

SIERRA NEVADA ALLIANCE SIERRA NEWS

VOLUME X, ISSUE 1

JANUARY 2006



SIERRA NEVADA ALLIANCE

CALENDAR COLUMN

~*~

Wild & Scenic Film Festival

February 25, 2006

Doors open: 6:30pm
Films: 7:00pm

Lake Tahoe
Community College
Theater,
South Lake Tahoe, CA

Get your tickets at:
Sierra Nevada Alliance
Patagonia @ Heavenly

League to Save
Lake Tahoe

~*~

Sierra Nevada Alliance 13th Annual Conference

August 11-13, 2006

North Tahoe
Conference Center,
Kings Beach, CA

Look for more
information in your mail
and out website

~*~

Sierra Nevada Preparing for Climate Change

It seems these days that every week a new study about climate change is in the news. With climate scientists agreeing on the world's climate changing, the debate is finished regarding *if* global warming is real. However, now the real work begins of reducing emissions AND adapting to the changes— and this work particularly needs to begin in the Sierra Nevada.

By mid-century, spring snowpack in the Sierra Nevada is projected to decline about 25 to 50 percent. This reduction in snowpack is predicted by some modelers to occur even if the nations around the globe implement significant greenhouse gas emission reductions. Already Yosemite Valley has seen a 5 degree Fahrenheit rise in temperature in the last one hundred years and a number of Sierra critters have moved their range up the mountains due to this warming. Clearly climate change in the Sierra is noticeable now and only getting worse.

The Sierra Nevada Alliance discovered that almost no other groups are working on the critical topic of adapting to the significant changes that are already occurring. Consequently, the Sierra Nevada Alliance Sierra Water and Climate Change Campaign is working to ensure that we protect our natural resources and

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Sierra Conservancy – New Staff and Orientation

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy, the newest and largest state conservancy in the United States, is up and rolling. The Sierra Nevada Alliance worked long and hard to help create this new agency and is carefully watching and participating with the agency as it hires its first staff and establishes its new plans.

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy, which is dedicated to protecting Sierra resources and rural communities, hired Jim Branham as their Executive Officer. As he said in one of his first announcements about the position, “it is an exciting job in a new organization with an important mission.” In this position, Mr. Branham returns to his natural resources “roots”. Prior to the Executive Officer position, Mr. Branham was the Deputy Director of the California Environmental Protection Agency in the Schwarzenegger administration for two years, where he worked under Terry Tamminen. Before that he was government affairs director for often-battled Pacific Lumber Company. Prior to that

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SIERRA NEVADA ALLIANCE

Keeping light in the range.

Executive Director's Letter

You know what my new years resolution is for 2006? Increase the number of 'wolverine' in the Sierra. I'm not talking literally of increasing the number of carnivore "Gulo gulo" (although that would be awesome!) but the number of community leaders who face climate change as a 'wolverine.'

For three years of my life I was a Wolverine highschool mascot in Truckee where I routinely wore fake fur on Friday before the big games. During this esteemed tenure I came to appreciate the characteristics of Wolverine: ferocity, cunning and extraordinary strength. They are not shrinking violets when faced with a challenge, no matter how large the challenge. They have a reputation for winning their battles.

So as I stare down some pretty intimidating facts on climate change – such as a third of the Sierra snowpack being gone in fifty years – I think of wolverines. We all need to be wolverines in the Sierra to tackle this issue and protect natural resources.

Currently most people feel like deer-in-the-headlights when it comes to acting on climate change. It seems overwhelming. It seems mesmerizing – in a "stand still and wait until the truck hits you" kind of way. But the climate change truck is coming and this is no time to freeze in inaction.

So to turn folks into wolverines – aka "leaders empowered to protect the Sierra in the face of climate change" – the Alliance recently released our Climate Change Toolkit and I sincerely hope it inspires folks to tackle this issue and be as determined as a wolverine to protect natural resources. We hope our facts, slides, experts, referrals and offers of assistance empower anyone involved in resource planning to tackle the climate change scenarios today!

So while I don't expect folks to start wearing fake fur on Fridays to work, I do expect our supporters, member groups, and allies to be cunning, determined and to show off their extraordinary strength. This goes for more than climate change – it applies to smart land use, watershed protection, and more. I know so many of us love the Sierra and consequently the region deserves the spirit of the Wolverine in its protection. So read on through this newsletter about many issues and actions, and may you feel your claws growing.

