



**SIERRA CLUB**

SAN GORGONIO

# Palm and Pine

A publication of the San Gorgonio Chapter of the Sierra Club  
Serving Riverside and San Bernardino Counties  
Protect America's Environment For our Families . . . For our Future

**October Special Election Issue 2022**



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## FEDERAL

House, District 23: Derek Marshall

House, District 25: Raul Ruiz

House, District 33: Pete Aguilar

House, District 35: Norma Torres

House, District 39: Mark Takano

House, District 41: Will Rollins

## CALIFORNIA STATE LEGISLATURE

Assembly District 50: Eloise Reyes

Assembly District 42: Christy Holstege

Assembly District 60: Corey Jackson

Assembly District 63: Fauzia Rizvi

Senate District 18: Steve Padilla

## LOCAL ENDORSEMENTS

Fontana Mayor: Jesse Sandoval

Rancho Cucamonga City Council District 1: Erick Jimenez

Western Municipal Water District Division 2: Gracie Torres

**For State-Wide Offices and Ballot Measures, see Sierra Club California's Endorsement Page:**

**<https://www.sierraclub.org/california/2022-endorsements>**

## UNSURE OF YOUR CONGRESSIONAL OR STATE DISTRICTS?

- CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS:
  - <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>
- CA STATE LEGISLATURE:
  - <http://findyourrep.legislature.ca.gov>

# **Palm and Pine**

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## **Tahquitz Group Candidate Endorsements**

The Tahquitz Group covers all of the low desert areas of Riverside County, including Coachella Valley, the Morongo Basin in San Bernardino County, plus Joshua Tree National Park and the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto National Monument.

Working with the San Gorgonio Political Committee, the Tahquitz Group endorsement team and Executive Committee are recommending the following local candidates for your support. Candidates are vetted through a process of questionnaires, personal interviews, and public research. In addition to your vote, we believe that these candidates deserve financial support and/or campaign assistance. Please consider using the listed contact information to help elect individuals who will partner with the Club to address climate change and protect our forests, deserts, and urban areas.

**Grace Garner**, City of Palm Springs City Council District 1 Incumbent  
[www.WewinwithGrace.com](http://www.WewinwithGrace.com)

**Ronald de Harte**, City of Palm Springs City Council District 3  
[www.rondeharte.com](http://www.rondeharte.com)

**Jeffrey Bernstein**, City of Palm Springs City Council District 2  
[www.JeffreyforPS.com](http://www.JeffreyforPS.com)

**Carlos Garcia**, City of Palm Desert City Council District 2  
[www.carlosg4pd.com](http://www.carlosg4pd.com)

**Yurema Arvizu**, City of Coachella City Council  
[www.yuremaarvizu.com](http://www.yuremaarvizu.com)

**Enrique Saldivar**, Cathedral City City Council District 4  
[www.ricksaldivar.com](http://www.ricksaldivar.com)

**Joel Kinnamon**, College of the Desert Board Area 4  
[www.joel4codtrustee.com](http://www.joel4codtrustee.com)

**Patricia Leal-Gutierrez**, Desert Recreation District Division 1  
[www.patifordesertrec.com](http://www.patifordesertrec.com)

## Local Politics Matters! Take Action In Your Community



The Sierra Club is endorsing Derek Marshall because he has proven to be a champion for environmental protection issues in California's new 23rd Congressional District. We support his vision for prioritizing people and the planet above special interests and big-monied corporations. This is a very important race and one that we believe we can win with your help!

Please sign up as a campaign volunteer to get out the vote and/or consider donating funds to the Derek Marshall for Congress campaign. For more details, contact: [info@derekmarshallca.com](mailto:info@derekmarshallca.com)

Sierra Club is endorsing Christy Holstege because under Christy's leadership as Mayor, Palm Springs has been a great partner with the Sierra Club in addressing both climate change and protection of the desert. Palm Springs has made significant investments in their Sustainability Commission and Sustainability Department and are clear leaders in Southern California on environmental protections. Palm Springs alone in eastern Riverside County has had the courage to embrace local community energy by joining Desert Community Energy to bring clean energy decision making to the local level. We look forward to working with Christy Holstege in the State Assembly! Please sign up as a campaign volunteer to get out the vote and/or consider donating funds to the Christy Holstege for Assembly campaign. For more details, contact: [info@christyholstege.com](mailto:info@christyholstege.com)



### Join our Political Team!

Are you interested in politics? Become part of our efforts to find and endorse candidates who will put a healthy environment, conservation, and an equitable transition to clean energy first! Once our candidates are in office, help us hold them accountable to these ideals by joining our political team. Contact our Political Chair Bhavin Jindal ([bhavin.jindal@gmail.com](mailto:bhavin.jindal@gmail.com)) today.



