

Redwood Needles



Summer 2024

Sierra Club Redwood Chapter

Volume 66, No. 3



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Wildflower photos by Teri Shore. Clockwise from upper left: Calypso Orchid, Seep Monkey Flower, Paintbrush, Trillium, Dutchman's Pipe

A year of record global heat has pushed Earth closer to dangerous threshold

This article by Scott Dance appeared in the Washington Post, June 5, 2024

A streak of record-setting heat that began last summer has now persisted for an entire year across the globe, researchers announced Wednesday, pushing Earth closer to a dangerous threshold that the world's nations have pledged not to cross.

The data released by European climate scientists showed May was the 12th consecutive month during which average global temperatures surpassed all observations since 1850, and probably any extended period for more than 100,000 years. Over the past year, according to the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service, global temperatures averaged 1.6 degrees Celsius (2.9 degrees Fahrenheit) above preindustrial levels.

Under the landmark 2015 Paris agreement, the world's leaders pledged to hold Earth's temperature rise "to well below" 2 degrees C (3.6 degrees F) above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts "to limit the temperature increase" to 1.5 degrees C above pre-industrial levels, to avert some of the worst effects of global warming. The fact that the planet surpassed 1.5 degrees C for one year does not amount to a permanent shift, but it comes as scientists are warning that it is likely to happen again — within a few years.

The World Meteorological Organization said that it is highly likely that, for at least one calendar year in the next five, temperatures will exceed 1.5 degrees C above preindustrial levels once more.

This unprecedented stretch of warmth, which has astonished scientists, prompted an urgent call by the United Nations to ban fossil fuel companies from advertising and encourage the public to stop using their products.

"For the past year, every turn of the calendar has turned up the heat," U.N. Secretary General António Guterres said in a special address in New York. "Our planet is trying to tell us something. But we don't seem to be listening."

Researchers have linked the rise in temperatures to the El Niño climate pattern and decades of global heating from human emissions of greenhouse gases.

A decade ago, scientists had estimated that the chances of the planet warming 1.5 degrees C by 2020 were nearly zero. Now, the probability of that happening by 2028 is an estimated 8 in 10.

Global temperature records have been broken by significant margins since last June, as a burgeoning El Niño began releasing vast stores of heat from the Pacific Ocean. During the periodic climate pattern, warmer-than-average waters pool along the equator in the central and eastern Pacific, transferring warmth and moisture into the atmosphere and triggering extreme heat waves, floods and droughts around the world.

In July, temperatures rose above the 1.5-degree C warming benchmark for an entire month, the first time that had happened.

That warming trend then continued largely unabated. Global surface-air temperatures last month averaged 1.5 degrees C higher than



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SIERRA CLUB

REDWOOD CHAPTER

Redwood Needles

A Quarterly Publication of
Sierra Club Redwood Chapter

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The Executive Committee is the governing body of the chapter, with one (1) member delegated by each of six (6) regional groups and six (6) members elected at large. Each group elects its own Executive Committee. The chapter ExCom meets every-other month over Zoom.

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A visit to an old dam yields a glimpse of the new future for the Eel River

This article by Mary Callahan appeared in the Press Democrat, June 14, 2024 (<https://bit.ly/3Xv0aUv>)

CAPE HORN DAM — Poised atop a high concrete structure that will no longer exist in a few short years, a group of public officials surveyed the Eel River on a recent Friday as it tumbled down the face of Cape Horn Dam.

There, they contemplated the river's future. It is a future without the two dams that impede its flows. A future that will once again allow declining salmon and steelhead trout to once again swim upstream. And a future that will maintain water supplies

critical to more than 600,000 Russian River water consumers at the same time.

The 51-foot-high, sloping dam they stood on that day — and the enormous boulders that now slow the water so some can be redirected into the Russian River — would be shaved away, freeing the Eel to flow more naturally.

Impediments that put declining salmon and steelhead populations at risk would be eliminated, improving conditions as well for Pacific lampreys that occupy the same waters. (Often mistaken for eels, lampreys prompted the river's name.)

Scott Dam, which impounds Lake Pillsbury 12 miles upstream on the Eel, will be gone too, reopening 288 miles of streams to migrating fish and restor-

ing a river that has been manipulated for more than a century to provide hydropower and water through Pacific Gas & Electric's Potter Valley power plant.

Challenges ahead

But enormous challenges lie ahead, including the sensitive negotiation over when and how much water could be sent to the Russian River and what metrics would be used to determine when diversions could occur.

Fishing and environmental interests, as

well as downstream users in Humboldt County, have long fought to end diversions, saying all the water should be left in the Eel — particularly

now, as water temperatures below the dam heat up, imperiling fish.

The source of substantial funding needed to build and maintain new infrastructure is also undetermined, though some portion would be borne by municipal ratepayers and other consumers.

Even the design of the thing, still largely conceptual, is unfinished, though a \$2 million infusion from the Bureau of Reclamation announced in December is intended to take the design from 30% to 60% in the next year or so, closing in on final details of a fish-friendly diversion system.

The mixed crowd of local elected officials, environmental stewards, federal officials and others who visited the smaller of the two dams, about 85 miles



Officials from Lake, Mendocino and Sonoma Counties get a close up view of the Cape Horn Dam on the Eel River, Friday, June 7, 2024. (Kent Porter / The Press Democrat)

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A Billionaire-Backed City Promises to Be a Green Urban Paradise—but it may not be what it appears

This article appeared in *Sierra*, the national club newsletter, available here (<https://bit.ly/4euCOPT>)

Text and photographs by [Claire Greenburger](#)

A plan to develop a new city northeast of San Francisco has been seven years in the making, but until recently, the details were largely kept under wraps. Now that the plans are public—and the proposal has garnered enough signatures to make it onto the November ballot for voter consideration—residents and activists are squaring off to defeat what the developers promise will be a kind of green urban paradise.

