

# Tehipite Topics

December 2020 – Vol. 66, No. 2

[www.sierraclub.org/tehipite](http://www.sierraclub.org/tehipite)

## Tehipite Chapter Election Report 2020

by Gary Lasky, Tehipite Chapter Chair

### Summary

This is an election report on our Tehipite Chapter program for 2020. For the first time, our chapter hired temporary, part-time staff to recruit Sierra Club members to volunteer for the 2020 election campaigns of two Club-endorsed Congressional candidates: TJ Cox, in the southern San Joaquin Valley 21<sup>st</sup> Congressional District, CD-21, and Brynne Kennedy in the Sierra foothill district, CD-4. Our staff, with the support of volunteers, contacted over 8,000 Sierra Club members by phone and made two “asks”: (1) to attend a special campaign event advertised exclusively to our members, and (2) to volunteer to make phone calls to voters with one of the candidate campaigns.

We’ve known that elections matter for the environment and for preserving our democratic system of government. The occupant of the White House and members of Congress determine our Sierra Club’s ability to get our key conservation messages through to Washington. And now the pandemic and the Trump administration have taught us an additional lesson: government must serve the essential needs of our residents if we are to sustain our economy — and our democracy.

The program met our expectations, on balance, as we succeeded at engaging a large number of our members in one of the two Congressional campaigns. There were some high points and some disappointments, too, which I will detail, below. We are presently launching a follow up program, on a \$1,600 grant from the national Sierra Club, to survey our membership and recruit them to volunteer for our Chapter activities for 2021. We are prioritizing those members who signed up to attend one of our election campaign events, or who volunteered to

### Survey Announcement

The Tehipite Chapter will be launching a phone survey of our members very soon. Please be on the lookout for a phone call from one of our staff. We want to hear from you regarding what our Chapter has done right (or not-so-right), and which issues you want to see us tackle in 2021. Contact us at [tehipite.chapter@sierraclub.org](mailto:tehipite.chapter@sierraclub.org) or 559-790-3495. Thanks!

make phone calls for the 2020 election.

### The Presidential Election

The national Sierra Club placed a priority on electing Joe Biden for President and Kamala Harris for Vice President, and mobilized an unprecedented number of members and supporters as volunteers to write 2 million letters, send millions of texts, and make 2.4 million phone calls to carefully targeted voters in five key battleground states. The program made a difference, as three of our targeted states — Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin — swung back from Trump to the Democrats this year, and were the margin of victory. A fourth, Arizona was icing on the cake. Only Florida did not pan out.

*It’s time in this difficult pandemic year to take a deep breath and celebrate for a moment.* Not only was Trump not reelected (and at press time, it appears he will depart on Inauguration Day), but voter turnout as a percentage of eligible voters was the highest since the 1904 election. Also, we mobilized unprecedented numbers of new activists to engage as volunteers this election season.

### Chapter Campaign Strategy

Our Tehipite Chapter 2020 election work had three goals: (1) to build the campaign skills of volunteers and

– CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 –

### see also:

A Trip to Norway in 2015

on page 10

Environmentalists Falsely Blamed for Creek Fire

on page 12



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet



## Bear in mind the consequences.

The Yellowstone grizzly bear is an irreplaceable part of America's natural heritage, a symbol of the independence that defines the American character and an icon of all that is wild and free. The Bush administration set forth a proposal that would remove federal protection for the Yellowstone grizzly bear. Help Sierra Club protect our forest friends; they prefer the woods than being on display.

**Get grizzly and JOIN Sierra Club.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

**Join today and receive  
a FREE Sierra Club  
Rucksack**



☐ Check enclosed. Please make payable to Sierra Club.  
Please charge my: ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ AMEX

Cardholder Name \_\_\_\_\_

Card Number \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Categories	Individual	Joint
<b>Special Offer</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	
Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> \$39	<input type="checkbox"/> \$49
Supporting	<input type="checkbox"/> \$75	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100
Contributing	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175
Life	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1250
Senior	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$35
Student/Limited Income	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$35

Contributions, gifts and dues to Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to Sierra magazine and \$1 for your Chapter newsletters.



**SIERRA  
CLUB**  
FOUNDED 1892

## Tehipite Chapter of the Sierra Club

**P.O. Box 5396  
Fresno, California  
93755-5396**

Copyright © 2020,  
Tehipite Chapter of the Sierra Club

Web Site: [www.sierraclub.org/tehipite](http://www.sierraclub.org/tehipite)

### Tehipite Chapter Officers:

#### **Chapter Chair**

Gary Lasky (559) 790-3495  
[data.nations@gmail.com](mailto:data.nations@gmail.com)

#### **Chapter Vice-Chair**

Bill Fjellbo (559) 642-4511  
[bjfjellbo@sti.net](mailto:bjfjellbo@sti.net)

#### **Chapter Secretary**

Brenda Markham (559) 400-1756  
[markhambrenda2@gmail.com](mailto:markhambrenda2@gmail.com)

#### **Chapter Treasurer**

JoAnne Clarke (209) 233-7380  
[jo\\_clarke@att.net](mailto:jo_clarke@att.net)

### Executive Committee Members:

Chip Ashley (559) 855-6376  
[wattsvalleypreservation@gmail.com](mailto:wattsvalleypreservation@gmail.com)

David Cehrs (559) 875-9495  
[dcehrs@verizon.net](mailto:dcehrs@verizon.net)

Bill Fjellbo (559) 642-4511  
[bjfjellbo@sti.com](mailto:bjfjellbo@sti.com)

Sharon Hoffmann (209) 380-4061  
[wavelength1111@aol.com](mailto:wavelength1111@aol.com)

Gary Lasky (559) 790-3495  
[data.nations@gmail.com](mailto:data.nations@gmail.com)

Leslie Martinez (559) 920-0558  
[leslie.andrea@live.com](mailto:leslie.andrea@live.com)

Peter McDonald (559) 269-4339  
[pmcdonald@csufresno.edu](mailto:pmcdonald@csufresno.edu)

Dan O'Connell (559) 967-1940  
[agrariandemocracy@gmail.com](mailto:agrariandemocracy@gmail.com)

### **Merced Group Appointee**

Rod Webster (209) 723-4747  
[rwebster@elite.net](mailto:rwebster@elite.net)

### Chapter Committee Chairs:

#### **Honors & Awards**

Bob Turner (559) 203-0714  
[robertsturner52@gmail.com](mailto:robertsturner52@gmail.com)

#### **Legal Committee**

Gary Lasky (559) 790-3495  
[data.nations@gmail.com](mailto:data.nations@gmail.com)

### **Membership / Topics Distribution**

Marian Orvis (559) 226-0145  
[mforvet@comcast.net](mailto:mforvet@comcast.net)

### **Outings**

Sam Hopstone (925) 951-7378  
[samhopstone@gmail.com](mailto:samhopstone@gmail.com)

### **Political Committee**

Bill Fjellbo (559) 642-4511  
[bjfjellbo@sti.net](mailto:bjfjellbo@sti.net)

### **Programs**

Brenda Markham (559) 400-1756  
[markhambrenda2@gmail.com](mailto:markhambrenda2@gmail.com)

### **Publicity / Hospitality**

Karen Hammer (559) 298-5272  
[ecuagirl45@yahoo.com](mailto:ecuagirl45@yahoo.com)

### **Tehipite Topics Editor & Chapter Website Administrator**

Bob Turner (559) 203-0714  
[robertsturner52@gmail.com](mailto:robertsturner52@gmail.com)

### Conservation Committee:

#### **Conservation Chair**

Bob Turner (559) 203-0714  
[robertsturner52@gmail.com](mailto:robertsturner52@gmail.com)

#### **Environmental Justice**

Leslie Martinez (559) 920-0558  
[leslie.andrea@live.com](mailto:leslie.andrea@live.com)

