ELECTING CANDIDATES WHO CARE

BY BRIAN BEFFORT, DIRECTOR, TOIYABE CHAPTER
(775-848-7783, sierraclub.org/toiyabe)

TOIYABE CHAPTER’S NEVADA POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE is gearing up for success in 2018. Your support will help elect environmentally friendly candidates in Nevada’s state and local elections.

Learn more at: https://www.sierraclub.org/toiyabe/political_action.

Range of Light members, contact San Gorgonio Chapter: https://san-gorgonio2.sierraclub.org/.

Tahoe Area members, contact Mother Lode Chapter: https://www.sierraclub.org/mother-lode.

Thank you.

Join me in committing to the earth

BY BRIAN BEFFORT, TOIYABE CHAPTER DIRECTOR

This morning I woke my son up for school. Sitting next to him on his bed, I admired his natural grace and beauty as he stretched and yawned. I welcomed his innocence as he recited the lines he’s memorizing for his class play, and by the items he’s adding to his ever-growing Christmas present wish list.

For these moments, I was able to put aside the news I read every day about the threats to our public lands, wildlife habitats, and communities — not to mention my son’s future; Trump’s reduction of Gold Butte, Bear’s Ears, and more than 20 other national monuments; a tax plan and federal budget that rewards gazillionaires, hurts the rest of us, and opens the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil exploration; efforts to dismantle the EPA and the environmental laws and regulations it enforces; and Trump’s pledge to pull out of the Paris Climate Agreement — to name just a few.

Like every parent, I want my son to live a long, healthy, happy life. I want him to share the bountiful blessings of our beautiful Earth with his children. I fight back tears knowing that he, others of his generation, and future generations will pay the price for our ignorance, inertia, and greed. It’s painful to accept that our planet, our civilization, and the species here with us face the greatest threats in human history.

Then I think of my job with the Sierra Club and feel grateful and empowered, because I am part of the largest grassroots environmental organization in the country. Since the 2016 elections, our members and supporters have grown to more than 3 million people. We are building the power for our most precious and threatened places and species; to build communities that are healthier, happier, and more sustainable; to guide our society to a healthier future based on renewable energy. Faced with depressing headlines, I focus on my work, on my ability to make a difference, even if it’s in small ways.

You, too, dear member, share that power. Together, WE have the power to make a difference in the issues that matter here in Nevada and the eastern Sierra.

In September, the Toiyabe Chapter Executive Committee drafted our list of strategic priorities for 2018, which include (in no particular order):

• Climate Change and renewable energy;
• Protecting our region’s public lands, water, and wildlife;
• Electing candidates who care about the environment during the 2018 elections;
• Building our membership and engaging our members;
• Participating in other local campaigns as they arise, such as the Tahoe Group’s engagement with the Lake Tahoe Shoreline Plan, helping kids and others go on outings, and partnering with the Great Basin Water Network to protect Nevada’s rural waters from the Las Vegas water grab.

The Sierra Club’s greatest power lies in its grassroots. It lies in you. Despite the Sierra Club’s size, we will never have enough money, community organizers, and lawyers to effect all the changes we need. But by joining forces with you at the local level, where decisions can still make a difference, there is nothing we cannot do.

At the end of my life, I want to be able to tell my son that I did everything I could to stop the world from coming apart from our national office. By doing this, you will be assured that your gift stays in the Chapter to continue supporting the protections you want for Nevada or eastern California.

Because the language must be stated exactly to avoid misinterpretation, please contact the Chapter Director, Brian Beffort (brian.beffort@sierraclub.org) or the Fundraising Committee Chair, Janet Carter (jkumar167@aol.com), to make sure it is correct.

—— Sign up ——
for Toiyabe Chapter’s Monthly e-newsletter

Toiyabe Trails is just part of the story. Catch up with more news, events, and action alerts in the Toiyabe Chapter’s new monthly e-newsletter. If you’re not getting it already, send an email to toiyabe.chapter@sierraclub.org, and we’ll make sure you’re on the list.

Need information about Toiyabe Chapter? Try the . . .

