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### **The Transformation of the Sierra**

*Laurel Ames, Executive Director*

The enormous changes in the Sierra and how we work with them permeated the presentations and conversations at the Alliance's sixth annual conference.

How we address resource damage, development threats, misguided agency management schemes, and the changing forces in our communities and economies wove speakers, panels and conversations together for our August weekend on the rim of the Lake Tahoe basin.

The transformation of the Sierra, from a mining, timber and grazing economy to a haven for retirees and home to commuters and service employees, has brought about fundamental conflicts that are repeated throughout the West.

The Sierra is in the forefront of this shift, which has brought profound social and political change to our rural communities. From West Point, in Calaveras County, where a group of citizens is working on a bottom-up, citizen-led economic renewal effort, to Nevada County, in which the voters have fundamentally shifted the outlook of local government from heavyhanded development to protection of quality-of-life values, the Sierra is experiencing a new relationship between the people, the economy and the local government.

Panels to inspire member groups to work closely with the media and to embrace fundraising were interspersed with examples of collaborative processes with ranchers and the impacts of the sale of hydropower dams and lands in the Sierra.

State Senator Debra Bowen, chair of the Senate Energy, Utilities and Communications committee, attended the conference on Sunday to hear the keynote address and to observe (and comment) on the hydro panel.

Tim Duane, assistant professor of city and regional planning at the University of California, Berkeley, opened the second day with a keynote address on the profound implications of changes in the relationship between nature and culture, people and place. Tim noted that these changes have brought intense social conflicts based on the different perceptions and values with which residents regard the Sierra Nevada.

Inevitable population growth, value conflicts, economic dislocations and new income all color our future and challenge our understanding of our community and our place. In the new West, nonmarket assets have a great value, but are not measured in terms of dollars. "The spotted owl is not listed on the commodity markets," he said, and "trees are given a dollar value for their horizontal, not vertical worth." Changes do not benefit people uniformly. "Tourism, recreation and timber combined are dwarfed by residential building spending in the Sierra," Duane said. But counties in the far north of the Sierra have not yet seen the building boom of Nevada, Placer and El Dorado counties. He noted that they have the opportunity to look in their rear view mirrors as they drive north and see their future if they make no changes. Duane pointed out that the land use decisions of those three counties from 1969- 73 are now being understood, as the impacts hit 25 years later. The other 15 counties in the Sierra have that example to follow, reject or alter.

And, as an example of how a community can tackle value issues, Michael Kinsley of the Rocky Mountain Institute spoke about an economic renewal process he has developed that empowers local people to rethink their values and their communities' economic needs.

From that process, communities can take charge of their own future and build their economy based on the mix of nonmarket and market values that they choose.

While West Point is moving through this process, other rural communities in the Sierra are ripe to try a new way of controlling their own destiny. The highlight of the conference, as usual, was the updates from member groups about their places, their issues, and (mostly) their successes. From the Sierra Buttes to Mariposa, from Nevada City to Mammoth Lakes, members told their stories, creating an exponential increase in energy for all.

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**More \$\$ for Watersheds**

More money will be allocated for watershed work at the state level, providing that voters approve these bonds in March:

## **WATER BOND**

**WATERSHEDS:** \$90 million in the bond, but northern California only gets \$26 million of that, since the southern California watersheds grabbed 60% and special projects picked up another \$10 million. Funding will be available for watershed plans and projects.

**NON-POINT SOURCE PROTECTION:** \$100 million in bond, with 60% to southern California. Funding available for specific pollution control for everything from timber and grazing to pesticides and animal wastes. Projects must comply with regional water quality control board Integrated Plan. Can be awarded to watershed groups with watershed plans that meet the definition in Section 79080 of the watershed protection program.

## **PARK BOND**

\$3.5 million is available for parks and watershed restoration in the Sierra-Cascade region.

## **WATERSHED FUNDING**

**DRAFT LEGISLATION:** The very drafty draft is on our website. It raises \$270 million per year from water user fees. The Regional Council of Rural Counties (RCRC) and the Alliance are seeking constructive comments on the legislation so that we can rework it to meet most of the needs of the watershed groups, the water agencies, and the water users. Anyone with a better idea is encouraged to let us know! The website is interactive, so comment away! November 1 is the deadline for comments.

