



**Butte, Glenn, Lassen, Plumas & Tehama Counties**

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**Yahí Summer 2013 Outings and Events**  
*Coordinated by Alan Mendoza*

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

**Rolling Stones**  
*By Rex Burress*

As you drive up Cherokee Road north of Oroville, passing by the Pioneer Cemetery, twisting along the dammed Diversion Pool, and finally enter the interior of Morris Ravine, you will notice, if you look up on the slope of South Table Mountain opposite the Sand Mine, a massive landslide.

At the bottom of the mixture of loose debris is a gigantic, house-sized rugged mass of basalt that had broken free from the mountain capping and tumbled down the mountain a mere 10 years ago. The volcanic flow had erupted from a fissure near Susanville some 20 million years ago.

I don't know if anyone witnessed the slide but it must have been a rumble. It probably happened during a winter storm when water had loosened the clay surrounding the thin layer of basalt. Most of North Table Mountain has thick, 100-foot walls of sheer basalt that chips away to form talus slopes at the base,

while the 9,000-acre mountain top is relatively flat.

I clamored up that slide shortly after it came down, curious as to what might have been uncovered, since agatized "mastodon bones" had been found nearby, and petrified wood is commonly found in the area. Most



*The meadow on North Table Mountain with the recent slide in background. In the foreground is the Maidu boat rock. At the base of the slide is the house-sized rock that came down with the slide. The rock that will come down with the next slide is visible at the top.*  
 Photo by Rex Burress

*(continued)*



*According to the Maidu, this rock on North Table Mountain is the site of the mythical boat on a flat earth where Turtle dived in the ocean and brought mud that Wonomi molded into a round earth.*

*Photo by  
Rex Burress*

alarmingly, another huge block of basalt is poised to roll down after a few more storms or earthquakes.

Out in the field below the slide, there is another loaf-shaped colossal chunk that apparently has been there a long time, since one Maidu myth explains that the point of creation came when Turtle landed in his boat to dredge earth out of the mud. In any case, present-day Maidu look upon the rock as a sacred place. Another such monarch in the meadow is split, and an ancient oak grows out of the crevice.

Across the chasm is that exposure of sand where ancient riverbeds built up unbelievably thick deposits of sand. The mine operations have scraped away at that mountain of sand and processed it into mounds of pure white silica waiting to be hauled away to glass makers. In the excavation, they have uncovered petrified trees that once were carried downstream. Pockets of quality clay that contaminates the sand have been sucked into a “potter’s delight” pit. Those countless sand grains were once rocks tumbled fine by erosion. Gravity and water and time do their job on grinding big things small.

The clay rubble is shown most graphically at the north end of North Table Mountain at Cherokee. Giant monitors used in hydraulic mining had shot water against the cliffs of the Ione Formation to recover gold nuggets from ancient riverbeds. The overwhelming sediment was washed into rivers and farmland, bringing the mining to a halt in the 1870s. Left behind were yellow clay walls capped with that volcanic black basalt — and a basin of sand and cobble.

It will all come rolling down to make one level plain on the ground, just as the gushing waters flow downhill to the ocean, to lie there equally level until the next great upheaval, when rocks start rolling again. Sierra Club members know the shifting quality of rocks very well!

*It's good sportsmanship not to pick up lost golf balls while they are still rolling.*

—Mark Twain

*Revenge . . . is like a rolling stone, which, when a man hath forced up a hill,  
will return upon him a greater violence,  
and break those bones whose sinews gave it motion.*

—Albert Schweitzer

*Creativity is a spark.*

*It can be excruciating when we're rubbing two rocks together and getting nothing.  
And it can be intensely satisfying when the flame catches and a new idea sweeps around the world.*

—Jonah Lehrer



# Local Conservation News

## Grace Notes

*By Grace Marvin, Conservation Chair, Yahi Group*

This past month Yahi activists have been involved with tabling at Earth Day, fighting fracking in *numerous* ways (led by the extremely active Dave Garcia), and gathering signatures on clearcutting petitions. We also are eager to get the word out to members that counties undertaking general plans need to get involved to shape their futures in environmentally friendly ways. One way to get started would be to contact Sierra Nevada Alliance (SNA) for more information: [info@sierranevadaalliance.org](mailto:info@sierranevadaalliance.org). The Mother Lode Chapter and several groups of the Sierra Club are members of SNA (including the Yahi Group). They have terrific conferences, by the way, and general plans are of special interest to the SNA.

