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Sierra News Volume 2, Issue 3

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Marjorie Sill, Sierra Club Toiyabe Chapter
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Stan Weidert, Biologist

Sierra Nevada Alliance is committed to a future that is shaped by the physical and spiritual values of the Sierra, the integrity of its landscape, its human and cultural resources and its communities. Through community-based efforts we can weave the tapestry that celebrates the splendor, values our quality of life, and protects the long-term health of the Range of Light.

Sierra News is made possible by a generous grant from the **William & Flora Hewlett Foundation**.

The Calendar Column

- SNA regional outreach meetings:

Thurs., September 17th - Mammoth Lakes from 7:15 - 9:45 pm at the Mammoth Lakes Community Center.

Wed., October 14th - Lake Tahoe Basin from 6:30 - 9:30 pm at the North Tahoe Conference Center in Kings Beach.

Fri - Sat, October 9th and 10th - Overnight gathering at Audubon California's Kern River Preserve near Weldon. Potluck dinner and camping on Friday night, followed by outreach meeting on Saturday morning.

- 3rd annual Truckee River Day - Sun., October 11th from 9:00 am - 5:00 pm.

Sponsored by Truckee River Habitat Restoration Group (TRHRG) in partnership with the US Forest Service Truckee Ranger District. T-shirts for those who register by Oct. 2! Call TRHRG at 530-587-4509 for information or to register.

Trading Polite Input for a Seat at the Table

There are so many different passionate views held about the forest. This is a chance to help guide direction of the national forest in the future.

- Ann Westling, TNF

For as long as most of us can remember, the way the Forest Service worked was to spend years studying an issue and coming up with a "preferred alternative," which would be made available to the public for review.

As you can imagine, there was often great reluctance on the part of the Forest Service to make substantial changes, regardless of public input, since so much time and energy had already gone into formulating the preferred alternative.

This tradition of asking for "polite input," only to have it ignored in many cases, has frustrated many forest activists.

Well, now it's time to trade that polite input for a seat at the table, thanks to a new Forest Service initiative calling for public involvement upfront.

The agency is hosting a series of public meetings up and down the Sierra in an effort to get ideas from people for the as-yet unformed Sierra Nevada Framework for Conservation and Collaboration.

The goal of the initiative is three-fold: 1.) to maintain and enhance sustainability of Sierra Nevada ecosystems; 2.) to make greater use of science as a foundation for planning and management; and 3.) to use a more open public involvement process and improve working relationships with all interested publics.

The point of the public meetings is to introduce these ideas to the public as background and use them to help answer two main questions: 1.) what is the relationship between current science and existing management direction and 2.) where should changes be made.

Input gathered from the many local meetings will be brought together at a Sierra-wide public gathering at UC-Davis on October 3. From there, the Forest Service will use that information to develop a proposed action by October 30, 1999. This will mark the beginning of the usual 60-day comment period.

The suggestions incorporated in the finished framework will be used to update and amend individual land management plans for all 10 national forests in the Sierra.

The Forest Service has put together two important documents for review as part of this public involvement initiative.

The first is a Science Review document which identifies the state of existing science on a number of key issues, including fire and fuels, old growth forests, aquatic/riparian/meadow systems, and others. The Science Review is available on the Internet at <http://www.psw.fed.us/sierra/>.

The Science review is paired with a Summary of Existing Management Direction listing current management practices concerning these key issues. The Management Direction summary is available at <http://www.r5.fs.fed.us>. Both documents are also available through the individual forests or can be ordered by calling Rick Alexander at 415-705-1837.

By the end of February, the Forest Service plans to publish a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for amending the land management plans for the 10 Sierra forests. If all goes well, the final EIS and Record of Decision will be published by July 30, 1999.

"Our challenge," according to SNA Executive Director Laurel Ames, "is to determine what meaningful standards there are for protecting the resource and identifying what the governance looks like afterwards. In other words, what assurance will the Forest Service give us that the things agreed upon at the planning level will be implemented on the ground at the local level as intended."

The Alliance commends the Forest Service for its sincere effort to listen and learn from its

interested publics and use that information to make good policy. But it is a bit unnerving given the tight timeframe allotted for processing and incorporating a great deal of information.