#### **Air Quality & Climate Change**

Peter McDonald (559) 269-4339  
[pmcdonald@csufresno.edu](mailto:pmcdonald@csufresno.edu)

#### **Energy / Oil**

Ron Martin (559) 394-9417  
[martinrj93638@yahoo.com](mailto:martinrj93638@yahoo.com)

#### **Land Use / Transportation /**

##### **Agriculture**

Dan O'Connell (559) 976-1940  
[agrariandemocracy@gmail.com](mailto:agrariandemocracy@gmail.com)

#### **Water**

David Cehrs (559) 875-9495  
[dcehrs@verizon.net](mailto:dcehrs@verizon.net)

#### **Wilderness**

JoAnne Clarke (209) 233-7380  
[jo\\_clarke@att.net](mailto:jo_clarke@att.net)

### **National Forests**

Chip Ashley (559) 855-6376  
[wattsvalleypreservation@gmail.com](mailto:wattsvalleypreservation@gmail.com)

### **Kings Canyon National Park**

Bob Turner (559) 203-0714  
[robertsturner52@gmail.com](mailto:robertsturner52@gmail.com)

### **Yosemite National Park**

George Whitmore (559) 229-5808  
[geowhit1954@comcast.net](mailto:geowhit1954@comcast.net)

### Council of Club Leaders:

#### **CCL Delegate**

David Cehrs (559) 875-9495  
[dcehrs@verizon.net](mailto:dcehrs@verizon.net)

### Sierra Club California /

### California Conservation Committee:

#### **SCC / CalConsCom Delegates**

Peter McDonald (559) 269-4339  
[pmcdonald@csufresno.edu](mailto:pmcdonald@csufresno.edu)

Ron Martin (559) 222-5524  
[martinrj93638@yahoo.com](mailto:martinrj93638@yahoo.com)

#### **SCC Delegate / CCC Alternate**

Gary Lasky (559) 790-3495  
[data.nations@gmail.com](mailto:data.nations@gmail.com)

# **Tehipite Chapter Conservation & Executive Committee Meetings**

**Second Wednesday of each month ~ members welcome ~ contact Gary Lasky, Chapter Chair**

December 9, January 13, February 10, March 10, April 14, May 12, June 9, July 14,

August 11, September 8, October 13, November 10, and December 8

The Conservation Committee meets at 7 PM. The Executive Committee meets at 8 PM.

## **Tehipite Chapter General Meetings**

**Traditionally the third Wednesday of each month from 7 to 9 PM, except for July and August**

***WE ARE CURRENTLY EXPERIMENTING WITH ZOOM FOR LARGE GATHERINGS.***

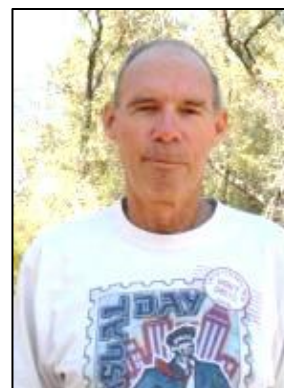
**OUR FIRST GENERAL ZOOM MEETING WILL BE THIS WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16. WE HOPE TO CONTINUE HOLDING SIMILAR MEETINGS UNTIL WE CAN GATHER TOGETHER IN PERSON AGAIN, LIKELY NEXT SUMMER. SEE THE ANNOUNCEMENT BELOW FOR HOW TO ATTEND OUR MEETING.**

### **Wednesday, December 16, 2020, 7:00 p.m. — Tehipite Chapter General Meeting via Zoom**

**Doug Broten, Docent for Sierra Foothill Conservancy, speaks on:  
“Central Valley: floor, foothills, and mountains before the Europeans,”  
exploring some of the geology, the importance of fire, and the impact of Indians.**

Doug was born in Whittier and moved to Fresno to attend Fresno State College in 1965. He graduated from Fresno State in 1970 with a degree in Social Sciences. After teaching for three years, he spent the next forty managing local non-profits. Over the last 40 years, he has deepened his love for the Sierra Nevada and surrounding foothills, spending many hours backpacking, and cross country skiing throughout the region. He has led Sierra Club hikes and cross country ski trips. Spending as much time in the mountains as he can, Doug now spends his retirement kayaking the San Joaquin River year-round (the wildlife on the river is fantastic during the winter), hiking on a weekly basis, skiing during the winter, and leading Sierra Foothill Conservancy hikes.

To get the link to the meeting, email Karen Hammer at [ecuagirl45@yahoo.com](mailto:ecuagirl45@yahoo.com).







**Merced Group  
of the Sierra Club**  
345 E. 20<sup>th</sup> Street  
Merced, California  
95340

**Executive Committee:**

**Group Chair**

Rod Webster

(209) 723-4747

rwebster@elite.net

**Group Vice-Chair**

[open]

**Group Treasurer**

Lisa Kayser-Grant

**Group Secretary**

Herta Calvert

fog51city@gmail.com

**Member-at-large**

John Magneson

jmagneson@gmail.com

**Committees:**

**Agriculture** [open]

Rod Webster (interim)

**Membership**

Herta Calvert

**Outings**

Stephen Ho

**Publications**

Annette Allsup

**Publicity**

Rod Webster

## Merced Group Conservation & Executive Committee Meetings

We are currently meeting via Zoom, usually at 7:30 on the first Wednesday of each month. Be aware that there are sometimes 'adjustments'. The Conservation meeting is first and generally lasts 30-40 minutes. Anyone with an interest in local, state, or national conservation issues is welcome to attend. It is immediately followed by the Ex-comm portion where official business is conducted. All Sierra Club members are invited to join us for both meetings. Please contact Rod Webster if you are interested in attending so he can confirm the date and time and forward you the log-in info.

## Merced Group Monthly General Meetings

... already resumed in September after our normal summer break. They are conducted using Zoom and are held on the third Thursday of the month, except in November and December (see details below). All Sierra Club members and the public as well are cordially invited to join us. Program topics and speakers vary — some educate on environmental issues, and others are more entertaining and hopefully inspire folks to get out and enjoy our natural treasures. The *Topics*, the Tehipite Chapter website, and local newspapers often have details on our monthly general meetings, but to make sure info is accurate and up-to-date, email Rod at rwebster@elite.net and get on the email list for notifications and occasional updates on important issues of local concern.

## Merced Group to host renowned author and artist John Muir Laws

**Saturday, Dec. 12th, 7:00 p.m.**

One and all are invited to join us for a Zoom presentation by John Muir Laws, renowned author of *The Laws Field Guide to the Sierra Nevada*. This has become the go-to book for the layman naturalist. Particularly amazing is the fact that Laws created all the thousands of drawings of flora and fauna that grace its pages.

In this live program Jack Laws will treat us to a virtual winter ramble through Merced National Wildlife Refuge. John will show us how he has trained himself to observe more carefully with techniques that you and your family can use. Laws will highlight observations of winter bird activity, Sandhill Cranes, and migratory waterfowl. Laws keeps a notebook filled with observations, drawings, maps, lists, and notes and will illustrate this virtual adventure live.

During the evening we will also present our annual Environmental Stewardship Award to Sarah Ottley, the executive director of Adventure Risk Challenge. This indoor/outdoor ed program promotes literacy and leadership in underserved communities by engaging youth with the natural world. Learn more at [adventureriskchallenge.org](http://adventureriskchallenge.org).

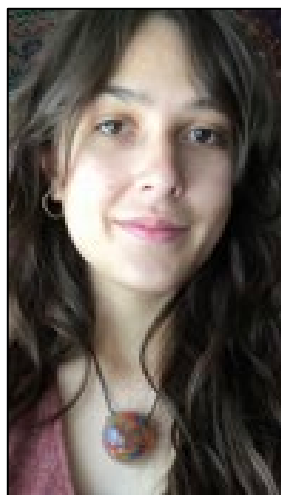
Email Rod Webster at rwebster@elite.net for the zoom link to attend.



