



Yahi Group



Butte, Glenn, Lassen, Plumas & Tehama Counties

News Articles Programs Hikes and Outings Meetings Events

Just Don't Drink the Water: Lake Davis to be Poisoned Again

By Joseph Abbott

Northern Pike have taken over the lake and threaten downstream fisheries

On September 26, California's Department of Fish and Game (DFG) hosted town meetings at Portola Hospital's Educational Center to discuss Northern Pike eradication at nearby Lake Davis. Technically these were environmental "scoping" sessions. The evening meeting is reported by Joseph A. Abbott. email: jabbottmd@mindspring.com

"The solution to this second, more intensive poisoning of Lake Davis (to rid it of Northern Pike), is balancing the costs. If Fish and Game poisons, as they need to do to protect downstream fisheries, then it will totally destroy Portola's economy. The Governor and the State legislature need to put enough money into a Trust fund to do the job yet allow Portola to survive and financially recover. Does the State have the wisdom and courage to do this? I hope so." (Fran Roudebush, former Plumas County Supervisor).

"How can the State consider poisoning 44 square miles of a Sierra lake, all its streams and surrounding forest? What will happen to defenseless animals and birds? Forget the pike; it's outrageous the State even consider doing this sort of ecological disaster!!" (local Sierra Club member).

Main points:

DFG is once again determined to poison Lake Davis with the "natural" product rotenone in an attempt to rid the lake of its Northern Pike infestation.

Most Portolans oppose Davis' poisoning; it's their drinking water. If a vote were taken, DFG's proposal would be defeated.

A few Portola businessmen and some fishing associations are enthusiastic proponents of the lake's poisoning. They hope to restore the lake's trout fishery and thus rejuvenate Portola's faltering economy.

Environmental groups such as Sierra and Audubon Clubs have taken no position.

Northern Pike; Esox lucius. Characteristics: Single dorsal fin, light colored spots on darker body, upper half of gill cover and entire cheek has scales.



As predators, northern pike have significant impact on their prey. Pike consume large numbers of smaller fish about 90 percent of their diet but seem willing to supplement their diet with any living creature their huge jaws can surround, including frogs, crayfish, waterfowl, rodents, and other small mammals. Their preferred food size is approximately one third to one half the size of the pike itself.

Pike grow rapidly in both length and weight. Females become sexually mature at age three or four years, and males at two to three years. Their span averages 10 to

Lack of potent opposition likely will allow DFG to proceed with their poisoning plan.

Reading: *A Plan for Y2000* www.dfg.ca.gov/northernpike/mgpike.html and DFG web-site www.dfg.ca.gov/northernpike/ for in-depth information.

The audience included the cream of DFG's Sacramento office, including legal and public relations experts, Plumas officials, including Water Quality and Health, and local citizens. Students from Portola High were present doing a civics-class project.

Bill Powers, Plumas County Supervisor and former Councilman of Portola, made introductions. Powers gained celebrity by chaining himself to a Davis buoy in a vain attempt to prevent DFG's 1997 rotenone poisoning. Now he is proponent of the grandiose second rotenone application. Powers serves as chair of the Lake Davis Steering Committee.

The Case for Lake Davis Rotenone Use

By Eric Gerstung

As a fisheries biologist for 37 years I used rotenone to remove undesired nonnative fish from dozens of California lakes and streams. Rotenone in the concentrations used did not kill birds, mammals, or plants. Aquatic invertebrates typically recolonized the treated water within a year.

Rotenone is an organic and biodegradable product derived from the root of African and South American plants which were frequently used by native people to collect fish for food. Rotenone is still used in the garden as an alternative to toxic pesticides and remains as the most effective, safest, and least costly method of eradicating undesired fish populations such as the Northern Pike infestation at Lake Davis.

The Northern Pike is considered to be one of the most voracious predatory freshwater fish in North America. Its huge, toothy mouth has been known to devour large trout, birds, and mammals. Northern Pike are native to the northern Midwest, and parts of Alaska and Canada mostly excluding the Pacific basin where salmon still reign. Pike were illegally introduced to California--specifically to Frenchman Lake and Lake Davis within Plumas County. Both of these reservoirs were treated with rotenone. Frenchman Lake after a duration of 14 years remains free of pike while pike mysteriously reappeared in Lake Davis a relatively short time after it was treated. With good planning and cooperation from local residents Lake Davis could and must be successfully treated.

Fishery scientists fear that a catastrophic 1964-type storm could wash pike downstream into the Central Valley where an abundance of favorable habitats could foster an exploding pike population, with the consequential decimation of one of the world's largest and most valuable King Salmon fisheries. The latter is composed of the currently

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Limiting Factors

Down by the riverside at Oroville, CA, some of those introduced-from-China Tree of Heaven saplings developed with strange flattened stems. The condition is called fasciation, a word similar in structure to fascination, and which my spell-checker failed to recognize. You can be fascinated by fasciation!

The park department would probably welcome a culprit like fasciation that would curtail the Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus*) growth, since it is an invasive foreign plant that spreads rapidly. There have been several futile attempts by cutting crews to remove it, although in moderation it is an attractive small deciduous tree that retains greenery throughout the hot summer. Introduced plants often become overly invasive without the natural limiting factors of their original habitats and crowd out established native species.

Fasciation is possibly caused by a virus or other irritation, an interruption and deformity of botanical growth similar to the foreign substance of gall-making insects that create the swellings of galls. Too much of this deforming material can stunt the plant or kill it. Fasciation occurs in a number of plant species, and I have seen poison oak thickets thus afflicted. It is a reminder that there are limiting factors to growth that will bring living things back into balance if allowed to exist. Viruses, galls, bacteria, and burls, in fact, can afflict any organism and cause untold grief.

There are not only viruses lurking about ready to attack many life forms, but predators, diseases, parasites and dominating life-forms play a part, and the more abundant the population, the more likely the chance for contacting troublemakers. Some would call it trouble, but others might call it limiting factors that help keep a healthy balance.

What is too much of anything? Too many deer can play havoc with habitat vegetation and upset other animal balances. A mountain lion might move in to take advantage of an overpopulation, or often it is deer starvation or disease that thin the ranks. Some would say there are too many cormorants that are devastating too many fish.

Sierra Club members have an interest in limiting factors and outdoor balances, since those conditions affect the quality of outdoor hikes and involvement with nature. There is even concern about the number of people using popular trails and the pollution and wear-marks left behind.

Food is a limiting factor that shows itself in places like drought-stricken Africa where there is human starvation in a country already overpopulated. It takes some shrewd food management and large imports from agricultural areas to maintain a city like San Francisco or Tokyo, and rural lands are rapidly being wiped out and replaced with houses. What is the limit on human population in Sacramento . . . or Oroville, CA? Already there is talk of small-town Oroville becoming much larger with industrial additions. Is this desirable for people who prefer less smog and clamor, the reason many moved to Oroville? It certainly isn't desirable for surrounding open space habitats and the wildlife that lives here.

It is bothersome to see anything die. Yet death is part of the scenario of life. John Muir said: "The woods are full of dead and dying trees, yet needed for the beauty to complete the beauty of the living." There seemingly are a great many animal and plant species that have lost out to limiting factors. I think of dinosaurs and mastodons in America, and how they are gone, leaving only a fossil trace to inform us that they ever existed. What limiting factor was involved in their disappearance?

"Nature is ever at work building up and pulling

"Every good thing, great and small, needs defense." -John Muir

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photo/Clara Natoli

Conservation

Bidwell Park: Crown Jewel or Poor Stepchild? Perception Versus Reality

By Susan Mason

Whenever you read any marketing literature about Chico, it always includes a prominent mention of Bidwell Park, frequently described as the "Crown Jewel of Chico." Real estate ads often tout a home's proximity to the park, as in "Walk to Park", "Close to Upper Park." Bidwell Park is the first place we take visitors to our community. Newcomers to Chico, especially retirees, cite Bidwell Park as one of the main reasons they moved to the area. Year-round, thousands of people walk, jog, run and hike in the park, walk their dogs, ride their bikes and horses, use the children's play areas, visit the observatory or Horseshoe Lake, participate in public and private park events, look at wildlife, play golf or enjoy Upper Park views. On warm days, many thousands more use the park for swimming and picnics, play softball and horseshoes or just enjoy being outdoors.

You might think that the benefits that the park brings to our community, both economic and in our quality of life here (not to mention the affection we feel for the park and the pride we feel in having a world-class natural landscape in our midst), would be reflected in the funding and care that the park receives from Chico residents. Let's examine whether Bidwell Park is, in fact, Chico's crown jewel, its poor stepchild or something in between.

First, we need to briefly review the park's funding sources for maintenance and capital projects. All of the park's maintenance is paid for from Chico's General Fund, whose five biggest sources of income are sales tax (43%), utility tax (15%), DMV fee (12%), Interfund transfers (10%) and property taxes (8%). The Park Division receives about \$3 million per year, but this amount also funds the care of 30,000 street trees, 10 undeveloped open spaces and greenways, and 9 developed parks. Permanent park staffing consists of 7 maintenance workers, a field supervisor, and 2 rangers for the entire 3670 acre park. Of course, they're also responsible for the other 19 Park Division parks and open space areas. The park's capital projects are funded from a variety of sources, with perhaps \$100,000 per year from the General Fund, and the remaining provided primarily by transfers from other Chico Funds, and state park bond per-capita funds. For example, the recent One Mile Recreation Area Irrigation and Lighting project received \$67,000 from the Park Operating Fund and \$101,000 from Proposition 12. There's currently no development impact fee (i.e. a fee paid for each new Chico residence) for park maintenance or capital projects. So, unless you've bought an expensive vehicle recently, you probably haven't contributed much towards maintaining the park.