## All Politics are Local - Get Out and Vote!

Exercise your right to vote! It's your opportunity to have a voice in decisions that affect your quality of life. Our elected officials set policies on things like:

- How public lands are used – as open space for public enjoyment and habitat protection, or for fracking, mining, and drilling
- How our coastlines are used – as protected waters for sea life and clean beaches, or for offshore drilling
- Where the next warehouses will be constructed –in industrial areas, or near homes and schools
- Who has access to healthcare and prescription medication – everyone, or only those wealthy enough to afford it
- The quality of our air and drinking water – Whether to fight pollution, or favor corporate profits
- The quality of public schools – what's taught, and what's not

According to NPR, nearly a third of environmentally concerned voters are planning to sit out the midterm elections because they are frustrated with Congress (Living on Earth Green Voters and the 2022 Midterms). Some people believe that by refusing to vote, they are 'sending a message' to congress or their local government. But the only message being sent is that you are willing to give up your rights and allow your representatives to do as they please.

Sometimes people don't vote because they think enough other people who share their same values will show up and do the voting for them. They think there's no way candidate X will get elected, or Proposition Y will pass. By now, we should know better. In many states, women have lost the right to an abortion. Voting restrictions decide who gets to vote. And in July, a bill that would have protected the right to access contraception – what seems like a no-brainer – did not pass. (Nearly all Republicans in the House voted against it, and it failed to pass in the Senate.)

Having environmentally friendly candidates in office makes Sierra Club's work that much easier. We need your help electing representatives who will work with us, not against us.

Don't depend on others to vote for you. We each get one vote. Use it wisely, but use it.



# October Trail Talk

## Trail Talk: Hiking the Camino in Europe

October 19, 2022 | 7:00 PM



Have you ever wanted to take some of the great hikes of Europe? Find out how with our own Joseph Amador during his October Trail Talk, "Hiking the Camino in Europe." An experienced hiker and backpacker, Joe will describe what it is like to plan and walk the great pilgrimage along the Camino de Santiago in Spain and Portugal.

As always, the Trail Talk presentations will be held virtually via Zoom on the third Wednesday of the month. . [RSVP HERE](#) and a zoom link will be sent to you.

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# November Trail Talk

## Trail Talk: Who Should We Thank For Our Trails?

November 16, 2022 | 7:00 PM

Walter Roth will give a presentation about trail maintenance. Few hikers give any thought to how the trails we walk were created or how they are made safe and clear. Anyone who has had to climb over a fallen tree or done off-trail hiking can appreciate how trails enable us to travel with relative ease so we can enjoy the outdoors. Walt will provide a slide presentation explaining the special tools and surprising methods of clearing and repairing trails.

As always, the Trail Talk presentations will be held virtually via Zoom on the third Wednesday of the month. [RSVP HERE](#) and a zoom link will be sent to you.



# 2021-22 California Legislative Session Includes Critical Wins for the Environment and Public Health

### *Sierra Club California*

Sacramento, CA - The California legislature concluded its 2022 Legislative Session on August 31st. During the month of August, Governor Newsom made a final push to advance key legislation addressing the climate crisis, oil & gas drilling, and renewable energy.

Some of the major bills included SB 1137, which establishes a 3,200-foot setback rule between new oil and gas drilling sites and Californian communities; SB 1314, which bans Enhanced Oil Recovery, a process whereby carbon captured by oil and gas companies can be used to extract fossil fuels and further pollute the environment; and SB 846, - opposed by Sierra Club California and a coalition of environmental and environmental justice groups and ratepayer advocates - which sought to extend the operations of Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant past its long-established 2025 decommissioning date.

With the session behind us, Sierra Club California is preparing to release its annual Legislative Report Card, which tracks the performance of legislators and the governor on key environmental and climate bills. The 2022 edition of the Legislative Report Card will be released in early October.

