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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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THE CALENDAR COLUMN

- Join us at SNA's 6th Annual Conference, Sat. Aug. 7th and Sun. Aug. 8th, at Echo Lake Berkeley Camp.
- Watch for information on upcoming regional outreach meetings in Sonora, Susanville and Markleeville and informational gatherings for the Attorney Feasibility Study in Nevada City, Sonora, and Mammoth Lakes.

NEED FOR RECREATION PLANNING IN THE NEW WEST

Environmental activists are used to paying attention to land use planning issues - where the Wal-Mart goes (or doesn't go!), how many houses per acre on a given project, whether grazing, or mining or timber harvest will be regulated on the public lands.

But what about planning for the use of the land that isn't developed - the land we've all worked so hard to protect? What about recreation planning? "As the population increases and more people move from the cities and Valley to the foothills, we need to 'think smart' about the impacts such movement will have on the Sierra," says SNA executive director Laurel Ames. "We talk about the environmental benefits of shifting from extraction-based industry to tourism in the Sierra. But recreational tourism has its own set

of impacts that we must plan for."

A recent High Country News (HCN) article about Vail, Colorado, and the growing trend toward creating and enhancing high-altitude resort towns in the West, introduces the ugly spectre of runaway recreational development, or corporate tourism, as "a huge factory without smokestacks."

Whether we're talking about downhill skiing, OHV use or back-country rock-climbing, recreation on public lands has impacts. They may not be as readily visible as the black smoke belching from a factory's stack; but they do exist.

One such impact that recreational planners don't always consider is the shift in real estate prices resulting from "corporate-style" tourism. HCN reports that in Vail, for example, 72% of the housing is devoted to second homes, some of which are owned by people with incomes in excess of \$675,000. The fulltime residents, many of whom work in the service industries that support recreational tourism, certainly can't afford these prices. So they are forced to move farther and farther outside of town just to find a home and amenities they can afford.

Meanwhile, ski areas are being built or expanded more for their real estate development potential than for the recreational opportunities they provide. Values of another sort are at the heart of efforts to encourage recreation planning in the Sierra. Resource values such as wildlife habitat, open space and water quality are at stake and need to be considered in relation to the increasing recreational use of almost all our public lands.

In the face of development and other pressures, Sierra County, for example, is working with the Sierra Economic Development District to create a county-wide recreation master plan. Since recreational tourism is admittedly the County's major economic engine, it behooves county leaders to plan for impacts and institute policies to protect those values. In Nevada County, the Yuba Watershed Council recently received funding from CalFed and Proposition 204 to conduct an assessment of recreational uses and their impacts on water quality in the South Yuba River. Following the Alliance's recommendation, the group is completing this assessment before embarking on its ultimate goal, which is to create a coordinated watershed management plan with input from all stakeholders in the canyon.

Impacts of whitewater rafting on the popular South Fork American River in El Dorado County have forced the County and other managing agencies to address the thorny issue of possibly reducing the number of users allowed on the river each day.

While no one wants to see quota systems established for every bit of public land we enjoy, in some cases it may be necessary to ensure that we don't

love these places to death, literally.

It's no secret that environmental activists pay special attention to industrial uses of our public lands. But now it's time to start looking at the impacts of recreation, so it doesn't turn into - "wreckreation."

6TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE, SAT. Aug. 7th & SUN Aug. 8th

by Janet Cohen, 1999 Conference Coordinator

It's here - the 6th annual conference, *Shaping the Sierra: Strategies to Weave Together Our Land and Our Culture*, to be held at Echo Lake Berkeley Camp, a high Sierra retreat overlooking Lake Tahoe, on Sat., Aug. 7th, and Sun. Aug. 8th.

"This year," says Laurel Ames, Alliance executive director, "we'll be talking specifically about growth in the foothills, economic revival in a former mill-town, the challenges of changing ownership of PG&E facilities throughout the Sierra and the processes driving all these changes."

