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Yahi
Group



Butte, Glenn, Lassen, Plumas & Tehama Counties

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Yahi Spring 2016 Outings and Events

Coordinated by Alan Mendoza

www.sierraclub.org/mother-lode/yahi/outings

Op-Ed: Surface Water Regulation Threatened

By Roland McNutt, Yahi Group Member and Guest Writer

Locally much interest in (under) ground water has stirred up opposition to water transfer projects. Above ground water, (rivers and reservoirs), or surface water, is also threatened by the greed of capitalist projects.

During the first part of the twentieth century people came from all over the world to the Feather River to participate in an array of recreational activities. The train would deliver fishermen to resorts along the river to fish its renown spring-fed waters, and even stop to pick them up and let them off at various fishing holes. The hydro projects that were built in the 1950's and 60's gathered up most of the river's water and put it in pipes to produce power, leaving but a trickle, killing most all fish.

Since then the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) has regulated these projects and their licensing, bringing to the table public agencies such as the Forest Service, Fish and Game, and Department of Water Resources, as well as NGOs such as fishing and whitewater organizations.

The local landmark was the Rock Creek Cresta Settlement Agreement (FERC P-1962). This agreement more than doubled the base flows, set standards for water temperature, required habitat improvements for fish spawning, as well as requiring recreational releases starting at one weekend per month during the summer. Since this agreement was initiated, in the form of a new FERC license, we have seen a dramatic improvement in the fishery and an increase in shore-based recreation. In addition, thousands of paddlers have come to the North Fork Feather to experience what many feel is the best summer whitewater opportunity in California.

Presently there is a threat to the regulation of power companies. H.R. 8 (the "North American Energy Security and Infrastructure Act") is a comprehensive energy bill with hydropower provisions that, if passed, will make restoring rivers impacted by hydropower dams significantly more challenging.

The hydropower provisions in H.R. 8 would give hydropower developers special treatment by allowing them to ignore the Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, and other laws that protect fish, wildlife, recreation and public lands. It would strip states and Native American tribes of their existing authority to hold dam owners accountable for pollution and damage to local rivers and communities, as well as federal agencies to protect fish and other aquatic species.

The hydropower industry is behind these provisions, claiming that their efforts are about improving regulatory efficiency and promoting "clean, green" energy; in reality these large and powerful energy companies are seeking special treatment in order to squeeze our rivers dry for their own interests.

Ask your Representative to oppose the hydropower provisions in H.R. 8 that would undermine the public's ability to balance hydropower interests with non-power values like recreation, fish and wildlife.

Roland McNutt is involved with the Yahi group as well as the Chico Paddleheads and American Whitewater.

Yahi Club News

Yahi Group ExCom Elections

By Suzette Welch

These are the Yahi Group Sierra Club Officers for 2016 after election in November of 2015 and Board meeting January 11, 2016.

- ⇒ Co-Chair: Suzette Welch, 342-9214, booksontape@rocketmail.com
- ⇒ Co-Chair: Celeste Garcia, 533-2357, celesterdh@mynvw.com
- ⇒ Secretary: Laurel Heath, 343-3290, laur3290@gmail.com
- ⇒ Board Member: Annette Carey 872-3557 annettecare@sbcglobal.net
- ⇒ Board Member: Sharon Frisch, safritsch@comcast.net

Yahi ExCom meetings are open to members. Contact Suzette Welch, for information, 530-342-9214 or booksontape@rocketmail.com

Yahi Group Program Meeting

By Suzette Welch

Stop Fracking Campaign in Butte County, March 10, 2016

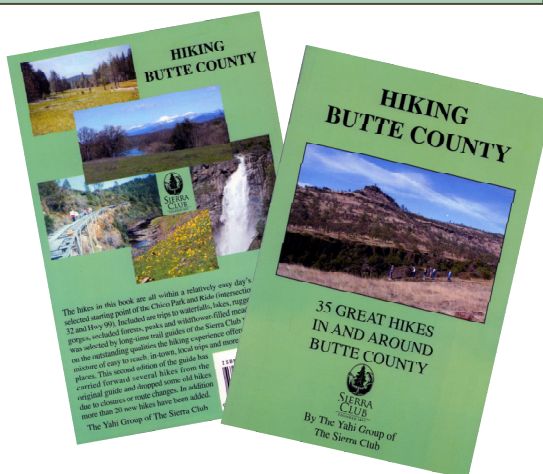
Our speaker for the evening will be David Garcia, organizer of *Frack Free Butte County*. The title of his talk will be **What Do Flint Michigan, the Porter Ranch Methane Leak and the Butte County Fracking Ban Have in Common?**

Social hour with refreshments will start at 6:30PM with the program following at 7PM. at the Chico Branch Library at 1108 Sherman Ave. on the corner of East First Ave. and Sherman in Chico. The talk is free and open to the public. Non Sierra Club members are welcome. For more information call Suzette Welch 530-342-9214.

