

# Tehipite Topics

## Do you want to Go Green?

This issue of *Tehipite Topics*, and the next two, as well, are being e-mailed to all chapter members for whom the Tehipite Chapter has an e-mail address on file. Your other copy of this issue is a pdf attachment, which you can view using Adobe Acrobat Reader DC, a program you can download for free at [www.adobe.com/us/en/products/pdf-reader.html](http://www.adobe.com/us/en/products/pdf-reader.html). This e-mail attachment is safe to download to your computer and is coming directly from your *Topics* editor.

The electronic version of *Tehipite Topics* is in color, with full-color photographs and maps, and an evergreen highlight theme. It can easily be printed out in color.

While we are not proposing at this time to do away altogether with the printed mailed copy of the *Topics*, if you want to “go green,” literally, you will be given the opportunity this December to opt out of receiving future *Tehipite Topics* in the mail, instead getting future issues solely via e-mail.

Going green means saving trees and the water it takes to make paper, along with reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and the growth of landfills. You will also help the Tehipite Chapter reduce the volume of our print run, allowing us to redirect scarce chapter funds to (1) our legal battles to preserve our local environmental quality, (2) our chapter’s participation in environmental and progressive coalitions, (3) registration and transportation for our volunteer staff to attend statewide conferences, and (4) our meetings and annual banquet.

We are aware that not everyone has the means to receive *Tehipite Topics* in digital form, and that some of you will prefer the printed version, even as it remains just the black-and-white publication that you currently receive in the mail. You can make that choice by checking the appropriate box on the 2015 Executive Committee election ballot. But if you are willing to forego receiving a printed version in the mail in favor of getting a readable and downloadable color pdf document via an email attachment, all you need to do is check the box and provide us with your e-mail address if we do not already have it. If you



SIERRA CLUB EXCOM MEMBER AND FRESNANS AGAINST FRACKING LEADER RON MARTIN (LEFT), WITH PEACE FRESNO LEADERS CAMILLE RUSSELL AND DAN YASEEN AND MEMBERS OF THE RAGING GRANNIES, AT THE FRESNO AMTRAK STATION SATURDAY, JULY 17, WARNING RESIDENTS ABOUT THE DANGER OF OIL TRAINS PASSING THROUGH URBAN CORRIDORS. TRAINS CARRYING HEAVY TAR OIL ARE ESPECIALLY DANGEROUS BECAUSE OF HIGHLY VOLATILE DILUENTS THAT ARE MIXED INTO THE THICK TAR TO FACILITATE LOADING INTO TANK CARS. THE POSTERBOARD ON THE TABLE DISPLAYS MEMORIAL BIOGRAPHIES FOR SOME OF THE 47 PEOPLE KILLED IN THE FIRESTORM THAT INCINERATED DOWNTOWN LAC-MÉGANTIC, QUEBEC, WHERE, ON JULY 6, 2013, AN UNATTENDED OIL TRAIN ROLLED DOWN A HILL, DERAILING IN THE CENTER OF TOWN. THE FAMILIES OF THE DEAD WILL SPLIT NEARLY \$80 MILLION IN A SETTLEMENT TO COMPENSATE FOR THE DEATH OF THEIR LOVED ONES, BUT NO AMOUNT OF MONEY CAN COMPENSATE FOR THE LOSS OF A FAMILY MEMBER.

PHOTO BY BOB TURNER

request to continue receiving the issue by mail, you can still get the color electronic copy by providing us with your e-mail address on the ballot. The choice is yours.

Go green!

### see also:

Call for Candidates — ExCom Election Calendar for 2015  
Sequoia/Kings Canyon Wilderness Stewardship Plan Approved  
Book Review — The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History

on page 6  
on page 7  
on page 14



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet



### Bear in mind the consequences.

The Yellowstone grizzly bear is an irreplaceable part of America's natural heritage, a symbol of the independence that defines the American character and an icon of all that is wild and free. The Bush administration set forth a proposal that would remove federal protection for the Yellowstone grizzly bear. Help Sierra Club protect our forest friends; they prefer the woods than being on display.

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Senior	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32
Student/Limited Income	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32

Contributions, gifts and dues to Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to Sierra magazine and \$1 for your Chapter newsletters.



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# Call for Candidates

## 2015 Executive Committee Nominations

### The world's most democratic environmental organization needs you!

Yes, Tehipite Chapter members, you can run for Executive Committee and have a say in decision making in the Sierra Club as an elected Club leader. The ExCom is the administrative body of the Tehipite Chapter. We need people who can organize committees and inspire participation from our members. The Chapter always needs volunteers to handle the tasks common to all organizations.

If you have some time and would like to help this great organization, please volunteer to run for a seat on the ExCom. Each winning candidate is elected for a two year term.

The Executive Committee typically meets at 7:00 pm on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month in the UC Merced Center, across from the Fashion Fair Mall in Fresno.

You may volunteer yourself for consideration or suggest another member to the Nominating Committee (NomCom). Suggestions for nominations will be accepted until 5:00 pm Tuesday, October 13. Any submissions mailed must be received by the deadline.

Members may also run by petition. Any Chapter member proposed in writing by at least fifteen Chapter members prior to the deadline for submission of petitions, and who gives consent, shall also be included on the ballot. Petitions must be submitted to the Chapter Secretary (e-mail to [sailboard@prodigy.net](mailto:sailboard@prodigy.net)) by 5:00 pm Monday, November 2.

Please submit names to Sierra Club, P.O. Box 5396, Fresno CA 93755-5396, or e-mail names to one of our NomCom members listed below. Only those who consent to run will be on the ballot.

### Election Schedule:

August 31 ..... Notice of elections mailed/Start of nominations

October 13, 5 pm ..... Deadline to submit names to Nominating Committee for consideration

October 14 ..... Nominating Committee reports nominees to Executive Committee

November 2, 5pm ..... Deadline to submit petitions to Chapter Secretary (or ExCom designee)

November 6 ..... Deadline for candidate statements to be submitted to Election Committee

November 17 ..... List of eligible voters produced

November 23 ..... Ballots mailed out/Start of voting

December 30, 5pm ..... Close of voting

January 5 ... Ballots counted by Election Committee, meeting at 7:00 pm at the UC Merced Center

January 6/7 ..... Candidates contacted with results

January 13 ..... ExCom certifies election and welcomes new members to the ExCom

### For election nominations or information contact a member of the Nominating Committee:

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**Agriculture**

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**Membership**

open

**Publicity**

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rwebster@elite.net

**Population**

open

## Merced Group Conservation & Executive Committee Meetings

The first Wednesday of each month at 7:00 PM — at Rod Webster’s home, 345 E. 20th St., Merced  
Conservation meeting is first and can last 30-40 minutes.

