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# Blue Oak Group



**Butte, Glenn, Lassen, Plumas & Tehama Counties**

## Lassen Forest Preservation Report

*By Patricia Puterbaugh, Committee of the Blue Oak Group, Sierra Club*

What a winter it was for those of us in the foothills and mountains! Mountains and mountains of snow and we are so fortunate with the abundance of water. Our spring in Cohasset is now a little creek, where for over 3 years it has been barely running. We hope the flooding will be not destructive in the valleys.

The current forest focus for the Butte County Foothills and communities is fire prevention. CAL FIRE's "first five feet" and defensible space around our homes is paramount. The Cohasset community and others in Butte County have been the recipient of grants to thin along evacuation routes and around homes, thanks to the Butte County Fire Safe Council and other organizations. After 120 years of fire suppression, logging and grazing, our forests and wildlands are "out of wack." Slowly, we are working to change that and the work is endless!

Some projects feel and look like "overkill" such as the clearing along Hwy 32 East. Caltrans is in charge of that project and I am not sure of the goal. Generally it is about having a corridor to

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## Lassen Forest Preservation Report *continued from page 1*

slow down or stop a fire and having a place where fire fighters may be able to safely stage equipment, and put out a fire. There are also several community protection projects starting in the Plumas National Forest to create cleared areas around communities for fire protection. The Camp, North Complex, and Dixie Fires have burned so much of Butte County and beyond, that CAL FIRE and the USFS are struggling about how to respond.

It is unclear that these kinds of firebreaks will be effective in the wind driven wildfires like those mentioned above. Lake Almanor, Hwy 89 and Chester did not stop the Dixie Fire.

The Butte County Fire Safe Council (BCFSC) has board meetings every first Wednesday of the month, from 9–11 AM. You can attend by zoom or in person. Their website (<https://www.bcforestsafecouncil.org/>) has the details. There are also many “firewise communities” and fire safe councils around Butte County that you can become part of. It is an interesting and informative way to learn and comment on what is happening in your community forests.

I am trying to attend BCFSC meetings as well as the Butte County Forest Advisory Committee, the South Lassen Watershed Group, and the Burney Hat Creek Collaborative. Many are on zoom which makes attending easier.

Biomass is a big topic at all of these meetings. What to do with all the dead trees killed by fire and beetles? Let them fall, cut them for salvage, burn, burn, burn? There is lots of discussion and some disagreement. What we all agree on is that prescribed fire is the best tool, the least expensive and the most ecological. However, it is not easy due to air quality restraints and the potential for more wildfire. There



Vilas Rd., Cohasset March 2023. Photo Patricia Puterbaugh

is a small biomass plant that just broke ground in Burney. I agree with the idea of having small, locally controlled biomass plants to produce energy.

In our back yard the Upper Butte Creek Headwaters Project is out for scoping. This project is approx. 19,000 acres in the upper reaches of Butte Creek. Jonesville and Butte Meadow communities as

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### Newsletter Information

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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.

## Lassen Forest Preservation Report

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well as the Colby Mountain lookout are encompassed by the project. The more comments from the public the better. The USFS appreciates public participation. The best way to read the plan is to view the documents at (<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/lassen/?project=62761>) on the Lassen National Forest website's Upper Butte Creek Headwaters Project page. Our local Butte County Resource Conservation District wrote the scoping and is directing the project plan, They will receive public comments, do lots of surveys for wildlife and botany, and then put out an Environmental Assessment. We will then have another opportunity to make comments.

There are many positive parts of the project, such as meadow and aspen restoration, moving and decommissioning bad roads, and reforestation in severely burned areas. A good deal of the project was burned at varying degrees by the Dixie fire.

We are concerned about the plan to take trees from 30-40" diameter at breast height (dbh). Also concerning is the plan to put in fire breaks along many miles of roads where the basal area and canopy cover will be very low or non-existent.

There is no precedent for either the cutting of trees over 30" or cutting so heavily along roads for a fire break. There is no science to justify this level of logging. This is especially true, as this area is home to many old growth dependent species such as California Spotted Owl, Northern Goshawk, Pacific Fisher, and American marten, as well as threatened species of

frogs. As you all know, our Butte Creek is one of the remaining California streams to support wild salmon - but they are struggling.