Of course, those who enjoy or benefit from the park could make a direct financial contribution. Individuals and businesses can

specify exactly how donations made to the city for park purposes should be spent and, to the extent allowed by law, this donation is tax-deductible. However, the amount of money actually donated by the Chico community to the park is miniscule. Some goods and services are occasionally provided by Chico businesses, but this doesn't amount to much either. While Enloe Hospital has received millions in donations over the last few years, direct donations to Bidwell Park have been considerably less, in perhaps the \$10-20,000 range during the same time period.

One might argue that Chicanos instead contribute to the park's welfare by volunteering in the park. It's true that there are a number of organizations that provide volunteer programs within the park. These include Park Watch and VIPS (Volunteers In Police Service), which act as the "eyes and ears" of the park. As they walk or ride throughout the park, their members look for and report problems, answer questions, and generally provide a watchful presence. Their time provides a significant majority of the approximately 18,000 park volunteer hours last year. These two programs have a total of about 150 volunteers.

The Chico Cat Coalition rescues cats and kittens that have been dumped in the park, provides care and finds them new homes. Their work benefits the park by protecting the wildlife species that would otherwise be injured or killed by these cats (not to mention providing a high-quality and long life to animals that otherwise would have a short and painful one). Big Chico Creek Watershed Alliance volunteers test the creek's water quality and have been trying for years to get a grant to repair the Iron Canyon Fish Ladder. These two groups have dedicated volunteers, but are few in number.

What about groups which provide hands-on park labor? Butte Environmental Council's annual *Bidwell Park and Creeks of Chico Cleanup* attracts about 50-75 volunteers for the park cleanup segment. The *California Native Plant Society Mt. Lassen Chapter* provides about 100 volunteer hours a year for Spanish broom removal in Upper Park. *Streaminders* relies on volunteers to plant and maintain their 2 small restoration sites in Lower Park. CSU, Chico's annual *Scour and Devour* service project provides about 150 students for 2-3 hours. One segment of the *Kids and Creeks* elementary school educational program is invasive plant removal in Bidwell Park and replanting with native plants. They provide several hundred hours of volunteer labor to the park annually. A mountain biking group, the *Tuesday/Thursday Ride Club*, has adopted a couple of the south side trails and works on them as needed. The *Park Division* itself offers trail maintenance volunteer days in the spring and fall, but only rarely does anyone show up to help. The group I work with, *Friends of Bidwell Park*, contributed 2850 hours of on-site

volunteer labor last year, primarily removing invasive plants and picking up trash. Most of these hours came from a couple of very large group projects and the rest from a small group of dedicated individuals who toil week after week.

In all, I estimate that fewer than 250 people volunteer in Bidwell Park on a regular basis, with another 400-500 mostly students participating in one-time community service activities. This is a dismal show of support for a resource that is supposedly so beloved by Chico.

Maybe this lack of financial and physical support by the community would not matter so much, except that Bidwell Park has a huge backlog of deferred maintenance amid increased park usage. There are serious erosion problems, both on the trails and off. Invasive plants, such as vinca, privet and ivy, have smothered Lower Park's understory vegetation and other invasives, like starthistle and European olive threaten Middle and Upper Parks. There's no plan for fire management in the park's various vegetation zones or money to implement such a plan. There's never been a comprehensive assessment of the park's flora and fauna, which is essential to have as a baseline for monitoring the park's future health. Sycamore Pool needs \$2.1 million in repairs and upgrades in order to continue to function as Chico's main swimming facility. If, like the children's game where each child decides how he or she would hypothetically spend a large sum of money, someone gave a million dollars to the park and it had to be spent immediately, there would be no shortage of ways to spend that money.

So, Chico seems to have a split personality regarding Bidwell Park. They love to use it, boast about it, and write about it. They may not want to spend more of their tax dollars on it (at least not in ways that can be identified as a separate fee or tax), although the City Council has been reluctant to even ask the question. It also appears that they don't want to make personal financial or time commitments to help the park or perhaps that they just don't think that it needs any extra help. After all, it's survived for 100 years without a lot of public support. Crown Jewel? Stepchild? I guess it depends on your perspective.

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Club Notes: The Summit and the Yahi!

The Summit

Club leaders attended quite a variety of workshops and other sessions at the Sierra Club Summit in September. One workshop, focused on making good decisions, included our voting on "what is most effective in bringing about change?" The most popular answer given was: a changed way of thinking. We Yahi have some good opportunities to generate environmental programs that stimulate new ways of thinking. Please help make that happen in 2006.

Another speaker reminded us of the Club's three-fold mission: to explore, enjoy and protect the environment. How can we, who belong to "the oldest and largest grass roots organization in America," get the public and powerful leaders to change their way of thinking about how to protect our environment? The one issue that the majority decided should most consume (no pun intended) the Club is (1) building a new energy future. The

next highest was (2) building vibrant and healthy communities, followed closely by (3) defending federal lands and public waters.

Differences among our priorities seemed to be due to where we reside or where we are the most active; i.e., many deal with urban sprawl while others are strongly concerned about exploitative mining; still others were especially concerned about protecting the global environment while others emphasized sustainable economies and businesses.

Special attention was given to the human and environmental costs associated with Hurricane Katrina. Al Gore pointed out that President Bush had received dire warnings about the New Orleans levees four years before the hurricane hit. Gore demanded that we hold our leaders accountable for this and many other environmental catastrophes. His concrete goals included: strengthening FEMA, developing better and more extensive public transportation, protecting wetlands, and decreasing the amount of greenhouse gases we put in the air.

Another workshop ("Talking the Talk") concerned how to convey our messages. We need to get away from always framing our environmental concerns in divisive political language but rather address people in ways that concern them directly, e.g., as nurses, consumers, parents, farmers, etc. We also need to focus more on listening to their values and not just focusing on our own values or jargon.

Similarly, we need to open more dialogues with the Latino and other ethnic communities. Inner City Outings already introduce nature to many children who might otherwise not experience the joys and challenges of the great outdoors. Also, race and cancer are sometimes linked because of environmental conditions, especially for Latinos. The Sierra Club website has good information about mercury and other talking points: <http://clubhouse.sierraclub.org>

We also heard Carl Pope, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., George Lakoff, Arianna Huffington, the new (female) President of the Sierra Club, and many others who were very inspiring speakers. May their power and ours fuel a change in our energy appetites!

The Yahi

I am very grateful that Gene Anna McMillan took the helm while I was overseas one month this fall as well as one month in the spring. As you may know, we have had some good news on some fronts: revisions in planning for the Oak Valley development and the parking structure, while questions still loom regarding other large developments, water transfers, the final report about managing Bidwell Park, trees in Paradise, highway development plans, excessive population growth in small and large communities, etc.

Our new conservation chair, Debra Moon, is very eager to reach people over the five Yahi

About This Newsletter

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For submissions, comments and inquiries, please write to Sierra Club, Post Office Box 2012, Chico, CA 95927 or contact the content editor Susan Sears at 530-532-0149 or the copy editor Louise Casey at 530-872-9159.

For advertising in the Newsletter, please call John Wood (530-899-8607). 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 52968, Boulder, CO 80328-2968; 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, May 1, August 1, and November 1. A one week extension is available if the submission is sent by e-mail and advance advisory has been provided that the article is forthcoming. Submissions will be returned if specifically requested and accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

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.

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YAH! 2006 Executive Committee Elections

There are three openings on the YAH! Executive Committee for 2006. YAH! members will find official ballots in this newsletter. Each member may vote for up to three candidates (including write-ins), and ballots must be mailed prior to December 31, 2005.

Candidate Statements

Grace Maria Marvin

Since becoming chair in 2004, I am happy to report that we have seen (1) more Yahi showing commitment to conservation concerns, as well as (2) more community recognition for Yahi efforts, e.g., we are frequently contacted to address environmental issues. While the Club will continue to strongly support the wonderful Outings program, new expectations of board members have meant that we all have been working hard. I will encourage the club to accomplish as much as members' interests and time permit in the next two years as well. These tasks included addressing our concerns at a large variety of meetings, in letters and newspapers, at programs, and in enhanced networking among our members near and far.

Conservation interests that are drawing a special focus among club members include: forest, tree, and water issues, seeking "Smart (sustainable) Growth" principles in new developments, and, I hope, the national club's special focus on building a new energy future.

Norma Odell

Norma Odell is a fine prospective new Executive Committee member. She explained that a few years after moving to Chico in 2001, she joined the Sierra Club. Norma's environmental interests are reflected in her membership in the Sierra Conservancy for more than 20 years. Her goal in joining our club is to see more sorely needed conservation action. Some of her chief concerns are waste disposal and water issues.

Among her special qualifications for the board are her tremendous amount of experience in and willingness in making phone calls and writing letters to the press, politicians, and the membership. Norma did such work in jobs with Orange County and as a secretary in private industry.

Club Notes *(con't from p. 2)*

counties and build action networks among them. She has real passion about mobilizing folks and is eager to bring her talents to the Yahi group -- now that she has returned to this area to live.

