

# Tehipite Topics

Summer 2017 – Vol. 63, No. 2

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

## Catching Up with the Shadow of the Moon — Road Trip to the Eclipse

by Bob Turner

News reports warned of massive traffic jams along the Interstate Highways leading toward the solar eclipse path. I resolved to avoid any crowds and so plotted a path along the remote highways of Nevada's Great Basin, where I saw few cars or trucks, and was able to cruise along at seventy miles per hour, legally. Nevada is one of those states where signs warn drivers to slow to 60 mph for an upcoming curve in the road, and going 65 seems slow.

"Nevada is too great to litter," I read on a sign — or was it going into Idaho where I read that heroic declaration. In any case, Nevada certainly does live up to that proscription, as I enjoyed hundreds of miles of highways across sagebrush valleys free of any litter. Zipping along the desert roads, the landscapes perceptively shift with my passage in ways that could only have happened in slow motion in the days of the pioneers.

### A Defense of the Car

The reader may wonder why I am extolling a road trip in a publication of the Sierra Club. Well, let me voice my opinion that I consider the car an essential tool of political democracy in our country, as it allows us each the freedom to easily travel out onto our public lands. We should never convert our travel options to only mass-transit vehicles. Such travel between cities and towns must follow clearly designated paths, the corridors of which can always be preserved or manicured for pleasant scenic riding. But if that were our only means of mechanized travel, then how would we be certain that beyond the sight of the high-speed train route, our lands were not being mismanaged or given away to private interests behind our back?



**THE VAST DESERT VISTAS OF THE GREAT BASIN ARE TOO BROAD TO PHOTOGRAPH. THE BEAUTY OF THIS PARTICULAR SCENE IS DIMINISHED WHEN NOT EXPERIENCED WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE OVERALL PANORAMA.**

For true freedom one needs the ever-versatile low-occupancy vehicle, which, compared to riding a horse, has immensely greater speed, ease, and comfort, if not total range. Come the day when California and the rest of the country has gone totally electric with its travel choices, there better still be a car that can go 400 to 500 miles without refueling, or recharging, as the case will be.

As for self-driving vehicles, don't get me started. I guess I would be willing to put my life in the hands (so to speak) of an artificial intelligence on the Tioga Road, but would you trust a computer to drive you along a dirt or gravel mountain road that has no guard rails beside its hundred-foot drop-offs? A computer would probably just freeze, unable to move forward or backwards or even turn around without sensing danger. Would it even be able to recognize when one danger is preferable to another one? But enough of that.

On this trip, my mind strayed frequently onto issues of technology amidst the natural world. Though I drove past many small, isolated national forests and a few newly-

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*see also:*

Call for Candidates

Engaging the Public in a Participatory Grant-writing Process

How the 2012 Forest Plan Revision Policy Partners with Stakeholders

A World of Dark, a Nation of Light

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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.

#### Get grizzly and JOIN Sierra Club.

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Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

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<b>Special Offer</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	
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Senior	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32
Student/Limited Income	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32

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# Call for Candidates

## 2017 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 Friday, October 6. 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 Wednesday, October 25.

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:

September 14 ..... Notice of elections mailed /  
Start of nominations

October 6, 5pm ..... Deadline to submit names  
to Nominating Committee for consideration

October 9 ..... Nominating Committee reports  
nominees to Executive Committee

October 25, 5pm ..... Deadline to submit petitions  
to Chapter Secretary — Petitioners may go to  
<http://www.sierraclub.org/tehipite/chapter-policy-documents> to review the by-laws  
regarding election procedures

November 8 ..... Deadline for candidate statements  
to be submitted to Election Committee

November 8 ..... List of eligible voters produced

November 13 ..... Ballots mailed out / Start of voting

December 18, 5pm ..... Close of voting

December 20 ..... Ballots counted by Election  
Committee, location to be announced

December 20 .... Candidates contacted with results

January 10 ..... 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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# Upcoming Tehipite Chapter Meetings

## Tehipite Chapter Conservation & Executive Committee Meetings

Second Wednesday of each month ~ members welcome

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

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—again this year—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)



### Wednesday, September 20, 7:00 PM

#### **“California Ocean: Its Coastal Ecology,” with Richaud Mathieu**

We are familiar with California's coastal mountains, beaches, and wetlands, but what about the habitat under the surface? Join us Wednesday to learn about life under our neighboring ocean. Professor Mathieu teaches oceanography and geology at Fresno State University. His main interests are in global biogeochemical cycles and habitat mapping of the seafloor.

### Wednesday, October 18, 7:00 PM

#### **“Following the Silk Road through Central Asia,” with Helen Gigliotti**

Following the Silk Road through the countries of Central Asia, affectionally known as the Stans (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan), is one of life's great adventures. Their ancient history is monumental, with spurs of the Great Silk Road criss-crossing each country and legends of great conquerors, such as Alexander the Great, Timur (Tamerlane), and Genghis Khan pervasive in their culture. The photographic opportunities are extraordinary, from the colorful mosaics to the ancient rock fortresses of Samarkand and Bukhara, from the bustling markets to the colorful dress of the women ...all so photogenic!

**[Read the complete announcement on last page of this issue]**

### Wednesday, November 15, 7:00 PM

#### **“Solar Energy: A Technology with Multi-scale Opportunities to Integrate Wildlife Conservation,” with Brian Boroski**

Brian Boroski directs impact assessment, permitting, and monitoring efforts for world-class utility-scale solar projects, among his other duties, as Vice-president of H. T. Harvey & Associates, an environmental consulting firm employing over 100 expert ecologists to provide project analyses, environmental compliance support, landscape planning, and habitat restoration for clients with complex natural resource challenges. In the last year, for the first time, solar energy exceeded both natural gas and wind as a source of electrical generation in the U.S., though we are still ranked fourth in the world behind China, Germany, and Japan. As construction of utility-scale solar facilities expands worldwide, it becomes increasingly important to understand the impact this has on wildlife conservation and habitat protection. These projects can have positive or negative impacts on the landscape, depending on how they are sited and operated. This talk and discussion will look at multi-scale measures that can be taken to enhance positive effects and mitigate potential negative effects on local wildlife.

