

SIERRA NEVADA ALLIANCE

SIERRA NEWS

VOLUME XI, ISSUE 1

FEBRUARY 2007



SIERRA NEVADA ALLIANCE

CALENDAR COLUMN

For information on the events below visit www.sierranevadaalliance.org or call 530-542-4546

IRWMP Conference

March 9, 2007
Sacramento

~*~

Patagonia Presents the Wild & Scenic Environmental Film Festival On Tour

March 24, 2007
South Lake Tahoe

~*~

Thunderbird Lodge Benefit

May 19, 2007
Lake Tahoe

~*~

Wild Flower Walk

April 1, 2007
Lotus

~*~

14th Annual Sierra Nevada Alliance Conference

August 3-5, 2007
Kings Beach

425,000 acres of Yosemite Foothills Better Protected from Sprawl

Can you imagine the road to Yosemite Valley lined with strip malls and subdivisions? Well now you won't have to, thanks to a recent decision that will protect nearly half a million acres of Mariposa County's foothills from suburban sprawl.

In December 2006, Mariposa County adopted a new General Plan that protects 425,000 acres of ranchland and directs future growth into existing towns. The plan is the 'blueprint' for where and how the County will grow in the next 20 years. Having a strong General Plan will help Mariposa County prevent the kind of runaway sprawl that has hurt other Sierra communities.

Mariposa County's small towns and rolling, oak-covered ranchlands look much the same as they did 150 years ago. But like many counties in the Sierra, Mariposa County is facing tremendous growth pressure. One major source of growth pressure is the new UC Merced campus, less than 10 miles from the Mariposa County line.

Concern about this growth pressure spurred Sierra

Continued on page 6

Sierra Nevada AmeriCorps Partnership Kicks Off!

Twenty four young adults surround Sue Beatty in Yosemite meadow. Sue is a Restoration Ecologist for Yosemite National Park and leading a tour on meadow restoration. Yosemite falls drops thunderous breaks of ice in the background occasionally. The friendly crowd peppers Sue with questions. "What role does fire play in meadow restoration?" "Why do Giant Sequoias need fire to reproduce?" "What role does a meadow play in the greater ecosystem?"

These 24 enthusiastic folks are the majority of the first class of members of the new Sierra Nevada AmeriCorps Partnership (SNAP). This meadow tour led by the Park Service is part of the first SNAP member training and marks the official kick-off week of the new AmeriCorps program in the Sierra Nevada.

Continued on page 7



Sierra Nevada AmeriCorps Partnership Members & Alliance Staff at Yosemite

Photo by Do Lee

IN THIS ISSUE

2

Executive Director's Letter

3

Integrated Water Planning

4

New Staff
New Board Members

5

New Member Groups
Largest Award to Alliance



SIERRA NEVADA ALLIANCE

Keeping light in the range.

Executive Director's Letter

I've been volunteering and working for the conservation and environmental movement for twenty-five years now. This is the first year that I ever thought of what I did as 'service to my country.' But thanks to our new Sierra Nevada AmeriCorps Partnership— I now think of what I do as a service to my country.

For too long in my life I have associated service to my country as only something that soldiers sent overseas 'do'. And as vegetarian who won't kill ants in my kitchen anymore, serving my country by joining the marines was just never going to happen for me. So I never thought I would serve my country.

Then in the fall of 2006 the Sierra Nevada Alliance received a federal award to start the Sierra Nevada AmeriCorps Partnership (SNAP). As part of the program, the national AmeriCorps encouraged us to have the members discuss 'service'. The bell rang loud in my head – this was federal funding to support protecting our environment because protecting and restoring our environment is a service to our country.

Thoreau and John Muir would be so proud! Rachel Carson would stand up and do a dance. Working for clean water, passing on diverse wildlife, and restoring natural areas – that is surely a service to our country.

So as our 27 AmeriCorps members dispense throughout the Sierra with the word 'serve' embedded in their lexicon, I join them in thinking many of us providing service to our nation. So the next time you recycle a can, conserve energy, plant a tree, educate others on how to monitor their watershed, etc – please join me in knowing you are doing a service for your country!

