

# Tehipite Topics

Winter 2016 – Vol. 62, No. 1

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

## Grassroots Activism for Environmental Justice in the San Joaquin Valley

by Bob Turner

The competition among California's local and regional entities for limited government funding resources often leaves small rural communities at the sidelines of the action. These communities, many of which are disadvantaged by low income and newly migrant populations, may be too small to have staff with the technical expertise to navigate through the necessary paperwork or even to know the requirements for applying to get their fair share of state allocations. Unincorporated areas also get left behind, as small, dispersed neighborhoods usually have a diminished voice in the political life of a region.

Climate Justice Leaders, a partnership between the Fresno's Leadership Counsel for Justice & Accountability and the Delano Office of the Center for Race, Poverty, and the Environment, has developed a strategy for remedying this disparity in effectiveness between disadvantaged communities and their more populated and wealthier neighbors. It is a strategy that empowers communities with knowledge, leadership, and active engagement in the administrative process of government. The results can be immediate when citizens know the correct way to present their proposals by relating the needs of their communities to the unfolding trends of the larger political story.

### **Motherhood and Climate Justice Leadership — Making Time for Both**

Recently I attended a meeting of Climate Justice

### **Banquet – Change of Date**

Our previously announced date for the annual Tehipite Chapter Potluck Banquet had to be changed. The banquet will be held on Thursday, March 31<sup>st</sup>, beginning at 6:00 PM. Details for the event are on page 3 of this issue. We hope everyone reading this will attend. Bring a friend.

Leaders at the office of the Leadership Counsel in downtown Fresno. Officers of the Leadership Counsel explained to community activists from western and southwest Fresno neighborhoods how to go about preparing arguments to present before councils, boards, and other administrative agencies. There were upwards of 25 to 30 in attendance, many of them mothers who brought children along with them. One effective means of getting such a large turnout for an early Saturday morning was to provide a room with a professional child care provider and to prepare a modest but hearty lunch of rice, beans, and homemade burritos for after the meeting.

### **Leading in a Litany of Concerns Was Our Valley Air's Lack of Quality**

The meeting began with each participant stating a major concern they have with regard to climate change and the local degradation of our environment. Many concerns had to do with the deteriorating quality of the air we breathe in the Valley. Many children and adults have developed asthma and are susceptible to the dust and chemicals that come from agricultural work. The

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*see also:*

Engaging in the Yosemite Planning Process: An Invitation to Get Involved on page 10  
Rehabilitation of the Rough Fire Burn Area by the Forest Service on page 12  
Book Review: Poison Spring 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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## Tehipite Chapter of the Sierra Club

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COME JOIN US FOR OUR  
**SIERRA CLUB TEHIPITE CHAPTER**  
**2016 ANNUAL BANQUET**



*LESSONS LEARNED ON THE JOHN MUIR TRAIL*

A VISUAL DOCUMENTARY BY ANDREW FIALA

CHAIR, DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY  
AND DIRECTOR OF THE ETHICS CENTER, CSU FRESNO

AUTHOR OF *THE PEACE OF NATURE AND THE NATURE OF PEACE*

DR. FIALA ALSO WRITES A REGULAR COLUMN ON RELIGION & ETHICS FOR THE *FRESNO BEE*.

THURSDAY, MARCH 31, 6:00 PM

FREE POTLUCK DINNER

(A-H MAIN DISH, I-P DESSERT, Q-Z SALAD OR SIDE DISH)

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

2131 N. VAN NESS, FRESNO

PUBLIC WELCOME (\$2 DONATION REQUESTED)



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## 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

Same time, **NEW LOCATION for the Merced Group’s general meetings**, on the third Thursday of each month. We are now meeting in the social hall at the back of **Unity Church, 305 W. 26th St.** The church is on the corner of MLK (“J Street”) and 26th, across from John Muir Elementary School. Park in the back lot or on the street, and enter at the back door.

Being on Rod’s email list assures that you get the updated information as it is known, and also a reminder as events approach. If you are not on “The List” already, just email Rod at [rwebster@elite.net](mailto:rwebster@elite.net) and ask to be added.

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

### Merced Group’s March General Meeting

**Thursday, March 17<sup>th</sup> (yes, St. Patty’s day), 7:00 PM**  
“Nature at Our Backdoor: Wildlife Refuges of Merced and Stanislaus Counties,” with Madeline Yancey, Park Ranger at San Luis NWR Complex

Join us to learn about national wildlife refuges of the San Joaquin Valley and the San Luis National Wildlife Refuge Complex. The Refuge Complex Park Ranger, Madeline Yancey, will talk about the three refuges located in Merced and Stanislaus Counties -- the San Luis NWR, the Merced NWR, and the San Joaquin River NWR. They provide protected habitats for millions of migratory waterfowl and waterbirds, as well as thousands of other species of songbirds, raptors, mammals, reptiles, plants, etc. The public is welcome and encouraged to spend time at these refuges learning

about and connecting with nature. You will learn about wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities available at the refuges and about ways the US Fish & Wildlife Service engages with local communities. **And . . .** Madeline also wants us to know that on Saturday, March 19<sup>th</sup>, the public is invited to a guided hike at the San Luis NWR. This will be a great outing to attend as a follow up to our March presentation. Below are details on that and other events later in the spring.

### Merced Group’s April General Meeting

**Thursday, April 21st, 7:00PM at Unity Church**  
**Program to be announced**

### Merced Group’s Annual Potluck Picnic

**A Saturday in May (time & location to be determined)**

## Upcoming Guided Nature Walks

The Valley is full of birds of all colors, shapes, and sizes, especially during the winter and spring. Do you ever wonder, “What bird is that?” Visit the Complex and participate in a guided birding nature walk and learn how to identify all those birds! Nature walks/tours will begin at 8:30 a.m. and last approximately two hours at the locations and dates listed below. There is no registration/sign-up required for these activities, but if you have questions, please call the San Luis NWR Complex visitor center at (209) 826-3508. Dates and locations are as follows (all are on Saturdays):

- **March 19, 2016 at 8:30 a.m.** – San Luis NWR, meet at the Visitor Center, 7376 S. Wolfsen Rd., Los Banos, 93635.
- **April 23, 2016 at 8:30 a.m.** – San Joaquin River NWR, meet at the Pelican Nature Trail parking lot, 2714 Dairy Rd., Vernalis, 95385.
- **May 21, 2016 at 8:30 a.m.** – San Luis NWR, meet at the Visitor Center, 7376 S. Wolfsen Rd., Los Banos, 93635.