**December 2017: no meeting**





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Rod Webster (interim)

**Membership**

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**Outings**

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**Publications**

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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.

The 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 at the Methodist Church

The Merced Group will resume its meetings on the third Thursday of each month. As always we try and have a variety of presentations, some of a more educational and informative bent, focusing on timely environmental issues. Others are opportunities for our speakers to share outdoor adventures that were particularly beautiful and inspiring.

Information on programs is advertised in the local papers (though space limitations often make these descriptions sparse). Unfortunately, programs often cannot be confirmed far enough in advance to be included in the *Topics*. One way to get timely notification is to have Rod Webster add your email address to the list of 70 or 80 folks that like this more reliable method of notification (rwebster@elite.net). You can also specify to be emailed a digital copy of the *Topics*. This will not preclude a paper copy being mailed to you, but you may enjoy access on your device where links can be uploaded easily, plus it will be in color.

### Thursday, Sept. 21, 7:00 PM "Winter Residents of Merced National Wildlife Refuge," with Linda Lagace

When Linda Lagace lived here in Merced she became a regular visitor to the Merced National Wildlife Refuge off Sandy Mush Road. Many weekends during the winter months you would find her at the refuge observing and photographing the seasonal residents who had flown in. The Merced NWR is on the international flyway and is a stopover or permanent winter destination for many species of birds, with some like Ross' geese and Sand Hill Cranes showing up in prodigious numbers.

After moving to the Modesto Area several years ago Linda continues her visits to the Merced NWR. She says that even after over a decade it never gets old. Maybe that's because there is always something new to discover as well as old 'friends' to reacquaint with.

In September Linda will share some of her more recent photos. She is particularly excited to share ones taken with her new zoom lens. With that she can see even more beautiful and complex details of the birds who call the Refuge their winter home.

Members and the general public are all encouraged to join us at Merced United Methodist Church, 899 Yosemite Parkway (Hwy 140 to Yosemite). Park in the lot on Cypress Ave. and enter there. Questions? Rod Webster, 723-47470.

### Getting involved with the Merced Group

With summer winding down and a new 'season' of environmental work ahead, the Merced Group is eager for some new folks to join us in helping with the many tasks needed to be a viable and contributing voice in our community. It is easy to start off slowly as an observer on the learning curve or you can jump right in because there are needs at all levels of involvement.

1. Curious about conservation issues? Either local (land use, transportation, Merced River dam relicensing, city bike trails), regional (air quality, water sustainability, Temperance Flat Dam, the proposed ACE train line extension, etc.), state (Twin Tunnels project, fracking for oil, burdens on disadvantaged communities, CEQA stream-lining, etc.), or national (protecting national parks and monuments, maintaining California's autonomy, growing our independence from oil dependence, etc.)?

2. Want to know how the Merced Group is administered, how decisions are made, how specific causes or issues are vetted?
3. Want to help welcome new members with a letter of greeting and an invitation to our meetings?
4. Want to help with outreach into the community by helping to 'table' at community events like UC Merced Community day or the spring Green Tour, or the Pick & Gather?
5. Want to help plan and organize day outings?
6. Want to help plan, publicize, and put on our Annual Awards Banquet?
7. Want to help organize and recruit for community work projects?

You get the idea! There's lots to do and it can only get done with willing hands to do it. So give it some thought and talk to one of the members, or chat it up with someone over refreshments at the next meeting, or just give someone a call to learn more.

## A First for Fresno

# Engaging the Public in a Participatory Grant-writing Process

by Bob Turner

Earlier this year Fresno was awarded the opportunity to receive \$70 million in cap-and-trade funds to use on projects that will improve the city. Before we congratulate ourselves, however, let us remember that this award came to Fresno because portions of the city rank among the worst in the state when measuring the negative environmental impact from a combination of local pollution and economic deprivation.

In an attempt to help rectify environmental injustices, state law specifically targets disadvantaged communities for investment of proceeds from the State's cap-and-trade program. These investments are aimed at improving public health, quality of life, and economic opportunity in California's most burdened communities while at the same time reducing pollution that causes climate change.

### **\$70 Million Coming to Fresno's Areas in Need**

With significant amounts being raised to fund greenhouse gas reduction projects, the Brown administration proposed, and the California Legislature passed, Assembly Bill 2722, authored by Assemblyman Autumn Burke, to direct the Strategic Growth Council (SGC) to administer \$140 million from cap-and-trade revenues for the development and implementation of neighborhood-level transformative climate community plans.

Utilizing the California Communities Environmental Health Screening Tool, commonly known as CalEnviroScreen, two cities were selected



**AT THE FIRST STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE FRESNO TRANSFORMATIVE CLIMATE COMMUNITIES COLLABORATIVE, DISTRICT THREE COUNCILMEMBER OLIVER BAINES ADDRESSES A STANDING-ROOM ONLY CROWD THAT EXCEEDED THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE PLANNERS.**

in November of 2016 by the SGC to be pilots for the new Transformative Climate Communities Program (TCC). The City of Fresno is to receive \$70 million and Los Angeles will receive \$35 million. A third city, yet to be determined, will also get \$35 million.

A primary component for funding under this program is that projects be community-led. This experiment in community participation allows targeted communities to come up with their own plans, choosing a suite of coordinated projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions at the local level while also providing economic, environmental, and health benefits to the disadvantaged community. A

– CONTINUED ON PAGE 8 –

## Why was Fresno chosen?

### CONCENTRATED POVERTY

Fresno has the highest per capita concentration of people living in the state's most disadvantaged communities.

### SUBURBAN SPRAWL CHALLENGES

Fresno has significant concentrated poverty and infill development challenges stemming from suburban sprawl.

### COMMUNITY-DRIVEN PLANNING

Fresno already has significant local leadership and climate-smart policies, and community-driven planning processes that prepare us to be ready for significant state investment.

# CalEnviroScreen

The screening tool used by the State to aid in administering environmental justice grants is the California Communities Environmental Health Screening Tool, commonly known as CalEnviroScreen. Developed by the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), CalEnviroScreen identifies communities in California that are disproportionately burdened by multiple sources of pollution, taking into account socioeconomic factors that increase the vulnerability of citizens to the adverse effects of pollution. Working at the level of the census tract, CalEPA uses the tool to designate California communities as disadvantaged based on several factors in two categories — pollution indicators and population indicators — listed below.

