

SIERRA NEVADA ALLIANCE SIERRA NEWS

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NOVEMBER 2008



SIERRA NEVADA ALLIANCE

CALENDAR COLUMN

For more information on the events below visit

www.sierranevadaalliance.org
or call 530. 542. 4546

~ * ~

Holiday Party

December 4, 2008
4-7 pm

South Lake Tahoe

~ * ~

4th Annual Wild & Scenic Environmental Film Festival on Tour

February 28, 2009
6-9 pm

Lake Tahoe Community College

~ * ~

16th Annual Sierra Nevada Alliance Conference

September 18-20, 2009

Kings Beach

Key Alliance Highlights from 1993 to 2008

As the Sierra Nevada Alliance celebrates our 15th Anniversary, we naturally look to the journey that brought us to this point. We looked back to all the wonderful folks who have worked so hard over the years to accomplish so much, with so little.

The Sierra Nevada Alliance was formed in 1993 by a group of committed visionaries who were spurred into action by Tom Knudson's *Sierra in Peril* series in the Sacramento Bee. The Alliance's first 15 years have been filled with challenges, accomplishments and victories. We have no doubt that we can take the lessons learned from the past as we move into our next 15 years. We've listed some of the key highlights, and for a full list of Alliance accomplishments, visit our website at www.sierranevadaalliance.org.

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Alliance Ignites New Energy Around Sierra-Friendly Landscaping

Only three months since the publication of the Sierra Nevada Alliance's new *Sierra Nevada Yard and Garden* guide, Sierra-friendly landscaping is taking root in communities around the range. Over 200 guides have already been distributed, more than 90 agency staff and community volunteers trained, and four new homeowner consultation programs started with grants to local organizations from the Alliance.

The new landscaping guide, *Sierra Nevada Yard and Garden*, is designed to help homeowners create a beautiful yard that is fire-safe and Sierra-friendly. The guide's practical tools and techniques provide strategies for reducing homeowner maintenance while enhancing the usefulness of the yard. Sierra-friendly

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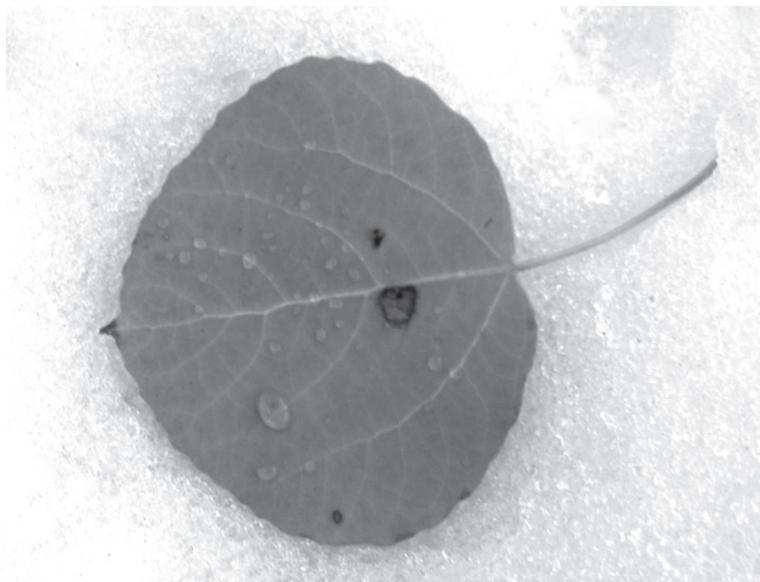


Photo by Autumn Bernstein

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SIERRA NEVADA ALLIANCE

Keeping light in the range.

Executive Director's Letter

Dear Friends,

What an exciting and interesting time this is – for the Alliance and our country.

The Alliance is celebrating our 15th Anniversary. This anniversary has provided an opportunity to celebrate many milestones and accomplishments. Foremost of these is that we now have over one hundred member groups as part of our Alliance. Our staff has grown to thirteen members working diligently in the region. We are celebrating that our land use program has created model elements of a General Plan and a network of over fifty groups working to shape better land use. Our watershed program has trained over 150 water monitors, spawned over eight community programs demonstrating how landscaping can protect the local rivers & lakes, and funded numerous watershed restoration projects. We celebrate that our Sierra Water & Climate Change program succeeded in having our principles for adaptation incorporated into a new state strategy, successfully launched over three major regional water plans that protect ecosystem health, and educated thousands on the need to address climate change in the Sierra. We are also celebrating that our Sierra Nevada AmeriCorps Partnership has trained over 50 young leaders, restored over 3000 acres, educated over 50,000 individuals, and monitored over 300 sites.