# Merced Group News

## 2020 Kiri-hara Memorial Scholarships Awarded to U.C. Merced Students

In 2011 a scholarship was established in memoriam to honor of two of the founding members of the Merced Group, Jake and Fran Kiri-hara. The Kiri-haras were supporters, and when needed founding members, of many groups dedicated to the environment, peace, and justice. They were activists who not only spoke out but took action to defend and provide for the under-represented and disadvantaged. Each year the Merced Group awards scholarships to two University of California, Merced students who show seeds of these same passions and sense of commitment. At the 'Zoomed' October general meeting Taylor Cottrell and Louis Perez were recognized and received their scholarships, memberships in the Sierra Club, and Sierra Club wall calendars. Each of them did a great job in sharing a bit about their college interests and future aspirations.



Taylor Cottrell said of herself: "I am a Merced, California native and a junior studying biological science with an emphasis in ecology and evolutionary biology. The Yosemite Leadership Program on campus was a big factor in my deciding to attend UC Merced. I joined in my first year hoping to expand my conventional understanding of leadership and to develop the capacity to create positive change within the local community. My involvement in YLP solidified my commitment to environmentalism by unveiling the interrelatedness of environmentalism to social, cultural, and economic factors. Understanding the multifaceted aspects of environmentalism really reinforced the importance of environmental work since the entire biosphere's future and well-being depends on it. From my YLP experience, I discovered my passion for mitigating the intertwined environmental, social, and economic features of environmentalism from a natural sciences approach. I hope to ultimately find work related to climate justice, conservation biology, restorative ecology, agroecology, and the like."

Louis Perez described himself as follows: "I am a 3rd-year college student majoring in Computer Science & Engineering at UC Merced. My academic interests include math, philosophy, virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and machine learning. As a hobby I develop video games, some of which aim to teach younger audiences important topics such as news literacy. Earlier this year, I worked with Yosemite National Park to create live maps to help track where researchers place their scientific installations in the park. Now, I am in the process of creating live maps to address issues such as gentrification and racism. When not spending time on the computer, I enjoy going outside and taking a break from technology. UC Merced's Yosemite Leadership Program has helped me to reconnect with the wilderness and learn about leadership at the same time. After graduating, I plan to develop more software with application in the area of ethics."

We congratulate both Taylor and Louis for being selected by the supervising faculty in the Yosemite Leadership Program as exemplary student leaders with great promise to have an important role as future environmental stewards.



# Tehipite Chapter Dives into the 2020 Election

– CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE –

staff and to show them how to make an impact in elections; (2) to expand our pool of volunteers for chapter conservation campaigns and other activities in 2021; and (3) to establish our chapter as a player in the regional political landscape.

In addition to the Presidential race, a record number of Senate and Congressional races — 43 in the nation — were targeted by the national Sierra Club this year.

Traditionally, this has been a top-down process, funded by federal PAC funds, and with targeting decisions made by the national Club Political staff. As in all campaign years, the Club trained ordinary Club staff as field organizers and assigned them to campaigns through the Club's "Victory Corps" program, beginning October 5<sup>th</sup> this year. For the first time, one of these staff members was assigned within our district, to the TJ Cox campaign in CD-21. For the staff to contact the general public, this work must be funded *using precious PAC funds*. But ordinary chapter C4 funds can be used when we contact just our own Sierra Club members.

This was the basis for our Tehipite Chapter campaign strategy: by limiting our contact to Sierra Club members we sidestepped campaign finance restrictions on our work. And for a nominal fee, we were able to contact non-member supporters in our Club database. This program has enabled us to support the national program and preserve our limited PAC funds. In California, voting begins three weeks prior to Election Day, and some states start even sooner. Yet the Victory Corps program does not begin until four weeks before Election Day, too late to reach some voters. Our program enables the Victory Corps staffer to have volunteers from the day they arrive, instead of having to spend a week or more developing a team — as it is the volunteers who are needed to contact voters.

Accordingly, our Chapter funded three local campaign staff to back up our endorsements with electoral action. With access to the Club's VAN database of voters and Sierra Club members, I worked with our chapter staff daily for seven weeks: training them, writing and revising scripts, preparing call lists, and reviewing our results. Our talented staff, Iris Medina Alvarez, Rhonda Moomjian, and Hali Aquino, made phone calls from home, and we stayed connected all day as we worked, through Zoom.

In conversation, we asked three questions: "Are you familiar with [candidate name]?" "Can you attend a campaign Zoom event for Sierra Club members?" and

"Will you volunteer for the campaign making phone calls to voters?"

## Results

We dialed 8,644 members and held 614 conversations in which we asked members to volunteer for one of our two candidate campaigns. For the September 25<sup>th</sup> "environmental town hall" held by Brynne Kennedy for Sierra Club members, at our urging, 86 members RSVPed for the event, and 43 attended. This totally impressed the campaign! (In election campaigns involving Congressional districts and smaller, volunteers are as important as financial contributions.) This result was based on four half-days of phone calling by two staff.

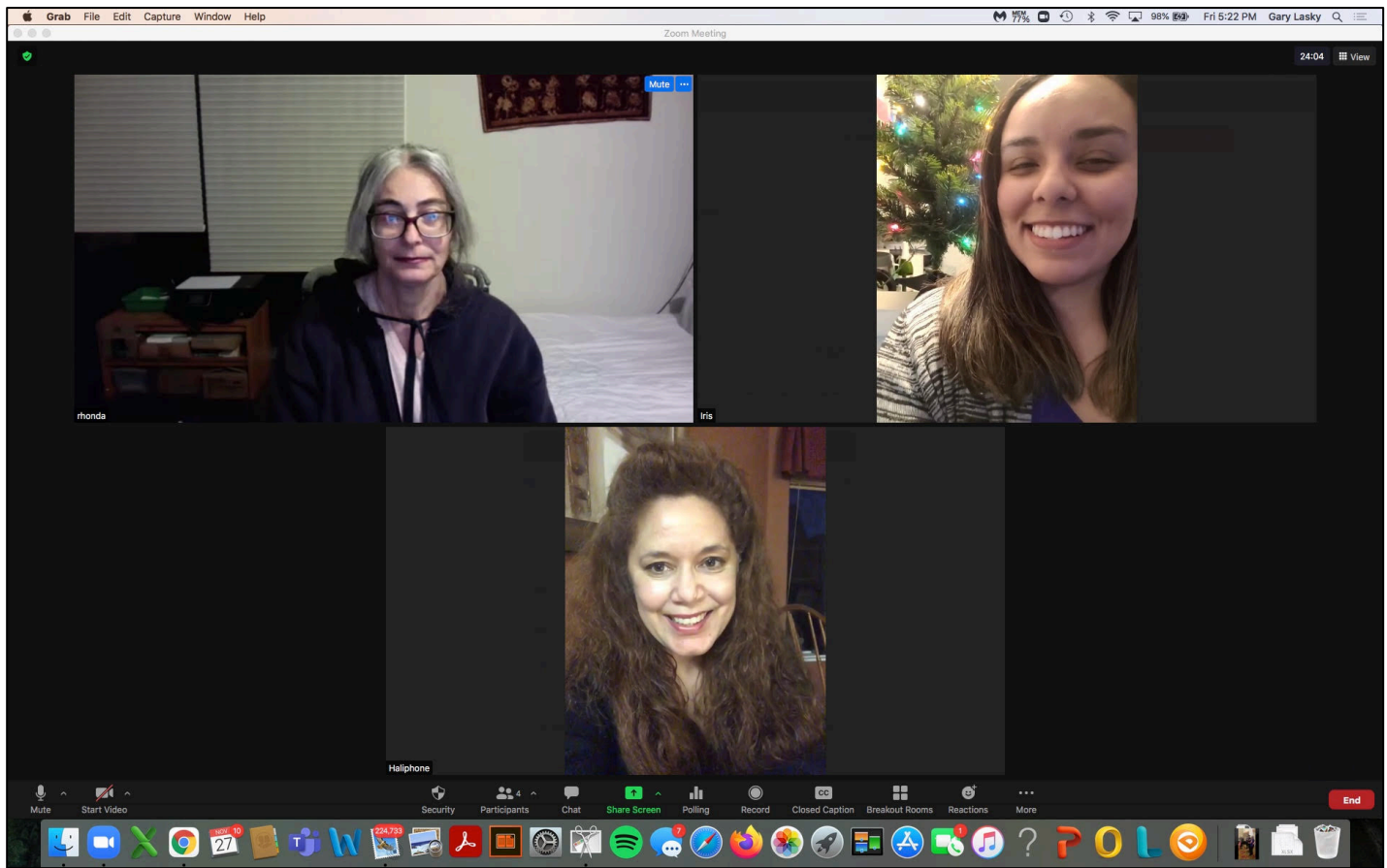
As of October 2nd, 704 volunteers had made phone calls for the Brynne Kennedy campaign, of whom 59 (8%) were current Sierra Club members, and 171 (24%) were in the Club's database of members and supporters. For TJ Cox, we also made calls for four days, this time with three staff, to recruit for a special campaign event. It was not successful. We had 18 members RSVP (a respectable figure), but *just one* of them showed. Fortunately, we had five others from the Tehipite Chapter attend after I invited them, plus our staff.