To find out when and where the closest meetings are for your forest, you can check the Forest Service web site at <http://www.r5.fs.fed.us>. Or, you can call the Alliance for a copy of the full Sierra meeting schedule.

The Alliance views this as an exciting opportunity and encourages its members to take advantage of the opportunity to vastly improve resource protection in the Sierra.

Preserving Their Corner of the Planet

John and Patty Brissenden, owners of Sorensen's Resort in Hope Valley, are one of three recipients of the international Conde Nast Traveler's 1998 Ecotourism Award, given in recognition of 16 years of promoting and preserving the surrounding environment through their "inventive, interactive brand of ecotourism."

John and Patty bought Sorensen's - an old fishing and hunting camp and cattle and sheep ranch dating back to the 1800s - in 1982. They refurbished the property using recycled materials from old abandoned cabins. But once they were done, they did the unthinkable. They donated 65 acres to permanent scenic open space and spent 10 more years lobbying for funding to allow the Forest Service to acquire the 25,000 acres surrounding the property to guarantee public access and protect the land from development threats.

"We wrote petitions and left them at the front desk. We gave addresses and sample letters to our guests as they sat down for breakfast. We bugged everyone until we'd received letters of support from nearly every congressional district in California," explains John Brissenden. And it worked. The state and federal governments kicked in with funding for the necessary acquisitions.

The Brissendens didn't stop there. They then began to work to get the East Fork Carson designated a federal Wild & Scenic river. They continue to donate 200 nights of lodging each year to environmental groups, while sponsoring a scholarship for local high school students, a fish-stocking program to support the Carson River fishery, and annual Friends of Hope Valley Carson River cleanup days, among other activities. Amid all their community work, the Brissendens manage to keep their guests active with skiing in

winter and kayaking, hiking, and fishing in summer. When the weather's not so great, they provide guests with exciting indoor activities, as well - like writing citizen action letters that get results!

Conde Nast gives the international Ecotourism Award for three categories - tour operator, hotel/resort, and destination - to recognize those tourism providers who involve both visitors and locals in what is a constant uphill battle to preserve their corner of the planet.

To learn more about how to protect your community, plan to attend the upcoming PCL Foundation "Protect Your Community" workshop. For information, see below.

Planning & Conservation League Foundation offers the "Protect Your Community" workshop, Sat., Oct. 3rd, 10 am-2 pm, at the Sacramento Tree Foundation. Learn how to use California's key environmental and planning laws to shape your community's future. Free workshop with light lunch provided. Reservations required. Call PCLF at 916-444-8726, ext. 86, for info.

President's Letter



Back in 1992, at the Sierra NOW conference in Sacramento, I first experienced the kind of excitement and inspiration that comes from joining together with people dedicated to protecting and restoring the Sierra Nevada. This July, our Echo Lake conference gave me the same sense of renewal and hope.

There was a big difference, though. While I hardly knew anyone at Sierra NOW, there were

many familiar faces and stories at Echo Lake. Why? Because of the Sierra Nevada Alliance.

As it set out to do back in 1992, the Alliance has joined the people working on environmental and community issues throughout the Sierra into a viable, communicating, mutually supportive network. The members of that network - those of you who work day in and day out for the Sierra, inside our communities and outside them, and those of you who support that work in so many ways - are the Alliance. Together, we have become the strong voice for the region first envisioned by our founders, including Andrea Lawrence, our first president.

In large part, the Alliance has reached this level because of Andrea's strong leadership, unflagging spirit, and vision. Andrea, we cannot begin to thank you enough!

As the new Alliance president I will do my best to build on Andrea's legacy, working with our talented staff and dedicated directors - and with you - in continuing the good work of the Sierra Nevada Alliance.

Belated Acknowledgement of a Job Well Done!

The Alliance would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank Tom Infusino for all his hard work in stopping bad development in El Dorado County.

Tom was a key player in all three projects highlighted in the May 1998 issue of Sierra News, including the Cinnabar Project, Carson Creek, and the traffic initiative. Thanks to the unflagging efforts of Tom, the Center for Sierra Nevada Conservation and others, development in El Dorado County is being held accountable for its actions.

- Alliance Board member **Martha Davis** recently accepted the position of Executive Director of the Californians and the Land Project, sponsored by The James Irvine Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Bank of America, and Environment Now. Martha is the former Executive Director of the Mono Lake Committee.
- **Linda Blum**, SNA Board member, spoke to the National Audubon Society's Forest Activist Campaign Summit in Estes Park, Colorado, this summer.

