



SIERRA CLUB
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Blue Oak Group



Butte, Glenn, Lassen, Plumas & Tehama Counties

Rooftop Solar *by Allen Wing*

If you have been thinking about a solar electric system, it would be wise to have it installed before April of this year.

Currently if you install a solar system PG&E will put you on a E-TOU-C rate schedule. This rate schedule during the summer will charge about 48¢ per kilowatt hour during the peak hours of the day between 4 p.m. and 9 p.m. every day of the year. The rest of the day they will charge about 42¢ per kilowatt hour. During the winter (October 1st thru May 31st) the charges will be about 39¢ per kWh and 37¢ per kWh respectively.



Any excess power you produce over and above your consumption during the day will give you credit at the rate of 42¢ per kWh, and the credit can be used up during the peak hours or carried forward to be used up in the winter when the sun does not shine as much. You only have to pay the billing/

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Rooftop Solar *continued from page 1*

meter reading charges of about \$10 per month and then you settle with PG&E at the end of a whole year of operation. Most of the systems we install on this rate schedule will pay for themselves within five to seven years depending upon the complexity of the installation.

After April of this year a new net metering program will be activated called NEM3. The rate schedule for solar will have a lower rate per kWh during the day when solar produces its power and a much higher peak hour rate. What is worse any excess power you produce during the day will not be credited to your account at the retail rate you are paying but at the wholesale rate which is currently

between 4¢ and 5¢ per kWh. This rate schedule will make solar almost impossible to pay for itself, but only lower your bill, which will be a benefit. The way solar will be able to pay for itself after April will be if batteries are added to the system so they can be charged during the day when the rates are low and then run the house on the batteries during the high rates of the peak hours and of course during power outages.

Adding batteries to a solar system will increase the cost and increase the payback time to about 10 years.

A word to the wise.

Ode to Snow Geese

We want them to bless us, but they're far away.
 No matter how much we beg for their cries,
 long to see them form cumulus clouds
 that fly fast and break apart, become flying Vs
 that flare in the sun, then disappear when they turn,
 but they're far away. Fields lie flooded today.
 Torrents came. Maybe they broke the drought.
 Snow geese have space. They don't need us.
 All water birds can spread out. Sandhill cranes
 find lots of mud where they forage and eat.
 invertebrates and plants. All the ducks:
 pintails, shovelers, widgeons, teals,
 get lots of space. We beg them to come close,
 but they thrive in this rain-drenched world.
 We celebrate you, far away birds.
 Thanks for this temporary hope.
 Gray Lodge, January 1, 2023

Written by Paul Belz

About Paul Belz

I am an environmental educator and writer who lives in Chico, I work with local science and nature education programs and have coordinated writer and workshops and a Storytelling class.

My poetry appears in a number of publications including *The Poeming Pigeon*, *Blueline*, the website *Califragile*, and in the anthologies *What's Nature Got to Do With Me?*, *Living In The Land Of The Dead*, and *Fire And Rain: California Ecopoetry*. A number of magazines and web sites have shared my prose articles on early childhood science education, green travel, and natural history. My book on Bidwell Park is projected to appear in print later this year.

Newsletter Information

Blue Oak Group News is published four times a year, in March, June, September, and December, by the Blue Oak Group of the Sierra Club, P.O. Box 2012, Chico, CA 95927.

For changes in mailing address or email address, contact Suzette Welch, booksontape@rocketmail.com.

For submissions, comments, or inquiries, contact: Suzette Welch, booksontape@rocketmail.com

530 570-3240. Please include name, phone number, and address with each submittal. Short, single-topic articles are preferred.

Deadlines for proposed articles and letters to the editor: February 1, May 1, August 1, and November 1.

Blue Oak Group News reserves the right to edit all submissions for reasons of space, clarity and potential libel. The opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Sierra Club or the Blue Oak Group.

