

# SIERRA NEVADA ALLIANCE

# SIERRA NEWS

VOLUME XII, ISSUE 1

MARCH 2008



SIERRA NEVADA ALLIANCE

## CALENDAR COLUMN

For more information on the events below visit [www.sierranevadaalliance.org](http://www.sierranevadaalliance.org) or call 530. 542. 4546

~ \* ~

### Wildflower Walk

April 6, 2008

Coloma

~ \* ~

### Sierra Day at the Capitol

May 6, 2008

Sacramento

~ \* ~

### Tim Palmer Book Signings

Spring 2008

throughout the Sierra

~ \* ~

### 15th Annual Sierra Nevada Alliance Conference

September 12-14, 2008

North Tahoe Conference Center

~ \* ~

## Sierra Conservation Landscaping: Preventing Pollution

Did you know that Sierra yard and garden choices touch on the most critical conservation issues facing the region? It's true. Many elements vital to enjoying your yard and/or garden are vital to conservation.

The plants you choose can attract or repel wanted or unwanted wildlife, introduce alien invading weeds into the wild, consume little or lots of water, and repel or attract wildfire to your house. For example, toyon, bearberry, flowering cherry, and quaking aspen are deer resistant plants, a way to prevent deer from consuming your young plants and attracting a mountain lion, that would follow deer into your yard.

Irrigation choices can optimize your plant's health, waste water, and/or lead to the pollution of your nearby stream. For example, drip irrigation conserves water by dripping directly on the roots at a rate that maximizes absorption by the plant, preventing evaporation almost entirely and avoiding creating runoff that carries sediment into local streams.

Your path and wall materials can provide a firebreak or ignite your yard and then your house when a fire comes to town. For example, a low stone wall can break up spaces in your yard – while helping create a small fire break.



*Continued on page 6*

## The Sierra Water and Climate Change Campaign is Heating Up!

The Sierra Nevada Alliance's Water and Climate Change campaign achieved several major milestones at the end of 2007 in its efforts to educate and empower Sierra leaders to take action on climate change. The Alliance presented to a total of 25 conservation groups and agencies regarding "Adapting Resource Management to Climate Change". Twenty-two organizations completed the Alliance's Adaptation Pledge, promising to address climate change and protect Sierra resources through management planning.

"It is exciting to see so many groups and individuals joining the Alliance to tackle this critical issue," said Joan Clayburgh, Executive Director. "Climate change can seem overwhelming, but seeing so many folks roll up their sleeve and commit to making a difference gives me hope."

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SIERRA NEVADA ALLIANCE

*Keeping light in the range.*

## Executive Director's Letter

Dear Friends,

Recently I saw a picture of a wolverine in the Sierra! Wolverines have not had a confirmed sighting in decades. Ever since I sported a wolverine mascot costume for three years of my high school life in Truckee, I've been a big wolverine fan. So it has always made me very sad to think wolverines were gone in the Sierra. And in March I saw picture of a wolverine in the Sierra and I had hope.

And I realized I always have hope - lots of hope. I may be crazy in a time when we're facing the loss of 25% of our Sierra snowpack in the next 24-40 years and the projections for a quintupling of populations in some Sierra foothill counties. But you see, I'm surrounded by people at the Sierra Nevada Alliance turning crisis into opportunity.

Al Gore says we need to come together to tackle climate change like we did during the world wars. He's saying it will take that kind of investment, commitment and attention. And that commitment sure doesn't seem to be happening nationally today. But at the Alliance we don't wait for others to lead. We've started building our 'army' of committed groups and leaders to tackle climate change in our region. When you read our climate change story on page 1 - you'll see what we've done to gather folks, create models of change, and lead state efforts to protect our region and more.

1500 gallons of sewage spilled into Wolf Creek not so long ago. Sadly, every watershed in the Sierra has had some stretch that has been challenged at one time or other. But do I have hope? You betcha! Our watershed program has trained 100s of volunteers and started programs in almost half the Sierra watersheds to catch problems and educate communities to be better stewards. We have watershed partners up and down the range.