Although we celebrate our successes, we face continued alarming news on climate change impacts in the region, economic depression, and increasing population pressures. It's a perfect storm – a global crisis.

Through crisis, comes opportunity. We have an opportunity to transform our practices at the local, regional, state, national and global level toward sustainability. We are at a moment in time where we all determine if the answer is 'Drill Baby Drill' or 'Act Locally, Think Globally.' Clearly the crisis is big – and we need big change. So how big will we change?

At the Alliance, we are helping local conservation leaders guide Sierra communities. We are establishing regional efforts that coordinate, integrate and find solutions. We are teaming up with state efforts to shape sound water, energy and sustainability plans. So as we celebrate our past, I'm most grateful that our past has created the capacity to seize this opportunity for positive change. Now is not the time to doubt, but a time to lead. At the Sierra Nevada Alliance, thanks to all our supporters, we are leading! I look forward to the next 15 years and the positive changes we will then look back on and celebrate!

Joan Clayburgh, Executive Director

PERIODIC NEWSLETTER OF THE SIERRA NEVADA ALLIANCE

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Alliance Highlights: continued from page 1

June 1991: Tom Knudson's Pulitzer Prize winning series of articles entitled *Sierra in Peril* is released in the Sacramento Bee, prompting statewide attention to the often forgotten Sierra

August 1992: SIERRA NOW Conference, with over 450 people, created a visionary plan for the long-term health of the Sierra Nevada

November 1992: First Board Meeting of the Sierra Nevada Alliance to establish goals for the newly formed Alliance

Summer 1993: First Member Groups join for a total of 10-12 groups

July 1994: First Annual Conference was held outside at Mammoth Lakes

1996: Watershed Program launched to establish stewardship groups on all segments of Sierra watersheds and ensure Sierra watershed groups effectively assess, restore and protect their watersheds

May 1997: Sierra Futures Fund begins and over next five years gives \$30,000 in mini-grants to 25 groups for Sierra protection and restoration

Spring 1999: Funded and supported the West Point Renewal Project with Foothill Conservancy

October 1999: Released first major publication, *Watershed Council Toolkit*, a basic "how-to" guide for people interested in starting new groups or strengthening existing ones

December 2000: The Watershed Principles created by the Alliance and Regional Council of Rural Counties are adopted by the state

April 2002: First Ski Area Citizens Coalition Report Card released in Sierra and California with the Ski Area Citizens Coalition garnering statewide media attention. The Ski Area Environmental Scorecard is an independent review that assesses the environmental performance of ski areas

2003: Released *Troubled Waters of the Sierra* with widespread media coverage about Sierra waters requiring better protection and more investment from State and Federal Governments

2004: Started Land Use Program and hired first Land Use Coordinator to protect Sierra lands, water, wildlife and rural quality of life by shaping smart land use planning in all Sierra Nevada counties

September 2004: The Sierra Nevada Conservancy legislation passed thanks to Alliance, The Sierra Fund, Sierra Business Council, Sierra Cascade Land Trust Council and other allies!

2005: *Sierra Climate Change Toolkit* launched Water and Climate Change Campaign to alert the public and decision makers about the impacts of climate change in the Sierra. First release and 1000 copies distributed the next year

June 2005: Celebrated completion of training over 150 water quality monitors on seven watersheds in the Sierra in partnership with SYRCL

June 2005: Released *Planning for the Future* with stories appearing in over 80 newspapers, recommending four development principles to be considered for inclusion in county general plans

January 2006: Celebrated Mariposa General Plan adoption that helped save 37,000 acres of open space and included model elements. The plan was passed thanks to the teamwork of the MERG, the Alliance, Laurie Oberholtzer and Tom Infusino

March 2006: Released *State of Sierra Waters: A Sierra Nevada Watersheds Index* with simultaneous press conferences in San Francisco, Sacramento and Reno. The 170-page report painted a grim health picture of Sierra Nevada watersheds- 24 out of 25 were listed as being impacted for drinking, fishing or recreation

June 2006: Published and distributed *Saving Sierra Places: An Activists Toolkit for Winning Land Use Campaigns*

January 2007: Awarded federal support to start the Sierra Nevada AmeriCorps Partnership— placing first 27 AmeriCorps members with 19 partner groups who completed monitoring 389 sites, restored over 4,100 acres, educated 30,000 individuals, and recruited over 3,300 volunteers in the first year

September 2007: Released *Dangerous Development: Wildfire and Rural Sprawl in the Sierra Nevada* at four simultaneous news conferences. The report showed that 94% of the land slated for development in the next 20 years in the Sierra Nevada is classified as 'extreme' or 'very high' fire hazard by CalFire

August 2008: Released new resource with the Local Government Commission called *Planning for Water-Wise Development in the Sierra*. This guide presented planning strategies that promote development patterns and practices better aligned with water protection goals

August 2008: Celebrated reaching over 100 member groups as we also celebrate our 15th Anniversary!