(continued on p.3)

Complementing her work will be the ongoing and superlative efforts of Wendy Woods, secretary and press release person, and Gene Anna McMillan, Vice-Chair. Joanne Gerson, who has served long and extraordinarily well on the Ex-Comm, will be retiring as Treasurer but still plans to help with special events such as garden tours and holiday dinners. We applaud her as she "retires" just as we are grateful that Lynn Ott served us this past year as the fifth member of our Executive Committee. We hope to welcome Norma Odell and Leslie Grayson on board, but for that we need your votes.

I also am running again, but we sorely need people to help us do a better job. I would love to have a Program Chair and committee as well as a Political Chair and committee.

Please come to our holiday dinner program on Saturday, December 10. Joanne, who is organizing this event, asked me to remind you to please bring an inexpensive little present to exchange.

Many thanks to Alan Mendoza (outings), Louise

Report Illegal Dumping

Butte County citizens sick at heart and fed up with the messes made by illegal dumpers now have recourse other than cleaning it up themselves again and again.

In April of 2005 Butte County Public Works hired Code Enforcement Officer Scott Johnson to respond to complaints of illegal dumping, try to find the perpetrators, and make them clean up their messes.

Scott will sort through the piles of refuse and find discarded mail or other papers identifying the likely culprit. Though they will often claim they hired someone else to dump their trash (or that someone must have stolen their trash), that doesn't let them off the hook.

If they are spotted dumping illegally and their license number and vehicle description copied down they could even have their vehicle confiscated.

To report an illegal dumper or dumpsite, call 538-7681 extension 2016. Be prepared to leave vehicle information, if seen, or at least a detailed location of the dumpsite, including nearest cross streets and/ or landmarks, the size of the trash pile, and what kind of trash is there (household, appliances, furniture, etc).

Holiday Dinner

It is that time of year again. Time to see all your old Sierra Club friends at the holiday dinner. Mark December 10 on your calendar. There will be a no host beer and wine bar at 6 PM and dinner will be served at 7. We were able to hold the cost at \$15. the same as it has been for a few years.

Where? Los Amigos restaurant on 9th Street, cross street Cherry. Some of you will remember we had the 2000 dinner there. It is now under new ownership.

Call Joanne at 893-2154 or Karen Kern at 899-8305 to reserve your ticket. If possible send in your check to Joanne Gerson at 977 Palmetto, Chico 95926 or Karen Kern at P.O. Box 3794 Chico 92927. Please indicate if you want vegetarian or meat.

Awards for service and membership will be handed out. The Executive Committee is working on an interesting short presentation.

Bring a wrapped white elephant gift marked man, woman or either for a fun exchange.

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Conservation

Clear Cutting: A Short Story



This is a picture of the extent to which modern forestry practices have altered the vegetation near Paradise.

Clear cutting has increasingly become the chosen method of silviculture. The reason behind this is the giant lumber company, Sierra Pacific Industries, the largest private landowner in California. It is their intent to clear cut a majority of their land holdings.

In clear cutting the loggers remove all vegetation from 20- to 50-acre parcels, sometimes larger. Sierra Pacific has received so many complaints

about this that they now leave islands of 3 to 7 trees, usually not of commercial quality, within the cut-over parcel. The rest is cut down to bare earth.

Sierra Pacific claims that this is a great forward leap in reducing the fire threat to our foothill communities. They claim that selective logging, where a minority of the trees are cut, has created the fire dangers we now have. This is very much like our current election hype, sounds good, but untrue. Selective logging through the 1960's had virtually no controls on it. Loggers did leave large piles of dead wood and didn't replant their parcels. Brush grew up. The California Division of Forestry and United States Forest Service stopped every forest fire as soon as possible, allowing the dead wood and brush to accumulate. New forestry regulations require selective loggers to clean up their parcels and assure that there is an adequate number of trees left after logging ends.

On the other hand clear cutters spray toxic chemicals on the brush that tries to grow back. Then they go in and plant trees very close together. After a few years these trees, predominantly ponderosa pine, are growing so close together that their needles are touching each other and the ground. This continues until the trees are about eight to ten years old when they are limbed up so

that their needles are touching each other but not touching the ground. Once the trees reach about forty years of age they are considered ready to harvest. Then it starts all over. The problem is that one small spark to one pine needle could lead to an immediate conflagration, spreading from one tree to its neighbor, to its neighbor... The fire danger in these parcels, which are getting closer and closer to each other, exceeds even the fire danger in the old style selective logging.

There are numerous other problems: The siltation of nearby streams is killing the fish and preventing reproduction. The toxic brush killers are killing and mutating the frogs and other amphibians. The food, cover, and nesting sites for birds, mammals, and other vertebrates are disappearing.

The only people to benefit are the Lumber companies. Even the wood users, carpenters and you and I, hate this process. The two by four that you buy from a 40 year old tree has a couple of years of growth rings in it, so if you don't nail it down within a couple of days of purchase it will curve and bend every which way. When your grandfather bought a two by four from a slow growing 200 year old tree it had many growth rings in it and was a straighter, stronger, more durable piece of wood.

Nordic Notes

Snowmobilers Get Off with Small Fine

Two Chester residents were caught snowmobiling in Lassen National Park. They appeared before a federal judge in Redding and were given fines of \$650 and \$250. This may sound like a lot to some people, but it doesn't begin to pay the wages spent on law enforcement and prosecution.

There's a small group of outlaw snowmobilers in the Chester area. Hopefully the next persons caught will have their sleds confiscated plus a heavy fine.

Mineral Snowmobilers Want Access to McGowan Cross-Country Ski Area

A few Mineral residents want to use a section of the McGowan Ski Trail. The route from Mineral comes in at the gravel pit about a mile west of the McGowan/Nanny Creek junction. The noise will easily carry that far; sled tracks will be visible on the Dry Lake Road to the 17 Road. Besides the noise, this will eventually lead to snow machines "poaching" in the McGowan trail system.

I urge you to call Almanor District Ranger, Al Vasquez, at (530) 258-2141 and tell him you want the McGowan area to remain peaceful, quiet and unpolluted. You may also call Elizabeth Norten at Lassen National Forest Headquarters in Susanville at (530) 252-6645.

The Lassen National Forest has 465 miles of groomed snow machine trails, 369,000 acres of open riding, and seven staging areas.

New Trails to Try at McGowan

With the help of volunteers from the Volcano Riders, Snowlands Network and the Sierra Club, we were able to finish one trail and build a sign a new trail in the McGowan Ski Area. The new trail branches off the Church Camp Trail and runs up to a plateau on the south side of Christie Hill. The trail has an advanced and an intermediate loop. There is also a nice open area for practicing telemarks and other downhill techniques. We also want to thank Russ and Marvin for their chainsaw work.

Trail Improvements at Colby Meadows

Sierra Club and Snowlands Network volunteers teamed up to do trail improvements on the Upper Meadow Trail, the Silver Tip Trail and the Creekside Ramble Trail.

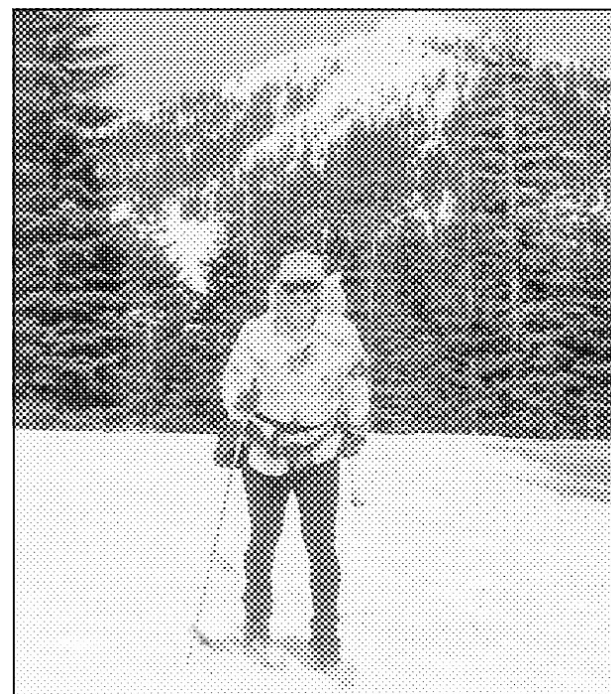
A small logging and thinning project above the Willow Creek section of the Old Lookout Road is complete. New trails are a possibility in this area.

Parking Problems at the Jonesville Staging Area

With the increasing popularity of snowmobiles, the noise and air pollution have grown worse at this popular trailhead. We ask that skiers park at the west end, and try to squeeze in close, to allow as many vehicles to park as possible.

We encourage you to arrive early on

weekends so you will have a place to park. There were some days last winter when gridlock was achieved. The Butte Meadows Hillsliders want to expand the parking lot to the east, but the Jonesville Homeowners' Association doesn't want the noise any closer to their cabins. The land south of Humboldt Road is an archaeology site. Whenever I think



The author at the Upper McGowan Cross-Country Ski area with Mt. Conard in the background.

Paradise Trees Need Advocacy

Paradise has a Tree Preservation Ordinance with much introductory language touting the value of our urban forest, but it is confusing and deeply flawed.

