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### **New Faces At Alliance**

As we welcome 2002, the Alliance also welcomes new staff. **Joan Clayburgh** joined the Alliance as the new Executive Director in December and **Nancy-Clair Laird** began as the new Watershed Program Manager in late January.

Joan Clayburgh has a heartfelt commitment to and extensive experience managing community-based coalitions, a strong history directing environmental organizations, and a passionate connection with the Sierra Nevada. She was the national press secretary for the Sierra Club, executive director for Pesticide Watch and the campaign director for a statewide coalition called Californians for Pesticide Reform. Having grown up in Truckee, she sees her return to the Sierra Nevada as coming "home." She is looking forward to working with grassroots and regional groups throughout the range and working with coalitions to protect and restore the natural and community values of the Sierra.

Nancy-Clair Laird brings to the Alliance a wonderful mix of program management experience, Sierra Nevada issue exposure, solid training in collaboration and a master's degree in community development from University of California at Davis (with an emphasis in land-use planning). Her career has developed strong organizational and leadership skills. Most recently she was a Sustainable Communities Leadership Program fellow with the Sierra Business Council working on their Wealth Index, the Director of Volunteers and Outreach for Disabled Sports USA, and an instructor with the National Outdoor Leadership School and Pacific Crest Outward Bound School.

Laurel Ames who directed the Alliance for eight years is retiring this spring and through March continues to assist the Alliance as a senior advisor. Phil Chang, the former watershed coordinator has moved to the Bay Area to be with family and is the new Project Director and Watershed Coordinator of the San Francisco Watershed Council. Luckily for the Alliance, both Laurel and Phil have been very generous with their time and assistance during the transition and the Alliance looks forward to future collaborations together.

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## Watershed Council and Land Trust – Hitched & Healthy

Photo courtesy of Truckee Donner Land Trust



Grey Creek

As John Muir once said "everything is hitched to everything else." This is true for nature and it holds true for conservation organizing. The Truckee area in particular is home to a strong example of the benefits of land trusts and watershed councils working together. Jeff Cutler, Land Conservation Director of the Truckee Donner Land Trust, and Lisa Wallace, Executive Director/Coordinator of the Truckee Watershed Council shared the benefits and possible downsides of their alliance.

The alliance began when Jeff was working on a project to acquire a section of land near Gray Creek – which is in the northern end of the Mount Rose Wilderness, south of Highway 80, outside Truckee. During his research of the area he learned that the Truckee River Watershed Council was doing sediment monitoring of the creek and decided to attend one of their meetings. He thought there was an opportunity to get the Watershed Council's support of their acquisition project and to possibly form new relationships with other community members.

In addition to building the new relationships with agencies and non-profits and getting support of the Gray Creek acquisition – Jeff found that his continued participation provided him a broader perspective of the community's interests. The Watershed Council was crafting a list of subwatershed projects – many with acquisition components. Jeff not only uses this information in the land trust planning – but gets to help shape the watershed acquisition strategy.

"Our land trust, like many others, responds to the public and planning community rather than drive the process," explains Cutler. "Being an active participant in the watershed committee has provided me another tool to tap into the community's land needs."

In addition, he explains that Watershed Council can be a wonderful source of information. The Truckee River Watershed Council provides an information clearinghouse for the region – and has allowed Jeff access to GIS mapping, aerial photos, topography, biological data, etc. The Truckee Donner Land Trust has used this information to strengthen their grant proposals. Jeff also points out that these watershed information banks, where available, could be particularly helpful to new land trusts when they are determining their priority areas for acquisition.

But rarely does a relationship exist without its downsides. Jeff points out that his watershed

participation takes time and sometimes patience. For example, "sometimes you have to sit through technical discussions beyond the scope of the land trust's work." The Truckee Donner Land Trust decided the time investment has been worth their participation – but caution that volunteer and small staffed organizations need to weigh this investment with their other priorities before making a commitment.

