

SIERRA NEWS

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Sierra Nevada Alliance 17th Annual Conference

August 27 - 29, 2010

**Mountainside Conference Center
Mammoth Mountain Ski Area
Mammoth Lakes, CA**



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SIERRA NEVADA ALLIANCE

SIERRA NEWS

VOLUME XIV, ISSUE 1

MARCH 2010



SIERRA NEVADA ALLIANCE

CALENDAR

~ * ~

Western Wilderness Conference 2010

Hosted by Sierra Club, CA
Wilderness Coalition, NW
Wilderness & Parks Coalition

April 8-11, 2010
Berkeley

www.westernwilderness.org

~ * ~

Sierra Nevada Alliance 17th Annual Conference

August 27 - 29, 2010

Mountainside
Coinference Center
Mammoth Lakes

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Fly Fishing in Hope Valley

Hosted by Alliance Board
Member Pete Pumphrey &
Roberta Lagomarsini

September 24 - 26, 2010

Sorensen's Resort
Hope Valley

~ * ~

For more information on these
and other events, visit
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New Strategic Plan Launches Alliance into New Era

By Joan Clayburgh

The Sierra Nevada Alliance board of directors and staff got together in 2009 to determine the strategic direction of the organization in the next 3-5 years. We envisioned a Sierra with hope, and in our last newsletter we shared some of that vision. But as important as having a vision is, having a clear strategy to achieve that vision is critical.

The Alliance board and staff recognized that the core of the Alliance's mission, our strength and what makes us unique, is that we are a network of conservation groups. The strategic plan continues our tradition of having a program dedicated to member group service and support. In the next five years we will sustain mutually-supportive relationships with our Members Groups, ensuring our member groups are highly satisfied with our support and having at least 100 Groups as

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Photo by Kay Ogden.

New model Climate Plan reduces emissions to protect Sierra snowpack.

Sierra Nevada Conservancy Adopts Model Regional Climate Action Plan

By Marion Gee

This past December 2009, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) adopted a strong regional climate action plan to reduce emissions and protect the region from the effects of global warming. Sierra Nevada Alliance staff worked tirelessly to ensure a model plan, including: working with Conservancy staff, providing detailed comments on the draft plan, sending out action alerts and talking points to our network, submitting in-person comments at Conservancy Board meetings and even calling Conservancy board members to brief them on what should be included on the plan.

In the end, the Sierra Nevada Alliance advocated and secured important elements that address wildlife and community quality of life in the region's first Climate Action Plan.

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Group!



SIERRA NEVADA ALLIANCE

Executive Director's Letter

Dear Friends,

2010 is well under way and a new era has begun. Personally, I think these next ten years will be the most critical ten years for the Sierra Nevada of the last hundred. The pressures from growth and development are colliding with the climate changes set in motion from our greenhouse gas emissions.

The qualities that stir our passion for the Sierra are in jeopardy. What would the high Sierra be like without Pika storing dried flowers? What will Lake Tahoe be like if murky green? What will our National Parks be like if the foothills up to their edge are lined with big box stores and other generic sprawl? What would our rivers be like with more dams and diversions pulling every drop from the environment to support wasteful developments.

The good news is that the Sierra Nevada Alliance doesn't wallow in fear or the dark side. We envision a better future for the region – a future that grandchildren and their grandchildren will be thankful for. More importantly, we strategically plan and implement programs that create real world change.

We hope you enjoy this issue highlighting our new programs, member groups actions, and models for the future.

The Alliance is on the ground, region-wide, and acting on the big picture. We must hold our feet to the fire to be strategic and ambitious in this next decade – because the Sierra needs us to. We can do it. Together.

Cheers,

Executive Director

PERIODIC NEWSLETTER OF THE SIERRA NEVADA ALLIANCE

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9th Annual Ski Area Environmental Report Card Highlights Iniquities and Virtues for 2009-2010

By Patricia Hickson

This last November the Sierra Nevada Alliance helped release of the Ski Area Citizens' Environmental Report Card showing strong scores from many resorts around the west for watershed and habitat protection. Of the 83 resorts evaluated 60 scored a 'B' or better for their watershed protection policies and 57 resorts scored a 'B' or better for their habitat protection policies. For those highest scoring resorts this meant little or no disturbance of sensitive watershed or habitat areas, and no documented water quality violations.