Chapter website <http://toiyabe.sierraclub.org>
Happy New Year to all our friends in the Great Basin! The Great Basin Group will continue to host monthly program meetings during 2017 at the Bartley Ranch Regional Park Western Heritage Interpretive Center on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 7pm.

Get active in Great Basin. An activism session, 6:15-7pm, will be held prior to each monthly GBG program meetings at Bartley Ranch Center. Stay active and keep the dialogue moving!

Appreciation note. A special Thank you goes to Charlotte Cox and Matthew Salazar who are stepping down from their positions as Great Basin Group ExCom members. In her role as Program Chair, Charlotte’s energy, ideas, and persistence have resulted in many wonderful programs during the past two years. Her initiative also led to the new popular Activism Hour before each monthly program. Matthew Salazar served as Vice-Chair; his assistance helped with many projects. Good luck to Matthew as he moves on with his life.

Tin Cup Award. Long-time Sierra Club member, Cathy Schmidt, is the 2017 Great Basin Group Tin Cup award recipient. Cathy has served the Great Basin in many ways, including Group Chair, ongoing volunteer, outings leader, early promoter of Get Kids Outdoors, and consistently active in conservation causes. Most recently, her efforts helped support and organize the Ready for 100 campaign and the Activism Hour before the GBG’s monthly programs.


Great Basin Gatherings

Cathy Schmidt receives Tin Cup Award from Chapter Chair David von Seggern. Thank you, Cathy! And thank you ExCom members for organizing and for all who realize “it takes a village” and eagerly pitched in for a fun event and great turnout.

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Great Basin Group

BY KATY CHRISTENSON

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First, congratulations to Bob Sumner for finishing the Nevada P2K list July 14, 2017 on Beaver Peak in Elko County. This list has many notable peaks that are scattered throughout Nevada. Since two sit within the Nevada Test site, Bald Mountain and Belted Range HP, a finish can’t include their summits.

The access to some of these peaks requires miles of driving on rough dirt roads that can be more grueling than the peak climb. Moody Peak requires one of these long drives.

In June, Ken Jones organized a trip with Ron Moe, John Ide, and myself, to hike Moody and Shingle Peaks, both on the NV P2K list. We met at Moody Springs to camp on October 21, 2017, to tour this area. We drove to the west side of Smoke Creek Desert on the NV P2K list. We met at Moody Springs to camp.

Our 6 am start followed horse trails and the dirt road as a landing strip. There we fly-in by several small aircraft who used tufa formations. Our next stop along the small creek which runs through a pinyon-juniper forest interspersed with Mountain Mahogany. Happy to beat the heat on our climb, we took a leisurely break on top to enjoy the views and sign the register.

Next, we drove to Shingle Springs in Lincoln County’s Far South Egan Wilderness to camp in position for our hike up Shingle Peak (9823 ft). Our camp near the corral had a flurry of hummingbird activity as we set up camp.

We started early again to beat the heat, meandering up a dry wash until we found a ridge that led to the summit. Yellow blooms on clifffrose shrubs provided a colorful display along our route. We took another leisurely summit break to absorb surrounding views and enjoy the cool temperature before we descended.

These NV P2K peaks provided yet another Great Basin adventure to experience Nevada’s public land treasures.

**Smoke Creek desert history & hike**

Smoke Creek Desert, north of Pyramid Lake and southwest of Black Rock Desert, was home to approximately 500 pioneer people in the early 1900s. Today, only one ranch remains occupied. Although the larger, adjoining Black Rock Desert gets attention due to its designation as a National Conservation Area and due to the annual Burning Man Festival, the Smoke Creek Desert deserves a look.

Outings leaders David von Seggern and Dorothy Hudig set out with 10 participants on October 21, 2017, to tour this area. We drove to the west side of Smoke Creek Desert playa, first stopping at the geothermal area north of Pyramid Lake that has abundant geothermal activity.

