

SIERRA NEVADA ALLIANCE SIERRA NEWS

VOLUME X, ISSUE 3

OCTOBER 2006



SIERRA NEVADA ALLIANCE

CALENDAR COLUMN

~*~

SAVE THE DATE!

Sierra Nevada Alliance 14th Annual Conference

August 3-5,
2007

~*~

Sierra Nevada Conservation Positions Apply Today!

The Sierra Nevada Alliance is searching for a Sierra Watershed Associate, a Sierra AmeriCorps Regional Coordinator and 27 Sierra AmeriCorps Members

Visit www.sierranevadaalliance.org for more information and to apply.

Controlling Pollution in the Sierra Work Under Clean Water Act Grant Wraps Up

In 2003 the Sierra Nevada Alliance received a 319h federal EPA grant from State Water Resources Control Board to control pollution entering our rivers, lakes and streams. The Alliance finished work on this grant which gave over \$250,000 to watershed groups throughout the Sierra, and in the process built their capacity and knowledge to more effectively assess, protect and restore their watersheds. All in all, the Alliance partnered with over twenty watershed groups spanning the entire Sierra.

The key to the success of the grant was offering direct organizational, technical, financial and educational assistance to local watershed groups in the Sierra. The project reduced discharges of sediment, nutrients, pathogens, and other pollutants through a range of management measures.

The Alliance from 2003-2006:

- Subcontracted out over \$250,000 to watershed groups around the Sierra.
- Provided technical and organizational assistance to 17 community demonstration nonpoint source control projects.
- Gave technical and organizational assistance to conduct six new citizen monitoring initiatives and equipped nine water monitoring programs.

Continued on page 6

Concerted Groups Shape Sierra Conservancy Strategic Plan

Passing legislation is often so celebrated that you forget that it's only 1/10 of the effort to get results on the ground. So true is the case with the Sierra Nevada Conservancy. This past year the new agency got its board appointed, hired its first staff, and set to work on their Strategic Plan – the blue print for how the agency would carry out its work. The Sierra Nevada Alliance knew this planning process was critical in ensuring the new agency truly would be set up to effectively help protect and restore the Sierra Nevada.

In July the Sierra Nevada Conservancy board adopted their new Strategic Plan and the staff of the Alliance celebrated. We celebrated not only because the Plan contained the priorities

Continued on page 7



Photo by Tim Palmer

The Alliance supported work on the Carson River watershed by the Alpine Watershed Group

IN THIS ISSUE

- 2**
Executive Director's Letter
- 3**
Land Use Toolkit
- 3**
Vote No Prop 90/
Vote Yes Prop 84
- 4**
Our Voices/Awards
- 5**
New Member Groups
- 7**
New Board Members



SIERRA NEVADA ALLIANCE

Keeping light in the range.

Executive Director's Letter

You don't read your children factoids at night and there is good reason! Stories have for centuries been our primary way of communicating. Sadly, butt numbing hearings, regulatory processes, and a good dose of academia have beaten this effective form of communication out of the hides of most conservation leaders. And our conservation movement suffers greatly from this loss of story telling. We have a hard time motivating someone to vote with us, donate, and volunteer when we don't touch their hearts first.

I remember when I first got involved in environmental issues that it was the stories of Lois Gibbs talking about rushing her daughter to the emergency room after years of toxic exposure in her neighborhood that really motivated me. It wasn't the endless facts of how Love Canal toxics caused cancer, birth defects, and other illness. It was empathizing with her story of holding her daughter down while she screamed in pain as the doctor examined her. It was a passion for making our lives better that motivated me to choose an environmental career, not a list of impressive facts.

Yet I still tend to lead off our Sierra Water and Climate Change campaign (and please join me in saying this with a nasally accent and no inflection) "25-50% of the snowpack will be gone by mid-century due to Climate Change according to leading scientists." At the Alliance we need to tell more stories.

