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Board Briefs

Andrea Lawrence, SNA Board president, has been asked to be a guest speaker at the California Parks & Recreation Leadership Institute, the El Dorado Environmental Symposium, and the Forest Service Regional Leadership Forum. Keeping busy!

SNA Board member Rick Breeze-Martin has been appointed to the Delta Tributary Watershed Advisory Committee to review grant proposals and make recommendations to the State Water Resources Control Board for watershed restoration project funding.

Collaboration

Just what is collaboration?

That concept, as we use it, goes beyond communication, cooperation, and coordination. As its Latin roots - cum and laborare - indicate, it means "to work together." It is a mutually beneficial

relationship between two or more parties who work toward common goals by sharing responsibility, authority, and accountability for achieving results. Collaboration is more than simply sharing knowledge and information (communication) and more than a relationship that helps each party achieve its own goals (cooperation and coordination). The purpose of collaboration is to create a shared vision and joint strategies to address concerns that go beyond the purview of any particular party.

from Collaborative Leadership: How Citizens and Civic Leaders Can Make a Difference, by David D. Chrislip and Carl E. Larson. Published by Jossey-Bass Publications, Sept. 1994.

Find out more about this and other publications at <http://www.amazon.com>

Environmental Web Sites

These are some good environmental news web sites.

1. <http://www.enn.com> -- A big site with several areas containing current and archived environmental news, a forum, and a free e-mailed news clips service.
2. <http://www.envirolink.org/environews>
3. <http://www.ljx.com/practice/environment/index.html> -- Part of the National Law Journal site dedicated to environmental law.
4. <http://www.arin.org/arin/tlpe.html> -- A primer on takings law titled, "Takings Law in Plain English," produced by the American Resources Information Network.

Executive Director's Letter

Laurel Ames

Collaboration is a concept that is going to be with us for a while. President Clinton endorsed the collaborative process at this summer's Lake Tahoe event; the Forest Service has begun workshops on collaboration; and even the home of the home rule movement - Catron County, New Mexico - has embarked on a collaborative effort.

Is it easy? No. Does it take a lot of time? Yes. Is it worth it? We think so. It is important, when contemplating giving up old ways and warily approaching new processes, to assess the time, money and effort of both.

Do appeals take time? Yes. Are lawsuits enormously expensive? Yes. But can facilitated, collaborative decision-making be equally time-consuming and expensive in its own way? Probably.

Both the old ways and the new require time, energy and financing. But the resources tend to come from different pots. Only you know whether those pots are worth trading for you or your organization.

The advantage that we see in collaboration is that once agreements are made, they last for a much longer time than some of the victories we've experienced in the past - the ones that end up creating even more passionate enemies who work even harder to overturn our successes.

Conservation and protection efforts around Lake Tahoe illustrate the concern. The League to Save Lake Tahoe began with an aggressive litigation strategy, which paid off in victory after victory. But, once the resulting new rules were in place, they were not enforced. In fact, the "losers" continuously undermined the requirements, and ultimately, the lake continued to lose clarity.

With the launching of a consensus process, however, the recalcitrant have come to the table and are becoming part of the solution instead of a continuation of the problem. Without the acrimony of the winner/loser model, there is a new energy invested in protecting Lake Tahoe from the ravages of the past. We believe the Sierra is worth the same effort.

Onward –

Forest Management: A Balancing Act

Katherine K. Evatt

This time of year is absolutely beautiful in our special county. We can all agree on that. We may differ on what we appreciate the most, but the beauty is so overwhelming that it simply cannot be missed or taken for granted.

How we see the world around us is usually shaped by our own life experiences, our personal needs and beliefs, and our values. Some folks have a heightened appreciation for things aesthetic and spiritual, others lean more toward the practical, the useful. To complicate matters, the lines

between these blur, and what is "useful" can be complex and multifaceted. And uses are not always mutually beneficial.

This is one of the reasons we have so many conflicts in our country on natural resource issues. Forests are the best local example. Nearly everyone agrees that forests are, or at least can be, beautiful places. They can be temples of solace for those whose well-being depends on regular contact with the natural world. They can bring joy to our hearts and calm to our souls.

At the same time, forests are sources of timber products. The beams in our houses, the decking around them, the furniture within them, all come from trees. Useful, practical, needed items, of value to society. They can be beautiful, too, and in some settings, inspiring in their own right.