**Great Basin Peak Section News**

**Exploring Nevada P2K peaks**

BY SHARON MARIE WILCOX

For some hardy individuals, winter is the best season to be outdoors exploring the mountains. And for many others, winter is a season to relax with a cup of coffee by the fire and read a book. Either way, here is a short list of books that could be of some interest to a person aspiring to a primary or secondary career in alpine outdoor adventure. Enjoy!

- **Mountaineering: The Freedom of the Hills** (latest edition) — The Mountaineers Books. This is one of the “the reference bible of elementary technique for exploring the high country. A must-have for any outdoor adventurer’s library.

- **Staying Alive in Avalanche Terrain** — Bruce Tremper. This is an industry-leading manual for avalanche safety and recommended for anyone planning to travel in a snow-covered alpine environment. If you take a quality Level 1 avalanche fundamentals course, the instructor will most likely ask you to purchase and read this.

- **Backcountry skiing: Skills for Ski Touring & Ski Mountaineering** — Martin Volken, Scott Schell, and Margaret Wheeler. This is a book for anyone interested in learning advanced winter ski touring techniques. One of my mottos is “if you need to put a harness on when skiing, then ask yourself, ‘am I skiing, or am I climbing?’”. Anyway, if you think you’ll need to use a harness on a ski tour, check this book out.

- **Allen & Mike’s Really Cool Backcountry Ski Book** — Allen O’ Bannon and Mike Clelland. These guys’ books are just fun to read. Great illustrations as an added bonus!

- **Allen & Mike’s Really Cool Telemark Book** — Allen O’Bannon and Mike Clelland.

- **Biff America: Mind, Body, Soul** — Jefrey Bergeron. This is actually a collection of short columns about making the ski bum lifestyle work in 21st century America, written with wit and wisdom. Lighthearted, and fun reading about backcountry skiing.

- **Ski Against the Atom** — Knut Haukelid. Riveting tale of a group of Norwegians running Nazi plans while skiing the Hararecdnivards. True story.

- **Be One** — When I was a soldier, I was trained to use a map and compass and how to pace out distances in an open field. It was, and still is, a good set of skills to have. Then the Army gave me a GPS, which at the time was as big and heavy as a brick. Within the next decade, anyone could go to a sporting goods store and buy a lightweight GPS of their own, but we were still having to print out maps from software on our computer and tape them together to create a map to use at UNR to buy a large USGS 7.5 minute map. Fast forward to today — we have CalTopo.com.

- **Backcountry skiing** can be done almost all of that USGS and USFS mapping data at your fingertips. It is all online and free to use (there are account upgrade options available), making it easy to create and download to the topo overlays. Create an account and you will be able to save custom maps and trips to share with other people online. Also, the custom trip and waypoint data can easily be uploaded to your GPS and vice-versa.

- **Trip planning** can also begin and end with CalTopo if you desire. There are several weather and map overlays that you can apply to your trips to show slope angles (for avalanche terrain), weather forecasts for your trip area, public/private land ownership, snow and ice, and many other overlays. All of this data is pulled from several public sources in real-time. After plotting your trip, you can also give reasonably accurate estimates of trip distance and elevation gain.

- **To learn more about CalTopo, visit caltopo.com. In addition, to learn more about the one man team that makes this great trip planning tool possible, Google “Matt Jacobs CalTopo”.

- **Be the lookout for future CalTopo classes on the Great Basin Group outings calendar.**

**General Outings Info**

The Great Basin Group publishes all of its outings online. There are two primary sites; be sure to watch both of them, because some outings leaders post to one and not the other.

The majority of outings are posted on our Meetup site: https://www.meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Hiking-Reno/

Many additional outings are posted exclusively on the Great Basin Group website calendar here: http://www.sierrachub.org/toiyabe-great-basin-outings-and-events.

Are you an experienced hiker, backpacker, trail runner, kayaker, bicyclist, rock climber, skier? Do you believe in the Sierra Club mission? Do you want to share your experience with others? If so, you might become an outings leader for the Great Basin Group of the Sierra Club. Contact Outings Chair Daniel Ellsworth for more details (danomike@yahoo.com, 775.741.8384).

