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Yahi Summer/Fall 2012 Outings and Events

Coordinated by Alan Mendoza

<http://www.motherlode.sierraclub.org/yahi/outing.htm>

Victory: More Rooftop Solar for California

From Chris Carney, The Union of Concerned Scientists

Thanks to the letters of thousands of UCS supporters, California will extend its incentives for rooftop solar. Last month, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) updated a state program to pave the way for more rooftop solar power.

This statewide clean energy program, called net metering, has helped install more than 100,000 solar energy systems on homes, businesses, schools, libraries, and other buildings around the state.

When homeowners and small building owners install solar panels, any excess electricity they do not use can be sent back to the electricity grid for others to use. The solar owners get credit on their electricity bills for sharing their extra clean, renewable energy.

The program almost fell victim to its own success—participation in the program was so high there was a risk of hitting a vaguely defined limit on the amount of power that could receive the net metering incentive. Now that the CPUC has taken action, solar installers will continue to have plenty of business putting up more rooftop panels in California.

Read more about this rooftop solar victory.

<http://blog.ucsusa.org/more-solar-roofs-in-california>

The Conservation Forum



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Join the Rooftop Revolution in California!

Letter from Michael Brune, Sierra Club Executive Director

Last summer, Sierra Club supporters just like you all across California joined the Rooftop Revolution. If you missed out last year, now you can go solar too!

Click here to find out how to switch to clean, renewable energy and save money on your electric bills. <http://content.sierraclub.org/solar/>

Going solar with the Sierra Club and our solar partner, Sungevity, is a win, win, win!

- **A win for you:** You can lock in your electricity rate for the next 20 years, free yourself from dirty energy, and do it all with no upfront investment. Most homeowners start saving on their power bills immediately.
And if you go solar this summer, you'll get a \$750 cash gift card.
- **A win for the planet:** Powering your home with solar energy is the single best way to shrink your carbon footprint - the equivalent of taking 1.5 cars off the road.
- **A win for the Sierra Club:** Sungevity will give \$750 to the Sierra Club for everyone who goes solar through this program. This means more money for Sierra Club's important environmental campaigns in California.

Here's how it works:

1. **Enter your address and energy use to get a free solar evaluation for your home.**
2. Your free Sungevity quote will detail your solar options, show you what your home would look like, and how much you would save.

Repower your home and America's future - go solar today!

We Want Your E-Mail Address!

By Lorna Cunkle

Are you receiving a printed copy of the newsletter? Would you like to help us save money and trees?

To electronically receive a link to the online Yahi Group newsletter, rather than a printed copy, send an email with your full name and current email address to wordsfly@gmail.com.

Thanks!

YAH! Club News

Grace Notes:

Yahi Local Conservation News

By Grace Maria Marvin, Yahi Conservation Chair

This summer, we have hot topics that should concern us. One is fracking -- which Yahi's own Dave Garcia has been publicizing, and which is increasingly raising alarms across California (as well as other states), especially regarding its horrific health and environmental damages. Please see Dave's articles in prior editions of this paper or contact him at rangerdave@mynvw.com.

This month, however, I would like to relay water, rail, and timber concerns.

Water Concerns in California

1 - Water transfers from the north state overwhelmingly benefit corporate agriculture and harm our interests, including protection of our ground water and related ecosystems. One major and very expensive proposal involves the state's support for building a massive tunnel (or other "water conveyance") that is supposed to meet the needs of the environment and people. But upon close examination of the details of the BDCP (Bay Delta Planning Commission) proposal, we see how it would lead to many unsustainable consequences for our waterways, *e.g.*, too many "straws" would be going to monied interests that are not concerned about the longterm (or sustainable) use of our natural resources.