There is another large project in the planning on the Lassen National Forest Almanor Ranger District called the "West Lassen Watershed Project." This is a very large project of approximately 200,000 acres. There will be a public meeting about this project in Mineral on June 10th from 11 AM – 12:30 PM. Location not determined at this time. This is one of the many projects in the Sierras that are trying to "increase the pace and scale" of "forest restoration."

Several US forests in the Sierras are presenting large scale restoration and logging projects like this, something that is very new. Environmental groups are challenging these projects when they intersect and effect threatened and endangered species, old growth forests or wild and scenic river corridors. We understand and support the need for communities to have firesafe boundaries, but we question the science of heavily logged fuel breaks and cutting of very large trees for safety.

We always support prescribed fire and continue to push the use of broadcast burning any time we can. In Butte County we have an awesome "Prescribed Burn Association" that is active all over the county assisting private landowners with good fire.

I hope you can get out in our beautiful forests this season to enjoy the bounty we are surrounded with!

## 2023 Blue Oak Group Sierra Club

### 2023 Blue Oak Executive Committee

Chair: Suzette Welch  
 Interim Secretary: Betty Volker  
 Treasurer: John Hollister  
 Board Member: Jane Coleman  
 Board Member: Wendy McCall  
 Board Member: Bridget Blair  
 Board Member: Marissa Maxey

### Committee Chairs & Other Contacts

Rep. To Motherlode: Grace Marvin  
 Conservation Chair: Grace Marvin  
 Facebook Administrator: Suzette Welch  
 Forest activist: Patricia Puterbaugh  
 Membership Chair: Position Open  
 Newsletter Editor: Suzette Welch  
 Newsletter Assistant Editor: Carla Resnick

Newsletter Distribution: Steve Miller, Dave Nopel, and Suzette Welch  
 Newsletter Advertising: Position Open  
 Outings Chair: Alan Mendoza  
 Outreach Chair: Wendy McCall  
 Political Chair: Position Open  
 Program Chair: Position Open  
 Publicity : Position Open  
 Treasurer: John Hollister  
 Blue Oak Website: Louise Casey  
 Youth Activities: Wendy McCall

## Clarification About Sierra Club Blue Oak Group Position on Valley's Edge and the Need for Housing in Chico

The Sierra Club is not against development, per se, and more housing in Chico. It is for housing to meet the needs of people already living here. It is against sprawl development like Valley's Edge which would occupy open land which currently serves as a buffer against wildfires. Valley's Edge includes a variety of expensive housing designed to attract people from outside of this area, creating an increase in car traffic and air pollution negatively impacting climate change. The project will also extract large quantities of water from our already depleted aquifer to water lawns and fill the planned lakes.

Sierra Club is for more housing which is needed for medium income people who are already living and working here. It is for housing within the footprint of Chico which will enable its residents to walk or bike to nearby stores, restaurants, and community gathering places and make public transit feasible.

Compared to the sprawl of Valley's Edge, the compact multi-use development proposed for Barber Yard looks like it may be the kind of development we need and one which the Sierra Club Blue Oak Group is likely to support.

Suzette Welch

Chair Sierra Club Blue Oak Group

## 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 editor Alan Mendoza know by emailing or calling at: (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.

## 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](mailto: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.



## Blue Oak Group Summer 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>

### **Tuesdays, 7–8 PM**

#### **Thursday-Sunday, June 22–25 Backpack (4,D)**

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 3 miles round trip 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 [ajmendoza666@gmail.com](mailto:ajmendoza666@gmail.com)

### **Saturday, July 8**

#### **Day Hike (1,A) Colby Meadows (Educational)**

A stroll through the beautiful, lush meadows, pines and wildflowers along Colby Creek near Jonesville, east of Butte Meadows. Along the way we'll learn about the Colby Mountain Recreation Project which will add 20 miles of single track trail in the Lassen National Forest for hikers, equestrian and mountain bike usage. At about 5000' it will eventually be part of the 300+ mile, long distance Lost Sierra Route that will link 15 mountain towns for world class recreation. Bring boots, water, lunch and carpool \$.

Meet at Chico Park & Ride at 8:30 AM. Leader: Alan, 530-891-8789 or [ajmendoza666@gmail.com](mailto:ajmendoza666@gmail.com).