## Pollution Indicators

### Exposure Indicators:

- Air Quality: Ozone
- Air Quality: PM2.5 [particulate matter smaller than 2.5 micrometers (about 1 ten-thousandth of an inch)]
- Diesel Particulate Matter
- Drinking Water Contaminants
- Pesticide Use

- Toxic Releases from Facilities
- Traffic Densities

### Environmental Effect Indicators:

- Cleanup Sites
- Groundwater Threats
- Hazardous Waste Generators and Facilities
- Impaired Water Bodies
- Solid Waste Sites and Facilities

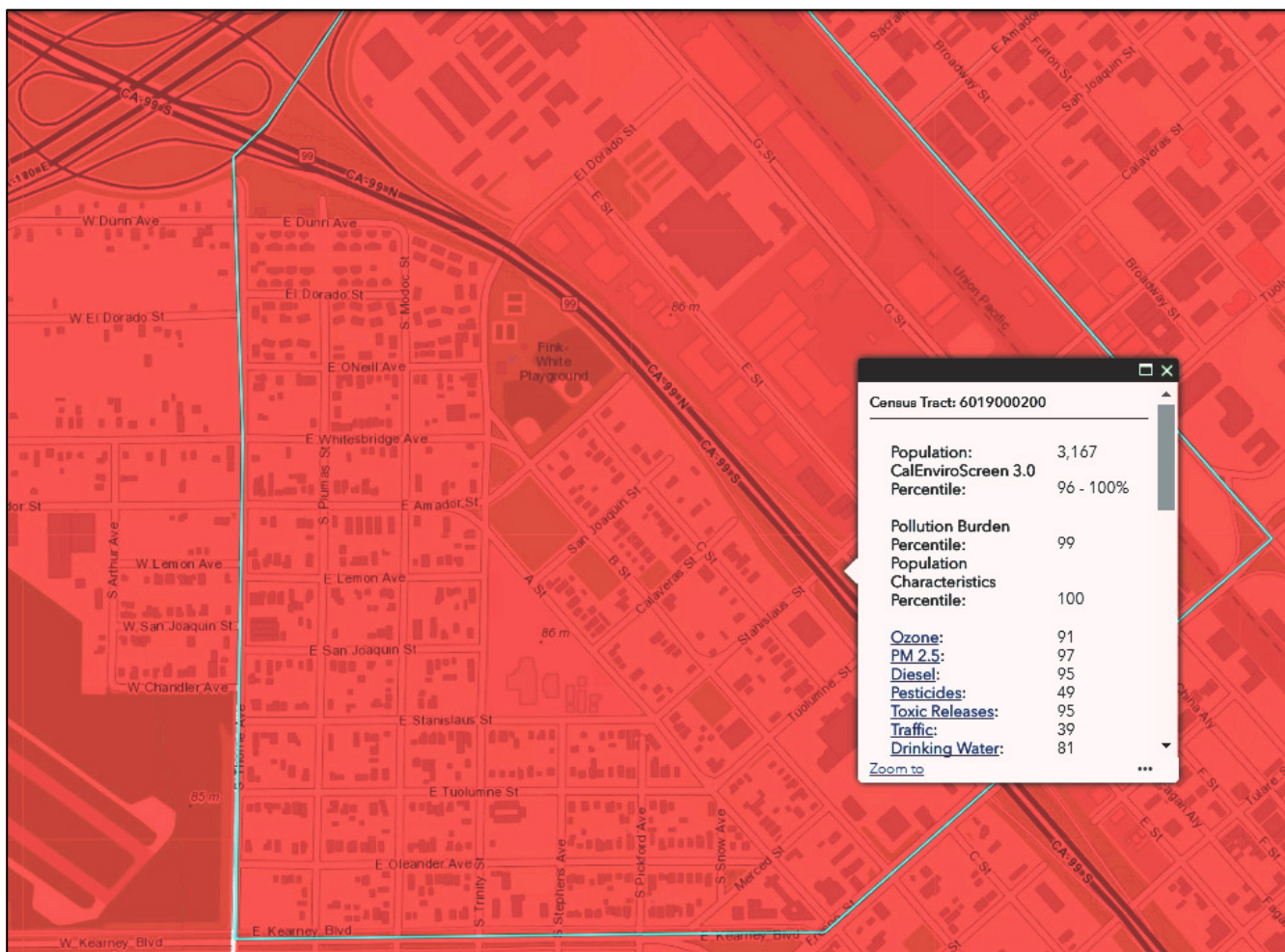
### Population Indicators

### Sensitive Population Indicators:

- Asthma
- Cardiovascular Disease
- Low Birth Weight Infants

### Socioeconomic Indicators:

- Educational Attainment
- Housing Burden
- Linguistic Isolation
- Poverty
- Unemployment



CENSUS TRACT 6019000200 (APPROXIMATELY ONE SQUARE-MILE BETWEEN CHANDLER AIRPORT, THE UNION PACIFIC TRACKS, AND FRESNO STREET, ON EITHER SIDE OF HIGHWAY 99) RANKS IN THE 99<sup>TH</sup> PERCENTILE FOR POLLUTION BURDEN AND THE 100<sup>TH</sup> PERCENTILE FOR NEGATIVE POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS. INFORMATION ON CALENVIROSCREEN, WITH INTERACTIVE MAPS, IS ACCESSIBLE ONLINE AT [HTTPS://OEHHA.CA.GOV/CALENVIROSCREEN](https://oehha.ca.gov/calenviroscreen).

community can decide which greenhouse gas reduction methods suit it best, and combine them accordingly

The TCC program model is considerably different than earlier models for delivery of greenhouse gas reduction funds. Money has typically been distributed by grading projects from across the state using a prescriptive set of guidelines that directs applicants when they put together a particular kind of project. TCC, on the other hand, is place-based, with a less prescriptive set of thresholds and requirements, allowing applicants and the community to define for themselves what community transformation looks like.