The Environmental Water Caucus, consisting of numerous organizations, developed a letter under the leadership of Nick Di Croce, that was sent to the Department of Interior in D.C. on 6/12/012. Among those who signed on are representatives of Sierra Club- California, BEC (Butte Environmental Council) and Aqualliance. It is a compelling letter describing our concerns:

*The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary of Interior
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240*

*Dear Mr. Secretary:
The State of California is poised to make an enormous mistake, and potentially drag the Department of Interior and the American people along with it. California Secretary for Natural Resources, John Laird, recently informed us in a May 24, 2012, briefing that the State intends to proceed with construction of a world-record-size tunnel or pipes capable of*

diverting 15,000 cubic feet per second from the Sacramento River - nearly all of its average freshwater flow. Diversion of this water, which is the most pristine source of water to the San Francisco Bay Delta Estuary, would have devastating ecological impacts.

Scientists within the Department of Interior have been pivotal in assessing these impacts and have raised “red-flag” warnings. This \$20 to \$50 billion dollar, highly controversial project will primarily serve to deliver Sacramento River water, through State and Federal pumps, to provide subsidized irrigation water to corporate agricultural operations of the western San Joaquin Valley.

In addition to the ecological devastation, the project will destroy jobs dependent on tourism, farming, recreation, fishing and seafood production in California and the entire Pacific Coast. The decision outlined in the May 24th briefing has stirred urgent concerns among fishing communities, farming communities, and conservation organizations throughout the West Coast. This project is a poorly conceived assault on the public trust that desperately needs a strong hand of reason from your Department.

The State has not provided the details of how it reached this proposed action—nor have they answered questions about significant constructability challenges, provided blueprints, or developed a plan of operations. The State has not answered our questions regarding how the 22 species facing extinction in the Delta Estuary will be protected from this massive engineering project and water diversion. We are not reassured by the State’s announcement that this project proposal was not pre-decisional and would not undermine the lawful environmental consideration of the project.

We were surprised and dismayed that the State of California is headed in this direction, as it appears to contradict or ignore the consensus of expert opinions repeatedly expressed by scientists with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences. Most recently, State and Federal fishery and wildlife agencies issued official “red flag memos” detailing their concerns that the 50-year permit could hasten the extinction of Central Valley salmon, Delta smelt, longfin smelt and other fish species.

*We need you, Mr. Secretary, to take a stand for the public. It would be folly for the Department of Interior to follow the State of California down this risky path. We hope that Interior will instead work to dissuade the State from pursuing this misguided policy. As you know, the Federal and State funding and cooperative assistance agreement, signed in March 2009, promised the following: “Reclamation will, upon completion of the Program, have the documentation and engineering information to **gain Congressional approval to move toward feasibility, design, and implementation of restoration projects to benefit fish and wildlife habitat.**” [Emphasis added Cooperative Agreement 09FC200011 P. 3 of 32]*

We urge you to uphold the Obama Administration's promise to ensure the Department of Interior's scientific integrity and not bow to political pressure. Circumventing peer-reviewed science with faulty modeling, analysis, and engineering, as the State is proposing, is legally questionable and will damage public trust. Further, protecting our national public trust demands the Department of Interior champion the State of California's flow criteria to protect public trust resources for the San Francisco Bay-Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (Delta) ecosystem and water quality. The Department of Interior should also raise the Cooperative Agreement's requirement to "...address measures that improve conditions for and allow conservation and rehabilitation of habitat supporting the Federally-listed endangered Delta smelt, winter-run Chinook salmon..... These species are considered by many to be the gauge of the health of the Delta ecosystem. Additionally, consider measures that benefit other fish, wildlife, and bird species that have been negatively affected by changes to the natural ecosystem, some caused by Central Valley Project operations." [Cooperative Agreement 09FC200011 Page 2 of 32.] *No justification has been given for the scale of the proposed tunnels or pipe, nor is there any assurance of operations consistent with ecosystem goals.*

Please do not put the interests of South-of-Delta water contractors before the public and San Francisco Bay-Delta dependent farmers, fishermen, and local communities. Narrow special interests should not be allowed to take these public water resources for private gain without regard to costs to one of our nation's most important estuaries. Mr. Secretary, two-thirds of existing Delta Estuary water exports serves corporate irrigators of the western San Joaquin Valley, which accounts for less than .5 percent of California's economy and population. Less than a third of the water goes to the urban areas that make up half of the state's population and economy. Levels of water demand are artificially high due to taxpayer subsidies. Basic fairness, binding commitments, and economic reality all demand that the fast tracking of this massive engineering experiment be rejected because it cannot meet basic legal, economic, and scientific requirements.