But do remember – these SNAP members are only living on about \$900 a month in their full-time service for one year. Not a cushy budget. So feel free to also show your appreciation of their service by taking a SNAP member out to lunch or giving them a bag of oranges or a free oil change. Contact our office to find a SNAP member nearest you!

Sincerely,

Joan Clayburgh
Executive Director

PERIODIC NEWSLETTER OF THE
SIERRA NEVADA ALLIANCE

P.O. Box 7989, S Lake Tahoe, CA 96158

T 530.542.4546 F 530.542.4570

email: info@sierranevadaalliance.org

www.sierranevadaalliance.org

STAFF

Executive Director
Joan Clayburgh

Watersheds Program Director
Megan Suarez-Brand

Land Use Coordinator
Autumn Bernstein

Development Director
Kay Ogden

Office Manager
Kathy Haberman

Program Associate
Julie Leimbach

AmeriCorps Regional Coordinator
Do Lee

Watersheds Program Associate
Shasta Ferranto

AmeriCorps Watersheds Program Assistant
Genevieve Marsh

AmeriCorps Water & Climate
Program Assistant
Helena Rodriguez

BOARD OFFICERS

President
Terry Manning, Sequoia Riverlands Trust

Vice President
**Jan Chatten-Brown,
Chatten-Brown & Carstens**

Secretary
**Steve Robinson,
Mountain Meadows Conservancy**

Treasurer
Geoff McQuilkin, Mono Lake Committee

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kim Carr

Jenny Cooper

Tracy Grubbs

Addie Jacobson

Robert Johnston

Tim Little

Betsy Reifsnider

Christine Rozance



Printed on recycled paper.

Integrated Water Planning: New Process to Protect Sierra Waters

Want a tongue twister or a brain challenge? Try saying three times fast: Consumnes, American, Bear and Yuba Integrated Regional Water Management Plan – CABY IRWMP. While more than a mouthful, this planning process is providing hope for new, creative, collaborative water solutions – and a possible model for good planning for the entire Sierra and California.

The Consumnes, Yuba, Bear and American watersheds supply water to thousands of residents, businesses and farmers in the Central Sierra. This region is one of the fastest growing regions of California. These waters are also the circulation system fueling a world-class white water recreation industry, first-class fishing, and myriads of other recreation opportunities. These waters have long been home to salmon and a vibrant ecosystem supporting diverse wildlife.

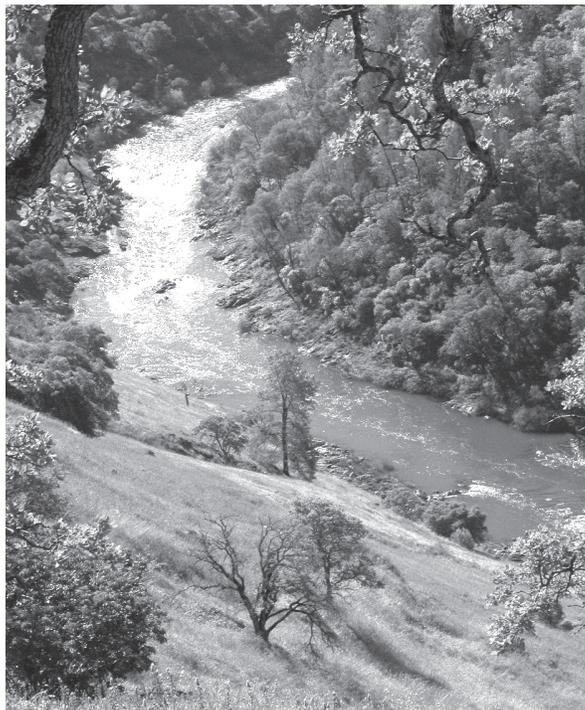
Over the past year, nearly thirty diverse organizations, including the Sierra Nevada Alliance, met to collaborate on the development of an Integrated Regional Water Management Plan for the Consumnes, American, Bear, and Yuba (CABY) watersheds. Alliance staff member Julile Leimbach served on the Planning Committee, Coordinating Committee, and Ecology Work Group. They recently succeeded with the adoption of the plan.