Hiking Butte County

Hiking Butte County is a wonderful field guide to hikes in and around Butte County. It was assembled by the outings leaders in the Yahi Group under the direction of Alan Mendoza. In it you will find descriptions directions, distances and difficulty information for 35 hikes. This is the only book of its type for this area.

You can purchase it for \$11.95 at Trailside Adventures in Paradise and in Chico at Mountain Sports and Lyons Books. Or you can order one directly from Alan for \$10 plus shipping. Contact Alan Mendoza, 891-8789 or ajmendoza@prodigy.net.



Yahi Calls to Conserve

By Grace Maria Marvin, Yahi Group Conservation Chair

Why not **pick a New Year's or new Spring Resolution** to address one or more of our environment's immediate needs! You may email me if you need information on how to get involved (g-marvin@comcast.net). You might consider working the club, with other allies, or on your own to:

1-**protest to Governor Brown and other legislator about the "Water Fix"** (I call it the *Water Fiction*), *i.e.*, the new name for the Twin Tunnels project. It would divert good water directly from the Sacramento River (which ought to continue flowing in the Bay Delta) to send to water districts in the central and southern parts of the state. At the same time, we should protest moves by water districts in our own region that are planning **transfers of water out of this area**, while water contractors, e.g., working for Westlands, Metropolitan, and Kern Water Districts, pay huge sums to get our water. Or do we, instead, want to experience land sinking (*subsidence*) due to excessive pumping of groundwater in the Yahi region, thus drying up our land and streams?

2-point out to local and state government leaders that using Proposition 1 money for **building or increasing the size of dams and reservoirs would be a misuse of our tax money**; such structures will not produce more *new* water – as seen in the very low increases in water to Shasta and Oroville dams despite this winter's storms. Moreover, climate change results in increasing evaporation from dams;

3-call for **more and different conservation and land use policies that will actually allow for more available water** -- such as winter flooding of land near rivers resulting in more recharging of groundwater;

4-make sure that the newly forming **locally-based groundwater agencies represent the best ecological interests** of your area? These agencies, stemming from the 2014 Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, will, at last, mean that groundwater will be regulated in California);

5-express concern that **state oil and gas policies should not allow contamination** of aquifers and highly dangerous methane leaks – as in Porter Ranch above Aliso Canyon-- forcing hundreds of families to relocate; this bears on the club's concerns about the casing in fracking wells. In Butte County, we also need to **get out the vote against fracking on the June 7, 2016, special election**. Frack-Free Butte County (FFBC) collected enough signatures for it to be on the ballot, while dangerous modes of fracking continue in other parts of California. Much scientific evidence shows how dangerous fracking is to air, water, and thus health. The health of our lands matters here as well, since fracking has caused a) land contaminated with toxins, b) increasing earthquakes, and c) **serious accidents from fuel transport in trains**. Recall: the major goal of the Sierra Club is for our country and world to move away from "dirty fuels;"

6-get involved with the newly funded **Clear-Cutting Campaign**. The Mother Lode Chapter just awarded \$3000.- for the effort in January, 2016. Locally, one organization **fighting tree**

removals and involved in many other hugely important causes is the Butte Environmental Council, while Aqualliance is on the forefront of legal challenges to excessive pumping and transfers of water from our region;

7-speak up at local forestry meetings about **protecting trails and other land from excessive off highway/ road vehicle (OHV) use;**

8-become involved in the newly energized **Climate Change Campaign** of the Mother Lode Chapter, or getting involved in your own local community to help it to better address climate change;

9-**fight local government land use decisions that negatively affect people** and their environment. One example, that I compare to the issue about pipes in Flint, Michigan) is allowing lead-laden junkyards to be in in the vicinity of schools, e.g., in Chico;

10-**elect people to government offices** who will best address our human and environmental needs on the local, state, and national levels.

37th Annual Endangered Species Faire



Photo © Alan Sheckter

SATURDAY, MAY 7TH, 2016, 11AM - 4PM

**ONE MILE PICNIC AREA
IN LOWER BIDWELL PARK**

The Endangered Species Faire is a Free event for all ages, with environmental education being offered alongside music, eco-entertainment, a rescued animal show, and a larger than life puppet parade.