Bring binoculars, spotting scopes, and field guides. Don’t forget hats, sunscreen, insect repellent, and water. Remember to dress for changeable late winter/early spring weather.

# Merced Group News

## Annual December Pot Luck and Awards Dinner a Success

### The Program:

The Merced Group held its annual pot luck and awards banquet in December. The program was a travelogue of the sailing adventures of JoAnne Clarke and her husband George Deane as they traversed the Pacific to New Zealand. Stunning photography of remote islands and ports-of-call along the way contrasted with the images and accounts of their many days navigating the open ocean. It became clear that, not only zest for adventure, but MacGyver-like innovative problem-solving skills are also a prerequisite for such a trip. This was just the introductory chapter of what was a multi-year sailing excursion. We look forward to future episodes.

Drawn back home to Merced by the birth of twin grandchildren, JoAnne is re-engaging in her Sierra Club involvement. She was recently elected to the Tehipite Chapter's executive board and has already agreed to be a representative to both the CCL (Council of Club Leaders) and a chapter delegate to the CNRCC. Welcome home JoAnne.

### Awards:

The December event was also occasion to honor Marilynne Manfredi for the many "hats" she has worn over the years as an activist for environmental and community causes. The plaque presented to Marilynne read, "In recognition of your dedication and leadership in community causes that contribute to our health, our environment, our children, and even our pets."

Though only earning her Master Gardener designation last year, Marilynne has already stepped up as the chair of the Merced County branch of that organization. Promoting and advising on the conversion of landscapes to drought tolerant natives has been an emphasis of the group this past year. Marilynne also currently co-chairs Mercedians Against Fracking and was a key organizer in the inception of that group. Sometime further back there was a multi-year effort to "Stop Wal-Mart" from building a one-million-square-foot distribution center on the south end of town. The project carried a multitude of health and environmental impacts.

Marilynne was part of the local leadership that mounted a campaign to educate citizens and focus opposition to the project. Years later it has still not been built.

As a teacher at both the high school and community college, Marilynne incorporated environmental awareness and appreciation into her curriculum. Her students participated in a county-wide "River Word" program. Field trips along the Merced River were used as the basis for poetry writing assignments. Students then shared their works around the community. The Merced Group enjoyed one of these.

Local dogs and their owners have also benefited from Marilynne's compassionate involvement. She is past chair of the group that established the community's first and only dog park. She currently volunteers time each week at the Merced County animal shelter.

Throughout these various involvements two underlying themes run. One is a willingness to take a leadership role. The other is that Marilynne has a skill for bringing people together in fun and friendship to work for the causes that she is passionate about. Whether it's canvassing door-to-door in Merced or traveling to San Benito County to do so, whether it's organizing locals to attend rallies in Sacramento and Oakland, whether it's leading students in outdoor excursions, whether it's helping organize a Halloween costume parade for pets at the dog park, or if it's just home-cooked goodies at a meeting, Marilynne knows how to engage and encourage people to become advocates for what they hold important.

Our appreciation and thanks to Marilynne. Keep up the good work!



# Upcoming Tehipite Chapter Meetings

## Tehipite Chapter Conservation & Executive Committee Meetings

Second Wednesday of each month ~ members welcome

March 9, April 13, May 11, June 8, July 13 (if necessary), August 10 (if necessary), September 14, October 12, and November 9, December 14, January 11, February 8

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

Third Wednesday of each month from 7 to 9 PM, except for July, August, and—this year only—December

**OUR GENERAL MEETINGS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC, AND PARKING IS FREE.**

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



**Thursday, March 31, 6:00 PM, at The Big Red Church, 2131 N. Van Ness Avenue, Fresno**

**Our Annual Potluck Banquet — Lessons Learned on the John Muir Trail, with Fresno State Professor Andrew Fiala**

Andrew Fiala is Chair of the Department of Philosophy and Director of the Ethics Center at California State University, Fresno, and is the author of *The Peace of Nature and the Nature of Peace*. Dr. Fiala writes a regular column on ethical issues that appears Saturdays in *The Fresno Bee*.

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

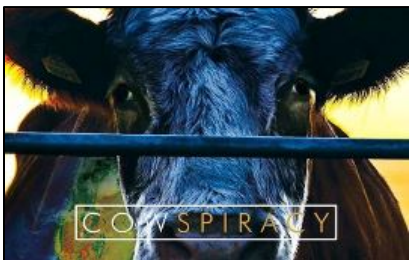
**Our California Desert, with Terry Frewin**



Terry Frewin is Chair of Sierra Club's California/Nevada Desert Committee, which works for the protection and conservation of the deserts of California, Nevada, and other areas in the Southwest. The Desert Committee monitors and works with public, private, and non-profit agencies to promote preservation of our arid lands, sponsors education and service trips into the desert, and publishes the quarterly *Desert Report*, one of the most informative and polished publications of the entire Sierra Club. You can access the current and past issues of the newsmagazine at [www.desertreport.org/?cat=3](http://www.desertreport.org/?cat=3).

**Wednesday, May 18, 7:00 PM**

**Movie Night — “Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret**



Follow the shocking, yet humorous, journey of an aspiring environmentalist as he daringly seeks to find a real solution to the most pressing environmental issues of our *time* and a true path to sustainability. Filmmaker Kip Anderson's personal *investigative* journey from uninformed citizen to empowered herbivore addresses the effect of cattle on the environment and argues for a vegan lifestyle to save the planet.

**Wednesday, June 15, 7:00 PM**

**Movie Night — “This Changes Everything”**



Inspired by Naomi Klein's international non-fiction bestseller *This Changes Everything*, this film is an epic attempt to re-imagine the vast challenge of climate change, presenting powerful portraits of communities on the front lines.

