

Tehipite Topics

November 2004 ♻ Vol. 50, No. 8

www.tehipite.sierraclub.org

Paving the Way to Paradise

a letter by Mikhail Davis

to the President of The Yosemite Fund

October 18, 2004

Mr. Robert Hansen

President, The Yosemite Fund

155 Montgomery Street, Suite 1104

San Francisco, CA 94104-4105

Dear Mr. Hansen,

I write to express my concerns with recent Yosemite Fund projects that use entirely more blacktop than is desirable in a National Park. Biased by my years working alongside Yosemite climbing and conservation legend David Brower, I would like to see Yosemite Fund projects more often remove unnecessary asphalt from our natural areas, rather than add to it or re-install it.

In cases where repair of existing structures in the park need renovation, and impervious surfaces may be warranted to reduce erosion, I follow Mr. Brower's recommendation to the Park Service and the concessionaire that this be done with the utmost sensitivity to the natural environment of the park. I participated in many meetings in my years managing Mr. Brower's affairs, both with Regional Director Reynolds and the various heads of Yosemite Concession Services and its predecessor, where he reminded them that any development in the park must provide for the enjoyment of the public only "by such means as will leave it unimpaired for future generations." He

See Paving, page 4



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Chapter General Meeting

Millerton Watershed Coalition and

San Joaquin River Trail

presented by Steven Haze

Wednesday, November 10th, 2004
7:00 P.M.

Unitarian Church
4144 N. Millbrook
Fresno, California

Steven Haze, with the Sierra Foothill Conservancy, will give us a two-for-one presentation. He is involved with the Millerton Area Watershed Coalition which operates under a grant from the State of California. His second hat has to do with the San Joaquin River trail from Millerton Lake, which extends north for 75 miles over the crest of the Sierra to Devil's Postpile. Come and see how you too can become an involved member.

We enjoy dinner with our speaker at The Old Spaghetti Factory, 5:15 P.M., before our program. Everyone is invited. (Please call Richard Sloan (559) 297-2971 to reserve.)



Fresno County Measure "Z"

The Tehipite Chapter of the Sierra Club has elected not to take a position on Measure Z. We have the following concerns:

The campaign on behalf of Measure Z is a mass of often conflicting material. Other than technical provisions for administering the tax, the actual text of the measure says practically nothing as to what the money would be spent on. The summary description on the ballot is not supported by the actual text of the measure. Various governmental,

quasi-governmental, private entities, and individuals are all making different claims as to what Measure Z would do, or not do, and the various claims are in a state of flux.

Should this process result in the failure of Measure Z on November 2, we would hope that a fresh start could be made. We would like to see a new measure which would address the need for urban parks, as well as the need to provide for the animals at the Chaffee Zoo. In particular, the integrity of Roeding Park needs to be addressed, so that the voters need not feel they are sacrificing a park for the sake of the zoo, or vice versa. ☞

Merced Group

Conservation Committee and Executive Committee Meeting

Thursday, November 11th, 7:00 P.M.
345 E. 20th St., Merced (Rod Webster's home)

General Meeting

Thursday, November 18th, 7:30 P.M.
Sierra Presbyterian Church (yes, a new venue!)
3603 "M" St. (corner of "M" St. and Yosemite Avenue,
across from Merced College)

"Alaska Grizzlies"

Jim Cunningham will present slides of his up close and personal encounters with grizzlies taken during his recent trip to the 50th state.

Annual Banquet

Thursday, December 2nd
"Photography and Conservation—Personal Experiences"
presented by Stephen Johnson

Stephen Johnson "applies science to nature and creates art."
His images create "an intimacy that brings subject and viewer close in ways conventional photographs cannot."
—*Life Magazine*

Stephen will share images and reflections from his years of experience behind the camera.

His most recent projects include a soon to be published book, *On Digital Photography*, the culmination of 17 years spent merging computer technology with the artistic endeavor of photography, followed soon thereafter by *With A New Eye: The Digital National Parks Project*. Three previous books include *At Mono Lake*, *The Great Central Valley: California's Heartland*, and its tutorial companion, *Making a Digital Book*. See www.sjphoto.com.