SNA Welcomes New Board Members

Jim Baetge, Executive Director of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA). Jim has also served as E.D. of the State Water Resources Control Board, Supervising Planner for California DOT, Board of Registration Executive Officer for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors, and Civil Engineer/Planner with the California DOT. Jim holds a degree in public administration from CSU-Sacramento.

Scott Kruse, biophysical geographer. Scott is a long-time supporter of the Alliance. He has attended three of the last four Alliance annual conferences and is currently leading an environmental education project involving the Sierra.

Lynn Sadler, Executive Director of the Mountain Lion Foundation. Lynn also spent eight years as Natural Resources Director for the Planning & Conservation League. She holds degrees in political science and journalism and has 27 years' experience running political, fundraising and media campaigns.

Stan Weidert, biologist and botanist. Stan has a master's degree in biology from CSU-Fullerton. A member of the Sierra Business Council, Stan has worked in consensus-building and group facilitation. He is receiving this year's conservation award from the Mother Lode Chapter of the Sierra Club in recognition of his efforts.

Watersheds in Need

by Laurel W. Ames

CalFed gets help from the locals

Under continuous pressure on CalFed from the Alliance and RCRC (the Regional Council of Rural Counties), watersheds moved up a step in importance in the CalFed process, as the brand new CalFed Watershed Work Group got down to business in Chico in August.

Co-chaired by Alliance Board member Martha Davis and Plumas County Supervisor Robert Meacher, the 20-member panel will be identifying policy options for watershed management.

With a very tight deadline of October 9, the volunteer group has been asked to devote a serious number of hours to the task of developing a set of criteria for CalFed participation in watershed projects.

The work group will take a cut at what the first seven years of the program should look like and is expected to revise the management strategy (billed by critics as "not a strategy") that appeared in the draft EIR/EIS. But first, the group will take a look at the current goals and objectives of the program to see if these fit with our understanding of watersheds at the ground level.

The work group will be meeting in various locations around northern and central California.

Requests large, CalFed \$\$ small, Sierra scores!

The second round of CalFed grants available to watershed projects totaled a puny \$2.3 million. But 52 grant applications arrived asking for a total of \$28 million!

The first cut of the review panel recommended 14 grants ranging in size >from \$24,000 to \$295,000. In many cases, the panel recommended funding a project at less than the total amount requested. The grant review process was weighted heavily toward projects with strong community involvement components.

The final decision will be made in September. Of five projects for Sierra watersheds, two have been recommended for full funding.

Prop. 204, next round

A total of \$4.5 million for watershed projects will be granted by the State Water

Resources Control Board in this Prop. 204 granting cycle. And, in response to a recommendation from the Board's citizen advisory committee, which includes Alliance Board member Rick Breeze-Martin, this round includes up to \$200,000 per proposal for planning projects.

A number of the 31 proposals received requested planning funds, indicating a recognition on the part of the watershed groups of the need to better understand their watersheds before plunging in to fix them.

The total amount requested by the 31 proposals is \$13.5 million. Final recommendations will be sent to the State Water Resources Control Board in November.

Ongoing Alliance Efforts

The Alliance has contracted with Kerri Timmer to provide support to a formative watershed group in Nevada County, with the intent of learning what works and what doesn't in the creation of watershed stewardship organizations. Some groups seem to spring up almost spontaneously, while others never seem to get it together.

The Alliance and the EPA are talking about establishing an ad hoc outreach project to see how we can encourage local groups to come together to work on their watersheds and to qualify for the future funding that will be coming available through state and federal government programs.

And finally, with the collapse of the governor's water bond, which would have included \$35 million in funding for watershed restoration, efforts will now focus on working with legislators in Washington, DC, to find more funds for upper watershed restoration work.

Are you part of a watershed group in need of funding?

A new program, called Resources for Community Collaboration (RCC), provides funding for locally-based organizations who want to, or are already participating in, viable community-based collaborations committed to resolving key natural resources issues in the rural West.

The deadline for submitting applications for the Fall 1998 grant cycle is Mon., Oct. 19.

