

## INSIDE:

MLC Ex-Com nominations, Delta dangers, National Plug-In Day, 2012 election endorsements, population program, Berryessa Snow Mountain update, and more...

### Thinking of going solar? Sierra Club offers an affordable way of helping the planet

The Mother Lode Chapter is participating in the Sierra Club Solar Homes Campaign. Based on our partnership with a company called Sungevity, we're able to offer our members and friends an affordable way to get solar panels on their rooftops and reduce their carbon footprints.

Instead of buying solar panels for your home, you can lease them. Sungevity will install the panels for no up-front cost, and also handle all maintenance and service. The homeowner pays for clean energy with a small monthly bill—which may be less than the household's current energy bill.

And for every home that goes solar through this program, Sungevity gives \$750 to the customer and \$750 to the local Sierra Club, based on where the sale was made. So if you decide to go solar through this program, you'll be helping your local Sierra Club chapter and group protect your local environment.

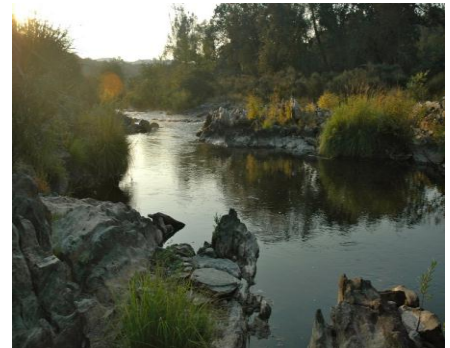
To watch a two-minute video with Michael Brune, go to: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fkMID96KkSw&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fkMID96KkSw&feature=player_embedded)

You can get a free solar evaluation of your home by going to [www.sierraclub.org/solarhomes](http://www.sierraclub.org/solarhomes).



## Proposed Bear River Dam stopped amid flood of opposition

South Sutter Water District, citing both strong public opposition and a failure to acquire sufficient backing from other water agencies, has withdrawn its plans for the proposed Garden Bar Dam on the Bear River. The proposed dam would have flooded up to 2500 acres of pristine blue oak woodlands, riparian wetlands and significant Native American cultural sites as well as habitat for threatened and endangered species. The dam would have also flooded the Garden Bar Preserve, which consists of lands acquired by the Placer Land Trust and the Bear Yuba Land Trust. Funding for the acquired conservation lands came in large part from mitigation won by the Sierra Club in the Bickford Ranch settlement. In addition to the Club and the land trusts, support for the thousands of acres now protected along the Bear River has come from private donations and the state of California. The acquired lands stretch from Coon Creek to the south all the way to Spenceville Wildlife Preserve, preserving an extraordinary landscape for future public access.



Six years ago, South Sutter entered into a partnership with five other water agencies (The City of Napa, American Canyon, Castiac Lake, Palmdale and San Bernadino) to fund a one million dollar dam feasibility study. The study, when finally released, recommended a large 450,000 acre foot reservoir in the very heart of the preserved landscape. Most of the water captured by the dam would be sold to southern California water agencies. And although the dam would flood portions of both Placer and Nevada counties, there were no identified benefits to either county.

From the beginning, opposition to the dam proposal was based on a two tiered strategy. If significant public opposition was created, that public opposition could be used to convince some of the water agencies which had helped fund the feasibility study to withdraw their support and, in addition, discourage other water agencies from considering support. South Sutter Water District and its partners received letters of opposition to the dam from the Bear/Yuba Land Trust, the Placer County Land Trust, the Board of Supervisors of Nevada County, the Board of Supervisors of Placer County, Nevada Irrigation District, the City of Lincoln, the Placer County Fish and Game Commission and the United Auburn Tribal Council as well as from numerous private landowners, concerned citizens and environmental groups. And, perhaps most persuasive, with the help of Sierra Club California Director Kathryn Phillips, a three page letter from Resource Secretary John Laird outlining the state of California's strong opposition to the proposed dam.

Faced with both the strong opposition and the high regulatory and economic hurdles of the proposed project, three of the water agencies withdrew support. A great deal of credit goes to Redwood Chapter volunteers Nancy Tamerisk

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## Sierra Club co-sponsors National Plug-In Day, September 23, 2012

By Rick Bettis

Mitigating Climate Change, and potentially catastrophic impacts, is the top national priority for the Sierra Club. This effort underlies many of the Club's activities such as the Beyond Coal and Beyond Oil campaigns.

