

*May 1997*

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### **\$\$ for Watershed Restoration Floating Along**

*Laurel Ames*

Prop 204 funds came a drop closer to Delta tributaries with the release of the draft Request for Proposals (RFP) from the State Water Resources Control Board.

The staff proposes a review process that includes four different groups looking at and recommending funding for the proposals:

1.) the Delta Tributary Watershed Advisory Committee, which includes the Sierra Nevada Alliance; 2.) a Regional Water Quality Control Board; 3.) the Resources Agency; 4.) other interested parties.

Proposed selection criteria include demonstrated past success, demonstrated collaboration among multiple stakeholders, and documentation that a monitoring/assessment component will be implemented during the project and maintained for a certain period after the project to promote technology transfer and accountability.

All in all, the Alliance is pleased with the State Board staff's recommendations, and we feel our participation in the process resulted in the inclusion of key criteria. We expect the addition of stakeholders and post-project monitoring to vastly improve the quality of projects submitted for

funding.

Workshops are being scheduled for either June 4 or 5 to take comments on the draft RFP. Call 916-657-0430 to find out the exact date, location and time of the review.

PS - if your county has not yet talked to stakeholders about putting together a restoration proposal, there is still time!

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### **American River Watershed Group**

People all over the Sierra are recognizing a need to do business differently regarding potentially contentious and divisive community issues. And some are even doing something about it! Take Frank Olrich of SNA member group Protect American River Canyons (PARC), for example.

In a presentation to the local Chamber of Commerce a little over a year ago, Frank introduced the concept of collaborative decision-making, based on his reading of Dan Dagget's book, *Beyond the Rangeland Conflict*.

When he invited Chamber members to get involved in a similar process around the issue of Auburn Dam, the unthinkable happened. They agreed. That left Frank scrambling to put together such an effort.

As it turns out, there was already an American River watershed management group meeting in Auburn under the auspices of the Placer County Resource Conservation District (RCD). Frank and Eric Peach, of PARC, started attending meetings of this government agency-based group, and they liked what they saw.

"Rich Gresham [Executive Director of the RCD] did this wonderful dance, providing collaborative leadership, inviting and nourishing everyone's participation in the group effort," recalls Frank.

Working together, Frank and Rich started bringing more community-based concerns to the group, starting with fuel load reduction - a topic that was fairly non-controversial and already had substantial buy-in.

Using that issue as a basis for relationship-building, the watershed group is now moving in new directions. Together the group has developed a multi-faceted, community-based proposal for funding projects under the recent Proposition 204 watershed restoration fund. The projects range from fuel load reduction and forest health to water quality monitoring and meadow re-watering.

"We have close to \$1 million in projects in our proposal, all of which have received the unanimous support of the entire 80+-member group," says Frank. That's quite a testament.

The group continues to work well together, according to Frank. His one concern, though, is what happens when they get involved in an issue that has less consensus going in. Just like in any other serious relationship, Frank says, "we need a long-term commitment from each of the members to continue working together once the 'honeymoon' is over."

Whatever the future holds, Frank says he will always marvel at the fact that there was such a huge base of consensus among such a diverse group for taking care of river and water resources. "People have battled so intensely around Auburn Dam, I think they've come to accept that such adversity doesn't really get us anywhere," he says.

"I don't know whether this group is so unique or whether we're just lucky," muses Frank. "But I do know that the whole operation has really exceeded my expectations."

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### **Board Briefs**

SNA Board member Martha Davis has been appointed to the CalFed Ecosystems Roundtable, a subcommittee of the Bay-Delta Advisory Council (BDAC), to represent Sierra watershed interests.

SNA President Andrea Lawrence and Board member Linda Blum will represent rural community-building organizations on a panel of "Pioneer Women in the Sierra Nevada," as part of the Northern California Grantmakers Association's 21st Annual Conference at the Presidio in San Francisco on June 25.

### **Fourth Annual Conference**

#### Strategies for Shaping a New West

For years environmental organizations and activists have been trying to "get a place at the table" as full participants in the decision-making process for growth and resource management issues in the West.

With the advent of environmentalist participation in Coordinated Resource Management Plans (CRMPS), mediated settlements, interest-based negotiations and other facilitated group decision-making, some might say we've made it. But have we? What happens in these processes, how do they work, what are some of the pitfalls, and, perhaps most importantly, how do the decisions get implemented, or do they?

These are some of the questions we will be grappling with at the Sierra Nevada Alliance's Fourth Annual Conference: Strategies for Shaping a New West, on July 18th and 19th in fabulous June

Lake.