### **Requirements for the Project Package**

The proposal that Fresno will submit to the SGC must meet three goals: greenhouse gas reduction, environmental and health benefits, and economic opportunity and shared prosperity. In addition, there is a leverage requirement. An equivalent fifty percent of the granted funds must be raised from other public or private sources for the collection of proposed projects. Individual projects are to be judged for their catalytic potential, such that their implementation encourages further investment in the targeted communities. All projects must be compatible with already completed community plans — the Southwest Specific Plan, the Fulton Corridor Specific Plan, and the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan. And finally, Fresno has been directed to consider connectivity to the High-Speed Rail (HSR) station as an additional factor in choosing projects.

Applicants for funding must have experience in overseeing and managing large infrastructure projects, as well as the ability to forward the funds on a reimbursement basis. Since this financial and management capacity rarely exists at the neighborhood level, the City of Fresno is identified as the Lead Applicant for the city's TCC projects proposal. However, since the proposal must be chosen and submitted through a citizen participatory process, the city government contracted with the recently-formed Central Valley Foundation (CVF), led by former mayor Ashley Swearingin, to facilitate the publicizing, gathering, and organizing of the citizen-composed steering committee that is at the center of the process.

### **FTCCC off to a Rocky Start**

The first meeting of the Fresno Transformative Climate Communities Collaborative (FTCCC) public steering committee got off to a rocky start. Anyone who lives, works, or owns property in Southwest Fresno, Chinatown, or Downtown Fresno was invited to join in the participatory process. However, the organizers

clearly did not expect the level of participation that their publicity engendered. The ballroom at the Hotel Californian was set up with only eighty or so chairs, but some 350 citizens showed up to take part, so most had to remain standing throughout the meeting. Proof of CVF's low expectations lay in their not even bringing an amplified sound system for the meeting.

### **Reservations about the Process and Distrust of the City Government**

Naturally, this has led many to question the authenticity of the goals for citizen participation. The most pressing concern from those present was who ends up having the final say in which projects are included in the final package. H. Spees, chosen by Mayor Lee Brand to be the city's point person on the FTCCC, responded to the question of whether the public's vote can be overridden by stating clearly that the mayor is ultimately the man in charge. But he added that it would be foolish for him to disregard the recommendations of the community after having brought the community to the center of this process, not to mention the negative political impact.

If the mayor approves of the community recommendations, he will then take the package to the City Council, which will vote whether to send the proposal package to the Strategic Growth Council.

Many residents of West Fresno, the collection of neighborhoods west of Highway 99, are particularly cynical about trusting the city government to honor their promise to use the \$70 million to benefit their community. For decades, they say, the city has made promises to help this part of Fresno that it has not kept, encouraging development instead in the downtown area. And with the mayor having actively campaigned for office promoting a trickle-out theory of downtown development benefitting surrounding neighborhoods, their worry is that most of the funds will end up diverted to the downtown business center and streets around the HSR station.

### **Experiencing Sudden Disenfranchisement**

The two subsequent meetings of the FTCCC steering committee, with a couple of hundred still attending, were run much more smoothly than the first one, but qualifications for membership in the committee were narrowed by limiting project locations to just the two zip codes of 93721 and 93706. My own neighborhood in the Lowell District northwest of downtown, having its own zip code of 93701, was originally included in the eligible area, but it became disenfranchised from the process by that decision, despite being entirely within the region identified as disadvantaged in the initial screening. After verbalizing my own complaint about this to the assembly, I nevertheless managed to



secure a vote for myself due to the fact that much of my work is accomplished at the Hashtag, a computer club in the center of downtown.

Another concern regarding voting membership in the steering committee had to do with the requirement to be actively participating in the process. It is not enough to have a stake in the project area. While a few participants felt that a one-person, one-vote policy for all residents of the area should prevail at the final project vote, most of those I talked with agreed that only those who have been regularly attending the steering committee meetings should be granted voting rights in choosing which projects will be included in the final proposal. With a total of five steering committee meetings, the necessary threshold for enfranchisement is attendance at three of those five meetings.

### **Problems with a New Process**

As a participatory democratic process, the Fresno Transformative Climate Communities Collaborative process suffers from an accelerated schedule, an ambitious and untested voting procedure for choosing projects, and severe distrust of city government among those meant to benefit most from these state funds.

The whole process is being pushed along by a deadline to have the proposal completed and presented to the SGC by the end of October, which has left little time for community groups to develop and submit project proposals. The final project package will include only so-called shovel-ready projects already in the pipeline, with their well-developed cost breakdowns, unless city staff can work with community groups to quickly develop their new projects into completed grant proposals that can meet readiness thresholds by the state deadlines. However, if this can indeed be accomplished, it will bring needed expertise to parts of the city that need it most, so that currently involved citizens can teach others in their communities how to further engage the city to improve their neighborhoods.

As of the last meeting, there were 96 projects proposed. Not all of these are expected to meet the requirements for TCC funding, but while some may not be eligible, they may still be included in the final package if they can help bring in the necessary matching funds.

Besides having a cost that fits within the \$70 million state grant and providing the necessary \$35 million in matching funds, the submitted project package must reduce greenhouse gas reductions, provide public health and environmental benefits, addressing local sources of pollution, and encourage economic opportunity and shared prosperity, including jobs for low-income residents of the project area. The package must also integrate vehicle and pedestrian connection

between the High Speed Rail station and the surrounding neighborhoods, providing complete streets, bicycle and pedestrian (“active transportation”) opportunities, public parks, and affordable, mixed-use housing centers close by the HSR station. Projects should avoid displacement of existing residents and small businesses, and all projects must fit within the five-square-miles of the as-yet undefined package area.

There is a lot of detail to absorb for community members unfamiliar with planning processes. But city staff say they are committed to help with any eligible project proposal. Let’s hope the public rises to the task and engages the planning professionals in developing ready project plans. Especially since community engagement must be demonstrated in the final package, this should include project development, and not just the public voting on the final plan.

### **A Host of Possibilities**

Among proposed projects are non-motorized urban trails separated from traffic, bicycle share and zero-emission car share fleets, a complete street and pedestrian alleyway along the length of Chinatown, tree planting to provide shade and improve air quality, clustered housing with micro-retail space near transit hubs, community gardens and food waste distribution programs, energy efficiency retrofitting for low-income family residents, and rehabilitation of existing buildings for low-cost business rental. Even within the strict limitations of the TCC guidelines, there are endless opportunities for new eligible projects.