The plan's goals are to:

- Protect and improve fisheries and aquatic biota
- Reduce contamination of surface and ground water resources
- Achieve sustainable surface and ground water supply
- Provide multiple benefits from management of water resources, diversions and infrastructure
- Reduce impacts from catastrophic fire

- Protect infrastructure, equipment, and property from flooding
- Protect and improve watershed resources through land use practices
- Manage sediment for water resources, infrastructure and habitat value
- Reduce mercury contamination in waterways

The IRWMP identifies specific projects to meet the integrated water needs of the people and rivers in the CABY region now and into the future.



*American River
Photo by Bill Center*

Organizations that have adopted the plan to date include the Sierra Nevada Alliance, El Dorado Irrigation District, Gold County Fly Fishers, the U.S. Tahoe National Forest, the Yuba Watershed Council, Bear River Watershed Group, American Rivers, Natural Heritage Institute, Wolf Creek Community Alliance, California Outdoors and Nevada Irrigation District. These significantly diverse groups involved in the development of the IRWMP worked

extremely hard over the past year and due to their successful collaboration, implementation by a regional entity is expected to begin in 2007.

“Our success this year shows our ability to coordinate among watersheds and communities to improve our water quality and prepare for flood needs, among other things,” noted Ron Nelson, general manager of the Nevada Irrigation District and one of the CABY partners. “Residents in this region can be assured that their public funds are going toward projects that have widespread support and are protective of the water quality, water supply and environment.”

In 2007 and beyond, the CABY stakeholders will improve water management in the Sierra foothills and mountain region by increasing communication and coordination and seeking funding to implement projects throughout the region. State and federal programs are increasingly supportive of integrated planning and funding projects that are related to these plans.

The Sierra Nevada Alliance is very interested in exporting effective models for integrated water management in different subregions of the Sierra. How the planning process is designed and implemented is critical to ensuring strong plans that truly protect water quality, restore and protect ecosystems and supply water.

The Alliance is the lead organizer on a conference to share successful strategies from the CABY IRWMP and other integrated efforts in the Sierra. The conference is co-convened with the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, Mountain County Water Agencies, and CABY. The event takes place March 9 at the Sierra Health Foundation in Sacramento. Visit www.sierranevadaalliance.org for more information.

Welcome New Staff

Do Lee, SNAP Regional Coordinator

Do grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area and has been a resident of South Lake Tahoe for the last year. Do was the Open World Program Coordinator and a Program Officer with Pacific Environment and ISAR managing their environmental exchange programs for 90 Russians, Lithuanians, and Ukrainians. Do also was an Environmental Education Volunteer in Kazakhstan in the Peace Corps and has



experience conducting environmental analysis and research. Do has a Master of Public Administration, Columbia University, School of

International and Public Affairs (SIPA) and a BA in Molecular Cell Biology, University of California at Berkeley. Do is also a photographer and speaks Russian and Korean.

Shasta Ferranto, Watershed Program Associate

Shasta is originally from the CA North Coast and she received her bachelor's degree from the Nature and Culture program at UC Davis. Following graduation Shasta worked seasonally for several years as a wildlife biologist and environmental educator. Shasta recently



completed a Master's degree in Geography at the University of Nevada, Reno. For her master's research, Shasta collaborated with several

agencies and organizations (including one of our member groups – the Eastern Sierra Land Trust) to create a conservation plan focused on protecting native mule deer populations in the Eastern Sierra. Shasta most recently worked for the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. In addition to her passion for the Sierra, she is an avid rock-climber, backcountry skier, and aspiring kayaker.