Results of the 2023 Blue Oak Group Sierra Club Election

2023 Blue Oak Executive Committee

Chair: Suzette Welch
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Interim Secretary: Betty Volker
bettyinchico@gmail.com

Treasurer: John Hollister
hubhollister@yahoo.com

Board Member: Jane Coleman
volecole@juno.com 530-343-4768

Board Member: Wendy McCall
rootswendy@gmail.com

Board Member: Bridget Blair
bridget.blair1@gmail.com

Board Member: Marissa Maxey
mmaxey@healthcollaborative.org

The two new ExCom members were elected as write in candidates

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Facebook Administrator: Suzette Welch
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Forest activist: Patricia Puterbaugh
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Youth Activities: Wendy
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As you can see we have a number of positions which are open or as in the case of secretary have an interim person in the position. If you are interested in more information about any of the position or would like to volunteer please contact Suzette Welch booksontape@rocketmail.com.

The two new ExCom members elected as write in candidates Marissa Maxey and Bridget Blair have candidate's statements below:

Marissa Maxey

Marissa Maxey lived much of her adult life in the small mountain community of Mariposa California. If you have ever visited Yosemite, chances are you have stopped to refuel or buy snacks there. Marissa moved to Butte County to continue her education at Chico State. Currently, Marissa is the Project Director for LEAD (Leadership In Equity Action and Development), a project of the California Health Collaborative. LEAD's goal is to improve the health and wellbeing of North Valley residents through youth leadership development and health policies. Prior to directing LEAD, Marissa worked with the American Lung Association educating rural health care providers on wildfire safety issues. She is working towards her Master's in Public Health, specializing in the public health impacts of climate change on underserved communities. Marissa resides in Chico with her two sons, both of whom attend Inspire high school. When she has free time, she loves to garden and read sci-fi.



Bridget Blair

Bridget Blair, originally from South Texas, graduated from Rhodes College with a degree in Environmental Sociology. She was the campaign manager behind Addison Winslow's successful run for Chico City Council in 2022. She is experienced in issue campaigns, digital organizing, and environmental education. She enjoys wildcrafting, metalsmithing, and walking alleys looking for forgotten items she can turn into art.



Blue Oak Group Spring 2023 Outings

Coordinated by Alan Mendoza. For updated outings information, and for general information about outings and meetings places, please see our website: <https://www.sierraclub.org/mother-lode/blue-oak/outings>

Sunday, March 12 – Day Hike Yana Trail (2,B)

A 7.5 mile out and back hike starting from the Perry Riffle trailhead in the Sacramento Bend BLM area north of Red Bluff. We'll enjoy beautiful spring greenery and nice views of the Sacramento River and Mt. Lassen. Bring lunch, water hiking boots and \$ for drivers. Rain cancels. Meet at Chico Park & Ride at 8:30AM. Leader: Alan, 530-588-8031 or ajmendoza@prodigy.net

Sunday, March 26 – Day Hike Table Mountain (2,B)

Enjoy the spring wildflowers and waterfalls of spectacular Table Mountain north of Oroville. We will hike for a total distance of 7–8 miles and visit Beatson Canyon and Coal Canyon and see at least 5 waterfalls. Bring lunch, water, sunscreen, boots and \$ for drivers. Meet at Chico Park & Ride at 7:30AM or at Table Mountain parking lot at 8:15AM. Requires purchase of day land pass from state of California at: ca.wildlifelicenses.com/InternetSales Rain cancels. Leader: Alan, 530-588-8031 or ajmendoza@prodigy.net

Thursday-Sunday, June 22–25 – Backpack Yosemite National Park North Rim (3,C)