Statement from Brandon Dawson, Director of Sierra Club California:

“The 2022 legislative session was a whirlwind for environmental and climate activists. After years of advocacy from frontline communities, environmental justice organizations, and environmental groups, the legislature finally passed a 3,200-foot setback rule between new oil and gas drilling and homes, schools, nursing homes, and other sensitive areas. Overcoming fossil fuel industry opposition to pass SB 1137 is a massive victory for public health and the environment, and we commend the legislators who had the courage to do so.

“The legislature also passed SB 1314, which ensures that any new carbon capture and sequestration (CCS) technology does not further promote reliance on fossil fuels. SB 1314 will force oil and gas companies to be more responsible with their emissions.

“It wasn’t all victories, though. Another Sierra Club California priority bill and a Governor Climate priority, AB 2133, died on the Assembly floor last night after major opposition from the fossil fuel industry. Sierra Club California also opposed the eleventh hour push to extend Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant, which passed early this morning. We still have many lingering concerns about this bill and its impacts on ratepayers. We will continue to work with the administration and Public Utilities Commission to address these concerns.”

*Sierra Club California is the legislative and regulatory advocacy arm for Sierra Club chapters in California. The Sierra Club is one of the nation's oldest and largest environmental organizations. It was founded in 1892 by a group of Californians, including John Muir, who valued the state's wilderness areas. Today, the Club has chapters in every state and a national membership that exceeds 1 million. California is unique among states in that it has 13 chapters, representing more than 500,000 members and supporters.*

*Sierra Club California was established in 1986 to help ensure that the Club speaks with one strong voice on statewide environmental policy issues before the legislature and state agencies.*

## Free Shipping Isn't Free For Everyone

*as published in Sierra Magazine, by Judith Lewis Mernit*

### **When Truck Season Became All-Year-Round**

When Angelo Logan was growing up in the City of Commerce, California, in the mid-1980s, there was a time of the year that he and his friends called “truck season.”

“It was the two or three months leading up to the holidays,” he remembers. During truck season, semitrailers loaded up at the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles, unloaded their goods at storage facilities, and transported them to local department stores.

As warehousing expanded in the region, so did truck season. Commerce was an ideal hub, centrally located among railyards, highways, and maritime ports—and the trucks began to come and go all year long. But traffic was still limited to certain times of day. “It used to be that we’d see drayage trucks coming from the ports to the warehouses and railyards in the early morning. Then at a certain time at night, you’d see transloading trucks that would go from the warehouses to the railyards.”

Now, Logan says, “the types of trucks and operations are constant.”

### **E-Commerce, in Real Life**

Southern California’s mushroom-like spread of mega warehouses (facilities that are 100,000 square feet and larger) and the accompanying heavy truck traffic and air pollution is a harbinger of what’s coming to the rest of the country.

The explosion of online shopping has led to a frenzy of warehouse construction in almost every region of the United States. To accommodate the flow of merchandise, Amazon and other online retailers have built what they call “fulfillment centers” in key hubs where zoning is welcoming (or nonexistent) and land is cheap.

Although the warehouse buildout began before COVID isolation prompted many people to rely on home delivery, e-commerce skyrocketed during the pandemic. Amazon’s product sales revenue grew from \$160 billion in 2019 to \$241 billion in 2021, and during that time the company doubled its warehouse capacity.

By the end of 2021, Amazon had 253 giant fulfillment centers spread across the county, along with 110 smaller sortation centers and 467 “last mile” delivery stations. While Amazon is the largest online retailer, it is not alone. The real estate investment management firm CBRE Group reports that in 2021, more than 1 billion square feet of warehouse space was constructed or newly leased. The firm projects that at least another 850 million square feet will be added in 2022.

Online retailers prefer to build warehouses in areas with easy access to transportation and loose development rules. This frequently draws them to areas already heavily developed for industry and often with a history of being redlined—the only neighborhoods where people of color could easily buy property in the years when covenant laws kept them out of other, more desirable neighborhoods. Those same areas play host to sprawling, churning delivery hubs that have turned already-burdened neighborhoods into vortexes of traffic and pollution.

In Southern California’s Inland Empire, massive warehouses push up against bedroom-community homes. In New York City’s Red Hook neighborhood, a sprawling UPS facility is under construction right next to apartment blocks. For residents in these places and many others, the arrival of the mega warehouses means that traffic noise and pollution bombard them at all times of the day, all year.

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“You have the warehousing, the transloading. You have the fulfillment centers—you know, these are all parts and pieces to the development of warehousing,” Logan says.