Is there a strategy that makes sense for us to fight fracking in our region? Several local activists believe we should get county governments to enact local anti-fracking ordinances, that is, if we fail in our current efforts to get the state to put a moratorium on fracking. (Have you worked on that in your county?)

Local Sierra Club members and other activists are also learning more about the arguments and strategies we need to employ to fight the hugely expensive state plan to construct tunnels to ship our water south: \$14 billion is the figure I have seen most recently, and that does not include the huge impacts on agriculture, local economies, and habitat that the plan did not consider. Water transfer concerns are being addressed by A-Aqualliance (the principle local organization undertaking the very expensive legal challenges), B-Butte Environmental Council, and C-Citizens Water Watch. Statewide, a major organization fighting the tunnels is the Environmental Water Caucus (EWC), based in Sacramento. Several members of the above organizations (A,B,&C) participate in regular conference calls with the EWC; we also attended their all-day retreat on April 25 in Sacramento. But don't let our activism fool you. We are very poor (financially speaking) and very small in number compared to those who want to build the tunnels.

At the April 7, 2013, Mother Lode Chapter meetings (which I regularly attend as the Yahi representative), we discussed numerous conservation issues or campaigns, communication and financial challenges facing our chapter, as well as several lawsuits. This includes the Dyer Mountain legal campaign that has gone on for several years. I reported the sad news of Steve Robinson's recent death. He founded the Mountain Meadows Conservancy (MMC) to fight Dyer Mountain Development and its four-season resort near Westwood in Lassen County. Nils Lunder, now the MMC interim manager; Rachel Hooper, the main lawyer handling the lawsuit; and I have discussed the current legal options. Eventually, I hope to report more good news, to complement Steve's already wonderful legacy. His efforts in leading the MMC, along with the support of the Sierra Club and Sierra Watch, prevented the development of a seriously environmentally challenged four-season resort.





# Training Future Advocates

By Grace Marvin, Conservation Chair, Yahi Group

As a Sierra Club—and Butte Environmental Council (BEC) and Citizens Water Watch (CWW) activist — I have had the opportunity to get involved with environmental protection of many different kinds. Thus, I would like to share with any newbies, some of the strategies used in a local environmental campaign.

On April 18, 2013, I helped with training future conservation advocates. In particular, Carol Perkins (longtime Water Consultant with a 2013 Chico State M.S. in Environmental Sciences) and I reviewed the organizing strategies and arguments used to successfully fight Crystal Geysers in 2009-2010. The Orland city government wanted Crystal Geysers to build a large water-bottling plant without, first, doing an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) while many citizens knew that the plant would be very harmful to groundwater, both in terms of quantity and quality. Citizens from Orland joined together to form SOWR (Save our Water Resources) to fight the decision of the Orland City Council. Subsequently, several outsiders who were members of Butte Environmental Council (BEC) and the Yahi Group supported the efforts of SOWR, and we came to identify ourselves as SOWR members as well.

All the efforts of SOWR (summarized below) showed the city just how strong its citizens were, while reinforcing our resolve to keep up the fight! Moreover, SOWR found local persons and outsiders who provided expertise regarding how local power holders work, how to best do publicity, how to organize and inform local citizens, how to address governmental bodies, how to make informational binders and administrative records, and how to critique official reports and fact sheets using geographical, legal, corporate, local economic, and technological information.