\$70 million may sound like a lot, but it isn’t really. It is hoped that with a well-designed, synergistic package, the projects chosen will also serve as a catalyst for further private and public investment to achieve a positive economic and environmental transformation of these long-neglected neighborhoods in West Fresno and Chinatown, helping to heal existing rifts in our Fresno community.

Three remaining meetings are scheduled:

- September 20 – Project Review Day, at which all project submitters will present their projects to the public and answer questions
- September 27 – Community Steering Committee meeting #4, where members will rank and package the submitted projects within the funding limitations, developing several alternative packages for consideration
- October 4 – Community Steering Committee meeting #5, when eligible members will vote amongst the several alternative packages that meet state and local criteria, choosing one to forward to Mayor Brand and the City Council

# How the 2012 Forest Plan Revision Policy Partners with Stakeholders

by Trudy Tucker

Environmental organizations have been involved with USDA Forest Service forest plan revision processes for decades. For years, organizations and other interested stakeholders have spent time and money (e.g. lawsuits) challenging and holding the agency accountable to include environmental issues, systems, and species in their land management planning documents, standards and guidelines.

The agency spent years drafting and writing forest planning documents, and only when they were complete, outreached for public comments. The public had a lot to say about what was in or not in the documents. Disagreements and, if needed, lawsuits would be enacted to make documents changes. Meanwhile, forests continued using old plans, way beyond their expiration dates.



**WORKING WITH THE PUBLIC, TRIBES, COMMUNITIES, AND COOPERATING AGENCIES, THE FOREST SERVICE IS PLANNING HOW OUR LOCAL INYO, SEQUOIA, AND SIERRA NATIONAL FORESTS WILL BE MANAGED FOR THE NEXT 10-15 YEARS.**

Tired of this negative and lengthy process, the agency outreached to the public, stakeholders, and other forest users to revamp and improve the process. The end result was an epic rewrite of the old policy planning rules producing the new 2012 Forest Plan Revision policy.

The main message received was to include interested members of the public and stakeholders at the beginning and throughout the process enabling the agency to develop and write a better forest plan. Working with all parties allowed open communication and better transparency, providing a process that fosters collaboratively working through issues, discussions, and disagreements.

The agency selected nine early adopter national forests to test and work through any difficulties in the new policy directions. The Sierra, Sequoia and Inyo National Forests were chosen to be early adopters. Many Tehipite Chapter leaders consistently participated in the many initial public meetings to learn, share concerns, and make suggestions to the agency leadership. The new policy:

- provides an upfront process for reviewing any known needs, deficiencies or issues;
- includes working with the Center for Collaborative Policy, Sacramento State University, to develop and use a *Regional Collaboration and Communication Plan*, a model to outline and follow public outreach and participation. The plan was completed after analyzing issues and concerns regarding forest plan revision and ideas for effective communication;
- developed new public meeting/participation events, e.g. the Sierra Cascades Dialog quarterly sessions open to everyone, bringing diverse groups to collaborate on issues as the process moved forward;
- created electronic platforms for any and all to participate and collaborate virtually: *Our Forest Place*.
- *Our Forest Place* was used to complete a new project, developing forest assessments of all 15 topics based on the 2012 Planning Rule to advise the planning process. Stakeholders were engaged in a transparent way, shared ownership in the process, and fostered a community of learning to capitalize on shared knowledge. These assessments were an important foundational record in developing the final forest assessment documents.

Interested communities, organizations, and stakeholders are continuing to collaborate with the agency throughout the process to work with, comment on and make suggestions to the end of the process. The Tehipite Chapter is a coalition partner of like-minded organizations continuing to work with regional and forest leadership on specific issues, directing focus on missing or overlooked entities, questioning processes for clarity or deficiencies, and making suggestions on being successful. Some important Coalition issues the group has worked on: the Species of Conservation Concern, Wild and Scenic River evaluation, the Wilderness Inventory and Evaluation, the science synthesis documents, bioregional assessments, and development of alternatives in the NEPA process. The Coalition is in active communication with the agency, continuing to represent our values, issues, and goals in this new process to its end and implementation.

For more information on USDA Forest Service forest planning, visit Pacific Southwest Region 5 website: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/r5/landmanagement/planning>. Check out local forest planning in the right columns.

## Road Trip to the 2017 Solar Eclipse

– CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 –

declared national monuments, I also passed by the occasional large mine, supplying raw material for our industrial needs and consumerist desires. The small town of Gabbs in Nye County, named for a paleontologist who scouted for fossil specimens in the valley, boasts the oldest continuously operating mine in the state, which importantly produced magnesium for the war effort to defeat fascism. Magnesium ore from Gabbs was trucked to Luning in Mineral County, where it was transferred to railroad cars bound for the West during World War II. Today Luning is the site of a large field of solar panels.

I stopped at an historical plaque marking the site of a waystation on the route of the ephemeral Pony Express. Later, passing by piles of gravel beside the road, waiting to



**TOWERS STRETCH OVER A MILE ALONG THE TOP OF RELAY RIDGE IN IDAHO, WHERE I CHOSE TO WATCH THE 2017 TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE**

be spread out with oil to keep the routes smoothly paved, I was reminded that even with the early production of cars, this trip to the eclipse would have been impossible one hundred years ago in the short time it was taking me.

I nostalgically recalled road trips I took with my father in the days before Interstate Highways, when gas stations had attendants who checked our oil and cleaned our windshield. Today, though, even in the smallest and remotest one-gas-station towns, gasoline pumps all take credit cards, so you can get gas even in the dead of night when no one is at the station.

Traditional issues the Sierra Club cares about also came to the fore on this road trip. Air quality, which Nevada has in abundance, was glorious across the state, and brought sadness and anger as I contemplated its contrast to the atmosphere I breathe every day at home in the San Joaquin Valley. The vast landscapes that I drove across, nearly all under federal control, brought to mind the

debate over management of our public lands. Though a few roads and ranches, mines and mining towns, dot the land, the overall sense is still of a world predominately wild, and here it remains largely owned by we the people.