To start the discussion we welcome Michael Kinsley, who has wrestled with issues of sustainability for nearly 30 years, first as the director of a citizens' organization, then as an elected county commissioner, and now as Director of the Economic Renewal Program at the Rocky Mountain Institute. Mr. Kinsley teaches and writes about sustainable economic development and collaborative decision-making and has pioneered programs in environmental and growth management. His publications include, *Paying for Growth*, *Prospering from Development* and the *Economic Renewal Guide*.

Sunday's keynote speaker is Tim Duane, author of the recently-published *Shaping the Sierra: Nature, Culture and Conflict in the Changing West*. Tim is an Associate Professor of City and Regional Planning, Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning at UC-Berkeley and was a contributor to the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project (SNEP) report.

He grew up in California and, with the sensitivity of a native, has been able to write passionately about the impact of rapid population growth on the culture, economy and ecology of the Sierra Nevada.

In his book he recommends innovative policies for mitigating the negative effects of future population growth in this spectacular but threatened

region, and he shows how new approaches must recognize the importance of natural values and the application of an environmental land ethic to future development.

Additional panels, discussions and presentations throughout the weekend will cover topics including the innovative economic development plan being implemented in West Point, the results of the Alliance's attorney feasibility study, an economic and cultural study of central Sierra ranches and the change in ownership of PG&E facilities in the Sierra.

Another great panel will feature representatives of the print media addressing the relationship between environmental groups and the media. To many participants, an important aspect of the conference is the opportunity to gather in a beautiful location and get reinvigorated for continued efforts at the local level.

This year we are increasing the time for social opportunities, along with the chance to gain access to technical assistance, problem-solving expertise and hands-on training in disciplines useful to community-based citizen action.

For more information on registration or other conference details, please call new conference coordinator JANET COHEN at 530-265-5961 or email her at [Registration brochures with the full conference agenda](#) and other information will be mailed out in June!

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Spring is nature's time of hope, renewal, and promise. It inspires us all and brings a sense of rightness to our world.

One Sierra foothill community - the formerly timber-dependent area surrounding West Point and Rail Road Flat in Calaveras County - is beginning its own time of hope and renewal, thanks to the hard work of a diverse group of local residents.

Following the Economic Renewal process developed by the Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI), the new Mokelumne Alliance for Community Renewal is working to develop community-based sustainable economic development projects and build community capacity. They are learning new ways to make decisions and work together while moving beyond some of the divisions that have characterized their community in the past - lessons we can all take to heart.

The group's work is supported by grants from the W. Alton Jones Foundation to the Sierra Nevada Alliance and Alliance member, the Foothill Conservancy. Thanks to the grants, these organizations brought Michael Kinsley, director of RMI's Economic Renewal program, to Calaveras County in early April to work with the fledgling community group. Kinsley conducted two days of workshops, teaching group members how to conduct the RMI Economic Renewal process in their community. Then he and the group introduced the basics of sustainable economic development and community collaborative process to more than 90 people at a Sunday afternoon town hall meeting.

The weekend was a successful kickoff for the project, but that really wasn't a surprise. RMI's common-sense approach brings out the best in people and empowers them, while reinforcing the inextricable links between environment, economy, and community. And while the process encourages community members to base decisions on their shared vision of the future, it offers practical tools for analysis and decision-making.

Alliance Executive Director Laurel Ames and I were privileged to be able to attend the training and town hall meeting and to work with the Calaveras group. We will continue to be involved in the project, helping in any way we can. While skeptics, history, and other negative forces can derail efforts of this type, we're optimistic that the people in the West Point-Glencoe-Rail Road Flat area will succeed in these first steps toward strengthening their local economy in a sustainable way. And in doing so, they should begin to build a stronger and more resilient community where discussion and cooperation, not argument and division, become the norm.

If you are interested in learning more about the RMI Economic Renewal Program for your own community, please call Laurel at the Alliance office.