The online purchase you made the other day may seem cheap and easy, but it’s not exactly free. Someone, somewhere, is paying the price for the convenience of that one-click purchase.

### **Truck Traffic Equals Air Pollution**

Last spring, Kim Gaddy, founder of the South Ward Environmental Alliance in Newark, partnered with the Ironbound Community Corporation for a two-day truck count and air-monitoring project. Ten years ago, the truck count at the intersection of Newark’s Empire and Frelinghuysen Streets was roughly 500 trucks per day.

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By 2022, as many as 500 trucks were passing through that same intersection in a single hour.

In Will County, Illinois (a major e-commerce distribution hub outside of Chicago), residents who live within a half mile of a warehouse have elevated rates of asthma and other respiratory diseases due to soot in the air, which is more than one-third higher than the national average and worse than in 88 percent of the country.

In Texas, 79 percent of the state's 3,929 warehouses are in similarly polluted areas.

The Houston neighborhood of Pleasantville is ringed with major roadways that connect Houston's port, warehouses, and last-mile facilities. Diesel tractor trailers rumble along and idle on neighborhood streets on their way from warehouses to the port.

"We were already inundated with trucks in and around our community," says Bridgette Murray, founder of Achieving Community Tasks Successfully, a nonprofit group that works on environmental and social justice.

"Warehouses have contributed more."

The inky black cloud of diesel exhaust from heavy trucks carries fine particulate matter, also called PM 2.5. It is known to cause cancer, respiratory disease, and heart failure.

The diesel exhaust from heavy trucks also produces nitrogen oxides. When released into the air and hit by sunlight, they are transformed into ground-level ozone, the primary lung irritant in smog.

## **E-Commerce Warehouses Are Everywhere—But Not Everyone Is Impacted Equally**

Today in the United States, there are 39,116 warehouses and distribution centers larger than 100,000 square feet, and they can be found in rural and suburban areas as well as urban ones.

A Sierra Club analysis found that 79 percent of the population within a half mile of the Houston metro area's 1,186 warehouses are people of color.

Residents of Pleasantville, a heavily industrialized neighborhood of Houston where most of the residents are Black, believe that official estimates don't capture the full brunt of toxic emissions in their community. The EPA measures pollutants in the atmosphere over a broad area, based on 12- or 24-hour averages.

Environmental justice advocates say that process fails to measure pollution spikes that occur at various times of the day or night and also blurs the lines between cleaner-air communities and heavily burdened ones.

## **What Diesel Exhaust Does to the Human Body**

The pollution you don't see in diesel exhaust is more dangerous than the soot you do see.

Diesel particulate matter is so small that it can easily enter human airways, penetrate tissue, and embed in the lungs. If those particles penetrate the alveoli—the tiny sacs that take in oxygen and release carbon dioxide—and make their way into the bloodstream, they can damage the heart and other organs.

## **An Aerial Assault on Multiple Organs**

Particulate matter isn't made up of any one chemical or compound. It is instead a "mixture of mixtures," in the words of the EPA.

The tiny irritants can carry anything from pesticides to heavy metals to benzene, a carcinogenic hydrocarbon present in diesel exhaust. Particulate matter has been implicated in heart disease. Because it infiltrates the bloodstream, it increases the risk of developing chronic kidney disease and can impair the functioning of the liver, spleen, and even the brain.

Most of all, it causes or aggravates a whole host of respiratory illnesses in children and adults: asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, lung cancer, and COVID. The smaller the particle, the more dangerous its effects.

## **Workers Suffer Too**

Warehousing is nothing new to Chicagoland, that region that spreads from the southwestern shores of Lake Michigan north to southern Wisconsin and east into Indiana.

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Five of the seven railroads in the nation intersect in Illinois's Will County, which is a one-day drive from 60 percent of the United States mainland and home to the country's largest inland port. At last count, 370 warehouses larger than 100,000 square feet occupied the county, with another 64 proposed or under construction.

The corporations and developers behind the warehouse boom, including the multibillion-dollar landlords Prologis and Blackstone, have promised economic revival for cities depressed by the loss of manufacturing. But the communities themselves have felt little of the benefit. The hourly pay for warehouse workers rarely rises to a livable wage. According to a survey conducted during the height of the COVID pandemic by Warehouse Workers for Justice, only half of workers in the food distribution and logistics sector had any health insurance.

"We also found they were uniquely affected by COVID," says WWJ's former labor and environmental justice director, Yana Kalmyka. Not only were people who breathe in diesel pollution day and night predisposed to the worst effects of the disease, but also they couldn't work from home.