Anyone with an interest in local, state, or national conservation issues is welcome to attend.

## Merced Group Monthly Meetings/Programs

The Merced Group does not hold general meetings in the months of July and August.

We will resume our monthly programs in September.

We will continue to meet on the third Thursday of each month. Meetings start at 7:00 PM and are usually over by 8:30 or so. We meet in the Fireside Room at Merced United Methodist Church, 899 Yosemite Parkway (that’s Hwy 140 to Yosemite). Other events are often going on, so park in the lot off of Cypress Avenue and use the entrance there.

We try to have a variety of programs — some more topical and informational, some more entertaining and inspirational. Speakers cannot always be confirmed in time for the *Topics* so some program info may be “TBA”. You can either phone Rod Webster at 209-723-4747 for specific months or details or send him your email at rwebster@elite.net and he will put you on the regular notification list.

## 10 Best Outings

We are looking for suggestions on your top 10 best hikes.

Please submit your best hikes, time of year, and the difficulty rating to our Outings Chair Bill Fjellbo ~ jbfjellbo@sti.net ~ 559-642-4511.

All Tehipite Chapter hikes & activities are open to the general public.

### Outing Ratings

- 1 — up to 6 miles
- 2 — 6 to 10 miles
- 3 — 10 to 15 miles
- 4 — 15 to 20 miles
- 5 — over 20 miles

### Elevation Gain

- A — under 1,000 feet
- B — 1,000 to 2,000 feet
- C — 2,000 to 3,000 feet
- D — 3,000 to 4,000 feet
- E — over 4,000 feet



# Merced Group News



MERCED GROUP CHAIR ROD WEBSTER AWARDING THIS YEAR'S KIRIHARA SCHOLARSHIPS TO UC MERCED STUDENTS ARICIA MARTINEZ AND ANDRES ESCALANTE AT THE MERCED GROUP APRIL MEETING.

## Annual Scholarships Awarded

Several years ago the Merced Group created a scholarship fund in honor of former founding members Jake and Fran Kirihara. Loyal and active Sierra Club members for decades, in addition to their environmental advocacy, they were also known in the community as committed activists for peace, equity issues, and the rights of the underrepresented.

Each year two UC Merced students are selected who have shown personal qualities of passion, commitment, and service as young environmental stewards. This year's selections were made with the help of Ranger Maynard Medefin, who staffs Yosemite's Wilderness Center on campus. Maynard also runs the Yosemite Leadership Program, which mentors selected students to work at the Wilderness Center and in the community doing outreach and education.

### **Congratulations to this year's recipients — Aricia Martinez and Andres Escalante.**

Aricia Martinez has already earned her degree in biology at UC Merced, with an emphasis in Ecology and Evolution. She is currently enrolled in a Master's Program in Ecology and Sustainability through CSU, Stanislaus. She is preparing a research proposal to study the bee populations at the UC Vernal Pools Grassland Reserve. Aricia has served as a Yosemite NP wilderness ranger since 2010 and is currently the lead ranger at the UCM Wilderness Education Center.

Andres Escalante will be a senior next year and is an Environmental Engineering major. He too is involved with the Yosemite Leadership Program and is hoping to work for the Park Service to get hands-on experience in wildlife and environmental conservation. He sees environmental conservation and preservation as a pathway to effect positive societal change. Andres believes that learning to share nature responsibly is a key to coexisting as a species and making this world a better home for humanity.

Both recipients also received Sierra Club memberships, which we hope establishes a connection that will continue throughout their lives.

Sincere thanks to those who contributed to this year's scholarship during the December fund-raising drive.

# Upcoming Tehipite Chapter Meetings

## Tehipite Chapter Conservation & Executive Committee Meetings

Second Wednesday of each month ~ Open to the Public

September 9, October 14, November 11, December 9, January 13, February 10, March 9, April 13, May 11

The Conservation Committee meets at 7 PM. The Executive Committee meets at 8 PM.

University of California Center, 550 E. Shaw Avenue, Fresno (between First and Fresno Streets)

## Tehipite Chapter General Meetings

Meetings are the third Wednesday of each month from 7 to 9 PM except in July, August, and November

**OUR GENERAL MEETINGS ARE FREE 2ND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

University of California Center, 550 E. Shaw Avenue, Fresno (between First and Fresno Street)



**Wednesday, September 16, 7:00 PM**

### Restoring Hetch Hetchy, with Tom Cotter

Tom Cotter of Restore Hetch Hetchy will speak about their mission to return the Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park to its natural splendor, while continuing to meet the water and power needs of all communities that depend on the Tuolumne River.

**Wednesday, October 21, 7:00 PM**

### Hiking in the Huayhuash of Peru, with Ingrid Carmean

Ingrid Carmean returned from a two-year service with the Peace Corps in Peru last January. While there she was able to do two treks — Santa Cruz and Huayhuash. She will give a presentation on both those treks and then a little more on her time in Peru.

**Wednesday, December 16, 7:00 PM**

### Cruising the Subantarctic Islands of New Zealand, with Helen Gigliotti

The Subantarctic Islands are a largely uninhabited circle of islands off the coast of New Zealand. Designated a World Heritage site, these islands are rich scenically and abound with endemic flora and fauna. Macquarie Island, in particular, offers a near-Antarctic experience.

**Wednesday, January 20, 7:00 PM**

Program to be announced

**Wednesday, February 17, 7:00 PM**

### Great Scenic Views of the American West: an old-fashioned Kodachrome slide show, with Bob Turner

*Tehipite Topics* editor Bob Turner will combine Kodachrome slides from his own travels in the 1970s & 80s with extraordinary images he has found on the Internet in recent years, with the aim of finding the greatest scenic viewpoints in the American West.



# Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks Projects Update

## Wilderness Stewardship Plan Approved by National Park Service

By Bob Turner

On May 27, 2015, nine days before the deadline decreed by Congress to finalize the plan, the Record of Decision for the Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks Wilderness Stewardship Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement was signed by Patty Neubacher, Acting Director of the National Park Service's Pacific West Region. Several years in the making, with input from wilderness users, other concerned citizens, and numerous scientific experts, the report details a framework of goals, methods, and actions that will be used by park management staff to protect the parks' wilderness, which comprises 97% of the total acreage of the two parks, for the next 15 to 25 years.