Preparing for the 21st Century

Anyone interested in receiving information via email, instead of paper-heavy snail mail, please send us your email address to

We're also anticipating starting a Sierra

Nevada listserv service, and we'd love to be able to include you on what will undoubtedly be a great new source of information on what's happening in the Sierra! Questions? Call or email Cristi Bozora at 530-542-4546 or

SNA BOARD BRIEFS

SNA Board member Harriet Burgess recently received the Woman Entrepreneur of the Year award from the San Francisco Chapter of the National Association of Women Business Owners. She was one of only three women who received this prestigious award. Kudos Harriet!

A PICTURE WORTH 1,000 WORDS

GreenInfo Network - GIS for Non-profits

They say a picture is worth a thousand words. A map must be worth more - at least for non-profit environmental groups trying to illustrate a point.

GreenInfo Network was created in 1996 to help non-profits take advantage of the power of GIS, or Geographic Information Systems, mapping. GIS is a type of computer software that links different layers of information to specific locations on a map.

Let's say you wanted to show dams of varying sizes in a particular watershed. You could use GIS to plot the dams, rivers, creeks, roads, and other parameters, which are then printed out as a single color or black and white map (see example below).

This can be immensely helpful for educating and involving the public in land use issues, conducting detailed research, and, basically, illustrating your point to any and all audiences.

But to create such a map, you need special software, top-end computer equipment and, in most cases, a fair amount of training.

That's where GreenInfo Network can help. GreenInfo Network was created as a project of the San Francisco-based Greenbelt Alliance to assist non-profits in using GIS technology to more effectively carry out their missions.

GreenInfo Network works in two ways. Under an agreement with the Packard Foundation, GreenInfo is available to assist other Packard-funded non-profits with GIS capacity-building. The idea is to get these non-profits started, show them the potential of GIS and help them think strategically about appropriate future uses and funding opportunities. For other groups not affiliated with the Packard Foundation, GreenInfo

offers its services on a contract basis.

GIS can be used for conservation planning, such as identifying lands with high habitat value that are at risk from imminent development; defining demographic focus areas, such as communities facing high risks of a certain toxic exposure; and even communicating more effectively with your own members or supporters, such as notifying members within a certain distance of a specific project about meetings or other issues related to that project.

And, it can be an effective way to communicate with the general public by creating strong images to illustrate a given problem or solution.

GreenInfo Network has access to a variety of data, including: governmental boundaries, land uses, public lands, natural resources and features, transportation systems, census-based demographic data, and more.

To find out how GreenInfo Network can help you:

- call Brian Cohen at 415-979-0343, ext. 305;
- check the GreenInfo Network webpage at: <http://www.greeninfo.org>;
- or write or visit them at 201 Mission St., 4th Fl., San Francisco, CA 94105.

MONO COUNTY'S NEW MINING ORDINANCE

While many environmental activists find fault with SMARA, California's Surface Mining and Reclamation Act, members of the Mono County Mining Committee recently turned the Act to their favor by calling the County's attention to a clause giving local jurisdictions the authority to regulate environmental impacts of mining, even on federal lands.

The U.S. Supreme Court, in a case known as Granite Rock, ruled that local jurisdictions do have the right to impose and enforce certain regulations and that right is not preempted by federal law for operations taking place on federally managed lands.

Mono County voted unanimously to add Chapter 7.10 to the Mono County Code declaring its intention to protect the important natural resources and health and safety of county residents by imposing and requiring compliance with various regulations designed to ensure that mining operations within the County are conducted in an environmentally responsible manner. These regulations revolve primarily around prohibiting the use of certain known hazardous chemicals, such as mercury, cyanide and cyanide compounds, in processing activities, unless the use of such chemicals can be shown to have no significant adverse impact on the environment.

Requiring the mining operators to shoulder the burden of proving "no adverse impact" is a unique element to this ordinance, since most such ordinances place the burden on the regulatory agency to prove that there is a negative impact.

Mono County is the first jurisdiction in the country to codify the Granite Rock decision by adopting a permit process to review and control mine design and operational standards locally. The ordinance was reviewed and certified unanimously by the State Mining and Geology Board in January.