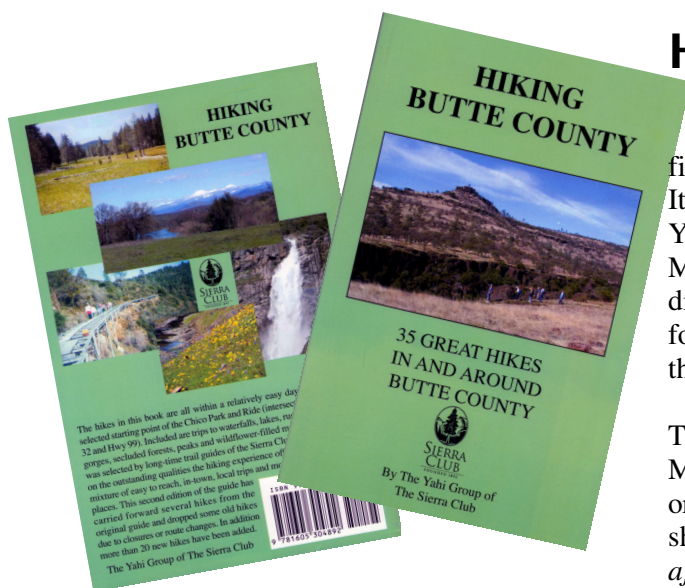
## Important Tactics Used

1. Posting large and small signs, and distributing meeting leaflets and fact sheets all over town.
2. Finding good places for local citizens to (frequently) meet to discuss the issues among ourselves.
3. Letter writing to the city officials, letters that were sometimes read at City Council meetings.
4. Informing the media and getting reports in the *Orland Press*, *the Valley Mirror*, *The Chico ER*, the *Chico News and Review*, KZFR, KCHO, and other media, including local TV. Also coverage in BEC and Sierra Club newsletters explained the issues and members' involvement.
5. Identifying: (a) *key demands* around which citizens could agree (and thereby keeping personal, special desires to the side); (b) *options* we had to consider; and (c) *skills needed* to facilitate our options, e.g., legal and technological background.
6. Injecting some humor in very serious concerns can become a real asset. (Instead of "Old McDonald Had a Farm," we sang *Old Crystal Geysers had a plant, EI - EIR*, with several additional strong yet very funny verses.)

(continued)

7. Gathering donations to allow for more work, including publicity, and eventually litigation.
8. Writing petitions to the City Council and careful planning for the gathering of community-wide signatures.
9. Turning out large numbers of citizens for local City Council and Technical Advisory Committee meetings (often called Planning Department meetings in other localities).
10. Planning how citizens and others should make presentations for such meetings. It was important to plan (ahead of time) the points each person would include in the three minutes that City Council allotted each person attending. For example, we had numerous citizen challenges to “official” findings; one person reported on monitoring results of personal wells before, during, after official pump tests; another person gave insider knowledge of trucking routes, noise, etc. We also discussed — ahead of the meeting — what *not* to say.
11. Taking minutes and videotaping crucial meetings,
12. Learning how to tolerate all kinds of frustrations. For example, at long City Council meetings, Council members censored public involvement and wasted citizens’ time and money by refusing to commission an initial study; belittling citizen concerns (by “flaunting” bottles of Crystal Geyser water when citizens spoke at public meetings); displaying ignorance of CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) and suggesting that the *public* (instead of the city) should provide scientific or substantive evidence to support our “claims” using “experts” (from Crystal Geyser) instead of independent researchers.

SOWR’s efforts were successful only after the matter was taken to court. When it was ruled that an EIR must be done, Crystal Geyser withdrew all its plans for Orland! What a wonderful and dedicated group of people the outside activists saw among Orland’s SOWR members, and how sweet it was to have all of our efforts pay off by seeing that company leave, at least, for now! Crystal Geyser knows, now, what local activism can do.