6:00 P.M. Arrive and Visit

6:30 Sit-Down Dinner

7:30 Program

The Branding Iron Restaurant

640 W. 16th St., Merced

Tickets @ \$20.00, available until November 24th at:

- Aloha Floral, 290 Merced Mall
- Applewood Gifts, 510 W. 18th St.
- Kissin' Kouzins, 2804 N. "G" St.

OR mail payment to

Merced Sierra Club, Box 387, Merced, CA 95341

by November 20th.

Dinner entree choices include Top Sirloin, Chicken Scaloppini Marsala, or Vegetarian Option. Please specify when purchasing tickets.

Outings

None planned for November.

Merced Group

Sierra Club
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Merced, CA 95341

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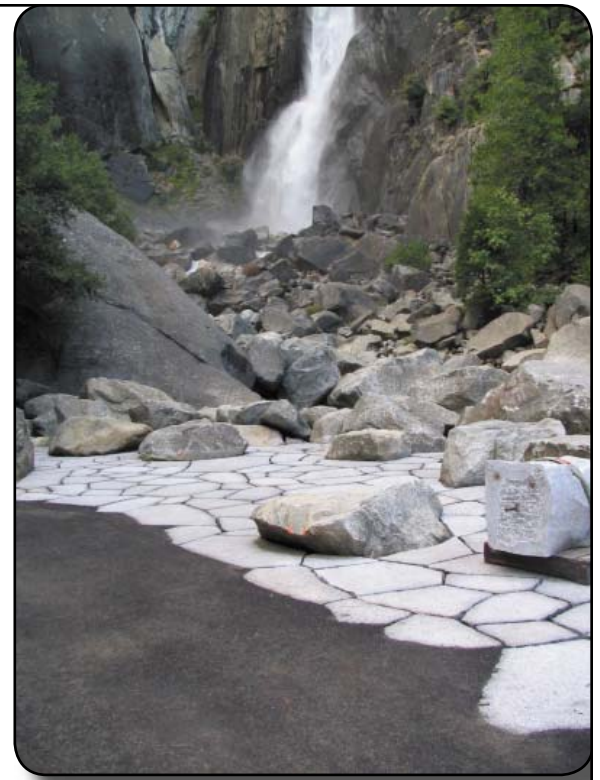
Population

Tammy Johnson(559) 665-5507

felt that the Parks should be a place to showcase the very latest in environmentally sensitive technologies, from green building designs (LEED certified), to innovative transportation planning, to non-toxic construction materials.

The current funding crisis in the National Parks makes environmental innovation and setting a good example harder than ever for the Park Service, and this is where the Yosemite Fund can help. Unfortunately, I am forced to infer by the Fund's recent decisions that you do not prioritize the natural environment for your projects in Yosemite.

In addition to upsetting many Native groups, your Yosemite Falls project shows no signs of cutting-edge environmental thinking. The good news is that gives you room for significant improvement on future projects. The bad news is that we have another asphalt encrusted section of Yosemite to look at for years to come. Blacktop is a material best left on urban basketball courts and out of our nation's most majestic National Park. In addition to being a visual eyesore that contrasts harshly with the grandeur of the surrounding terrain, the blacktop walkways leading to Yosemite Falls are introducing more petroleum products into an already threatened natural ecosystem that has seen sharp declines in sensitive amphibians in recent years. Preliminary research shows that fresh asphalt leaches many



compounds that may negatively impact water quality. All of this is just a stone's throw from the Wild and Scenic Merced River!

Still more perplexing is the use of another paving product on small sections of the Falls trail that has all the durability of hard-packed dirt. When I walked the trail several weeks ago with a group of student environmental leaders, the non-asphalt sections were already cracking and crumbling in numerous places. I appreciate that this material appears to be non-toxic, but its application is minimal and I don't think it satisfies any other performance criteria for a National Park trail. The future of National Park trails is indeed with non-asphalt surfaces, but this vision is not advanced by the crumbling surface on display at Yosemite Falls. As many other units of the National Park System (Glacier and others) are already using high performance asphalt alternatives, I cannot imagine the strange politics that led to this inferior paving product being used.

I know the Fund is already working on plans for repaving the John Muir Trail at Happy Isles and pray that you exercise more care in this project.

While laying pavement in the midst of such natural grandeur never sounds like a good idea to those mentored by David Brower, I recognize the need for erosion control in heavily trafficked areas. I am aware that much of your funding comes from local oil companies, but I would hope that this will not inhibit you from making the best choice for Yosemite's environment, which I believe would be a durable, non-petroleum product.