A four day loop backpack starting from the Yosemite Creek trailhead in Yosemite National Park. We will begin by setting up a car shuttle and then hike to the top of Yosemite Falls 7.5 miles with full packs and set up camp above the falls. On day two we will day hike to Eagle Peak for great views of Yosemite Valley and Half Dome. On day three we will pack 3-4 miles north to Lehamite Creek and set up camp. In the afternoon we will hike to North Dome for more great views. On day four we will pack out 4-5 miles and climb 1000' to our vehicles at Porcupine Creek. Shuttle required. Cost \$10 per person for permits. For experienced backpackers only. A Individual commissary and you must bring full backpacking equipment. Leader has extra backpacks, tents, sleeping bags, pads, stoves, bear canisters to share. Bear canister required or you can also rent one at the entrance station to park. Limited space. Reservation and advance payment of \$10 required to reserve your spot. Contact leader for more information and to make reservation and payment: Alan, 530-588-8031 or ajmendoza@prodigy.net



Table Mountain. Photo by Alan Mendoza

Trail Experts Needed

The Blue Oak Group is reprinting our *Hiking Butte County* book and are looking for help with updating the hikes. If you are interested in adopting any of the trails in the book, please let the editor, Alan Mendoza know (ajmendoza@prodigy.net or 530-891-8789). What we need is someone to hike the trail and check what condition the trail is in and make any necessary changes to the trail description or map. Also, if you have a trail you would like to add to the book, let us know. The following trails will be dropped from the book due to fire damage or lack of maintenance: #15 Feather River Flume; #16 Feather River Hospital Trail; #20 Indian Spring to Butte Creek; #22 Pulga to Mayoro; #28 Snow Mountain.

Conservation Report: Blue Oak Group Conservation Action

by Grace M. Marvin, Blue Oak Group Conservation Chair

On Friday, the 13th of January, 2023, the Blue Oak Group met. Election results for the Ex Com gives us seven voting members. Suzette Welch will return to being a very active Chair, while Wendy McCall will remain on the Board and will help with tabling (re challenges to Valley's Edge), and working to send young campers to Clair Tappan Lodge. (She is working with Paradise High School.) There are now 1324 total members in our Group. Other members have been active as well, and we highly welcome the two new young newcomers. (I chose not to be on the Board.)

Alan Mendoza, long time hiking leader is working on revising his excellent book about local hikes.

Thanks to a lawsuit against the city, Chico now has pallet shelters, for many, but not all of our houseless people. Our group is grateful to the Mother Lode Chapter for contributing funds for two trash dumpsters in Chico, and we are grateful for related volunteer efforts. We have other local activists who are desperately trying to get the city to approve a managed campground for the unhoused. This is an uphill struggle, i.e., to get support from the Chico City Council. All but one progressive candidate lost in the last election.

My report on Valley's Edge made it in *The Bonanza*, with the title, "Robin Hood Would do this: Fight against Urban Sprawl in Chico, CA." This past year, I have been working with the fabulous MLC leaders, the Blue Oak Group, Smart Growth Advocates, and other activists on strategies to fight the project. Legal news about that is likely forthcoming in the next two weeks.

If we cannot get rid of the project altogether, we locals tend to agree on the following:

1. Overall the project should shrink in size and in impact on the environment. We are not in favor of 2777 housing units planned for 1400 acres of beautiful land.