## 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](mailto:ajmendoza@prodigy.net).

# Conservation News

## Court Victory for Opponents of Fracking in California

SAN JOSE, CA via Sierra Club News. In April a federal judge ruled that the Obama Administration violated the law when it issued oil leases in Monterey County without considering the environmental impacts of hydraulic fracturing, also known as fracking. The ruling came in response to a suit brought by the Center for Biological Diversity and the Sierra Club, challenging a September 2011 decision by the federal Bureau of Land Management to auction off about 2,500 acres of land in southern Monterey County to oil companies.

“This important decision recognizes that fracking poses new, unique risks to California’s air, water, and wildlife that government agencies can’t ignore,” said Brendan Cummings, senior counsel at the Center, who argued the case for the plaintiffs. “This is a watershed moment — the first court opinion to find a federal lease sale invalid for failing to address the monumental dangers of fracking.”

Fracking employs huge volumes of water mixed with sand and toxic chemicals to blast open rock formations and extract oil and gas. The controversial technique is already being used in hundreds — perhaps thousands — of California oil and gas wells. Oil companies are aggressively trying to frack the Monterey Shale, which stretches from the northern San Joaquin Valley into Los Angeles County, and west to the coast. Extracting this oil will certainly require more fracking in California.

“Fracking for oil and gas is inherently a dirty and dangerous process that decimates entire landscapes,” said Michael Brune, Executor Director of the Sierra Club. “We know without a doubt that fracking will lead to increased use of fossil fuels at a time when we should be doing everything we can to keep dirty fuels in the ground and doubling down on clean energy.”

Hydraulic fracturing, whether for oil or natural gas, has been tied to water and air pollution in other states, and releases huge quantities of methane, a dangerously potent greenhouse gas. Increased fracking threatens to unlock vast reserves of previously inaccessible fossil-fuel deposits that would contribute to global warming and bring us closer to climate disaster.

Fracking also routinely employs numerous toxic chemicals, including methanol, benzene, and trimenthylbenzene. A recent study from the Colorado School of Public Health found that fracking contributes to serious neurological and respiratory problems in people living near fracked wells, while putting them at higher risk of cancer at the same time.

“In an era of dangerous climate change, the Obama Administration should not sell off our public lands to be fracked for fossil fuel development that will only speed up global warming,” added Cummings. “We hope this court ruling acts as a wake-up call that steers the federal government away from sacrificing California’s public lands for dangerous oil development.”

The court has asked for a joint recommendation on next steps in the case. The Center and the Sierra Club believe the lease sale should be set aside. At a minimum, no drilling or fracking on the leases will be allowed before a thorough analysis of the environmental risks has been completed.



# Solutions for Climate Change

By Ed Schilling

What can we do about climate change? In May, 2013, CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere reached the 400ppm mark at Mauna Loa Observatory in Hawaii. "The last time Earth saw 400 ppm CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere about 3-4 million years back, there were camels and forests in the Arctic...and large expanses of the U.S. East Coast, Florida and the Gulf States were underwater," says **Richard Norris, Professor of Paleobiology at Scripps Institution of Oceanography.**

Cars and trucks alone contribute roughly one third of the CO<sub>2</sub> to our atmosphere. With a steady two or three parts per million increase in CO<sub>2</sub> every year, we now find ourselves at 400ppm. Bill McKibben and "350.org" are trying desperately to get us back to 350ppm, and his divestment campaign seems to be taking off. But given how the coal, oil and gas industries continue to treat our skies as an open sewer, given the "extreme weather" of recent years, and given our insatiable thirst for fossil fuels, will divestment and other strategies really be enough to save our climate?

About twenty years ago, in 1992, I built an electric car with the help of a friend. We managed to convert a 1979 Honda to electric power. At the time, I felt that I was part of an electric car movement that would soon sweep California and the nation. After all, hadn't California just passed a law back in '92 that 2% of all cars in California must be electric vehicles by 1998, rising to 10% by 2003?

Well, everyone reading this knows or could easily guess what happened to that 2% rising to 10% law. The law was gutted and destroyed by auto and oil industry legal teams. And now climate change is overwhelming us a bit faster than anyone expected.