Anyone interested in reading parts of the planning document can view or download an electronic copy of the Record of Decision and the supporting materials by visiting the National Park Service (NPS) Planning, Environment, and Public Comment website

at [www.parkplanning.nps.gov/sekiwild](http://www.parkplanning.nps.gov/sekiwild). You can request a compact disk with the documents be mailed to you by calling Nancy Hendricks, Environmental Protection Specialist, at 559-565-3102, or by sending a written request via email to [seki\\_planning@nps.gov](mailto:seki_planning@nps.gov). Because Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks are adjacent to one another, they are administered together by one superintendent and staff.

### Sierra Club contingent meets with Parks Superintendent

Since Kings Canyon National Park lies within the region covered by the Tehipite Chapter of the Sierra Club, and Sequoia National Park is within that of the Kern/Kaweah Chapter, members from both chapters were actively involved in offering substantive comments about the various alternatives originally proposed for study and about the policies that would follow from the implementation of the preferred alternative. Several times over the past few years, Sierra Club members from both chapters, as well as from national headquarters in San Francisco, gathered together as a delegation to meet with Sequoia/Kings Canyon (SEKI) park staff and discuss the overall scope, direction, and details of the plan as it was being developed.

The most recent gathering was April 29, 2015 at Ash Mountain Park Headquarters in the offices of Park Superintendent Woody Smeck. Supt. Smeck is a genial fellow who has graciously taken a couple of hours at each



**PARKS SUPERINTENDENT WOODY SMECK (BACKGROUND CENTER) FIELDS QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SCOPE AND ALTERNATIVES OF THE SEKI WILDERNESS STEWARDSHIP PLAN AT A PUBLIC MEETING IN VISALIA IN JULY OF 2014.**

*PHOTO COURTESY NATIONAL PARK SERVICE*

of our meetings to answer our questions and address our concerns, bringing to the meetings with him other responsible staff who have been delegated to oversee both development of the Wilderness Stewardship Plan (WSP) as well as various ongoing projects in the protection of SEKI's wilderness, such as wildlife and ecosystem restoration, fire management, trail maintenance and stock use, and visitor capacity.

### Five alternatives for wilderness stewardship studied

Addressing each of these areas of focus, but with a heavy emphasis on patterns of visitor use, five alternatives were explored during the planning process, ranging from Alternative 3, which would increase trailhead quotas by 10% so that many more backpackers could enjoy the SEKI wilderness, to Alternative 5, which would have decreased quotas by as much as 30% wilderness-wide in order to enhance the quality of solitude for those lucky enough to

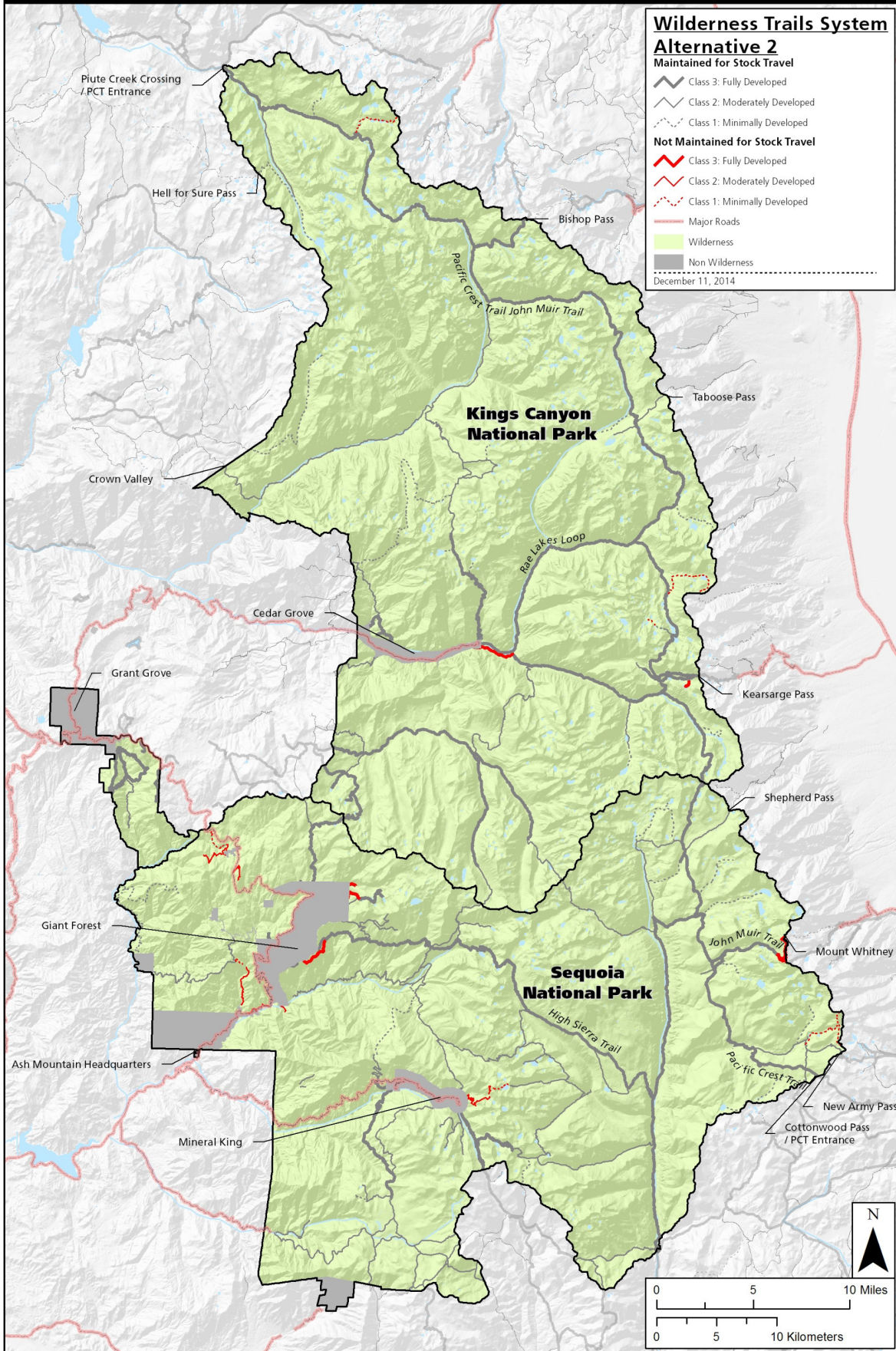
### Definition of Key Terms — Trail Classes

**Class 1:** Minimally developed. These trails provide for the highest level of on-trail challenge, the greatest opportunities for solitude, and the most self-reliant type.

