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JANUARY - MARCH, 2017
From the Chair

By Carol Love

As we enter 2017, these are certainly challenging times! While we were not able to elect a president who is supportive of the Sierra Club goals for the environment, we were able to elect Kamala Harris who will be a strong advocate for us as our new senator. The Sierra Club also endorsed and helped pass four propositions – 56, 58, 59, and 67 (keeping the ban on single use plastic bags). Locally, we had an important win – our Placer Group opposed and helped defeat Measure M, a thirty-year tax that would have increased our air pollution without solving our traffic issues! Thanks go especially to Mike Garabedian, our vice-chair, who spent an incredible number of hours attending many meetings and writing up and distributing talking points to help defeat this measure!! Marilyn Jasper also contributed a lot of time helping with this effort in spite of the many issues always on her “plate”! Thanks to Richard Sanborn for the signs and to all of you for your help and your vote!

The Sierra Club will have a lot of work to do in 2017 to further our environmental goals. Working on climate change issues will be a high priority. Please check our website (http://www.sierraclub.org/mother-lode/placer) and newsletter for ways you can help. Locally, we will be opposing the Nevada Irrigation District (NID) plan to build a dam on the Bear River. We will have information available for how you can get more informed and actively help us defeat the Centennial Dam.

Placer County is a very large area and we have a very small group of us trying to manage all that we need to do. We certainly appreciate the help you give us by being members of the Sierra Club, but if you are also able to give us some of your time as a volunteer, we would be very grateful for that.

Thanks and best wishes for the New Year!
Placer Group Executive Committee (ExCom) 2016 Election Results

A big THANK YOU to all our members who voted in our recent Executive Committee (ExCom) election. Mike Garabedian, Carol Love, and Tony Rakocija were elected for two-year terms. Our Member/ExCom meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month. All members are invited, welcome to attend and be part of our discussions, but only the six elected ExCom members can vote on any motions that are made. Come join us for our next Member/ExCom meeting and see how you might be able to help us protect our lovely Placer County!

Proposed Projects Needing Attention

The Placer Group is run by volunteers, and our territory covers Placer County west of the Sierra divide. We are seeing a plethora of sometimes unsavory, unsupportable proposals. It’s very difficult to keep up with watchdogging, let alone submitting comments on the avalanche of big and little development proposals. At the summit of the Sierra and into the Tahoe area, the Sierra Club’s Tahoe Area Group (‘‘Tahoe Group’’) handles proposals, but they too are inundated with developments and their impacts.

To become familiar and/or updated, please visit these websites and help with proposed projects as you can.

Centennial Dam on the Bear River: Placer Group, Sierra Nevada Group (Nevada, Sierra, and Counties), and South Yuba River Citizens League: www.savebearriver.com and www.facebook.com/SaveBearRiver and http://yubariver.org

Tahoe area proposals, including but not limited to Martis Valley West, Washoe Meadows State Park, and the Tahoe Area Regional Plan: http://sierraclub.org/mother-lode/tahoe/conservation

Squaw Valley proposal: www.sierrawatch.org

quick notes

Many people enjoy Sierra Club hiking events, called “OUTINGS,” that are led by certified outings leaders. For a full list of Outings, with many in our area in the Mother Lode Chapter, please visit: www.sierraclub.org/mother-lode and click on the “Outings Schedule” tab.

As a current member of the Sierra Club, you are welcome to attend Placer Group’s members-only Executive Committee meetings, usually held the first Wednesday of every month at the Auburn Denny’s (January 4, February 1, and March 1 for 2017) at 7:00 p.m. For more information, contact Marilyn at marilyn.jasper@mlc.sierraclub.org

Other events of interest can be found on the following websites.

Sierra College’s professional, informative, and interesting lectures: https://www.sierracollege.edu/about-us/beyond-the-classroom/nat-hist-museum/lectures/index.php

Placer Land Trust’s docent led hikes and tours: http://www.placerlandtrust.org/calendar-2

As the Sierra Club motto says, Explore, Enjoy, and Protect the Planet!
Volunteer Opportunity in Yosemite

The Yosemite Conservation History Center (formerly known as LeConte Memorial Lodge) is a National Historic Landmark building that represents the rich heritage of the Sierra Club in Yosemite Valley. The building houses several interpretive displays, a children's nature corner, a wonderful library, art projects and evening programs.