For the water bond text, see [www.leginfo.ca.gov](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov) AB1584 [Chapter 6 & 7]

For the Park Bond text, see [www.leginfo.ca.gov](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov) AB 18 [Article 2(z) and Article 4.6]

*Laurel Ames*

The Sierra, from the foothills to the high mountain crest, is a wondrous place that generates great passions and mobilizes many dedicated people working on a broad array of natural resource issues. We at the Alliance are reminded of this each year at our annual conference -- the sixth was more diverse than ever! While watersheds, open space protection and member group support dominate our internal work, we spent two days at the conference learning about other places and issues in the Sierra. I am struck by the change in our attitudes as the past six years have gone by -- from a time when we seemed to be struggling to make a mark, to today, when groups up and down the Sierra are tackling tough jobs with a sense that success will be reached, special places will be protected, and ecosystems will get the respect they deserve. That said, there is never enough time to bask in our successes, and there is always the next project, the next threat, or the next unimaginably bad decision that seems to defeat our best work. But we are a resilient force, and we are making great headway in our protection efforts.

Energized and exhilarated by the stories at the conference, I look forward to the Alliance's seventh year, working with you and for you in our mutual goal to protect our natural landscapes, communities and last, best places.

Onward!

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### **The Alliance Welcomes Kelley Moore**

The Alliance is proud to sponsor Kelley Moore, an AmeriCorps Service Learning Coordinator, for the year to help us design and implement a watershed education and public outreach program.

Kelley, a native of Saratoga, CA, graduated in June from UCLA with a B.S. in Geology. At UCLA's Institute of Geophysics and Planetary Physics, Kelley researched Libyan Desert Glass and received the Dean's Prize for her discovery of a small mineral within the glass. Kelley has a longtime interest in protecting the environment, including spending four months studying sustainable development in Costa Rica, and in environmental education in particular.

"I especially enjoy working with children because their ideas and energy bring me hope that we are taking steps to actually do something to help the earth," says Kelley. She can be reached most days at the Alliance office and by e-mail at

Americorps is a national service agency which finds sponsors, including schools, museums, and

nonprofit organizations, where its employees can make an impact and give back to the watershed.

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### **Watershed Council Toolkit - Hot Off the Press**

The Alliance's First Major Publication In keeping with the Alliance's goal of helping to create watershed groups throughout the Sierra, we have produced a basic "how-to" guide for people interested in starting new groups or strengthening existing ones. It's called the ***Watershed Council Toolkit***.

What some people like best about the ***Toolkit*** is that it doesn't just present one way of doing things.

Instead, it looks at how other watershed councils around the country have organized themselves and helps identify the pros and cons of each different structure. This way, you can see what might work best for you depending on your own situation!

As its name implies, the ***Toolkit*** is designed to provide a set of tools to make activists' participation in watershed councils more effective and/or the group's activities more productive so that Alliance members can continue to create positive change in their watersheds.

The ***Toolkit*** describes a process for organizing stake-holders into an effective group that can:

- a.) assess the watershed's condition;
- b.) create an action plan for addressing issues and maintaining or enhancing the watershed's health; and
- c.) carry out those actions, including finding funding and conducting necessary monitoring and follow-up activities.

The 122-page ***Toolkit*** is divided into three parts. The first contains information on what watersheds are, how different stakeholder groups have come together for the good of their watershed, and what the benefits may be to starting or participating in a watershed council in your watershed.

Part II looks at "Getting Started," including some of the important steps or decisions regarding

organizational structure, decision-making processes and participant makeup.

And the third part discusses how to keep a watershed council going once it is started. This section may be helpful to those who are already involved in collaborative groups but who want to know how to make their organizations more effective.

*The Toolkit* also has an appendix section with contact information for additional watershed work and community-based partnership resources, including organizations and initiatives, publications, and technical assistance for non-profits.

You will be pleased to hear that the Toolkit is already a hot item at gatherings of watershed groupies, such as the BDAC Watershed Work Group. Our distribution plan includes making the *Toolkit* available at many such gatherings, along with mailing a copy to all our member groups and, as Martha Davis says, "to those who will give it a good home."

We are asking agencies and businesses to pay \$25.00 a copy, or about 66% of the actual cost of production. Alliance member groups get their first copy free. The Toolkit marks an important step in the Alliance's efforts to support good working relationships among key stakeholders in the Sierra's watersheds.

To order a copy of the Alliance's Watershed Council Toolkit, call the Alliance Office at 530.542.4546 or send a check for \$25 to the Alliance at PO Box 7989 South Lake Tahoe, CA 96158.

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## **Roads, Roads, Roads**

**The Sociological and Ecological Consequences of Roads in the Sierra Nevada -- A Workshop** From highways to forest roads, from driveways to giant parking lots, roads are a part of our everyday life. And we all drive on them.