In 2000, Paradise voters, no doubt influenced by building industry ads exaggerating its consequences, voted down Measure U to rewrite the town's tree ordinance and require the hiring of an urban forester.

Town leaders then interpreted that loss as a mandate that private property rights should trump tree preservation. The leaders of that initiative effort, having sacrificed years of their lives to meetings, research, and organizing, were devastated and vowed not to waste more time on a losing cause.

Some newcomers to this battle, though, noticing full logging trucks still leaving residential neighborhoods, have not given up hope for a change.

We held more public meetings, researched the ordinance, talked with town staff, and then, after narrowing our wish-list down to ten suggestions, brought this issue back before the council in May of this year.

That prompted staff to do an admirable overhaul of ordinance language, though with private property rights foremost in mind, and with only a few of our original suggestions included.

Our other committee members, leery of inciting public protest that might result in a weakening of the ordinance, agreed to overlook the omissions for now.

I protested that the most egregious loophole had not been addressed; but the town manager warned of dire consequences should I persist.

I broke ranks, though, concerned that later attempts at improvement may prove futile since town staff had already gone through the ordinance line by line.

I think the Paradise Tree Preservation Ordinance needs major revision. Rarely are inspections done to justify more than \$20,000 per year into the general fund. Hidden in Municipal Code definitions and cross-references is language enabling any single-family residential property owner to remove their trees for almost any reason.

Circumstances allowing automatic issuance of a tree felling permit for any number of trees includes, "Tree(s) that must be felled to accommodate the establishment or expansion of a permitted residential accessory land use..." (Ch 8.12.090 B.6.c.), which means "uses ... customarily associated with and subordinate to the permitted or conditional permitted principal use" (M.C. p.291).

Thus, it is not uncommon for tree felling applicants to list "landscaping" as the reason trees must be removed, even though the summer irrigation often associated with such would also eventually kill nearby native oaks.

Landscaping can even (and often does) mean removing the largest and most valuable pines, which is still legal as long as financial reasons are not the primary purpose claimed for their felling (M.C. pp 294 & 320.1).

That application is "reviewed and acted upon administratively by the town manager or his/her designee" meaning that the clerk at the Community Development desk takes your money (\$20 per permit and \$14 per tree) and issues the permit.

Tree felling permits are reviewed (by a qualified tree expert with no financial stake in the felling, and by a

volunteer committee), only if nine or more trees are proposed for felling and only for other than single-family residential construction, even though most permits issued are to facilitate single-family residential development.

There are some good ideas that staff brought the council in October. Those include requiring a waiting period between the time a tree felling permit is issued and felling may occur, requiring better posting requirements to inform neighbors, and putting an actual appeals process in place if neighbors want to appeal.

Even that met with opposition, though. Mayor Lotter suggested raising the fee to file appeals, implying that some tree huggers may just appeal all permits on principle. Town Manager Rough then suggested the language could be such that only immediate neighbors would have appeal rights.

They seemed to ignore the fact that appeals would have a chance of being successful only if there were some provable misstatement on the permit application.

Because town staff ignored our suggestion that tree felling permit fees be re-directed back into tree permit inspections and enforcement, instead of helping pay the salary of the building code enforcement officer who is already swamped with duties, most permits are not investigated and would not be unless a private citizen with a lot of free time (and armor-plated skin) investigates permits on their own.

My suggestion, that there be some kind of greater protection for the largest trees, was rejected in committee.

Instead the Council will probably be asked to consider new language requiring permits for felling trees smaller than the 10-inch diameter (or larger) ones now considered, because smaller trees are easier to work around during construction activities.

The Council may also vote on whether the size and species of trees proposed for felling be required to be listed on the permit application, but unless the town also buys new software to be able to gather aggregate data about tree felling and then generate reports, no one will ever know for sure if changes to the ordinance are having the desired effect.

I asked the council to give more protection to the largest native trees because 1) they are more majestic, giving the town more beauty and a greater feeling of historical continuity; 2) they generally have a wider canopy, thus providing more shade to reduce air conditioning costs and better inhibit the re-growth of brush removed for wildfire safety; 3) they generally have a higher canopy thus allowing more retention of native specimen and other landscape bushes with less threat of those posing a potential problem as a fuel ladder into that tree canopy.; 4) they have a wider root zone, thus are most threatened by grading and trenching activities associated with building and septic system installation (and re-installation); 5) they are usually more commercially valuable, thus often the ones most likely to be removed for profit; and 6) because trees newly planted (or seedlings already onsite) will require many decades to provide the same benefits as mature trees, more than enough time for all to forget their supposed status as replacements for what was lost.

Another change I championed is to at least add

Paradise native trees suggested for restocking after tree felling (M.C. 8.12.120 B).

[* = suggested for adding to the list.]

[Information from USFS database, <http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/index.html>, and *Peterson Field Guide to Western Trees*]

CONIFER SPECIES

Ponderosa Pine, *Pinus ponderosa*

Maximum 700 years, 6' diameter, 200' tall

Sugar Pine, *Pinus lambertiana*

Maximum 600 years, 10' diameter, 250' tall

Douglas Fir, *Psuedotsuga menziesii*

Maximum 1000 years, 14' diameter, 300' tall

White Fir, *Abies concolor*

Maximum 400 years, 6' diameter, 210' tall

Incense Cedar, *Calocedrus decurrens*,

Maximum 500 years, 12' diameter, 225' tall

California Nutmeg, *Torreya californica*[^]

Maximum 170 years, 14' diameter, 140' tall

HARDWOOD SPECIES

California Black Oak, *Quercus kelloggii*

Maximum 500 years, 5' diameter, 120' tall

Canyon Live Oak, *Quercus chrysolepis*,

Maximum 300 years, 10' diameter, 100' tall

Blue Oak, *Quercus douglasii*

Maximum 400 years, 3' diameter, 90' tall

Valley Oak, *Quercus lobata*,

Maximum 500 years, 11' diameter, 138' tall

Big Leaf Maple, *Acer macrophyllum*

Maximum 300 years, 8' diameter, 100' tall

more native trees to the list suggested for replanting after trees are felled (see insert of revised list). I left quite a few native trees off this list because they are considered undesirable for one reason or another.

Currently, the ordinance requires replanting two trees for every one felled, though it doesn't have to be in the same location. My proposal to delete some non-native trees from that list was opposed; but a counter-proposal to give credit for seedlings already growing on site may at least help the town retain more native trees than non-native.

Not having the heart to personally keep investigating town sanctioned logging, I turned to part of the ordinance that has been on the books since January of 2004, Designation of Landmark Trees.

Finding that staff had not found time to create an application form for those, I submitted one; staff then suggested changing the ordinance language to specify that only the tree owner may submit that application. Perhaps at least some of the most majestic of

Outings and Events

Yahi Winter 2005/2006 Program Meeting

By Grace Marvin

Thursday, January 19, 2006. Program open to all! **Should Fish and Game be Killing Fish?** A Yahi member who often writes for us, Dr. Joe Abbott, explained his concerns, while another Sierra Club member has written an opposing view in this edition of the newsletter. We'll start the new year learning more about the different points of view surrounding this very controversial issue in a special, quarterly program. What position should the club take? We are planning on having representatives for and against another fish kill in Lake Davis. This will include a slide show and discussions of how attempts to kill fish can be harmful or helpful to nearby communities, to anglers, and to the state's fishing industry. Please come and invite your friends! 7-9 p.m. at Chico Public Library, corner of East First and Sherman Avenues, Chico. Contact person: Grace M. Marvin: 893-1994.

Winter 2005-2006

Yahi Group Cross Country Ski List. Join our more than 35 cross-country ski enthusiasts this winter as we explore the backcountry of Colby Meadows and Lassen Park and enjoy the groomed trails of Mt. Shasta, Royal Gorge and Tahoe-Donner. If you'd like to be added to (or updated on) our list, please contact Yahi Group Leaders: Jeanne, 899-9980 or Larry, 342-7998. All ability levels welcome.

On-Going Tuesday Volleyball. Join Yahi Group members and friends for friendly, co-ed volleyball every Tuesday night at 7PM at the Chapman Center (corner of E. 16th Street and B Street in Chico). Cost: \$4 per night. Free lessons included. For more information call Karen, 899-8305 or Betty, 345-7205.

December 2005

Wednesday, December 6 — Yahi Group Executive Committee meeting 7PM to 9PM. Contact Grace Marvin: 530-893-1994 or GMRADM@aol.com for directions.

Saturday, Dec. 10 – Cross Country Ski, Lassen Park Road (grade 2, class B). This is for intermediate and advanced skiers who own ski equipment. Weather and snow conditions may change the destination. Bring ski gear, gloves, lunch, water, appropriate clothing and \$ for drivers. Meet at Chico Park & Ride at 8 AM. Leader: Larry, 342-7998.

Saturday, Dec. 10—YAH! Holiday Dinner. It is that time of year again. Time to see all your old Sierra Club friends at the holiday dinner. No host beer and wine bar at 6 PM and dinner will be served at 7. \$15. Los Amigos restaurant on 9th Street, cross street Cherry. Call Joanne at 893-2154 or Karen Kern at 899-8305 to reserve your ticket.