Yosemite Fund's goal of enhancing the National Park experience is admirable but is diminished when the projects you fund do not demonstrate the appropriate level of environmental performance. I hope to see Yosemite Fund move "beyond asphalt" in future Yosemite trail projects and we will not hesitate to criticize the Fund publicly if progress is not made in the coming months toward upgrading the environmental specifications for the John Muir Trail project.

Sincerely,

Mikhail Davis

Executive Director, The David Brower Fund

CC: Sierra Club Yosemite Committee
Sierra Club Tehipite Chapter

Mikhail Davis

*Field Director, Brower New Leaders Initiative
Earth Island Institute
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December General Meeting

Madagascar, the Eighth Continent

Presented by Helen Gigliotti

December 8, 2004 at 7:00 P.M.

The Unitarian Universalist Church, 4144 N. Millbrook, Fresno

Helen Gigliotti is a retired Professor of Biochemistry and administrator at Fresno State and an avid international traveler and photographer. Recent trips to Mongolia, Antarctica, Borneo, India, and Baja California have resulted in slideshows and/or photographic exhibits in the local community.

Join Helen on this journey to the fascinating island of Madagascar which became separated from the east coast of Africa 165 million years ago. In its isolation, Madagascar became a laboratory for evolution giving birth to wildly strange creatures and plants. As we travel from the northeastern rain forests to the southern deserts, we will visit wildlife reserves and experience the fascinating culture of the native peoples. We will enjoy several species of the precious and most ancient of all living primates, the exotic lemur. We will experience many endemic species of chameleons, frogs, birds, baobab trees and other fauna including those found in the "Spiny Desert". Despite its unfortunate past, rapidly developing ecotourism is becoming a powerful force in the preservation of Madagascar's remaining endangered species. 🌿



ECOVIEW

by *Marin Orvis*

We're overdue for light humor rather than the heavy humor dealt by the election hyperbole...right? Here goes:

Panting Dogs: Dogs in the German state of Bavaria now can wear the same traditional lederhosen as their owners. Designer Hildegard Bergbauer says her leather outfits are best suited for dachshunds, but also look good on poodles, spaniels and boxers. She also makes "dirndls for the bitches." (Cute, but do they make a size to fit my Irish Wolfhounds?)

Humdinger: A reminder of simple known facts: The amount of food a 180 lb. human must eat to proportionally match that consumed by a hummingbird is 275 lbs. a day.

Copy Cats: About four million TONS of copy paper are used annually in the U.S., or about 27 lbs. per person. The average office worker uses about 10,000 sheets per year, the equivalent of five sheets an hour.

Ways to reduce paper use include avoiding fax cover sheets, redesigning standard forms, adjusting margins and fonts sizes to reduce document length, communicating more by e-mail and using both sides of paper. (I have another one. Think about it: do you really need to make a copy?)



Organic Doritos??? Sales of organic chips, nuts and candy jumped by almost one-third last year, and Frito-Lay is now the #1 seller of organic snacks.

Not only are there organic Tostitos, but the company is working on producing organic Doritos. Nutritionists point out that, organic or not, such food won't make you any healthier.

Fade to Green: Embalming fluid, floral arrangements, metal caskets and marble headstones will be banned at Fernwood Forever, California's first organic cemetery—32 acres between San Francisco Bay and Stinson Beach. The dead will be laid to rest in shrouds or biodegradable boxes and buried in graves that mourners must dig themselves. Proceeds from each funeral will be used to restore the meadows and oak forests on the property.

Unsavory or a new Thanksgiving offering? Garlic oil deters voracious European starlings, chemists have found, raising hopes of an environmentally safe repellent against the crop-ruining bird. The introduced birds, released in New York's Central Park in the late 1800s, now number about 200 million all over North America!

Fecundity: Women who want to conceive probably should get off high protein diets, suggests a new study by the Colorado Center for Reproductive Medicine—because animal studies indicate that diets like Atkins lower fertility. In another new but unrelated study, King's College researchers in London found the leaves of the khat plant--chewed to get high in the Middle East but banned in other countries--boost the power of men's sperm. Lab tests showed that treated sperm became fertile faster and stayed fertile longer.