California/Nevada resorts were consistent with this trend with 16 of the 20 CA/NV resorts evaluated scoring a 'B' or better for their watershed protection policies and 17 out of 20 scoring a 'B' or better for their habitat protection policies.

In contrast, many of these same resorts did not achieve as high a grade for addressing climate change, or for their environmental policies and practices. More than 50% of the western ski areas evaluated received a D or an F in these two categories. California and Nevada resorts fared only slightly better than the average western resort with 8 of 20 CA/NV resorts scoring a 'D' or worse in the climate change category and 9 failing with respect to their environmental policies and practices.

Many resorts lost points in the climate change portion of the report card because of unsubstantial use of biodiesel fuel for vehicles or other equipment. Resorts also lost points for not purchasing alternative energy offsets, such as energy credits from wind, solar and geothermal sources. Such energy credits help to offset greenhouse gas emissions created in powering ski lifts and other resort operations. Very few resorts in the west generate renewable energy on site.

This year marked the 9th annual release of the report card. The Ski Area Citizens Coalition (SACC) is endorsed by more than 20 conservation organizations. The Alliance is one of the groups on the SACC steering committee and the Alliance leads media outreach efforts for California.

The Ski Area Environmental Report Card grades ski resorts on their environmental policies and practices. The grades of the scorecard are based on individual criterion. The criterion are

in four categories: Habitat Protection, Protecting Watersheds, Addressing Global Climate Change, and Environmental Practices and Polices, which then form a overall grade. More detailed information about the grading criteria can be found online at: www.skiareacitizens.com.

The Alliance is happy to report that the media release for this year's report card generated media attention in hundreds of outlets throughout the country. An AP article, first published by the Reno Gazette Journal, subsequently showed up in papers as large as the LA Times and as far away as Kentucky. Alliance staffer Patricia Hickson was interviewed on the morning report for Capitol Public Radio and for Dave Egbert's nationally broadcast Living Green Radio.

**2009/2010 Ski Area Environmental Scorecard Grades
For California & Nevada Ski Resort**

Resort Name	2009/2010 Overall Grade	Resort Name	2009/2010 Overall Grade
Squaw Valley USA	A	Mt. Shasta Board and Ski Park	B
Alpine Meadows	A	Snow Summit Mountain Resort	C
Homewood Mountain Resort	A	Northstar-at-Tahoe	C
Sugar Bowl Ski Resort	A	Bear Mountain Resort	C
Boreal Mountain Resort	B	Dodge Ridge	C
Kirkwood Mountain Resort	B	Sierra Summit Mountain Resort	C
Mammoth Mountain Ski Area	B	Snow Valley Mountain Resort	C

To view each resort's score and to see details on resort performance in each of the four categories, visit: www.skiareacitizens.com

New Sierra Legal Service Committee Forms

Sitting in the Foothill Conservancy's office in Pioneer with local leaders Katherine Evatt, Christopher Wright and Tom Infusino, the need for more legal support for conservation groups in the region was impressed upon Joan Clayburgh, Sierra Nevada Alliance Director. Numerous bad developments, expensive and unnecessary dam expansions, horrendous timber harvesting plans and other projects are proposed in the region that don't make any sense. More importantly, many projects also violate the environmental laws of the state.

However, if you are an all volunteer group in Round Valley, Midpines, or other rural Sierra communities— how do you know what the laws are and if someone is violating them? How do you find an experienced environmental attorney to help you - because most likely the environmental attorneys are not living in Round Valley? How do you even approach an experienced attorney with the right information to convince them to take your case? And the age old question, how do you afford the perhaps many thousands of dollars necessary to litigate to enforce the law?

Foothill Conservancy has figured out many of those answers, but they wanted the Alliance to help other groups so they would not have to reinvent the wheel. So the Alliance agreed

to form a committee of experienced environmental attorneys to discuss how best to connect our conservation network to expert assistance, what trainings to hold, and what models for funding this critical work might be available.

Now the Alliance has a Sierra Legal Service Committee, made up of over 12 experienced environmental attorneys from around the state of California. Former Alliance Board President Jan Chatten-Brown has agreed to chair the Committee. Together, members of the Committee are coming up with ways to improve environmental legal service in the Sierra.