Alliance calls attention to fire and landuse

Photo by Trish Hickson

15th Annual Alliance Conference Celebrates and Renews Efforts for the Sierra

The Sierra Nevada Alliance 15th Annual Conference was a wonderful celebration and renewal of efforts to protect the Sierra. Over 250 participants rejoiced together in how far we have come and, at the same time, the importance of continued efforts to achieve our visions for the region.

Tim Palmer's stunning photography and inspiring stories from his new book *Luminous Mountains: the Sierra Nevada of California* kicked off the event on Friday, September 12. Saturday started off with Pulitzer Prize winning reporter Tom Knudson sharing cautionary and sobering tales of climate change from around the Sierra, the focus of his latest series in the Sacramento Bee.

A panel of distinguished Sierra leaders then shared how the Sierra Now Summit came about in 1992. Caught in controversy over how to respond to Tom Knudson's Sacramento Bee series of '92 *Sierra in Peril*, Rick Luskin shared how Environment Now visionary Frank Wells,



Photo by Do Lee

Tom Knudson, Sacramento Bee Reporter

who funded the Sierra Now process, was skeptical of a conference really creating anything, but how he trusted Luskin enough to give it a go. We then heard from Tom Martens, Bill Center, Martha Davis and Patty Brissenden who shared what has happened in the intervening years and what is happening now. From the 1992 conferences numerous region-wide efforts spun off: the Sierra Nevada Alliance was spawned, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy

was eventually created, Sierra Business Council formed, Sierra Nevada Forest Protection Campaign was launched, and The Sierra Fund started up. After 1992 the Sierra no longer lacked a regional perspective or action on its behalf. But as Sierra Now board member Martin Litton warned us, "Don't be too happy", because much remains to be done.

Moving the focus from regional to local actions, the Sierra Nevada Alliance Annual Meeting showcased brief updates from over half of the Alliance's 104 member groups, demonstrating how local stewards safeguarding the Sierra's many special places continues full force. Stories from Sierra community leaders inspired everyone – from Mountain Meadows Conservancy and friends stopping Dyer Mountain Ski Resort in the northern Sierra (a new ski resort planned for an area of the Sierra destined to lose most of its snow under climate change, with its sewage treatment effluent being sprayed onto the landscape) to Tulare County Citizens for Responsible Growth's efforts now saving Yokohl Valley – a historic ranching community in the Southern Sierra foothills threatened by a proposed new development of over 10,000 new homes far from any existing infrastructure.

The Conference continues to be more than stories however, and the workshop sessions on Saturday and Sunday continued the tradition of passing on tools, strategies and tactics to make a difference. These workshops ranged from opportunities to learn from Native American Sierrans to how to restore meadows to adapt to climate change – workshops were well reviewed by all. The special strategy session was well attended and created the beginnings of a vision and action strategies for the next ten years.



Photo by Do Lee

Martin Litton

Saturday also included a celebration honoring our best Sierra heroes. Sierra Nevada Alliance founding Executive Director

Laurel Ames was honored for all her efforts founding the Alliance.

Alison Sheehy was honored for her great work in the Southern

Sierra and Central Valley. Martin Litton, renowned for his efforts saving canyons to Sequoias for over 80 years, received the Tissiack Award for being a leader who is most impressive in their actions and inspires admiration by other Sierra conservationists. Andrea Lawrence, Olympic gold-medalist turned community activist, was also celebrated for creating precedent setting law and achieving many great changes in the Eastern Sierra. These leaders' spirit and determination continues to create lasting change today. In addition, outgoing board members Terry Manning, Tim Little and Geoff McQuilkin were acknowledged for their outstanding service to the Sierra Nevada Alliance.

An additional highlight of the weekend was Key Note speaker John Muir Laws, naturalist and illustrator of the *Laws Field Guide of the Sierra Nevada*. Jack gave a very humorous and passionate address on the Sierra – including sharing stories of the Pika. Pika, a mighty mouse looking critter of the very high Sierra, stock up on flowers and vegetation all summer to survive under the



Photo by Do Lee

Laurel Ames, Founding Executive Director

Continued on page 9

Water Quality Monitoring Summit Showcases Impacts of Land Use on Water

On June 5th and 6th, the Sierra Nevada Alliance hosted a Water Quality Monitoring Summit with its partners at the Zephyr Point Presbyterian Center on the east shore of Lake Tahoe. Six watershed groups, each with unique citizen water quality monitoring projects, shared data, successes, and challenges of their projects. The groups also received expert advice and individual guidance on reporting and project management.