I was encouraged by the "Our Electric Car" article last issue and applaud Suzette Welch's investment in and enthusiasm for the Nissan Leaf. It's a car I've thought very seriously about getting since I parted with that old converted electric Honda. In recent years I've opted to drive a Honda Civic Hybrid, and sometimes even ride an electric bike.

What haunts me about the climate crisis is not only that cars and trucks contribute so much to the carbon dioxide in our atmosphere, but also what an explosion there has been in the population of cars and trucks around the world in the last 60 years. In 1950 there were, for example, 50 million gas cars on the planet--a planet inhabited by roughly 2 and a half billion people. Now there are over a billion cars on a planet inhabited by roughly 7 billion people. In other words, in 1950, one out of every 50 people had a gas car. Today, one out of every seven people has a gas car. Some cars are electric or hybrid these days, and cars aren't as polluting as in the fifties, but this does very little to mitigate the problem. Let's add some other drivers of climate. China has ramped up the building of coal fired plants. Fracking and mountaintop removal continues. And if we don't stop the Keystone XL, it's "game over," as climatologist

*(continued)*

James Hansen puts it. Do we have a fighting chance to stop the coal, oil, and auto industry juggernaut?

For years I've been wondering about so called "technological fixes" to the dilemma of climate change. At one time, cars were the pure clean alternative needed to end all that methane gas generated by horses on the streets of New York City. How can technology help us now?

Professor Klaus S. Lackner of Columbia University, director of the Lenfest Center for Sustainable Energy at the Earth Institute there, has been working for years on ambitious carbon capture and sequestration strategies. Lackner has developed an "air extractor," which removes carbon from the atmosphere and is modeled after the leaf of a tree, yet his synthetic trees and huge polymer sheets remove hundreds of times more carbon from the atmosphere than a tree or plant would do. Since air flows everywhere, his "air extractors" could be deployed anywhere. One million of them, strategically placed around the planet, would significantly reduce CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere. Lackner has gotten money from various investors and there are research centers in New York and San Francisco. His ambitious soon to be commercialized "air extractors" are being developed by a company he helped found, "Kilimanjaro Energy," named after the retreating "snows of Kilimanjaro." A company doing similar air extraction technology research is underway in Calgary, Canada, and is called "Carbon Engineering."

We can all act to cut down CO<sub>2</sub> carbon footprint. Ride a bike, walk, take the bus, or even practice "hypermiling." Buying an electric car is a great idea, if for no other reason that it tells the auto industry that demand is up for electrics. Still, with over a billion cars on the planet, plus all the other CO<sub>2</sub> sources, we need additional measures as a bridge to a clean air future.

In an article/interview by Maria Ioshpa for "The Earth Island Journal," (May 7, 2012) entitled "Scrubbing Carbon From the Air Isn't Good Enough by Itself," the author put the obvious question to Klaus Lackner: "Would the creation of these air capture devices be a sort of magic pill, making people less inclined to stop the production of CO<sub>2</sub> because of it?"

Lackner's reply: "Scrubbing CO<sub>2</sub> from the air is one weapon in the arsenal; by itself it's not good enough....The answer is, maybe for some people it does. But the flip side of the problem is: You may not have a choice anymore but to take back CO<sub>2</sub>... you need some way of pulling the CO<sub>2</sub> out of the air, and forests are not quite fast enough."

Not to mention the huge carbon sink that is our increasingly acidified oceans--just not fast enough. You can google "Kilimanjaro Energy" and "Carbon Engineering" to see what's in the works. In the meantime--we can count on those 2ppm CO<sub>2</sub> increases in our atmosphere increases, year by year. It's 2013 and we're at 400ppm...and counting.