**Class 2:** Moderately developed. These trails are typically more challenging to travel and provide access to less-visited areas of the park, providing opportunities for primitive recreation to people who are seeking more challenge and/or solitude.

**Class 3:** Developed. These trails require the least self-reliance, and provide opportunities for primitive recreation to people needing or seeking less challenging travel in wilderness.







get a permit. Another, Alternative 4, would have enhanced the undeveloped quality of wilderness by removing many physical improvements and drastically reducing commercial services throughout the wilderness.

Each of these three approaches would have involved a greater degree of regulation in one form or another, whether in controlling the numbers of visitors or in some other aspect of the means of enjoyment. An emphasis on solitude and a purer wilderness experience, for instance, would mean keeping camp groups apart from one another by instituting more campsite-specific restrictions, or so-called “destination quotas,” although other regulations would be loosened. Campfires would have been allowed anywhere in the wilderness except in sequoia groves under this alternative, and stock use would have been allowed throughout as well, although party sizes would be smaller than in other alternatives. Increasing visitor capacity, on the other hand, would entail allowing larger party sizes, but would restrict them to designated campsites in popular areas and shorter night limits. Campfires would be restricted to lower elevations, and more food-storage lockers and privies would have to be built. Alternative 4, emphasizing the undeveloped quality of wilderness, would have further restricted stock use across the wilderness and not allowed campfires anywhere in the wilderness.

**Sierra Club supports the NPS-adopted Alternative 2: a continuation of current visitor use capacities with site-specific adjustments based on measured impacts**

While all parties concur in a desire to keep wilderness untrammled, the Sierra Club expressed our wish that visitor enjoyment not be excessively controlled, beyond that necessary to protect the wilderness and its native ecosystems. To that end, we spoke against the additional development and regulation that would have accompanied the substantial increase in visitor capacity at the heart of Alternative 3, as well as the increased restrictions of Alternative 4 and the severe cutbacks in visitor numbers of Alternative 5. In general, we support the NPS-preferred Alternative 2 that was chosen (Alternative 1 was the status quo, with no changes in current management strategies), though we would like to see some slightly stricter standards implemented for campsite impact, trail encounters, and party size, especially parties with stock. The adopted plan, to its credit, does have the flexibility to allow for specific revisions in use patterns when impacts detrimental to either the wilderness resource or the visitor experience are observed.

Alternative 2 of the draft wilderness stewardship plan is essentially a maintaining of the status quo on the numbers of visitors allowed into the wilderness, with

site-specific management changes directed at areas requiring intervention due to measured environmental degradation over the years since the implementation of the previous plan. The Rae Lakes Basin, for instance, is heavily used because of its relatively easy approach from the eastern Sierra escarpment over Kearsarge Pass or



**THE RAE LAKES BASIN, ALONG THE JOHN MUIR TRAIL IN KINGS CANYON NATIONAL PARK, BESIDES BEING HEAVILY IMPACTED BY HUMAN USE, IS ALSO RELATIVELY CROWDED WITH CAMPERS. ACCORDING TO THE NEW WILDERNESS PLAN, IN THIS AND SEVERAL OTHER PLACES “A VARIETY OF MANAGEMENT ACTIONS COULD BE TAKEN TO REDUCE ENCOUNTER FREQUENCIES, SUCH AS REDUCING NIGHT LIMITS, REDUCING MAXIMUM PARTY SIZE, REDUCING COMMERCIAL SERVICES, LOWERING TRAILHEAD QUOTAS, OR OTHER MEASURES. THESE MEASURES WOULD IMPROVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOLITUDE BUT COULD INVOLVE TRADE-OFFS IN TERMS OF THE UNCONFINED QUALITY OF RECREATION . . . BY ADDING NEW RESTRICTIONS THAT MAY DECREASE VISITOR FREEDOM AND SPONTANEITY.” THE NEW PLAN WILL NOT LET STOCK GRAZE OR STAY OVERNIGHT IN THIS PART OF THE PARK, AND CAMPERS WILL BE ALLOWED ONLY ONE NIGHT AT ANY LOCATION ALONG THE TRAIL.**

*PHOTO BY JEFFREY PANG*

from Road's End in Kings Canyon along either branch of the Rae Lakes Loop. Camping at various places along the loop trail and at Kearsarge Lakes is currently limited to two nights, with certain spots closed to camping altogether. Under the new plan, the limit for camping in the Rae Lakes Basin will be reduced to one-night per lake, and the area could become subject to destination quotas, so that permission to camp there at all would have to be part of one's entry permit. A similar destination quota may be established for Dusy Basin, and restrictions similar to those at Rae Lakes may be instituted in Sequoia National Park for lakes on popular trails close in to the trailheads.

**Revisions in trail classifications help protect natural qualities of wilderness from excessive human impact**

Another example of a site-specific change in management practice under the adopted plan is the redesignation as a class 1 trail of the path over Lamarck Col, which is currently an unmarked cross-country route. Trails are classified from class 1, the least engineered, through the moderately-developed class 2, to class 3 trails, which are graded with stone walls, switchbacks, and wood & masonry bridges over dangerously heavy rivers. Classes 4 and 5, which may even involve asphalt paving like the trail to the foot of Lower Yosemite Fall, are not found within wilderness boundaries. Lamarck Col merited an upgrade (or downgrade, depending on your point-of-view) because its increased usage over the years has resulted in the growth of multiple worn trails through the meadows of Darwin Canyon. It was determined that the



**THE ROUGH FIRE, PHOTOGRAPHED THE NIGHT OF AUGUST 13, 2015 ACROSS THE KINGS RIVER FROM JUNCTION VIEW, BURNS UNCONTROLLABLY ON DEER RIDGE BELOW SPANISH MOUNTAIN. THE ESCARPMENT IS SO RUGGED THAT FIREFIGHTERS SOUGHT ONLY TO PREVENT THE FIRE FROM CROSSING THE RIVER INTO THE HUME LAKE DISTRICT.**



**SMOKE FROM THE ROUGH FIRE FILLS THE CANYON OF THE MIDDLE FORK OF THE KINGS RIVER ON THE MORNING OF AUGUST 13 AS THE ROUGH FIRE SPREADS INTO THE MONARCH WILDERNESS OF SIERRA NATIONAL FOREST, JUST OUTSIDE OF KINGS CANYON NATIONAL PARK. BECAUSE THE FIRE WAS SPARKED BY LIGHTNING, IT WILL BE ALLOWED TO SPREAD UNHINDERED THROUGH THE WILDERNESS, CONTAINED ONLY IF IT THREATENS OCCUPIED PORTIONS OF PARK AND FOREST ENVIRONS.**

*FIRE PHOTOS BY BOB TURNER*

area along the route would benefit from a funneling of the cross-country traffic onto a specific marked path wherever the environmental damage was most pronounced. Travel over Lamarck Col will remain for hikers only.