Based on many scientific studies, the California Air Resources Board has determined that 38% of the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions in the state are from transportation sources. This percentage can range up to more than 60% in some communities within the Mother Lode Chapter (MLC)>

In accordance with the landmark AB 32 and accompanying Executive Orders, California has adopted the goals of reducing GHG emissions to 1990 levels by 2020 and to 80% below 1990 levels by 2050.

A key strategy that must be used to reach these ambitious goals is a transition to low or zero emission vehicles. In an effort to enhance public interest in this effort, the Club, along with Plug-In America and the Electric Auto Association, is sponsoring National Plug-In Day to be held on Sunday September 23, 2012. Events are being planned all over the nation including several in California.

In the Mother Lode Chapter area the Club is co-sponsoring an event with the Greater Sacramento Electric Auto Association and the Sacramento Municipal Utility District. This event will include a 'show and tell' and free "ride and drive opportunities" for many electric vehicles, such as the Chevy Volt, Nissan Leaf, and the groundbreaking Tesla. Information will also be available on the electric energy infrastructure being planned and implemented to support these vehicles.

The event will be held from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on September 23, 2012 at the Folsom Outlet Stores Mall at 13000 Folsom Boulevard, Folsom. The site can also be reached by Sacramento Regional Transit Gold Light Rail line Iron Point Station. For more information please see: <https://www.facebook.com/SacramentoPlugInElectricVehicleDay>

If you have any questions, please contact Rick Bettis at [rckbettis40@gmail.com](mailto:rckbettis40@gmail.com) or (916) 893-9065.



### DO IT YOURSELF

Are you crafty? Do you love the environment? Do you hate paying for gas? A DIY electric conversion may be the right thing for you. Check out [diyelectriccar.com](http://diyelectriccar.com)

**WANT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?** Join the Chapter Alerts email list which gives you breaking news about environmental issues so that you can write that letter, make that phone call or send that email or fax to let your representatives and public agencies know your concerns. This email list is low-volume and your email will never be shared with anyone. To be added go to <http://lists.sierraclub.org/archives/motherlode-alerts.html> or email a request to [info@mlc.sierraclub.org](mailto:info@mlc.sierraclub.org).

## Nominations sought for Chapter Ex-Com

Nine at-large elected members and eleven representatives of local Sierra Club groups comprise the 20-member Mother Lode Chapter Executive Committee, which guides our grassroots efforts in 24 California counties. The Nominating Committee is seeking three candidates to run for three year terms (three terms expire each year). Self-nominations are welcome, as well as nominations of others (with their consent).

Candidates need to have been a chapter member for a minimum of one year, and should be committed to attending the five yearly meetings: January, April, August and November. Meetings are held in Sacramento, and some of the business and voting is conducted via e-mail.

Those interested in being considered by the Nominating Committee should send an email with a short biography and reasons for wanting to serve to [info@mlc.sierraclub.org](mailto:info@mlc.sierraclub.org). Nominations should be received no later than October 1, 2012. Questions may be directed to Terry Davis, Chapter Director at 916 557-1100 ext.108, [terry.davis@sierraclub.org](mailto:terry.davis@sierraclub.org)

## Committee for Climate Change Education forming

Concerned about climate change? You're invited to participate in the Mother Lode Chapter's new Global Warming & Climate Change Education Program. Surveys show much of the public is shockingly uninformed about the reality of climate change and its principle cause (fossil fuels). Myths and disinformation has been spread by climate change deniers including the oil, gas & coal industries, the Koch Brothers, Fox News, and conservative think tanks. That's left many Americans confused and uncertain about arguably the most important issue facing our world today.

The chapter's Climate Change Education Program plans to begin a climate change education program targeting faith based groups, service organizations, educational groups, political groups and more. The goal will be to convince people to conserve energy and reduce their carbon footprints, while encouraging others to do the same. In addition, the committee hopes to build pressure on local and state government to take action to reduce fossil fuel consumption and encourage renewable energy.