There were some differences between the two events to help explain the difference in success. Most important, however, we had over 3,300 Sierra Club members with phones in CD-4, the Brynne Kennedy district, but just 125 in CD-21. Although the national Club reserved for our phone calls those members living in two Central Coast Congressional districts, and targeted members with a history of online or other activism, and we recruited 18 of them, these members "flaked" (the unofficial campaign expression for no-shows). It was probably asking too much of them to invest their volunteer time and energy calling on behalf of a candidate from inland California.

In addition, we had a first-ever partnership with the Mother Lode Chapter, designing and printing recruitment postcards to our 3,697 CD-4 members asking them to volunteer for one of our two candidate campaigns. In addition, Mother Lode Executive Director Dyane Osorio sent out two email blasts that I drafted, and their volunteers made 951 phone calls for us.

The hard part was getting our members to pick up their phones. Club members are more willing to have a conversation with another Club member than with a political campaign, especially in election season, but in the context of the pandemic, and a recent increase in scam phone calls, we had just an 11% contact rate. We





#### OUR TEHIPITE CHAPTER 2020 ELECTION CAMPAIGN STAFF

CLOCKWISE, FROM UPPER LEFT – RHONDA MOOMJIAN, IRIS MEDINA ALVAREZ, HALI AQUINO

were hoping for a 15% contact rate, but voters were more unwilling to pick up their phones after the barrage of phone calls came in from all sides.

#### **CD-21 Election: Cox vs. Valadao**

In California this year, no Senate seats were up for reelection. Here, the House of Representatives is where the action was. Forty-six of California's 53 Congressional seats were Democratic after 2018, a year in which seven Republican seats were flipped, including two in the San Joaquin Valley.

Our Tehipite Chapter team interviewed Congressional candidates and endorsed freshman Rep. TJ Cox in CD-21. Anyone can talk a good line, but TJ proved himself to be an environmental advocate, despite representing a region where the oil industry and agribusiness are major power brokers and which, sadly, has been represented by a long line of compromised elected officials. TJ was the exception; as he expressed to us in our interview, "I'm not afraid of the oil industry. I beat them before." And he had a 93% voting record scorecard on environmental issues from the League of Conservation Voters.

In 2018, powered by outrage from the Latino community at Trump and the Republican Party's

immigration horror show, TJ Cox nabbed this seat from David Valadao by just 862 votes, and Valadao was back this year for a rematch. Although it was close, on March 27, the Associated Press called the race for Valadao, ahead by just 1,754 votes, or 1.0%.

#### **CD-4 Election: Kennedy vs. McClintock**

Those of our members who live in the Sierra foothills know well the dangers of fire and the related spiraling cost of fire insurance. In the 4<sup>th</sup> Congressional District, Republican Rep. Tom McClintock has failed to use his voice on the House Natural Resources Committee to address this problem, instead preferring to stick to his libertarian philosophy: that government should *never* provide for the public interest. McClintock was exceedingly pleased with the federal shutdown in October 2013, which harmed Yosemite tourism, and he supports mining, drilling and logging of our National Forests, and oil lease sales on federal lands. McClintock also supports a gift to the Merced Irrigation District of an enlarged reservoir behind the New Exchequer Dam on the Merced River, which would inundate a reach of federally recognized Wild & Scenic River on BLM land.

McClintock was challenged this year by technology CEO Brynne Kennedy, age 34. Brynne made the

cornerstone of her campaign the delivery of real services to district constituents, including tax credits for fire-hardening and clearing brush around homes, and COVID relief to small businesses (ignored by McClintock, who mocks wearing masks). She had a creative idea to incentivize locally-owned fire insurance companies to create some market competition, and supported small-scale biomass plants to enable forest thinning. Running on a big-tent philosophy, she sought the votes of independents and Republican women with a call to an end to partisan politics in Washington. Her campaign also insisted on delivering programs to help the district's constituents who are hurt in the current economic depression, and to protect Social Security, Medicare, and environmental laws.

Brynne's 12-point loss, 56 to 44%, was the shock of the campaign for me. In 2018, with a favorable tail wind, Jessica Morse lost to McClintock by just six points.

### Takeaway Lessons

- **We need cell phone numbers to reach our members.** Recruiting Club members by phone doesn't work unless they answer the call. In the past decade, even our elderly members have entirely stopped using their land line and moved to cell phones. But the Club membership directory, like voter registration records, was based on data from years (even decades) ago. Accordingly, just 15% of members pick up their phone, and this figure dropped to 10% this election season.

- **Combine phone calling and texting with door-to-door canvassing.** Voter fatigue from phone calls reached unprecedented levels this year, and many members were unwilling to discuss politics on the phone even with another Sierra Club member. Members no longer answer a phone call from an unfamiliar number, even on their cell phones.

In this pandemic year, the Democratic Party made the decision early to avoid door-to-door canvassing, which research shows is three times more effective than phone calls for persuading voters to vote. Due to the absence of door-to-door canvassing, we relied entirely on phones and texting to communicate with voters, who quickly became allergic to these efforts.

We have accidentally conducted what social scientists term a "natural experiment" to answer the question, "How effective can a campaign in a close election be without a ground campaign of door-to-door canvassing?" The results are painfully evident, as Democrats lost back four of the seven Congressional seats in California that they flipped in 2018. Each loss was by less than 1.3%.

- **Only recruit members from the district a Congressional candidate is running in, not from outside the district.** Members are much more likely to

volunteer in their home region where they can vote for the candidate they are supporting. We made four days of calls to targeted Club members in the Central Coast to recruit members to attend our TJ Cox event, but of 18 members who RSVP'd, just one attended.

- **Our model of chapter-funded recruitment is needed across the nation** to supplement our Sierra Club Victory Corps program, and we can export it with the support of the national Club. Victory Corps starts four weeks before Election Day, about the time early voting is beginning. Chapters, using their C4 treasuries, can fund a program to identify and engage Club members as campaign volunteers in advance of the arrival of Victory Corps staff, providing a head start for our campaign work.