Lisa Wallace, the coordinator of the Truckee River Watershed Council, couldn't find a downside from her perspective of working with land trusts. She pointed out that land trusts provide a vehicle for the watershed council to acquire land from willing sellers for habitat and ecosystem protection. Having on-going participation of the land trust has kept a mechanism in place that prevents having to re-establish a partnership on a case by case basis. The volunteer and staff energy is not invested in creating new relationships but instead in finding funding for their joint projects.

Lisa also sees the land trust as a source of information on the region's habitat and ecosystem health. Land trusts often have a strong sense of critical habitats and what needs to be captured in a watershed assessment. She's also found the land trust has a strong sense of where the community at large wants to preserve land. For example, in Truckee the community widely supports protecting the Euer Valley, where as other places may not have such wide spread support yet.

So the project that initially spurred Jeff to attend a watershed council meeting has resulted in an official partnership. The two organizations jointly applied for a \$400,000 acquisition grant from the Prop 12 Sierra Nevada Cascade Grant program. Land trusts and watershed councils – a recipe for success.

For More Info:

**Truckee Donner Land Trust**, Jeff Cutler, Land Conservation Director, PO Box 8816 Truckee, CA 96162, 530.582.4711, email: [tdlt@tdlandtrust.org](mailto:tdlt@tdlandtrust.org) or web: <http://www.tdlandtrust.org>

**Truckee River Watershed Council**, Lisa Wallace, Executive Director/Watershed Coordinator, P.O. Box 8568, Truckee, CA 96162, 530.550.8760, email: [web@truckeeriverwc.org](mailto:web@truckeeriverwc.org)

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### **Executive Director's Letter**

*Joan Clayburgh*

As most people who I have had the pleasure of meeting this first month and a half on the job will tell you, I'm excited to be the executive director of the Sierra Nevada Alliance. I grew up in Truckee and have long drawn my inspiration and energy from the breathtaking vistas, coldness of granite on warm summer days, the shock of jumping into mountain lakes, the excitement of seeing marmots or snowflowers, the silence of snow fall, or simply sitting in a grove of turning Aspens. Well – obviously people who write much better than I have written volumes about this endless inspiration. But in summary, the Sierra is in my soul. So to be able to live in the Sierra and most importantly work to pass on this legacy to future generations is heaven.

But coming home is only part of the story – for me the strategy and approach of the Alliance is what makes life near perfect. Over my 15 years of working for non-profits I have become a huge fan of local efforts informing and leading statewide and regional change. Change happens on many levels – and indeed no one level alone achieves the clean air, clean water, protected wild lands and sustainable communities we strive for. My favorite campaigns however are ones where local efforts establish working examples and then inspire more local efforts – which in turn effect state and national policy. And my favorite state policies provide funding, resources, and support to local efforts. It sounds theoretical here on paper, but my experience is this dynamic relation among local, regional, state and national level players is the key to protection and restoration.

And so the Alliance encapsulates the perfect model for me. We work to network groups in the Sierra to learn from each other; we build alliances to leverage resources to our collective campaigns; and we inform state policy – all to save this amazing range of light that inspires and sustains us all.

So I look forward to meeting and working with all our member groups, supporters, allies and friends to continue and expand on the Alliances' great work. And a hearty thank you to our board of directors for this opportunity to give something back to the Sierra for all the years of joy and wonder it's provided in my life.

Sincerely,

Joan Clayburgh

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### **Welcome: WildPlaces Joins Alliance**

WildPlaces Ecological Restoration and Education is based out of Weldon, CA in Kern County and works in various ecosystems in California and Louisiana, focusing the bulk of their projects around the Sierra Nevada. The organization is unique in the Sierra for doing volunteer-driven habitat restoration as the means to provide ecosystem education. Greater awareness is as important as the completed restoration projects. Their restoration work's goal is having volunteers reconnect to the land and each other with the end product being successful habitat restoration. Volunteers leave a WildPlaces project more aware of environmental issues, more empowered to become part of the solution, and motivated to meet the local challenges that lie ahead.

Formed in January of 2001, much of their work is focused on wilderness areas, particularly those sensitive lands that buffer official wilderness or that are corridors between core habitat areas. Their restoration projects are on wild lands significantly impacted by human activity or natural calamity.