*Ed Schilling is a Sierra Club member and former newsletter editor. ('93-'95) He has written articles for the Earth Island Journal, Sonoma County Independent, and Chico News and Review.*





## Sierra Club Launches Campaign Demanding Disclosure of California Clearcutting

Sacramento, CA (Sierra Club Press Release). On March 8, the Sierra Club sent a letter to Sierra Pacific Industries asking for the disclosure of specific details on the extent to which that company has engaged in the clearcutting of California forests. In conjunction with that letter, a corresponding online campaign was launched encouraging Sierra Club activists to demand the same details from Sierra Pacific via email, Twitter, and Facebook.



“Sierra Pacific has made a lot of claims about how they are committed to sustainable and responsible forest management. We're asking them to prove it,” said Sarah Matsumoto, Sierra Club Senior Representative. “Clearcutting devastates California forests and wildlife habitat, threatens clean water for Californians and makes wildfires more dangerous for local communities. No company can claim to be ‘sustainable’ and widely engage in this practice, and Californians deserve to know the truth about whether Sierra Pacific’s actions meet their rhetoric.”

The letter from Matsumoto and Kathryn Phillips, the Executive Director of Sierra Club California, requests that Sierra Pacific Industries disclose the acreage of harvesting by clearcutting over the previous five years and the acreage expected to be clearcut in the coming year. The request also asks that clearcutting be reported by county and watershed.

“Collecting and openly and clearly reporting this information on your company’s website will not present an undue burden to you or your company,” write Phillips and Matsumoto. “Rather, it will add one more class of information to help consumers judge the sustainability of your harvest practices and help them determine from whom they will purchase their wood products.”

### **What is the problem with clearcutting?**

The current logging method "clearcutting" results in the following:

1. Degradation of water in the State Water Project, that is, the network of rivers and aqueducts that routes water from Sierra Nevada forests to the Central Valley and coastal cities.

*(continued)*

2. Floods and mudslides downstream from logged sites during the winter and droughts during the summer.
3. Damage to local and state economies, resulting from loss of fishing and agricultural jobs near clearcut forests. High potential for eventual damage to tourism industry.
4. Destruction of wildlife habitats, including those for endangered species.
5. Increased forest fire risk.

## **Why has clearcutting become more prevalent?**

Unfortunately, clearcutting (the removal of all trees) has been practiced since the 1950s. However, in the last decade there has been an unprecedented increase in California by Maxxam's Pacific Lumber in Humboldt County and by Sierra Pacific Industries in the Sierra Nevada. When these two companies incurred large debt load, they began to rapidly liquidate their trees to pay their creditors. Since 1994, clearcutting in California has increased by 225 percent, and in the Sierra Nevada it has increased by 2,500 percent. SPI owns three-fourths of the industrial timberland in the Sierra Nevada and has announced plans to clearcut one million acres in the next few years. They have already made a strong start toward this goal. Over 38,000 acres are near the Oroville Dam Reservoir. If these lands are logged with SPI's typical process, waterways serving the entire state may face costly sedimentation and pesticide contamination.

## **Who wins and who loses with clearcutting?**

The state must balance the competing rights of property and livelihoods of individuals and industries. It must also balance the property owners' rights against the public's right to have the public trust resources of water, fish and wildlife sustained. In this complex network of competing rights, some players are favored over others.

The wood and paper products harvested from our forests are taken at a cost to our public trust resources. Some of these costs are paid now in the form of taxes to remove sediment from our water, to fight wildfires, and to cover the government's administration of logging on private land. Other costs will be born by future generations as extinct plant and animal species, deteriorated rivers and riparian zone, loss of wilderness recreation areas, lost forests, and increased global warming. No public forum is debating whether the products are worth the loss of public trust resources.

## **What can you do?**

For more information, see <http://www.sierraclub.org/clearcutting>, and on Facebook, see Stop Clearcutting California. In addition, Sierra Club activists are encouraged to ask SPI for information about the location of their past, present, and future clearcutting sites, via the company's internet presence, and by posting on Facebook and Twitter.



# YAH! Club Information

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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



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