To become active in the Global Warming and Climate Change Education Program or to get more information, please contact Jerry Scott at [jersusan@volcano.net](mailto:jersusan@volcano.net)

## Bear River Dam... continued from page 1

and John Stephens for their efforts to persuade the City of Napa and American Canyon to back out.

The hope is that with the dam no longer a viable option, South Sutter Water District will now enter into discussions with the Nevada Irrigation District, the City of Lincoln and others to craft a regional non dam solution to the area's future water needs, as well as a solution that would enhance flows and improve the fishery of the Bear River. But that is another story.

Editorial Committee Comment: Allan Eberhart, Mother Lode Chapter environmental activist galore, worked years behind the scenes, using diplomacy and effective strategies to build opposition to the dam. We can hear him now, insisting that others did the work. And yes, it took a village, but if Allan hadn't been on the scene, the dam would still be an issue. Thank you, Allan!

**The Bonanza** is the official news publication of the Sierra Club, Mother Lode Chapter and is published four times a year by volunteers. The deadline for submissions are: February 7 (Spring), May 7 (Summer), August 7 (Fall) and November 7 (Winter).

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*Bonanza* articles need to be submitted to the Editorial Committee by the deadlines, and should be 400 to 500 words (with photos if appropriate). Send to [bonanza@mlc.sierraclub.org](mailto:bonanza@mlc.sierraclub.org).

## Dangers for the Delta and California

□ Kathryn Phillips

The San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta probably doesn't ring a lot of bells for most Californians. Most who live far from it, probably know about it mostly from travel stories about houseboat rentals and bass fishing. Most who live closer, probably know it for the interesting tiny towns, odd little eateries, and windy roads and levees that make it a fun day trip.

For many years, the major decisions addressing the Delta have happened in Sacramento without much understanding by many beyond the boundaries of the Delta itself and the several blocks around the Capitol Building where most of the Delta debate occurs.

To put it simply, the Delta is so important that California wouldn't be California without it.

Created where the Sacramento and the San Joaquin rivers flow into the San Francisco Bay, the Delta contains the largest brackish estuarine marsh on the West Coast. The entire Delta ecosystem—the largest wetland habitat

in the western United States—supports more than 750 wildlife species and more than 120 species of fish. It is one of the state's largest commercial and recreational fisheries (hence the bass fishing stories).

The Delta estuary also provides migration corridors for two-thirds of the state's salmon and nearly half of the waterfowl and shorebirds that travel the Pacific Flyway. In winter, especially, it's a birder's paradise. It's one of the half-dozen reasons California has so much wildlife.

The Delta is also the hub of California's water supply and delivery system. Most of the state's rain and snow falls north of and upstream from the Delta, while much of the state's city and farm water uses occur south of the Delta. The state's two major water projects store water in major reservoirs upstream from the Delta, convey water through the Delta, and export the Delta's water south from project pumps in the south Delta. Southern California relies on the Delta for 30% of its water supply, while the San Francisco Bay Area relies on the Delta for 33% of its supply.

All this demand has created big problems for the Delta.

One big problem is that the Delta has about 1,100 miles of levees, much of them deteriorating. If an earthquake or big winter storm causes multiple levee ruptures, drinking water delivery through the Delta from Northern California to Southern California would affect about 23 million people south of the system. The Southland's intense dependence on levee stability hundreds of miles north is a risk manager's nightmare.

Another big problem is that many of the native fish populations in the Delta are suffering. Scientists have considered one species in particular, the delta smelt, when they've evaluated the health of the Delta. This tiny fish, native only to the Delta, was the most abundant fish in the system as recently as 30 years ago. Now it's on the brink of extinction.

Here's a simple truth that is often hard for some people to admit: Right now, the amount of water exported to Southern California and the San Joaquin Valley from the San Francisco Bay Delta Estuary is unsustainable. It's simply not possible to keep an ecosystem healthy if, as urban population grows and farm water demand grows, you keep pulling out the pins that hold the joints together.



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But hope seems to spring eternal when it comes to water and politics in California. So even after spending millions of dollars on a years-long negotiation that was supposed to protect the Delta environment, and that includes governments, water agencies, farmers and some environmental groups, it appears that the Delta is doomed to have more water withdrawn.