Saturday, Dec. 17 – Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge (grade 1, class A) Enjoy an incredible drive through the heartland of the Sacramento Valley's wintering waterfowl, stopping to observe the thousands of birds who feed and rest in the freshwater marshes. We'll also do two easy walks at Llano Seco and the Sacramento Wildlife Refuge. Bring binoculars, field guide, camera, lunch and water. Bring \$3 for entrance fee and \$5 for carpool. Heavy rain cancels. Meet at Chico Park & Ride at 9 AM. Leader: Alan, 891-8789 or ajmendoza@prodigy.net; Asst. Leader: Jeannie, 894-5354.

Sunday, Dec 18 - Yahi Trail Hike (grade 1, class A). Leisurely hike the Yahi Trail in Upper Bidwell Park. This 5-6 mile round-trip trail passes by Alligator Hole, Bear Hole and a Diversion Dam and affords great views of Big Chico Creek and the surrounding canyon. Bring boots, water and a snack. Rain cancels. Meet at 1PM at Rifle

Range/Horseshoe Lake parking area in Upper Bidwell Park. Leader: Michelle, 865-9491.

Wednesday –Thursday, Dec. 21-22 - Winter Solstice in Colby Meadows (grade 1, class A). Spend one of the longest nights of the year in a yurt surrounded by wintering trees and the poetry of snow. We'll snowshoe or cross-country ski 2 miles to the yurt, stay the night and return the next afternoon. Cost: \$5 per person for yurt. Bring snowshoes/cross-country skis, warm clothing/dress for snow, sleeping bag, mat for stay in yurt and individual commissary for 2 days and one night. Call to sign up and get more details. Leader: Theresa, 899-7331/TMARCIS@shastacollege.edu; Asst. Leader: John, 872-8258.

Saturday, December 31 - Chico Bike Ride. Ride beside the Western Pacific Train tracks and CSUC campus. We'll check out some neighborhoods and

campus edges. Then lunch downtown, maybe Moxie's. Meet 11:00 AM at West Lindo Ave and RR tracks. Park on street. Helmets required and bring water. Rain cancels. Leader: Carla, 891-6977; Asst. leader: Gene, 873-1552.

January 2006

Sunday, January 1 - Annual New Year's Day Hike (grade 2, class A). Some people like to participate in Chico's Polar Bear Swim. We prefer the warmer way to bring in the New Year, with the Yahi Group's annual hike in Bidwell Park. Let's meet at the Five-Mile parking lot (south side of Chico Creek) and, depending on the weather and trail conditions, we'll hike to Upper Bidwell Park or walk the trail in lower Bidwell Park. Bring hiking boots and tennies and rain gear if it is raining lightly or threatening rain. Dress in layers, and bring water and snacks. Meet at 1 PM. Return time: Approx. 4PM. Heavy rain cancels. Leader: Jeanne, 899-9980. Asst. leader: John, 872-8258.

Wednesday, January 4 — Yahi Group Executive Committee meeting 7PM to 9PM. Contact Grace Marvin: 530-893-1994 or GMRADM@aol.com for directions.

Friday, January 13 - Dinner at Greyatip Thai Restaurant. Enjoy good company and a delicious meal. Please call by Thursday, so I can make the reservation. Leader: Michelle 865-9491 or Michelle95963@yahoo.com.

Yahi Group's General Outing Information

The following information is intended for people who have decided to take or are contemplating an outing that has been organized by the Yahi Group of the Sierra Club. The information is based on the Group's established policy (available from the web site or from the Outings Committee Chair); it will be supplemented by trip specific information and by the outing leader.

Updates: Updated outings information can be found on our web site at www.motherlode.sierraclub.org/yahi/

Transportation: There is an active interest in car pooling, but leaders cannot organize car pools to Sierra Club outings. All trips begin and end at the trailhead, which is not necessarily the initial meeting place. Any car pool arrangements are private agreements between the driver and the passengers.

Riders are expected, as a matter of courtesy, to reimburse drivers to cover the transportation expenses of the trip. A customary amount is 6 cents per mile per passenger depending on the vehicle, the number of passengers, and the road conditions. This is only a guideline.

Membership in Sierra Club not required: Outings are open to the general public unless otherwise indicated. If you enjoy the outings, it is hoped that you will see the value of joining; application information is available in this newsletter or on the web site.

Fees and costs: Occasionally an outing announcement will indicate a cost. Unless the announcement specifically indicates that outing is a fund raiser, the cost indicated is only that which has been estimated to cover trip expenses. **Non-Sierra Club members are asked to make a \$2 donation if attending an outing to help defray our costs for outings**

Sign-up: Most activities do not require advance sign-up; it is merely necessary to show up at the designated time and place. For those outings where advance sign-up is requested, a call to the leader will initiate the procedure. If fees or deposits are needed, the sign-up is not considered complete until those have been paid. Deposits may not be refundable; please inquire at time of making payment.

Outing Waivers: All participants on Sierra Club outings are required to sign a standard liability waiver. If you would like to read the liability waiver before you chose to participate on an outing, please go to <http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms/>, or contact the Outings Department at (415) 977-5528 for a printed version.

All activities: These are group outings. It is important that participants follow the instructions of the outing leader. Please be sure you are in adequate physical condition to undertake the activity you choose (see classifications for guidance). If you are unsure of the difficulty of the trip or of your ability, check with the leader before deciding to go. The outing leader may decide to disallow the participation of an outing applicant if the leader concludes that the applicant's reduced preparation or capability may negatively affect the outing for the rest of the group.

Hiking and Day Activities: Bring lunch, water, and essentials, as well as reimbursement money for your driver. Wear boots or sturdy shoes.

Dos and Don'ts: Plan to carry out anything you carry in. Pets are not allowed unless the trip specifically indicates "pets permitted". No firearms. No electronic music devices.

Young people: Please consult with the leader for a decision as to whether the outing is appropriate for a youth, whether accompanied by an adult or not. Any person under 18 not accompanied by a parent must have a written parental authorization to give to the outing leader. Forms may be obtained in advance from the outing leader or from the Outings Committee Chair at 891-8789. The completed form is required to provide for emergency medical care if needed.

Errors in the schedule: If there is incorrect information in an outings announcement, please see the web site at www.motherlode.sierraclub.org/yahi/ or call Skip Augur at 894-1366 to obtain a correction.

Suggestions and Comments welcome:

Any comments on the outings or suggestions for future ones are always welcome.

Mail to Alan Mendoza; 6 Patches Drive, Chico, CA 95928 or e-mail ajmendoza@prodigy.net.

Outings and Events

Saturday, January 14 & Sunday January 29 – Cross Country Ski Lessons. This is for beginners and intermediates who want to improve their overall ski techniques and fitness. There is a fee of \$10 per lesson. Bring ski gear, gloves, lunch, water, appropriate clothing and \$ for drivers. Call leader for meeting time, place and more information. Leader: Larry, 342-7998.

Sunday, January 15 - Bidwell Park Day Hike (grade 2, class A). Take a mostly flat 10 mile trek along the south side of Big Chico Creek. Meet at One Mile's Caper Acres parking lot at 10:00 AM. Our walk is on paved park road past Five Mile to the upper park (via a gravel pedestrian/bike path) and ends at the golf course. We'll return to Five Mile to eat lunch and return to parking lot by 2-3 PM. Bring water and lunch, (or buy at golf course). Rain cancels. Leader: Gene, 873-1552; Asst. Leader: Carla, 891-6977.

Thursday, January 19, 2006. Should Fish and Game be Killing Fish? What position should the club take? The program will include a Slide show and discussions of how attempts to kill fish can be harmful or helpful to nearby communities, to anglers, and to the state's fishing industry. 7-9 p.m. at Chico Public Library, corner of East First and Sherman Avenues, Chico. Contact person: Grace M. Marvin: 893-1994.

Saturday, January 21 – Lassen Park Snowshoe Hike (grade 2, class A). Enjoy beautiful mountain scenery on a moderate snowshoe walk in Lassen Park. We'll snowshoe part of the park road and travel cross country to a nice view of Mt. Shasta and nearby peaks. Bring snowshoes, boots, layered clothing, lunch, water and \$ for carpooling. Storm cancels. Approx. 180 miles round trip drive. Meet at 8AM at the Chico Park & Ride or at 10 AM at the Manzanita Lake parking area. Please call to confirm trip. Leader: Alan, 891-8789 or ajmendoza@prodigy.net.

Sunday, January 29 - Hike Along Feather River in Oroville (grade 2, class A). We will see views of Table Mountain, Feather River Canyon and Oroville Dam. We will start the hike from the Nature Center in Oroville then we will leisurely walk up/along the Feather River for about a 5 – 6 mile round trip. Meet at Chico Park & Ride at 12PM and at the trail head in Oroville at 12:40 PM. Please bring water, snack, carpool \$\$ and sturdy shoes. Return time: approx. 5 PM. Heavy rain cancels. (Maybe Chinese Dinner afterwards). Leader: Michelle, 865-9491 or Michelle95963@yahoo.com; Asst. Leader: Jeannie, 894-5354.

February 2006

Wednesday, February 1 — Yahi Group Executive Committee meeting 7PM to 9PM. Contact Grace Marvin: 530-893-1994 or GMRADM@aol.com for directions.

Friday, February 10 - Dinner at Greyatip Thai Restaurant. Enjoy good company and a delicious meal. Please call by Thursday, so I can make the reservation. Leader: Michelle 865-9491 or Michelle95963@yahoo.com.