Collaboration and strategies that avoid the courts are paramount, and the Alliance continues to help groups protect and steward their resources without litigation. In fact, securing legal services during the administrative process on a project is often the best way to reduce the likelihood of needing to litigate, while at the same time assuring that there will be a good administrative record if litigation is required. We hope improved legal support will help stop bad projects and decisions that violate the law and destroy Sierra lands, water, wildlife and communities, and help us all better protect the Sierra's special places.

New Faces at the Alliance



Rich McIntyre, Regional Climate Change Campaigns Director

Rich has been working in conservation and electoral politics for over 25 years. He founded the applied science of stream restoration in 1979 and completed over 140 national projects.

In the 90's, as NW Director for American Land Conservancy he was front and center in the Klamath basin water wars, developing the largest delta restoration project in the Northwest, relocating 2.5 miles of river and while concurrently securing easements on 8,000 acres that are now part of Upper Klamath National Wildlife Refuge. In 2006, Rich developed a ground breaking coalition of conservative agricultural-water groups and environmental interests in Idaho, and then directed The Wood River Legacy Project to win the first ever unanimous vote by the Idaho Legislature on an environmental bill. Rich has also run a US Senate campaign and worked on several Presidential campaigns.

Kara Ramos, Office Manager

Kara graduated from Hawaii Pacific University with an M.A. in Sustainable Development. While in Hawaii, Kara also completed her Master's Thesis on monitoring energy emissions for the Hawaii Loa campus, which is becoming LEED Certified Silver.



Katie Scott, Development Program Associate

As a professional whitewater kayaker Katie was inspired by the tragic story of Hetch- Hetchy. She and her two best friends produced the award winning film, *The Last Descent*, where they documented and kayaked some of the world's most precious rivers slated for large scale hydropower projects. After marketing the film and attending college in Sacramento, Katie is excited to be working to help protect the Sierra.



Nick Santos, AmeriCorps Member and Program Assistant, Regional Climate Program

Prior to joining AmeriCorps, Nick worked in Washington, DC as a policy fellow for 1Sky, a national campaign to enact federal climate change legislation. A graduate of UC Davis, Nick studied environmental policy analysis and geographic information systems.



Reyna Yagi, AmeriCorps Member and Program Assistant, Sierra Sustainable Communities Program

Reyna comes to the Alliance from UC Davis, where she graduated with a degree in Environmental Policy Analysis and Planning, specializing in water policy. Originally a Bay Area native, Reyna has internship experiences at the Planning and Conservation League and with the Tahoe Environmental Research Center.



Sierra Friendly Yard and Garden Program Expands Through the Sierra

By Dan Keenan

The Alliance is expanding its Sierra Nevada Yard & Garden program to educate and assist Sierra homeowners in creating sustainable landscapes that flourish and revitalize neighborhoods, while softening the impacts of development on Sierra watersheds. Working with conservation partners around the region the Alliance is increasing home consultation programs, creating demonstration gardens and launching a new pilot to test a neighborhood-scaled approach.

Last year, the Alliance published the Sierra Nevada Yard & Garden, a homeowner's guide to Sierra Friendly landscaping. The guide was the result of a collaborative effort among experts to create an innovative and one-stop shopping resource for Sierra Friendly landscaping tips. Included in the guide is a step-wise process with in-depth information on topics such as native plants, defensible space, wildlife and water.

According to one user, "I like the entire book for ideas. It's easy to follow and interesting in its novel approach to gardening."

The guide has been acclaimed by homeowners and professionals alike, but the Alliance hasn't stopped there!

The Alliance is supporting our nonprofit partners that have launched new Sierra Nevada Yard & Garden Home Consultation Programs in four communities. These programs provide residents with workshops and personal home consultations. Each consultation gives the homeowner an individual site assessment, local resource packet and a developed site plan with Sierra Friendly landscaping recommendations.

In order to demonstrate the Sierra Friendly practices in living color, the Alliance and its partners recently completed four Sierra Nevada Yard & Garden demonstration sites in highly visible locations around the Sierra. Each site showcases sustainable landscaping through hands-on exhibits and public tours.

The demonstration sites are located at:

- Caroline's Coffee Shop in Grass Valley, by Wolf Creek Community Alliance
- Sierra College in Truckee, by Truckee River Watershed Council

- Sierra Nevada Conservancy in Auburn, by Upper Merced River Watershed Council
- South Tahoe Women's Center, by Sierra Nevada Alliance

According to Liana Lopez, demonstration site project manager for the Upper Merced River Watershed Council, "The attendees were very excited about the project and requested more copies

of the brochures to share with key members of the community. After asking questions about the project, they immediately expressed ideas of how these techniques could be implemented on their own properties."