For more information or to request grant guidelines and application materials, call 415-332-2250 or email

SNA Regional Outreach Meetings

The Alliance is arranging three more regional outreach meetings to gather together SNA members and other activists in the southern Sierra, eastern Sierra and Lake Tahoe Basin areas.

The first meeting, co-sponsored by the Mono Lake Committee and CNPS-Bristlecone Chapter, will be held Thursday, Sept. 17, from 7:15 - 9:45 pm at the Mammoth Lakes Community Center. This meeting will focus on tools being used to protect important areas of concern and how individual conservation efforts in the area interrelate.

Next we're scheduling an exciting two-day meeting at the Audubon California Kern River Preserve either Oct. 9-10 or Oct. 23-24. People can join us for a potluck dinner and camping on Friday night, to be followed by our meeting on Saturday morning. After Saturday's meeting, Audubon California staff will be available to guide participants on hikes or other activities in and around the Preserve.

The Tahoe-area meeting, co-sponsored by Sierra Club-Toiyabe Chapter, Truckee-Donner Land Trust, Truckee River Habitat Restoration Group and League to Save Lake Tahoe, is taking place Wednesday, Oct. 14th, from 6:30 - 9:30 pm at the North Tahoe Conference Center in Kings Beach. This group will look at river and lake management issues, community building, and other habitat protection opportunities.

Please contact Kerri Timmer at 530-470-0526 or to register or get more information.

Futures Fund Dollars at Work

The SNA Futures Fund program provides seed money to Alliance member groups for community-building and conservation projects in the Sierra. The first round, awarded in July 1997, resulted in completion of these exciting projects:

Institute for Ecological Health (IEH)

Established a working group of university scientists, land management agency representatives and natural science experts to develop a pilot Sierra Nevada Biodiversity Conservation Planning Project in El Dorado County to fill gaps in the knowledge and

mapping of biodiversity resources on private lands.

Range Watch

Used SNA Future Fund money as a match for donation of nearly \$6,000 in computer-based video editing equipment to improve the quality of video materials produced by Range Watch. Video is one of Range Watch's primary tools for educating people about the effects of grazing on streams and riparian corridors.

People for Healthy Forests (PFHF)

Established the Sierra Watershed Health Assessment Project, a cooperative research effort between PFHF, the US Forest Service, and the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, designed to obtain scientifically credible data for use in assessing biological effects of large-scale herbicide use on mid-elevation Sierran streams.

Rural Quality Coalition (RQC)

Supported the Neighborhood/Community Services program, which links professional planners with neighborhood and community groups working toward quality land use planning. Futures Fund money allowed RQC to support local opposition to poor planning decisions, develop a citizen referendum to require a full EIR for the Dark Horse project, negotiate with local government for restoration of an illegal timber harvest area, and sponsor two meetings which brought community groups together to share their successes.

High Sierra Hikers Association

Originally slated to help host facilitated meetings between commercial and private stock users to work out conflicting resource uses. High Sierra Hikers Association later amended its plan to introduce the project with a series of more informal, non-facilitated meetings, to be followed by facilitated meetings, if necessary.

Protect American River Canyons (PARC)

Used to construct a public access trail on the North Fork American River just below the

dam at Lake Clementine. The trail, built by Placer Action Corps (PAC) crews, provides safe access in a location where access had been severely limited due to steep, rocky terrain.

Foothill Conservancy

Developed a print and radio advertising and public relations program in Amador and Calaveras counties to raise public awareness about the interrelationships of environmental, economic, and quality-of-life issues and the role the Foothill Conservancy plays in addressing those issues. The project has generated new memberships, positive comments >from readers and listeners, and additional visits to the group's Web site. In addition, because it is paying for advertising, the Conservancy's relationship with local media outlets has improved.

Watch for the application for the next round of the Sierra Futures Fund coming to your mailbox in early January. The Futures Fund program is open to all SNA member groups.

Regional Meeting Held in Sonora

On June 13 SNA hosted its third regional outreach meeting in Sonora. Presenters at this meeting included: Laurel Ames, SNA Executive Director, Glenda Edwards of Clavey River Preservation Coalition, Pete Bell of the California Hydropower Reform Coalition, Katherine Evatt of Foothill Conservancy, Colleen Carr and Marlee Powell of Our Back Yard, Colleen on People for Healthy Forests, Warren Alford of Sierra Club Motherlode Chapter, Shirley Shmelzer from Mariposans for Environmentally Responsible Growth, and Marc delaVergne from PCL Foundation.