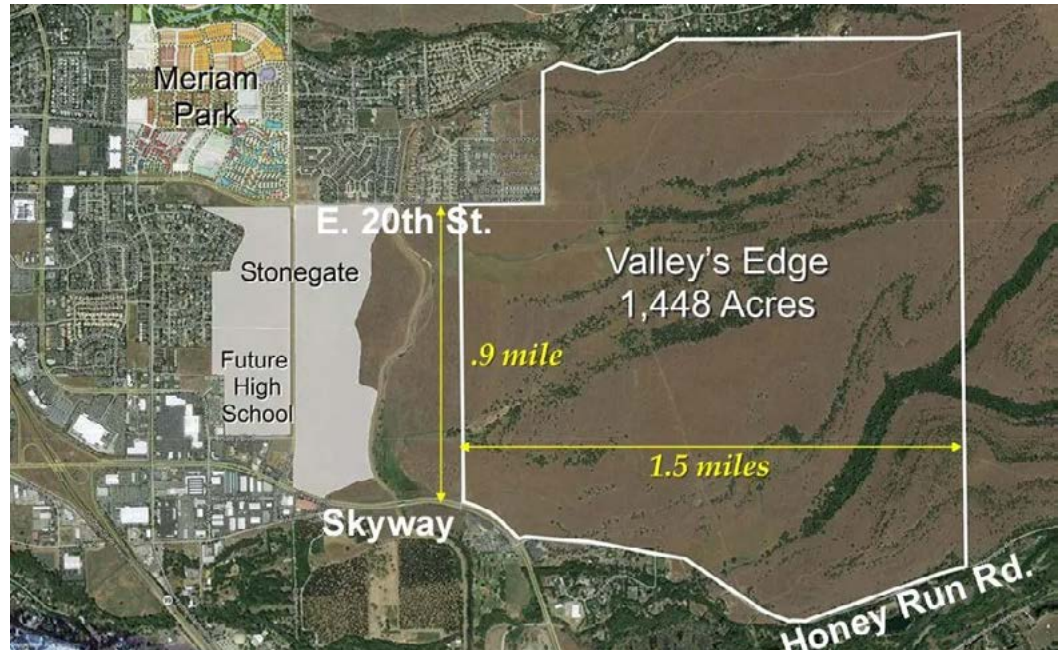
2. GHG emissions are hugely excessive with this project. To reduce that, and as the state law requires, there should be highly effective, public transit system that only high density housing would support. There should be transit availability to residents every 15 minutes to encourage people to use instead of cars.
3. Since the beautiful land sought by the developer (it needs to be annexed first) has numerous endangered species, we need protection of Butte County Meadow Foam, wetlands, oak and other woodlands. An Open Space area should also protect scenic views, the hills, deer, and numerous endangered animals. Moreover, the foothill area should not be developed where there is great fire danger.
4. There should be much more protection of our precious groundwater resources, and other waters. Related: The construction of private lakes should be removed from the project.
5. My main concern all along—shared with many others—is that not enough affordable housing will be built. The 4 acres for such housing in the VE plan is far too small. Moreover, the City is producing less than half of the extremely low, very low, and low-income houses that are needed. High density homes with at least at least 10% Inclusionary Zoning are needed in the Valley's Edge project.

There are members of the Blue Oak Group who are eager to help with a referendum to challenge the Valley's Edge project via personal donations and related efforts. The referendum is not being organized by our Sierra Club Group, and our Group is not providing donations to the referendum. Instead, the Mother Lode Chapter (thank you!), the Blue Oak Group and numerous others have contributed to the potential Valley's Edge litigation.

Lawsuit Challenges Sprawl Development in Northern California Wildfire Zone

Chico Project Would Put Thousands in Harm's Way

A coalition of environmental groups sued the city of Chico today for approving a development with nearly 2,800 housing units without properly assessing or mitigating wildfire and other environmental risks. The Valley's Edge project would bring nearly 5,700 residents to an area that has burned repeatedly and is adjacent to the town of Paradise, which was devastated by the 2018 Camp Fire.



“Tragically, Butte County knows far too well how destructive and unpredictable a fast-moving wildfire can be. Unfortunately, city leaders didn’t apply that knowledge when approving this risky project,” said J.P. Rose, a senior attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity. “It’s too dangerous to wait until the next wildfire to test out evacuation plans. We have to make smart, science-based decisions now.”