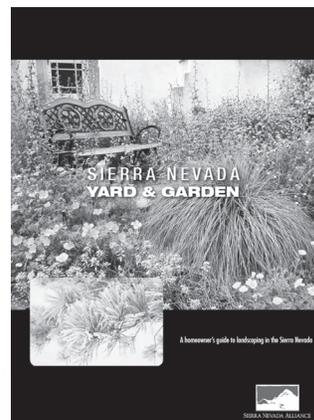
Most recently, the Alliance embarked on a new model project to test using a neighborhood-scaled approach to expanding Sierra Friendly practices. The Truckee pilot project will address excessive sediment buildup in the Middle Truckee River, which has impaired fish habitat, particularly that of the threatened Lahontan Cutthroat Trout.

Design and construction of sustainable landscapes in the town of Truckee will reduce sedimentation of the river, revitalize neighborhoods with lush yards and gardens, and meet all the other wonderful benefits of a Sierra Friendly Yard & Garden.

Stay tuned for more on this new project !



Karin Kaufman, a landscape architect in Grass Valley, works with a homeowner to create a Sierra Friendly yard. Wildflowers Forever coordinates the Grass Valley program.



"The real value of this guide is its ongoing use as a resource for residents in the Sierra. The techniques and methods described in these pages demonstrates simple, straightforward ways to implement good stewardship of California's watershed."

- Jim Branham,
Executive Officer
Sierra Nevada Conservancy

For more information on the guide and how to order, go to:
<http://www.sierranevadaalliance.org/publications/SNLG/>

New Strategic Plan Launches Alliance: continued from page 1

members. We will keep our members actively engaged in shaping our work while we continue to provide cutting edge information, training, and resources. We will continue holding our Annual Conference and leading the Sierra Nevada AmeriCorps Partnership.

A new program area is our Sierra Sustainable Communities program. This program expands on the success of our past watershed program. This program will engage and support efforts to adopt exemplary local sustainable community actions in each of the seven Sierra regions. Exemplary community actions balance social, economic and environmental issues to create vibrant local communities providing a high quality of life for their residents and visitors while protecting and stewarding wildlands and natural resources for future generations.

These actions address and integrate multiple issues such as renewable energy, water and air quality, walkable/ bikeable towns, alternative transportation, living with wildlife, habitat protection and restoration, greenhouse gas emission

reduction, sustainable jobs, fire protection, and local food production.

Another program is our Sierra Regional Climate Program. This expands on our past land use and water programs. In the next five years the Alliance will engage and support regional efforts to adopt exemplary sustainable regional plans in each of the seven Sierra regions.



The Alliance's programs protect and restore Sierra wildlands like Picture Peak, seen here.

Exemplary sustainable regional plans work to protect and restore Sierra waters, lands, wildlife and rural communities and incorporate climate change adaptation

principles and/or will be consistent with or exceed the most aggressive statewide or national GHG emission reduction legislation. Regional plans address a geography that goes beyond a single town or one community. Examples of these plans are County General Plans, Integrated Regional Water Management Plans, and Climate Action Plans.

And of course no programs can occur without having a Sustainable Organization. We are committed to attracting and maintaining the staff, funding and internal capacity to achieve the Strategic Plan goals.

So the board and staff of the Alliance are excited to be launching into this new era recognizing our strength is our membership, our value is in working in diverse partnerships to establish cutting edge models, and true protection and stewardship of the Sierra requires local, regional and state level action. The Alliance is committed to the future of the Sierra and we look forward to working with many others to keep light in the range.

Photo by Tim Palmer

Model SNC Climate Plan: continued from page 1

Thanks to the Alliance's efforts and the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Board and Staff's leadership and vision, this new plan will provide a forum for regional action on climate change, enabling the Sierra to reduce emissions and ensure the resilience of our communities and natural resources. Important actions from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Climate Action Plan include:

- Inclusion of a wildlife strategy to create or preserve contiguous habitat corridors.
- Creation of a Sierra Nevada Climate Action Team.
- Identification of short and mid-term goals to address key regional issues including fire, forestry, watersheds, energy, and wildlife as they relate to climate change.
- Addition of a Climate Change Coordinator to Sierra Nevada Conservancy staff to oversee the implementation of the plan and coordinate with the Climate Action Team and other partners.
- A process for an annual review and a bi-annual update of the plan.
- Recognition of the need to address other important climate change issues such as community quality of life.
- Identification of potential regional and local partners and points of collaboration.
- Assistance from the SNC to identify funding to achieve the Plan.