- **If you're wondering, "What can I do to help?"** The answer is: *Volunteer with our Tehipite Chapter!*

As part of a national campaign to have those members shift from the election back to our chapter Conservation activities, the Chapter recently received a grant to conduct a survey and recruit our chapter members to our conservation campaigns and other volunteer work.

We will begin soon to conduct a telephone survey to our Tehipite Chapter members with phones listed in our database. However, feel free to be proactive and reach out to us. Send an email to me at [tehipite.chapter@sierraclub.org](mailto:tehipite.chapter@sierraclub.org) or call 559-790-3495 and we will contact you as soon as our survey is underway.

**Our chapter needs funds to continue the work we do in protecting our local environment in the Sierra Nevada and San Joaquin Valley, fighting against environmentally unsound projects like Friant Ranch and Temperance Flat Dam, and promoting sound urban, agricultural, forest, and park planning for the region, with housing and transportation development that is sustainable, competent management of our groundwater resources, and careful stewardship of our mountain and valley wildlands. Your donation to the Sierra Club, if sent to the Tehipite Chapter, will directly aid this local work in Fresno, Madera, Merced, and Mariposa Counties. To make a tax-deductible donation, make the check out to "Sierra Club Foundation," since the foundation is a 501c3 charitable organization. Checks made out to "Sierra Club" are not tax-deductible, but of course are also always welcome. In order to benefit your chapter in either case, make sure that you write "Tehipite Chapter" in the memo section on the check. Mail your check to: Tehipite Chapter of the Sierra Club, P.O. Box 5396, Fresno, California 93755-5396. Many of you have already made generous donations this season. Tehipite Chapter thanks all of you for your support and wishes you an enjoyable holiday season.**



## Central Valley Talk - A Local Internet Video Station Inviting Us To Appear

by Ron Martin

CentralValleyTalk.com has been online broadcasting local stories around the world for several years. The station's hours are mid-day, with shows including seven hours of Central Valley Business, an hour or two each of "Real Estate and Home Improvement," "Let's Talk Senior Issues," "Artists and Authors (& Musicians)," "Cool Fresno," "What are your Thoughts?" twenty other shows, and an hour of "Newsmakers with Mike Briggs," the show I appeared in. The Newsmakers show is an opening for activists to share what we're doing in live, online interviews.

The Newsmakers interviewer is the broadcaster of the station, Assemblyman Mike Briggs, who served in the seat now held by Jim Patterson. Mike encourages interviewees to bring files of graphics to include in the interview that illustrate the topic. I did not bring files, but the staff found pictures on the Internet that illustrated what I talked about: on the topic of oil trains Mike found the photo of the mushroom cloud over Lac-Mégantic from the explosion of the oil train parked nearby. On the topic of the pro-fossil-fuel organization the Cornwall Alliance he found their website banner.

After the interview, which has no fee to be scheduled, Mike offers the option to pay \$45 to have his staff edit out the interview and put it on YouTube, with titles I selected.

I have done two interviews on Central Valley Talk, the first about the work of Fresnoans against Fracking, which is also the Energy Committee of the Tehipite Chapter. Its YouTube title is "Fracking, Fresno, and Ron Martin – President of Fresnoans against Fracking." The second interview is on the topic of a newly formed committee in Fresno to reach out to evangelicals with the facts about climate change, "Evangelicals, Climate Change, & Ron Martin with the Evangelical Climate Change Network." You can view both of these by searching YouTube by their titles. The number of views is posted with each video, and although the numbers are low, there have been some who have seen what I shared.

The Central Valley Talk YouTube channel URL is [www.youtube.com/channel/UC4izSC91-10wqNe4Us5FGJA](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4izSC91-10wqNe4Us5FGJA).

If you would like to be interviewed and broadcast, you can contact CV Talk through a form on their website that includes the shows with open times for booking. The studio is at 1212 Van Ness, one door north of Olive in the Tower District.

### Citizens' Climate Lobby



**YOU CAN HELP STOP CLIMATE CHANGE AND MAKE A BETTER WORLD IN ONLY 5 MINUTES A MONTH**

**Call your Member of Congress and tell them you want action on climate change now.**

*Join our Monthly Calling Campaign Team at Citizens' Climate Lobby.*

It is a simple once-a-month call. To **register** and see how easy it is, go to: [www.cclcalls.org](http://www.cclcalls.org).

For more information about Citizens' Climate Lobby and our bill: [www.citizensclimatelobby.org](http://www.citizensclimatelobby.org).

Or contact Lesa at: [lesaschwartz@yahoo.com](mailto:lesaschwartz@yahoo.com).

# A Trip to Norway in 2015

by Bill Fjellbo

As you may have guessed from my last name, my father came from Norway. He left there in 1938 when he went to sea and fought in the Norwegian Navy in World War II. In June of 2015 I along with my wife Jan, youngest brother Eric, and nephew Tyler had the opportunity to go to Norway and meet the family that we had never seen. Our first stop was my dad's home town of Larvik which is about 60 miles south of Oslo, the Capitol. During our wonderful three-day visit, we met more Fjellbos than we knew existed! From there, Jan and I set out to explore the rest of the Country. Our first stop was Oslo with its many museums and parks. This included the Viking ship Fram and Kon-Tiki Museums, the National Gallery, Edvard Munch Museum, and Frogner Park. Frogner Park contains over a hundred sculptures by Gustav Vigeland, a contemporary of Rodin and Norway's greatest sculptor.



**GAUSTATOPPEN — ONE CAN SEE ONE-SIXTH OF NORWAY'S MAINLAND FROM THE TOP**

We particularly wanted to experience some of Norway's National Parks to compare them with our own. We chose to explore Jotunheimen and Hardangervidda National Parks which are in between Oslo and Bergen. My family had warned us that spring was late that year and they did not seem to be having much of a summer. Therefore we came prepared for it to be cool and rainy. We did not come prepared for 30 degrees and a blizzard, which it was on occasions, complete with whiteouts! Because of this, there was much more snow still on the ground than normal, and hiking was difficult or impossible at times. Keep in mind, this was mid-June.



**RJUKAN IN THE VALLEY WITH THE GAUSTA ABOVE**

To explore Hardangervidda we stayed in a hostel in the town of Rjukan. Rjukan sits in a very narrow valley with sheer granite walls soaring above it. Little sun light hits it in the winter so the town has installed parabolic mirrors on the mountains to direct sunlight into the town center.

Rjukan was the site of a famous commando raid during World War II. The Germans needed "heavy water" or  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$  for their attempt to

build a nuclear bomb. The only place they could get it was from the Norsk Hydro plant in Rjukan. This made the plant a high priority for the allies to destroy. After a previous attempt by the British had failed, nine Norwegian commandos attempted the attack. They were able to enter the plant, destroy the part that produced the  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$  and escape into the Hardangervidda wilderness on what is now called the Saboteurs Trail without even being seen by any of the 300 German guards. The German General in command was so furious at this that he had all of the guards transferred to the Russian Front.

Norwegian National Parks are different than America's in that there are no entrance fees, few if any visitor centers, and no friendly Park Rangers that we ever saw. The visitor center for Jotunheimen consisted of a kiosk in a grocery store manned by helpful volunteers when they had time.

On one of our first hikes from Rjukan, we took the Krossbanen cable car up to the summit of Mount Gvepseborg, a 900-meter elevation gain. From there you have a magnificent view of Rjukan in the valley below and Mount Gaustatoppen (elevation 6,178 feet) directly across. The "Gausta" is considered by many locals to be Norway's most beautiful mountain and I won't disagree with them. From there we took the Saboteurs Trail into the wilderness. We had hoped to see one of the herds of reindeer that live in the park, but we were told that due the recent snow they had not arrived yet.