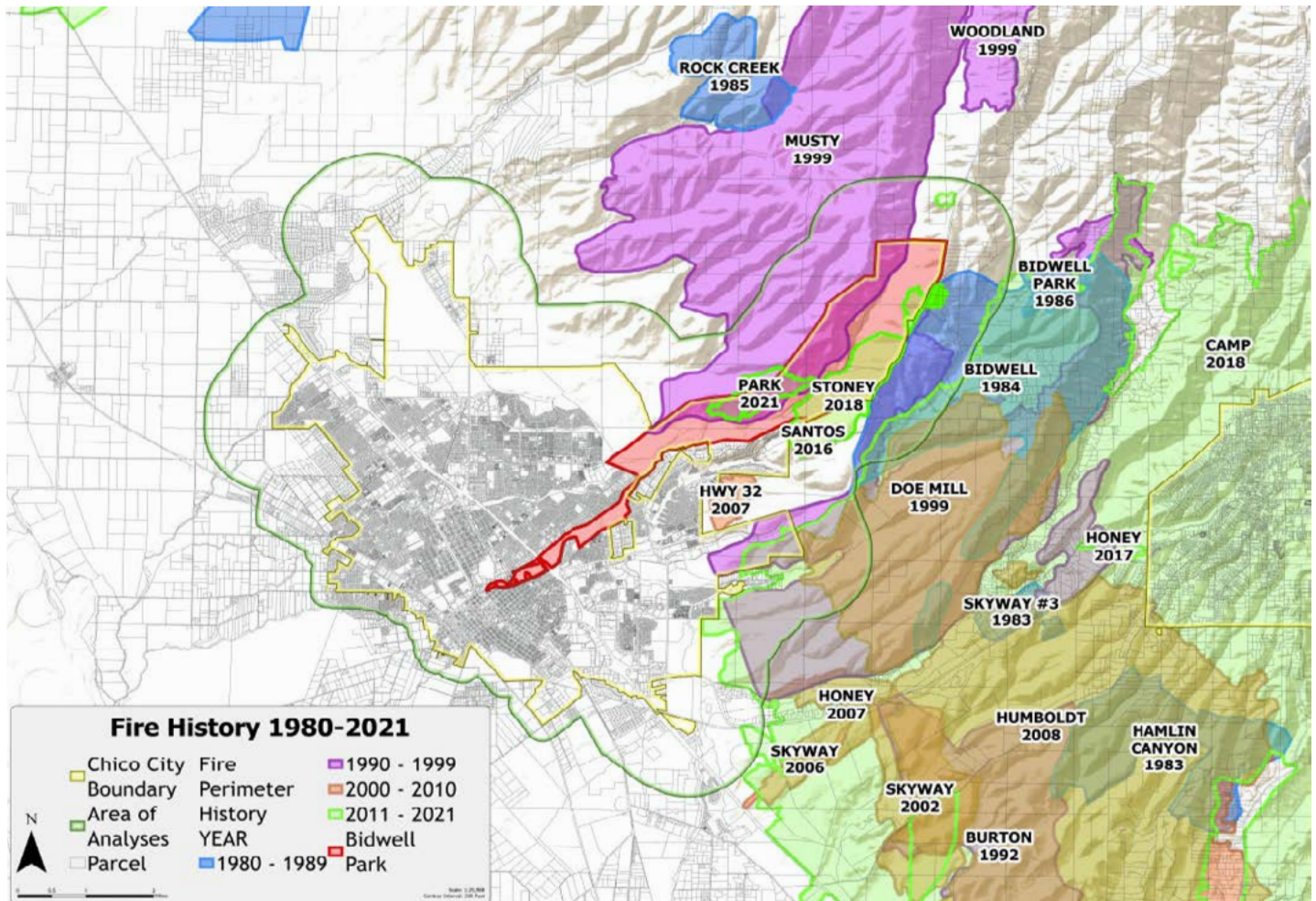
Today’s lawsuit argues that the city failed to adequately analyze wildfire conditions and evacuation routes when it approved Valley’s Edge last month. The 1,400-acre project site is prone to wildfires, having burned in 1999, 2007 and 2018. The Camp Fire, the deadliest and most destructive fire in state history, spread to the eastern part of Chico, causing widespread evacuations and dangerous air pollution.