In mid-July, Governor Jerry Brown and U.S. Interior Secretary Salazar are expected to unveil a proposed water diversion project. All signs suggest Brown will embrace construction of world-record size tunnels or pipes capable of diverting 15,000 cubic feet per second of water from the Sacramento River. That's nearly all of that river's average freshwater flow.

The project will cost anywhere from \$20 billion to \$50 billion.

In the old days, the idea was to build a peripheral canal. Voters voted that down. Now the idea is a tunnel or pipe. Same governor, different century. The effect of the old idea and the new could very well be the same: A lot more water flowing out of the Delta than that system can tolerate, killing a big piece of what supports California's environment.



## UPDATE:

Governor Jerry Brown has announced plans to build a massive twin tunnel system to carry water from the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta to urban users in Southern California and agribusinesses on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley.

The two huge underground tunnels would carry Sacramento River water 37 miles to the federal and state pumps at Tracy. **Key decisions on how much water will ultimately be diverted, how the system will be operated, and what actions will be taken to protect the region's endangered species will be delayed until after construction has begun.**

Sierra Club California Senior Advocate Jim Metropulos said, "It's disappointing in this day and age that we have to continue to discuss whether large, expensive tunnels with no environmental safeguards and many harmful impacts are the right solution for California's water troubles. We don't need 19th century solutions to today's problems. California water agencies can increase water supplies in less expensive and faster ways by expanding water conservation, water recycling, and storm water recapture and by repairing and revamping older local water delivery systems."

## Sierra Club Population Program gaining momentum

The enthusiasm of Mother Lode Chapter's Committee for a Sustainable World Population (CSWP) has carried over to other chapters. CSWP activities include: Evan Jones' frequent tabling, letters to publications or folks who influence population opinion, and dozens of showings of the film *Mother...Caring for 7 Billion*; Chuck Knutson's involvement in the production of a CSWP educational brochure, and facilitating CSWP population activities and interfacing with the MLC; Lee Miller's LTEs, slide show, and gracious hosting of CSWP meetings at his home; Elaine Gorman's participation in educating teachers on population topics, and her innovation of an educational game for population tabling; Milt Trielweiler's supplying things that 'sell', such as a very successful roulette wheel used at tabling, with bumper stickers and pens as prizes; Virginia Phelps' organizing events in the Redding/Chico area, such as tabling and showings of the film *Mother*; and Karen Gaia Pitts' providing 15 years of experience to CSWP members and putting CSWP activities on the Mother Lode population webpage at <http://motherlode.sierraclub.org/population>.

With CSWP as an example, some CNRCC chapters have become inspired to activism. Southern California chapters are showing the film *Mother*, and the San Francisco Bay Chapter has a new population chair who is looking to CSWP for guidance. The SF Bay population committee now has a webpage. Check it out at <http://sanfranciscobay.sierraclub.org/population/>. Even chapters outside of California may have been inspired when CSWP enthusiasm was brought before participants of a GPEP training in San Francisco last June. GPEP (Global Population and Environment Program) is the Sierra Club national population committee, directed by Kimberly Lovell, who is very supportive of local Club activists.

Finally, Karen Gaia Pitts, who wrote this article, is very thankful for the inspiring people on the CSWP committee, and the help of GPEP's Kimberly Lovell. This makes the job as population advocates so much easier and more energizing.

If you want to get involved, contact Chuck Knutson [population@mlc.sierraclub.org](mailto:population@mlc.sierraclub.org). If you have steered clear of population issues before because you think it's about 'population control', we no longer advocate 'control' and haven't for a long time, but rather we support a woman's or couple's right to voluntarily choose the size and spacing of their children and having access to contraception and information about using it. To achieve this, women's empowerment and girl's education is critical for success along with providing reproductive health care and lowering infant mortality rates.