Since 1904 a curator and Sierra Club volunteers have provided information to park visitors. Today the program welcomes over 15,000 visitors to the Sierra Club's spiritual home in Yosemite Valley and volunteers are needed now as the building reopens for its 113th season on Wednesday May 3, 2017.

Volunteers spend a week in the park assisting the club's curator Bonnie Gisel, PhD. by interacting with park visitors and carrying on the Sierra Club tradition of helping others appreciate and protect our natural environment. Volunteers get free park admission and camping in a group campsite during their service week.

Potential volunteers must be outgoing and comfortable interacting with park visitors; have visited Yosemite within the last two years and have current park knowledge; be familiar with current Sierra Club programs and initiatives; be able to stand for up to 3 hours per day; be comfortable with tent camping; bring their food and supplies; comply with the no children, pets or guests policy.

To become a volunteer for the 2017 season, please contact Bonnie Gisel at 209-347-7300.

Island Hopping in Channel Islands National Park

Join us for a 3 day, 3 island, live-aboard cruise to California’s Channel Islands!
Hike wild, windswept trails bordered with blazing wildflowers. Kayak rugged coastlines. Snorkle in pristine waters teeming with colorful fish. Swim with frolicking seals and sea lions. Look for unusual sea and land birds. Watch for the highly endangered island fox. Or.....just relax at sea!

All cruises depart from Santa Barbara. The cost, $650, includes an assigned bunk, all meals, snacks and beverages plus the services of a naturalist-docent assigned by the national park to help lead hikes, point out items of interest and give evening program.
For more information contact leader Joan Jones Holtz at (626) 443-0706 or jholtzhln@aol.com. To make a reservation send a $100 check, written to Sierra Club, to leader, 11826 The Wye St., El Monte, CA 91732.
(Editor’s Note: This was one of the most delightful and memorable trips ever taken and is a great fundraiser for Sierra Club California.)
Measure M defeated:
PCTPA may try again in areas the transportation sales tax got a 2/3 vote

Placer County Elections released the final vote tally defeating Measure M on December 6. The next day on December 7 the Placer County Transportation Planning Agency (PCTPA) voted to consider seeking state legislation to allow sales tax balloting efforts in parts of the county.

Voters throughout the county rejected the tax, while west Placer County cities supported it but not at the big margins needed for it to pass with the required 66.67%. It got 64% in the final tally with 114,929 yes and 65,199 no. Sierra Club is reviewing the Measure M results.

Measure M may have defeated itself. The Measure M support committee that spent approaching $1 million, and the PCTPA, assured voters that they knew what they were voting for. This was a mirage. About half of the proposed $1.6 billion 30-year tax was proposed for highway and interchange improvements. Had the measure passed, massive increases in green house gas emissions were on our air pollution horizon from new freeway construction.

But the named freeway including five new interchanges and proposed local road improvement expenditures could have been changed to other transportation purposes. The measure’s purposes did not specifically include two of the Sierra Club’s priorities, walking and biking infrastructure.

The measure asked voters to disenfranchise themselves from voting on expenditure plan amendments and on new city capital improvement plans that changed funding from road repairs to other transportation purposes.

Perhaps most galling to readers of Measure M in the sample ballot pamphlet was to learn it would have authorized PCTPA to issue bonds for any transportation purposes “including but not limited to the expenditure plan.”

Measure supporters didn’t list projects along with the cost to build them; the amount of the tax to go to each one; the amount and percentage to be paid by developers, the state and federal sources, nor the part of the $200 million in early financing allocated for each one to build the projects before developers pay their fees.

For example, the $380 million cost to build an excessive massive I-80/SR 65 interchange would have been funded by $300 million of the $1.6 billion. The apparent combined state, federal and developer contribution was identified as $80 million or 21%.

At a California Groundbreakers pro and con panel on the initiative in Roseville, Sierra Club Measure M coordinator Mike Garabedian said Measure M opens an opportunity for Placer County to begin the bold steps needed to incorporate convenient transit, biking, walkability and greenhouse gas reduction into development.

Sierra Club members who support transit, bicycling, walking, and clean air for health, and who oppose climate change are needed to volunteer to help to bring this about. Call (916) 719-7296.