Yeah, the Sierra has 150 years of past atrocities that have destroyed basic ecological function for many areas of our region. But in one year our 27 Sierra AmeriCorps volunteers restored over 4000 acres in the Sierra. 4000 acres that would not have been restored without them! One year!

So we face challenges to the Sierra that have never been experienced in over 160,000 years. But you know what, we can do our best to restore the Sierra, create sustainable communities and turn this climate crisis into an opportunity for a better future. I work with terrific people who face crisis and make it opportunity everyday - staff, board, volunteers, group leaders, agencies and other partners.

The Alliance is all about uniting that commitment to the Sierra's future that runs deep. That shared commitment creates more than hope. That shared commitment creates change.

Sincerely

Joan Clayburgh, Executive Director

PERIODIC NEWSLETTER OF THE  
SIERRA NEVADA ALLIANCE

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**Megan Suarez-Brand**

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**Patricia Hickson**

Development Director  
**Kay Ogden**

Office Manager  
**Kathy Haberman**

Program Associate  
**Julie Leimbach**

AmeriCorps Program Director  
**Do Lee**

AmeriCorps Program Regional Coordinator  
**Morgan Fessler**

Watershed Program Associate  
**Sarah Green**

Watershed Program Associate  
**Genevieve Marsh**

AmeriCorps Watersheds Program Assistant  
**Dan Keenan**

AmeriCorps Water & Climate  
Program Assistant  
**Marion Gee**

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## 'Comeback Kid' Ski Areas Greening Up Their Act

What do Mammoth Mountain, Squaw Valley, Telluride and Park City have in common? These ski resorts used to be at the bottom of the class on the annual Ski Area Environmental Scorecard. Not any longer. Four resorts who previously received low grades on the scorecard are now receiving As and Bs as a result of improving their environmental stewardship.

For example, Squaw Valley scored a D for several years after illegally filling streams and altering stream channels, impacting wetlands and violating water quality standards. Now Squaw Valley is scoring an A for the first time, because they haven't been cited for any further water quality violations, and they've reduced their energy footprint through programs such as retrofitting old buildings, using bio-diesel in their fleet, and investing in more energy-efficient snow guns.

The story is similar at Mammoth Mountain, which never scored more than a low C for a host of reasons. This year Mammoth scored it's first B for adopting a variety of new resource conservation programs and policies, such as using solar and geothermal energy and supporting an expansion of the nearby Hoover Wilderness.

"These 'comeback kid' resorts are now biting at the heels of the ski industry's environmental leaders," noted Autumn Bernstein, Land Use Campaign

Director for the Alliance from 2005 through 2007. "We're thrilled to highlight resorts such as Squaw Valley and Mammoth that are making a turnaround. The goal of the Ski Area Scorecard has always been to promote change, not beat up on the industry's worst. I think these 'comeback kid' resorts are simply listening to their customers."

"The Comeback Kid story is not an industry norm," explains Ben Doon, Research Director for the Ski Area Citizens Coalition. "Resorts like Kirkwood, Northstar, and Colorado's



Breckenridge and Copper, are continuing their outdated, destructive practices and have ranked amongst the poorest environmental performers on the Scorecard since 2000. Others, like Idaho's Sun Valley, seem to get worse each year."

To view each resort's score and details on their environmental management practices, visit: [www.skiareacitizens.com](http://www.skiareacitizens.com). Skiers and snowboarders can easily send emails to resorts through the website, thanking resorts for their environmental

stewardship or encouraging them to improve their environmental policies and management.

Since 2000, the Scorecard has evaluated 77 ski resorts throughout the western United States. This year 14 ski resorts in Western Canada were added as that region gears up for the 2010 Winter Olympics.

The Ski Area Environmental Scorecard, published for the eighth consecutive year by the Ski Area Citizens' Coalition, is the only independent review that gives skiers and snowboarders a way to assess the environmental performance of their favorite resorts. Resorts are scored on a comprehensive suite of criteria such as protection of old growth forests, alpine wildlife and water resources, along with proactive steps such as carpool programs, recycling and using green energy. More detailed descriptions can be found on-line at [www.skiareacitizens.com](http://www.skiareacitizens.com).