Sincerely,

Joan Clayburgh
Executive Director

PERIODIC NEWSLETTER OF THE SIERRA NEVADA ALLIANCE

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Sierra Nevada Alliance's mission is to protect and restore the natural environment of the Sierra Nevada for future generations while ensuring healthy and sustainable communities. We do this by strengthening the work of people and organizations committed to the environmental integrity of the Sierra.



Printed on recycled paper.

Ski Resorts Not So Hot on 'Keeping Winter Cool'

Ski resorts around the country are not living up to their rhetoric when it comes to preventing climate change, according to the just released 2005/2006 Ski Area Environmental Scorecard. Each year, the Scorecard grades 77 ski resorts throughout the western United States. This year's findings demonstrate that an industry program to "Keep Winter Cool" is not so hot among ski resorts.

The National Ski Area Association's Keep Winter Cool program claims that "ski areas around the country are concerned that global warming could have a serious effect on their business. So they're taking action to fight the problem on many fronts." However, the new Ski Area Environmental Scorecard finds that less than half of ski resorts in the West have instituted voluntary measures to reduce emissions and combat climate change.

For each resorts scores and details on their actions to address climate change visit www.skiareacitizens.com.

"When you look at the numbers, it is clear that the ski industry's performance on

global warming doesn't match its rhetoric," says Autumn Bernstein, land use coordinator for the Alliance. "Global



Skier on lift at Kirkwood Resort

warming could reduce the ski season in the Sierra Nevada by three to six weeks over the next fifty years, yet less than half of the Western ski resorts have voluntary environmental programs to reduce their emissions."

Of the 77 ski resorts examined in the Scorecard, 22% are supporting carpool programs, 21% are using alternative fuels such as biodiesel, 31% are using wind or solar power, and 50% are supporting legislative efforts to combat climate change.

"We challenge all ski areas to start cutting their emissions immediately," said Autumn. "Next year, we hope 100% of the ski areas have implemented programs to reduce their emissions. If the ski industry doesn't get serious about climate change, who will?"

The Ski Area Environmental Scorecard, produced each year by the Ski Area Citizens' Coalition, is the only non-industry mechanism that gives skiers and snowboarders a way to assess the environmental performance of their favorite resorts. More detailed descriptions of the criteria used to grade resorts, a complete breakdown of each ski area's score can be found on-line at www.skiareacitizens.com.

Ski Area Environmental Scorecard California Grades this Year:

Ski Area	Grade	Ski Area	Grade
Alpine Meadows Ski Area	A	Mt. Rose - Ski Tahoe	C
Bear Valley Mountain Resort	D	Mt. Shasta Board & Ski Park	B
Bear Mountain Resort	B	Northstar-at-Tahoe	D
Boreal Mountain Resort	B	Sierra-at-Tahoe Ski Resort	A
Dodge Ridge	C	Sierra Summit Mountain Resort	B
Heavenly Mountain Resort	C	Snow Summit Mountain Resort	C
Homewood Mountain Resort	B	Snow Valley Mountain Resort	B
Kirkwood Mountain Resort	D	Squaw Valley USA	B
Mammoth Mountain Ski Area	C	Sugar Bowl Ski Resort	C
Mountain High Resort	B		

Alliance Working to Stop Sprawl at the Gates of Yosemite

37,000 acres of forest and ranchland west of Yosemite National Park is in danger of being opened to sprawling development. So the Sierra Nevada Alliance has teamed up with member group Mariposans for the Environment and Responsible Government (MERG) to stop this destruction of the Sierra and get smarter plans in place.

For the last four years, Mariposa County has been updating its General Plan, the blueprint for future growth and development. In October 2005, Mariposa County unveiled the new plan. In an era when many California counties are seeking to curb sprawl and preserve agriculture and rural economies, Mariposa County's proposed new General Plan would do just the opposite. Instead of preserving the existing zoning for large ranches and private forests, the plan makes it easier to chop up these large holdings into smaller and smaller pieces. In effect this rewards land speculation and encourages conversion of working ranches and private forests to low-density rural residential development.

This increase in the rate of rural residential development would bring more roads, fragment habitat, and negatively impact the agriculture and tourism-based rural economies.