The lawsuit also asserts that the city failed to provide an adequate study on how the groundwater supply will be affected by this project and did not consider the harms to imperiled wildlife, including the Butte County meadowfoam, an endangered flower. The project, located in vernal pool habitat, would also harm the conservancy fairy shrimp, vernal pool fairy shrimp and vernal pool tadpole shrimp.

“We’re quickly losing what little remains of precious vernal pools to encroaching development and climate change,” said Barbara Vlamis, executive director of AquAlliance. “Since the early 1990s, the city of Chico, activists, and resource agencies sought to protect vernal pools in Butte County, but here we are today with a city council ignoring past commitments and efforts. Without more foresight and better planning, we’ll lose these Butte County gems forever and we’ll deeply regret it.”

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Lawsuit Challenges Sprawl Development in Northern California Wildfire Zone *continued from p 6*



Chico area wildfire history, 1980–2021. From “City of Chico Community Wildfire Protection Plan - 2022”

“The lesson from past wildfires is that we need to plan and build much smarter,” said Don Mooney, an attorney for Sierra Club. “Bringing a sprawling development to a fire-prone area without considering the consequences is not smart planning. Chico deserves a safer project that doesn’t decimate the vernal wetlands we still have.”

Today’s lawsuit was filed in Butte County Superior Court by the Center, AquAlliance and Sierra Club. The coalition is challenging the city for violating the California Environmental Quality Act when approving this project.

Contact:

J.P. Rose, Center for Biological Diversity, (408) 497-7675, jrose@biologicaldiversity.org

Barbara Vlamis, AquAlliance, (530) 895-9420, barbarav@aqualliance.net

Don Mooney, Sierra Club, (530) 758-2377, dbmooney@dcn.org

Feather River Canyons National Monument Proposed by *Patricia Puterbaugh*

The organization, The Friends of the Plumas Wilderness, has written a detailed proposition for a Feather River Canyons National Monument. It was presented to the Butte County Forest Advisory Committee (FAC), and we were asked to send comments to the Butte County Board of Supervisors (BOS) with our opinions.

The following is my comment sent to the BOS as the Butte County FAC representative for environment and watershed.

The proposal for a Feather River Canyons National Monument is in the very early stages of consideration and will take a few years to develop. The public, especially the local public, will be engaged in the development and design of this National Monument. Local tribes, counties, the state and local groups will be involved in leading and attending information sessions, focus groups and public input meetings. The Butte County FAC viewed the excellent movie "Visions of the Lost Sierra" where the Monument area was highlighted. It will be a formal process after the plan is formulated including negotiations with the USFS, NEPA documentation and studies. None of the plan is set in stone as written!

The purpose and need, or reason for this proposal is to inspire local residents and communities to work to restore and care for this precious region that is in dire need of tending.

As we are all acutely aware, the Plumas National Forest and surrounding communities have endured numerous devastating wildfires in the last decade. The Feather River PG&E infrastructure is crumbling, antiquated and dangerous. The state highway running through the canyon is under constant construction. Many areas of the forest have been gated or cut off to public access and many are burned and inaccessible.

A National Monument designation will enable more fund raising, grant possibilities, and "care" of this important region. National Monuments offer more protection to sensitive and unique areas guarding against large scale water project development and diversions, large scale mining, and unmanaged, unregulated recreation.

National Monument Designation will mandate

that a plan be written within 5 years of monument designation outlining protections and restoration plans.

The Plumas National Forest (PNF) has generally been unable to manage our lands for the benefit of the environment or our citizens. This is for literally thousands of reasons! The PNF Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) was written over 25 years ago and a new plan does not appear to be anywhere close on the horizon. We need a new plan to address the new challenges of life in our future. Climate change, increasing populations wanting to recreate on their lands, invasive species, droughts and floods. The current LRMP does not allow any prescribed fire in wilderness and prescribed fire is woefully deficient on the entire PNF. All experts agree we cannot thin ourselves out of this dilemma or "leave things as is." We need prescribed fire and more options for managing these wildlands for future generations.