# Climate Justice Leaders Work for Their Communities to Get a Fair Share of the State Funding Pie

– CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 –

spraying of pesticides in nearby farms and orchards usually happens with no warning from either farmers or the county government. Dangerous chemicals are also being used to combat mosquitos. Many chemicals can be smelled inside houses even when windows are closed. There is a lot of dust from development, farming, and the ongoing drought, and Valley Fever is a major risk.

Buses do not reach into some communities or out into the county. Most transportation is still by polluting automobiles and diesel trucks. There are several schools close by major highways, including Highway 99. The transition to electric cars isn't going fast enough, and poor people will be unable to afford the cars when it does finally happen. There aren't enough parks, and rural children have to walk on the road to go to school.

My own expressed concern was the effect of the drought on the mountain forests, where an epidemic of bark beetles has left vast tracts of dead standing trees which may become tinder for wildfires like we haven't yet seen, creating a major air pollution health crisis and consuming lots of government money that could have been spent in other ways to protect the environment.

## Looking for Leaders from within the Community

The initial effort in developing a grassroots movement to improve disadvantaged communities is to schedule meetings locally and canvas neighborhoods to alert residents and get them to attend. From among those who come, a body of potential community leaders is established, and the next step is to educate them about the issues and how they can be addressed.

Last year, groups in Kern and Fresno counties discussed climate change and how it affects residents in both rural communities and the poorer parts of the cities. Three areas of major concern were identified:

- Air quality issues, including the short-lived climate pollutants that remain in the atmosphere for a much shorter time than the longer-lived pollutants like carbon dioxide, but which have a much greater impact upon the environment and public health over the short term. These include black carbon, a component of fine particulate matter from combustion of fossil fuels and biomass, including forest fires, fluorinated gases that deplete ozone, and methane, much of which results from agricultural processes and waste treatment in addition to the oil and gas industry.

- Land use and transportation issues, including fighting urban sprawl, making sure there are adequate sources of clean water for all developments, and creating and encouraging alternative means of transit, which basically means getting people out of their cars as much as possible for their transportation needs.
- The need for greater public investment in our communities to create more parks, water and sewer facilities, buses, sidewalks, and other amenities that wealthier communities usually take for granted.

## For the Want of a Sidewalk Children Walk to School on County Roadways

The focus of this meeting was to explain the process of acquiring state funds for local improvement projects. Seeking to build sidewalks where there aren't any illustrates some of the problems involved. Meetings were held with a Fresno councilmember and a County supervisor. The councilmember was sympathetic to the needs expressed, but did not know how to help. His concern was for more housing construction. Since sidewalks are considered part of the private property, they will be put in when there is new construction. The supervisor, on the other hand, knew of a program to help build sidewalks through state grants, but he was unwilling to help out.

The program is Safe Routes to Schools, one of several funding sources through the Active Transportation Program (ATP) that are put together by each Metropolitan Planning Organization in the state. In the San Joaquin Valley, these organizations are the COGs or Councils of Government for the eight separate counties. The COGs need to apply for the funding from the State.

Nonprofits, cities, counties, and tribal governments may apply for ATP funding. Workshops are held to help decide which projects will be chosen for the program. They could be sidewalks, or curbs and gutters to prevent flooding during rains. It could be for lighting, or traffic lights, or for bicycle lanes.

## A Little Technical Knowledge Goes a Long Way

Projects are ranked by points. How does a project improve public health? How does it get more people to walk or bike? Is the project supported by community residents, and how are they involved? Guidelines currently propose that disadvantaged communities automatically get five points because, unlike cities with their planning professionals, they usually do not have the resources or staff to prepare these plans. A perfect



### **CURRENT AND FUTURE VALLEY LEADERS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

FROM LEFT: CRISTOBAL DOMINGUEZ, SANDRA VASQUEZ, ESTELA ORTEGA, KATLEEN BANDERAS, KAYLON HAMMOND (POLICY COORDINATOR FOR LEADERSHIP COUNSEL FOR JUSTICE & ACCOUNTABILITY), JULIO BANDERAS, AND ABIGAIL RAMIREZ (POLICY ADVOCATE FOR LEADERSHIP COUNSEL FOR JUSTICE & ACCOUNTABILITY)

score of 100 puts a project at the top of the list. It usually takes a score of 85 or higher to get funded.

Here is where a little technical knowledge of the administrative process can go a long way for a group of community activists. Knowing the right formula for justifying local improvements can boost the scores and get their projects into the ATP. Public parks have trees that reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide and provide shade to create an island of cooler temperatures during hot summers. They provide opportunities for children to exercise and improve their health. They get people out walking when there are enough that every resident has a park close by. They can bring a community closer together by providing a venue for events or the focus of a local group of volunteers to help maintain the park.

Bike lanes help with air pollution because people drive less, and scarce petroleum is conserved. More money is left in the hands of families when cars are used less often. These are the kinds of testimony that local residents can present to decision makers to boost their chances of getting a project off the table and into

actual construction.

The Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) is a major source of funding for local programs across the State. 2.2 billion dollars was available last year through approximately nineteen funding programs. Funding for the transit program is based on population, so the Bay Area gets much more funding than Fresno, but Fresno gets a lot more than Merced. One complaint made by local activists at the hearings is that the agency thinks Valley residents only want more bus routes. But a greater concern was for more bus shelters, so riders can handle the long waits in the rain or hot sun. They also want their children to ride free. Unless residents make the effort to talk to transit agencies to tell them what they want, the staff will assume they know what you want, which may not always be right.

Another program promotes affordable housing. Projects that are designed to connect with active transit and public transit so that residents do not have to use their cars will get a higher priority because of their help in combatting climate change.



There is a program to promote more efficient use of water. Knowing that that is their only concern will prevent a speaker from wasting time on the improvements a project can make to water quality, which is not an interest of this particular agency.

### Not All Programs Effect Economic Equality

Several programs can stand to be improved. Subsidizing zero-emission cars and building charging stations is considered a benefit to the entire community, but the change for most residents is small compared to other programs, and the monetary incentive for buying an electric car still leaves such a purchase out of reach for low-income residents.