The plan also calls for the dramatic expansion of Mariposa County's small towns and hamlets. The town of Mariposa, for example, would grow from its current one-half square mile to twenty square miles.

"This County proposed plan threatens our rural quality of life. It undermines the very qualities which make Mariposa County such a great place for residents and tourists alike," said Bart Brown, Chairman of MERG.

In response, Sierra Nevada Alliance and MERG are building support for an alternative plan that would encourage more compact, town-centered development and preserve the County's working landscapes and wildplaces. It is not anti-growth, it is smart growth.

Sierra Nevada Alliance helped MERG organize a campaign to send hundreds of postcards to the Board of Supervisors calling on them to "Keep Mariposa Rural!" To date, nearly 300 postcards have been sent. MERG representatives have also been meeting with the Supervisors and speaking to community gatherings around the County, asking for their support.

Sierra Nevada Alliance is also helping MERG produce maps that identify threatened areas, and show how an alternative plan could dramatically reduce these impacts.

The partnership of MERG's local perspective and Sierra Nevada Alliance's campaign expertise have proved to be a good combination. Public support for the campaign has been strong, and the Board of Supervisors and planning staff have indicated a new willingness to re-evaluate the plan. We are hopeful that the Board will reverse course and adopt a more sensible plan for protecting Mariposa County's future.

*For Preservation of the Environment
and our Economy*

Keep Mariposa Rural!

New Faces at the Alliance

Kay Ogden Development Director

The Sierra Nevada Alliance welcomes to staff Kay Ogden to fill our new position as



Development Director. Kay Ogden started work on January 5th and will be based in our South Lake Tahoe office. Kay has been involved in many areas of development, fundraising, event management and outreach. She comes with strong interpersonal and communication skills. She has extensive experience managing projects, planning activities, and building alliances. And as important, she has a passion for the Sierra Nevada, a love of people, and adoration of the outdoors. She also has an attachment to 750-mile long bicycle races and the mental and athletic challenges these races provide.

Most recently Kay was the Community Development Coordinator for IntraCare Hospitals in Houston Texas. Prior to this position in 1996 to 1999 she was the Marketing Director and Special Events Coordinator for the Mono Lake Committee based out of Lee Vining California. From 1983 to 1996 she was the owner of a multi-dimensional consultation and design company specializing in marketing. She is very much looking forward to living in the Sierra again and working for the Alliance.

Kim Carr Board Member

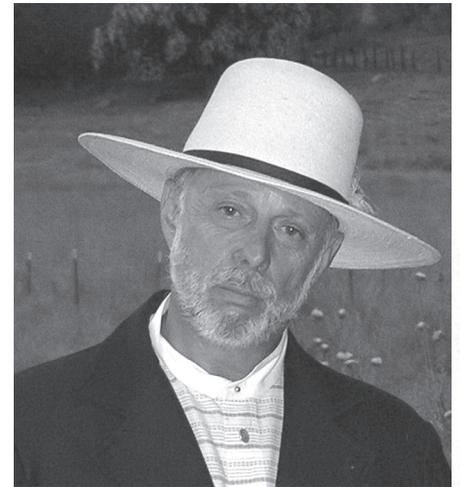
Kim was appointed to the Sierra Nevada Alliance board of directors this October 2005. Kim lives in South Lake Tahoe, CA and has been in the environmental field for over 15 years. Currently she is working for EDAW Inc consulting focusing on environmental restoration projects and regional planning projects. Prior to employment with EDAW, she was a watershed restoration specialist for the California Tahoe Conservancy. In this capacity, she managed water quality improvement projects, as well as, water quality and vegetation monitoring projects. Prior to the Conservancy, she worked with a number of non-profit organizations and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in Washington D.C. While at EPA, she developed national markets for recyclable materials and assisted in agency planning and policy development.



Kim also teaches a Tahoe environmental course at the Lake Tahoe Community College each year that reviews basin issues and regulations. So Kim stays very abreast of all Tahoe issues, groups, and agency activities. Kim brings a passion for air quality issues and improving public transportation. And she bikes the talk, being seen regularly around South Lake Tahoe biking to work or on errands.