There are unavoidable on-the-job hazards. Dust builds up inside warehouses, "so workers are experiencing poor air quality both inside the workplace and outside when they leave," Kalmyka notes. Many warehouse workers reside in the same communities where they work, she says, "so they're experiencing a double jeopardy exposure to diesel pollution." Most of those workers are Black or Latino.

### **How Can We Solve This?**

E-commerce is likely here to stay, so reducing its environmental and public health impacts centers on fixing the operations of all those trucks. Doing so would also have a major climate benefit, since transportation (including the shipping of goods) is the number one source of US greenhouse gas emissions.

In March 2022, the EPA proposed a rule to reduce truck pollution beginning in 2027. But most clean-transportation advocates argue that the rule should be stronger. "It's just an update to a previous regulation that says manufacturers need to be cleaning up trucks," says Katherine Garcia, director of the Sierra Club's Clean Transportation for All campaign. "The regulations haven't been updated in 20 years."

The EPA is expected to deliver a more stringent truck-pollution standard later in the year. In the meantime, reforms from state, county, and municipal leaders could help to clean up this logistical nightmare.

It would also help to change local zoning ordinances so warehouses can't be located near or within neighborhoods where people live and where children attend school.

One of the best long-term solutions is to electrify the fleet of long-haul and heavy-duty trucks so they aren't releasing any local emissions at all. Electric-truck technology is "light-years ahead" of federal and most states' requirements, says the Sierra Club's Garcia. Since trucks dedicated to moving goods from ports to warehouses rarely travel longer than 100 miles per day, they're ideal for electrification.

Six states—Massachusetts, New Jersey, Washington, Oregon, New York, and Maine—have already adopted California's 2020 Advanced Clean Trucks rule, which requires that medium-to-heavy-duty trucks sold in the state get progressively cleaner over time, beginning in 2024. By 2035, 75 percent of trucks on the heavier end of the scale will have to run on electricity or an emission-free fuel. Several more states, including Colorado and Illinois, are considering following suit.

But the warehouse takeover of vulnerable communities won't be ameliorated by laws and policy levers alone. "It's not going to be solved just by public health specialists. It's not going to be solved just by engineers. It's not going to be solved just by the communities themselves," says Nemmi Cole, a researcher at the University of Southern California's Keck School of Medicine.

Bad air, wherever it comes from, doesn't stay put—the emissions that damage warehouse neighbors' bodies are part and parcel of those that heat up the planet. Global warming aside, Cole says, "Think about it: What if that was your child, your mother, your aunt, living along that transportation corridor from the port to the warehouse? What if one of the premature deaths policymakers attribute to pollution was your child?"

We need to understand the public health injuries of e-commerce "on a macro level," Cole says, as if they're hurting all of us.

Because, in fact, they are.

# As Lithium Recovery Moves Forward, Will Salton Sea Residents be Left Behind?

by Joan Taylor and Shelby Reeder

By now you've probably heard of Lithium Valley, the lithium-rich basin at the Salton Sea in Imperial County. The coveted metal is used to produce rechargeable batteries for electric vehicles, provide renewable energy storage and more. As demand for EVs and renewables climbs, so has the demand for lithium.

Lithium mining, whether in the US, South America or elsewhere, has proven extremely destructive of habitat and native cultures. But at the Salton Sea, lithium exists in geothermal liquid under the earth's surface in unusually high concentrations. Corporations believe they can recover it from the hot brine used to run geothermal energy generators and then return that brine to the ground with minimal damage to the environment. Many see lithium as the key to accelerating the shift to electric vehicles and storing energy from intermittent renewables like solar and wind -- resulting in improved air quality and combating climate change. Governor Newsom dubbed Lithium Valley "the Saudi Arabia of lithium."