Genevieve Marsh, AmeriCorps Watershed Program Assistant

Genevieve grew up in Durham, NC, but has oscillated from east to west since going off to college to earn her bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies and English from Hobart and William Smith Colleges.



She has recently relocated to her new watershed on the Truckee River, just before it reaches Tahoe. She spent the last three years in the wilds of Montana, writing, enjoying the mountains, and earning her Master's in Environmental Studies and Writing. She has worked with diverse nonprofits—from sustainable agriculture programs to land trusts, and even spent a year as an environmental educator with the Audubon Society of Portland. She enjoys long walks, talking to her cat, Liar's Dice, and, like her grandfather, the feel of the sun warming her back.

Helena Rodriguez, AmeriCorps Water & Climate Change Assistant

Helena was recently a Senior at UC California, Berkeley and is getting her degree in Conservation Resource Studies. She has worked her way through school and still managed to intern at the Raza Recruitment and Retention Center. Helena hails from South Central Los Angeles and is excited to take a year in between her studies to live in the Sierra and get conservation experience with AmeriCorps. Helena and her 4 month old Chihuahua-mix dog had never been in snow before they started at the Alliance.



Welcome New Board Members!

Jennifer Cooper is founder of Emerald Bay Physical Therapy, in Lake Tahoe CA. Since graduating from Northwestern School of Medicine, with a Bachelors of Science in Physical Therapy, Ms. Cooper has spent the better part of two decades working with athletes and personalities including the USSA Olympic snowboarders. Therapist, author, public-speaker, TV personality, and athlete herself, Jenny seeks opportunity and adventure.



Christine Rozance was born and raised in Berkeley and received her B.A. degree from U.C. Berkeley. She attended the University of Rochester School of Medicine in Rochester, New York. Since 1998 she has served as primary care physician and medical director for Sutter SeniorCare. She has longstanding interest in environmental issues. She served as a member of the Board of Directors for the League to Save Lake Tahoe for over 10 years.



Welcome New Member Groups!

Tahoe Chapter California Native Plant Society
South Lake Tahoe, CA
email: revegetateearthlink.net

California Native Plant Society (CNPS) is a statewide non-profit organization of amateurs and professionals with a common interest in California's native plants. The Society, working through its local chapters, seeks to increase understanding of California's native flora and to preserve this rich resource for future generations. The Tahoe Chapter services the Tahoe Basin.

Tulare County Citizens for Responsible Growth
Springville, CA
email: tccrg@earthlink.net

Tulare County Citizens for Responsible Growth came together in early 2006 because of concern about the direction of growth in Tulare County, home of Sequoia National Park and California's most productive agricultural county. Their mission is to ensure that future growth protects Tulare County's natural resources, communities and local economy.

Largest Grant Award to Alliance Funds Reduction of Land Use Impacts on Sierra Waters

The Sierra Nevada Alliance just received our largest grant in the history of the organization - \$925,000. This sizable award from the State Water Resources Control Board and Proposition 40 is to the Alliance for our land and water programs. The grant funds will support work evaluating how common home and county land use practices in the Sierra Nevada impact water quality and habitat function, and fund efforts to voluntarily reduce land use impacts on watershed health. The program will partner with local Sierra watershed groups and other experts to monitor land use impacts on water, promote model land use policies that protect watersheds, and encourage private landowners to adopt best landscaping practices that protect the watershed. The grant will fund work from January 2007 to July 2008.

One aspect of the program has Sierra Nevada Alliance working with community-based watershed groups to monitor chemical, physical and biological attributes of Sierra waters and their habitats. This targeted monitoring will garner information on how common land use practices are impacting water quality and stream habitats. This builds off the Alliance's successful efforts which trained over a hundred and fifty water monitors in the Sierra. The Alliance will now expand the number of community monitoring efforts and deepen monitoring skills and techniques in existing programs.