Hardangervidda is Norway's largest national park and covers some 8,000 kilometers of icy mountain lakes and moorland amid the biggest mountain plateau in



**THE SHERPA STEPS**



Europe. After walking for some time through patches of lingering snow, tundra and alpine forest, we reached a series of granite steps in the trail that went up the hillside. We were later told that the steps had been laid the year before to control erosion by a crew of Sherpas who had come from Nepal to do the job. After reaching the crest we came upon the site of a German anti-aircraft gun emplacement meant to defend the Norse Hydro plant from air attack. The U.S. Air force did indeed attack the plant with 176 Flying Fortress and Liberator bombers in November of 1943.

Since it was getting colder and the snow on the trail ahead seemed to be getting thicker we decided to start back. We attempted to take an alternate route back to the cable car so that we could examine the parabolic mirrors that provide some light to central Ryjukan in winter. After passing through stands of mountain birch and patches of crowberry we reached a point where the trail was entirely blocked by deep snow and could proceed no farther. After taking the cable car back down the mountain we had a hearty dinner of lamb kebab, fish, and



**THE STAVE CHURCH AT VIK**

chips at the Gondal Taxi Burger run by a friendly Pakistani family.

The second park we visited was Jotunheimen. We used the village of Lom as a base. The rustic cabin that we rented was comfy and had a sod roof. After seeing the sights around Lom, including an 850-year-old stave church lit to “fairytale effect,” after dark we set off for Spiterstulen. Jotunheimen means “Giants Home,” an appropriate name for a park that contains 275 peaks above 5,000 feet, 60 glaciers, deep valleys, and plunging waterfalls. Spiterstulen is a country inn in the park, which you can use as a base for the many climbing and hiking opportunities in the area. We chose a hike along the Visa River with some impressive views of the Styggebeen Glacier across the valley. This 4- to 5-hour hike takes you through open, treeless terrain with high mountain peaks all around. Along the way you can look for the remains of old homesteads and hunting cabins which speak to the harsh conditions that people endured to survive there.



**ME AND THE VIKING**

It has been said that Norway’s most distinctive architecture is the stave church. It is a tall, skinny, wooden pagoda-like structure with dragonhead gargoyles built during the medieval era. On the inside it looks like a boat flipped upside down. Once, there were a thousand such churches, but today only a few dozen survive. On the way between Lom and Bergen we stayed in the pleasant tourist town of Balestrand on the Sognefjord. The elegant Kvikness Hotel makes you want to sit in the lounge all day sipping a cocktail or tea, watching the cruise ships come up the fjord. We had a delicious reindeer stew in a local café that evening (sorry, Rudolf) where our hostess told us of the colorful local history.

Nearby across the fjord at Vik is one of the most beautiful of these Stave churches. Built in the 12th century it sits between rolling hills and the fjord. Nearby is the site of the 22-meter-tall statue of a Viking that sits on a hill in the middle of nowhere, overlooking the fjord. The statue was a gift from Kaiser Wilhelm II, who while of a vacation in the area decided, “What you need is a giant Viking statue on that hill!” So he donated it and had it built in 1913. As Mel Brooks once said in a movie, “It’s good to be the King.”

It has been said that Norway’s most distinctive architecture is the



**JAN ON THE TRAIL AT SPITERSTULEN**



# Environmentalists Falsely Blamed for Creek Fire to Distract from Profit-driven National Forest Logging Policy

by Gary Lasky

While the Creek Fire raged in early September, Fresno radio personality Ray Appleton raved on-air that environmentalists had caused the fire — through supposed bureaucratic red tape, public review, and the National Forest planning process “since the 1970s.” Somehow, he claimed, “forest thinning” by the timber industry was halted because of this. The day of this radio program, hateful phone calls were made by an anonymous caller to two Tehipite Chapter officers, promising to “come after you sumbitches.” We notified the national Club’s top brass.

Blaming environmentalists and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), signed into law by President Richard Nixon in 1970, for catastrophic wildfires is a convenient fiction. Many elements contributed to the devastating fires of this year, more than ten times the acreage of any previous year. One cause agreed to by all sides is fuel load, which is caused by a lack of funding and willpower by the Forest Service to pay to clear the brush and downed wood that fuel today’s fires. True forest thinning almost never exists, because it is unprofitable, so the dangerous buildup of woody debris continues until a major forest fire occurs.

We need to start a Sierra Club public awareness campaign to fight back against the slick propaganda from anti-environmental politicians, such as Reps. Tom McClintock and Devin Nunes, and the corporate interests they represent, intent on raiding our natural resource base and public lands for short-term profit, with no regard for forest science.

When I visited Sen. Feinstein’s Fresno office in 2014 on matters relating to the drought, I saw maps documenting our National Forest die-off. I concluded that this was a product of timber industry lobbyists demanding logging of the bark-beetle killed trees to supposedly reduce the fire danger. The adaptability of the timber industry to create new “science” justifying timber cutting (“salvage logging,” for example) is remarkable. Now they propose “forest thinning.”

Effective forest thinning of brush and skinny trees requires hand tools, not heavy machinery, because compaction of the thin and fragile forest soil results in runoff and erosion. President Trump’s Idea of raking the forest may be fantasy, but it is a lot less harmful than the fantasy that cutting the forest (other than clearing vegetation within the immediate vicinity of homes) will protect homes from fire. We learned from the 1991 Oakland Fire that homes are vulnerable to flying embers from at least a half-mile away.



THE CREEK FIRE EXPLODED IN INTENSITY ON SEPTEMBER 5, 2020, ONE DAY AFTER IGNITION A MILE WSW OF THE COMMUNITY OF BIG CREEK IN SIERRA NF.

But, of course, that’s not what the logging industry and their Congressional zealots like McClintock mean by “forest thinning.” They prefer clearcuts, in any case, or any of the other lucrative approaches to harvesting “their” trees for market, methods based on the premise that a forest is more like a crop of corn to be harvested than a rich ecosystem.

We’ve seen this before in industry arguments that, somehow, clearing forests within a half-mile of structures will protect them. Positions such as this, when voiced by Forest Service personnel, drive environmental “purists” to their unshakeable conclusion that the Forest Service is inherently corrupt and can never be trusted to manage forest health. This is NOT true.

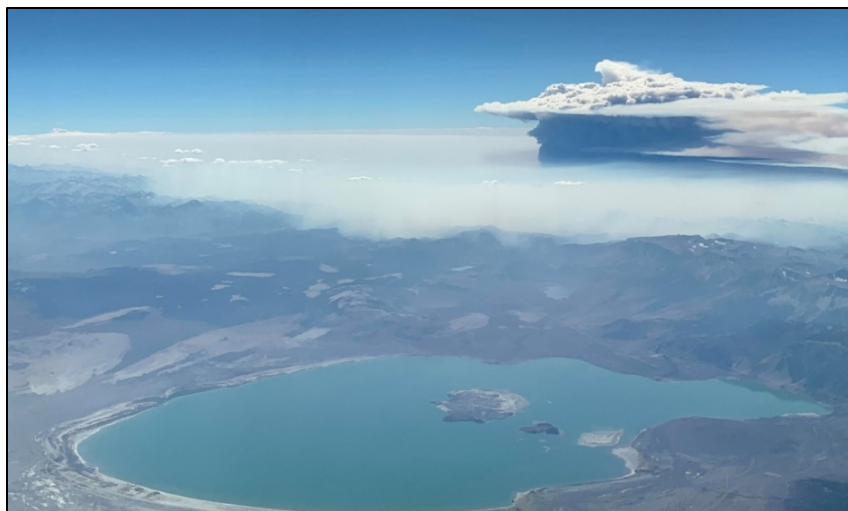
Extremism is the enemy of rational policymaking and reform. Rep. McClintock was recently quoted as saying that environmentalists have closed down “forest thinning” since the 1970s (through NEPA, presumably). This is an alarming rewrite of history — National Forest

clearcuts were the norm until President Clinton halted them in 1993.