Daniel Kemmis, author of the popular book, *Community and the Politics of Place*, will start us off with a keynote discussion of community-building in his home state of Montana.

We feel very fortunate to have Mr. Kemmis joining us for this year's conference. He is currently director of The Center for the Rocky Mountain West in Missoula, Montana, and has served as an elected official in both local and state government.

Having survived all that, he has also authored another book, *The Good City and the Good Life*, as well as articles for national magazines and journals on such topics as the city center, community and community building, and the economy of the West.

After hearing from Mr. Kemmis, we'll be addressing a number of community-building efforts in our own state, including Tuolumne County's "Future Search" process, the South Fork American River Consensus Group, Lead Partnership Group, the ongoing SNEP process, and others, to help determine the "prizes" and "pitfalls" of collaborative planning.

We'll also be taking a closer look at some specific outcomes of collaborative decision-making processes related to watershed restoration, forestry issues, and biodiversity in the state.

Using these specific examples as a foundation for discussion, we will spend time considering how (or perhaps whether) the environmental community can survive the collaborative process. In other words, how do these processes play out? What happens after "consensus" is reached? How do we balance the local/regional voice with the larger perspective of national environmental groups?

In addition, we will learn more about the state of land use planning in the Sierra, thanks to a presentation by the Sierra Business Council, and we'll participate in a hands-on media training exercise led by Janet Cobb and Tom Martens. Everyone who participates in the media workshop will go home with a professionally prepared media kit for future use.

But perhaps most important of all, we will be outside in a great setting, sharing meals together, and reinvigorating in ourselves and others whatever it is that keeps us going as community activists.

The goal is for us all to go home rested, while having become a little wiser and more in tune with how to work together, both among ourselves and with other stakeholder groups in our communities.

We will be gathering at the Oh! Ridge Campground at June Lake again this year. We have reserved two loops of campsites - Deer and Fish - which will be available from Thursday night (for those who want to arrive the night before) through Saturday night. Site assignments are made on a first-paid, first-served basis, so register early! Registration materials will be sent out next month.

Each campsite has room for 6 and includes a picnic table and fire ring, along with unlimited access to the lake. There are enclosed group bathrooms with toilets and sinks. Sorry, no showers - although the campground store has showers for a small fee. **BRING QUARTERS!**

The overall conference fee includes registration, two lunches (Fri. and Sat.), one dinner (Fri. night), and camping for Friday and Saturday nights. Meals for children are extra. Thursday night camping is also separate - \$10 per party. And Saturday dinner is on your own. We are hoping to pull together a group potluck dinner at the campsites for those who choose to stay overnight on Saturday. Look for more details in the registration brochure coming your way next month.

Mark your calendars now, and start preparing to join friends and fellow Sierra activists for two days of regenerative thinking and doing in the unbeatable surroundings of the Eastern Sierra.

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### **Getting Acquainted: Protect American River Canyons**

In the words of Eric Peach, Chair of Conservation for Protect American River Canyons (PARC), PARC is an organization of dedicated individuals woven together by their deep appreciation for the American River.

Founded in 1972 to fight the Auburn dam, PARC has evolved into a community service, watershed education, and research group whose goal is to preserve and protect the American River watershed for everyone to enjoy.

More specifically, PARC publishes the American River Guide Book, a resource and recreational guide to the river, rich in history, anthropology, topology, trail information, and much more.

The group also sponsors hikes, educational outings, river clean-ups, and trail maintenance days, not to mention the Confluence Festival, a full day of river fun and appreciation, including food, entertainment, workshops, boating demonstrations, etc.

Given the group's long list of accomplishments and activities, you would think it had a staff of dozens. But you'd be wrong! The truth is, PARC has no paid staff at all. "We're an informal and sometimes chaotic but wonderfully effective volunteer group," says executive committee member Frank Olrich.

PARC has been an Alliance member since 1995. To find out more about PARC and its activities or how to become a member, write to: PO Box 9312, Auburn, CA 95604.

The 6th Annual American River Confluence Festival sponsored by PARC is Sun. June 8, 9 am-5 pm at the confluence of the North & Middle Forks of the American River off Hwy 49. Call 916-885-8878 for more info.

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## President's Letter

*Andrea Lawrence*

Tony Hiss, in his book, *The Experience of Place*, writes "as places around us change - both the communities that shelter us and the larger regions that support them - we all undergo changes inside. This means that whatever we experience in a place is both a serious environmental issue and a deeply personal one."