Scorecard data is obtained from an annual survey, public records from government agencies, and from the resorts themselves. Freedom of Information Act and Public Records Act requests are filed with appropriate land managers to identify ski area development projects and management plans each spring. Resorts are also asked to fill out surveys regarding their on-mountain environmental programs. All source documents are on the website.

### 2007 Ski Area Environmental Scorecard California Results

Resort	Score	Grade	Resort	Score	Grade
Alpine Meadows	73.8	A	Snow Valley Mountain Resort	64.9	C
Squaw Valley USA	70.7	A	Snow Summit Mountain Resort	64.6	C
Mountain High Resort	69.8	B	Sierra Summit Mountain Resort	63.1	C
Boreal Mountain Resort	68.9	B	Sugar Bowl Ski Resort	60.5	C
Mt. Shasta Board and Ski Park	66.7	B	Dodge Ridge	50.7	C
Bear Mountain Resort	66.2	B	Heavenly Mountain Resort	50.2	C
Mammoth Mountain Ski Area	66.2	B	Northstar-at-Tahoe	48.5	D
Sierra-at-Tahoe	65.8	B	Bear Valley Mountain Resort	47.1	D
Homewood Mountain Resort	65.3	B	Kirkwood Mountain Resort	37.8	F
Mt. Rose - Ski Tahoe	65.0	B			

For the full 2007-2008 Ski Area Scorecard visit [www.skiareacitizens.com](http://www.skiareacitizens.com)

# Staffing Changes

## Goodbye Autumn Bernstein

The Sierra Nevada Alliance wishes Autumn Bernstein well as she begins her new position as Coordinator with ClimatePlan, a state coalition addressing climate change through land use. Autumn was the Land Use Coordinator at the Alliance from 2005 through 2007. She wrote our popular Saving the Sierra toolkit for activists, authored our informative Dangerous Development Report, and organized numerous helpful workshops and events for land use leaders in the Sierra. She also consulted with our partnering groups to help them achieve real change in Sierra general plans to protect Sierra waters, open space, wildlife and rural character. We will miss her leadership at the Alliance, but thankfully not her presence. Autumn is subletting space out of the Alliance office.

## Welcome to the Alliance Patricia, Marion, and Dan

### Patricia Hickson, Sustainable Sierra Land Use Associate

Patricia Hickson grew up in Colfax, California – a small town in the foothills of Placer County.

Growing up Patricia bore witness to the rapid population growth and subsequent sprawling development of Placer County's western slope. She recognized the rapid development of her home county was not only land and resource intensive, but antithetical to the idea of community. She has been passionate about changing land use development patterns every since. Patricia believes good planning is the foundation to a more sustainable society



and she is excited to be working at the Alliance aspiring towards this vision. Prior to joining the Alliance Patricia worked as a project assistant for the environmental consulting firm EDAW in the Tahoe Basin and as a reporter for the North Lake Tahoe Bonanza. Patricia has also held positions with a variety of environmental non-profits including: Sierra Forest Legacy, Tahoe Area Sierra Club, and Earthworks. She holds a BA in Environmental Studies and Philosophy from UC Santa Cruz.

### Marion Gee, AmeriCorps Water and Climate Change Program Assistant

Marion Gee hails from the tame suburbs of Orange County. Although a SoCal resident for most of her life, she traversed much



of the Sierra from an early age, hiking, fly-fishing and skiing with her family. In 2004, she graduated with a BA in history from the University of California at Irvine, her senior thesis a study of the landscape changes created by the Japanese internees at Manzanar, on the Eastern Sierra. She also studied environmental history and policy at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. Marion also volunteered for seven months in a children's shelter for the non-profit organization, VEGlobal in Santiago, Chile. This year, Marion joins the Sierra Nevada Alliance team as the Sierra Water and Climate Change Program Assistant, working to raise awareness of climate change and inspire action in the Sierra. She hopes that in this small way she will give back to the mountains that have been the site of countless hours of study, recreation and familial contentment.