There are several designated unmaintained routes currently open to stock travel that will be upgraded to Class 1 or 2 trails. A number of other trails, on the other hand, once maintained but long neglected, will now be officially "abandoned." While not really representing a change in policy, these routes, the longest being the one over Cartridge Pass, will disappear from the official trail map altogether.

"Some fire and fire suppression activities can impact soils and cause contamination. In all cases, prescribed burns in the parks are designed to mimic or restore natural fire regimes; however, some areas that have undergone a prolonged absence of fire may experience unnaturally altered soil properties following prescribed fire activities. Rarely, chemical fire retardants may be used in wilderness when there is a significant threat to life or property. In all cases, planned and unplanned fire-related management activities in wilderness will follow minimum-impact guidelines and are discussed in depth in the Fire and Fuels Management Plan (2013)."

— from the May 2015 Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks Wilderness Stewardship Plan



## **SEKI's ongoing Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Project aims to save the Mountain Yellow-Legged Frog from the threat of extinction in the face of climate change and the invasion of pathogens by engineering the eradication of non-native fish from high alpine lakes and ponds**

One major ongoing habitat restoration project is the eradication of trout from lakes in which they are not native dwellers. Beginning in 1870 and possibly as early as 1850, fish were stocked in high-altitude lakes and ponds for the purpose of recreational and sport fishing. Alpine basins harbor very simple food webs due to the unweathered granite rock, sparse vegetation, and short summer growing season. These historically fishless habitats were protected from invasion by trout because of steep cascades and waterfalls leading into the upper reaches of streams. Fish in these areas have changed the aquatic systems, preying on and threatening the existence of native invertebrate and amphibian populations. In many places the fish are not healthy and remain unsuitable for their original purpose of providing for those visiting the high country, while the native frogs have disappeared altogether. The National Park Service ended fish stocking in SEKI in 1988, but the non-native fish have established self-sustaining populations in approximately 575 waterbodies and in hundreds of miles of stream.

The mountain yellow-legged frog, now gone from 92% of areas it is historically known to have inhabited in the Sierra Nevada, is currently being further stressed by the recent emergence of a highly infectious disease caused by the chytrid fungus. The depositing of air-borne contaminants into the aquatic habitat may be making the mountain yellow-legged frogs more susceptible to disease. Climate change is also being implicated in the drying up of critical breeding habitat. A few of the frog populations are showing evidence of

resistance to the disease, surviving and reproducing despite being infected. All of them are in fishless areas that had high abundance prior to infection. Eradicating fish from areas near existing mountain yellow-legged frog populations will allow these populations of frogs to expand, enhancing the chance of their having a long-term recovery from the chytrid infection.

The SEKI staff has undertaken to map all of the fish habitats in the park, choosing for non-native fish eradication only those that can be effectively maintained in that state due to their isolation from other areas with fish populations because of rugged terrain that prevents fish migration back into the subject areas. Exceptions are being made, however, for lakes that historically have been popular for recreational fishing and that harbor healthy fish populations. The rest will undergo one or another method of fish eradication based upon the results of current experimentation to determine the safest, most effective, and least damaging process to achieve that end. The Sierra Club has asked to continue being informed about and involved in evaluating the methods used to restore these sensitive habitats.

In the end, the fish eradication program is going to affect less than 20% of fishable waters in the parks. Most public comments, we were told, understood the need to deal with the precipitous decline in endangered frog species, knowing that the Park Service is not going to get rid of all non-native fish in the parks. Supt. Smeck assured us that "recreational fishing will continue to be a big part of the park experience."

Other similar tweaks to prior management practices include lowering elevations of regimes restricting campfires, freeing certain meadows from stock grazing, eliminating half of the large, fixed food-storage boxes to reduce camper concentration and impact (portable bear-proof containers are already a requirement in heavily-used areas of the park wilderness), as well as the removal of numerous, but not all, stock use structures (hitch rails, fences, and gates) and privies. Recreational campfires will be allowed up to 10,000 feet in elevation in the San Joaquin, Kern, and Kings River drainages, and up to 9,000 feet in the Kaweah and Tule River drainages.

Protection of native species, such as the Yosemite toad and mountain yellow-legged frogs, will necessitate additional restrictions on grazing in known toad and frog habitats. In order to limit encounters between humans and bighorn sheep, the plan proposes new Class 1 trails through their habitat to concentrate visitor use, making human activity more predictable for the bighorn sheep. Class 1 trails are not really "constructed," but are established with small, light-on-the-land crews. The effects on bighorn sheep of establishing these trails are expected to be short-term and negligible.

The Sierra Club also expressed disapproval of wilderness use fees for backpackers, most of whom have already paid once at the front gate to enter the park and who may have had to pay yet again for an expensive campsite in order to



secure their wilderness permit the night before so as to get an early start. While it is appropriate to institute a fee for making advance reservations online, we feel that entering the wilderness on foot ought to be free, if only to encourage the public, rich and poor alike, who share ownership of these lands (if anyone truly can be said to own them), to frequently enter them. Lately, most popular parks have instituted a fee to obtain the required permit for overnight backcountry visits, including Sequoia and Kings Canyon, which will be charging \$10 per permit plus \$5 per person in 2016 during the quota period of May 27 to September 24. The fees collected directly aid in wilderness preservation, helping, for instance, to fund the monitoring of visitor use impact.

### **Determining the appropriate and necessary level of commercial activity within the wilderness is a complex task for the National Park Service**

Much has been left unmentioned in this brief summary of a document numbering 656 pages (not including a second volume of appendices). The Sierra

### **Summit Registers**

“More than 170 summit (or peak) registers exist in these parks. They generally consist of a sealable weather-resistant container (e.g., metal, plastic, or glass) holding a small notebook in which people record dates and details of their climbs. Most registers were placed many years ago; these have served on occasion as a historical record of climbing in the Sierra Nevada, and have even aided in search and rescue efforts. The Sierra Peaks Section of the Sierra Club has inventoried and maintained these registers for many years and has worked with the Bancroft Library at University of California, Berkeley to document and preserve information from the registers.