“Forest thinning,” to McClintock and the timber industry, involves the profitable logging of 3- to 4-foot diameter trees in exchange for some productive cleanup work. Any actual thinning to improve forest health has to be profitable to the industry; otherwise there can be no contract. You might say that the US Forest Service was the original underfunded and privatized federal agency.

If there is a grain of truth to these broadsides against us, it is that forest purists in the environmental community, and inside the Sierra Club, reject the premise that the Forest Service can ever take positive, intelligent action. These purists believe the Forest Service to be irredeemably corrupt. They have boycotted open, collaborative, public processes of the agency in the past decade. And they have verbally attacked and intimidated Sierra Club forest activists, particularly in the Mother Lode Chapter.

In this way, ironically, our forest zealots agree with McClintock (and Reaganism) that, in their oversimplified



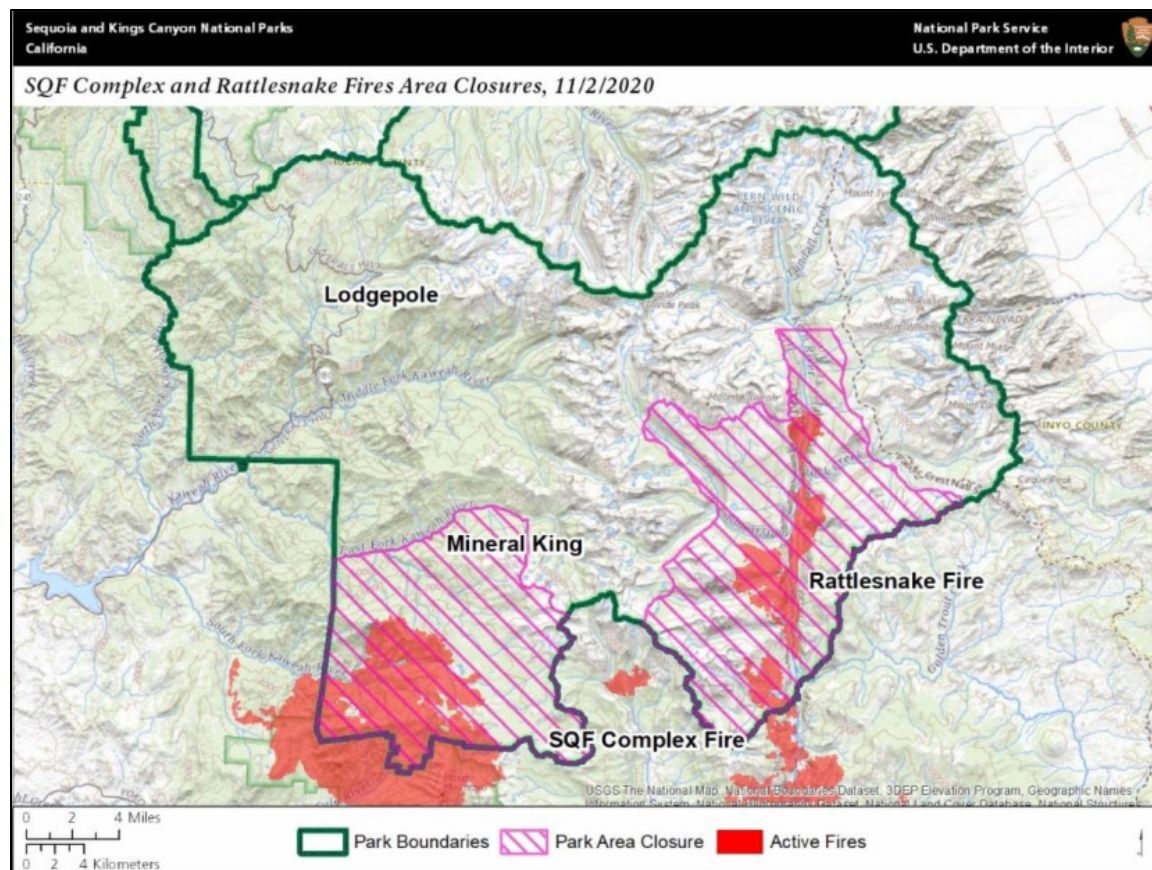
**THE CREEK FIRE CREATED ITS OWN WEATHER, GENERATING THIS LARGE PYROCUMULONIMBUS CLOUD, VIEWED FROM THE AIR OVER MONO LAKE.**

world view, it is the federal agencies that are the problem.

Where the forest purists and the extractive industry-funded Republican propaganda differ is over the question of whether MORE or LESS government oversight is the solution. In the case of McClintock and the Trump Administration, the answer is, obviously, “less regulation.”

It is our job to make the case that restoring funding to the Forest Service, and rebuilding an agency which has been systematically dismantled and decimated for FOUR DECADES, will take time. More — not less — government oversight of our public lands is required.

And we have no time to waste after the election to start this process — while we still have the institutional memory available, in the person of environmental activists and dedicated, now retired, Forest Service professionals who have been around since the 1970s.



**THE LIGHTNING-CAUSED CASTLE AND SHOTGUN FIRES WERE DISCOVERED ON AUGUST 19 IN GIANT SEQUOIA NATIONAL MONUMENT AND LATER MANAGED AS ONE INCIDENT, THE SQF COMPLEX. ON SEPTEMBER 14 THE FIRE CROSSED INTO SEQUOIA NATIONAL PARK, CAUSING CLOSURE OF MUCH OF THE PARK. AS OF DECEMBER 1, TULARE COUNTY'S MOST DESTRUCTIVE WILDFIRE HAS SCORCHED OVER 174,000 ACRES AND IS 90% CONTAINED.**





THIS HUGE, DENSE CLOUD CREATED ON SEPT 05 WAS A PYROCUMULONIMBUS CLOUD (PYROCB), ALSO CALLED A CUMULONIMBUS FLAMMAGENITUS, LATIN FOR “CREATED FROM FLAME,” DESCRIBING A CLOUD CAUSED BY A NATURAL SOURCE OF HEAT SUCH AS A WILDFIRE OR VOLCANO. RISING WARM AIR FROM THE FIRE CAN CARRY WATER VAPOR UP INTO THE ATMOSPHERE CAUSING CLOUDS.

ANY TYPE OF CONVECTIVE CLOUD CAN BE CREATED. IN THIS CASE, A CUMULONIMBUS, OR THUNDERHEAD CLOUD, WAS CREATED. PRECIPITATION AND LIGHTNING CAN ALSO OCCUR WITH THESE TYPES OF CLOUDS CREATING A RISK THAT THE FIRE WILL EXPAND DUE TO INCREASED WIND FROM PRECIPITATION DOWNDRAFT OR BY CREATING NEW FIRES DUE TO LIGHTNING STRIKES. THESE ARE ALL THINGS THAT FIRE MANAGERS MUST KEEP IN MIND WHILE CONTINUING TO TRY TO FIGHT THE FIRE. “THE PYROCUMULONIMBUS CLOUD CREATED AEROSOL INDEX VALUES INDICATE THAT THIS WAS ONE OF THE LARGEST (IF NOT THE LARGEST) PYROCB EVENTS SEEN IN THE UNITED STATES,” ACCORDING TO DR. COLIN SEFTOR, ATMOSPHERIC SCIENTIST AT GODDARD SPACE FLIGHT CENTER IN GREENBELT, MD.