The Sierra Nevada Alliance provided funding and training for each group thanks to a Proposition 40 grant the Alliance secured that is administered by the State Water Resources Control Board. Each partnering group coordinates a citizen-based volunteer water quality monitoring project designed to assess the effects of common land use practices in their watershed on water quality. At the Summit groups reported on their programs.

The groups in attendance covered a broad range of Sierra watersheds, representing a variety of Sierra land uses and monitoring needs. The Big Chico Creek Watershed Alliance is tracking changes in water temperature, which are affecting the few remaining salmon populations in the Sierra. The Eastern Sierra Water Watchers, a joint program of Friends of the Inyo and Mono Lake Committee, are monitoring the effects of the diversion of Mill Creek, a major tributary to Mono Lake, into an irrigation ditch known as Wilson Creek. Wolf Creek Community Alliance is monitoring Wolf Creek for the impacts of historic mining practices, and to establish a baseline by which to measure the effects of the expected reopening of the Idaho-Maryland gold mine.

Similarly, the Upper Merced River Watershed Council is monitoring the Merced River for the effects of past and current watershed stress related to heavy recreational use in Yosemite National Park, which receives over three million visitors a year. Meanwhile, Alpine Watershed Group is monitoring legacy impacts of ranching and agriculture in the high country and the Truckee River Watershed Council is monitoring the influences of urban upland development and the effectiveness of restoration projects.

At the Summit, in addition to hearing reports from each monitoring group, Dr. Carrie Monohan, Senior River Scientist with the Natural Heritage Institute, provided tips and guidance on data management and communicating results to a broad range of audiences. It was clear from the Summit that volunteer monitoring not only provides valuable information regarding the impacts of human land uses on local watersheds, but also inspires long term stewardship of Sierra rivers, lakes and streams.

Staffing Update!

Mary Bennington Associate Director

Mary joined the Alliance in May as the new Associate Director. She supervises the Watershed and SNAP Programs and oversees the Alliance Operations. Mary has lived in and near Tahoe for nearly 27 years and she brings to the Alliance over 20 years of experience managing non-profit organizations and governmental programs. She comes to the Alliance from the Washoe Tribe after working there for 5 ½ years. Prior to the Tribe, she served as the Carson River Project Manager for The Nature Conservancy.



Mary loves to hike, bicycle, telemark ski with her husband and has a huge garden that she enjoys with her chickens. *For her complete bio visit our website.*

Max Norton Program Associate

Max is a Northern California native and a Sierra river enthusiast. In the summer of 2008, he was the Alliance's Water Policy Intern working on Integrated Regional Water Management Plans. In addition to his work with the Alliance, Max works half time with Velocity 7, an award winning consultancy providing design and marketing solutions out of Nevada City. He has a B.A. in Film Studies from Columbia, and grew up in San Francisco. Max lives in Nevada



City, where he works from home. *For his complete bio visit our website.*

Alliance Transitions

Julie Leimbach, Alliance Program Associate, left the Alliance on maternity leave and is now the proud and healthy new mother of Ian! Julie will not be returning to work with the Alliance, but will resume her work half-time as the Foothill Water Network Coordinator in 2009.

Do Lee, our SNAP Director is now splitting his time between the SNAP Program as the Director and the Land Use Program. Morgan Fessler, previously half-time Regional SNAP Coordinator is now coordinating full-time.

Congratulations!

Welcome New Member Groups!

We are thrilled to announce that the Sierra Nevada Alliance now has 104 member groups!! See our website for a full list of all of our Member Groups and their areas of interest. Our most recent new Member Groups include:

Clair Tappaan Lodge Committee
Norden, CA
odiaz@foothill.net

The Clair Tappaan Lodge Committee focuses their efforts on a wide-variety of programs that support sustainable practices and the Sierra Club's mission to "explore, enjoy and protect the wild places of the Earth." At the Lodge, they strive to increase awareness of the environment, foster a sense of community, increase the spirit of volunteerism, and nurture ecoconscious conduct.

CNPS – Alta Peak Chapter
Springville, CA
tori2toli@ocsnet.net

The California Native Plant Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to understanding and appreciation of California's native plants and how to conserve them and their natural habitats through education, science, advocacy, horticulture and land stewardship. The Alta Peak Chapter is centered on the Three Rivers - Exeter area of Tulare County.

Friends of the West Shore
Fremont, CA
grasslandladyvrn@aol.com

Friends of the West Shore is a Lake Tahoe community group established to help preserve and enhance the character, scale and historical significance of the West Shore. It is a resource to the community on an "as needed" basis and uses the collaborative efforts of the residents to make a positive impact on the West Shore neighborhoods.