Lassen National Park. Photo by Alan Mendoza

### **Saturday, August 19**

#### **Day Hike (2,B) Lassen National Park**

Cold Boiling Lake, Bumpass Hell and Conard Lake. An out and back 6-7 mile hike to Bumpass Hell from the Kings Creek Picnic area. For strong hikers in good condition only. If the Bumpass Hell trail is open we will do a car shuttle and 8-9 mile hike ending at the Visitor Center. Subject to snow conditions in the park. Call or email the leader in the week before the hike to confirm if the hike is still on. Bumpass Hell is the largest hydrothermal area in the park and the trail to it has spectacular wildflower displays. Bring lunch, water, boots, hat, camera, sunscreen and carpool \$.

Meet at Chico Park & Ride at 8 AM. Leader: Alan, 530-891-8789 or [ajmendoza666@gmail.com](mailto:ajmendoza666@gmail.com)

## Current Status of Chico's Homeless Siblings

by Mary Kay Benson, Butte County Shelter for All, volunteer

Our major fire events continue to affect many. 2018's Camp Fire destroyed 14,000 Paradise homes, where only 1,400 have been rebuilt in the four years since—for the few who had great insurance. Mostly low-income people lived on the burn scars. 2020's Bear/North Complex fires burned 1197 homes in Berry Creek. 25% of our homeless are fire survivors. Before the fires Chico's vacancy rate was 1%. PG&E pled guilty to 84 counts of manslaughter for Paradise. Some fire survivors received a 30% payment of estimated PG&E settlements, the rest are still waiting.

Many unhoused are hidden and not counted as they are doubled up with family or friends, as are 500 children in Chico schools per CSUD 2021. 45% of CSU Chico students declared they experienced homelessness in the past year. People over 60 will soon comprise 30% of our unhoused population, as rents skyrocket and fixed incomes can't keep up with the costs of living. Most homeless have SSI, SDI, SSA income or work, but cannot afford Chico rent, much less first and last month's rent and security deposit.

The last Point in Time (PIT) homeless count, always an undercount, is a snapshot one day in January every 2 years. While volunteers interview one person at a time, others walk away or are not available. After postponing PIT during Covid, in 2022 a makeup PIT reported Chico had 885 unhoused with a total of 1135 in Butte County. This January's report is expected in May 2023 to show increases.

[https://www.buttehomelesscoc.com/uploads/1/1/7/5/117500423/2022\\_butte\\_community\\_pit\\_report\\_final.pdf](https://www.buttehomelesscoc.com/uploads/1/1/7/5/117500423/2022_butte_community_pit_report_final.pdf)

PIT determines government funding. January 2022, Chico had 288 shelter beds available (only Torres and Pallet shelters count per legal settlement) for 885 unhoused people. Covid necessitated Torres operate at half capacity. The city was sued on behalf of 8 homeless plaintiffs, Warren v. Chico in 2021, just before the last large encampment at Comanche Creek was to be "swept" "cleared out," or "enforced," what advocates call raided. That lawsuit forced the city to settle, as the court deemed Chico to be in violation of

our federal Constitution's 8th and 14th Amendments, and precedent to provide enough shelter beds or people could not be moved with no place to go. That caused the city's Pallet Shelter to open and one small sanctioned camp site, which was also recently raided. Two more are required and just designated, unavailable yet.

Per Butte County Housing Authority Executive Director, Ed Mayer: we need 8,000 more housing units, shelters, and 2-3 campgrounds. For every apartment opening, there are 10 applicants; though it is cheaper to shelter folks—\$15K/yr with services, than to keep moving them, \$45K/yr. Each raid wastes tens of thousands of taxpayer dollars offering no solutions, and with heavy equipment doing more harm to the environment than the campers, who simply move along to other neighborhoods. Trending criminalization and enforcement increases as this recent CalMatters headline illustrates: "California cities are cracking down on homeless camps. Will the state get tougher, too?" <https://calmatters.org/housing/2023/04/california-homeless-city-laws/>

Several affordable apartments are opening in the next year or two. Jesus Center is adding 100 beds, but they are high-barrier, which means residents must be clean and sober, may have religious conditions; and therefore do not count as part of the settlement. There are many people who cannot live in congregate shelters, which means large group sleeping rooms with many beds, not separate rooms for each person. At Torres Shelter, most sleeping rooms have triple tier bunk beds, where many elders and disabled cannot access the top bunks. Some folks have PTSD or other mental health issues which prevent their access. The Pallet shelters are 8'x8' plastic cubicles, they are the most desirable so far, and are most difficult to obtain.