We urge you to take the rightful stand against this project and reject these unsustainable water demands and their high public costs, and instead invest in more efficient use of our scarce water resources through cost-effective water conservation and recycling. This will not only protect the pocket books of millions of California ratepayers and U.S. taxpayers, but will help ensure that legally-required salmon doubling goals, estuary restoration, and public trust values are honored for future generations. The planning for California's water future must return to a lawful, science-based, inclusive, and transparent process. The San Francisco Bay-Delta Estuary must not be stripped of the freshwater flows upon which so many vital public trust resources and West Coast communities depend. From its inception, this plan has been crafted by, and for, South-of-Delta exporters. They have used their economic power to influence and rush this halfbaked, multi-billion dollar water tunnel.

Planning for California's legitimate water needs, and preserving recreational, fishery, environmental and agricultural resources are way too important to be rushed. California voters said "No" thirty years ago to a plan to dewater the Delta Estuary. It is doubtful they will like the idea any better this time. As Representative Grace Napolitano determined from Congressional testimony, water efficiency and conservation can save one million acre feet of water quickly and cost-effectively—and can start now. It will be an unimaginable shame if the Department of Interior, the keeper of the public trust resources of our Nation, makes the mistake of going along with the State's poorly conceived and destructive plan.

Sincerely,

Nick Di Croce ,Co-Facilitator, Environmental Water Caucus

Jim Metropulos, Senior Advocate, Sierra Club California

and signers for more than 30 other environmental organizations

Rail Concerns in California

2 - Another very expensive and 'environmentally challenged' state project, now being promoted, involves high speed rail. Please *Google* Kathryn Phillips regarding her work for Sierra Club California on the **high speed rail** project. Although many environmentalists see great value in having an excellent mass transportation system in our state, many share her controversial stand that no rail project should be allowed an exemption from the thorough review mandated by the California Environmental Quality Act. Without undergoing a CEQA review, the numerous defects in the current plans could create havoc for California. Why rush such a project (costing billions) when our state is already in financial trouble?

Timber Concerns in California

3 - Timber harvesting is rampant in our Yahi Group's neck of the woods. Juliette Beck now heads up the effort to curb clear cutting for the Sierra Club. In late June she helped organize a terrific tour of Collins Pines timber operations, a lumber company located in nearby Chester, Ca. We learned much about the different kinds of 'harvesting' that timber companies employ, and why sustainability is important to Collins Pine. Yet, we also saw that sustainability is not the watchword for the largest land owner in California, Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI). Their huge checkerboard patterns of clearcutting are massive throughout the Sierras and can easily be seen on plane trips or on Google Earth. Thus, Juliette is looking for volunteers who would be interested in reviewing private companies' THP's (timber harvest plans). Please contact her (stopsierraclearcutting@gmail.com) if you are at all interested, in helping with such reviews, in writing letters, collecting signatures on petitions, etc.

The Yahi Group's Chris Nelson will be returning to our area in the Fall and will be an excellent contact person for local efforts to reduce clear cutting (chris4pax@gmail.com). Let's remind others that by doing so , we can help protect our view sheds and watersheds, water and air quality, wildlife creatures and their habitat, now and for generations to come.

The Conservation Forum

The River Watcher:

The Ethics of Harvesting Wild Plants

By Rex Burress

On a planet where it was intended for life to eat living things, some life forms are in peril of being eaten right out of existence!