Lake Spirits
West Sacramento
developingnationsllc@yahoo.com

Lake Spirits is a nonprofit indigenous organization dedicated to building a

social consciousness to restore balance of community, economy and environment. This will be promoted by utilizing best methods and spiritual practices of our early indigenous people coupled with modern technology which is in harmony with its past and responsive to meeting the needs of our current and future generations.

Save the Foothills Coalition
Tollhouse, CA
wattsvalleypreservation@gmail.com

The Save the Foothills Coalition was organized to protect the foothills of the western slope of the Sierra Nevada against environmental degradation of any kind. They are also concerned with encouraging local sustainable communities in the Sierra, with special emphasis on land-use, energy, and water issues. At this time STFC opposes the foothill routing of a huge PG&E project misnamed the Central California Clean Energy Transmission Project, or C3ETP.

Serene Lakes Property Owners' Association
Soda Springs, CA
www.slpoa.com

The Serene Lakes Property Owners' Association is a voluntary homeowners' group in Serene Lakes on Donner Summit about two miles outside of Soda Springs. This group represents over 600 families/homeowners to governmental entities and provides various activities during the year for their members and members of the public. Beginning in 2007 a major focus of their energies has been meeting the challenges of a proposed development in the recently purchased Royal Gorge.

Sierra Nevada Deep Ecology Institute
Nevada City, CA
www.sndei.org

The Deep Ecology Institute vision is to provide the general public with inspiration and information regarding the local bio-region and global environmental issues facing the 21st century. Through workshops, field trips, classes and guest

speakers they educate people of all ages, fostering a deeper connection with nature.

SC Wildlands: Science and Collaboration for Connected Wildlands
Fair Oaks, CA
www.scwildlands.org

The SC Wildlands' mission is to protect and restore systems of connected wildlands that support native wildlife and the ecosystems upon which they rely. They accomplish this with a science based collaborative approach to ensure that no species is left behind. Success is measured by how well numerous agencies are implementing their plans.

Wildflowers Forever
Grass Valley, CA
mtngypsyl@sbcglobal.net

Wildflowers Forever's long-term vision is for a public garden landscaped with native plants to be located just outside Grass Valley city limits and adjacent to a 220 acre open space preserve. This Program was conceptualized by Wildflowers Forever and will be the first venture for the group. By partnering with other well-established organizations, the program's success is ensured.

Washoe Meadows Community Group
San Jose, CA
info@washoemeadowscommunity.org

Washoe Meadows Community Group wants to restore the Upper Truckee River through the Lake Tahoe Golf Course, a state recreation area. Because of past abuses, this stretch of the river is a significant contributor of fine sediment and nutrients to Lake Tahoe, decreasing the big lake's clarity. The Washoe Meadows Community Group believes the river can be restored, the park can be preserved, and golf can continue in the state recreation area on the east side of the river.

Sierra-Friendly Landscaping: continued from page 1

landscaping also dramatically reduces pollution into local waters, works in harmony with wildlife, incorporates native and adapted plants, conserves water, and maintains healthy soil in yards and gardens.

On the Friday before the Alliance's Annual Conference, a Sierra Nevada Yard and Garden Summit brought together homeowners, master gardeners, and agency and organization staff to share tips and tools for educating communities in these conservation-oriented principles and landscaping techniques. Attendees learned the step-wise process of creating a Sierra-friendly yard and where to seek additional resources. Many participants will be taking this knowledge back to their communities and starting programs to help educate homeowners about these important strategies.

The guide, Summit, and local programs work together to give homeowners the resources to design and implement Sierra-friendly yard and gardens. With historic incidents of catastrophic wildfire blazing across the west and in much of the Sierra, these tools and techniques are increasingly important for protecting our communities. By the same measure, we can create yards that are low maintenance, beautiful, and benefit the natural landscape.

Sierra Nevada Yard and Garden is available for free on the Sierra Nevada Alliance website www.sierranevadaalliance.org. Hard copies can also be ordered online or through our office at (530-542-4546) for \$14.00 each, plus tax, shipping and handling. For more information about this program, please contact Genevieve Marsh at genevieve@sierranevadaalliance.org.

Welcome New Board Members

At the Sierra Nevada Alliance Annual Meeting our Member Groups elected four new board members, highlighted below. *For full bios visit our website.*

Laura Chamberlin

Laura is the Watersheds Program Coordinator for Friends of the Inyo, where she coordinates the citizen-based water quality monitoring program and other volunteer stewardship efforts. Laura began with Friends of the Inyo in 2007, when she served in the Sierra Nevada AmeriCorps Partnership program. Prior to the AmeriCorps program, Laura served in the Peace Corps in Niger, West Africa from 2004-2006, implementing a variety of development activities in a small village. Laura holds a B.S. in Animal Science and Minor in Wildlife Biology from the University of Rhode Island.