Our experience of place in the Sierra Nevada is what I hope we can share through *Sierra News* - letting us capture from our individual communities the essence of place and special qualities that connect us to our neighbors and our landscapes.

With this, our second newsletter, we invite you to share and inform us of your "sense of place" - news of your communities, the good, the troubling, the hopeful, your community efforts, photos, story ideas, calendar items, letters to the editor, and anything else that makes up your universe.

To co-opt a phrase, "the highest and best use" for *Sierra News* is to be your vehicle to talk to the larger activist base in the Sierra, as well as to our readers living in other communities who care about the Sierra Nevada.

The more we know and understand of other communities and their activities, concerns and interests, the more effective we can be in working toward long-term solutions for a healthy Sierra.

I believe there is great strength and potential in weaving together the fabric of our communities of interest throughout the Sierra. Having started with Tony Hiss, I will close with a few more lines from his *Experience of Place*:

Luckily, we have a hidden ally - or, if not hidden, at least a long neglected, overlooked, undervalued one. This ally is our built-in ability to experience places directly, an ability that makes it possible for people to know personally, through their own senses, about many of the ways our surroundings work within us. Paying careful attention to our experiences of places, we can use our own responses, thoughts, and feelings to help us replenish the places we love.

You have been called to join us and tell us your stories - please do! Cheers!

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## Quips and Quotes and News Notes

SNA has received a new two-year grant from The James Irvine Foundation to expand its programs in the Sierra and initiate the Futures Fund mini-grant program.

We've received a number of responses to our newsletter- naming contest, which we are still mulling over. The winner will be notified by phone prior to July's conference. In the meantime, we're proud to share with you what members and others have said about Sierra News:

"A very professional job!" - Hildie Heidt

"Looks professional." - Jeff Putman

"The newsletter is great." - Bill Stall, LA Times

"Very professionally done." - Shirley Blumberg

"Good work! This is truly a picture of an alliance!" - Terry Pencovic

"Nice job!" - Jerry Meral, PCL

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## Right In Our Backyard

*Glenda Edwards*

In an amazing show of willingness to try something new, 72 Tuolumne County citizens came together for a long weekend to address the subject, "Our Backyard - Tuolumne County in 2020, Seeking Common Ground."

Three intense days of brainstorming, arguing and working in ever-changing groups of mixed interests produced conference room walls plastered with ideas and a tentative hope that maybe the community could move beyond gridlock to address some of its pressing problems.

These 72 citizens participated in a facilitated discussion process known as Future Search, in which diverse interests are encouraged to work together to "find common ground for controversial issues in order to build a future of civility and collaboration."

The facilitators, led by Susan Dupre of Global Visions, started off by handing out a cartoon stating: "All guns, egos and positions shall be left at the door. It's time we all pull together."

This attitude prevailed throughout the weekend, as participants completed a battery of exercises designed to encourage dialogue (versus specific problem-solving) among various interests.

By working within this Future Search framework, people felt more comfortable departing from their traditional stakeholder interests.

For example, one exercise called for participants to brainstorm a list of issues or trends occurring in the county. Then, each stakeholder group (education, environment, natural resources, tourism, arts/entertainment/media, economy, government, social services/community-based organizations, and infrastructure) was given a set of colored dots to post next to the five issues or trends they considered most important.

The issue of "environmental degradation" received not only the highest number of dots, but also the most dots of varying color - proving that this was an issue of importance to many interests, not just the environmental stakeholders.

By the end of the weekend, the group identified areas of common ground, agreed on priorities, and planned actions to move forward. Participants were asked to make a personal commitment to stay involved in the process on some level.

The Future Search Conference completed a circle of dialogue started in early 1995 between SNA President Andrea Lawrence and Tuolumne County Supervisor Ken Marks regarding how to reach agreement on natural resource matters. The Alliance, as part of its community-building program, offered to help find a way to initiate new dialogue through Future Search.

A planning committee of 12 people - including Supervisor Marks, Alliance Board member Rick Breeze-Martin, representatives from two SNA member groups (People for Healthy Forests and the Central Sierra Watershed Coalition), EDC, the Forest Service, the Chamber of Commerce, city government and other interested people with no specific affiliation beyond a concern with the level of conflict in the community - spent the better part of a year putting the conference together.