I disdained the developed, and usually expensive, campgrounds, preferring instead to turn off onto a gravel road for a ways to camp out on empty public land. My first night was high near a pass before the main highway entered Idaho. In a hollow between clumps of sagebrush, I laid out my campsite, three layers of inch-thick foam pads over a plastic tarp, which shielded me from small branches and gravel. With sheets and blankets it felt as good as a bed. Eschewing a tent to feel the wind and cold air upon my face, I was open to the millions of stars visible on that moonless night.

### **Cultivating the Astronomical Mind**

Gazing up at the galaxy crossing an otherwise dark sky, I cultivated my astronomical mind, imagining the multiple combined motions of the earth in rotation, the moon and planets in their orbits, and the whole solar system sweeping along at over a half million miles every hour. Even at that brisk clip, it still takes 230 million years to complete one orbit around the center of the Milky Way. I pondered the three-dimensionality of it all — bright stars up relatively close to our system, dimmer stars farther off in the nearby vastness of our neighborhood in the starry galactic arm. Black gaseous nebulae blocked my vision into the dynamic heart of the galactic center. In the morning I was mentally prepared to view an eclipse of the sun.

Back on the road, I soon entered the more populated region of the Snake River Plain. The valley was thick with urban haze and smoke from forest fires, which I immediately perceived would seriously degrade the enjoyment of the eclipse if viewed from down in these lowlands. I quickly decided to continue on into Wyoming if I was unable to reach my initial destination atop the Big Hole Mountains in Caribou-Targhee National Forest.

### **Finding the Perfect Place to View the Eclipse**

In the months leading up to the cosmic event, I had studied the NASA charts of the path of totality, with their precisely calculated and mapped times, durations, distances, and plotted percentages of solar obscuration. This would be my second total solar eclipse. The first, in Virginia's Great Dismal Swamp in 1970, remains today one of the most awesome experiences of my entire life, and I was resolved not to miss this opportunity to experience another one. But I wanted to see it from a high location this time, hoping I could see the edge of the moon's shadow cross the lowlands as it approached my perch on a mountain. I found a perfect location in Idaho atop Ryan Peak, located on the center line of the eclipse path and with a road clear to the summit.

The Forest Service office was closed the Sunday I drove

through Idaho Falls. I'm glad it was, as they would definitely have counseled against my taking a regular highway vehicle up that dirt road to the summit. But with a line of radio transmission towers crowning the ridge crest, I figured the road must be navigable for service and maintenance vehicles, so I was determined to give it a go.

The road up to the aptly-named Relay Ridge definitely required my constant vigilance to every foot of the road, since I was driving a low-clearance Toyota Corolla. That meant dodging rocks and deep ruts on many parts of the road. Since I am recommending this fairly unknown viewpoint, if only for the great vista, I strongly suggest taking a high-clearance vehicle, though having four-wheel-drive is unnecessary.

### **A Rough Road atop the Ridge**

Soon after I arrived on top, a Volkswagen also made it to the summit ridge, having come on a test run to see if they should drive up the morning of the eclipse. On turning around just past the top, they promptly ran over a protruding rock and punctured a hole in their car. A trail of oil led up the slope to where they had stopped, pooling under their car. They were unprepared for spending the



**RELAY RIDGE WAS NOT ONLY A SPECTACULAR PLACE TO WATCH THE SOLAR ECLIPSE, BUT IT ALSO PROVIDED SCENIC CAMP SITES**

night on top, but the exposure of the ridge meant we had excellent cell phone reception. In due time they were picked up, and would return a few days later with jack and a new oil pan to repair their car, but their enthusiasm for watching the eclipse on the ridge was gone and they would not return in the morning.

I had chosen Relay Ridge because of the clear view west across the Snake River Valley. I was thrilled to see that the ridge drops off fairly steeply to the east as well, giving an unimpeded view east across Teton Valley to the Teton Range, the three Tetons prominent on the horizon above the agricultural town of Driggs. Memories of my exploration of the back side of the Tetons, from our base

camp in Alaska Basin, were revived by the view. Ryan Peak, the high point of the long ridge on which I stood, has a wonderful 360-degree panorama, with the agricultural plains four thousand feet below wrapping around three sides of the lightly forested Big Hole Mountains.

### **Contemplating the Presence of Man on the Landscape**

Only the radio towers break the continuous vista, but I didn't really mind. They were the only reason the road was there, and my campsite was made easy by laying down my three foam pads on the flat concrete beside one of the buildings. That night, as I looked up at a star-strewn sky through the beams of a radio transmission tower, the valleys below sprinkled with road lights, moving cars, small towns, and the city of Idaho Falls in the distance, my mind was brought back to the technological presence of man on the landscape. I marveled at the florescence of agriculture all across the valley floor, the ability to communicate wirelessly over great distances, and the fact that our species can so track the movements of celestial objects that we can predict precisely where, and to the day, hour, minute, and second when, a total solar eclipse will begin and end, with such reliability that millions of people will travel out of their way to see this spectacle, totally relying on those predictions without a measure of doubt in the scientists' calculations. The setting at the summit was for me the ultimate expression of the integration of man and nature, of the wild and the useful.

The mile-long ridge of towers was well-populated the morning of the eclipse, most having spent the night on top. There were well over a hundred people along the ridge, but it did not seem crowded. I tried to take some photographs, but my camera stopped working. I really didn't mind. I had planned on not taking pictures during the eclipse, resolved to focus instead on just appreciating the experience.

### **Watching the Approach of the Shadow of the Moon**

As totality approached, our surroundings grew noticeably darker and the air cooled to jacket temperatures. Then the shadow's edge was sighted out over the Snake River Plain approaching rapidly from the west-northwest. Traveling at forty miles an hour, the shadow took an appreciable amount of time to reach the ridge, at which point the sky went dark and we were able to look directly at the sun. Crossing the ridge, the shadow took most of a minute to sweep across Teton Valley, until darkness engulfed the Tetons thirty miles away.