WildPlaces prides itself on being community organizers and beginning any project by involving a variety of stakeholders. They begin by hosting a "Gathering" to educate the community and motivate participation. These events include not only the usual presentations around a target

area – but also involve social time to begin building teamwork and unity around a project. After the gathering a stakeholder group may be formed that then determines the strategy and projects for an impaired target area. Once the plan is in place, WildPlaces begins its active work to recruit volunteers. The organization understands that restoration is not a one time event and monitors and augments restored areas over a three to five year period. Ideally, a network of concerned community members is developed over this time to permanently steward an area.

For WildPlaces restoration is not just hard work - but education and fun. Their restoration days incorporate briefings from local environmentalists. They also often schedule a guided educational hike after the work day for interested volunteers and stakeholders. As Mehmet McMillan their director writes "It's always a pleasure to inspect the restoration site with a bird's eye view. From higher above the ground we can imagine what the site will look like in five, ten, and twenty years, and we can also get a better perspective of its importance to the balance of the entire ecosystem."

In addition to their restoration projects - WildPlaces has a growing Eco-Education Program which works to raise awareness about environmental problems faced on a global level and teach community members how to affect the big picture at the local level. Their program builds understanding of how to live in a balanced manner. Sustain-ability Seminars focus on problems and solutions and are given at community forums as well as during their restoration events.

WildPlaces also offers the "Immersed in the Wild" program. For one to two weeks youth age 10 to 15 can join habitat restoration programs coupled with hiking, reading, campfires and other activities to connect to nature. This program educates youth about where their drinking water, energy and resources for their urban lives comes from. Finally, WildPlaces offers its "Careers in the Wild" program to high school students. This program provides seminars with ecologists, land management agency representatives such as Forest Service and National Parks, Search and Rescue professionals, eco/recreation business leaders, and others to introduce the possibility of working for the earth everyday.

For More Info and to inquire on volunteering:

**WildPlaces**, Mehmet McMillan, 760.447.1702, email: web: <http://www.wildplaces.net>

Current restoration projects include:

- riparian restoration and illegal OHV trail closure at Audobon's Kelso Creek Preserve adjacent to the Brighstar Wilderness in Sequoia National Forest
- rare plant seed collection and propagation in the South Sierra and Domeland Wilderness
- Manter Fire restoration in Sequoia National Forest
- riparian corridor rehabilitation on the South Fork Kern River
- non-native plant eradication in multiple locations

### **Hot Report Available on Health of California's Rivers**

In November the Trust for Public Land released The State of California Rivers, a report on the health of the state's 80 major rivers including seven major hydrologic basins in California. Their chapters on the Central Valley Basin and Eastside/Great Basin are all relevant to the Sierra. Important biological and physical aspects of each region and watershed are described in the report, as are the major threats to the health of rivers systems and the general trend in protection and restoration efforts. Full color maps of each basin and watershed accompany the text and convey topographic, vegetative and land ownership information.

To order a copy of the report contact: Elise Holland 415.495.5660 Trust for Public Land 116 New Montgomery St, #300, San Francisco, CA 94105; email: elise. web: <http://www.tpl.org>

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### **Eastern Sierra Highways Group**

The newly formed Eastern Sierra Highways Group (ESHG), an idea generated by participants at the Sierra Nevada Alliance conference last August, is growing and now includes participants from both Nevada and California, from Susanville to Mono Lake. Roads are the single largest contributor of sediment to Sierra streams and recent violations by CalTrans of water quality standards at Mono Lake and in Truckee have resulted in small fines from the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board.

The Highways Group expects CalTrans will be interested in improving their performance, especially in light of these fines and recent decisions by the State Water Resources Control Board to emphasize TMDL (total maximum daily load) compliance. The group will be encouraging CalTrans to do a much better job of planning, construction and maintenance of its highways in terms of impacts on water quality, scenery, community, and habitats.