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**A shout out to Sierra Club outings leaders**

BY TINA NAPPE

Feel like a hike today? While the Sierra Club works to save our national monuments, support clean energy, and oppose public lands, many of us like to hit the trails as well. Fortunately, there are Sierra Club members who lead outings in all our groups and in groups across the nation continue to fulfill one of the Sierra Club’s early missions: introducing the public to the open spaces we all cherish. People will likely defend that which they know.

And we could not offer this service or this opportunity without volunteer leaders.

This unpaid responsibility requires initiative, reliability, and dedication. Outings leaders are expected to have First Aid skills and training in how to be leader. They coordinate with other leaders to make a calendar of outings. They thoroughly check the hike before actually doing it and often research history, biology, and other matters which surround the trail.

This fall after some absence from Please see GB OUTING LEADERS, page 6.
Moose, black bear, wolf, & rare bats in Nevada

By Tina Nappe

SIGHTINGS OF MOOSE IN ELKO County are becoming more frequent, according to the Nevada Department of Wildlife. In years gone by, sightings were rare and may even mistakenly identified, but now moose have been captured on camera. Two moose were mistakenly killed by sportsmen. A moose, maybe a young one, was spotted near Winnemucca.

Historically, a moose or two might wander in from Idaho where the population has risen to 15,000-20,000. Moose have also meandered into Or- egon and Washington as well. In Idaho the increase in moose is partially credited with forest regrowth after timber cutting. IF YOU SEE A MOOSE, please call NWDOS at 775-688-8888, or, better yet, send a photo to ndwosinfo@ndow.org along with documentation.

BLACK BEAR populations are increasing and spreading into their historic range in Nevada. Healthy black bear populations have spread from the Sierra Nevada and Carson range down to the Utah border. Except for occasional sightings, black bear were once considered nonexistent. Beginning in 1988, complaints to the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) from Carson residents about marauding bears began to build and studies were initiated. Now the estimated population is between 500 and 600 bears. Genetically, they are related to the Sierra Nevada bears. Maybe time to build highway crossings along the Sierra Front?

A possible WOLF sighting in November 2017 was verified in March via its scent as a male wolf, perhaps from the Shasta pack. There have been possible sight- ings with wandering wolves over the years, but no wolves have been confirmed since 1922. Wolves are endangered under federal law but managed as a game animal (no hunting) in Nevada.

In August, the Bat Working Group set up mist nets in the Monitor and Toquima Mountains. They captured a SPOTTED BAT and a WESTERN RED BAT, both rare and protected. You can learn more about Nevada bats by listening to NDOW podcasts (http://nevadawild.org/ bat-week-bats-of-southern-nevada). Maybe next year we could volunteer.
Every Saturday morning, on the last day of September, Las Vegas ICO (Inspirational Connections Outdoors) and eight children from the Cambridge Community Center set out for an adventure to Valley of Fire State Park. Ranging from 9-13 years of age, one by one, the children introduced themselves to Las Vegas ICO leaders. They had lovely, lyrical names, such as Heaven, Harmony, Precious, and Karma. All said how fond they were of playing outside. It was clear they were ready to make the trek out to the Valley of Fire.

On arriving, we stopped off at the Valley of Fire. We could make a movie like bees, scaling each rock formation that was given, along with a discussion of Leave No Trace principles. Afterward, the children scattered off like bees, scaling each rock formation that crossed their path. “You could make a movie here!” squealed one girl. It was heartening to watch each child discover the nooks and crannies of these sandstone structures, popping their heads up between each interesting formation, all the while trying to keep up with their requests to snap their picture. As we walked back to the van, Precious thoughtfully expressed her own discovery about herself, “I never knew I liked to climb until I came here.”

Hiking at Mouse’s Tank ignited more of the children’s imagination. While they all were able to spot the ancient petroglyphs etched along the trail, the children were drawn to exploring the shady slot canyons and their many carved-out crevasses, creating visions of the new “apartments” they wished to live in. We settled into our newfound “apartment” and dove into our lunch sacks. Precious, lounging on her rock as if it were a couch, said dreamily, “I’m so comfortable here,” then let out a big sigh, while Rosa asked if we could stay in our “apartment” overnight.