Just to make things more complicated, forests also provide the water California needs to survive, while sustaining the natural diversity of plants and animals that were here long before people began to wonder how to treat them.

Because of this, forests are more complex places than any corn field, despite the fact that some trees can be cut and regrown time and time again.

Most of us realize however, that lacking a suitable substitute, some of our forests must be managed for production of timber products. But we also appreciate forests for their other values - as sources of clean water, recreation, and biological diversity. Some of our forests, then, must primarily be managed to sustain those values. Achieving an acceptable balance is difficult, because opinions differ as to what matters most.

Two years ago, up in Quincy, I was taken to see an 11-foot diameter sugar pine. Anyone who spends time in our forests knows that there are not many of those awesome giants remaining outside of parks. One of the most interesting things, to me, was seeing that the forest around this ancient tree had been logged more than once. The loggers had always left this tree, even though it was worth a small fortune. They obviously appreciated it for what it was, standing there in the forest, even though they know what it could become in the mill.

At the same time, I have some sugar pine in my house, cut from wide boards we purchased from a local rancher many years ago. I know those boards came from a very large, old tree. I don't resent the fact that the tree was cut, for I enjoy its wood every day. At the same time, if I saw the tree in the forest now, I know I would be saddened at the thought it might be logged.

Forest management will never be simple, because neither forests nor people are simple. Short-term decisions have long-term consequences, many never intended. Taking care should be the watchword, because we cannot afford to lose any of the values our forests offer. We should do the best we can, but at the same time, recognize that our knowledge is incomplete, our understanding imperfect, and our notions of time distorted by our own short lives.

Katherine Evatt is vice president of the Alliance Board and co-president of the Foothill Conservancy in Amador County.

(This article appeared in the March 26, 1997, Amador Ledger-Dispatch under the title, "Nothing simple about forests.")

Futures Fund Winners

Excitement filled the air as Executive Director Laurel Ames and SNA Board member and Futures Fund selection committee chair Patty Brissenden began calling up the award winners for this year's inaugural Futures Fund grant program at the annual conference in July.

Futures Fund is a small-grant program for grassroots Alliance member groups. The seed money to start the program came from a grant from The James Irvine Foundation. This year's award winners and the programs funded:

Foothill Conservancy, for a local media campaign to educate citizens of Amador and Calaveras Counties about the interrelation of good planning, resource protection, and quality of life issues.

High Sierra Hikers Association, to hire a facilitator to work with the HSHA and commercial mule packers to identify common ground.

Institute for Ecological Health, to assemble local biological information in El Dorado County to serve as a baseline for developing an achievable local conservation strategy.

People for Healthy Forests, to partially fund the Sierra Watershed Health Assessment Project, including researching and documenting the effects of herbicides on water quality and riparian habitat.

Protect American River Canyons, to work with state and federal agencies on habitat restoration, trail-building and maintenance, and trash removal in the river canyon.

Range Watch, to purchase a computer video editing system that will allow for production of TV-quality footage.

Rural Quality Coalition, to provide neighborhood and community groups with planning, legal, and scientific consulting and advice.

South Yuba River Citizens League, to educate small businesses and other organizations about the benefits of Wild & Scenic river protection.

Getting Acquainted: People for Healthy Forests

People for Healthy Forests (PFHF) is a non-profit, grassroots group of community volunteers that formed in 1983 in response to U.S. Forest Service's plans for herbicide use on tens of thousands of acres of ground.

The group monitors the use of herbicides on public lands and educates people about these practices, with the overall goal of stopping chemical use on USFS lands and promoting safe, healthy alternatives to herbicide use.

PFHF is stepping up its public education program through the Sierra Watershed Health Assessment Project, a biological, chemical and toxicological water monitoring program designed to assess the impacts of widespread USFS herbicide use in the Stanislaus, Merced and Tuolumne River watersheds.

A draft MOU with the USFS for chemical monitoring, the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board and UC Davis for toxicological evaluation, and PFHF and others for volunteer biological assessments is currently underway, as is training for volunteer citizen monitors.

PFHF plans to use the data collected to secure significant changes in the water quality and vegetation management practices of the Stanislaus and other national forests in the Sierra Nevada.

For more information, contact Linda Conklin of PFHF at 209.532.2956 or write to PO Box 3252, Sonora, CA 95370.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: Circulate petitions and fact sheets; Write the USFS Regional Forester and/or senators Boxer & Feinstein; Volunteer to help monitor your watershed.