For more information contact:

**Truckee River Watershed Council**, Lisa Wallace, Executive Director/Watershed Coordinator, P.O. Box 8568, Truckee, CA 96162, 530.550.8760, email: web: <http://www.truckeeriverwc.org>

**Mono Lake Committee**, Craig Roeker, Mono County Outreach Coordinator, PO Box 29 Lee Vining, CA 93541, 760.647.6595, email: web: <http://www.monolake.org>

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### **Prop 40 On March Ballot – A Bond Act to Know About**

A number of environmental groups from around the state are looking to the successful passage of Proposition 40 on the March 2002 ballot to aid them in their conservation efforts. The California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Act of 2002 will provide funds to help preserve California's ecosystems and habitats, and improve the ability to enjoy already-protected natural areas that are accessible to the public.

Proposition 40 will provide \$1.275 billion for land conservation and improved air and water quality, and \$1.325 billion for California's State and local parks, recreation, and historic and

cultural resources. Passage of Prop 40 will allocate \$300 million to the Wildlife Conservation Board for the acquisition, development, restoration, and rehabilitation of habitat that promotes the recovery of threatened and endangered species. \$445 million is divided between eight state conservancies, for land acquisition, particularly with a focus on land and water resources. \$40 million of this is earmarked for the Tahoe Conservancy. \$75 million would be for the preservation of agricultural lands, including oak woodlands and grasslands. \$20 million to the State and Local Conservation Corps for acquisition, development, restoration, and rehabilitation of land and water resources. \$225 million for State Parks for the improvement of existing parks, which will benefit wildlife by providing public education and quality habitat. Up to half of the funds can be used for land acquisition. \$375 million for protection of water resources which would benefit wildlife that live in wetlands or delicate riparian zones along rivers.

While no funds are earmarked specifically for the Sierra region, this new statewide pool of money could support land conservation and watershed work in the range. Many of the programs in Proposition 40 require that funds be distributed on a per capita basis. Other programs include a list of projects that are widely distributed throughout the state. The minimum grant provided by the per capita program is \$220,000 for cities and \$1.2 million for counties. This ensures that rural counties receive enough funds to make a difference in meeting their priorities. The money for agricultural and grazing land preservation includes oak woodlands and grasslands which also benefit rural counties.

To get more information on the campaign, visit <http://www.tpl.org> or contact Bryan Blum at 916-313-4539 or <http://www.voteyeson40.org>.

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### **Resource Advisory Councils Meet**

Seven Resource Advisory Committees (RACs) have formed in 7 Sierra counties and have begun to meet to recommend watershed restoration, road maintenance or closures and other Forest Service projects on Forest Service lands.

By way of background, counties used to get money for schools and county roads from National Forest timber sales in their county. Just last year Congress passed new county payment legislation trying to decouple this relationship – which presented options for how counties got payments.

The counties that chose Title II option have the obligation to spend 50% of their money on watershed restoration. Resource Advisory Committees (RACs) are local collaboratives formed under Title II to recommend the projects to spend the money on.

The Forest Service has indicated that road restoration is one use of watershed restoration funds. Road restoration does not include expanding the width of roads or other expansion projects! Road restoration however must be for the purpose of improving the watershed which includes stabilizing slopes, removing roads, and replacing culverts. Removing roads and restoring the land gets the greatest bang for the buck in road restoration projects.

The Sierra counties with RACs and the annual funds they will receive in 2001 and 2002 are:

Alpine \$138,764 Fresno 394,354 Madera 159,603 Plumas 1,040,171 Sierra 264,811 Tehama 343,181 Tuolumne 367,322

For more information contact Laurel Ames at the Alliance at 530.542.4546 or laurel@sierranevadaalliance.org.

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### **Americans for National Parks**

Americans for National Parks is a new coalition forming to address dire funding shortfalls for natural and cultural resource preservation in our national parks. The budget of the National Park Service has failed to keep pace with burgeoning pressures from increased visitation, pollution, motorized use, and over-development adjacent to the parks.

Spearheaded by the National Parks Conservation Association, the Americans for National Parks is inviting individuals and groups to join their coalition effort. Coalition members have participation options ranging from lending your name to participating in their meetings and conferences. There is no cost to join or participate.

For a copy of the coalition's Guiding Principles or for more information please contact Bodhi Garrett, Americans for National Parks California campaign coordinator, at 510-839-9922.