A program to support installation of solar panels, and to help weather-proof homes, generally aids homeowners over lower-income renters, because landlords are reluctant to make improvements that benefit residents more than themselves. A landlord may be required to spend money to improve a heating system before PG&E will fund the weatherproofing of leaky windows and doors. Residents need to work in concert and learn how to encourage their landlords to make the necessary applications for funding.

The Leadership Counsel is working to make all of these programs equitable by asking that the funds be spread out to benefit small, low-income, and minority communities in the Valley, as well as the big cities and suburbs, and that improvements in, say, waste reduction, or transportation, don't negatively impact small communities that have a hard time fighting the siting of large facilities in their neighborhoods. When government has their meetings, they need to get the plans right. This sometimes means gathering our members together to travel to Sacramento to testify. The Leadership Counsel is also promoting a technical assistance bill in the legislature that will require the State to provide expertise to jurisdictions that applied

but failed, helping to make their applications stronger for the next time around.

There is a lot of money to be spent. If we do not show up and ask for it, it will be directed elsewhere or lost forever. Some agencies don't even spend all that they have available. We need to make the county agencies put the needs of our communities into their plans and to ask for the funds to address them.

### The Leaders of Tomorrow Arise from the Grassroots Activism of Today

Community organizing is based on what a community identifies as its own needs and priorities. When the community organizers of the Leadership Counsel and its partner in Delano educate local leaders, they are giving them the technical knowledge necessary to get their own issues in front of public agencies. Armed with this knowledge of how the government works, the local grassroots leaders then gather large numbers of their own community residents to attend agency, council, and board meetings, helping to craft everyone's testimony to highlight those features of a project that are relevant to the focus of the funding source.

As this happens again and again, a community becomes stronger from within, empowering itself with successes and the example of effective leaders, and achieving positive developments, the effects of which can be seen immediately. And as knowledge of the administrative process grows locally, especially with the involvement of young people, from within our communities will come the leaders of tomorrow. In the end, this may be the most significant outcome of this grassroots strategy for change.

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**Leadership Counsel for Justice & Accountability** is located at 2115 Kern Street, Suite 320, Fresno, CA 93721. They can be contacted at (559) 369-2790. Their website is at [www.leadershipcounsel.org](http://www.leadershipcounsel.org).



**WALKING THE DRY SAN JOAQUIN RIVER AT KERMAN**  
PHOTO BY CARLOS CHAVEZ

## Women's International League for Peace & Freedom

**WILPF Fresno's Earth Democracy Group Invites You to a FREE Workshop:**

**WHAT:** Enlightened Apocalypse: Paying It Forward To Save Mother Earth

*Life on our home planet is disappearing.  
How did we allow this to happen?  
Let's look back, learn from our mistakes and  
make plans for restoration of a healthy Earth.*

**WHEN:** Saturday, March 19, 8:30 AM – 1:00 PM

**WHERE:** Artè Américas, 1630 Van Ness Ave.,  
Fresno, CA

**Questions: (559) 313-7674**

First Nations Opening  
Ceremony promptly at 9:00 AM

#### Presentations

Local First Nations: *Indigenous Philosophy of Mother Earth*  
Walt Shubin: *The San Joaquin River, Then and Now*  
Lloyd Carter: *Water! Water! Nowhere To Be Found*  
Steve Haze: *Tulare Lake and Beyond*

Small group discussions



# Engaging in the Yosemite Planning Process

## — An Invitation to the Public to Get Involved

by Bob Turner

January 20<sup>th</sup> was a cold day in Yosemite Valley, with the deep blue sky outlining a snow-encrusted Half Dome. The roads were clear, but the Village parking lot had not been plowed, so no one saw any need to mount chains on their tires. Delaware North's tow truck made the rounds all day long helping folks get moving again from their icy parking lanes. When I left I managed to maneuver out on my own with the careful use of low gear.

I was in Yosemite Village for a public meeting with National Park Service planning staff to discuss the onset of their revision of the Yosemite Wilderness Stewardship Plan. The last such plan was put into effect in 1989. This current effort is to review the management direction of that plan and update it as necessary to better align with contemporary use patterns and with National Park Service (NPS) policy. One notable difference is in the name. The 1989 plan was a "wilderness management plan," while the new one will be a "wilderness stewardship plan," reflecting the notion that the ecosystems of the wild are at their best when left alone to strike their own natural balance. What needs management is not so much the wilderness itself, but rather our intrusions into the wilderness to enjoy its special values.



**THE JOHN MUIR TRAIL IN LYELL CANYON**

The 1989 plan was a "wilderness management plan," while the new one will be a "wilderness stewardship plan," reflecting the notion that the ecosystems of the wild are at their best when left alone to strike their own natural balance. What needs management is not so much the wilderness itself, but rather our intrusions into the wilderness to enjoy its special values.

### **No Public Meetings in the Valley**

Meetings had already been held online by webinar, as well as in person in Berkeley. My first comment was to encourage the Park staff to hold a public meeting in the Valley, either in Fresno or meeting us halfway in Oakhurst. While I grant that Yosemite NP has a special widespread interest compared to other national parks, and the Bay Area is considerably more populated than the South Valley, residents who live close by often visit the park on a more frequent basis and so have an intimate knowledge of the park's features, character, and ongoing changes. There were only about twenty or so guests at the midweek hearing in Yosemite Village, reflecting the difficulty, even for those of us who are retired or have a flexible work schedule, to attend a meeting so far from home. When Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks staff worked through their wilderness planning process, regular public meetings were held in Visalia.

That said, the Park staff is indeed interested in hearing from those who care about the Yosemite Wilderness and who have their own thoughts, concerns, and vision for how we should interact with it. They are actively soliciting our input to help guide the planning team in developing the plan. Although the comment period for Public Scoping closed already on January 29, there will be other opportunities for us to provide general and specific feedback on the draft document and on the various alternatives that will be presented throughout this year. For now, I suggest people visit the Park Service's Planning, Environment & Public Comment (PEPC) website at [www.parkplanning.nps.gov](http://www.parkplanning.nps.gov) to get an overview of the process. The document page for Yosemite National Park lists 116 current park plans or projects, from Comprehensive Management Plans for both the Merced and Tuolumne Rivers, through Resource Management Plans to remove trails, restore habitat, and preserve scenic vistas, to numerous specific repairs and capital improvements throughout the developed portions of the park.