Well thankfully, our movement has amazing story tellers who can refresh our memory about what effective communication is like. John Muir impersonator Lee Stetson and publisher Malcolm Margolin who spoke at our conference really got our blood boiling, our smiles exploding, and our laughter bubbling up. And our Sierra Nevada Alliance Conference "Our Voices our Stories, Making A Difference" conference really did touch people deeply – because we shared our stories of conservation dreams and achievements.

So as a movement we will always need to rely on science, use facts, and be 'professional.' But when we are trying to motivate people to change we need to also reach them with a good story!

Sincerely,

Joan Clayburgh, Executive Director

PERIODIC NEWSLETTER OF THE SIERRA NEVADA ALLIANCE

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

T 530.542.4546 F 530.542.4570

email: info@sierranevadaalliance.org

www.sierranevadaalliance.org

STAFF

Executive Director

Joan Clayburgh

Watersheds Program Director

Megan Suarez-Brand

Land Use Coordinator

Autumn Bernstein

Development Director

Kay Ogden

Office Manager

Kathy Haberman

Community Group Coordinator

Julie Leimbach

BOARD OFFICERS

President

Terry Manning

Vice President

Jan Chatten-Brown

Secretary

Steve Robinson,

Mountain Meadows Conservancy

Treasurer

Geoff McQuilkin, Mono Lake Committee

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kim Carr

Jenny Cooper

Tracy Grubbs

Addie Jacobson

Robert Johnston

Tim Little

Betsy Reifsnider

Christine Rozance

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



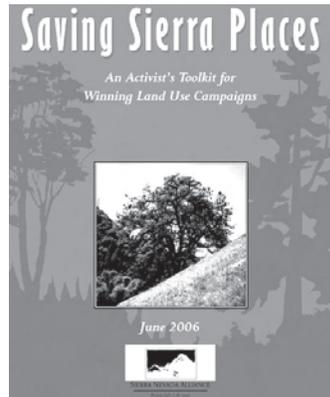
Printed on recycled paper.

Land Use Toolkit Available!

Is your county's plan for growth looking to change your rural area into sprawlville? Does it seem like there are only two people in your area raising their voice for protecting wildlands and open space in your area? Are the terms CEQA, NEPA, EIR, and zoning Greek to you?

If the answer is yes, then it is time to get some assistance by digging into your own copy of *Saving Sierra Places: An Activist's Toolkit for Winning Land Use Campaigns*

This new guide by the Sierra Nevada Alliance includes how land use decisions



are made, how to plan a successful smart growth campaign, tactics that win, common problems in land use efforts and a range of appendices to get you started.

The full guide is available for free to download on our website at: www.sierranevadaalliance.org. Or order a hard copy by contacting our office: email: info@sierranevadaalliance.org or phone: 530.542.4546. Donors and member groups get a first copy for free. \$10 each for all others and for each additional copy (includes shipping.)

No on Prop 90 Deceptive Measure a Giant Step Backwards

This November, voters in California and other western states will be asked to radically realign the current system of land use planning to favor individual property rights over planned growth. Yet most voters, and even some community leaders, don't realize it. So where are the alarm bells?

The reason is that these dangerous provisions are buried deep in a ballot initiative that is otherwise all about eminent domain reform. The initiative is Proposition 90, the so-called "Protect Our Homes" Act.

Hidden in the initiative is a poison pill that would make it virtually impossible for state and local governments to enact basic land use planning policies. The text reads: "Except when taken to protect public health and safety, "damage" to private property includes government actions that result in substantial economic loss to private property. Examples of substantial economic loss include, but are not limited to, the down zoning of private property, the elimination of any access to private property, and limitations on the use of private air space. "Government action" shall mean any statute, charter provision, ordinance, resolution, law, rule or regulation."

In other words, any time a landowner wants to do something with their land that isn't allowed by the General Plan, zoning ordinance, or any other land use policy, that landowner can file a lawsuit and force the government agency to compensate them for their perceived "damage."