Bellies full, the children continued to climb to higher vistas along the trail until the afternoon sun got the best of them and we trudged back to the van. Adventurous Ashby summed it up like this: “When you’re doing boring things, time goes so slow, but when you’re doing fun and interesting things, time goes too fast!”

What you can do. For more information on how to support Las Vegas ICO, please email us at: lasvegasico702@gmail.com.
**Sierra Club California/Nevada Regional Conservation Committee**

Sierra Club hikes, I began checking the GBG Meetup site and was immediately impressed with the variety and number of hikes and leaders.

For many years Holly Coughlin was both a coordinator of GBG outings and a leader of her own. During those outings, leaders gathered each quarter to lay out three months of outings—a challenge for anyone to plan that far in advance. Now outings are no longer posted in the Trails for the GBG, but directly online through coordination with the new GBG Outings Chair, Daniel Ellsworth. This ensures quality, a variety of outings, and a minimum of conflicting dates.

Rielle Martin is new to the area but a tireless leader. I joined him on a fast-paced six-mile conditioning hike along the Steamboat ditch, returning after dark. He also offered a hike into Lagomarsino Canyon with its 1200 rock art sites. David Von Seggern led a casual hike along an old railroad bed in Dog Valley, suggesting the possibility of another trail. T.A. Watt wanted to offer a hike until full colors of the Fremont Cottonwoods along the Carson River on October 31st were spectacular. A key person on this trip and other hikes is the “sweep,” the person who offers to come last to ensure that no one is lost. Sweeps are often listed as “co-leader.” Lurana Cancilla, an inveterate hiker and leader, was the sweep on several of these hikes.

Thank you, leaders and co-leaders. I hope to go on more hikes and see you!

A 7 mi RT through narrow canyon passing by geode field on way back. Minimal gain. Wildlife viewing here affords big horn sheep, coyote, desert tortoises, gray horned owl. What do owls subsist on, what feature in their feathers helps them fly silently? Level 3 Leader: Sasson Jahan (sasson702@gmail.com, 702-499-9218).

**Winter Desert Trips**

**Sierra Club California/Nevada Regional Conservation Committee**

DEATH VALLEY TOUR. Begin in Shoshone near Death Valley at noon for a tour of historic community and then primitive camping in area. Next day, go to China Ranch and hike in Amargosa Canyon. Third day, drive through heart of Death Valley, visiting scenic sites and hiking some of the beautiful canyons. Camp that night in Furnace Creek area. The last morning, hike dunes and then head home. Details available later. To reserve: Carol Wiley (desertlily1@verizon.net, 760-245-8734).

**FEBRUARY 26-MARCH 1**
(MON-THU)

Death Valley National Park:

**Sierra Club California/Nevada Regional Conservation Committee**

To be announced. Info: tajainlay@aol.com.

**GREEN BASIN OUTING LEADERS** . . .

continued from page 3

your favorite dishes and drinks to share.

Family and friends welcome, too! Time: 6-9pm. Info: tajainlay@aol.com.

**FEBRUARY 10 (SATURDAY)**

McCullough Hills Trail (1). Located at Black Mountain in Henderson, hike is 10 mi RT with only a few hundred feet of gain. Why is McCullough Range called Black Mountain? What makes it so many wildlife inhabit this range? Level 4 Leader: Sasson Jahan (sason702@gmail.com, 702-499-9218).

**FEBRUARY 11 (SUNDAY)**

Sierra Club Political Training. Organizers from Sierra Club National Headquarters in Oakland, CA, are coming to Southern Nevada to share their knowledge on how to elect environmental champions to office in this year’s important elections. This is your opportunity to come together and discuss how you can help with cause-related campaigning. Learn how to participate and become a member of our Group or Chapter political committees. Time: To be announced. Info: tajainlay@aol.com.