### **Recommended Reading for informed Participants**

The [parkplanning.nps.gov/ManagementPlans.cfm](http://parkplanning.nps.gov/ManagementPlans.cfm) page lists ten management plans and reports for Yosemite NP, with links to the complete documents as downloadable pdf files. One concern I voiced, regarding dispersed parking along the

Tioga Road for those wishing to walk into the meadows, was deflected by reference to the [Tuolumne Wild and Scenic River Final Comprehensive Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement](#), where, it was said, the concern had already been addressed. So, decisions have already been made on many issues that impact on wilderness use. While one comment period is closed and another has yet to begin, this is a good time to study the management plans that already are in effect in preparation for the next stage in the process of developing a Wilderness Stewardship Plan.

Also recommended as an initial overview of the issues are the documents available at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?parkID=347&projectID=47112&documentID=69176>, which include a Yosemite Wilderness map, the texts of the Wilderness Act of 1964 and the 1984 Act that created the Yosemite Wilderness, the 1989 Wilderness Management Plan, and four fact sheets on commercial services, visitor use and capacity, stock use, and trails. Study these documents in the light of your own experiences traveling through the Yosemite backcountry, and begin to think about what issues are important to you and how the Park Service should address them.

### **Alternative Use Patterns will be Presented at the Next Stage of Public Input**

When the comment period opens again, there will be a range of alternative use patterns written up for consideration, from increasing the number of visitors that are allowed daily into the wilderness (which usually entails stricter regulations to control visitor impact) to the opposite extreme of tightening entry quotas (which enhances the qualities of solitude and silence, but for only the few able to secure visitor permits), and there will be a status quo alternative, as well. If the Sequoia and Kings Canyon NPs wilderness plan process is a valid guide to what will happen here, the Park Service will offer a preferred alternative that adheres fairly closely to the status quo on visitor use, while offering up particular changes and adjustments, such as trail decommissions, new protections for fragile meadows and lakesides, campfire restrictions, and other site-specific regulations deemed necessary for the restoration of natural habitat.

There will be two more opportunities for public comment: (1) the public review of preliminary alternatives, and (2) the release of the draft plan and environmental analysis. You will be able to submit written comments by letter or email, but keep in mind that every public comment gets preserved in the final report, so the work involved in processing and documenting public input will be vastly facilitated by utilizing the PEPC website to send in your comments.

The team doing the Wilderness Stewardship Plan is the same that developed the Merced and Tuolumne Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plans. I was told that staff will look to these finished plans for guidance, making every effort to integrate the wilderness plan with them. Also, this Stewardship Plan is about the impact of human use upon the wilderness, not biomanagement strategy. Questions about how to deal with wildfires in the wilderness, eliminating non-native fish that prey on endangered frogs, transporting bighorn sheep to extend their range, or the resilience of ecosystems in the face of climate change are subjects for a Resources Management Plan.

### **Competing Activities and New Trends in Trail Use**

This plan is about visitor, commercial, and administrative activities in the wilderness, with special focus upon visitor use patterns, methods of managing visitor use, techniques for trail design and construction, and concepts for managing stock within the wilderness setting. Some trailhead quotas will be adjusted and certain camping areas may come under quota as well. Some seldom-used trails may be abandoned, while others may be restored and new ones constructed. Levels of commercial stock use and guided climbing may be curtailed if similar non-commercial activity reaches site capacity. And new considerations must be made for trending trail uses such as fast through-hiking, geocaching, and trail running.

The presence of the High Sierra Camps is also being called into question by some observers. While each camp lies within a non-wilderness island, supplying the camps by pack train impacts the trails that cross the wilderness. Most of the High Sierra Camps have been around since the 1920s and '30s, and so qualify for historical status and protection. But they also provide a means for more elderly and less able visitors to enjoy the wilderness. In a similar vein, commercial outfitters provide an avenue into the wilderness for those less competent in backcountry skills.

94% of Yosemite National Park lies within the Yosemite Wilderness Area — 704,608 acres of land with the highest level of protection — land that is untrammled, natural, and undeveloped, affording opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation. This Wilderness Stewardship Plan seeks to provide a framework for measuring and monitoring these aspects of wilderness character, in order to ensure that, along with selected actions to be taken today, future management actions can be taken as needed to protect the wilderness from ongoing human use and to adapt policies to changing conditions.