For example, a developer wants to build 1000 homes on a piece of land, but the County's policies would only allow them to build 600 homes. The developer could build the 600 homes, then sue the local government for the money they would have made if they built the other 400.

Clearly, the cash-strapped local governments of the Sierra don't have the resources to pay out every landowner that wants to build a casino, resort enclave, and big-box mall on their 5-acre ranchette. Either pay out, or let developers do what they want.

At the heart of this debate is a fundamental question: should individual landowners have the right to do whatever they want regardless of impacts on their community?

For more information on Proposition 90 visit www.noprop90.com.

Yes on Prop 84 Support Sierra Conservation

Funding from park and water bonds have helped to preserve some of the Sierra's most beautiful landscapes and protect the health of our rivers and lakes. As California's population booms and more people move into the Sierra, proactively preserving the lands that are important for wildlife, watersheds, agriculture and rural economies is critical, and that's where Proposition 84 (the Clean Water and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006) comes in.

The measure would provide \$5.4 billion in funding to "ensure the availability of safe drinking water, improve local water supply reliability, strengthen flood protection, and preserve California's natural landscapes, including parks, lakes, rivers, beaches, bays, ocean and coastline." This amount includes \$54 million for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and up to \$500 million in additional Sierra funding through other sources such as the Wildlife Conservation Board.

Sierra Nevada Alliance has endorsed Proposition 84, along with many of our member groups and over 600 diverse leaders and organizations. For more information about Proposition 84 visit www.yeson84.com.

Our Voices Our Stories Making a Difference

This year's conference was rated 'the best' by many people. And while the workshops with excellent technical information, successful strategies for creating change, and leads to useful resources were as popular as ever, it was the stories that really wowed people.

World-renowned John Muir impersonator, and less renowned Mariposa County Supervisor Lee Stetson took the crowd on a ride of his life with his stories of acting around the world and his efforts to inspire others through John Muir. And HeyDay Books publisher Malcolm Margolin also got strong reviews for his stories that shared his Bronx background and relationship with Native Americans. Both have a connection to the Sierra and inspire others to connect to our region.

One of the big surprises of the conference was the passion of the youth on our Generations Making a Difference panel.



Executive Director Joan Clayburgh contemplates growing a beard, like Keynotes Malcolm Margolin and Lee Stetson

"Just a year ago, when I was 15 years old, I found the way that I could do some good. I met two of my mentors. Through this relationship, my life took a turn. I learned

out there, there is also something that is very much alive in me. The Nature is in me, and there are people who share this, and you get to see this part of yourself through their eyes. This is what nags you to save all you can." – Anabelle Schossig, Youth Track Participant Sierra Nevada Alliance Conference.

And if you missed the conference this year, there are still ways to catch some of the stories and passion of conservation through the Saving the Sierra project. This project is collecting stories for a public radio series and national hour-long documentary to shed light on the role of conservation in preserving regional heritage and character while connecting people to the land and to each other. Visit their website www.savingthesierra.org.

Awards

At the Sierra Nevada Alliance Annual Conference Dinner the following groups and individuals were recognized.

Bill Center and **Ray Griffiths** received the **Bedrock Award** for their generous years of service on the Alliance board.

Dean Malley Sun Tzu Award - Sierra and Foothill Citizens Alliance: This award goes to an organization that developed a winning strategy and exemplified that to win without fighting is best. Gary Temple and SAFCA successfully built a broad coalition and convinced the Fresno County Board of Supervisors to do a first-of-its-kind groundwater study for the Sierra foothill

portion of the County. The study found evidence that too much groundwater pumping has led to a lowering of the aquifers in several foothill areas. As a result, the county adopted more stringent water requirements for new development, as well as an ongoing monitoring program to track changes over the years and make further recommendations.