Gary Adest Advisory Board Member

Gary Adest lives in Springville, CA in the southern Sierra and is trained in Evolutionary Biology and Ecology. Since



1990, Gary has worked with his wife Barbara on a variety of field research projects in Wildlife Biology. In 2000, Gary and Barbara bought River Ridge ranch on the Tule River when it looked as if the land would end up as a major housing development. By working with the Sequoia Riverlands Trust, and a number of partners and donors, they were able to place a conservation easement on the ranch and market the development rights. River Ridge is now fully protected in perpetuity and will remain a haven for the public seeking personal restoration and recreation and for the flora and fauna which abound on the property. In order to afford the costs of the Ranch, Barbara and Gary decided to do what they knew best: to teach people about the outdoors. River Ridge ranch is host to many community and youth outdoor education programs. Gary also ended up learning to do what he knew nothing about: managing the day-to-day affairs of a working cattle ranch, a grazing regime and the myriad details involved in planning and providing for people to have a rewarding and memorable experience when visiting their ranch.

Climate Change: from page 1

wildplaces by determining how we shall adapt to changes in climate.

In the summer of 2005 we contracted with a consultant to interview leading scientists and those involved in resource management regarding climate change impacts. We identified the best graphics and information to educate community members and resource planners. We also researched the best ways to communicate this complicated issue of adapting to climate change. We put our findings in our Climate Change Toolkit: Planning ahead to protect Sierra natural resources and rural communities.

In the fall of 2005, the Sierra Nevada Alliance distributed over four hundred Climate Change Toolkits and made presentations on this topic to hundreds of conservation leaders. The toolkit is for those involved in a range of resource planning efforts such as long-term river restoration projects, county land use planning, large-scale reforestation efforts, fish restoration or the operation of major hydroelectric dams.

The climate change toolkit includes:

- The science of climate change and impacts on the global, national, and state level

- The effects of greenhouse gas emissions and actions you can take to reduce them
- Information about climate change impacts and ideas for how to adapt natural resource management strategies.
- Power point presentations containing the best graphics for communicating the impacts of climate change.

The goal of the toolkit is for any community member to feel empowered to take action today to plan for this new future. Planning now rather than waiting for extreme events to overtake us is cheaper, easier, and allows us to manage our resources to protect our wildlife, recreation, and economy. We also hope that by planning how to adapt to changes in climate already underway we add fuel to efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prevent catastrophic global warming.

The Sierra Nevada Alliance is determined to protect and restore the Sierra's natural resources and rural communities for future generations. We are confident that by working together at the local, regional, state, national and global level we can achieve this mission. Our organization is founded by a network of groups who have saved many of the Sierra's special places



*Get Your Copy
of the Toolkit Today!*

*The toolkit is available for free
on our website at
www.sierranevadaalliance.org
or
via mail for \$12.*

*Our website offers more
information on our campaign
and this issue.*

*Our staff are also available to
make presentations on Climate
Change in the Sierra.*

because they did not wait for others to do it for them. It is this history of taking the initiative and being passionate stewards of our natural world that gives us hope in the face of such global changes. Climate change is an issue where the saying "Think globally, Act locally" has never been clearer. We offer an additional phrase to this popular slogan, "Think multi-generationally, Act Today."

New Guide on Watershed Restoration

The Sierra Nevada Alliance Watersheds Program has designed a guide for community-based organizations interested in tackling the dynamic work of restoring function back into their watershed.

Community-Based Watershed Restoration in the Sierra Nevada—A Guide to Getting Started is designed to provide an overview of restoration and be used as a reference when planning for restoration projects in the Sierra Nevada.

The restoration guide includes:

- An in-depth look at the Sierra Nevada Alliance and Regional Council of Rural Communities Principles for Watershed Restoration

- Review of Adaptive Management Strategies
- Appraisal of what types of small scale restoration projects are feasible
- Outline of resources needed to plan for restoration and questions to be asking
- Discussion of potential permits required for restoration projects
- Summary of attributes of restored ecosystems
- Tips for how to work with consultants.

Watershed restoration planning is quite complex. Our guide is a tool for those

just getting started. The guide encourages individuals and groups to use the experience of stakeholders in their council or group, consult with professionals, and to review other resources to guide their restoration planning.