# Sequoia National Forest Staff Seek Public Input on Projects to Rehabilitate the Rough Fire Burn Area

by Bob Turner

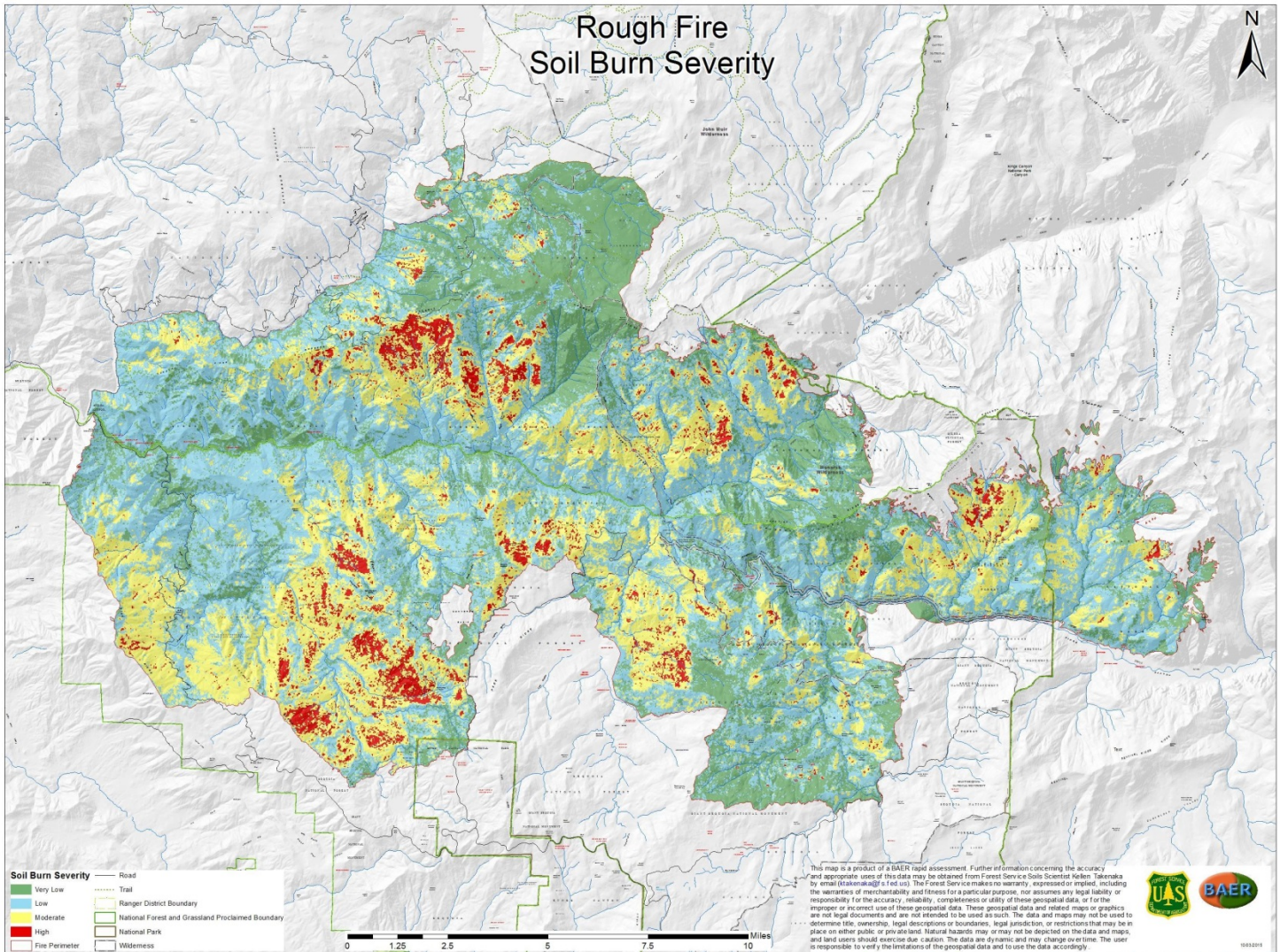
I recently drove to the Hume Lake District headquarters of Sequoia National Forest and Giant Sequoia National Monument to attend an open house on the damaging effects of the Rough Fire and the proposed attempts at forest restoration. The Rough Fire burned areas in both Sierra and Sequoia National Forests. This gathering concerned only those projects in the area south of the Kings River inside Sequoia National Forest.

I am certainly glad I made this trip, if only because the scenic drive up to Dunlap was so unexpectedly beautiful after the dry month of February. It was a pleasure to see Jesse Morrow Mountain all green with grass after the long drought, and I was surprised by the extravagance of the wildflower blooms for miles alongside Highway 180 once I entered the foothills. I recommend to those of you reading this as it is published in March of 2016 to go to the

hills while the flowers put on their show, and catch their fleeting beauty.

The Rough Fire, started by a lightning strike on July 31<sup>st</sup>, burned over 150,000 acres, making it California's biggest fire of 2015. It initially engulfed the extremely rugged terrain between the summit of Spanish Mountain and the Kings River to the south, making efforts to control the fire impossible through the first half of August. The fire eventually spread over Rodgers Ridge to the north and across the river to the south, where Forest Service fire crews were ready to do battle. The wildfire slowed its advance by mid-September, getting as far as the perimeter of Grant Grove in the west and the foot of Hume Lake Dam in the east, finally coming under full containment by November.

Because this was a well-studied area that had seen a number of controlled burns over the past 37 years, the



Forest Service was able to compare resulting conditions from the passing of the Rough Fire through previously burned versus unburned areas. The intensity of the Rough Fire lessened as it passed through prescribed burn regimes. Bark on large trees was only mildly scorched, and the fire stayed away from high crowns. Giant sequoia trees have very thick bark, so the largest of them may survive even the high intensity fires that swept through some groves, leaving them blackened over much of their height. Only time will tell. But clearly the goals of prescribed burning were justified by the empirical results.

Though the highway into Kings Canyon is now open as far as the Hume Lake turnoff, the dirt roads into the Converse Basin remain closed, and all of the trails, as well. Hiking is closed throughout the burned zone of the Rough Fire from the edge of Grant Grove down to the Kings River.

Hazards exist along established trails, where bare hillside washes and dry sloughing have covered many trail surfaces and fallen trees have left gaping holes. Water flow channels have shifted in places, eroding trail grades. Directional signs are burned. The first public entry back into the area will be by guided field trips that the Ranger District is planning. If you want to be notified of these trips, or if you have a particular destination you would like them to include, contact the District to let them know and to put you on their e-mail list.

Though not an established wilderness area, most of the burn in the Hume Lake Ranger District lies inside the borders of Giant Sequoia National Monument. Removal of vegetation is highly restricted or prohibited by law within this special management area of the national forest. Downing of hazard trees will mostly be limited to the wildland-urban interface of villages and forest homes, alongside roads, and beside recreation sites, such as campgrounds, equestrian and bicycle trails, and popular hiking trails. The danger from trees close by trails is not only that they may topple over, but that they also may drop large branches from great heights upon hikers.

Fortunately, clearing such hazards from alongside more distant backcountry trails is not a priority. I encouraged staff to leave these trees alone, their danger being much lower due to the trails being less traveled and because hikers at such distances are more experienced in handling risks, as well as because such heavily burned trees are particularly interesting elements of the scenery. No one wants to see stumps along their hiking routes. As for the remainder of the forest, there is no reason to fell trees that are away from roads, trails, or structures, so, hopefully, much of the burned area will remain as is.