Some summit registers have historical value; the registers are also viewed as intrusions on the undeveloped quality of wilderness by some visitors. These parks recognize that a limited number of registers is compatible with wilderness character, provided they are in appropriate locations, of appropriate size and construction, and are well maintained. It is a desired condition of this WSP/FEIS to reduce developments and installations in wilderness, therefore, these parks will work toward reducing the number of registers and will not permit placement of new registers. In the near future, the parks will pursue the development of a general agreement (e.g., Memorandum of Understanding) between the NPS and the Sierra Peaks Section of the Sierra Club, which would determine locations, maintenance standards, and other conditions under which registers could remain.”

— from the **May 2015 Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks Wilderness Stewardship Plan**

### **SEKI Anniversary Celebrations**

On Saturday, September 26, come celebrate Sequoia National Park's 125th Anniversary and Kings Canyon National Park's 75th Anniversary! Events have been planned to honor a combined two centuries of preserving and protecting giant sequoias and the wilderness of the Sierra Nevada for the benefit of the American people. Entry will be free on both the 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>.

Sequoia National Park is the nation's second national park, established on September 25, 1890. Kings Canyon National Park, established March 4, 1940, incorporated lands initially protected as General Grant National Park, also established in 1890. Of note, Kings Canyon NP was established to ensure the permanent preservation of wilderness character 25 years prior to the passing of the Wilderness Act.

Events begin at 7 am with a coffee hour at the Lodgepole Campground Amphitheater, where you have an opportunity to meet Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks Superintendent Woody Smeck and members of SEKI staff for an informal discussion of park issues and projects. The official anniversary ceremony will take place from 10 am to 12 noon at the trailhead of the walk to General Sherman Tree. There will be guest speakers and music among the trees.

Throughout the day at various locations between Grant Grove and Foothills Visitor Center, the two parks will be hosting a veritable open house, letting visitors see some of the behind-the-scenes activity that keeps the parks functioning year-round, including maintenance, resource protection, and search-and-rescue. Rangers have scheduled talks and walks, or you can just drop in at various locations to chat with a wildlife biologist or a meadow restoration ecologist, a park fireman or a mule wrangler, or one of the "Ghosts of the Giants," living history creators who will be joining us from the park's early past.

The Lodgepole Visitor Center Theater will be hosting a special anniversary display of artworks by Tehipite Chapter's own indefatigable defender of wilderness, Heather Anderson, who has been painting her visions of the High Sierra since 1991. And later, join others atop Moro rock for an enchanting sunset and rising of the full moon, or stay late to attend one of four evening programs before heading home.

Club, with our own fee-based summer outings program, is a primary stakeholder in determining the degree of limitations to be imposed upon commercial activity in the wilderness, an issue too complex to go into here. The management of natural and prescribed fires is another complex issue deserving more explanation. All fires, regardless of their initialization, have a major impact on air quality in the parks and adjoining urban areas. However, more than a century of fire suppression in the parks has disrupted natural processes, creating a situation that requires attention.

### **Summit registers — historical relics or unwanted intrusions on the wilderness scene**

Another issue which generated some minor controversy involved the widespread presence of climber registers on mountain summits. There is a fundamental opposition between their cultural and sometimes historical value and their intrusion on the undeveloped quality of the wilderness experience, though the registers, typically buried among rocks at the summit, are far less intrusive than a communication tower, which we occasionally find atop a wilderness peak in some parks.



Despite a few major interventions in the interest of impact reduction (the new and upgraded trails, for instance) and native ecological restoration (the fish eradication project), the overall approach of park staff is away from an active *management* of wilderness, promoting instead a hands-off style of wilderness *stewardship* that allows for the ongoing self-regulation of wild systems. “The Wilderness Act makes it clear that the wilderness resource itself is not to be managed. What needs to be managed is the human use of wilderness.” (from Sierra Club comments on the Draft Environmental

Statement for the SEKI Wilderness Stewardship Plan) For wilderness to truly remain wild it must be controlled by natural processes only. This is the best approach to holding onto the quality and character of untrammeled nature. The National Park Service is to be commended for taking seriously and adhering rigorously to the mandates of the Wilderness Act, which seeks to minimize the impact of humans on the wilderness, especially by way of our invasive technologies, while still allowing for and encouraging our enjoyment of these most precious wild lands.



**KINGS CANYON NATIONAL PARK HAS SOME OF THE MOST REMOTE WILDERNESS IN THE 48 STATES, AND YET TRAILRUNNER AND MOUNTAINEER LEOR PANTILAT FINDS THAT NEARLY EVERY AREA OF THE SIERRA NEVADA IS ACCESSIBLE TO HIS FAST STYLE OF TRAVEL IN A SINGLE DAY OF JOGGING AND CLIMBING INTO AND OUT OF THE WILDERNESS. THIS PHOTO FROM HIS RECENT TWO-DAY FASTPACK TRIP TO THE SUMMIT OF MT. RUSKIN (BY WAY OF GRANITE PASS, CARTRIDGE PASS, BENCH LAKE, AND PINCHOT PASS) IS OF A BEAUTIFUL LAKE NESTLED IN THE NORTH END OF WINDY RIDGE AT 10,236 ELEVATION, WITH A MAGNIFICENT VIEW OF THE CANYON OF THE MIDDLE FORK OF THE KINGS RIVER. WITH CAMPGROUNDS GENERALLY FULL AND THE PERMITTING OFFICE CLOSED UNTIL 7 AM, LEOR’S COMPLAINT ABOUT BEING UNABLE TO START AN OVERNIGHTER BEFORE SUNRISE IS A COMMON ONE. PARK STAFF SHOULD FIND A WAY TO ACCOMMODATE EARLY RISERS WHO WANT TO GET A HEAD START INTO THE WILDERNESS, SO THEY CAN TRAVERSE THE LOWER ELEVATIONS IN THE COOL MORNING AIR.**

*PHOTO BY LEOR PANTILAT, FROM HIS AUGUST 17, 2015 POST: “LAKE BASIN FASTPACK LOOP” (at [www.pantilat.wordpress.com](http://www.pantilat.wordpress.com))*



## Book Review:

# The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History

by Heather Anderson

Reading about extinctions in geological time can be boring. But this is a book about an extinction taking place right before our eyes, now! This is not new. I was telling students twenty years ago that the next species to go extinct may be us! As biologist E.O. Wilson hints, it is not just the survival of our own species that is at stake as it is the ongoing evolution of the most incredibly unique and beautiful creations known.