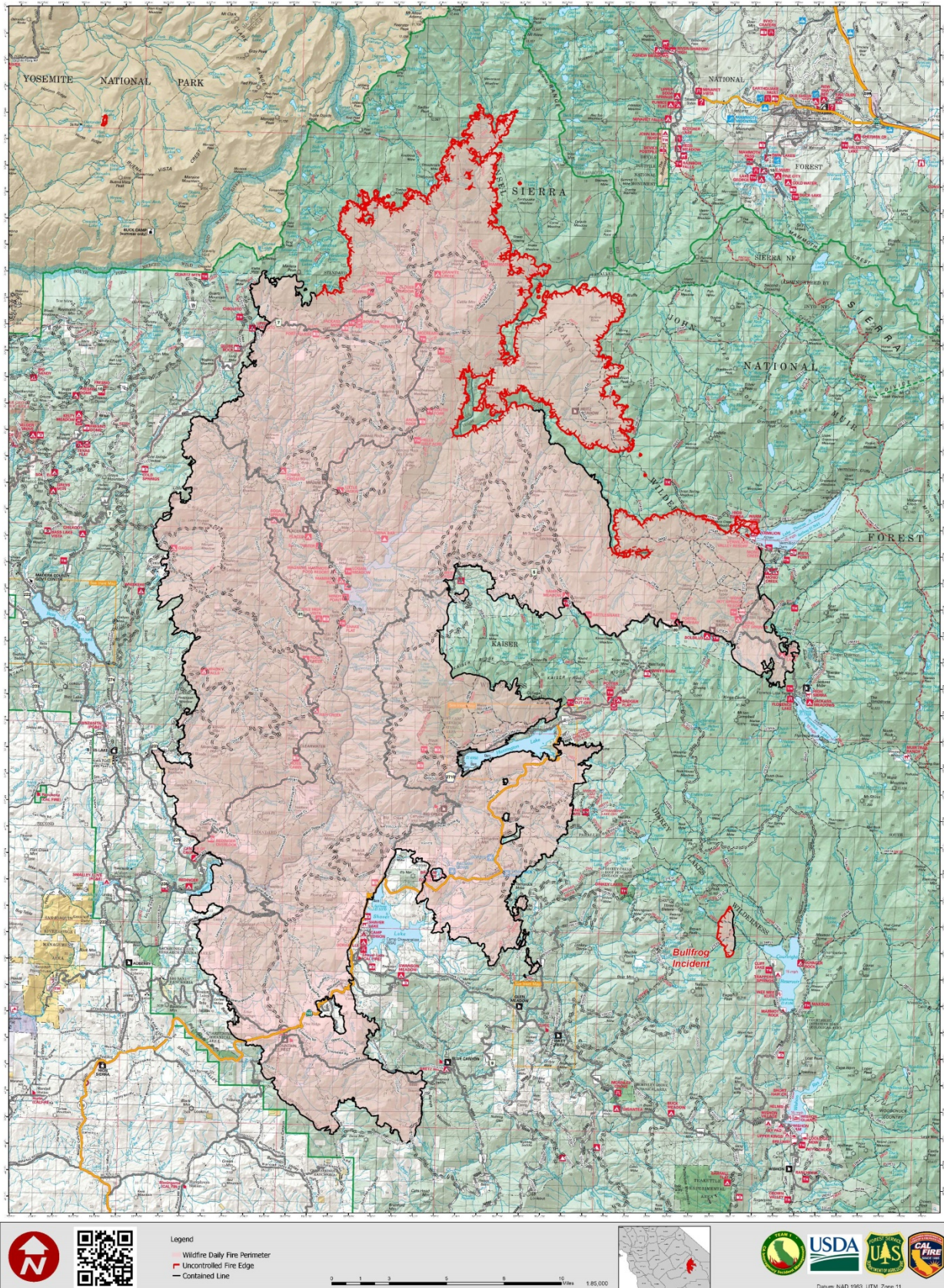
THE CREEK FIRE SMOKE PLUME OF SEPT 5<sup>TH</sup> IS PROMINENT IN THIS SATELLITE IMAGE. BURNING IN THE BIG CREEK DRAINAGE OF SIERRA NATIONAL FOREST, FIRE QUICKLY SPREAD ACROSS THE SAN JOAQUIN RIVER FROM FRESNO COUNTY INTO MADERA COUNTY. TIMBER IN THE AREA HAD APPROXIMATELY 80-90 PERCENT TREE MORTALITY FROM THE BARK BEETLE, PROVIDING AMPLE FUEL FOR THE FLAMES.



10-21-2020

CA-SNF-1391

CREEK FIRE



MAP OF CREEK FIRE BURN AREA IN SIERRA NATIONAL FOREST, OCTOBER 21, 2020. FIRE WAS CONTAINED TO THE EAST AND SOUTH ON THIS DATE, BUT WAS STILL ADVANCING INTO THE WILDERNESS, NORTH TOWARD THE BOUNDARY OF YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK AND NE TOWARD THE RITTER RANGE AND SILVER DIVIDE. MEGAFIRES LIKE THIS ONE WILL CONTINUE TO ERUPT UNTIL WE'VE FLARED OFF OUR FORESTS' STOCKPILED FUELS.





**TEHIPITE CHAPTER  
OF THE SIERRA CLUB**  
**P.O. BOX 5396**  
**FRESNO, CALIFORNIA 93755-5396**

**Non Profit Org  
U. S. Postage  
PAID  
Fresno, Calif.  
Permit No. 150**

### **Inside this issue of *Tehipite Topics***

Tehipite Chapter Election Report 2020 .....	Cover
Tehipite Chapter Information .....	2
Tehipite Chapter Meetings and Dec 16 Zoom Meeting .....	3
Merced Group Info and Dec 12 Zoom Meeting .....	4
Kirihara Scholarships Awarded to UC Merced Students .....	5
Local Internet Video Station Invites Us To Appear .....	9
A Trip to Norway in 2015 .....	10
Harvesting Our Forests in the Name of "Forest Thinning" .....	12

*Tehipite Topics* is published up to two or three times a year. This is the second issue of 2020. Downloadable color versions are available on the chapter website at [www.sierraclub.org/tehipite/newsletters](http://www.sierraclub.org/tehipite/newsletters). Back issues are archived on the website beginning from April 2004. Articles and photographs from Sierra Club members are always welcome for our upcoming issues. See the message in the box below. Send your contributions for our next issue by email to [robertsturner52@gmail.com](mailto:robertsturner52@gmail.com) before February 1, 2021.

## **A Call for Copy from the Editor:**

This issue of *Tehipite Topics* includes an account by Bill Fjellbo, former Chair of our chapter, of his 2015 trip into two wilderness parks of Norway. As editor of this newsletter, I am always in need of interesting and informative articles to bring to the Sierra Club members who read it.

Most of you, I surmise, are lovers of the wild lands of this planet, and have visited places, close by or farther afield, that affected you deeply, profoundly, maybe even changed the course of your life. We would like to read your story. Even just a paragraph accompanying a photograph or drawing would be a welcome gift for our readers.

Or perhaps you care so passionately about some aspect of our environment that you have become a protector, or an advocate for its preservation or restoration. Tell us why you care. Share your story. And enlist our support. Many stories raise an issue of concern that needs addressing now — to prevent harm or destruction before it is too late, or to repair damage that has already occurred at humanity's hands. This is environmental journalism at the grass roots, calling for action and providing links for the reader to get involved.

The best articles for the *Topics*, even those that appear to be mere travelogues, express values that imbue the Sierra Club and motivate its members, values centered on love of nature, and a commitment to help people enjoy nature in harmony and understanding, now and into the future. Surely you have a story to tell. Type it up and submit it to the *Topics*. Send it to me at [robertsturner52@gmail.com](mailto:robertsturner52@gmail.com) or mail it to the address above. Your stories matter. Please share them with us.

— Bob Turner, editor