### Dan Keenan, AmeriCorps Watershed Program Assistant

Dan grew up in Syracuse, NY and graduated from St. Michael's College in Burlington, VT in 2003 with a B.A. in Anthropology/Sociology and a minor in Spanish. In 2004, he came to call Lake Tahoe home. While in Tahoe, Dan has been a First Mate aboard the 1949 classic wooden boat, the Tahoe. Aboard the Tahoe, Dan gave interpretive human and natural history tours of Lake Tahoe and the Sierra Nevada, fostering a passion for spreading public awareness of environmental issues in the Sierra. Dan also toured Thailand and Laos on motorcycle in 2005/2006, which got him interested in the concept of sustainable development. He has experience working with a range of non-profits including the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program, the Vermont Livable Wage Campaign, and Habitat for Humanity. Now Dan works with the Sierra Nevada Alliance Watershed Program to help assess, restore, and protect watershed health, while building the capacity of other watershed groups in the Sierra. In his free time he likes to mountain bike, ski, walk his big dog, write music, and plan his next trip.



## Alliance Transitions

2007 AmeriCorps Member Genevieve Jessop Marsh is now one of the Alliance's Watershed Program Associates.

## Congratulations

Congratulations to Do Lee, SNAP Program Director for his engagement to Jennifer Smith, and to Genevieve Jessop Marsh, Watershed Program Associate for her engagement to Brian von Lossberg!

## Serving the Sierra: AmeriCorps Dedication Continues in 2008

Brittany Woiderski, 2007 Sierra Nevada AmeriCorps Partnership (SNAP) Member, couldn't help but be impressed when upon hearing the words "bull thistle," an invasive weed in Yosemite National Park, a Weed Warrior Volunteer she had trained exclaimed, "Who said bull thistle? Where is it? Shovel! I need a shovel! We got a live one over here!" The hard work by the Weed Warrior Volunteers to remove invasive weeds in Yosemite was one of the many Sierra Nevada habitat restoration projects organized and led by SNAP members. In 2007 SNAP exceeded the annual goal by restoring over 4156 acres in the Sierra Nevada.

Building on a foundation of 2007 accomplishments, the Sierra Nevada Alliance welcomed twenty-two new and four returning AmeriCorps Members for the 2008 SNAP member training early this year near Yosemite National Park. At this training, SNAP Members learned about conservation issues, became acquainted with their site supervisors, and got down and dirty with a day of trail maintenance.

Since 1994, AmeriCorps has been 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. The SNAP 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 2008 program places 27 SNAP Members to serve with 19 partnering groups and agencies in the Sierra.

The 2008 SNAP sites include:

- American Rivers
- Eastern Sierra Land Trust
- Feather River Coordinated Resource Management Group



*2008 Sierra Nevada AmeriCorps Partnership Members*

- Feather River Land Trust
- Friends of Deer Creek
- Friends of the Inyo
- Mountain Lion Foundation
- Placer Land Trust
- Planning and Conservation League Foundation
- Sierra Business Council
- Sierra Nevada Alliance
- Sierra Watershed Education Partnerships
- South Yuba River Citizens League
- Tahoe-Baikal Institute
- Tahoe Environmental Research Center
- Tahoe Resource Conservation District
- WildPlaces
- Wolf Creek Community Alliance
- Yosemite National Park

Illustrating the impact of the SNAP program for the partnering organizations, ten 2007 SNAP

Members were offered full-time or part-time positions with their sites after their year of service, with nine SNAP members accepting the positions.

"Laura brought many gifts to Friends of the Inyo, a dedication to doing our work completely and correctly, as well as a renewed level of respect and investment in the volunteers who really make our work possible. It

was a great year having her as our AmeriCorps member in 2007, and we look forward to working with her next year as she joins Friends of the Inyo as our first full-time Watershed Coordinator," said Paul MacFarland, Executive Director of Friends of the Inyo.