However, the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project (SNEP) report stated that aquatic/riparian systems are the most altered and impaired habitats of the Sierra. And roads are the largest contributor to damaging those ecosystems.

UC-Merced's Sierra Nevada Network for Education and Research (SNNER) and UC-Davis's Institute of Transportation Studies are co-sponsoring a workshop on the impacts of roads in all

their forms and functions.

The "Sociological and Eco-logical Consequences of Roads in the Sierra Nevada" work-shop will discuss road impacts in terms of ecological, hydrological, sociological and regulatory contexts.

The presentations will be cross-disciplinary, bringing together transportation planners, academic researchers, agency personnel, scientists, sociologists and independent consultants to assess the impacts of roads on our lives and on our environment.

The public is invited! The three-day event will be held October 22-24 at the Stanford Sierra Conference Center at Fallen Leaf Lake, So. Lake Tahoe.

For More Information Contact: Fraser Schilling SNNER at 530-752-7859 or email him at  
Workshop costs: \$300 per person -- includes lodging, meals & registration

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### **The Changing Face of the Alliance Board**

Alliance member groups elected three new Board members at this year's annual conference in August.

We now have a 12-member Board, reflecting the loss of eight founding members due to the Alliance's term limit policy. We are pleased to welcome new members:

**Randy Barrow**, an attorney specializing in business law. Randy's legal world was opened to land use litigation when he acted as co-counsel on the Cinnabar case in El Dorado County (see main story, Sierra News, May 1998). Randy, a resident of rural El Dorado County, is the chairman of the Maidu Group of the Sierra Club, based in Placerville.

**Shawn Garvey**, the Executive Director of the South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL) in Nevada City. Shawn has developed numerous SYRCL projects, including the Yuba RiverKeeper, Sierra Defense, "Yuba Tools" and the Senate Bill 496 Yuba Wild and Scenic Campaign, and has helped the aggressive 16-year-old organization grow to more than 2,700 members throughout 24 states. His most significant accomplishment is as proud new father of Skyler Rose Garvey, born June 17, 1999.

**Bob Kelso**, an activist who worked with others in the Arnold-Avery area of Calaveras County to start the Mountain Alliance, a group dealing with the rapid and poorly planned growth along

Highway 4. He has worked to protect the North Fork of the Stanislaus for many years and is a former Central Sierra Watershed Coalition board member. Bob has a long history with the Alliance, including serving on the first Futures Fund committee and attending the first annual conference. Bob lives in the Bay Area and has a second home in Calaveras County.

### **And We Say Fond Farewells . . .**

We thank these former members of the Alliance Board of Directors, now gone on to bigger and better things, and a lot more free time!:

Jane Baxter  
Linda Blum  
Rick Breeze-Martin  
Harriet Burgess  
Glenda Edwards  
Debbie Elliott-Fisk  
Katherine K. Evatt  
Marge Sill.

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### **New Member Groups**

#### **Sixty Member Groups and Counting!**

The Sierra Nevada Alliance must be doing something right: eight groups have joined since May! We welcome these new groups and give our best hope that the Alliance will continue to be a strong and reasonable voice for environmental protection in the Sierra Nevada.

- **Bear Preservation League**, a group of four volunteers who were outraged when DFG shot a neighborhood bear and her cub for pilfering garbage, decided to act instead of complain. On contract with DFG, BPL has trained more than 125 volunteers in the Sierra to respond to "nuisance" bear complaints. Perhaps most important to BPL's public education campaign is letting people know that DFG does not relocate bears: a fed bear is a dead bear;
- **Echo Lake Environmental Fund** is involved in all aspects of preserving the pristine beauty of the Echo Lakes area, including Desolation Wilderness;
- **Kaweah Land Trust**, active in the Three Rivers area in Tulare County, focuses on conservation in the Kaweah River watershed;

- **Tule Oaks Land Trust** in Tulare County educates landowners and the public about the value of conservation easements and oak regeneration programs in the Tule River watershed;
  - **The Friends of The Tule River** is a community-based public interest group whose mission is to restore and preserve the natural habitat values of lands and water courses in the Tule River watershed and to promote human activities through conservation practices;
  - **MYRACL**, the Middle Yuba River Area Citizens League, advocates for non-dam alternatives to flood control in the Yuba River Watershed, particularly its middle fork;
  - **The Plumas Audubon Society**, formed in 1990, is a chapter of the National Audubon Society. It provides scholastic and public environmental education programs, coordinates and conducts citizen science projects, and advocates for environmental protection and land conservation within the Feather River Watershed in the northern Sierra;
  - **Friends of Deer Creek** in Nevada County monitors water quality and habitat in the Deer Creek Watershed and serves as an educational resource and clearinghouse for the community.
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### **South Yuba Wild & Scenic Bill Passes State Senate -- Congrats to SYRCL**

Alliance member group the South Yuba River Citizens League – widely known as SYRCL – began its campaign to protect the South Yuba River from unwanted dams back in 1983. Earlier this month – 16 years later – its efforts have borne fruit.