– CONTINUED ON PAGE 15 –

### **The Role of Wildfires in the Giant Sequoia Ecosystem**

Fire is an integral part of the Giant Sequoia ecosystem, aiding in regeneration and in reduction of competition for the species. When large fires burn out the understory of a sequoia grove, the giant trees are well-defended by their thick fire-resistant bark. The heat reaches upwards, expanding the sap in the sequoia cones and popping them open prematurely. Eventually, the seeds rain down upon the cleared ground, falling into holes in the porous soil left open by the burned vegetation, aiding in their germination. With the other species of trees and shrubs burned away, their nutrients recycled back into the soil, these little sequoias get a head start on the competition and a chance to replace their progenitors.

Ironically, this was discovered accidentally after years of trying to aid natural regeneration in sequoia groves where fires had been suppressed for decades. Years of unchecked accumulation of fuel on the forest floor had created a situation throughout our nation's forests that posed a real danger for catastrophic wildfires. After the disastrous 1955 McGee Fire burned 13,000 acres in just a few hours, threatening Grant Grove, scientists began to study the role of periodic natural fires as a mechanism for clearing ground vegetation, opening the area between the big trees that are able to survive these smaller fires. Bucking the prevailing Smokey Bear ideology of complete fire suppression, the Park Service soon began a controversial experiment with managed burns in their sequoia forests.

In Redwood Canyon, one of these first attempts burned hotter than expected, and Park Service fire crews could only sit back and watch as it took its course. Afterwards, the scientists were surprised to see how many sequoia seedlings had taken root in the burned soil of the hot area. They concluded that fire had prepared a seedbed favoring the germination and survival of giant sequoia seedlings. We now know that fires need to come through this type of forest every ten years or so to provide its beneficial effects.

Since 1968, prescribed burns and non-interference with naturally occurring fires are a matter of policy in our national parks and forests, both to recreate natural processes that help the forest ecosystem and to catch up with fuel reduction after years of misguided fire suppression that has left our forests in a dangerously explosive situation. Unfortunately, the managing of prescribed burns is limited to wetter periods of the year, and is constrained by the effects of smoke accumulation on the already unhealthy air quality of the San Joaquin Valley. Every agency that seeks to do a prescribed burn must get advanced approval of the State Air Resources Board.

Prescribed burns also require crews and need their own budgets in these increasingly tight times for financially-strapped government agencies, but the cost of managing fires in a controlled setting is vastly less expensive than fighting catastrophic wildfires like this year's Rough Fire and the Rim Fire of 2013.

## **BOOK REVIEW**

# **Poison Spring: The Secret History of Pollution and the E.P.A.**

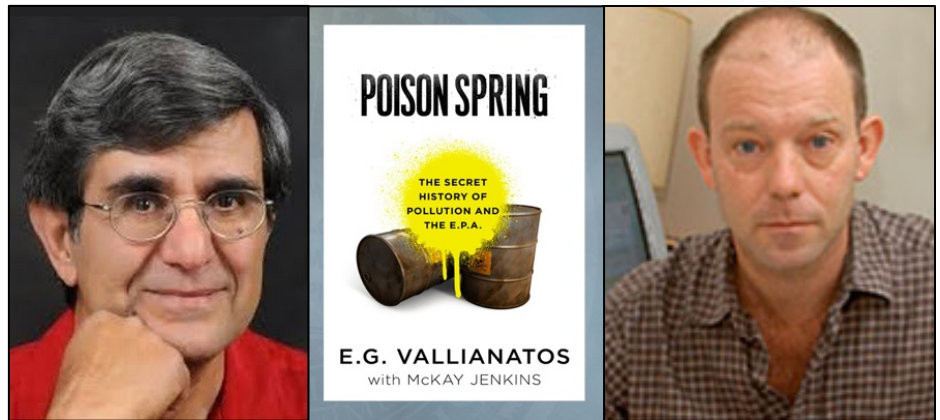
by E. G. Vallianatos with McKay Jenkins

**Reviewed by Heather Anderson**

This page-turner book documents the dangerous chemicals that are produced by the millions of pounds and dumped into the environment (land, water, air) every day. It documents the corruption of science and the public trust that has turned the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) into a “polluters protection agency.” Based on Vallianatos’ twenty-five years of experience inside the EPA, his collection of documents and the testimony of colleagues, the book reveals how pressure from politicians and threats from huge corporations compromised the EPA.

It’s been fifty years since Rachel Carson’s publication of *Silent Spring* in 1962, and we are still poisoning our air, land, water, food, homes, and bodies with toxic chemicals, which seriously affect the physical and mental health of ourselves, and future generations, as well. These effects include cancer, brain abnormalities, birth deformities, stillbirth, even sudden infant death. Unfortunately, the EPA is corrupt. It never once occurred to me that the EPA, an agency created to protect the health and environment of America’s citizens, would be more concerned with the pockets of Big Ag (industrial farms), chemical corporations, universities and their research scientists, and with lobbyist influence on members of Congress.

Statistics reveal that people use more dangerous chemicals inside their homes (paints, disinfectants, cleaners, fire retardants, mothballs, bug sprays, termite poisons, and pet insecticide collars) than outside to curb rodents, weeds, insects, plants, diseases, and fungi in their gardens. Sadly, women and children are more severely exposed to the polluted air confined inside than the polluted atmosphere outside. Exposure to these toxics may trigger endocrine disruptors, which interfere with the hormone system in mammals and result in cancerous tumors, birth defects, and other developmental disorders. Health Protection from toxic substances, especially for poor and ethnic workers, both



**TWO OUTSTANDING ENVIRONMENTAL WRITERS TEAM UP TO TELL THE EXCORIATING STORY OF CATASTROPHIC COLLUSION BETWEEN THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY AND THE CHEMICAL INDUSTRY.**

in the United States and abroad, is also seriously lacking.