To get a copy of *Community-Based Watershed Restoration in the Sierra Nevada—A Guide to Getting Started* please email megan@sierranevadaalliance.org or call 530.542.4546. You can also look for the guide on our website at www.sierranevadaalliance.org/publications/

Conservancy con't: from page 1

he spent 12 years working for state Senator Jim Nielsen, five years at the California Department of Forestry during the Wilson administration. He was also the California Undersecretary of Resources.

Board member Bill Center, Community Group Coordinator Julie Leimbach and Executive Director Joan Clayburgh had the pleasure of meeting with Mr. Branham his fourth day on the job. In the meeting Mr. Branham discussed many topics important to the Conservancy's start-up. He recognizes that the 400 mile long range will require that the new Conservancy partner with organizations, agencies, local governments and others on the local level to implement restoration and conservation

projects. He is also interested in discussing with his board the value of subregional offices. Mr. Branham thinks the Sierra Conservancy might also play a strong role in coordinating between the state and federal agencies planning and implementing projects in the Sierra. He also sees a potential role for the Conservancy to coordinate discussion between the upper watersheds and lower watersheds of the Sierra.

Mr. Branham discussed the need to spread the Conservancy's limited funding resources across six subregions equitably. The Sierra Nevada Alliance expressed our commitment to supporting the agency in getting state and federal funding for its conservation work.

One of the main tasks ahead for the Conservancy is developing a strategic plan. Mr. Branham expressed his interest in getting this plan finalized in mid-2006 and his desire for public and stakeholder input on the plan.

The Alliance has been busy working with our member groups in subregional meetings to pull together information on each region of the Sierra to brief the board and staff. We have scheduled a meeting with Mr. Branham to meet with our member groups on January 9. We will actively engage our conservation network in the strategic planning process and look forward to working closely with the agency in protecting and restoring the region.

Welcome New Member Groups!

Cummings Valley Protective Association (CVPA)

Tehachippi, CA
www.cvpainc.com

CVPA grew out of a desire by concerned property owners to maintain the serenity and rural beauty of the Cummings and Brite Valleys in Kern County, which are threatened by encroaching commercial development. The current Kern County existing General Plan preserves the rural character and farmlands. CVPA believes the General Plan is appropriate for the area and should not be changed.

Revive The San Joaquin (RSJ)

Fresno, CA
www.revivethesanjoaquin.org

RSJ's mission is to promote a collective stewardship that sustains the economic, environmental, and recreational benefits of a healthy San Joaquin River, including adequate flows, habitat and native fisheries. The group works to promote stewardship and balanced management that supports both restoration and economic activities. They conserve and enhance the wildlife habitat and scenic values of the San Joaquin River and work toward restoration of the historic salmon fishery.

San Joaquin River Intertribal Heritage Educational Corp (SJRIHEC)

Auberry, CA
www.intertribalcenter.org

SJRIHEC is dedicated to working with youth and adults in the preservation of Native American philosophy and preserving the ecology through hands on experience. The purpose of SJRIHEC is to promote a symbiotic relationship between individuals and their environment through education and understanding of plants, animals, geology and history, and through exposure to Native American philosophy, arts and crafts, and individual interaction with their surroundings.

Tuolumne County Citizens for Responsible Growth

Sonora, CA
email: info@tccfrg.org

Tuolumne County Citizens for Responsible growth works to sustain and enhance Tuolumne County's rural quality of life, historic value and scenic resources. They work through activism and advocacy of policies supporting a livable rural community. The group enlists the public's interest and cooperation in protecting these values.

Sierra & Foothill Citizens Alliance

Prather, CA
www.sierrafoothillwater.org

The Sierra and Foothill Citizens Alliance (SFCA) was created as a way to increase opportunities for involvement and local representation for residents in mountain and foothill communities within the unincorporated areas of eastern Fresno County. SFCA will endeavor to inform and educate mountain and foothill residents regarding potential impacts of land use and water resource decisions in their communities, and actively address those concerns identified. SFCA believes it is vitally important that land use decisions affecting eastern Fresno County be comprehensively reviewed for their potential impacts to water quality and sustainability, waste treatment, and traffic. These reviews must be conducted not only by the various public agencies and representatives that have jurisdiction over such development, but must also include the communities that may be affected by those decisions.

For a directory and more information on all of the Alliance's 71 member groups, visit our website at www.sierranevadaalliance.org/membergrps