In the proposal controversial subjects are addressed. Fighting fire in wilderness will be proposed. It is imperative for our future. Motorized vehicles, trails and access for motorcycles, OHVs and others will be allowed where they exist. There are 4 existing OHV trails into the inner canyon of the federally designated Wild and Scenic Middle Fork Feather River. These will be protected and potentially others added. The Middle Fork of the Feather is a treasure. Access will be protected where it exists and when a management plan is written all will benefit.

Instead of a hodgepodge, everyone loses, winner takes all, resource extractive focus we could have "the whole enchilada."

The Feather River is one of the most impaired watersheds in the USA. It is the headwaters of the State Water Project providing drinking water to 27 million Californians. Wildlife habitat including wild trout, California Spotted Owl, deer, Sierra Nevada Yellow-Legged Frog, Foothill Yellow-Legged Frog, Northern Goshawk, bobcat, American Marten and so many others are abundant in this area. Old growth forests, springs, waterfalls including Curtain Falls, Feather Falls, Seven Falls and others grace this area.

There are many trails, grinding stones, gathering

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Feather River Canyons National Monument Proposed *continued from p 8*

sites and burial grounds of the Maidu tribe here. Traditional Ecological Knowledge will be a large part of the monument proposal.

There is loads of history in this area including gold rush sites and historical trails. These will be protected!

Recreation is a paramount element of this proposition including the water falls mentioned above. OHVs use the area to access the wild trout waters of the Middle Fork. The Lakes Basin Recreation area is heavily used. Kayakers world wide use the river for multi-day trips. The Pacific Crest Trail runs for 65 miles through the proposed area. Bucks Lake and Wilderness are very popular with locals and others.

It is documented that National Monuments and National Parks are a positive economic driver for our local communities. Health business, real estate, restaurants, resorts, and retail grow with National Monument designations. The shift from resource extraction to Eco-restoration, recreation, and tourism is healthy for the environment and local towns. Protected, open space is very important to people. Protecting water, wildlife and our way of life is why we support this proposed National Monument in our very own Feather River Canyons.

The BOS wrote an official response to various local, state and federal leaders with their suggestions and opinion. In general, they believe the plan for designation is another layer of regulation and bureaucracy that may not necessarily benefit north state recreationalists or the forest. It is true there are many layers of protection and “regulation” on our federal lands.

However, National Monument designation is particularly protective and there are very clear guidelines on how a NM is governed. The Friends of the Plumas Wilderness is very committed to this designation and also the work it will take to govern the Monument after designation.

Stay tuned regarding this exciting proposal for our region. The Friends of Plumas Wilderness has lots of information on their website, as well as maps and details about location.

We Need You to Help Protect Public Lands!

The Mother Lode Chapter sorely needs Blue Oak members to join the 30 by 30 Committee, preferably from this (WIDE) region or further north—to help identify and address lands we want/ need to protect from development.

One can meet via ZOOM. If you are not a Sierra Club member, perhaps you know someone who is and may be interested.

Thirty-by-thirty (30×30) refers to “efforts by the global community to conserve 30% of terrestrial and marine habitat by 2030. The movement started with international calls for setting aside portions of the globe as protected, and became official policy in the U.S. in 2021.”

The Sierra Club is taking this on!

Please let me know if you are interested. Feel free to contact me at g-marvin@comcast.net or the Conservation Chair of the Mother Lode Chapter, Sean Wirth, at WirthSOSCranes@yahoo.com

Thanks, Grace Marvin

Conservation Chair of the Blue Oak Group

Need For Volunteers

If you want to continue to have a local Sierra Club, fighting for the environment and providing hiking opportunities, we need to have more participation of the membership. Contact Alan Mendoza ajmendoza@prodigy.net if interested in becoming outings leader.

Join the Blue Oak Facebook Page

The Blue Oak Group of the Sierra Club has a Facebook page where people can find information about local conservation issues and events and post items of interest. Anyone can go to the page and ask to become part of the conversation.



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