Up to ten pounds of active pesticide ingredients are sprayed annually over every acre of our urban environment in the form of DDT-like chemicals, PCBs, and nerve toxins. Although DDT was banned from agricultural use in 1972, it remains an ingredient in many other products, and accumulates in wildlife, especially birds, with a half-life in humans of six to ten years. The ban is considered a major factor in the comeback from extinction of the bald eagle and peregrine falcon. Roundup (glyphosate), which kills unwanted plants and bacteria, can be a gardener’s panacea, but its safety is not secure. Its use to clear roadside weeds (including milkweed) has led to a serious decline in monarch butterfly populations. Another current product on local shelves, 2,4-D, contains half of Agent Orange, which was used as a defoliant during the war in Vietnam. Beware of components labeled inert for household, garden and pharmacy. They are often not inert and include harmful ingredients.

Since the mid-1990s, Americans have been eating Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) in processed foods without their knowledge or consent. Many contain glyphosate. Genetically modified crops are grown from seeds that have been modified to survive being sprayed with the herbicide Roundup. This chemical was recently classified as a “probable human carcinogen” by the World Health Organization’s research team on cancer. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) admits that, due to

the high expense of testing, there is no long term research to insure food safety. So foods like corn, soy, cottonseed, and sugar beets, known to contain higher levels of a probable carcinogen, may not be safe for human consumption.

In fifty other countries GMOs have either been banned or required to be labeled, but not in our country. Repeated requests to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), its counterpart the USDA, to legislators, and to the

courts for labeling have been derailed and ignored. Should Monsanto, a multinational agrochemical and agricultural biotechnology corporation, producer of genetically engineered seed and the herbicide, Roundup, be rounded-up itself? (Jeffrey Smith, *Seeds of Deception*, Judy Nelson, GMO lectures).

We who care for our natural world and for the health of future generations, can no longer ignore the ideas in E. G. Vallianatos' comprehensive and powerful book.

## Concern for Threatened Wildlife at the Heart of Tree Replanting Effort

– CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13 –

Besides repairing trails, the other major project in the burn area west of Highway 180 is replanting trees where the fire was so destructive as to leave only isolated stands of live trees. This project's biggest area covers the upper reaches of Mill Flat Creek immediately north of Grant Grove, which had the largest acreage of high-intensity burning. Replanting of lost ponderosa pines, sugar pines, and incense cedars will occur mainly in these large burned areas that lack an immediate seed source.

According to Forest Biologist Jeff Cordes, small burned zones were not a problem for the animals living in the region, and those areas will be reseeded by neighboring stands of trees. The major focus of replanting will be to connect distantly separated islands of unburned or less-burned trees so that fishers and martens can have the cover they need to safely migrate and move about. Studies show that fishers generally move faster through exposed ground, presumably because of the greater danger of predation. The females fall prey to bobcats, while the larger males are hunted by mountain lion. They like to nest in burned snags, of which there will be no shortage, but their return into the heavily burned areas will be hampered by the small size and isolation of remaining stands.

Some historic nesting areas for spotted owls and northern goshawks also burned hot, but the fire happened after the nesting season, and so had a light effect upon the threatened bird species. Overall, the fire was not a catastrophe for mammal and bird species.

Of perhaps greater concern is the danger of hillside erosion in the burned areas destroying the habitat of the Pacific pond turtle. Members of this threatened species live in ponds along the lower grade portions of creeks in the Mill Flat Creek watershed west of Converse Basin. The faster replanting of trees proposed by the Forest

Service aims to prevent sediment from washing into the creeks and filling the streambeds and ponds.

These ridges and canyons have encountered catastrophic fires since before human history, of course, and one can question whether it is wise to attempt to speed up the natural recovery by artificial means. District Planner Marianne Emmendorfer assured us that replanting efforts in the National Monument backcountry will be conducted using hand tools and non-mechanized transportation.

Emmendorfer also stated that special efforts are being made to match the genotypes of the saplings that will be planted to those of neighboring populations. The Forest Service has been collecting cones for years, tracking them by species, location, and elevation, and testing their genetic diversity to create seed zone maps. A nursery in Placerville will be tracking the viability of the seeds supplied to them for germination. What remains unknown is whether and how climate change will complicate the restoration project.

The Rough Fire also destroyed a number of significant historical cultural resources. As the fire approached cabins, fire lookouts, and the developed area near Grant Grove, 20-man fire crews thinned out vegetation, set backfires, and wrapped structures — even entire fire lookout stations — in Kevlar fire resistant reflective foil. In some cases these protective measures worked, but occasionally, the fires burned so hot as to incinerate the wooden structures within. Much of the remaining old sequoia log flume that once connected the mills at Hume Lake to Sanger in the early 1900s is now gone, the walls and trestles burned away, leaving only the grade.

As with all projects conducted in Sequoia National Forest, public input is being actively solicited. Concerns about methods and strategy, recommendations for modifications of projects, and identification of other opportunities in the rehabilitation of the Rough Fire burned area are always welcome from the interested public. Go to [www.fs.usda.gov/goto/RoughFireRecovery](http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/RoughFireRecovery) to access reports and maps about the recovery effort.



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*Tehipite Topics* is published three to four times per year. Color versions of the *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 from April 2004. Articles and photographs from Sierra Club members are always welcome for our coming issues. Send your contributions for the Spring 2016 issue by email to [robertsturner52@gmail.com](mailto:robertsturner52@gmail.com) before May 1<sup>st</sup>.



**TERRY FREWIN IN DEATH VALLEY**

**APRIL 20<sup>TH</sup> GENERAL MEETING, 7PM**

**UC Center, 550 E. Shaw Ave, across from Fashion Fair Mall**

***“Our California Desert”***

I'm Terry Frewin, Chair of Sierra Club's California/Nevada Desert Committee. I live in Santa Barbara, CA. The Desert Committee meets four times a year at various places in the deserts. For the past 16 years we have had our winter (February) meeting in Shoshone, CA, a joint meeting with the Sierra Club Wilderness Committee. Our primary mission is to work for the protection and conservation of the deserts of California, Nevada and other areas of the southwest. Our meetings are open to the public and are always attended by public, private, and non-profit agencies, as well Federal and State representatives. We also organize outings and service trips to the deserts. We have members from all the desert chapters of the Sierra Club, including Nevada. We publish a quarterly newsletter, *Desert Report*, which focuses on current issues in the deserts, as well as cultural and natural history. Subscriptions are free and we invite new subscribers who are interested in the deserts.