Terry McLaughlin

Two words best describe Terry McLaughlin: passion and teaching. For over 25 years she has taught in and about the out-of-doors. Terry taught graduate courses in environmental education at the University of Minnesota, and



co-authored a book focused on teaching in the outdoors. Currently Terry is sharing her energy and passion with the Upper Merced River Watershed Council monitoring the health of the Merced River and sparking stakeholders to action to protect and enhance the watershed health. When she's not teaching, you'll find Terry hiking and birding with her two dogs, Sera and Utah and her husband Vern.

Roger Pratt

Roger has lived in South Lake Tahoe for the past eight years and is a Financial Advisor with Edward Jones Investments. After graduating in 1969 from Long Beach State with a degree in Finance, Roger started his career first in New York on Wall Street and then as a Commercial Banker. After a long tenure at Union Bank in Southern California he successively became the President of three independent community banks specializing in viable economic strategies for small business, integrating community service into local economies. Roger is a life member of the Sierra Club, drives a hybrid and is always passionate about protecting the environment, often recommending to his clients, Socially Responsible Investments (SRI). Roger has served on a number of boards in his career. Roger is currently an officer-elect of the local Rotary Club of South Lake Tahoe and recently



began a sabbatical as an Adjunct Faculty at Lake Tahoe Community College teaching numerous courses in Finance.

Lynn Sadler

Since 1996, Lynn Sadler has been the nation's leading advocate for mountain lion conservation. An award-winning veteran of numerous campaigns, Ms. Sadler has spent the last 12 years as President and CEO of the Mountain Lion Foundation, the national wildlife protection organization dedicated to Saving America's Lion. She now begins as CEO of SC Wildlands, Science and Collaboration for Connected Wildlands, for which she is a co-founder. Previously, she managed diverse efforts ranging from President of the United States to city council candidates, and the Olympics to local charities. She serves as an officer on the Board of Directors of the Planning and Conservation League, Conservation Restoration and Renewal Team and the Sacramento Valley Conservancy. Lynn co-founded and performs around the world with the Sacramento Choral Society. Lynn graduated Pennsylvania State University and University of Missouri with degrees in journalism and political science. She shares her home with her amazing husband Steve Braford and six furlings. She continues her family's ranching business in the Midwest.



Special Thanks to our Conference Sponsors!

Our 15th Annual Conference & Anniversary Celebration would not have been possible without the generous support of the businesses and organizations listed below. Sponsorships help to cover the costs of the facility, food and other logistical costs that registration fees don't cover. Having the following business and organizations sponsor the conference ensured that a broad range of committed leaders throughout the Sierra were able to attend. Thank You!

Pacific Gas & Electric Rose Foundation for Communities and the Environment

Environment Now

Los Angeles Department of Water & Power

**Camp Lotus • Chatten-Brown & Carstens • El Dorado County
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Metropolitan Water District • Christine Rozance • Sorensen's
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**California Trout • Bob Johnston • Mono Lake Committee
Placer County Water Agency • Sierra Club Maidu Group
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Defenders of Wildlife • Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch • ESA • Friends of Hope Valley
Friends of the Inyo • Friends of the River • League to Save Lake Tahoe • MERG
MACTEC • Mountain Area Preservation League • Patty Glaser & Sam Mudie • Peaceful Valley
Farm & Garden Supply • Planning and Conservation League • River Ridge
Sierra Club San Francisco Chapter • SYRCL • Stan and Carl Weidert Biological

Big Chico Creek Watershed Alliance • Center for Sierra Nevada Conservation
Country Copy Print Shop • Donner Summit Area Preservation • Eastern Sierra Land Trust
Foothill Conservancy • Friends of the North Fork • Mountain Meadows Conservancy
SRVA Advocates for Smart Growth • Tuolumne County Land Trust

Many thanks to Brighter Planet, our carbon-neutral sponsor

Sierra Nevada Alliance Creating Model Water Policy

The Sierra Nevada Alliance Water & Climate Change Campaign has been hard at work creating new partnerships and new ways of addressing water policy to not only protect Sierra waters, but to ensure adequate water supply for everyone.