Frank Wells Last Best Place Award – John & Patty Brissenden: This award goes to leaders who have exhibited outstanding leadership in protecting the Sierra's best places. John and Patty helped found Friends of Hope Valley, the Sierra Nevada Alliance and The Sierra Fund and continue to be active supporters and counselors to all organizations. John serves on the Off Highway Vehicle Commission and the Sierra Nevada Conservancy board of directors and Patty is Chair of The Sierra Fund board of

directors. Their leadership and support are too lengthy to mention in a short paragraph.

Tissack Award – Fran Spivy-Weber: This goes to a Sierra individual leader who is most impressive in their actions and inspires admiration by other Sierra conservationists. Fran Spivy-Weber, most recently the co-director of the Mono Lake Committee, is a water guru and state legislative guru that oodles of regional Sierra groups turn to for advice. She has been a champion for Mono Lake and water conservation. She is also a senior advisor for conservation groups regarding the Sierra Nevada Conservancy.

Sierra Lighthouse Award – Sequoia Riverlands Trust: This award goes to an organization which is a bright beacon of hope in the Range of Light. May all Alliance groups one day be as accomplished, healthy, and capable. Although a relatively young organization compared to past award winners, SRT has achieved impressive accomplishments. Its collaboration with The Nature Conservancy and Preserving Wild California has conserved priceless foothill habitat in Tulare County.



Photo by Kendra Weistar-Synergia

Gary Temple accepts SAFCA's award from board member Bill Center

Welcome New Member Groups!

Alliance for a Post-Petroleum Local Economy (APPLE)

Grass Valley, CA

Web: www.apple-nc.org

Alliance for a Post-Petroleum Local Economy is a grassroots group concerned about the repercussions

of declining oil and natural gas in Nevada county. APPLE is a local forum where citizens are gathering to develop practical solutions to the challenges ahead. Our vision is a more self-reliant, sustainable local economy which is localized — the opposite of globalized: we produce locally what we consume locally.



June Lake Advocates

June Lake, CA

www.junelakeadvocates.com

June Lake Advocates ensure that the community of the June Lake Loop develops into a moderately-sized, year-round

community that preserves the existing natural environment, mountain lifestyle and ambience of the area. This will be accomplished in accordance with the wishes of the members, property owners, residents and businesses and in conformity with Mono County General Plan, June Lake Area Plan (JLAP) and past precedent in existence at the formation of the June Lake Advocates.



Lake Tahoe Bicycle Coalition

Zephyr Cove, NV

www.tahoebike.org

The Lake Tahoe Bicycle Coalition founded for the purpose of building a bicycle friendly community for residents & visitors alike. Bicycling is an environmentally responsible activity and can contribute to the long-term health and well being of people, economies and eco-systems. LTBC's mission is to promote safe and enjoyable bicycle transportation and recreation in Lake Tahoe.



Sierra Cycling Foundation

Mammoth Lakes, CA

www.sierracyclingfoundation.org

Sierra Cycling Foundation's mission is to promote cycling and improve cycling conditions in the Eastern Sierra. SCF advocates bicycle safety and education of cyclists as well as motor vehicle operators. We strongly support the "share the road" concept and continually strive to add more miles of "share the road" signs. We provide bicycle safety information and suggested routes and rides for cyclists visiting and living in the Eastern Sierra. SCF was founded in 1983 to promote bicycling racing, namely the "Whiskey Creek Stage Race". Today we support the use of



the bicycle for fitness, recreation, rehabilitation and transportation within the Eastern Sierra. SCF emphasizes bicycle-safety training for children, mandatory helmet laws, and safer road conditions by working with public works and planning departments in Inyo and Mono counties, the town of Mammoth Lakes, the city of Bishop and Caltrans, district 9.

Tahoe-Baikal Institute

S Lake Tahoe, CA

www.tahoebaikal.org

The Tahoe-Baikal Institute (TBI) is a nonprofit, public-benefit organization established in 1990 to help preserve mountain lake watersheds, including and especially, Lake Tahoe and Russia's Lake Baikal (the world's largest freshwater lake). TBI provides training, education and exchange, original research opportunities, and hands-on project experience for young people and professionals involved in efforts to protect our global environment. TBI's core program is its Summer Environmental Exchange (SEE) which now has over 250 alumni.