## Sierra Club Endorsements in the Mother Lode Chapter

### Candidates for Congress

District 3 - John Garamendi (DI)  
District 6 - Doris Matsui (DI)  
District 7 - Ami Bera (D)  
District 9 - Jerry McNerney (DI)  
District 10 - José Hernández (D)

### Candidates for the California Legislature

Assembly District 4 - Mariko Yamada (DI)  
Assembly District 7 - Roger Dickinson (DI)  
Assembly District 8 - Ken Cooley (D)  
Assembly District 9 - Dr. Richard Pan (DI)  
Assembly District 13 - Susan Eggman (D)  
Senate District 3 - Lois Wolk (DI)

### California Ballot Measures: Endorsements on Statewide Ballot Measures

The Safe, Clean, and Reliable Drinking Water Supply Act of 2012 (Water Bond) - Oppose. This bond measure has been moved to the November, 2014 ballot.

Proposition 32. Prohibits Political Contributions by Payroll Deduction. Prohibitions on Contributions to Candidates. Initiative Statute - Oppose.

Proposition 37. Genetically Engineered Foods. Mandatory Labeling. Initiative Statute - Support.

Proposition 39. Tax Treatment for Multistate Businesses. Clean Energy and Energy Efficiency Funding. Initiative Statute - Support.

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## Berryessa Snow Mountain Update

Charlotte M. Orr

Great news! Two bills have been introduced for the proposed Berryessa Snow Mountain National Conservation Act. On May 8th, Representatives Mike Thompson, John Garamendi, and Lynn Woolsey introduced H.R.5545, and on July 11th, 2012 Senator Barbara Boxer introduced companion bill S.3375. Both of which will ensure permanent protection of 320,200 acres of federal public lands. In addition, the State of California has endorsed the proposal with a letter of strong support.

The Sierra Club, Tuleyome, Defenders of Wildlife, The Wilderness Society, California Wilderness Coalition, the Blue Ribbon Coalition, Back Country Horsemen of California, International Mountain Bicycling Association, and other outdoors enthusiasts are working together to ensure the permanent protection of the Berryessa Snow Mountain region. While it is uncommon for these different groups to work together, this designation is something special; everyone is invited to take a seat at the table.

The Berryessa Snow Mountain region is loved by many, but these public lands need permanent protection if they are to remain the

## Environmental justice, affordable housing at risk

Rick Bettis

For many years Sierra Club has been a supporter of environmental justice and social equity in the form of affordable housing for all.

Ten years ago the MLC made a significant cash donation toward the construction of a Habitat for Humanity in the underserved of Oak Park in Sacramento. Club members from Sacramento also volunteered during the construction of this home, which consisted of an advanced energy efficient design with photovoltaic solar energy panels.

We also worked with the Sacramento Housing Alliance in successfully advocating for an "Inclusionary Zoning" affordable housing ordinance for Sacramento County. This ordinance requires that for developments of 100 units or more that at least fifteen percent of the units be affordable for low income residents.

Affordable housing provides significant ancillary environmental benefits. It tends to be more compact thereby reducing sprawling "greenfield" development and the loss of open space and natural habitats. Residents of affordable housing are more frequent public transit users, resulting in reduced use of autos with resulting reductions in emissions of pollutants and climate change causing greenhouse gases

An update of the Housing Elements for each local jurisdiction in California is required for completion by October 2013. This update process is scheduled to start in Sacramento County with an initial public meeting on September 6, 2012. Affordable housing advocates, including this writer, are very concerned that there will be an attempt by developers and elected officials to eliminate or significantly water down the hard won gains in requiring affordable housing. All are encouraged to learn more about this significant and serious issue and consider becoming involved.. For more information please contact Rick Bettis at rckbettis40@gmail.com or 916-893-9065.



same for future generations. Illegal marijuana growing, invasive species, mercury pollution, and unmanaged recreation are ongoing problems impacting these public lands and effecting surrounding

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# LeConte Memorial Lodge, a Sierra Club legacy

□ Elaine Gorman

As I drove on Highway 120, approaching Yosemite Valley, my first view of the Merced River Canyon was breathtaking. And although I have been on this route many times, the soaring granite walls above the churning water of the Merced still fills me with awe. No wonder the turnouts were filled with visitors with cameras, enjoying the waterfalls and canyon vistas! Dogwoods rimmed the roadsides and trails with cascades of white blooms. The unusually warm mid-May weather seemed to fill everyone with a heightened sense of happiness and adventure.