A grant from the Forest Service Rural Revitalization program paid for much of the Conference. A portion of that grant has been held in reserve for scheduled follow-up activities. Other sponsors include the Sonora Area Foundation, EDC, TuCARE, People for Healthy Forests, Central Sierra Watershed Coalition, the Chamber of Commerce, and city and county government.

The most common hope expressed by those in attendance - and nearly everyone stayed for the whole three days! - is that this should be only the beginning. The planning committee has emerged as a cohesive group from its months of working together. It remains strongly committed to continuing the work of bringing civility and collaboration to Tuolumne County.

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## **SNA Statement Regarding QLG Proposal for New Forest Management Concept**

In November 1995, agreements were reached between the Clinton Administration, the Forest Service and the Quincy Library Group (QLG) to direct funds to the development and implementation of QLG's vision for new forest management concepts in certain Sierra forests.

However, the Forest Service has yet to begin forest plan revisions and other steps needed to move ahead. This lack of significant action by the Forest Service has prompted QLG to introduce legislation with the intent of moving the process forward in a focused and timely manner.

However, the legislative process is a risky proposition, as initial intent can often be lost in the political maneuverings used to move bills through Congress. Thus, the introduction of such legislation has galvanized interest and spawned some opposition within the larger forest activist community.

The Alliance, while strongly supportive of the Quincy Library Group's process, is deeply concerned that the legislation itself has precipitated a very strong division between forest activists and the coalition of community interests in Quincy, despite common interest in reforming forest management practices.

Until now there has been clear agreement by both forest activists and the Quincy Library Group that the national forests in the Sierra have been mismanaged for decades. It has also been clear that the future health of the forests depends on changing current USFS management practices.

As such, SNA continues to:

1.) support the Quincy Library Group's effort to look seriously at new solutions for forest management; 2.) commend the individuals in the group who have put in thousands of hours of time and dedication required by the collaborative process; 3.) and acknowledge that the group has taken enormous risks in attempting to implement the vision they have crafted.

The QLG's 1993 proposal has carefully constructed environmental protections and embodies strong community effort to seek new solutions, which is certainly commendable. However, opposition to legislation is understandable, since the legislative process is fraught with potential for mischief.

The challenge is to quickly reach a resolution and agreed-upon mechanism to launch a joint effort that protects the environment, supports the community, and reforms the management of the forests in the Quincy area.

The Alliance, therefore, stands ready and willing to help with that resolution process, through provision of a professional facilitator, outside experts, or other methods to expedite the reaching of a forward-looking, workable solution to the important forest management issues.

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## **Sierra Futures Fund**

Small amounts of money can do a lot to protect the environment when in the hands of local grassroots groups.

That's why the Alliance has initiated the "Sierra Futures Fund," a small-grant program for grassroots Alliance member groups.

"Grassroots groups are very creative and very adept at making do with whatever resources they have," notes Patty Brissenden, SNA Board member and chair of the Future Fund selection committee.

"But we think they deserve a boost, and we are very pleased that The James Irvine Foundation has provided this very nice nest egg for our groups to hatch."

Through the SNA Futures Fund, up to \$12,500 (\$1,000 max. per grant) will be distributed to member groups working on Sierra issues.

The selection committee, including Patty Brissenden, Ray Griffiths of FAWN, Heidi Hopkins of the Mono Lake Committee, Bob Kelso of Mountain Alliance, and Scott Kruse, a longtime Alliance supporter, will announce grant recipients at the July SNA conference.

Application deadline is May 30. Call the SNA office at 916-542-4546 for application materials or more info.

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## **What's The "Worth" of Water?**

According to Richard M. Stapleton, author of a Trust For Public Land report titled, Protecting the Source, the quality and quantity of our drinking water is seriously at risk. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that treating, storing, and delivering safe drinking water to the nation will require a capital investment of nearly \$140 billion over the next 20 years.

With uncontrolled development on critical watershed lands diverting the recharge of aquifers and polluting both surface and ground waters, water supply managers are coming to realize that land conservation and watershed protection may be the best and cheapest way to guarantee both the quality and quantity of safe drinking water.

The cost of watershed preservation is typically shared, and the benefits of parks and recreation, open space, and habitat preservation are all consistent with drinking water source protection. At the same time, slowing runoff and maintaining floodplains provide the complementary benefits

of reducing flood threats while increasing groundwater recharge.

The decision whether or not to protect a given property typically weighs conservation values against development values; increasingly, that equation is being rewritten to include the worth of water.

To order a copy of Richard M. Stapleton's *Protecting the Source*, a TPL report on the benefits of watershed protection, call 1-800-714-LAND.

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