Photos do not do justice to what it is like to look with one's own naked eyes at that spectacle in the sky, the unlit side of the moon facing us straight on, a seemingly perfect circle of black, as black as you will ever experience, surrounded by bright glowing corona streaming out from the hidden sun, with a dynamic range that no picture can



**THIRTY MILES FROM RELAY RIDGE, THE MAIN PEAKS OF THE CENTRAL TETON RANGE RISE ABOVE THE TOWN OF DRIGGS, IDAHO, IN TETON VALLEY, WITH GRAND TETON ON THE LEFT, THE HIGHEST AND NORTHERNMOST OF THE THREE TETONS.**

capture. Around the horizon, with our 360-degree panorama, the sunlight in the distance cast a twilight glow in a complete circle.

I relaxed in a portable chair to enjoy the duration of the eclipse, taking it all in at my leisure, while others down the ridge rushed about taking pictures or looking through their telescopes. Exclamations of wonder came from all sides. I was pleased that totality seemed to last longer than I had expected, but eventually the bright flash of the re-emerging sun appeared, darkness dissipated, and we all watched the shadow's edge retreat across the valley to the east until the Teton Mountains once again brightened in the sunlight.

Though this eclipse more than lived up to my expectations, it was not as special as my first one when I was a teenager. The rich atmospheric colors I remember from the eclipse in 1970 were not to be seen in this event, the colors somewhat grayed out, lost in the smoke and haze, even on top of the range. No stars were visible, only planets, and Mercury was undetectable in the smoke's

diffusion of the bright light from the corona.

My first eclipse was a primal experience for me. I had not studied eclipse photographs in books so much as I have now. Any viewing in reality now is colored by those decades of seen images, usually in close-up, of the corona streaming out from behind the moon. Pictures exist in abundance on the Internet, and in magazines and books, as photo and print reproduction technique gets better and better. I know too much now to duplicate the experience I had as a neophyte eclipse viewer. And yet, so clear in the sky above me, the corona seemed larger in relation to the sun's size than the photos had indicated, and I realized that sometimes the human eye is a better instrument than any camera at capturing a range of brightness.

Joining the line of SUVs and trucks going down the mountain, and the even bigger mess of traffic jamming the highways and interstate freeways, I eventually pulled into a McDonald's to hook up with the Internet. Several videos already on YouTube documented the eclipse. In one video, the parents and their kids get all excited about the effects



**THIS PANORAMIC VIEW LOOKS EAST FROM RYAN PEAK ACROSS TETON VALLEY TOWARD THE TETON MOUNTAINS. GRAND TETON RISES THIRTY MILES AWAY IN WYOMING, ABOVE THE TOWN OF DRIGGS, IDAHO. AT 8840 FEET, RYAN PEAK, THE SUMMIT POINT OF RELAY RIDGE, IS THE THIRD HIGHEST MOUNTAIN IN THE BIG HOLE MOUNTAINS. IT LIES WITHIN CARIBOU-TARGHEE NATIONAL FOREST. THERE IS A WELL-MAINTAINED, HIGH-CLEARANCE DIRT ROAD TO THE TOP OF THE RIDGE, WHICH IS HOME TO NUMEROUS RELAY TOWERS.**

they were seeing, anticipating each of them and ticking their names off the list — Bailey’s Beads, The Diamond Ring Effect, Shadow Bands — as if they were following a script, rather than just saying, “Oh, look at that, and at that. Isn’t it amazing?” I wonder if it isn’t better not to teach too much about an eclipse to little children. Instead, let them experience the surprise and wonder of a black sun surrounded by a halo in the sky, so different from our ordinary daily experience of the sun, and later, they can learn what it all meant.

#### **Desert Vistas Too Broad to Photograph**

I got back on the back roads at my first opportunity, once again enjoying vast desert vistas too broad to photograph. Like the eclipse, they must be experienced, because no medium can adequately capture the beauty of the particular within the context of the panorama.

I took my time coming home, camping two more nights on BLM-managed lands in central Nevada. The first of those camps was close by the transcontinental railway. Mile-long freight trains rolled by five times that night, much to my delight.

The next day I passed through cloudbursts in the high valleys and rain storms on the mountain passes, and I enjoyed a great show of lightning strikes over the fields of Diamond Valley. At my next night’s camp I had to cope with intermittent rain throughout the night, unfolding a second sheet of plastic to stay dry.

My route took me past spectacular rock formations which line the roads as they descend along dry creek beds. Hundreds of rabbits ran across the highway in front of me, while hawks and vultures soared overhead.

Unlike in California, where traveling east necessitates crossing one of the high passes of the Sierra Nevada, the highways of Nevada wend their way around shorter ranges, so that the long-distance traveler never has to gain much altitude in going over passes between valleys. Smaller roads break off from the highways, making their way into these mountains to end at remote trailheads.

Though I was taking my time returning home, I wished I could have taken even longer to more thoroughly enjoy the region.

I am glad I avoided the crowds, the campgrounds on airport runways, the peddlers selling food, eclipse glasses, and I don’t know what kind of eclipse souvenirs. I didn’t see many of those when I passed through the eclipse zone, keeping clear of tourist magnets.

However, passing through Austin, an old mining community perched high up in a hollow on the west side of the Toiyabe Range in Lander county, I stopped for gas and picked up a square pin that said “I survived 50,” the number emblazoned on a US Highway shield, “the loneliest road.” That seemed appropriate, for while the eclipse was deservedly the main event, this trip was as much about the journey as it was the destination. My road trip there and back again was for me a revelation, once again, of the glory of Nevada, of its clean air, majestic vistas, and unfulfilled promises of adventure.

#### **Passing by Wilderness and Missing Its Essence**

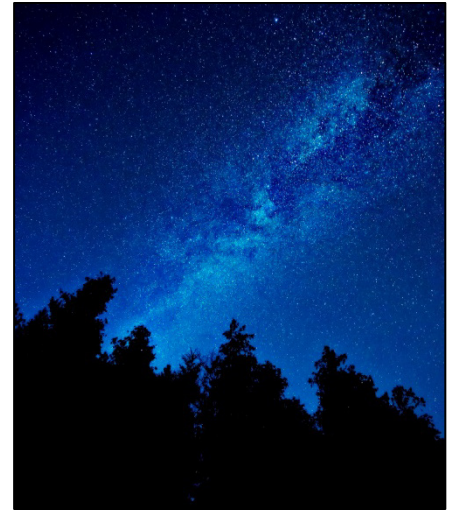
At their most basic, US Highway 50 and the John Muir Trail aren’t all that much different. They both have their man-made constructions of bridges over creeks and rivers, retaining walls, and directional signs. True, the one is an unpaved, sometimes gravel, path meant for riding a horse, but beyond that heavily manufactured strip lies a visual scape of natural patterns. Staying on the Muir Trail for the whole route is about like traveling Nevada on the Loneliest Road. Without venturing off the main path into the real wild, one is missing the details, the texture of wilderness, and the true scale of the landscape.