Hard at Work in the Tahoe Office

Kathy McGovern joined the Alliance staff after six years with the Mt. Diablo Region YMCA. Kathy, who holds a BS in Business Administration, manages all administrative services and is developing our new membership program.

Cristi Bozora is an environmental attorney formerly with the Friends of the Columbia Gorge in Oregon. Graduated from the Northwestern School of Law of Lewis & Clark College and a member of both the Oregon and California State Bars, Cristi is managing the open space rangeland program for the Alliance.

Laurel Ames is relaxed now that she has a real office with a great staff, is in her fourth year as

Executive Director.

New Membership Program

In "Membership Development Planning," a 16-page report prepared for the Alliance by consultant Kerri Timmer, it's pointed out that far and away the biggest private-sector (non-governmental) supporters of non-profit grassroots groups are individuals like yourselves.

Foundations, for example, only count for about 6% of the total amount of donations directed to non-profits in any given year. In contrast, individuals, both living (donors/members) and deceased (wills/bequests) add up to 89% of all annual donations.

So, although it may be tempting for non-profits to concentrate solely on pumping out foundation grant requests, the reality is there is more to be gained over time in developing better membership and individual donor relationships.

Unfortunately, there is no easy way to acquire and keep members. If there were, we'd all be doing it by now. However, there are a number of effective ways for the Alliance and our member groups to build membership.

The Alliance has already begun implementing some of the report's recommendations, including trading mailing lists for educational and outreach mailings to amenable, like-minded organizations in the Sierra.

While people sometimes have an instinctual aversion to sharing their membership lists for fear that the "competition" will steal away donors, donor research shows that in most cases, the opposite is true.

Donor loyalty to the first group tends to increase as donors learn more about other organizations in the same field. In addition, the majority of donors give to more than one group, and the groups they give to tend to be similar.

News Notes

SNA has received a two-year general support grant from the David & Lucile Packard Foundation.

In addition, the Alliance has received funding from the Sierra Nevada Forest Protection

Campaign to develop a set of protocols for reviewing forest health-related watershed restoration grant applications.

SNA "Slogans"

Media workshop moderator Tom Martens led SNA conference attendees in a brainstorming session to identify possible SNA descriptions, slogans, and other identifying catch phrases, including:

Together for a healthy Sierra
Preserve the Sierra together
SNA, working together to preserve this special place
SNA, building a better Sierra
SNA, forging links, building communities
SNA - the Home Team
SNA, empowering local Stewardship
The Sierra Nevada - for a "peak" experience.

But staff's personal favorite, at least for T-shirts or bumper stickers, is:

SIERRA NEVADA -- More Than Just an Ale

SNA Regional Outreach Meetings

SNA is instituting a series of regional outreach meetings over the next year. These meetings are designed to support the Alliance's grassroots member groups, who form the foundation of the Alliance.

Ideally, each meeting will be co-sponsored by one or more local member group(s). The purpose of these outreach meetings is three-fold: 1.) to help the Alliance gain a better understanding of local issues and needs of member groups, 2.) to provide the Alliance Board and staff an opportunity to educate member groups about Sierra-wide issues, and 3.) to emphasize community-building through individual trainings, case study presentations, and other activities.

Each meeting will be specifically tailored to the issues facing the local area, both to strengthen and support member groups and to encourage participation by non-member groups as well.

The first meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 11, in Nevada City, where we will be

discussing how (and whether) to establish a local watershed stewardship council for the Yuba River watershed.

Other possible areas for future meetings could include: Oakhurst, Butte Co., Porterville, Sonora, Placerville, Jackson, Lee Vining, Quincy, and Bishop.

Kerri Timmer is organizing these regional gatherings. If you are interested in co-sponsoring one (at no cost to your group), please contact Kerri at 530.470.0526 or

SNA and Watershed Councils

The Sierra Nevada Alliance has been working with the Regional Council of Rural Counties (RCRC), to develop collaborative principles and guidelines for forming watershed councils and funding future watershed restoration projects.

"Restoration project decisions are going to be made at the local level, not top-down from the EPA," explains Laurel Ames, Executive Director of the Sierra Nevada Alliance. To facilitate this local decision-making, however, local watershed councils need to be formed in the Sierra.

Together with the RCRC, the Alliance has developed a structure and process model for setting up and operating a Watershed Stewardship Council Joint Powers Agreement.