In order to review the entire Sierra Nevada Conservancy Climate Action Plan or get involved in the Conservancy's climate change activities, check out the Conservancy's dedicated website: http://www.sierranevadaconservancy.ca.gov/climate_change.html

This, however, is not the end of the story. The Alliance is also committed to assisting and supporting the successful implementation of the plan including helping develop a Climate Action Team and assisting Conservancy staff and partners to achieve the plan's short and long term goals.

Stay tuned for more developments!

Member Group Spotlight: Foothill Conservancy

By Rich McIntyre

The Foothill Conservancy, based out of Pine Grove, California, is one of the original member groups of the Sierra Nevada Alliance, and has been one of our most supportive member organizations. Since its inception in 1989, the Foothill Conservancy has played a key and precedent-setting role in protecting the “special places” of Amador and Calaveras Counties.

The group embraces a quote from Margaret Mead that sums up their approach to problem solving: “Never doubt that a small group of dedicated people can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” Their record of accomplishment demonstrates how the organization has embraced that message and made it their own.

Their work covers many important issues, and in many ways mirrors the work of the Alliance. By introducing Smart Growth concepts, promoting land use and development principles in Amador and Calaveras Counties, and empowering local residents, they have helped shape the way local development occurs.

They set state general plan precedent by joining with residents and the City of Plymouth in Families Unafraid to Uphold Rural El Dorado v County of El Dorado, which stopped a destructive subdivision project in south El Dorado County. But the work they may be most famous for, and which holds importance for everyone who appreciates free-flowing rivers, is their work on the Mokelumne River.

Foothill Conservancy Executive Director Chris Wright views the river as “the lifeblood of the community” – a perspective most citizens of the two-county area heartily endorse. The Conservancy’s work underlines the importance of that river to the citizens of their adjacent counties, and to the people of California.



Foothill Conservancy champions Wild & Scenic River designation for the Mokelumne River.

Photo by Katherine Evatt

The Foothill Conservancy successfully protected more than nine miles of the North Fork of the Mokelumne by stopping the proposed Devil’s Nose Dam Project in 1995. In 2000 the Conservancy helped secure a national precedent-setting settlement in the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission relicensing of PG&E’s Mokelumne River hydroelectric project, which led to the breaching, dismantling or removal of three dams on tributaries to the North Fork and better stream flows for fish, wildlife and recreation. The group also played a critical role in securing public access to the Middle Bar reach of the Mokelumne, which had been closed to the public for more than 40 years.

Most recently, the Foothill Conservancy has been at the forefront of the fight to stop the proposed expansion of Pardee Reservoir by the East Bay Municipal Utility District, which would inundate (as in “drown”) critical habitat, historical resources, and famous recreation spots.

It is not surprising that the Foothill Conservancy also leads the charge for National Wild and Scenic Designation for the 37 miles of the North Fork and main Mokelumne River from Salt Springs Dam to Pardee Reservoir. The organization continues to work for restoration of historic salmon and steelhead runs on the river and tributaries, as well as protection of its native rainbow trout fishery and foothill yellow-legged frogs.

The next time you float, fish or hike the Mokelumne River, remember and support the folks who make it possible!

Web: www.foothillconservancy.org

Email: chris@foothillconservancy.org

Welcome Newest Member Group

The Lake Tahoe Water Trail Committee



Lake Tahoe offers 72 miles of shoreline with areas of welcomed public access and long stretches of private property with no public facilities.

Beginning in 2003, a dedicated group of community volunteers recognized this recreation trend and understood that residents and visitors to Lake Tahoe increasingly

seek activities that celebrate outdoor adventure and close contact with the natural beauty of the area. The Lake Tahoe Water Trail (LTWT) was born. The LTWT Committee published a trail map and trip planning guide for sale throughout the region. Today they maintain an informative web site, host group paddles, and work to advocate for non-motorized interests at Lake Tahoe.

Web: www.laketahoe-watertrail.org

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