Because of past policies, especially not building public housing since the 1970's and closing mental institutions in the 1980's, this crisis has been decades in the making and cannot be corrected quickly. Better policies would be to build more non-congregate shelters as this reality is going to prevail for a long time yet. Political will is essential.

## Chico Housing Action Team Update

by Nicole Drummond, CHAT Executive Director

CHAT started in 2013 as a response to the growing homelessness problem facing Butte County. A group of like-minded community members set out to help some of those individuals living without shelter.

In 2015, still operating as an unfunded, volunteer-run program, CHAT opened its first rental house, renting out bedrooms to people who were homeless and willing to share housing -- the start of the Housing Now Program. Since then, CHAT has added programs to aid different categories of people in need: people with mental illness, youth, students, families with children, disaster survivors, people with health issues, and housing for veterans. CHAT continues to rely on volunteers for much of its work. CHAT has built on its success and has added paid staff. Today, we operate with a dedicated staff that honors and sustains our tradition of grass roots leadership, volunteer involvement and community support.

CHAT has always valued sustainability in all aspects of our work. Shared housing models create affordable housing opportunities for those that might otherwise be living outside without appropriate facilities for waste. The biggest move towards sustainability, in terms of costs, is acquiring our own properties for residents to live in. Another strategy includes replacing our old gas-powered maintenance tools with new electric and battery-powered tools. The four homes we recently acquired have solar panels installed and we are planning to install more. CHAT also helps residents acquire bikes for transportation and provides support to access public transportation.

CHAT is always working towards solutions to housing the most vulnerable in our community. The following are examples of some of our current projects:

Recently the governor's office announced that CHAT was awarded a CCE grant as part of the State of California's master plan on aging, to purchase and renovate two six-bedroom three-bathroom homes for individuals on Social Security. Both homes are handicap accessible and will be renovated with fully ADA compliant bathrooms. It is very difficult to find housing for individuals in wheelchairs or walkers, so this is very exciting. Significant staff time & financial

investment went into securing this funding.

"We are excited to have our unhoused neighbors call this place home. Here at CHAT, the possibilities are endless!" says Executive Director Nicole Drummond.

CHAT has received an incredible donation of five-acres of land. CHAT Vice President Bob Trausch has been working with two local builders, an architect, and an engineer, some of whom were key in making the donation happen. These professionals have helped CHAT connect with Butte County and the State regarding permits and regulations, as well as contacting neighboring businesses.

"It's incredible how generous the community is in helping CHAT," Bob says. "Thanks to this individual who wanted to help the community by donating this land, we will be able to provide more housing. We want to do something special with this property, and we want to include homes for people with disabilities.

Another example of amazing partnerships is the upcoming Hope Village, six tiny homes built on a lot by Slater and Son. CHAT will rent the homes and each one will have an agreement with a faith-based organization that will provide volunteer and financial support. We are partnering with local shelters to move individuals into their new homes where they can start to build community.

Everhart Village is an innovative shelter project between CHAT and Butte County Behavioral Health. The village will provide sleeping cabins for 20 individuals who are existing BCBH clients and who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. After years of diligent work Everhart Village is making so much progress! When the site is ready the partially completed cabins will be moved to their new home. The healing, supported, shelter village will be a project like no other in our state. We are so excited to be moving forward.

Please consider supporting CHAT's work to improve our community. Donate, volunteer, spread the word. If you need support with planned giving, IRA distributions, or in-kind donations please don't hesitate to reach out and our knowledgeable staff will assist you. 530-399-3965 or [development@chicohousingactionteam.net](mailto:development@chicohousingactionteam.net)

## Volcano Adventure Camp at Lassen Volcanic National Park

By Paul & Kathy Coots

Lassen Park Foundation Board Member & Volunteer Lifetime Sierra Club Members

The Lassen Park Foundation (Foundation) is a California non-profit established in 1985. The Foundation's mission is to promote and financially support programs and projects that take place in Lassen Volcanic National Park (LVNP). True to its mission, since 1996 the Foundation and LVNP have been introducing youth to the joys of camping in a national park. To enhance the youth camping at LVNP, the Foundation worked to build the infrastructure that now houses Volcano Adventure Camp.