**FEBRUARY 12 (MONDAY)**

Top of World Arch, Valley of Fire SP. From parking lot #2, this is a 4-mi hike longer than short route we took last time. Will feel like 6-mi trail hike. All off-trail. Moderate pace. Level 4. Entrance fee required for VoF. Leader: David Morrow (702-703-9486, Davidmorrow@gmail.com).

**March 26-29 (Monday-Thursday)**
Exploring Sedona, AZ. Leave Monday morning, return Thursday evening. Three nights in motel, optional camping. Sedona is famous for its beautiful red rock scenery, and as spiritual, New Age center for its controversial vortexes, as well as for its resorts, restaurants. Do three or four moderately strenuous, scenic hikes. Level 3 Leader: Geologist Nick Saines (greatunc@aol.com, 702-499-9218).

**March 10 (Saturday)**
33 Hole & Geode Field, Lake Mead NP.

**FEBRUARY 28-MARCH 4**
(WED-SUN)

JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK:

**LATE WINTER WEEKEND. Visit** Joshua Tree National Park when temperatures are cooler and wild flowers may be blooming. We may explore palm oases, boulder areas, and desert canyons or climb peaks within Park. We have camp sites from 12pm Wednesday until 12pm Sunday. Hikes may require walking over rocky trails and some areas of rock scrambling off trail. Maximum distance 10 mi, up to 2000 ft gain. Some vehicle travel on dirt roads may be required. Cost: $30/person, including 3 nights camping; $20 deposit to reserve; Park entrance fee of $25 per vehicle. We may take a guided tour of historic Keys Ranch ($10 per person extra). Group size: 18. Email or call leader for reservation information. Leader: Rich Juritch (rich.juritch@pacbell.net, 916-492-2181).

Sacramento Group/CNBC Desert Committee

**MARCH 20-23 (TUE-FRI)**
TOUR OF MOJAVE NATIONAL PRESERVE. Begin Tuesday at noon at Sunrise Rock campground on Cima Road. That afternoon, hike Teutonia Peak for scenic views of area (3 MI RT). Next day, drive to Rock House and hike loop trail (1 mi), then go Midhills to camp. Thursday we will hike in area. Friday, tour famous Mitchell’s Caverns at 11 am. Details available later. To sign up, contact Carol Wiley (desertlily1@verizon.net, 760-245-8734).

Mojave Group/CNRC Desert Committee

**Recycling: It’s one of the “Four Rs”**

**BY HEATHER HANLEY-KING, RECYCLING COMMITTEE CHAIR, S. NEVADA GROUP**

The Recycling Committee of the S. Nevada Group formed as a result of the New Member Orientation last May. Shortly after forming the committee, Republic Services announced they would be bringing single stream recycling to all of southern Nevada by the end of 2018. This felt like a big automatic win, but since then we have learned there is more to a successful recycling program than providing a periodic sweep on several of these hikes.

**S. Nevada Group Calendar**

continued from page 5

brenda.morrow@gmail.com).

**February 19–22**
(MONDAY–THURSDAY)
Enjoying Long Beach, CA. Leave Monday morning, return Thursday evening. Three nights in hotel. Guest leader is Ga- reth Pearson. Moderate hikes, bike riding along beach, visit to Aquarium of Pacific, some bird watching. Level 2-3. Co-leader: Brenda Morrow (brenda.morrow@gmail.com).

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Exploring Sedona, AZ. Leave Monday morning, return Thursday evening. Three nights in motel, optional camping. Sedona is famous for its beautiful red rock scenery, and as spiritual, New Age center for its controversial vortexes, as well as for its resorts, restaurants. Do three or four moderately strenuous, scenic hikes. Level 3 Leader: Geologist Nick Saines (greatunc@aol.com, 702-499-9218).

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33 Hole & Geode Field, Lake Mead NP.

**S. Nevada Group Calendar**

continued from page 5

**February 19–22**
(MONDAY–THURSDAY)

**February 24**
(SATURDAY)
McCullough Hills Trail (2). This hike is from Eldorado Valley 6 mi to Black Mountain in Henderson. About 8 mi RT of partial trails, partial x-c with several hundred feet gain. At lunch time, we’ll have views of Boulder City to E. lake bed, solar farm to W. Level 4 Leader: Sasson Jahan (sason702@gmail.com, 702-499-9218).