"Adoption of the Mining Ordinance was a real tribute to the resolve of the Mono County Supervisors to protect the ecosystems that lie at the heart of the Eastern Sierra's appeal to residents and visitors alike," says Bill McNeill, Mono County Mining Committee spokesperson.

"It is an important element in the regulatory framework that contributes to conservation of our environment and our tourism-based economy."

For more information on the Mono County Mining Ordinance, call Bill McNeill at 760-934-4141.

WATERSHED LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

By Laurel Ames, Executive Director

Legislation that can help or hinder watershed restoration is stirring great interest in the "shed-head" community, as the legislature gets its feet wet in a new pond.

Senator Poochigian introduced a bill (SB 1088), sponsored by the California Farm Bureau, that would give veto power over watershed projects to large landowners. This has been described as invoking a "feudalistic approach to watershed planning." This concept is the antithesis of full stakeholder involvement in watershed restoration! Significant opposition has encouraged the Senator to move SB 1088 to a two-year bill.

Assemblyman Dickerson has introduced a general bill (AB 730) for restoration that the CalFed Watershed Work Group (WWG) is concentrating on to assure that all interests have an opportunity to comment on, work on or provide new information to the process. The Assemblyman's staff is a part of the work group. Copies of the WWG draft statement of principles is available from Mary Lee Knecht at The committee is now developing the language for the next version and will present that to the WWG at its meeting in Sacramento on May 21. Comments are welcome!

The proposed water bond has been through a number of iterations, with no end in sight. Watershed restoration remains in the bond for now, but there are no dollar figures attached to it.

One month ago, the discussion about how PG&E should sell off its lands and dam facilities was going to be a collaborative effort, involving all interest groups; but Senators Bowen and Peace decided that the State legislature, rather than PG&E, should direct the discussion. Hearings on this issue are scheduled every Thursday afternoon at the Senate Energy Committee. Rumors abound. The latest is that the state should buy both the facilities and the lands. What will happen to those properties, and whether we will achieve environmental protections in the Sierra in the changeover, is still an unknown. The Alliance is committed to assuring that the protection of the Sierra environment is a key piece of the final deal.

NEW BOOK!

River Network's Clean Water Act: an Owner's Manual by Don Elder, Gayle Killam & Paul Koberstein a guidebook on using the Clean Water Act and other laws to protect your watershed. Call 503-241-3506 to order, or check <http://www.rivernetwork.org>

PACKARD-FUNDED ATTORNEY FEASIBILITY PROJECT MOVING FORWARD

by Cristi Bozora, Associate Executive Director

The Alliance's month-old legal support feasibility study (see March 1999 Sierra News article for more information) is already proving that many attorneys in the Sierra are just as interested in supporting the efforts of grassroots conservation organizations as the groups are in having the attorneys' help!

The first two meetings, one in El Dorado County and the other at the Amador County Bar Association, stirred lively discussions and helped to develop the beginnings of a network. The state Attorney General's office and the California District Attorneys Association's Environmental Circuit Rider Program have also indicated their interest in pursuing some kind of public/private partnership with the attorneys' network. The attorneys themselves are interested in supporting a broad range of efforts, from land use cases to environmental justice issues to Endangered Species Act matters. We've scheduled more meetings throughout the Sierra to hear from attorneys their ideas and suggestions about the project between now and mid-June. If you or your organization has worked with an attorney you think would like to participate in the formation of the network, please let us know!

In May, we'll also be starting a series of regional meetings with Alliance member groups, supporters, and other grassroots conservation organizations throughout the Sierra. Get ready to give us your suggestions about how a regional network of attorneys can help make your organization more effective!

For more information on the feasibility study or to pass along an idea or the name of an attorney you think might be interested, please call Cristi Bozora at 530-542-4546.

THE ALLIANCE GOES HIGH-TECH

For the next two years the Rockefeller Technology Project will be working with the Alliance on system upgrades to expand our ability to inform and assist our member groups. From starting a listserv to increasing website interactivity, we will be looking for ways to increase our services to you. We will host a regional meeting in the western foothills to get input on potential technology advances soon. For member groups that are farther

away, we will be working with the Technology Project folks to develop a training program that will work for you - but we will need your advice!