The Procession takes place on the day of the faire involving approximately 400 children from local schools who have made papier-mâché puppets of endangered species. The children learn about what threatens these animals' habitats and about environmental conservation efforts. Over a six week period we work with students to help them create their puppets, for the final event.

Visit the Butte Environmental Council web site for more information and to register online:
www.becnet.org/endangered-species-faire

You can view 2015 photo galleries of the wonderful handmade puppets at:

www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10153006393773089.1073741855.298863118088&type=3

River Watcher:

Water Conservation Begins with the Land

By Rex Burress

January 9, 2016

Conserving water was charged with tensions during the California drought of 2015. At the start of year 2016, there is also high uncertainty about the possible flooding from El Nino, or if it will even come, plus debates about water storage and the use of wells. Amid the fervor of the water issues, few people take the time to consider the grassroots of conservation in all of our natural resource usage.

Today's water news came out of San Diego, recipient of recent January rainfall, where they are discussing ways of retaining water that runs off into the ocean quite quickly. Of course, summer fires in the mountains laid the land bare, and without roots to hold it together, soil will go with the flow. The slogan, "soil is the foundation of life," is a generally accepted phrase that gained emphasis after the great dust storms on the Middle American Plains in the 1930's.

Before the dust-winds of the Great Depression, land was plowed and used indiscriminately with little thought of future sustainability, and land conservation had not developed efficient guideposts. I was born into that era on a farm in the Northern Missouri hills, which was sheltered from that Great Plains dust bowl, and Dad brought his 80 acres through, although I remember he had to take a WPA job at the Trenton tomato factory in order to buy seeds and stables.

The "conquering" of America began with European settlers hacking a hole into the forests to prepare land for agriculture. Eventually, that 'hack' became so extensive that much of the Great America Canopy east of the plains was nearly decimated, much like the forests in England. The plow laid the land bare, and without the tree-leaf-root cover and soil conservation practices, the soil was swept by storm into stream sandbars and the muddy Mississippi Delta.

Needless to say, the 49'er gold mining stripped soil in the Mother Lode country, plus many mountains were eroded by hydraulic water pressure and the debris suffocated Sacramento Valley streams before protective laws were enacted.

Franklin D. Roosevelt rather got the conservation ball rolling with the Civilian Conservation Corp [In 1942, Roosevelt established the Great Plains Shelterbelt and 220 billion trees were planted to lessen wind erosion.]. The conservation ideology was further enhanced by Aldo Leopold and his book "Sand County Almanac." A multitude of participants have contributed to the conservation movement, and even John Muir was noticing the lack of land management in the 1870's, when "The Father of National Parks" promoted land preservation.

My boyhood was centered in the riverbreak region of Northern Missouri during the 1930's and 40's. I became aware of nature and conservation while prowling those glacial-scoured hills, even though at first I was obsessed to find pretty pebbles and arrowheads uncovered by erosion. The clay hills that had been covered by trees and humus for millions of years to build up rich layers of soil until timbers were clear-cut and the erosive farming practices had allowed rains to

strip off the topsoil. Dad was tuned to helping the area recover via seeding, manure spreading, and crop rotation, while our ditches were filled with brush to slow the run-off.”Mud unconstrained is dirt lost!” [Political: “Mud slung is dirt lost.]

The Missouri Department of Conservation has been a leader in soil improvement, forest management, and restocking wildlife. [They also made me a Nature Knight which paved the way for a nature career.] The MO Conservation Agents [Game Wardens] help farmers plan the building of ponds and planting, to the point that most farms have efficient permanent ponds attractive to wildlife. “Build a refuge and they will come!”

“Land, then, is not merely soil; it is a fountain of energy flowing through a circuit of soils, plants, and animals.” --Aldo Leopold

“No small part of the prosperity of California depends upon the preservation of her water supply; and the water supply cannot be preserved unless the forests are preserved.” -- Theodore Roosevelt

“The battle for conservation will go on endlessly. It is part of the universal warfare between right and wrong.” --John Muir

River Watcher:

Who Owns the Land?

By Rex Burress

January 24, 2016

The land-use issue continued at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon during most of January 2016. The problem was about the use of Federal Land and whether the ranchers have a right to graze cattle on the public domain without following government regulations. The conflict caused a lesser tragedy in keeping birdwatchers out of the refuge.