Saturday, February 11 - Cross Country Ski (grade 2, class B). We'll go where the snow is good. This is for people who own ski equipment. Bring ski gear, lunch, water, appropriate clothing and \$ for drivers. Call leader for meeting place and time. Leader: Larry, 342-7998.

Sunday, February 12 – Almond Blossom Bike Ride (grade 2, class A). A flat, leisurely 15 mile ride through orchards and pastures on quiet country roads to Durham Park for lunch and return on the Durham Bike Path. We'll stop often to admire spring flowers and smell fantastic tree blossoms. On return we may check out murals on bike path along the Midway. Meet at 10AM at the Glen Oaks Memorial Park Cemetery Office, Hegan Lane and the Midway. Helmets required. Bring water and lunch (or buy one at the Durham Market). Rain cancels. Leader: Gene, 873-1552. Asst. Leader: Carla, 891-6977.

Tuesday, February 21 – Weekly Power Walk (grade 2, class A). Restarting for the spring and summer. Meet at the Chico Park & Ride each Tuesday evening at 6:30PM for a 1 ½ hour brisk walk along the creek. Wear tennies/walking shoes and bring water and a flashlight. Leader: Jeanne, 899-9980.

Thursday, February 23– Sierra Club Newsletter Folding. Join us to help fold and sort the Yahi Group Newsletter for mailing. It only takes about an hour and we always have a lot of fun! Volunteers are always needed. Newcomers and old members are both welcome. Call 343-9277 for directions and more info.

Saturday, February 25 - Cross Country Ski

(grade 2, class B). We'll go where the snow is good. This is for people who own ski equipment. Bring ski gear, lunch, water, appropriate clothing and \$ for drivers. Call leader for meeting place and time. Leader: Larry, 342-7998.

Sunday, February 26 – Bidwell Park Hike (grade 1, class A) Leisurely hike along the south side of Big Chico Creek. We'll meet at the Caper Acres playground parking lot (south side of 1 mile) at 1PM then walk up to five mile and back on the north side of Big Chico Creek. Heavy Rain Cancels. Leader: Michelle, 865-9491.

Tuesday, February 28 – Weekly Power Walk (grade 2, class A). Meet at the Chico Park & Ride each Tuesday evening at 6:30PM for a 1 ½ hour brisk walk along the creek. Wear tennies/walking shoes and bring water and a flashlight. Leader: Jeanne, 899-9980.

March 2006

Saturday, March 4 - Feather Falls Hike (grade 2, class B) Come and enjoy the 6th highest waterfall in the U.S. and the beautifully flowered, shaded 8-9 mile round trip trail to it. We'll take the lower trail to the lookout, then those desiring can go above the falls where we'll eat lunch by the creek. We'll return via the longer, but gentler uphill trail out. Please wear boots or sturdy hiking shoes and bring lunch, water and carpool \$. Meet at Chico Park & Ride at 8AM or the NW corner of Oroville's Wal-Mart parking lot at 8:45. Leader: John, (530) 872-8258; Asst. Leader: Jeanne, (530) 899-9980.

Saturday, March 4 – Cross Country Ski, Heart Lake Wilderness (grade 2, class B). This is for people who own ski equipment. Bring ski gear, lunch, water, appropriate clothing and \$ for drivers. Unusual weather or snow conditions may change destination. Meet at Chico Park & Ride at 8 AM.

Yahi Executive

Yahi Group Executive Committee meetings are usually held the first Wednesday of every month from 7PM to 9PM. Please contact Grace Marvin: 530-893-1994 or GMRADM@aol.com regarding the specific place and time if you would like to attend or if you have an item you would like placed on the agenda.

Bidwell Park

To date, there have been 4727 hours of work contributed to volunteer projects in Bidwell Park. See our Events Calendar at <http://www.FriendsofBidwellPark.org/calendar.ht>

Sierra Club Hike Classifications

Distance Rating

Grade 1: up to 6 miles

Grade 2: 6-10 miles

Grade 3: 10-15 miles

Grade 4: 15-20 miles

Elevation Gain Rating

Class A: up to 1000 feet

Class B: 1000-2000 feet

Class C: 2000-3000 feet

Just Don't Drink the Water:

Powers' wife is a DFG biologist with responsibilities to Davis and especially its pike problem.

Julie Cunningham of Portola's DFG's office presented an overview of the threat of Northern Pike to Davis, the Feather River fishery, and the harm pike could do to California's commercial fishing.

Beckworth Forest

(continued on p. 8) Service (USFS) Ranger Angie Dillingham emphasized that the lake and its tributaries are USFS owned, so National (NEPA) procedures, Federal Special Use, and other permits and exemptions are needed before poisoning begins. A conservative estimate projects the entire process will take the best part of a decade.

Since the meeting was part of official "scoping" for DFG's environmental assessment, the meeting thereafter consisted of questions and answers to define issues and concerns, somewhat along the lines of a focus group. Proponents wanted the lake's fishery and Portola's economy restored and opponents wanted uncontaminated water and the lake left alone.

In 1994, vandals introduced Northern Pike into Davis: the "unipiker" theory. In 1997, DFG tried eradication using rotenone. DFG was politically inept with SWAT teams and arrests preceding their applications. In 1999, pike were again discovered. The pike returned either from reintroduction or ineffective poisoning; both are DFG theories. After the first poisoning (some Sierra Valley waters and Frenchman's Lake were also poisoned), local politicians organized, visited Sacramento, and DFG began to understand that chemicals, even "natural" ones, placed in a town's drinking supply were politically volatile. Slowly, DFG came to appreciate the adverse economic impact of their application to a local economy that depended on fishing and tourism. Only then did DFG began to reduce confrontation in dealing with local, County, State, and Federal agencies. DFG is now making serious efforts to gain acceptance for their planned reapplication. Their second poisoning will be "bigger and better" than their first.

DFG's preferred plan is to drawdown the lake and apply rotenone to a reduced lake and to all lake tributaries: a 44-square-mile poison scheme. DFG's legal excuse is it's mandated by law to rid the State of invasive, non-native species. The political-economic reason is potential harm pike could inflict on the

State's commercial fisheries, especially salmon.

But there are problems with DFG plan's for extensive reapplication to the entire Davis watershed. DFG never assessed the effectiveness of their first poisoning, determined what went wrong, and ascertained how to make this second application a sure-fire success. DFG's prior incompetence now bodes ill for their plans. And once pike infect a watershed, they are there to stay. Pike dominate the food chain and are fast and prolific breeders. Most grow to adults within two years after hatching and can reproduce in less than a month. Davis is California's Northern Pike nursery. Davis' pike are increasing in spite of efforts to reduce them by electrocution, netting, explosions, beach traps, and bounties. They are survivors and have few natural predators. Pike escaping Davis will go down the Feather River to Lake Oroville and thence the Sacramento River and into the Delta and infect more fisheries.

And DFG has secondary goals in restoring Davis to health. DFG is eager to rehabilitate Davis in producing clean drinking water* and being a premier trout fishery, the economic engine for Portola. Ridding Davis of pike might just do this. But another poisoning, and especially another failure, will surely put Portola into a financial tailspin and more businesses will fail. This second try is a high-stakes gamble.

DFG's 1997 rotenone was obsolete and the supplying company went out of business. DFG assures that their newest rotenone formulation, which also includes naphthalene, is an improvement and is purchased from a reliable vendor. DFG seeks a 10-20 thousand acre-foot drawdown of the lake prior to treatment, which makes the poisoning more effective and simplifies rotenone's application. But additional applications, delivered by helicopter and ATV, are in store for all lake tributaries in the Davis basin. all in all 44 square miles of kill zone. This big kill will eliminate all fish life, many invertebrates, and possibly many of the animals and birds that depend on them.

After the die-off, DFG plans rotenone neutralization with either "natural" agents or potassium permanganate. But State Water Quality's Jim Pedri states they will not allow permanganate because it's too toxic. Less noxious approaches include charcoal filters or waiting for the rotenone to deactivate.

The dilemma of any eradication at Davis is the threat of a multimillion dollar loss to the State's commercial fisheries, which should be balanced against severe dislocation to Portola's economy and loss of its drinking water. But Portola has few residents, mostly

** Portola's drinking water comes from Davis. Portola's water treatment plant is owned by Plumas County. State Health closed it prior to initial rotenone application. DFG drilled wells to supply Portola water, but these are contaminated with rising levels of arsenic that will exceed Federal drinking standards by 2007. The State awarded Plumas \$250,000 to fix their plant but Plumas chose to delay repairs. Retrofitting, originally estimated at one million, has risen to \$3.7 million with no treatment plant in sight. Of the plant's two customers, Grizzly Creek Improvement District is to drill its own wells leaving Portola the County's sole customer.*

The Case for Lake Davis

(continued on p. 8)

abundant fall run and the severely depleted spring and winter run races which are currently listed as threatened under the state and federal endangered species acts. The Central Valley Steelhead and the Delta Smelt are also listed as threatened and could also be decimated by pike predation. Wild spring run and fall run King Salmon as well as Steelhead spawn in Butte, Chico, Mill and Deer creeks near Chico. An infestation of Northern Pike could jeopardize the value of local stream habitat restoration projects and uncounted hours of hard work by volunteers.

Paradise Trees Need

Paradise's trees may be better protected.

When it comes back before them, the council will probably also consider the major change of reducing the number of trees allowed to be felled with one permit, without tree committee review, from eight to four.