Earth has lived through five known prehistoric mass extinctions and has now entered a sixth biotic crisis with the Anthropocene, the present geologic epoch that began when human activities started having a significant impact on Earth's ecosystems. It is a time that most concerns us, our endangered species of plants and animals, and our diminishing natural resources of water, oil, food, clean air, and water.

Learning about the demise of Central America's golden frogs while reading her children's nature magazine, Elizabeth Kolbert felt a need to tell this story. She booked a flight to Panama to see for herself the identified cause of the golden frog's disappearance. It appeared to be the spread of a fungus that is also killing off our own Sierra mountain yellow-legged frogs. Digging deeper, she discovered that amphibians are the most endangered class of animals, with an extinction rate about 45 thousand times higher than the background rate. The "background extinction rate" is normally about one species to disappear every seven hundred years while present mass-extinction events appear to be off the charts.



**THE PANAMANIAN GOLDEN FROG BECAME VICTIM TO A CHYTRID FUNGUS IMPORTED INTO ITS NATIVE HABITAT BY HUMAN ACTIVITY. AUTHOR ELIZABETH KOLBERT BECAME AWARE OF THE PLIGHT OF THIS ONCE-PLENTIFUL SPECIES WHILE WRITING AN ARTICLE FOR *THE NEW YORKER*. REALIZING THAT SHE HAD BARELY SCRATCHED THE SURFACE OF A WIDER ISSUE, SHE BEGAN THE RESEARCH FOR *THE SIXTH EXTINCTION*, WHICH IN 2015 WAS AWARDED THE PULITZER PRIZE FOR GENERAL NON-FICTION.**



**AUTHOR ELIZABETH KOLBERT**

Before our recent Wilderness50 conference, I hadn't given much thought to the vast undersea ecosystems of the world's oceans. We know about the Great Pacific garbage patch, a gyre of microscopic insoluble chemicals and plastics, circulating through an area 700,000 km<sup>2</sup> in size (as big as Texas) or, by one estimate, 15 million km<sup>2</sup>. Floating debris frequently ends up in the stomachs of marine birds, animals, and their young. As these toxic pieces are consumed up the food chain, they cause death and hormone disruption.

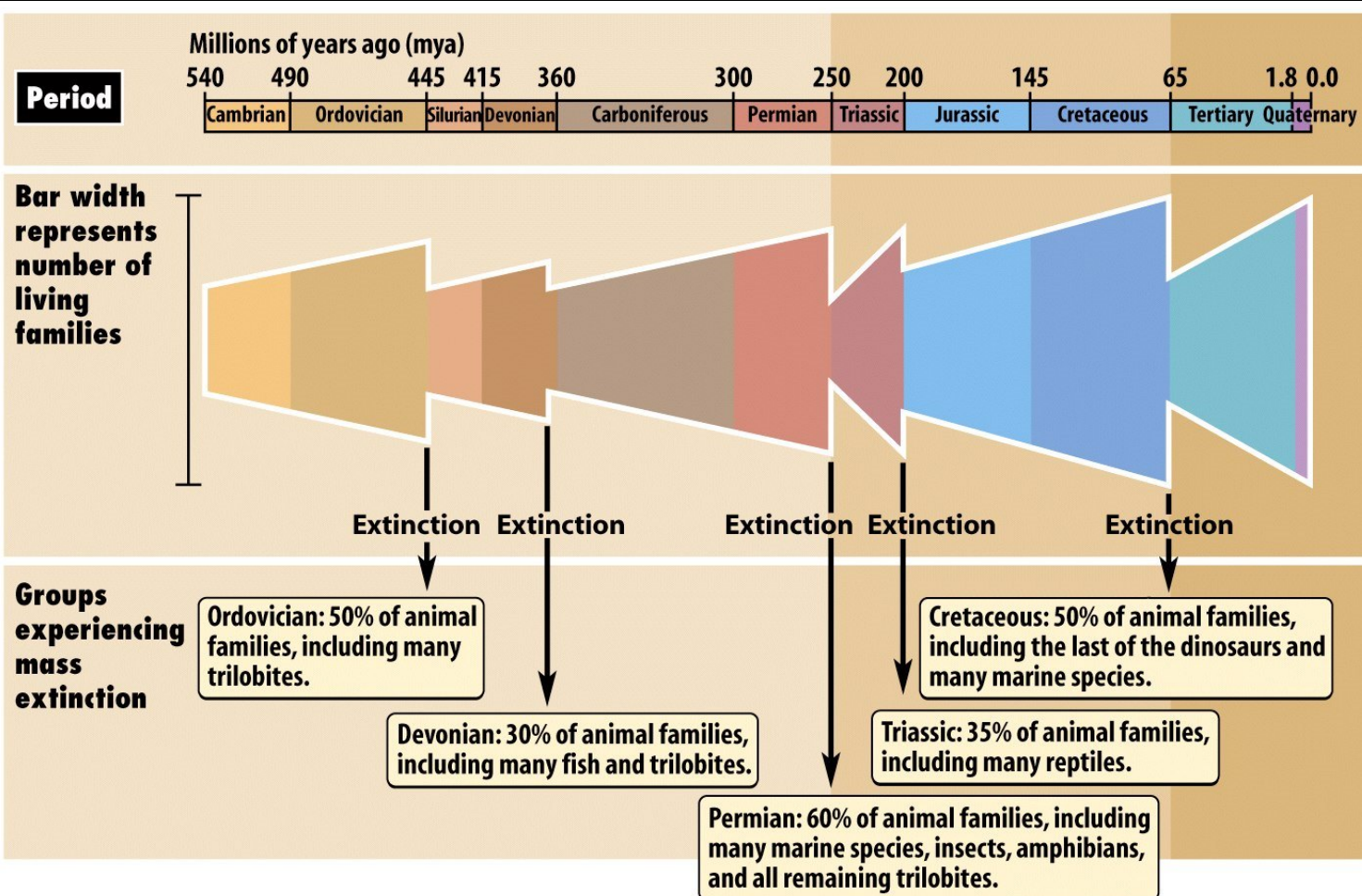
Despite being a lover of the wilderness and its wildlife, I have not thought much about oceans and our vast marine life. Until I heard oceanographer Sylvia Earle's Wilderness Conference keynote address, I had little knowledge of the world's oceans and its life forms. The coral reef ecology is expected to be one of the first ecosystems to go completely extinct, due to acidification from rising concentrations of methane and carbon dioxide. Our sequestered CO<sub>2</sub> is being massively returned into the air as we burn through coal and oil deposits.