Who owns the land? The question has lingered ever since mankind attained dominance in the animal world, and the issue became more of a problem as the human race expanded along with tools and technology. More living space was needed for people along with more space to grow food. All of this occurred on planet Earth, spinning through space “God knows how fast and far,” so mused John Muir. It spins with a finite amount of minerals, water, and soil that supports every living thing trapped in the atmosphere.

In the beginning of human emergence, land for people was rather “claimed by squatting on it,” just as animals protect their right to live in a certain territory. But then when Europe entered the civilization phase, a “land patent” system was developed which was brought along to America. Countries acquired land by war, purchase, and colonization, which was further shuffled to individuals through homesteading, grants, deeds, or patents. Land has always “belonged” to

some living thing, whether wildlife, Indians, colonists, or governments.

It was a big surprise for explorers to find various tribes already occupying America, and colonizers had to contend with their presence on the land. Did the inhabitants own it? Native Americans offered no proof of ownership, and indeed their belief was not to own land, but one of merely using and sharing Mother Earth. “This we know. The earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth.” --Chief Seattle. There were a lot of treaties and real-estate land deals in trying to justify modern methods of land management.

The Land Ordinance of 1785 tried to organize state parcels by creating townships, a six-mile square that was surveyed and divided into 36 sections of 640 acres each, sold to settlers for \$1.25 per acre for each section, but less desirable lots sold for 12 cents per acre, thus every inch of each state was accounted for by the human system! The 1812 U.S. Treasury managed public lands and granted patents until the Homestead Act of 1862 formed a new bureau. To homestead, you selected 160 acres of government land, resided on it for five years, built a 12x14 building and grew crops. Then you could apply for a patent deed of title in Washington D.C.

Land control was somewhat like gold mining claims in California, where a certain space was allotted to each miner who marked it as required.

Not all government land was sold, as we well know from the Malheur incident; in fact, nearly half of western land is under control of the government through the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forestry Service—very important in providing habitat for wildlife. Congress approved a law in 1976 saying that unclaimed public land would stay under federal control. Grazing laws would limit the size of herds to prevent overgrazing amid other conditions spelled out in the arrangement.

Access to the western land was difficult as roads were non-existent and there was a lack of trees on the plains to build houses [Sod shanties]. The Transcontinental Railroad of 1869 improved transportation, but there were no highways.

So who owns the land? Who speaks for the original inhabitants of America—the birds, beaver, bear, blossoms, blewits, and all of the species living on the thin layer of soil overlying hard rock of a planet once a mass of swirling hot magma? Wildlife was present long before people.

Who speaks for the conservation of the soil and our natural resources and landscape wonders? Who speaks for the earthly home of us all in Butte County and all of the world?

“Man did not make the earth, and though he had a natural right to occupy it, he had no right to locate as his property in perpetuity, any part of it.” --Thomas Paine, 1796

“What is this you call property? It cannot be the earth, for the land is our mother, nourishing all her children, beasts, birds, fish, and all men. The woods, the streams, everything on it belongs to everybody and is for the use of all. How can one man say it belongs only to him?”

--Chief Massasoit

YAH! Club Information

Executive Committee

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Board Member: Sharon Frisch, safritsch@comcast.net

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Newsletter Information

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For advertising, contact Celeste Garcia, 533-2357, celesterdh@mynvw.com.

For changes in mailing address or email address, contact Sierra Club Member Services: membership.services@sierraclub.org, or (415) 977-5500.

For submissions, comments, or inquiries, contact Louise Casey, 872-9159, YAHInews@comcast.net. Please include name, phone number, and address with each submittal. Short, single-topic articles are preferred. Deadlines for proposed articles and letters to the editor: February 1, May 1, August 1, and November 1.

Yahi News reserves the right to edit all submissions for reasons of space, clarity and potential libel. The opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Sierra Club or the Yahi Group.

The Last Word



Photo by Marie Scarrin

GOING, GOING... GONE?

Sea turtles date back nearly 90 million years and are among the Earth's oldest surviving species. All 6 species of sea turtles are protected under the Endangered Species Act. Sierra Club has mounted a major effort to defend and preserve threatened habitats before their inhabitants are gone forever.

Help protect our animal friends; because once they're gone, they're gone. Join Sierra Club now.

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Contributions, gifts and dues to Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to Sierra magazine and \$1 for your Chapter newsletters.



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Tell them if you want to receive only Yahi Group emails, or Yahi Group emails along with Sierra Club national and/or state emails.

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