The Mother Lode Chapter was well-represented during my week of service at LeConte Memorial Lodge (LML) – Jim and Anita from Yokuts group, Reuben from Sacramento group, and me from Tuolumne group. Our 5th volunteer, Stanton, is a member of the Redwood chapter. We welcomed visitors to LML, helping curator Dr. Bonnie Gisel to educate visitors to Yosemite, encouraging them to check out the exhibits on Joseph LeConte, John Muir, Yosemite, Sierra Club, and climate change. “Grub” the bear continues to collect thoughts and signatures from visitors as they add strips of green paper “fur” to the large decoupage structure created by Bonnie. Families enjoyed the children’s nature corner, where kids are able to draw, read, and play with nature-inspired toys and games. A quick look in one of the hundreds of books in the library could usually supply the answer to any question.

During my time in Yosemite Valley, as I walked along the trails, relaxed in camp, or spent time at LML, I kept thinking about efforts to protect Yosemite National Park. The forethought of John Muir, Joseph LeConte, and other early Sierra Club members helped to preserve it for future generations. Muir and LeConte met in Yosemite Valley during LeConte’s first visit to Yosemite with his UC Berkeley students. They became fast friends and scientific collaborators on theories of geologic & glacial processes. Muir and LeConte were charter members of the Sierra Club, and LML was built to honor the achievements of Dr. LeConte. Bonnie and Sierra Club volunteers continue the tradition of education and advocacy at LML.

On my last day, I took a final walk from LML, through House-keeping and on the “secret” path that crosses the Merced River, heads toward Yosemite Village, and loops back to LML via Sentinel Bridge. On this little-used trail, I hoped for a glimpse of a coyote or some other wildlife. Under a bower of big-leaf maple, I saw a cluster of bleeding hearts, the beautiful dark pink blooms catching my attention. As I admired them, I thought again about the achievements of Sierra Club members, and how their dedication and efforts has allowed me to be able to experience Yosemite and to explore Sierra Nevada wilderness. It was appropriate that my wish for a final wild encounter turned out to be the bleeding heart, as my heart yearns for a healthy planet, full of wildlife and wilderness. There is so much work to be done...



## Berryessa... continued from page 5

communities. A National Conservation Area will create a cohesive management plan that will help our federal agencies (specifically the Bureau of Land Management, National Forest Service and Bureau of Reclamation) better manage these lands.

A National Conservation Area will safeguard this national treasure and highlight the Berryessa Snow Mountain as a destination for visitors. According to the Outdoor Industry Foundation, active outdoor recreation contributes \$46 billion to the California economy, is responsible for 408,000 jobs, and generates \$31.2 billion in local revenue. Protecting special places encourages tourism, increases recreation opportunities, highlights local businesses, and creates a desirable place for people to work and live.

The proposed Berryessa Snow Mountain National Conservation Area has gained resolutions of support from several cities, including Winters, Davis, Calistoga, St. Helena and Clearlake. There are also county-wide resolutions of support from Lake and Napa County. Simply put, this proposal is good for the land; our communities and economy; and for future generations that will enjoy these beautiful lands.

Do you have a story about the public lands of the Berryessa Snow Mountain region that you would like to share? If so, please contact us at [info@tuleyome.org](mailto:info@tuleyome.org), or call (530) 350-2599. For more information, fact sheets, maps, pictures and supporter lists, visit us online at [www.berryessasnowmountain.org](http://www.berryessasnowmountain.org).

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## Get the lead out!

Lead is an extremely toxic element that we've sensibly removed from water pipes, gasoline, paint and other sources dangerous to people. Yet toxic lead is still entering the food chain through widespread use of lead hunting ammunition and fishing tackle, poisoning wildlife and even threatening human health. At least 75 wild bird species in the United States are poisoned by spent lead ammunition, including bald eagles, golden eagles, ravens and endangered California condors. Thousands of cranes, ducks, swans, loons, geese and other waterfowl ingest spent lead shot or lead fishing sinkers lost in lakes and rivers each year, often with deadly consequences.

The Center for Biological Diversity's "Get the Lead Out" campaign (March 2012) organized many groups to petition the Environmental Protection Agency to take toxic lead out of hunting ammunition. The coalition, calling for a transition to nontoxic bullets and shot, represented conservationists, birders, hunters, scientists, veterinarians, American Indians and public employees. In April 2012, the EPA denied the request — but in June, the Center and six other groups filed suit against the agency for refusing to address the problem of toxic lead in hunting ammunition that frequently poisons and kills our wildlife.