**MARCH 10** (SATURDAY)
33 Hole & Geode Field, Lake Mead NP.

**Non-Sierra Club Event**

**February 9 (Fri)**

MOJAVE NATIONAL PRESERVE:

**RESTORATION EVENT.** Join Cali- fornia/Nevada Desert Committee and National Park Service for restoration project in Mojave National Preserve (MNP) on February 9, one day before Desert Committee meeting on Saturday and Sunday. Gather on Friday, 8:45 am, work through afternoon, and adjourn in time to reach Shoshone for dinner hour. Our primary task will be to remove “culturally planted items don’t end up stuck inside once they are crushed by the equipment. For this reason, it’s a good idea to crush any large container prior to tossing in the recycling bin. Plastic containers numbered 1-7 are recyclable with the caps on, as are glass jars. With containers the key to remember is empty, clean, and dry. In this case rinsed counts as clean. Being dry prevents liquids from contaminating paper products.

**What you can do.** In the meantime, if you would like to participate with the recycling committee please contact me (hhaneyking@gmail.com). Also, please spread the word to others who may be interested. We typically meet the first Monday of the month at the Sierra Club’s Las Vegas office.

Remember, too, that RECYCLING is only one of the “four Rs” —be sure to REDUCE, REUSE, and REDESIGN your lifestyle to be more sustainable wherever possible. Your children and your planet will thank you.
Explore, Enjoy, Protect . . . wait, there’s more!

BY LYNN BOULTON, CHAIR, RANGE OF LIGHT GROUP

I recently attended a Sierra Club Training that started off with a reading of the Sierra Club’s mission statement. I was surprised to find out there are three paragraphs to the mission statement, not just three words. Here they are:

To explore, and protect the wild places of the earth;
To practice and promote the responsible use of the earth’s ecosystems and resources;
To educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment; and to use all lawful means to carry out these objectives.

The Sierra Club is not just solving environmental problems; its goal is to do it in a way that helps everyone. The mission statement has evolved to consider the human environment — e.g. those who live next to a polluting factory or breathe smog because they can’t afford to leave their neighborhood.

Here is the original 1892 mission statement, which is missing that element:

To explore, enjoy, and render accessible the mountain regions of the Pacific Coast; to publish authentic information concerning them; to enlist the support and co-operation of the people and the Government in preserving the forests and other natural features of the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

If you haven’t read the article, “A Deeper Shade of Green”, by Aaron Mair, the Sierra Club’s President, please do. Both the current mission statement and this article showed me a side of the Sierra Club I wasn’t aware of and have made me proud to be a part of it.

Range of Light Group

1872 Mining Law in today’s world

BY LYNN BOULTON, CHAIR, RANGE OF LIGHT GROUP

The comment period ended November 20 for the proposed Perdido Exploration Project at Conglomerate Mesa, Inyo County, and now the BLM has the task of deciding which laws take precedence — the 1872 Mining Law or the many environmental protection laws that have been enacted since then.

It is one thing to honor California’s gold mining history and traditions, but the increase in California’s population, now up to 38 million, has changed the game. Which laws take precedence?

The BLM charter (FLPMA, 1976 law) makes BLM lands available for many uses including mining. The Conglomerate Mesa area is included in the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA, 1976 law). The Omnibus Public Lands Management Act (2009) forces BLM to actively protect the CDCA. And the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP, 2016, no a law) designates a part of Conglomerate Mesa as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) containing 3 or 4 possibly rare plants.

All of this helps to protect Conglomerate Mesa, but it is still at risk for mining. The DRECP is being tested by Silver Standard’s application to drill seven holes to a depth of 1000 feet at Conglomerate Mesa to look for microscopic, disseminated gold. The obvious purpose for the exploration is to mine it. That means an open-pit, cyanide heap-leaching mine.