New information has surfaced, though, that could foil that suggestion. A state mandated revamping of building codes for fire safety includes language requiring that "fuels within 50 feet of the structure need to be the type that are fire resistive and low growing, easily maintained."

(continued on p. 8)

The Paradise Fire Chief has probably for that reason suggested exempting fuel reduction efforts from the tree felling permit requirement, even though fuel reduction projects done so far through the Fire Safe Council have only needed to remove the lower limbs from trees 10 inches in diameter or larger; and maintaining shade is recognized by the Fire Department as important for keeping ground level humidity higher and inhibiting brushy regrowth.

The state, through CDF, is also still taking public comment on new defensible space regulations, so perhaps trees near structures will be allowed to be retained, after all, and review of many tree felling proposals won't eventually have to be decided by Fire Department inspectors.

Councilmembers Huffman and Dresser are the two most likely to vote for stronger tree preservation requirements. Councilmember Huffman first got our suggestions agendized, though she told us that minor changes are probably the most we can hope for.

Councilmember Dresser explained his concern because he had seen a neighbor remove all the pines from their lot before building; and he questioned whether people would still want to live in a neighborhood if everyone decided to cut down all their trees.

Councilmember Culleton is unabashedly for private property rights supremacy, having said so, explaining that, "anytime you want to do something,

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Conservation

Pathways

As Sierra Club members, we are quite aware of accessible pathways where we may wander and enjoy the wonders of wildlife and the world we live in. Needless to say, that accessibility has mostly been confined to parks, U.S. Forests, and wilderness areas in the shrinking wild and free open space.

We've come a long way since the Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1803-06, until nearly every inch of land in America is claimed by some ownership. Nothing much has stood in the way of progress, as defined in land claims and industry, and but for the vision of activists like John Muir and Theodore Roosevelt we might have far fewer choices about arenas where we can walk freely.

First was the colonization of this country when the pilgrims descended on the eastern shores, occupying a new land that was seemingly without any ownership titles, in spite of two million Indian inhabitants. The creep westward into land occupied only by Indians seemed destined by government forces, and token reimbursements to those mysterious native residents were gestured as pioneers established land niches. We know the story. Treaties were broken in the name of progress, and gold, in the case of an invasion into the Black Hills where the Sioux were told the land there would be theirs "as long as the grass grew and there were buffalo to graze."

Whatever the turn of history, as so thoroughly described by Stephen Ambrose in his book, "To America," few today are willing to say they should not have done what they did in reference to the Indian presence in order to control the land, obtain homes, and accelerate progress.

However, when it comes to land ownership there is a lot of greed involved, and if Muir and Theodore Roosevelt had not acted in the public interest, we would be left with precious little accessible land today. T. R. said, "There can be no greater issue than that of conservation in this country." Muir said, "The battle for conservation will go on endlessly. It is part of the universal warfare between right and wrong."

Theodore expanded the forest reserves from 43,000 acres to 194 million acres, and in 1907, through executive proclamation, he boldly snatched 32 forest reserves from lumber interests. Roosevelt signed into effect the Antiquities Act which allowed him to proclaim 18 national monuments. He denied coal mining in the Grand Canyon, established 51 federal bird reservations, and in all, placed 230 million acres under the

protection of the federal government, a legacy, he said, for "the unborn generations."

I only mention these historical facts to emphasize how important these land preserves have become, not only to Sierra Club hikers and the public, but to wildlife. I find it disquieting that the present federal administration seems poised to reclaim lands for profit-seeking industries after all the effort to secure a portion of America for natural wonders.

One of the present imperilments is the attack on the Endangered Species Act. The thought of valuable land just being reserved for struggling species is just too much for land grabbers. "Some little insect or rat should not be obstructionists for agriculture and housing," the developers say. Thus we are poised to give up more ground to the privatization-blanket enveloping America...land of the free and the home of the brave.

I am reminded anew of the lumbering industry trying to put a damper on Roosevelt's zeal in preserving habitat through lobbying Congress. When special interest groups secured an amendment forbidding the President from setting aside any additional forest lands, Roosevelt put out an executive proclamation creating the 32 forest reserves. In triumph, he exclaimed, "When the friends of special interests in the Senate got their amendment through and woke up, they discovered that sixteen million acres of timberland had been saved for the people by putting them in the National Forest before the land grabbers could get at them."

Thus I am brought to the immediate subject of peril to a pet acreage near my home in Oroville. For 20 years an 80+ acre property has been allowed to go ungrazed until a magnificent natural woodland has grown complete with a wealth of Blue Oak seedlings, associated birds, turkey, jackrabbits, fox, deer, and an occasional mountain lion to add zest to the surroundings. Even though this has been an estate private property, access has been allowed by permission, and just to know the intact habitat exists has been gratifying.

Now, however, the property has been sold and a housing development planned. It is part of that human sprawl reaching out like the tentacles of an octopus to engulf open space and clutter it with human debris...and place access off-limits. Some years ago I found a crystal deposit above Lake Oroville, but it became part of a housing project and the next time I checked the wooded hillside quartz vein, a settler came huffing down the hill strapping on his gun and ordering me out. One more piece of freedom gone.

In Blue Oak Meadow, as I'm fond of calling my place of nature study nearby, little pathways go threading through the tangles of weedy brown stems after the eruption of spring green growth. The paths are well patted down by little animal feet and the occasional hiker and caretaker Richard who lives in a bus out in the forest by a spring.

When I see that brown autumn pathway winding through the meadow I think of Thornton Burgess's Little Bedtime Stories of Peter Rabbit.

"...So he left the Green Forest and started across the Brown Meadows, lipperty-lipperty-lip, as fast as he could go down The Crooked Little Path to the Smiling Pool..." I am enchanted.

Today I walked there where turkey, deer, and rabbit tracks were etched in the dust. Overhead in Snag Tree, acorn woodpeckers were busy embedding acorns in the aged wood. There were many ragged thickets which is keen habitat for wildlife but when the new houses come, I know that most home owners would think of the brush as shaggy tangles and take it away.

I saw pointed ears protruding from the tall grasses and I knew they were deer watching me. When you are in the tree-sheltered woods not a single house is visible, and only a winding dirt lane wanders through the meadow to the river. Jack rabbits bounded away, ever alert for a fox, and then I saw the ultimate of wild sights—a handsome buck deer standing under the oaks on the hillside. I grieve to think all of that primeval beauty would be lost in the bustle of community activity, and all those quaint little pathways would be replaced by lawns and pampered gardens and paved streets...and I would lose one more place to go exploring in the driftage of nature.

I will have no voice in the affairs of that private property, and what was once unheralded free land owned by no one and subjected only to the whims of the wild and weather will be one more parcel devoured by exclusive ownership and given a title in the name of money.

Thus it is that we come to love nature nooks that are near our homes, just as a group of concerned citizens are campaigning for a parcel of U.S. Forest land that is in their neighborhood up on the watershed of Lake Concow. The sector has all those ingredients that make a rich forest beautiful...ponderosas, woodwardia, waterfalls, rocks...and the advocates of "the Proposed Foothill Forest Preserve" are petitioning the Forest Service to make a protected nature study area of the parcel. Nearby areas are being logged and their site could be totally changed from its Old Growth status if cutting is extended there. Please sign THEIR petition to help protect THEIR natural place of special interest. "F.A.W.N." 530-533-3666. The battle of conservation goes on.

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Conservation

Tools for Working Landscapes Workshop

Held at the Loyalton Catholic Church social hall on October 12, 2005. You may contact Joseph Abbott at email: jabbottmd@mindspring.com

Protection of the Sierra Valley from poor land management was discussed at a meeting organized and chaired by the University of California Cooperative Extension's Holly George. The well-attended workshop included local ranch owners, timber-men, politicians, homeowners, land developers, land trust advocates, environmentalists, government planners, State and local technical experts, and interested citizens. The goal of the workshop was to encourage agricultural preservation of the Sierra Valley from development pressure coming from Reno, Lake Tahoe, and the Central Valley.

My morning drive through the autumnal Sierra Valley prompted thoughts about the obvious development going on in Plumas County's part of the Valley. In Plumas, housing development was so glaring, I wondered if the theme of the workshop was not how best to defend Sierra Valley from ex-urban growth, but that these meetings would be Sierra Valley NIMB focus on no-growth. I was wrong. These were serious folks, facing real problems, while trying to bring reason and good sense to a madcap process.

The workshop's theme was the use of agricultural conservation easements and land trust arrangements to maintain the Sierra Valley's family ranches and associated lifestyle. A side benefit of agricultural preservation would be retention of the Valley's open space and old-west attitudes. Presentations included formal talks, panel discussions, focus groups, and culminated with the entire group developing a summary plan to action.

Major points included these facts and recommendations:

California presently has 36 million citizens. By 2020 there will be 11 million more, and our population is predicted to triple by 2040. Yet there is no comprehensive State, regional (including interstate), or local governmental land use planning to accommodate this growth. A small step for Sierra Valley would be reconciling Plumas and Sierra Counties' respective General Plans to protect the Valley.

Because of retirees and urban "inputs," California's rural areas will feel the brunt of this amazing expansion, which will generate a switch to a service-oriented economy. Planning for these changes is the key but missing element from all political equations.