### History of the Volcano Adventure Camp

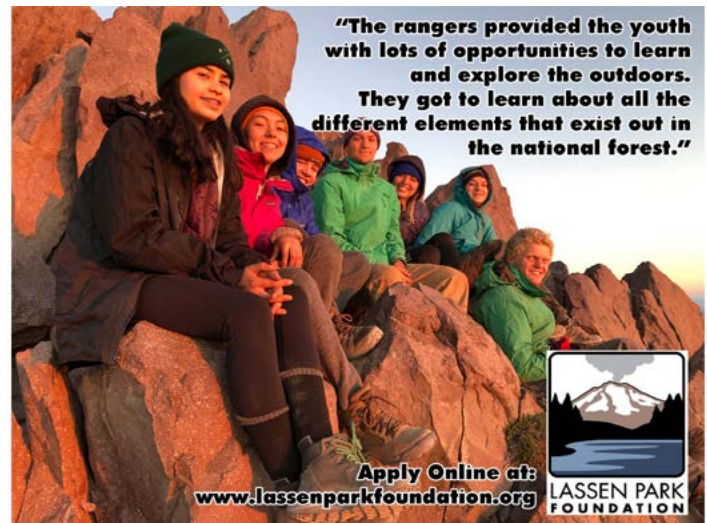
The Volcano Adventure Camp (VAC) is LVNP's first and only youth campground. Situated in the former Crags Campground, this site now hosts hundreds of youths aged 6 to 18 each summer typically from mid-June to mid-September. Youth groups traveling from all over California, Oregon, and Nevada stay for up to a week. Prior to the unusual impacts of pandemics and wildfires-between 40 and 50 youth groups camped here each summer.

### About Volcano Adventure Camp (VAC)

In 2016 the Foundation began construction of the facilities that allowed for large group capacity and also a private setting that permits youth groups to provide summer enrichment programs while learning and exploring the park. The VAC has two sections, each with five tent-cabins; each tent-cabin has eight bunk cots. The two sections each have a screened picnic shelter with BBQs, bear lockers and a campfire amphitheater. There are additionally four tent pads available for smaller groups or those wishing to 'rough it.' A few youth groups use the facility as their launching pad for a backpacking trip. The facility can be reserved for youth groups ranging in size from six to as many as 104. In addition to these facilities, the Foundation and LVNP typically provide two dedicated youth camping rangers and a wide variety of environmental learning activities.

### Activities at the VAC

National Park Service Education Specialists and Rangers at the Park work closely with each group to plan an itinerary specific to that group's needs. Group leaders can choose from an extensive menu



that includes ranger-led in-camp and as well as field activities. All groups must attend orientation and closure meetings with the youth camp ranger. Some groups choose to complete requirements to become Junior Rangers or members of the Volcano Club. Groups often visit the Loomis Museum or Kohm Yahmah-nee Visitor Center. There are campfire programs, compass courses, discovery hikes, or lessons in the rock cycle, history, ecology, and of course the volcanoes of Lassen. Engaging in these various activities helps to build stewardship and respect for public lands as well as teamwork and individual responsibility.

### Group Eligibility to Camp at VAC

Any youth group meeting the eligibility requirements can apply to stay at the VAC. Eligibility includes youth organizations serving youth ages 6-18 that are non-profits, public schools, or government agencies or youth organizations with a non-profit fiscal sponsor. Youth group size must be a minimum of six people, and up to 104. To reserve the VAC, visit [www.LassenParkFoundation.org](http://www.LassenParkFoundation.org). LVNP admission and campground fees are waived for approved applicants. On or about May 1st a calendar of available dates is viewable at both the National Park website for the VAC as well as the Foundation's website.

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## **Volcano Adventure Camp** *continued from previous page*

### **Youth Camping Program Grants Available**

The Foundation offers grant funding to help cover some of the expenses of bringing youth groups to the Park. Grant funds can cover expenses such as camping supplies, transportation, or food. Priority for the grant funds is given to youth groups serving underserved or at-risk youth. The grant application window typically opens in February every year and closes by March 31st. Grants are then scored, and awards announced by the end of April. Once youth groups receiving grants are placed on the VAC summer calendar, the window opens for other youth groups to apply to use the VAC, typically about May First.