Controlling Pollution: continued from page 1

- Educated Sierra Nevada Watershed Groups about stakeholder based efforts to implement Total Maximum Daily Loads.
- Educated 15-21 new communities about nonpoint source pollution control and watershed management groups through “Why Local Watershed Management?” presentations

There were three types of community demonstration nonpoint source control projects: Community Restoration Demonstration Projects, a Restoration Workshop and Field Tour, and Community Creek Stewardship Days.

Community Demonstration Restoration Projects:

The Alliance subcontracted with five groups to conduct six community demonstration “restoration” projects. Each project included pre and post monitoring, and educational community outreach.

One example is the project of the Big Chico Creek Watershed Alliance, working in the foothills outside of Chico. Their project improved a dirt road to reduce sediment to their watershed. They changed an insloped road to an outsloped road and created rolling dips. This project moved water on the road to natural swales and prevented rills and gullies in the road surface. Noticeable reductions in erosion have been detected from their project monitoring, in addition to a reduction in the need for maintenance. The group has offered numerous tours of the project to their community.

Another Demonstration Project was the **Sierra Watershed Restoration Workshop and Field Tour:** which attracted 36 participants from watershed councils and agencies throughout the range. This tour was highlighted in Vol 6 of Sierra News.

“I thought the tour would primarily impart

knowledge on restoration. But it did so much more,” said Megan Suarez-Brand, Watersheds Program Director. “So many important relationships were established from the tour that continue to help watershed efforts in the Sierra. The peer support was the best part.”

Creek Stewardship Days: The Alliance



Friends of the Inyo Creek Day supported by the Sierra Nevada Alliance

worked with eleven newly emerging watershed efforts to host creek stewardship days demonstrating NPS management.

One example of the Creek Stewardship Day Support was the event sponsored by Friends of the Inyo near the Big Springs Campground. The area had experienced heavy Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) damage. Volunteers helped clean-up around three campgrounds along the Upper Owens River. These campgrounds are major sources of trash in the streams. Volunteers also fixed a broken fence to keep campers off the eroding banks. They also replaced signs and barriers at illegal off-road vehicle crossings along creeks.

“The Alliance support was great,” said Paul McFarland, Director of Friends of the Inyo. “We had the idea, we knew we could find the volunteers, - we just needed the funding and some tips to make a creekday a new tool in our organization box.”

The Sierra Nevada Alliance also provided technical and organizational assistance in conducting six citizen-monitoring initiatives. The Sierra Nevada Alliance provid-

ed monitoring equipment for nine groups, a series of trainings co-organized by SYRCL to start new monitoring programs, and on-going consulting. Each group in conducted monthly to quarterly monitoring of sites in their watersheds. Over 150 Sierra residents were trained in monitoring methods and all the new programs are continuing to monitor post grant. These

programs are producing quality data to inform state agencies and local land use managers in watershed management.

“We continue to send out water monitors every quarter now,” said Laura Lueders, Alpine Watershed Group Watershed Coordinator. “This support strengthened our knowledge of the water-

shed and our credibility to get resources to do restoration. The Alliance support was awesome.”

The Alliance also held a regional workshop and produced a guide and public presentation on the wonky topic of Total Maximum Daily Loads. This state and federal program works to limit the amount of pollution into our waterways to safe levels. In the Sierra, many pollutants are from multiple sources (called non-point source) and limiting the load of pollutant requires involvement of many landowners and residents in the Sierra. The Alliance did over fifteen community outreach events to shed light on this critical process and how to get involved to protect and restore our rivers, lakes and streams.

“I never would have imagined that \$500,000 would stretch this far around the region,” said Megan Suarez-Brand, Watersheds Program Director. “It is so exciting to see ongoing efforts that this seed money helped grow.”