Conglomerate Mesa lies between 2 designated wilderness areas: Malpais Mesa and the Inyo Mountains. The mesa was withdrawn from Cerro Gordo Wilderness Study Area in 1994. A historic foot trail from Keeler to Death Valley crosses it, but it isn’t on the historic register. It is the only complete sequence of Permian continental shelf strata exposed and the only known location of 12 species of fusulinid fossils.

Unfortunately, there are no laws protecting unique geology and palaeontology of a national monument designation. There is a dense, regenerating Joshua tree forest to the east of the mesa and on the top of it, making it a valuable climate change refuge area for these trees. However, a 2017 Executive Order (13783) killed the guideline to consider GHG emissions in NEPA.
Range of Light
FALL PHOTO GALLERY

BY JOANNE HIHN

Long-time ROLG leader Sally (R) introduced hikers to a new loop trail below the Sherwin Mountain Range, outside of Mammoth Lakes. Sally led several Thursday early evening outings in September which were popular with tourists and locals alike.

Led by Tom Budlong, members of ROLG, Friends of the Inyo and California Wilderness Coalition visited Conglomerate Mesa, outside of Death Valley. We observed first hand this historically significant, unspoiled wilderness and learned about efforts by Silver Standard U.S. Holdings Inc. to secure permission by the BLM to drill exploratory wells in search of Carlin type gold deposits. If these deposits are found in sufficient quantities, Silver Standard proposes to extract the gold by means of open pit mining using the cyanide heap leach method. Many wrote letters to BLM and attended a meeting of the Inyo County Board of Supervisors, encouraging them to choose the “NO ACTION” alternative to prevent exploratory drilling.

Several ROLG members and friends enjoyed a cardio workout on an outing up and over Burro Pass. This view, near the top of the pass, looks down on some of the Virginia Lakes (west of Route 395 off of Conway Summit).

Robert Joki, local Mammoth Lakes historian, took a group on a “Ghost Busters, A Search For Mammoth City Graves” tour. We started at the old Townsend grave and explored local bluffs for the original 1880 Mammoth City Cemetery.

ROLG continues to follow recovery of vegetation and wildlife in Bohler Canyon after a 2015 fire. Lynn Boulton, ROLG’s Chair, gives perspective to rapid grasses and aspen growth along a trail.

In October, 2017 a small group of hikers visited the Harvey Monroe Hall Natural Reserve, in Inyo National Forest. In past years, the Carnegie Institute of Washington, Department of Plant Biology, conducted research on the effects of heredity and climate on plants.

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1872 MINING LAW . . .
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reviews.

Open-pit mining is a one-time only use which renders the landscape pretty much unusable thereafter. A 2003 amendment to SMARA, a California reclamation law, requires metallic open-pit mines to be backfilled, but once excavated, Conglomerate Mesa’s form, geology, and fossil record could never be restored.

We need tighter laws still. Thankfully, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA, 1969) allows us to contribute to BLM’s decision-making process, so we can point out how special this place is.

Thank you to all who wrote letters.
Now we wait and see what the BLM decides: a full EIS, a permit to go forward with the drilling, or a permit denial?

Deadline!
MARCH 1
FOR APR - MAY-JUNE ISSUE

Toiyabe Chapter
ExCom Meeting
Saturday, 9 am
February 10, 2018
Las Vegas
For details, contact the Chair,
DAVID VON SEGGERN
Chair@Toiyabe.
SierraClub.org

All Toiyabe Chapter members are welcome to attend these meetings. This will be a strategic planning meeting. There will be limited time for regular Chapter business. Those wanting to put an issue before the ExCom are asked to contact David von Seggern, Chapter Chair (vonseg1@sbcglobal.net, 775-303-8461).

Sierra Club
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Deadline!
MARCH 1
FOR APR - MAY-JUNE ISSUE

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WINTER DESERT TRIPS . . .
continued from page 6
species” (tamarisk, fan palm, sunflowers) at Desert Studies Center, Zzyzx. Don’t miss this annual, pre-Shoshone service opportunity. Contact: Sid Silliman for project details, directions, camping options, and RSVP (gssilliman@cpp.edu).

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