By jointly supporting outdoor learning and environmental education, LVNP and the Foundation hope to provide the catalyst for change in the lives of a new generation of national park stewards. Visit [www.LassenParkFoundation.org](http://www.LassenParkFoundation.org) for more information.

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## **Addressing Climate Grief**

*by Marissa Maxey*

I have been thinking a lot about climate grief and community recently. I want to (very briefly) explore how those two concepts intersect, and how social connectedness is essential to climate optimism. Climate grief is a relatively new concept. Simply put, it is grief at the loss, or anticipated loss, of our ecosystem. Some of us are more vulnerable to climate grief than others. Youth, indigenous people, those who live off the land (farmers), activists, scientist, and people who work with youth (teachers) are more likely to experience climate grief. Just like the loss of a loved one, the loss of the world as we have known it may bring about feelings of hopelessness and despair. We can find solace in fellowship though. Shared joy is a double joy; shared sorrow is halved.

Climate grief becomes dangerous when it leads to apathy or lethargy surrounding environmental advocacy efforts. Perhaps we can buttress our commitment to slow climate change and mitigate its impacts by prioritizing the needs of our young and disadvantaged community members, and focusing on the relationships we build as we work towards environmental justice.

We know that the most impactful environmental advocacy efforts rely heavily on relationship building, human interaction, and communication. Through engagement with advocacy activities, we experience greater social connectedness and an increased sense of purpose. In addition, when

community members participate in the planning and implementation of events, projects, or other advocacy efforts, opportunities are created for local leadership development and skill building. Relationship building also mitigates the detrimental physical health impacts of climate change. Studies have shown that social isolation is a determining factor in health outcomes during a natural disaster (heat waves, wildfires, flooding...). Meaning the more socially isolated you are, the more likely you will suffer injuries during a disaster. Social connections (friends or family) cushion us from the worst outcomes.

Relationship building, community organizing, and fellowship serve many purposes and are all vital to the success of environmental advocacy efforts. Social connectedness makes our efforts more impactful and powerful, keeps us safer during climate induced disasters, and staves off the development of climate grief and apathy. We can find joy and meaning even in the midst of climate change by remembering that our young community members need advocates. Gandhi said, "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."

If you are feeling burnt-out, I highly recommend subscribing to *The Climate Optimist* newsletter (<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/c-change/climateoptimist/>) produced by Harvard University C-Change and reading *Generation Dread* by Britt Wray.

## Brief Conservation Report

By Grace Marvin, Conservation Chair

Topics of interest to conservationists have been showering the national and local news. For example, we are concerned both about horrendous flooding in California, and by excessive control of water by greedy corporate interests. At the same time there are efforts to radically change current local control of water, i.e., the Tuscan Water District. By weakening the vote of many small landowners, the large landowners would control the amount and expense of water.

We are also hearing about ever more pollution as a result of some of the federal, state, and even urban deals that will help the oil companies at the expense of the quality of the air we breathe, the health of people, and our entire planet, i.e., global warming. We need to make ever more serious strides to reduce CO<sub>2</sub>.

On the other hand, it is so refreshing to know that the efforts of the Sierra Club, the Center for Biological Diversity, and Aqualliance continue to support the lawsuit—filed in early February 2023—against Valley’s Edge, a massive urban sprawl development planned for Chico. The project incorporates housing that is by and large too costly for the many Chicoans needing housing. And the lawsuit states that the project violates the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), since “it failed to adequately disclose, analyze, and/or mitigate significant environmental impacts and cumulative changes as required by law...”. Of special importance, here, is the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> that the project would produce. But many other environmental issues abound, such as fire dangers, water availability, endangered species destruction, and harm to aesthetically fabulous scenery.

After the success of signature gathering for the Valley's Edge referendum, the City Council decided that the question for citizens about whether Valley’s Edge should be approved, will be added to the March 2024 primary election. Whether or not citizens support the project in that vote, the lawsuit looms in the background. Furthermore, the lawsuit does not have the one-year time limit that is built into a referendum.

Think globally and act locally!