The Alliance will also export cutting edge ways to change home land use practices

to protect Sierra watersheds. The Alliance has just hired consultants to create a Sierra focused home landscaping guide. The guide will inform homeowners how to assess their property and implement water conservation measures, reduce sediment runoff, use native plants and discourage non-native weeds, and create



fire defensible space. There are many conservation landscaping guides in California – but none targeted to this range of conservation goals for the entire Sierra and its unique aspects (like how those bird feeders attract smaller wildlife that then can attract mountain lions.)

Once the home landscape guide is produced, the Alliance will sponsor a training for conservation leaders to learn how to assess private properties and recommend these best conservation management practices. The Alliance

will also be funding six communities to implement a demonstration landscape to provide local residents a model site to tour and learn from. Demonstration landscapes can be implemented through community volunteer work days – a great opportunity for families and residents to learn as they get their hands dirty!

The third component of the program will target county and city land use planning and decision making to prevent watershed problems. The Alliance is teaming up with the Local Government Commission and Planning and Conservation League to produce a guide for cities and counties on model land use elements, ordinances and other measures to protect their Sierra waters. The Alliance will host training seminars for local community leaders to learn about these land use opportunities and how to engage their community. Then these leaders will return and host community forums around the Sierra to share these opportunities.

All in all the Alliance will build the capacity of over twenty-five partnering organizations, provide over \$500,000 in cash support to our partners, and reach thousands of Sierrans. Hearty thanks to all those who voted to pass Proposition 40 and the State Water Resources Control Board!! It will be a productive and exciting year.

Mariposa: continued from page 1

Nevada Alliance to partner with member group Mariposans for the Environment and Responsible Government (MERG) to get involved in the update of the General Plan.

Early drafts of the plan were alarming:

tens of thousands of acres of rangeland would have been opened up to rural sprawl, and the plan lacked protections for wildlife, creeks and other natural

resources. What was needed was a major overhaul of the proposed plan.

Hardworking MERG volunteers took up the challenge. They spent countless hours reviewing documents, attending hearings, gathering signatures, meeting with elected officials, and organizing community educational events.

Alliance Land Use Coordinator Autumn Bernstein helped MERG develop and implement a campaign plan to build broad community support for their effort. Autumn helped with messaging, materials, political analysis, event planning and policy development.

Planning consultant Laurie Oberholtzer and attorney Tom Infusino also played crucial roles, reviewing documents and helping MERG to prepare professional comments promoting smart growth policies.

Ultimately, this victory was due to multiple elements of the campaign. First was an unlikely partnership between

MERG and the Mariposa County Farm Bureau. The two groups had been at odds in the past, and the Board of Supervisors took note of this uncommon alliance.

The second key to success was the credible threat of a lawsuit. Thanks



Some of the ranchland protected under Mariposa County's new General Plan

to the excellent work of attorney Tom Infusino and planner Laurie Oberholtzer, the County knew that their decisions were being carefully watched. This gave MERG leverage with the County.

The third and final key was the very visible community support for MERG's position. Nearly 1,000 people signed postcards or petitions supporting MERG.

At a series of town hall meetings organized by MERG, guest speakers helped raise awareness. And dozens of MERG supporters wearing buttons and signs sat through multiple hearings to register their opinions.



Dedicated MERG volunteers at one of the many hearings on Mariposa County's General Plan

The hard work paid off. The new General Plan contains many strong policies to ensure that ranchlands stay ranchlands, instead of being chopped up and developed. It also empowers unincorporated towns and hamlets to develop their own local plans for where and how they want to grow.

Some of the excellent policies include:

- Protecting working landscapes: 61% of the County, 425,000 acres, is set aside for agriculture, and the plan strongly restricts any development of this area.
- Preventing leapfrog sprawl: The plan states that "development shall grow outward from planning areas and residential areas with available services" and ensures that new development occurs close to existing roads, sewers and other services.
- Protecting wildlife and sensitive natural areas: The plan creates a new environmental conservation program that includes development standards and proactive conservation programs for protecting wildlife habitat; breeding and nesting areas for migratory birds; habitat along rivers, creeks and seasonal drainages; and rare plant communities.