Urbanite attitudes are disassociated from those of the rural-agricultural population, and this generates land use conflict. Educational efforts such as last spring's "Barns, Birds and Barbecue" tour are extremely successful; it sold out. The event introduced urbanites to the agriculture of the Sierra Valley, and it should be continued and expanded.

Agricultural land owners are aging and under great financial pressure, often from their own heirs, to sell their land. Many farmers are "land poor," as their properties are undervalued. More must be done to invest the coming generations of Sierra Valley ranchers in their land. The paradox is that tax laws have changed to favor retention of agricultural land, while the demands of a physically challenging lifestyle combined with inflated land prices have seduced ranchers to sell out while prices are high.

Water availability, delivery, and usage is the key commodity both driving and limiting California's growth. Sierra mountain water's value is worth \$18 to \$19 billion per year, and provides 60% of California's water needs. Sierra counties realize only a fraction of their Sierra water's worth, and no plans are afoot to correct this aberration.

High speed roads and highways provide the milieu that allows population expansion into agricultural areas. A carbon based (fossil fuels) economy invested in inefficient transportation modes could be reduced to obsolescence and cause rural economic collapse. Public transportation needs better financial underpinning, especially in large rural counties. Plumas, as large as Rhode Island, has only rudimentary public transportation.

In terms of revenue for local counties, industrial land provides the most cash, followed by timberland. Agricultural lands break even, but residential land is an outright money loser. Plumas County Supervisors pursue a money-losing housing development paradigm that only helps developers at the expense of the County's own tax payers. Local political entities need to plan better, and smarter, and their decisions

should not be solely market driven. If there is hope for retaining our agricultural assets, regional planning with adjoining counties, and State and Interstate agencies, must begin. Regional land use planning does not necessarily lead to conflicts between agricultural land values and ex-urban life styles.

Agricultural land keeps California's rural spaces open and its air clean, and thus needs to be better supported, expanded, and nurtured. This State responsibility is neglected.

The downside of land trusts is public exclusion from agricultural easements. Interaction with the public through education tours and boutique product marketing strategies could reduce suspicions between the urban insert, rancher, and timber-men.

The more outstanding presentations included Sierra Business Council's Steve Frisch's soon-to-be-published information on the disappearance of ranch lands in the Sierra, the importance of grazing to State and local County economies, and changes such as development of niche products that ranchers should consider to enhance their profits and better identify their products. Valley ranches have increased in size because of consolidation, while the ages of local ranchers have simultaneously increased in the face of strong family pressures to sell their wide-open spaces at exorbitant profit.

A panel discussion of ranch-land owners' personal experiences with conservation easements and land trust agreements was an excellent opportunity to learn the positives and negatives of land retention schemes. Enabling the next generation of ranchers to obtain their parents' land through estate tax avoidance via the device of living trusts was emphasized. This obvious tax avoidance scheme is surprisingly neglected by many older ranchers. The high rate of estate taxes is falling and may even be eliminated, but sometimes estate taxes require agricultural land be sold to meet their payment. The key to tax reduction, especially estate tax reduction, is selling development rights to land trusts while retaining the agricultural rights for the next generation of agricultural users.

The nuances of the Williamson Act, Farmland Security Zones, and Timberland Production Zones, and recent changes to strengthen them, were well presented. The idea behind these programs is to reduce taxes for the land owner

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Landscapes Workshop

(continued from p. 10)

while retaining the State's open spaces and strengthening agricultural and timber production. However, local exemptions, often politically inspired and only designed to avoid taxes, have subverted the Act's intent and now require enhanced enforcement. Discussion emphasized

(continued on p. 11)

hat most of Plumas County's income is from State programs, while in Sierra County

property taxes from Agricultural lands are the leading income source. Agricultural income to local counties is more efficient than that derived from housing developments, because agriculture has little need for extensive infrastructure support such as sewers, schools, fire protection services, etc. Timber lands are an order of magnitude more extensive and productive than agricultural lands protected under the Williamson Act.

David Polivy of the Sierra Business Council presented community planning information in a series of dramatic slides that emphasized "smart planning" which requires cluster building in existing assets (towns), while retaining and improving each community's character. Smart developers build in already well-established communities, not between them. Cluster building in or near established communities happens in Sierra County, but conventional California-style development (ex-urban sprawl) is the paradigm in Plumas.

There was universal agreement that the differing General Plans of Plumas and Sierra Counties regarding land use in the Sierra Valley are yet to be rationally reconciled, with Plumas favoring more housing development to service an expanding Reno, and Sierra desiring retention of family farms. Moreover, Plumas Supervisors are making zoning changes in outright conflict with their own General Plan. The disastrous 2000 Vinton meeting where bi-county General Plan reconciliation was defeated by B.J. Pearson and his allies, was sadly recalled. Reconciliation must again be reconsidered and this could happen during the revised Plumas General Plan process scheduled for the Valley in 2007.

Major unsolved problems facing Sierra Valley are more stringent State water quality requirements for agricultural wastewater discharge into the Valley's headwaters of the Feather River, and the soon-to-be-drilled deep-water wells in Nevada's Long Valley (outside water-hungry Reno), which will greatly reduce the Valley's aquifer level. At present, Valley wells are drilled down several thousand feet, and further reduction would lead to serious water depletion, threatening agricultural and drinking water needs.

Interestingly, the day following the

The Coming Wave

"The first wave of destruction is coming to Blue Oak Meadow," I mused while looking at some initial oak trimming in advance of a projected housing project.

That 100-acre natural woodland plot near my Oroville, CA, home and the Feather River has been one of my favorite walking places for years, but there is seemingly no stopping the advancement of human constructions and human occupied territories.

Ancient Oaks were well established and seedlings had generated new growth in the shelter of ungrazed grasses and leaf mats, but landscape trend-setters look upon shaggy trees and rough shrubs as unsightly. Hence a major overhaul of a natural environment with all its scraggly branches and dead wood that worked for countless ages. The saplings and thickets are cut and manicured green yards installed in housing developments. That's the privilege of private ownership, but it doesn't do the rabbit and fox and quail and turkey habitat any good.

Most assuredly, the water condition of Blue Oak Meadow will be changed. The natural, drought-resistant plant community that is there now will be replaced by water-greedy lawns and domestic plants, plus human households that will consume more water in a month than the 100 acres would in a year.

The blue oaks, toyon, manzanita, and buckbrush are deep rooted with small, tough, water-conservative leaves. The annual grasses and herbals fulfill their mission in spring surface water. The seeds become dormant until another season as the stems turn summer-brown in the natural scheme of survival.

Water was the subject of a KVIE television special, and indeed, the coming wave will not be a flood as we are prone to think of in the wake of tsunami floods and hurricane floods and storm floods, but a flood of people desperately seeking the substance of water.

As National Geographic expressed it, "All the water that will ever be is right now." In other words, Earth has just so much water in her system to spread around the world, admittedly uneven at times with drought here and flood there, but water is tenuously dedicated to its elemental role, and you can boil it to vapor, block it with dams, and divert it with channels, and still it will find a way to flow on. Water will be water and persistently cling to its Hydrogen

and Oxygen character in the matrix of the element system constituting reality.

Aside from this mystery of water is the more observable fact that human populations are increasing and using more water, and wildlife habitats are being converted into human housing districts that demand a source of water for their living compounds. There are numerous quotations referring to water as the essence of life, in conjunction, of course, with sunlight and soil, but The Essence is sinking low on the horizon of life when need outstrips availability.

The Coming Wave is a quest for water to support the expanding populations and the crops to sustain people. Will less and less consideration be given to the water needs of wildlife habitat and fisheries? Conservation of water should become a major issue, and green lawns with water-hungry landscaping could be modified into rock-and-cement adornments, which isn't a bad idea with the incorporation of a few cacti and native drought-resistant shrubs.

In my neighborhood, I groan to see excess lawn-water running down the street gutters, knowing that it is purified drinking water vitally needed in some parts of the world just for human consumption. The covered wagon movement west in the mid 1800's knew some of that preciousness of water when crossing the deserts as it is a cornerstone of life more important than gold.

Aside from the physical uses and needs, there is the aesthetical side of glorious transformations wrought by water. The wonders that water can bring were quite apparent one autumn morning after a rain along the river when every leaf was beaded with liquid jewels that gleamed in the sunlight "like the ray that streams from the diamond-stone," as Bryant wrote. In the wetness, rocks that are dull-colored when dry became polished gems glistening with hidden color.

The sages sing of water... "If there is magic on this planet, it is contained in water." (Loren Eiseley) "Water is the driver of nature." (Leonardo Da Vinci) "The noblest of all elements is water." (Pindar) "The frog does not drink up the pond in which he lives." (Indian proverb) "All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full." (Ecclesiastes 1:7).

The least we can do is think and practice conservation of water and other natural resources and take joy in the presence of those forces constituting life.

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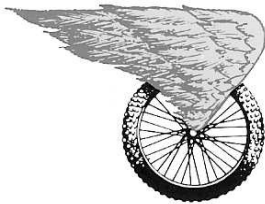


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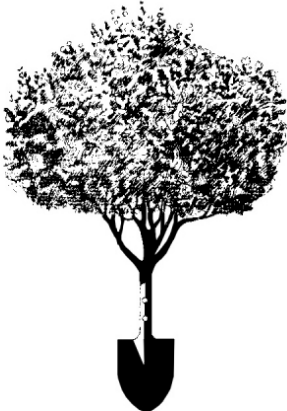
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