Built-In Cooler: Hard to believe that male King Penguins can preserve fish in their bellies for up to three weeks without digesting them—apparently to provide an emergency meal for hatching chicks. Researchers found that males secrete antibacterial chemicals that preserve food, presumably because males take the last shift to incubate eggs—and may have to feed the chicks if females are delayed from returning from foraging.

That's all folks! Need I remind you that you are what you eat? Got to admit that with every passing day, I'm looking more and more like a carrot! 🥕

Meetings

Conservation Committee - Wed., Nov. 3, 7:00 P.M.
General Meeting - Wed., Nov. 10, 7:00 P.M.
Executive Committee - Wed., Nov. 17, 7:30 P.M.
Conservation Committee - Wed., Dec. 1, 7:00 P.M.

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Trip Schedule

Outing Ratings

Distance	Elevation Gain
1) up to 6 miles	A) under 1,000 feet
2) 6 to 10 miles	B) 1,000 to 2,000 feet
3) 10 to 15 miles	C) 2,000 to 3,000 feet
4) 15 to 20 miles	D) 3,000 to 4,000 feet
5) over 20 miles	E) over 4,000 feet

Our Tehipite Chapter Outings Chair is Bruce Busch (559) 225-8935 or tehipite50@netzero.com. Please contact him with any questions concerning our outings program. Contact the trip leader directly if you are interested in one of the listed trips.

Tehipite Chapter outings are free and open to the public. All leaders are unpaid volunteers assuming responsibility for a good trip, and your cooperation is mandatory. For your safety, participation on a trip is at the sole discretion of the outings leader. Please call the leader well in advance for details, reservations, or if you plan to cancel. Outings officially start at the trailhead. Travel responsibility rests on each participant. Carpooling is encouraged, but leaders can not be responsible for the organization of carpools. The Sierra Club does not provide insurance for transportation. Drivers are normally reimbursed five cents per mile by passengers. No guns, pets, or radios are permitted on trips.

November 6th - Saturday

Day Hike (2B)
Moderate
Brewer, Tocher,
Beryl Lakes
Walt Taguchi
(559) 435-2818

November 13th - Saturday

Day Hike (2B)
Moderate
Goat Mtn.
Don Redmond
(559) 268-1537

November 20th - Saturday

Day Hike (1A) Easy
Eaton Trail, Walk at Woodward Park
Aimee Leyva (559) 438-8670 or
(559) 301-3977

November 28th - Sunday

Day Hike (2B) Moderate
Squaw Leap
Kathy Hart (559) 229-1752

December 4th - Saturday

Cross Country Skiing - Intermediate
Location to be determined, weather
and snow permitting
Steve Fretz (559) 221-6871

December 4th - Saturday

Cross Country Skiing
Beginners' Lesson
Location to be determined,
weather and snow permitting
Walt Taguchi (559) 435-2818

December 4th - Saturday

Day Hike (1A)
Yosemite Valley
Bruce Busch (559) 225-8935

December 11th - Saturday

Cross Country Skiing - Intermediate
Location to be determined,
weather and snow permitting
John Cameron (559) 896-6919

December 11th - Saturday

Day Hike
Location???
Marcia & John Rasmussen (559) 332-2419, Rasmussen@BigBaldy.com

December 18th - Saturday

Cross Country Skiing - Intermediate
Location to be determined,
weather and snow permitting
Gerald Vinnard (559) 431-5780

December 18th - Saturday

Day Hike (1A) Easy
San Joaquin River Trail from Squaw
Leap area along the river gorge to see
Indian sites and a huge tunnel
Don Redmond (559) 268-1537

December 26th - Sunday

Snowshoe
Dave Wallace (559) 284-2586

December 26th - Sunday

Day Hike (1A) Easy to Moderate
Pincushion ridge. Millerton
late recreation area. A
gentle climb up a tabletop
hill to view the lower river
canyon and Millerton Lake.
Aimee Leyva (559) 438-
8670 or 301-3977

December 29th - January 1st.

Wednesday - Saturday
Celebrate the New Year
at Mammoth Lakes and
Mountain! X-country (25
miles of groomed trails),
ski, snowboard, snowshoe.
Share cost of condo. Space
is limited.

Don Gaede (559) 434-5138



Joann, Bob, Beth, and Richard on the hike up to Panamint City
photo by Don Gaede



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TEHIPITE CHAPTER

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