A quick online search on Lithium Valley reveals a host of articles predicting economic and environmental benefits, as well as the potential to bring jobs to an economically depressed area that was once thriving. Yet there are few articles amplifying the voices of those who live in the area and may be most affected. Some residents are skeptical of the promises of both jobs and green recovery, and feel shut out of the decision-making process. In a recent Op Ed in the Desert Sun, (August 24, 2022) activists Cecilia Dora Armenta and Elizabeth Jaime asked that their communities of North Shore and Salton City be given greater representation in the process:

**"We are concerned that the profits that will result from lithium development are more important to decision-makers than our health. The lives of immigrants, children, and low-income people of color are worth more than the profits of lithium extraction. We experience the climate crisis every day through extreme heat, storms, high energy costs, and poor air quality. Climate solutions must not cause us more problems."**



Once a tourist destination, over the years the Salton Sea has been shrinking due to drought and water diversion reducing its in-flows. Water run-off from agriculture, plus industrial wastewater from Mexico, is largely what sustains the Salton Sea. This carries pesticides, heavy metals and salts, which have ended up in the lake. As the lake recedes, concentrations of these contaminants have ended up in the dusty lake shore and are eventually blown about by the region's strong winds. Meanwhile the Salton Sea is becoming hypersaline, threatening millions of migratory birds that rely on it as a major stopover on the Pacific Flyway.

The regional air quality is so poor that in 2019, the Imperial County Board of Supervisors declared a local state of emergency (Cavanaugh, KPGS, 2019).

Back in 2003 the state of California assumed the obligation to mitigate for water transfers from Imperial County to urban users, but dragged its heels. Sierra Club and other enviros fought for decades to spur the state into action, and now the state is finally stepping up to remediate these problems, with dust suppression and habitat creation projects finally getting underway (Taylor, 2017). Ensuring that lithium recovery support this remediation as well as benefit surrounding communities has been a main thrust of enviro activism.

Environmental and social justice organizations remain concerned that residents may be ignored once lithium recovery is in full swing. In an article for the Desert Report (March 2022), Mariela Loera, a policy advocate with the Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability, gave voice to residents' concerns:

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**“We’ve been told that low-income desert communities will also benefit from the economic prosperity that lithium extraction will bring through employment opportunities. But thus far, promises of prosperity are just promises as we await the facts and enforceable commitments that will ensure that economic development is shared, collaborative, and equitable.”**

The government agency tasked with researching and coordinating lithium recovery is the California Energy Commission. It established the Lithium Valley Commission, made up of state and county government officials, public utilities, industry, community leaders and one environmental representative, with the goal of analyzing opportunities and benefits of lithium recovery. The commission holds monthly meetings that are local and open to the public in person or by zoom, so community members can testify and submit comments. Yet Armenta and Jaime say their questions go unanswered.

The Lithium Valley Commission is tasked with producing a report on their findings by October 1st. The report will be translated into Spanish for public review and comment, with three local hearings whose dates have not been set. The question on many residents’ minds: will their concerns be included?

*This article was previously published in our September/October 2022 e-newsletter; we wanted to be sure it was not missed and so are printing it here again.*

## Citations:

Armenta, Cecilia Dora and Elizabeth Jaime. Aug. 24, 2022. We are More than an Experiment for Lithium in the Desert. The Desert Sun. <https://www.desertsun.com>

Cavanaugh, Maureen. Oct. 23, 2019. Imperial County Declares Emergency at Salton Sea. KPBS. <https://www.kpbs.org>

California Energy Commission/Lithium Valley Commission: <https://www.energy.ca.gov>

Loera, Mariela. March 2022. Climate Justice at Lithium Valley. Desert Report, Sierra Club California and Nevada Desert Committee. <https://desertreport.org/march-2022-latest-issue/>

Taylor, Joan. July 2017. Salton Sea - Preserving a Tomorrow. Desert Report, Sierra Club California and Nevada Desert Committee. <https://desertreport.org>

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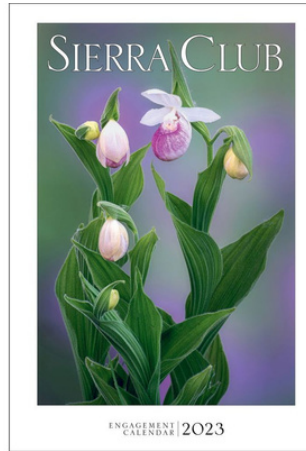
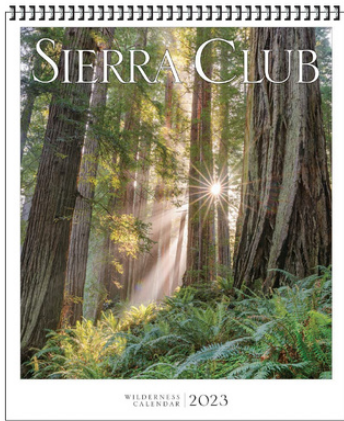
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