"The 2007 SNAP team exceeded what we dared to imagine," said Do Lee, SNAP Program Director. "Our pride in the 2007 SNAP team is matched by our excitement with the start of service by the 2008 SNAP team.

The 2008 SNAP team hails from all over California and the country – Ohio, Michigan, New York, Connecticut, Indiana, Massachusetts, and Wisconsin. The Alliance is very grateful to AmeriCorps for the opportunity to bring talented and future environmental leaders to our partnering conservation groups. We look forward to the 2008 SNAP year as we strive to exemplify the SNAP motto – "Serving the Sierra!"

## Conservation Landscaping: con't from page 1

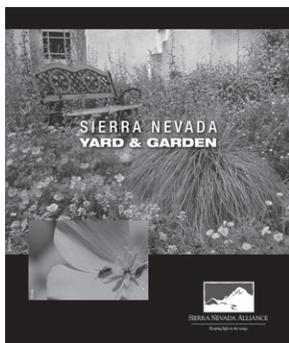
But most people have no idea that their yards hold so much potential for good – and possibly so much potential for bad.

In response, the Sierra Nevada Alliance decided to tackle multiple issues by educating Sierra homeowners on how to landscape to meet their personal garden goals – while protecting and restoring the greater Sierra.

The new project, run out of the Alliance's Watersheds Program, addresses nonpoint source pollution, conserving water, living in harmony with wildlife, creating wildfire defensible space, and using native vegetation simultaneously. The program is producing a Sierra Nevada Yard and Garden guide, creating conservation demonstration yards & gardens throughout the region, and training groups and agencies on how to launch community education and support programs for conservation landscaping.

This past fall the Alliance, with support from the Tahoe Resource Conservation

District, provided a training workshop to organizations interested in educating



landowners in their communities on conservation landscaping by offering free consultations. The Alliance has also constructed two conservation yard & garden demonstration sites in South Lake Tahoe, and regranted over \$90,000 in funds to groups in Truckee, Mariposa, and Grass Valley to create demonstration projects of their own. These demo-gardens provide inspiration to their communities through real conservation landscaping examples.

Finally, the Alliance has been working with consultants Michelle Sweeney and Jerry Dion to produce Sierra Nevada Yard and Garden, a guide for conservation

landscaping in the Sierra. This beautiful new guide will be published this spring, available to any interested Sierra resident. Official supporters of the guide include California Association of Resource Conservation Districts, Sierra Nevada Conservancy, and the University of Nevada Extension Service. Contributors and advisors to the guide also include Cal Fire and the California Fire Safe Councils.

“It is exciting to unite so many conservation and community voices,” said Watersheds Program Director Megan Suarez-Brand. “Until we started this guide, it was hard to get advice on blending fire safety with water quality and wildlife concerns. But the reality is that a homeowner is dancing with all these issues with every decision regarding their yard. We are excited to provide Sierrans with one-stop shopping on conservation landscaping.”

If you are interested in the guide, a training, or more information about a demonstration site please contact Genevieve Jessop Marsh by email [genevieve@sierranevadaalliance.org](mailto:genevieve@sierranevadaalliance.org) or by phone, 530-542-4546.

## Your support truly makes a difference

Join the Sierra Nevada Alliance to keep Sierra lands, water, wildlife and communities rural, wild and wonderful for future generations to enjoy!

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Enclosed is my check payable to the Sierra Nevada Alliance

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### DONOR CLUBS

Mt. Whitney	\$2,500+
Yosemite	\$1,000
Lake Tahoe	\$500
Mono Lake	\$250
Half Dome	\$100
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Sustaining	\$35

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## Climate Change: continued from page 1

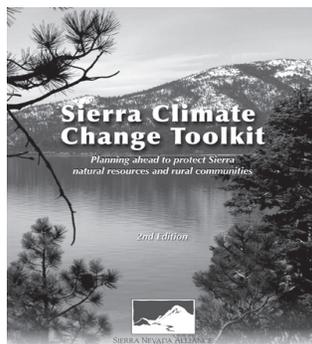
Thanks goes to Sierra Nevada AmeriCorps member Helena Rodriguez who spent 2007 leading the campaign's outreach. Helena is returning to UC Berkeley to complete her degree. To carry on outreach in 2008 is our new AmeriCorps member Marion Gee. (See Bio on Page 4).