The problem lies in an expanded population of people foraging in the out-of-doors for edible organisms, as featured in an article, "The Forager's Dilemma," by Jonah Raskin, in the April-June issue of Bay Nature magazine. Perhaps more importance should be put on poison in nature!

Once a novel way of sampling wild foods in a metropolitan area that is now crowded with seven million residents, foraging spaces have become few, and sometimes habitats are stripped bare by over-eager consumers. Most parks now do not allow collecting of anything, and private lands are often trespassed for access. The article indicated that some foragers strip seaweed from rocks, deplete urchin beds, engage in unlimited poaching, gather plants without restraint, play roulette with mushrooms, and sometimes trample the ground and reduce food for wildlife.

In the prehistory days of the Native American Indians, foraging and hunting was often the sole means of existence, especially before agriculture was practiced. But time has wrought changes to the food factor. Now food goes from the farm to the grocery stores, and an expedition across America in the style of the 1804 Lewis and Clark live-off-the-land journey, is no longer viable. Laws, lack of game, and private land restrictions, dictate a different kind of exploratory mode.

When working with Oakland Parks on the Naturalist Staff in the 1960's, we would lead nature hikes into the hills with a feature of edible/medicinal plants and mushrooms. We would nibble our way through miner's lettuce, chickweed, huckleberries, and hazel nuts without any thought of damaging the environment, but we may have had some apprehensions twenty years later when an advertised "edible mushroom walk" brought forth 150 people. With that, we put the emphasis on poisonous mushrooms and habitat stewardship—plus warnings that getting off of the trail subjected one to poison oak!

Alas! Even today there are a few Bay Area forager clubs that collect edible plants and animals for a \$100 a plate dinner at a Wild Kitchen feast...even amid restrictive laws and regulations.

The trample-traffic is not as intense at Oroville, CA, and on nature walks I point out edible miner's lettuce, even though I suggest only a nibble to get the flavor of what was once important to the gold miners. I specify restraint and conservation in collecting anything in nature. Unless you own acreage, there's no living off the land anymore. Like the Asians, I, too, once foraged and hunted and fished on the farm.

Collecting rocks and nature cast-offs is not as intrusive to balanced habitats, but even so, popular gemstone sites have been severely picked over, disrupting geological formations, and imposing limits. Once there was a marvelous "Wonderstone Mountain" of colorful rhyolite in Nevada, but it has nearly been leveled by commercial exploiters. When the money factor is involved, greed evolves. When morel mushrooms, or chanterelles, sell at \$40 a pound, you know there are more sellers than eaters.

Imagine my concern when a group of displaced Hmong refugees were established in Oroville. I soon noticed that they were excellent foragers as had been their custom in the Asian world. They didn't understand our laws, and it took awhile for them to adjust.

Not only did they excel at fishing, but setting snares for squirrels and succeeding, was going too far. The boys could scoot right up the cottonwood to pick oyster mushrooms, and the Hmong women were stripping the riverside of edible plants, especially pea family. But when lovely Hmong girls were picking bouquets of California poppies, I reacted, followed them home and confronted the parents. They understood little English, but I think they got the message with a lot of pointing and grimacing.

I think the kindly Hmong are within the orderly law and order system now, and contribute to the community circle. Worldly expansion has suggested a need to share natural things of aesthetic wonder and conserve limited resources.

*"In the end, we will conserve what we love,
We will love what we understand.
We will understand what we are taught."—Baba Dioum*

Thank You, Susan Sears!

By Louise Casey, YAHI Newsletter Editor

In Winter of 2001, Susan and I took over production of the YAHI newsletter from Mike Smith. Mike had developed the form and format of the newsletter, and we took it as our mission to together maintain the excellent quality of his work.

Susan and I have worked through several major changes in the newsletter as times and finances have changed. It has been a creative and challenging journey, and our partnership has always been rewarding. In 2010, the Sierra Club awarded us a joint award for "outstanding achievement" for our work together on this newsletter. I have always been proud of the newsletter we produced together.