Elizabeth Kolbert's love of nature (like that of Rachel Carson in earlier years) shines through the book. But our love of nature does not let us off the hook. Twenty years ago Bill Moyers said we may have forty years to mend our environmentally destructive ways. That leaves just twenty as we too slowly begin our turn to alternate sources of energy, conserving resources, and cleaning our air.

Kolbert's fascination with biology, her skill as a science writer, and



her eloquent and passionate voice on issues resulting from our assault on the ecosphere make this book a page-turner. A staff writer at the New Yorker, she is able to pinpoint the effects of climate change in this new Anthropocene Epoch, as it causes a sixth mass extinction that may destroy up to fifty percent of all living species on our planet within this century. We know what to do.



THIS GEOLOGICAL TIMELINE OF MASS EXTINCTION EVENTS DURING THE PHANEROZOIC EON, TAKEN FROM A POPULAR HIGH SCHOOL BIOLOGY TEXTBOOK, NEEDS TO BE UPDATED WITH AN ESTIMATE OF THE NUMBER OF ANIMAL FAMILIES THAT HAVE BEEN DRIVEN EXTINCT SINCE THE ONSET OF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AROUND 1800.

ALTHOUGH THE EARLY MIGRATION OF THE HUMAN SPECIES ACROSS THE EARTH HAS BEEN IMPLICATED IN THE DISAPPEARANCE OF PLEISTOCENE MEGAFUNA, SUCH AS THE WOOLY MAMMOTH AND THE GIANT SLOTH, THAT "QUATERNARY EXTINCTION EVENT" ALSO COINCIDED WITH THE PLANET'S ABRUPT WARMING OUT OF THE LAST GLACIATION OF THE ICE AGE, WHICH SAW THE DISAPPEARANCE OF CONTINENTAL GLACIERS FROM ALL BUT GREENLAND AND ANTARCTICA. NUMEROUS OTHER LOCAL EXTINCTION EVENTS, HOWEVER, ESPECIALLY OF ISLAND FAUNA, HAVE FOLLOWED THE ARRIVAL OR EXPANSION OF THE HUMAN POPULATION. THIS COLLECTIVE SERIES OF EXTINCTIONS, DUE TO HUMAN IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT OVER THE LAST 10,000 TO 15,000 YEARS, IS CALLED THE "HOLOCENE EXTINCTION," A CONSEQUENCE OF HUMAN OVERHUNTING, OUR INTRODUCTION OF DISEASES AND INVASIVE PREDATOR SPECIES INTO NEW ENVIRONMENTS, AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF VAST LAND AREAS FOR AGRICULTURE AND URBANISATION.

THE CURRENT MASS "ANTHROPOCENE EXTINCTION EVENT" OF THE PAST TWO CENTURIES, THE "SIXTH EXTINCTION" OF THE BOOK TITLE, IS BEING BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE WHOLESAL DESTRUCTION OF ECOSYSTEMS FOR INDUSTRIAL-SCALE FARMING, URBAN EXPANSION INTO MEGACITIES, AND HYDROPOWER DEVELOPMENT (THE LAST OF WHICH BY ITSELF IMPACTS MOST HEAVILY ON BIODIVERSITY), AS WELL AS BY OVERFISHING ACROSS ALL THE OCEANS, THE ADDITIONAL STRESS OF ANTHROPOGENIC CLIMATE WARMING UPON EVER-DIMINISHING AND FRAGMENTED NATURAL HABITATS, AND THE ALTERATION OF OCEAN CHEMISTRY FROM THE OVERLOADING OF CARBON DIOXIDE IN, AND TRANSFER OF EXCESS THERMAL ENERGY FROM, THE ATMOSPHERE. THE SCALE AND RAPIDITY OF THIS MASS EXTINCTION EVENT MAY BE UNPRECEDENTED IN GEOLOGIC TIME.

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*Tehipite Topics* is currently published four times per year. Full-color versions of *Tehipite Topics* are available on the chapter website at [www.sierraclub.org/tehipite/newsletters](http://www.sierraclub.org/tehipite/newsletters). Back issues are archived on the website beginning April 2004. Articles and photographs from Sierra Club members are always welcome. Send your contributions for the October 2015 issue by email to [robertsturner52@gmail.com](mailto:robertsturner52@gmail.com) before October 1<sup>st</sup>.

## Our New Website

**[www.tehipite.sierraclub.org](http://www.tehipite.sierraclub.org)**  
 – or –  
**[www.sierraclub.org/tehipite](http://www.sierraclub.org/tehipite)**

If you are looking right now at our digital edition, then you can click on the headline above and your computer browser will take you directly to our new Tehipite Chapter website. Here you can get up-to-date information on upcoming meetings and outings, as well as articles, downloadable fact sheets, and valuable links to other resources about many important issues of the day relating to preserving the quality of our environment and making it freely available for all to enjoy. The website has separate pages on Fracking & the Oil Industry, Land Use & Sprawl, National Forests, Water & Rivers, and Yosemite & Kings Canyon National Parks, as well as a Legislation page and another for Political Action. Merced Group has its own section, and all of the *Tehipite Topics*, dating back to April 2004, are archived for viewing and downloading. Tehipite Chapter committee chairs will be individually responsible for uploading content about the concerns of their committees. You can contact them to contribute material that would be of interest to the membership. If you find errors or have other concerns about the site, contact the webmaster, Bob Turner, at [robertsturner52@gmail.com](mailto:robertsturner52@gmail.com) or call 559-203-0714.

The screenshot shows the Tehipite Chapter website interface. At the top, it says "EXPLORE, ENJOY, AND PROTECT THE PLANET" with the Sierra Club logo. Below that is the "Tehipite Chapter" title and a navigation bar with tabs for Home, About Us, Issues, Outings, Legislation Page, Political Action, Merced Group, Newsletters, and Issues Fact Sheets. The main content area includes a mission statement, information about upcoming general meetings (Wednesday, September 16, 7:00 PM), and a call to action to support the Stop Arctic Ocean Drilling Act of 2015. There are also buttons for "Join/Donate To The Sierra Club Today!" and "Take Action".