While driving across Nevada, every mountain range I passed brought to mind potential adventures on foot or horseback. I have been in Nevada many times, and I have hiked to the summits of several of its ranges, but those times were long ago, and I needed to have revealed to me once again the sublime beauty of the Great Basin, an integral part of our magnificent West.

# A World of Dark, a Nation of Light

by Heather Anderson

A nation of light, defying the world's eons of darkness, was introduced on New Year's Eve, 1878, when Thomas Edison lit up the small town of Menlo Park, New Jersey with his discovery and utilization of the electric light. Now, on my evening city walk, I need to look intently even to find Orion or the Big Dipper and its handle which points the North Star. Once, driving home to Fresno late at night from San Francisco, I got lost during a detour and found myself out in the fields without street signs, direction, or compass. Unlike my children, I was born without a compass in my head. It was a beautiful dark sky, so I got out of the car and looked for the North Star, the ancient method of direction, but still was unable to orient myself. Finally some young men came along and directed me back to the highway.



Various categorizations of night light exist: *glare*, light shining into our eyes; *skyglow*, light shining into the sky above the horizon, and *light trespass*, light directed into unwanted areas, e.g. a neighbor's yard and windows. There are, however, problems. Fortunate to live on an urban lakeside, a neighbor may burn many shore lights (double that, counting lake reflection) even opposite my window. Some folks feel the need of a bright housetop light illuminating the lake as well as adjacent homes. All this night light seems more than needed. Using no drapes, I prefer to wake gently with the natural dawn. Research has found that lack of darkness in bedrooms often interrupts or prevents a sound sleep.

I recently learned of the International Dark-Sky Association, a non-profit, United States-based organization incorporated in 1988. Mostly, they work to raise awareness about the value of dark, star-filled night skies and encourage their protection, preservation, and restoration through education about the problems and solutions, including quality outdoor lighting practices that cause less light pollution. Innovative ways of lighting are being found to dim the effects of bright city light (like a deflector that would direct light downward rather than outward into others' space). Now we even have International Dark Sky Parks, Reserves, and Communities.

The effects on health and ecology by artificial night light are being studied. We humans have evolved over millennia, exposed to roughly equal periods of light and dark. The disruption of this circadian rhythm is found to cause hormone imbalance in all living organisms. As a result, our health may be impacted by hypertension, attention deficit disorder, obesity, diabetes and some forms of cancer.

Ecological light pollution is the effect of artificial night light on the structure of ecosystems as a whole. One of the most drastic man-caused changes to Earth, it is comparable to global climate change, toxic pollution, and land use change. Most species can be categorized as either nocturnal or diurnal. There are varied effects on different species, depending on the interactions of predator and prey and altered food webs. Without listing the many humans, animals, and insects, it is enough to know that all species respond differently to these diurnal/nocturnal, seasonal, and lunar cycles. For example, the irregularity of time and seasons will interrupt mating season in non-tropical animals, hibernation in some animals, and especially migration patterns of some birds. The day-night cycle is a most powerful environmental behavioral signal.

Humans work, drive, and play at night while other species live out their hard-wired existence of food-gathering and migration during this ancient natural rhythm of light and dark. Another unfortunate effect of artificial night light is the annual killing of many millions of birds from their attraction to tall light structures, including lighted airports. Take a look at a satellite photographic display of Earth's night light to comprehend the extent of light pollution. Efforts are being made to ameliorate some of these problems, to recognize our failure to address them, and to work for balance.

Treat yourself to get out of town, and see an absolutely beautiful starlit sky. I liken it to an El Greco sky, after the Greek painter's *View of Toledo* (1598) under a dramatic night sky. Rachel Carson also loved the night sky, and wrote, "If this were a sight that could be seen only once in a human generation, this little headland would be thronged with spectators. But it can be seen many scores of nights in any year, and so the lights burned in the cottages and the inhabitants probably gave not a thought to the beauty overhead; and because they could see it almost any night perhaps they will never see it." My favorite skyscape is from a mountain top, outside my tent, looking at the stunning cosmic show, one of the greatest of natural wonders.



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*Tehipite Topics* is published three times during the 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 Autumn 2017 issue by email to robertsturner52@gmail.com before October 31.

**“Following the Silk Road through Central Asia”**

**Our October General Meeting with Helen Gigliotti is Wednesday, October 18 at 7:00 PM**

Following the Silk Road through the countries of central Asia, affectionally known as the Stans, is one of life’s great adventures. Bordering on Iran, Afghanistan, and China at various points, the countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan were created along tribal boundaries following the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991. Their ancient history is monumental, with spurs of the Great Silk Road criss-crossing each country and legends of great conquerors, such as Alexander the Great, Timur (Tamerlane), and Genghis Khan pervasive in their culture.

Each of these countries is Islamic by history and tradition, with superb mosques and madrassas testifying to their heritage. Attempts to introduce radical Islamic ways are not tolerated by the state and the trend is increasingly secular, especially in the more oil-wealthy countries such as Turkmenistan. Breakup of the Soviet Union with its “birth to death” security was very difficult for a few years, particularly for the older folks, so there is still a bit of nostalgia for the “old days,” and ties to Russia are still very strong.

The photographic opportunities are extraordinary, from the colorful mosaics to the ancient rock fortresses of Samarkand and Bukhara, from the bustling markets to the colorful dress of the women ...all so photogenic! Especially in Uzbekistan, the home-based handicraft industry is spectacular. The textiles, ceramics, and woodwork are truly works of art.



***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 Streets)