Yes percentages: Unincorporated Area 54%; Auburn 58%, Loomis and Colfax 59%, Roseville and Rocklin 69%, Lincoln 72%. No vote tallies: Unincorporated Area 26,897; Roseville 18,393; Rocklin, 8764; Lincoln 6,478; Auburn, 2,856; Loomis 1,190; Colfax, 313.
Wildlife: An Integral Part of Our Lives

How we treat our fellow non-human animals speaks loudly as to how we treat our own fellow hominid animal species. Here are a few updates from the current multitude of wildlife issues in which the Sierra Club is involved.

As announced in our last newsletter, Sierra Club Placer Group sponsored a showing of the award-winning film, “EXPOSED—The USDA’s Silent War on Wildlife,” in October 2016. This film brings home the many reasons why citizens must keep watch on regulatory agencies. If you missed it, the film may be viewed free of charge via www.predatordefense.org and clicking on the “FILM” tab.

Sierra Club California has actively participated for the past 3-4 years in “Wolf Advisory Group” meetings, coordinated by the CA Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). Finally, in December 2016, the CDFW released the final “Wolf Conservation Plan.” Although not exactly what we wanted, the plan recognizes the ecosystem benefits that wolves bring to California, if/when they are established. To read more about wolves in California and the “Wolf Conservation Plan,” visit https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/conservation/mammals/gray-wolf

The CA Fish and Game Commissions’ (FGC) “Predator Policy Working Group,” continues to meet with stakeholders from conservation, ranching, and hunting organizations. This group will eventually suggest policies and regulations to “manage” predators in California. As one can imagine, discussions of predator roles in wildlife habitat and handling them responsibly, if/when they prey on non-wildlife species, can be highly controversial. The meetings are open to the public and usually held in Sacramento. For more info on this group and all other FGC meetings for 2017, visit http://www.fgc.ca.gov/meetings/2017/index.aspx

Earlier this year, the FGC approved a mammal hunting amendment to allow GPS collars on hounds to hunt deer and pigs and for training purposes. Because of a lawsuit that challenged their approval, at their February 8 meeting in Redding, CA, the FGC is expected to reverse that approved amendment and bring back the GPS collar ban for mammal hound hunting. However, they also voted to immediately proceed with another amendment to allow GPS collars, but this time they will comply with CEQA. The Sierra Club testified that GPS collars would increase negative impacts that loose dogs create on non-targeted wildlife and would open the door for increasing poaching opportunities. For more information on this topic and how you can help, contact Marilyn at marilyn.jasper@mlc.sierraclub.org

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Placer Group’s ONLY Annual Fundraiser Report

Our Sierra Club Calendar sales, which is our fundraising effort for the year, will be handled differently in the future. Due to a policy change, we can no longer return “unsold” calendars to the publisher, so we ordered based on last year’s sales. However, as much as we want rain, we were rained out at all but a couple of our 2017 calendar sales events! This was a bit distressing and would have been costly to the Placer Group. Fortunately, a Sierra Club chapter in southern California ordered too few; they purchased our remaining calendars at cost. Unfortunately, some folks who normally order were unable to purchase. We apologize and hope to give more advance notice of the sales.

It’s still in the planning stages, but we will follow what other Groups are doing and rely on “pre-sales” so that we can order the right amount and not have any leftovers. We are open to ideas or suggestions to make that work.

Last, but not least, a big round of applause goes out to all of you who purchased early or purchased at the few events where we sold. And thanks also to the Foothills Farmers Market, 49er Flea Market, and REI Roseville that generously allowed us to set up and sell. We’ll have a new sales program in place, hopefully by June, and have a successful 2018 calendar sales campaign.
We wish to thank these Placer Group sponsors

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Field Notes

Cedar Waxwing
Bombycilla cedrorum

A treat to find in your binocular viewfield, the Cedar Waxwing is a silky, shiny collection of brown, gray, and lemon-yellow, accented with a subdued crest, rakish black mask, and brilliant-red wax droplets on the wing feathers. In fall these birds gather by the hundreds to eat berries, filling the air with their high, thin, whistles. In summer you’re as likely to find them flitting about over rivers in pursuit of flying insects, where they show off dazzling aeronautics for a forest bird. Cedar Waxwings are social birds that you’re likely to see in flocks year-round. They sit in fruiting trees swallowing berries whole, or pluck them in mid-air with a brief fluttering hover. They also course over water for insects, flying like tubby, slightly clumsy swallows.

Look for Cedar Waxwings in woodlands of all kinds, and at farms, orchards, and suburban gardens where there are fruiting trees or shrubs.

Cornell Lab of Ornithology: All About Birds