The other major milestone the campaign reached is updating the Sierra Climate Change Toolkit. Hot off the press, the new toolkit is full of the latest information on climate change impacts in the Sierra, tips for how resource planners and individuals can successfully plan and adapt lifestyles and management practices to address climate change, and helpful resources such as websites, reports, and speakers.

**Visit [www.sierranevadaalliance.org](http://www.sierranevadaalliance.org) to download a copy or email our office at [info@sierranevadaalliance.org](mailto:info@sierranevadaalliance.org).**

With the specter of climate change reducing snowpack some leaders are calling for more dams. But in order to address these vagaries of water reliability presented by climate change, the Alliance has taken a leading role in promoting water conservation and encouraging the implementation of Integrated Regional Water Management Plans (IRWMPs). IRWMPs present a unique opportunity to receive funding for projects that address water issues raised by climate change.

The Alliance celebrated the success of the Cosumnes, American, Bear and Yuba (CABY) IRWMP, which received the highest marks by the Department of Water Resources of any IRWMP in California. The CABY IRWMP, which the Alliance helped get started and helped lead, is a model for the rest of the Sierra and California for its broad stakeholder process and its equal weighing of ecosystem benefits with water supply and water quality. The Alliance's work with



partners paid off in making this a model of collaboration and success for addressing multiple water issues, coordinating across jurisdictional boundaries, developing high cost-benefit projects, reducing local conflict, and attracting funding to Sierra watersheds.

The Alliance also celebrated the start-up of two new efforts to create integrated

plans in the Sierra in the Tuolumne and Stanislaus watersheds and Eastern Sierra. Alliance staff member Julie Leimbach helped transfer lessons learned from around the region and state to these new efforts. The Alliance looks forward to supporting more collaboration and integration to move the Sierra into a smarter water future that protects Sierra rivers, lakes and streams.

The final milestone achieved by the Alliance is the appointment of staffer Julie Leimbach as co-convenor to the California Urban Water Conservation Council (CUWCC). Water conservation is the most cost effective tool for California in adapting to climate change and should be a leading strategy, not dams. The Alliance has been on the steering committee of CUWCC, which is comprised of water agencies, conservation groups and water conservation businesses. For 2008, the Alliance will help lead CUWCC to improve water conservation around the state and increase understanding, appreciation and investment in Sierra headwaters.

The Sierra Water and Climate Change Campaign continues to heat up and looks forward to the possibility of turning our climate crisis into a climate opportunity for a more sustainable Sierra future.

## Welcome New Member Groups

### **California Trout-Eastern Sierra Program** Mammoth Lakes, CA

CalTrout was the nation's first statewide conservation group supported by trout fishermen with an altruistic goal: to protect and restore trout and the beautiful places where they live.

### **Donner Summit Area Association** Soda Springs, CA

Representing the people of the historic Donner Summit community for the preservation of the area's rugged mountain character and natural resources

by providing active coordination for community development issues.

### **Foresthill Residents for Responsible Growth** Foresthill, CA

Involving the community to prohibit Placer County from amending its General Plan to allow overwhelming development in a small foothills community of Foresthill.

### **Mokelumne Coast to Crest Trail Council** Pioneer, CA

The Mokelumne Coast to Crest Trail

Council is a coalition of volunteers and public and private agencies leading the effort to establish a multi-use trail across central California.

### **People for Healthy Forests** Sonora, CA

People for Healthy Forests is a non-profit, grassroots group of community volunteers, who monitor the use of herbicides on public lands and educate people about these practices. Their overall goal is to stop chemical use on USFS lands and to promote safe, healthy alternatives to herbicide use.