Never one to take the slow road, Susan has become increasingly involved with the California State Retirees over the past few years. Now, as President of the California State Retirees, she is leading that excellent organization full-time. In a recent note to me, she said:

As for my schedule...sigh...it's quite the disaster, at least the rest of this year. It might let up a bit after, say, November, but who knows, maybe people will come up with new ways to fill up my days and weeks with travel, meetings, special requests to appear here or go there or do that – which is what's happening at the present time. It's mostly fun, and very interesting – but my life is definitely no longer my own....I must sadly say that my name should probably come off your masthead – after all these [how many?] years.

So with gratitude and sadness, I did change the masthead. I am sure my fellow YAHI members will join me in a huge thank-you to Susan and in sending the best possible wishes for her in her work with California State Retirees. They are fortunate indeed to have a person of such energy and talent to lead them.

Hikes Planned for “Into the Wood”

By Olivia Diaz

Clair Tappaan Lodge, the Sierra Club Lodge located at 7000 feet in the Sierra Nevada and easily accessible via I-80 has many activities scheduled for the summer and fall. We now have information on theme hikes for our annual summer fund raiser. This year it will be August 17-19 at the Lodge on Donner Summit

Our Fundraiser, “Into the Woods” will get our participants into the woods to hike, to view the new “Brody Trees” (400+ year old trees) memorial and to listen to a wonderful professional cellist enchant us in the woods at Hutchinson Lodge.



See the Lodge web page at <http://www.ctl.sierraclub.org/> for directions and click on Activities for a current listing of special programs.

For details on the weekend, scroll down the Calendar of Activities page to August 17 and click on “Into the Woods” All are invited and the fee is \$155 for all of the activities and meals from Friday afternoon and through lunch on Sunday.

There will be a one-day fee of \$50 for Saturday. After dinner on Friday night the Donner Historical Society will present a speaker on Tunnel 6 of the Intercontinental Railway nearby the Lodge. The talk will be followed by a traditional campfire with s'mores and brandy.

On Saturday there will be a large menu of hikes with interesting themes. A photography instructor will lead a hike and instruct participants on framing a picture in the forest and mountains. Also a geologist will lead a hike and talk on the geology of the area. Additional theme hikes will be developed before the event in August. There will be more hikes on Sunday morning, of shorter duration.

Following the hikes on Saturday morning there will be a wine & cheese reception with cello music by David Eby. The Saturday night speaker will be Harry Weldon, the engineer on one of the 1960s wing additions to the Lodge. Throughout the weekend there will be an Art Silent Auction and a raffle for an overnight stay at Clair Tappaan Lodge and a 50/50 raffle.



This weekend event supports the Lodge as well as its Scholarship Fund for youth groups to participate in the Environmental Education programs held at the Lodge.

YAH! Club Information

Sierra Club Yahi Group Contacts

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Newsletter Information

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For submissions, comments and inquiries, please write to Sierra Club, Post Office Box 2012, Chico, CA 95927 or contact Louise Casey at 530-872-9159.

For advertising in the Newsletter, please call Paul Krause at 530-894-2931. For changes in membership address (which also affects the address for receiving the newsletter by mail) please write to Sierra Club Member Services, Post Office Box 42041, Palm Coast, FL 32142-6417; sending a mailing label for the old address will speed the process.

Submission Guidelines:

Please include name, phone, and address with each submittal. Short, single topic articles are preferred. Deadlines for proposed articles and letters to the editor: February 1, June 1, October 1. E-mail articles to yahinews@comcast.net. If you cannot send your article electronically, please mail it to Yahi Group of the Sierra Club, 5590 Feather River Place, Paradise, CA 95969, Attn: Louise Casey.

The right is reserved 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

Join the Solar Revolution!



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When you go solar this summer, you get \$750 and Sungevity will contribute \$750 to Sierra Club. It's good for the planet, good for Sierra Club and good for you.

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<http://content.sierraclub.org/solar/>

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