

California is unique within the Sierra Club because there are 14 chapters in the state - Sierra Club California and 13 regional chapters, of which the Santa Lucia Chapter is one. All other states have just one chapter for the entire state.

How Sierra Club California Works to Defend the Environment



By Brandon Dawson

Over the last month, I've heard from a number of individuals inquiring about how Sierra Club California operates, who works here, and how Sierra Club volunteers around the state can aid our efforts. Many of these members are new and want a primer on our chapter. Others are long-time members curious as to which staff member they should contact about a given issue.

Fear no more: the answers you seek are here! (If you already have an idea of the workings of Sierra Club California, here's a nice reminder).

[Sierra Club California](#) is the legislative and regulatory advocacy arm of Sierra Club in California. We're unlike any other Club chapter anywhere in the country. We focus only on state-level issues and campaigns.

We're based in Sacramento, just a few blocks from the Capitol building. In pre-pandemic years, a normal day would consist of our staff shuffling about the Capitol and state agencies, meeting with legislators and decision makers and their staff in person. Nowadays, that advocacy has shifted to virtual meetings and phone calls.

Our chapter is governed by a volunteer board of directors or, in Club parlance, an [executive committee](#). The positions we take on legislation, who we endorse in elections, and where we stand on regulatory issues are determined by groups of volunteers who are active in a variety of committees.

If you want to be involved in [state-level issues as a volunteer](#), there's a place for you and it could be on one of Sierra Club California's committees. If you're more interested in local issues, there's a place for you in a local chapter. There are [13 local chapters](#) around the state.



The [staff of Sierra Club California](#) includes three policy advocates ([we're currently hiring another!](#)), two organizers, an administrator, and a communications person. Our operations staff keeps our office running, our communications person keeps our newsletters and social media flowing, while our organizers work hard to ensure that you - our members and volunteers - are engaged and educated on specific campaigns.

Our policy advocates represent Sierra Club California at the state legislature and regulatory agencies by advancing pro-environmental policies and bills, and stopping harmful policies and bills.

Our legislative advocacy is a critical component of the work we do to ensure that future generations have the opportunity to enjoy and preserve California's beautiful and unique lands, coasts, waters, and communities. Every year, we track more than 500 bills that have some implication for the environment. (Pre-pandemic, it was common for bills with environmental keywords to exceed 600.)

As bills are filed, policy advocates research and analyze them - consulting a wide array of resources for information, including the expert knowledge of many of our volunteers. Staff use this information to develop suggested positions, and then take those suggested positions to our [volunteer legislative committee](#), who establish the final position on the bill. By mid-March, we will post a list of 2022 priority bills on our website.

Individual Sierra Club members and local Sierra Club chapters should not independently take positions on bills. If a bill arises that a member or local chapter believes should have a Club position, please email our legislative committee chair Patricia Jones at pvjones10@gmail.com. She can make sure the committee considers it.

Also, if you want to track particular bills or learn more about a bill's status, the state has an excellent bill information system online at <http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov>.

Sierra Club California is California's largest grassroots environmental advocacy organization. That wouldn't be possible without members like you. At least once a week, we reach out to different members around the state to take an action that will benefit the environment, asking you to either call your legislator, send an email to a regulator, or get involved in a local campaign.

Our members taking action is critical for decision makers to witness the power of the Sierra Club. So if you've just joined the Sierra Club—or been a member for years—you're playing a key role in protecting the environment and our communities across the state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "BD", followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Brandon Dawson
Director