## Take a Hike - Salmon in the Sierras

Sunday, June 25, 2023



TAKE  
HIKE

at the  
Deer Creek Preserve

The Northern California Regional Land Trust is excited to welcome the public to the Deer Creek Preserve to learn about the salmon populations in this tributary to the Sacramento River. Led by CDFW's Matt Johnson, the hike will offer participants insights into the lifecycle of migratory fish in Sierra watersheds, and a chance to learn about other species that call Deer Creek home. Moderate terrain, approx. 4 mi. roundtrip. Suggested donation \$10.

Space is limited! Register today at [landconservation.org](https://landconservation.org) events

The Northern California Regional Land Trust is excited to welcome the public to the Deer Creek Preserve to learn about the salmon populations in this tributary to the Sacramento River as part of the Take a Hike event series. Led by Matt Johnson, an Environmental Scientist at California Department of Fish and Wildlife, this hike will wind into the interior of the Preserve to the fish ladder before returning along the same route, offering participants the opportunity to expand their understanding of the lifecycle of migratory fish in Sierra watersheds, and to learn about other species that call Deer Creek home. To sign up, please visit [Brown Paper Tickets](https://www.brownpapertickets.com). This is a FREE event but registration is required.

## **Sprawl: How we got here and why it needs to change**

*By David Welch*

Suburbs are not a new phenomenon. Suburbanization began in the mid-19th century with the coming of trains. An early prototype was the Main Line, west of Philadelphia. A series of small, compact communities built along a rail line accompanied by large estates for the urban elites. In the early 20th century, this was followed by “streetcar suburbs”, lower density than urban housing, but still transit centered, mixed use, and modest in scale.

American suburbs as we know them today began after the Second World War. The country had been through the dual traumas of the Great Depression and the war. Massive industrialization for war production had ended the depression, but now the need for ships and planes had ended and millions of soldiers and sailors were returning home looking for jobs. Economists and planners wondered “How to keep the boom going?”

The answer was to create big consumer demand through a new kind of housing. Single family homes, spaced well apart, only accessible by car and needing to be stocked with appliances and lawn care equipment! New financing schemes—including VA and FHA loans—made home ownership more accessible than ever before and helped drive the demand, while the need for all those consumer products created the employment.

There was also a racial component. Large numbers of African Americans had come to the cities to work in war industries. Whites were happy to leave them behind and move to the suburbs, which were very explicitly “whites only.”

Suburbs spread out, people got used to commuting farther for their work, massive new road networks were created and exclusionary zoning kept businesses and homes far apart, guaranteeing that most trips had to be made by car.

So, what’s the problem? There are three big problems: ecological, financial, and socio-cultural.

Above all, in the face of the growing climate crisis, continued sprawl is not compatible with a livable planet. It’s essential that the use of automobiles and the amount of our urban landscape

devoted to them decrease. We need to create the kind of communities in which more trips can be made on foot, by bike, or by transit. And a typical American suburb cannot be served by transit. The number of people within walking distance of the transit stop is just too low. There is no practical way to graft a transit system onto a sprawling suburb. And long distances to jobs and shopping make walking or biking impractical for most people.

Economically, suburbs are also a losing proposition. Typically the developer pays for the initial infrastructure. But those streets, sewer lines, and street lights all have a limited life. And a low-density suburb requires too many miles of road and produces too little tax base per unit of space to pay for that upkeep. Surprisingly, in larger cities, it’s often the city center, with its businesses and its less affluent but higher density housing that produces the taxes that go to maintain the roads in the more politically influential suburbs.

Finally, there are the more subtle but important socio-cultural negatives. Suburbs are profoundly isolating. In more compact, multi-use environments, people walk places. They may shop at a corner store, where they may encounter their neighbors. Having traveled a bit myself, I can’t help contrasting the British person visiting their local pub, or the French person sitting on the terrace of their local café, where both of them are likely to encounter their friends and neighbors, with the American suburbanite, isolated in their car in the drive-through coffee chain.

At an even deeper level, the car-centric lifestyle of the sprawling suburb contributes to social stratification and to fear and suspicion of those not exactly like us. Those who live in single-family homes never encounter those who live in apartments. And the racial segregation integral to the origin of suburbs continues today.

We can’t change history. The sprawling suburbs we have are here to stay. But we can refuse to perpetuate the problem by building more. We can choose quality, mixed use development over more sprawl. Our future depends on it.

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