First, the Alliance helped launch two new efforts to integrate water supply, water quality and ecosystem health in large regions of the Sierra. Alliance staff helped convene and find funding to launch Integrated Regional Water Management Plans in Inyo and Mono Counties, as well as in the Kern, Kaweah, Tulare and Kings watersheds (the Southern Sierra IRWMP). Staff brought together conservation groups, water agencies, state and federal land managers, ranchers, city and county governments, and tribes to start regional water plans. Our vision continues to be collaboration to balance shared water needs and find win-win solutions. We not only recruited the first participants, we taught the steps of regional planning, how to identify resources to support their efforts, and created processes that ensure strong collaborative stakeholder participation and diverse leadership. While these plans are not regulatory, they do establish a basis for securing funding and integrating projects to meet multiple goals. It is a very solution oriented process.

Not only have staff helped spearhead new regional processes, the Alliance has been active with a coalition, including Clean Water Action, Planning and Conservation League and the Environmental Justice Coalition for Water to shape IRWMP state guidelines. The first guidelines the state issued did not adequately ensure that plans address ecosystem health and water quality as much as water supply. Thanks to more than a year of advocacy

at the administrative and legislative levels, the latest legislation guiding IRWMP funding incorporated many of the components we advocated, including stronger and more diverse leadership in the IRWM planning process.

But regional water planning alone is not enough. The State is working at a legislative and administrative level to create a State Water Plan, a Climate Change Scoping Plan to address emission reduction, and a Climate Adaptation Strategy. All too often in the past Sierra interests have not been involved in shaping these plans and ensuring Sierra resource protection and investment are adequately included. Emphasis on water policy below dams has been the priority, with no concern about headwater restoration or ecosystem protections. This last quarter the Alliance mobilized our broad network of Sierra interests to submit comments on each plan to better protect and restore the Sierra.

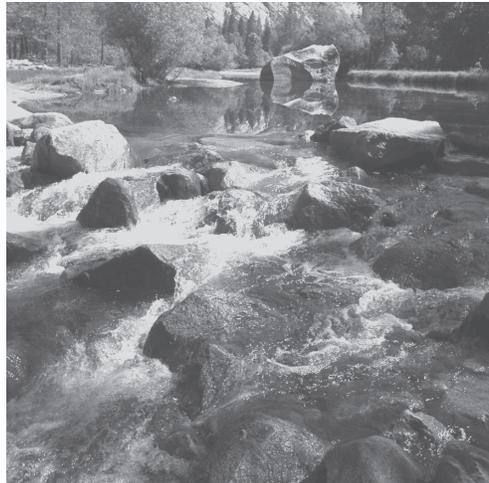


Photo by Do Lee

Thanks to our participation, things are changing. The state Climate Adaptation Strategy recently adopted draft principles for their strategy – after the Alliance raised this suggestion and provided sample principles from our Sierra Water & Climate Change Toolkit. These state principles incorporate the Alliance's suggested principles.

In summary, the Alliance is determined that water policies and plans address climate change, ensure ecosystem health is as valued as much as water supply and water quality, and that Sierra headwaters are protected and provided funding on a par with other regions in the state. Our continued diligence to train local leaders, create regional plans and shape state policy is making a difference.

15th Annual Alliance Conference : continued from page 4

snow all winter. Threatened by climate change, John encouraged us all to "Vote for the Pika" and taught everyone the Pika Cheer. His stories and amazing photos not only brought to life so much of what we all love of the Sierra, it showed the importance of all our efforts to reach children and others to create more and more stewards of this stunning region. To conclude the conference, a panel of youth shared their passion and vision for the



Andrea Lawrence

Photo by Do Lee

Sierra. Christa Baker, 15 years old from Nevada City, Laura Chamberlin, a twenty something of Friends of the Inyo member, and Kara Rockett from the Sierra Nevada AmeriCorps Partnership program, shared their thoughts, dreams and actions, demonstrating that the future is now.

While we are surrounded by bad news every day of threats and problems for the Sierra and the world, the conference once again helped participants leave with hope, determination, a strong sense of Sierra community, new tools, and renewed commitment to do our best to save the Sierra. Don't miss next year's conference! Save the date for September 18-20, 2009 in North Tahoe once again.

Another successful Sierra Day at the Capitol!

On May 6th, 2008, in what's becoming an annual tradition, Sierra Nevada residents and devotees dedicated their day to spreading the word to California legislators on Sierra successes, needs, and the importance of the range to the State of California. Sierra Day at the Capitol has been jointly organized annually by the Sierra Nevada Alliance and The Sierra Fund for over four years. A group of twenty eight huddled near the Capitol in the morning for a strategy session with The Sierra Fund CEO Izzy Martin and Planning and Conservation League Legislative Director Tina Andolina. Then, splitting into pairs, everyone headed to the State Capitol with the message that what happens in the Sierra matters to all Californians. As Andolina put it, "Californians expect clean air and water. The Sierra delivers."