Animals that scavenge on carcasses shot and contaminated with lead bullet fragments, or wading birds that ingest spent lead-shot pellets or lost fishing weights mistaking them for food or grit, can die a painful death from lead poisoning, while others suffer for years from its debilitating effects. In the United States, an estimated 3,000 tons of lead are shot into the environment by hunting every year, another 80,000 tons are released at shooting ranges, and 4,000 tons are lost in ponds and streams as fishing lures and sinkers — while as many as 20 million birds and other animals die each year from subsequent lead poisoning.

Lead poisoning in condors comes from ammunition fragments in carcasses and gut piles hunters leave behind in the condor range. Since 1992, at least 30 reintroduced condors in California and Arizona

## Giant clearcutting company gets off cheap

In mid-July, logging giant Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI) settled a lawsuit brought by the U.S. Attorney's Office for negligently causing the 2007 "Moonlight Fire" in Northern California. According to the lawsuit, the fire was started when employees of an SPI contractor failed to monitor an area where they had been operating a bulldozer on a hot, dry "red flag" day. Sparks from the bulldozer hitting rock smoldered unnoticed in dry growth for hours. During this time the fire could have been extinguished easily, had monitors been present and alert.

The conflagration raged for two weeks, destroying 65,000 acres, including old growth ecosystems in Plumas National Forest. 3,000 firefighters were deployed, more than 500 homes were threatened, and many were evacuated. These measures cost taxpayers millions, but there is no real way to calculate the value of critical wildlife habitat that was destroyed, including 15 million trees, some of which were more than 400 years old.

The United States sought compensation in excess of \$600 million for damages incurred by firefighting and restoration efforts, and for the value of devastated ecosystems. SPI was able to settle for about \$122.5 million, a figure that includes the value of 22,500 acres of land - roughly one percent of the California land owned by SPI - which will be transferred to the Forest Service. More importantly for the logging firm, which is the largest private landholder in California, settlement means that bad publicity will be minimized. SPI engages in intensive clear-cutting and even-aged management, logging practices in which all trees are removed from an area of forest at the same time, with replanting of seedlings in young, dense "tree farms." Tree farms are prone to more severe, hotter burning fires than comparable natural forests, and more extreme fires are likely as SPI converts thousands more forested acres to tree farms each year. In addition to adding to severe fire risk, clear cutting destroys biodiversity, threatens California's drinking water sources with dirty runoff and herbicides, and weakens our first line of defense against climate change. It is unclear whether the Forest Service will insist upon obtaining old and medium growth stands, or will accept ecologically devastated clear-cut land. As the land transfer terms of the settlement are implemented, we urge the Forest Service to demand high quality land containing older forests that provide good habitat for threatened wildlife such as the Spotted Owl.

The State of California should not allow the widespread conversion of forests to highly-flammable tree farms. Join the Sierra Club's Stop Clearcutting Campaign. Contact volunteer leader Karen Maki at karenmaki@comcast.net, 650-366-0577 to learn more about our volunteer opportunities and check out the "We Love the Sierra" page on Facebook.

*The text of this article was adapted from a blog post by Andrew Orahoske, Conservation Director, EPIC, with additional information coming from published sources.*

are known or suspected to have died from lead poisoning, and many more must periodically receive emergency, life-saving treatment. Experts agree that as long as lead ammunition contaminates the condor's food, recovery of the species is unlikely.

Lead bullets explode and fragment into minute particles in shot game and can spread throughout meat that humans eat. Studies using radiographs show that numerous, imperceptible, dust-sized particles of lead can infect meat up to a foot and a half away from the bullet wound, causing a greater health risk to humans who consume lead-shot game than previously thought. State health agencies have had to recall venison donated to feed the hungry because of lead contamination from lead bullet fragments. Nearly 10 million hunters, their families and low-income beneficiaries of venison donations may be at risk.

For interesting visuals, visit: [http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/campaigns/get\\_the\\_lead\\_out/lead\\_poisoning\\_images.html](http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/campaigns/get_the_lead_out/lead_poisoning_images.html)