On Friday, September 10th, the state Senate passed SB 496, the Wild and Scenic South Yuba River bill. Called the highest-profile environmental issue in the Legislature this session, SB496 will add 39 miles of the South Yuba to California's Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The South Yuba will be the first river protected under the Act since 1989, when SB 496 author Byron Sher (D-Palo Alto) successfully authored the last additions to the system – the East Carson and West Walker rivers.

Later the same night, the Legislature passed AB 1584, also known as the state water bond, which allocated \$90 million for levee improvements and other flood control measures for the Yuba and Feather rivers downstream of the South Yuba.

"The passage of SB 496 [and AB 1584] signals a new direction in watershed management – a direction that shows that common solutions to river protection, water supply and flood protection

can be found," said SYRCL Board President Roger Hicks, MD.

Taking a page from the Mono Lake Committee's book, SYRCL found a way to solve its opponents' problem -- flood control. "We realized early on that part of the solution to protect the South Yuba River is addressing the flood control problems of our downstream neighbors," Hicks said.

Nevada County and SYRCL (co-sponsors of the bill) put nearly as much effort into flood control for neighboring counties as they did into the wild and scenic bill itself. But the hard work paid off. For the first time ever, a water agency -- in this case the Placer County Water Agency (PCWA) -- supported wild and scenic protection for a river. PCWA gets a significant portion of its water supply from the South Yuba River.

Sixteen years is a long time to keep working on an issue like wild and scenic. Since such designation has not been a political possibility until just recently, SYRCL spent a lot of time involved in other worthy watershed projects, including fighting and defeating a number of individual dam projects for the Yuba River, founding an "Adopt-A-Watershed" pro-gram, suing the federal government to protect endangered species, helping to create California's longest river-based State Park, and successfully fighting to increase the amount of water left in the Yuba River.

But through it all, SYRCL never lost sight of its mission: permanent protection of the South Yuba River as a Wild and Scenic River. In January of this year, with a shift in Democratic fortunes in the state legislature and Governor's office and an historic change in the makeup of the Nevada County Board of Supervisors (a 4 - 1 environmental majority), SYRCL seized the opportunity. Within a month, volunteers had drafted legislation and presented it to the Nevada County Board of Supervisors, which agreed to sponsor the legislation. Soon after, Senator Sher agreed to author the bill.

The Yuba River bill garnered significant statewide attention, earning the endorsement of the Los Angeles Times, the League of Women Voters, more than 200 businesses and every state and regional environmental organization. But it was not without its detractors, and opponents -- including the Northern California Water Association -- who hired the state's highest paid lobbyist and spent more than \$100,000 opposing the effort. "The South Yuba River is the heart and soul of this community. The campaign has brought this community together in a way that we could not have imagined," said Hicks. "I imagine that David felt like this after his historic battle with Goliath." Senate Bill 496 now awaits Governor Davis' signature.

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## **A Special Thanks to PG&E**

The Alliance's sixth annual conference was the first to be supported by corporate sponsorship, and we'd like to specially thank Pacific Gas & Electric Company (PG&E) for its generous support. At PG&E's request, some of its contribution was used to fund the Alliance's awards, including the Sun Tzu award and several other awards new this year. The unexpected bit of money was much appreciated by the award recipients, who included the Jumping Frog Research Institute, Friends of Sierra Rock Art, P.E.S.T.E.R., Mono County Mining Committee, and the Truckee River Habitat Restoration Group. PG&E also provided us with copies of its recent environmental report and small keychain flashlights.

With the current uproar and vocal divisiveness over PG&E's proposed divestiture of its lands and facilities, we thank the company for reaching out to the environmental community. We appreciate the sponsorship as well as the participation of two PG&E employees, Governmental Relations Representatives Julie Green and Bob Fratini, who attended the conference. Julie was a presenter on the hydropower panel (see cover story). At the Alliance we work by collaborating, and we welcome PG&E as a partner in searching for innovative solutions to the Sierra's environmental problems.