The goal is to have the watershed stewardship council, composed of the various stakeholders in the watershed, set up as a joint powers authority through a county or group of counties. This makes it an independent public agency of the state.

This group then works with appropriate local, federal and state agencies to coordinate all aspects of watershed restoration and protection. Tasks include assessing, developing, coordinating, implementing, monitoring and evaluating projects designed to restore damage in the upper watershed and to protect healthy, functioning areas of the watershed.

The governing board of the watershed council is designed to have an equal number of members with equal votes selected from each of four segments of the community, including: 1.) representatives of the signatories of the joint powers agreement, including local government, 2.) economic interests, 3.) environmental interests, and 4.) at-large citizens, all within the upper watershed.

In addition, non-voting seats are included for representatives from each federal and state land managing agency with programs in the upper watershed.

Each council is then divided up into a number of working committees, including planning & research, community involvement & public education, organization & finance, evaluation &

reporting, and others, as needed.

The overall goal of the watershed stewardship council is to provide a mechanism for securing broad community involvement in designing, developing, monitoring and evaluating programs and to assure that all groups, sectors and elements represented on the council have a full and fair opportunity to participate in decisions affecting those programs.

In addition, the councils will provide planning and technical assistance to organizations in the upper watershed areas to help secure funding assistance from appropriate local, state and federal funding sources.

In terms of accountability and reporting, the watershed councils will meet the standards of the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, including an annual report and audit to be provided to the political subdivision or local government agency that initiated the joint powers authority, as well as state and federal funding agencies.

If you or your organization is interested in learning more about how to create watershed stewardship councils, call Laurel Ames, SNA Executive Director, at 530.542.4546.

Watershed Restoration is More than Just Logging

Laurel Ames

Recently some proposals for "watershed restoration" have looked suspiciously like recycled timber sales with a new cover sheet touting the watershed benefits of projects stressing thinning and fire protection. Much as the salvage logging sales were not forest health projects, thinning and fire protection projects may not be watershed restoration projects.

Both CalFed and Proposition 204 have confused the one with the other. The Alliance is working with both agencies to explain the difference - in a nutshell: there is more to a forest than the trees.

And there is more to a watershed than the trees in the forest. Wildlife habitat, water quality, healthy fisheries, soils, deciduous trees, shrubs and other diverse plants, weather patterns and moisture, and even the bugs that are so important to the functioning of the ecosystem as a whole, make up a forest. A forest is an ecosystem. And an ecosystem is a very complex set of components, structures and processes or functions. All of these interact.

As SNEP describes it, "Trees and wildlife are important to Sierran ecosystems but equally important are the myriad less visible or unseen organisms, such as insects, fungi, and bacteria" (emphasis added). Further, SNEP notes that "Ecosystems are linked to one another, so that changes in components, structure and function in one ecosystem may have consequences in contiguous and noncontiguous systems." In other words, don't fool with Mother Nature, unless

you are really sure of yourself.

With the understanding of how easy it is to make a mistake, the Alliance emphasizes the utmost importance of a true watershed-level assessment, analysis and evaluation before any restoration project proceeds.

To propose a watershed restoration project without such an assessment is the height of folly. Not only is it quite likely to damage essential ecosystem components through ignorance, but it is equally likely to fail in the next major storm, wasting taxpayer dollars, as well as causing even more damage to the watershed.

The need for watershed assessment is critical with forest thinning and fire protection projects. The assessment identifies stressors and means for addressing them. The assessment may endorse a forest thinning project, or it may not, depending on the analysis of all the components, structure and functions of the ecosystem.

There is danger that a.) proponents may propose projects for other than true restoration reasons, b.) they may believe a project is restorative and be unwilling to undergo an assessment, or c.) they may be so committed to the project that they are not interested in learning about the whole watershed.

The Alliance's message is: "Watershed Assessment First!" Require a watershed assessment and evaluation, and then you and everyone else will know whether the proposed project - be it thinning, fire protection, meadow reconstruction or a fisheries improvement project - is the correct step to take and if it is designed to truly protect the watershed ecosystem.

What is an Ecosystem Anyway?

According to the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project (SNEP) report, ecosystem refers to "the collective entity formed by the interaction of organisms with each other and with their physical environment at a particular location."

"Ecosystems exist at many, potentially overlapping, scales, from a rotting log to the entire Sierra Nevada."

Webster's II Dictionary defines ecosystem as: "an ecological community and its environment interacting and functioning as a unit."