Watch for a survey soon.

The Alliance is very fortunate to be part of this project through the Packard Foundation's Conserving California Landscapes Initiative, a program that is spending \$175 million in California over the next five years, on the Central Coast, the Central Valley and the Sierra Nevada.

SIERRA BUTTES/LAKES BASIN COALITION

By Cristi Bozora, Associate Executive Director

"We are rolling and we are broke - 'tis an honorable cause, however," says Nancy Wagner, co-chair of the Sierra Buttes/Lakes Basin Coalition. The Coalition, formed in 1998 (originally called Supporters of the Sierra Buttes), is dedicated to the preservation of the Sierra Buttes/Lakes Basin Special Treatment Area in Sierra County.

This magnificent natural area, including Upper and Lower Sardine Lakes in the Tahoe National Forest near the Nevada County border, is being threatened by development of the few parcels of private property located within the Special Treatment Area.

The group, another new member of the Alliance, came together to oppose construction of two cabins on these inholdings. According to one of the Coalition's founders, Jan Hunt Boucher, whose family operates the Sardine Lake Resort, this development will have "significant recreational, wildlife and water quality impacts."

Members of the Coalition have attended County Planning Commission and Supervisors meetings since January urging detailed environmental impact reports (EIRs) for the projects.

In February 1999, the Planning Commission denied the applications because they did not agree with the intent of the County's General Plan for "special treatment areas." The lack of a real EIR made prudent decisions impossible and the County had not yet prepared its Recreational Master Plan. The builders appealed and, this spring, the Supervisors overrode the February decision and permitted both projects. Using a common tactic of last resort,

the Coalition's attorney, Stephan Volker, filed suit against the County on April 22, 1999.

The Sierra Buttes/Lakes Basin Coalition is facing an increasingly familiar situation: how to protect the environmental values and scenic quality of our counties in the face of local government's often pro-development position.

The Coalition is using a wide array of tactics to get its message out and encourage participation in the local decision-making process, including:

- **Action Alerts.** Though the Coalition calls them, more innocuously, "Summary Memos," these bi-weekly updates let people know what's happened, what's happening, whom to call, and how to get involved.
- **Coalition-building.** The Coalition is working with Alliance member groups such as SYRCL and the Truckee-Donner Land Trust to increase momentum toward preservation of the Sierra Buttes area.
- **Visibility.** The members of the Coalition have been very successful at attracting media attention: The Grass Valley Union carried two articles in December 1998 about the controversy, and Sunset magazine included the Sardine Lakes area in its May 1999 article on "Snug Sierra Resorts."

MEET ANOTHER NEW SNA MEMBER: TAHOE FOREST ISSUES GROUP

The Tahoe Forest Issues Group (FIG) is the citizen watchdog for projects undertaken on the Tahoe National Forest. FIG advocates to protect streams, reduce logging and road building, save wildlife habitat, and reduce fire danger.

Some of FIG's successes include:

- successfully appealing the Liberty Sale, forcing the Forest Service to better protect watersheds, rare wildlife, and old forest areas;
- appealing the Cavanaugh Sale and, through negotiations with the Forest Service, keeping watersheds from being damaged by excessive logging; and
- arguing successfully for increased stream buffers on the San Juan Project to keep logging away from sensitive riparian areas.

FIG brings together dedicated volunteer citizen activists, including scientists, artists, students, retirees, and people like you who care about their national forests.

FIG works in cooperation with other local conservation groups and is affiliated with the Sierra Nevada Forest Protection Campaign, formed in 1997 to support and coordinate forest defense activities throughout the Sierra.

For more information, contact: Don Jacobson, FIG, PO Box 2167, Grass Valley, CA 95945, 530-272-1433,

NEWS NOTES

Thanks to all of you who bought books from Amazon.com through the Alliance's website! We just got our first referral check from the company, and did it feel good! We try to update the books often, and this month we'll be featuring Tim Duane's new book. Please let us know if you have other suggestions!