Photo by Paul McFarland

Sierra Nevada Conservancy: continued from page 1

we wanted, but because our conservation group members were such a vibrant and vocal part of the process to achieve key elements being included in the Plan.

You'd think that Sierra Nevada Conservancy by virtue of its name would automatically have protection of ecosystems and wildlife as a key goal in their plan – but the first drafts of the plan issued by the staff and board mentioned everything but ecosystem and wildlife as priorities. Tourism, working landscapes, natural disaster risk, and regional economies all got their name in lights. But the actual words of ecosystem protection and wildlife protection were glaringly missing – in the beginning.

The first drafts also emphasized partnerships with local governments – but failed to emphasize partnerships with non-governmental organizations. All along the Sierra Nevada Alliance has known that

for the agency to truly do on-the-ground conservation it would need to utilize the conservation experts who have worked for generations in the Sierra. However, this recognition of the knowledge, expertise, and on-the-ground savvy of land trusts, watershed groups and other conservation groups was missing.

The Sierra Nevada Alliance turned these glaring omissions around through good old fashioned grassroots organizing. We mobilized our network of conservation partners to attend six different subregional forums by the Conservancy to comment on the draft plan. We alerted our network to send in written comments echoing the key messages of prioritizing ecosystem and wildlife health and partnerships with NGOs. We attended every meeting by the Conservancy and ensured every staff and board member of the Conservancy knew our concerns.

So of course we were not surprised when the final draft was a much stronger document that ensured ecosystem and wildlife health were priorities and that nonprofits were noted throughout the document as critical partners as well. Many of our other comments were also included.

Much thanks needs to go the board and staff of the Conservancy for providing a good process that took comments and most importantly actively listened and incorporated those comments into their Final Plan. And much thanks needs to go to our entire network of conservation groups for taking the time to participate and raising their voices together.

We are now closer to seeing the new Conservancy take action to protect and restore the Sierra's natural resources. Stay tuned as we continue to actively partner to ensure success.

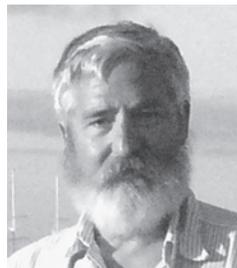
Welcome New Board Members

At the Alliance Annual Meeting our Member Groups elected three new board members, highlighted below. We also welcome Jenny Cooper and Christine Rozance to the board, who were appointed by the Board in October will be highlighted in our next newsletter.

Addie Jacobson lives outside Murphys with her husband, dogs, and banty chickens. For over ten years, Addie has helped to organize and obtain grant funding for local projects benefiting children, families and the environment. She is active in Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch, the Sierra Nevada Forest Protection Campaign, Sierra Club, the West Point CHIPS project, and Community Action Project, a participatory democracy and land-use organization in Calaveras County.



Professor Bob Johnston is professor Emeritus at UC Davis. He lives in Truckee and is father to Maddy. He has been a member of state and regional advisory committees for transportation and air quality planning agencies and a local transportation commission. He is also a Town Planning Commissioner in Truckee, CA. His current research includes: 1) Implementing a simple urban growth model in 15 California counties, including some in the Sierra Nevada, and 2) Developing a statewide urban growth model over the next 3 years.



Betsy Reifsnider was introduced to the Range of Light in 1978 when she climbed Lone Pine Peak in the Eastern Sierra. She went on to work for the Sierra Club in Los Angeles and then as a legislative deputy for environmentalist and City Council-member Ruth Galanter. Betsy was also the Associate Director of the Mono Lake Committee, the Water Conservation Manager for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's Mid-Pacific Region, and the Executive Director of Friends of the River. Betsy runs her own consulting firm in Sacramento with such diverse clients as the Sacramento Water Forum, Santa Clara University, and Catholic Diocese of Stockton's Environmental Justice Project.