Discussion centered around key issues facing Sierra counties, such as participation in collaborative efforts between local activist groups and federal/state land managing agencies, using the dam relicensing process to protect rivers and watersheds , the pros/cons of the county General Plan update process, life after a community "visioning" process, Yosemite management and transportation issues, combating counties' desires to fast-track development for economic gain, and opportunities for community education.

Our thanks to Glenda Edwards for handling logistics locally and to Clavey River Preservation Coalition, Foothill Conservancy, MERG, Mountain Alliance and People for

Healthy Forests for co-sponsoring the event.

Sierra News Notes

The Truckee River Habitat Restoration Group is helping the National Riparian Team set up a Proper Stream Functioning training on October 6-8. The first day will be a classroom session, followed by two days out in the field. For more information, call Kathleen Eagan at 530-587-2730 or e-mail her at

Thanks to an anonymous donor, the Tides Foundation Donor Advised Fund has provided a small grant to the Alliance to protect watersheds, with a concentration on old forests and roadless areas. Stay tuned!

New Leadership for Sustainable Land Use

(excerpted from article by Steve Sanders, Director of California Futures Network)

California's population boom is back. After years of recession and slow population growth, California has once again become a magnet for people across the U.S. and the world. According to the California Department of Finance, California is expected to grow by as many as 30 million new residents in the next 30 to 40 years. And while migration from other places is one cause of the boom, most of these new residents will be born to the people already here.

A number of recent reports - from entities as diverse as the state's Little Hoover Commission, Bank of America, the Low Income Housing Fund, American Farmland Trust, Sierra Business Council, Greenbelt Alliance, and the California State Resources Agency - predict that the consequences of future growth may outstrip anything California has seen before. This extraordinary growth raises questions about how California will

respond:

Will the current "rules of the game" - the taxing, spending, land use and infrastructure investment policies now in play at the local, regional and state levels - enable California to grow equitably and efficiently?

Will California be able to sustain its economic vitality without destroying its natural heritage and world-renowned quality of life?

As a new century approaches, respected voices for business, agriculture, local government, urban constituencies and the environment agree that the answer to both of these questions is "no." The current "rules" in California are grossly inadequate to accommodate the projected increases in the state's population without undercutting the state's economic prosperity, social cohesion, and environmental quality.

With California's economy rebounding and state tax revenues growing at a rapid clip, this is an opportune time to address the issues of growth and sustainable land use. But there is a leadership vacuum at the state level on land use and growth management. California - which once prided itself as being a leader in planning ahead for future generations - has fallen behind states from all around the country in setting a positive policy agenda for sustainable land use.

Next January a new governor will take office. The legislature elected this year will be made up overwhelmingly of individuals who never held state office prior to 1994. There will be a real need - and a golden opportunity - to educate and inform the new governor and his or her administration, new legislators and other policy makers and opinion leaders around the state about a range of issues related to sustainable land use and growth management.

In recognition of this fact, the California Futures Network this year is carrying out a "New Leadership Project" with the generous support of the Hewlett and Irvine Foundations. The project will work over the coming year to develop a broad political and civic coalition to promote sustainable land use policies among this new generation of policy makers. This is an ambitious effort, but a vital one if we are to meet the challenge of California's growth.

New Leadership "Stealth Campaign"

As part of its New Leadership Project, the California Futures Network is organizing a

"stealth campaign" aimed at making sure that candidates running for election in November are asked the tough questions about their stand on key land use issues.

If you're interested in helping to influence the future of land use policy in California, be on the look-out for more information on CFN's "stealth campaign" coming your way from the Alliance. CFN will provide all the samples and training needed to prepare citizen activists for participation in candidate forums, debates, and other venues.

The California Futures Network is a new statewide coalition of urban, environmental, housing, social justice, local government, tribal, labor, business and agricultural interests established to promote green space and the natural environment, livable communities, better housing and transportation, and the protection of farmland. Sierra Nevada Alliance is a CFN affiliate in the Sierra. For more information on CFN and its projects, check SNA's website at: <http://www.sierranevadaalliance.org>.