This new General Plan isn't perfect. The plan left unresolved some important issues. MERG and their experts will have to keep a watchful eye to ensure that new development lives up to the Plan.

Yet overall, the Plan contains a number of strong smart growth policies that will be models in the Sierra region.

For more information email autumn@sierranevadaalliance.org

AmeriCorps: continued from page 1

“The training was great,” said Genevieve Marsh, AmeriCorps member serving with the Sierra Nevada Alliance’s watersheds program. “I got a great overview of Sierra environmental issues and learned a number of new volunteer and education skills. My favorite part was getting to know all the other terrific AmeriCorps members and Site Supervisors.”

AmeriCorps is a network of local, state, and national service programs that connect more than 70,000 Americans each year in intensive service to meet our country’s critical needs in education, public safety, health, and the environment. AmeriCorps Members serve with more than 2,000 nonprofits, public agencies, and faith-based and community organizations.

The California Service Corps just approved funding for three years for SNAP in October 2006. The vision to apply for support to start this new program came from Jason Rainey, Executive Director of SYRCL (South Yuba River Citizens League.) Jason had directed an AmeriCorps program in Marin previously and when he started at SYRCL he immediately saw the potential for a program in the Sierra. Jason approached the Sierra Nevada Alliance to identify groups who would benefit from mentoring an AmeriCorps member and to apply for an AmeriCorps award.

The Sierra Nevada AmeriCorps Partnership (SNAP)’s mission is to develop the capacity of community-based organizations to play a leading role in the protection, restoration and stewardship of public lands, local waterways and working landscapes of the Sierra Nevada region. The Sierra Nevada Alliance is now the lead organization directing the program. The Alliance is responsible for recruiting and training all the members and administering the regional program.

Twenty-seven members were selected to serve for one year with twenty partner groups around the Sierra. Each member will learn teamwork, communication, conservation issues, and other essential skills to help launch and build their environmental careers. And they will gain the personal satisfaction of taking on a challenge and seeing results.

In 2007, these SNAP Members will:

- Conduct restoration projects on 1700 acres of high priority lands and rivers



Jason Avina and Carly Nilson, Sierra Nevada AmeriCorps members, taking water samples at their first week of training

- Perform ecological monitoring at over 200 sites, measuring indicators for water quality, vegetation regeneration, and wildlife
- Educate 16,800 individuals about solutions for ecological restoration and protection
- Recruit and train over 2100 volunteers to be involved with environmental education, restoration and protection projects.

Members specific duties reflect the Sierra community, placement-site and a member’s abilities and interests. No two service sites are quite alike. The twenty service sites include Yosemite National Park, Sierra Nevada Alliance, South Yuba

River Citizens League, Mountain Lion Foundation, WildPlaces, Eastern Sierra Land Trust and the Sierra Watershed Education Program.

Ian Herdell for example is serving with WildPlaces in Springville. Ian will assist in planning and coordinating volunteer-driven restoration and education events; coordinating field project logistics for Wild Places’ youth education program (Immersed in the Wild) and conducting habitat restoration projects in the Southern Sierra.

On the other side of the Range of Light from Ian is Katy Hergenrath, serving with the Eastern Sierra Land Trust. Katie will assist with habitat monitoring of Eastern Sierra Land Trust conservation easement properties. She will also design and produce environmental education materials, field trips, and classes about conservation projects.

Photo by Do Lee

Joan Clayburgh, Executive Director of the Alliance, will serve as the new SNAP Program Director. Megan Suarez in addition to her Watershed Program directing will be spending half-time coordinating with members and site supervisors. The Alliance also hired Do Lee to be a full-time regional coordinator and lead organizer. Kathy Haberman is the lead on SNAP administration.

“This is a major addition to the Alliance,” said Joan Clayburgh, Executive Director. “SNAP is an exceptional program to build the capacity of conservation groups in the Sierra. We are very grateful for the AmeriCorps award. I can’t wait to report on all the additional ecological monitoring, environmental education and habitat restoration that will get done in the Sierra. This is great!”