In past years, Sierra Day at the Capitol participants have aimed to rally legislative support for the creation and funding of a Sierra Nevada Conservancy. Thanks in part to those efforts the SNC was established by the State in January 2005. The agency's mandate calls for investment in the region's economic, social, and natural resources.

This year, thanks to the success of past efforts, Sierra Day participants were able to express their gratitude to legislators. Simultaneously, they encouraged legislators to protect the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's funding in the state budget. Armed with a Sierra-wide portfolio of worthwhile projects ready to proceed, but

for lack of funds, the citizen lobbyists stressed the Sierra's need for continued investment to address issues that include climate change, loss of habitat, water pollution, and fire safety.

Sierra Day also offered an opportunity to publicize the great projects funded by the new Conservancy through the grant program that is at the heart of its mission. In the program's inaugural year—fiscal year 2007/08—the Sierra Nevada Conservancy sent roughly \$15 million in funding out the door. Alliance conservation network organizations received 15% of this money—over \$2.7 million. Funded projects covered a very broad spectrum of environmental projects including resource mapping, meadow restorations, watershed assessments, and land acquisition. In 2008/09, the Conservancy plans to distribute another \$14 million in grants.

Following the day of meetings with legislators and legislative staff, the team adjourned to the Pyramid Alehouse to celebrate, where they were joined by Conservancy Board members, staff, and Assemblyman John Laird. The Alliance and The Sierra Fund presented awards to Natural Resources Secretary and Chair of the Conservancy Mike Chrisman, and Executive Officer Jim Branham. The awards honored their roles in making the Conservancy an undisputed positive force for the range.

Thanks are due to all Sierra Day participants and to co-sponsoring organizations: The Sierra Fund, Alpine Watershed Group, Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch, El Dorado Irrigation District, Mountain Meadows Conservancy, and the Planning and Conservation League.

Viva La SNAP!

The Sierra Nevada Alliance's 2008 Sierra Nevada AmeriCorps Partnership (SNAP) is going great. AmeriCorps members have truly taken their mantra of "Serving the Sierra" to heart. In nine short months the twenty-seven AmeriCorps members have utilized their passion, skill, and dedication to affect positive change throughout the Range of Light and build capacity at SNAP's partner organizations. By the end of September 2008, SNAP members restored 1,948 acres of habitat, conducted ecological monitoring at 348 sites, educated over 16,216 people on environmental issues, and leveraged the time and talents of 2,099 volunteers.



2008 Sierra Nevada AmeriCorps Partnership Members

Nikky Streegan from SNAP's partner site Sierra Business Council states, "Our two members have been incredible leaders over the past several weeks. I'm seeing a major benchmark for them at this point in the year as they begin to take real ownership over their work and rise to the occasion. They have both been invaluable to our organization."

As the Alliance begins to wrap up the 2008 SNAP program, we are looking forward to the 2009 program. We have begun the recruitment process to sign up next year's 27 members and are delighted in the amount of interest in the program. The Alliance is looking forward to another successful year of SNAP "serving the Sierra".

New Alliance Publications:

The Alliance has 3 new publications:

Sierra Nevada Yard & Garden: a homeowner's guide to landscaping in the Sierra

Sierra homeowners everywhere can get their landscaping, fire, water use, and gardening advice in one spot. A well designed and maintained yard helps expand living space, suits your needs, and contributes to the high quality of life found in the Sierra Nevada. No matter what goals you have for your garden – this guide shares practical, easy to follow steps, tips, and how-tos to meet your needs while being Sierra friendly.

State of Sierra Frogs and Toads: A report on the status of frogs and toads in the Sierra Nevada and California Cascade Mountains

The Report covers a number of issues including:

- The value of Sierra and Cascade frogs and toads.
- An overview of individual species experiencing declines.
- An examination of the current stressors to those populations, which includes climate change, the chytrid disease and the introduction of non-native species.
- Potential next steps to address these issues.



Photo by Ralph & Lisa Cutter

Foothill Yellow-Legged Frog

- And a long list of resources to help local citizens and decision-makers, environmental organizations and resource managers better understand the problems facing Sierra frogs and toads, their far-reaching implications and how to make a difference.

Planning for Water-Wise Development in the Sierra. A Water and Land Use Policy Guide

Poorly planned development has become a chief threat to the region's waters. This guide provides local conservation groups, local government and the public useful information about the connection between development and water – water quality, water supplies and the health of the Sierra's watersheds.

Visit our website at www.sierranevadaalliance.org/publications to download and/or order copies of these wonderful publications.

Your support truly makes a difference

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