Not so, say many of the plan's opponents. "My fight has all of a sudden started to heat up," said Joe Feller, chair emeritus of the Solano Group of the Sierra Club's Redwood Chapter, on the day the proposal made it onto the ballot.

For years, a mysterious LLC known as "Flannery Associates" was quietly buying up vast swaths of Solano County farmland. No one knew who they were or what they were doing. These large real estate plays, it now turns out, were part of a project backed by a who's who of Silicon Valley billionaires—among them Reid Hoffman,

the cofounder of LinkedIn, and Laurene Powell Jobs, the founder of Emerson Collective and widow of Steve Jobs—to build a new city that would house up to 400,000 people. Renderings of the city depict an oasis with dense middle-class housing, solar-powered homes, walkable



Jepson Prairie Reserve, adjacent to Flannery Associates' proposed development, hosts one of the few remaining vernal pool habitats and native bunchgrass prairies in California.

neighborhoods, open green space, and access to public transportation. The project, the developers claim, will solve the Bay Area's housing crisis. But according to Feller and several environmental groups who have banded together to oppose the project, it is not what it seems. Despite its promises, the development would come at a major cost to Solano County's natural environment. And there has been little community engagement about the proposed project or its potential impacts.

On a Sunday afternoon last February, as rainfall flooded roads across Northern California, hundreds of

Solano County residents gathered at a community center in Suisun City to celebrate the launch of Solano Together—a coalition of concerned residents and organizations opposed to Flannery Associates' plan. The crowd that day included a wide range of community members with varying

political views. At the event, impassioned farmers, environmentalists, and local leaders expressed outrage at how Flannery Associates had left them in the dark about their plan, which, they say, was a ploy by the developers to ensure low prices and minimal community resistance.

The crowd was fired up, erupting in cheers between each speaker. Unlike the land—of which Flannery now owns nearly 10 percent—"the spirit here is not for sale," said Princess Washington, mayor pro tem of Suisun City and the chair of the Redwood Chapter's Solano Group.

In April, months after the launch of Solano Together, Duane Kromm and Marilyn Farley, a retired couple who have been helping lead the coalition, drove a reporter north along Highway 113 to visit the site for the proposed city. Vast fields of hay and barley extended far into the distance.

A Stroll Around Lake Suttonfield

By Teri Shore

On a recent morning, I strolled around Lake Suttonfield at the former Sonoma Developmental Center. It is in the heart of the wildlife corridor where I've walked for decades. I was dazzled by the wildflowers and birds that I might have missed had I been pushing for an aerobic workout.

After decades hiking and backpacking as much as I can as fast and hard as I can, my body is forcing me to take it slow. Over the past year leg pain diagnosed as tendonitis has taken a toll on me despite trying just about everything. Finally, I'm realizing, and accepting, the benefits of easier walking. When you walk slower, you see so much more.

Right away, bright yellow mariposa lilies aka gold nuggets stopped me in my tracks. These elegant flowers are tiny sunbursts popping up from grass that has already mellowed to tawny hues. When the gold nuggets appear, summer heat soon follows.

Deep purple wine cup clarkias stretched up in the grasses and bushy yellow St. John's Wart lined up along the trail. But most wildflowers were done blooming, giving way to the leafy oaks and golden hills for the rest of the season.

As I admired the peaceful scene, a small, shy waterbird flushed from the shore. Mostly brown and grey with a short, sharp bill, it was a pie-billed grebe with three stripe-headed grebettes, as the chicks are called. The adults look a bit like coots or mud hens. One way to identify this grebe is the vertical black stripe on the bill. The grebettes have cool black and white head stripes for camouflage I assume. I had never seen a grebe family here before. The birds quickly pushed



Canadian geese family



Wine cup clarkias

out to safety in the center of the lake.

A bit further along, I heard a cry from the treetops. Often rowdy red-shouldered hawks are squawking and soaring around the lake. The reliable red-tailed hawk also is a regular here with its recognizable shrill call. But this was high-pitched and short. Scanning the canopy, I spotted an osprey spreading its narrow, angled wings from its white fuselage of its body as it emerged from the oak woodlands. I wondered if perhaps a nest was hidden in the trees. The osprey is a rare sight for this location.

When I got around the corner from the main body of the lake, I stopped to

watch a female mallard duck and her one remaining duckling happily munching on pond-weeds and bugs close to shore. Where was the male?

I looked up, and a few feet away was a unit of big, bad Canada geese giving me the evil eye. Intimidating alone, this crew was circling a fledge of meek mid-sized goslings. Not gonna mess with these birds! You never know, so I gave them wide berth, making a semi-circle off the trail and up the hill with my dog on short leash. They didn't budge but watched me retreat.

Next, I heard a ruckus in the sky, and saw a feisty kestrel repeatedly dive bombing a twitching, very annoyed Cooper's hawk. The small falcon wouldn't let up, probably trying to ward off the sleek accipiter's hunting for small birds in the woods—like maybe young kestrels?

Along with the birds mentioned so far, I heard or saw about 20 species of mostly resident birds

that morning including: spotted towhee, red-winged blackbird, song sparrow, acorn woodpecker, belted kingfisher, lesser goldfinch, killdeer, violet-green swallow, house finch, raven, black phoebe, house wren, white-breasted nuthatch, dark-eyed junco, mourning dove, oak titmouse, Northern mockingbird.

What a wild valley!

Teri Shore is chair of the Redwood Chapter Conservation Committee. Photos by Teri. This article originally appeared in the Sonoma Sun.



Dawn At Mineral King Valley: The Sierra Club, The Disney Company, and the Rise of Environmental Law

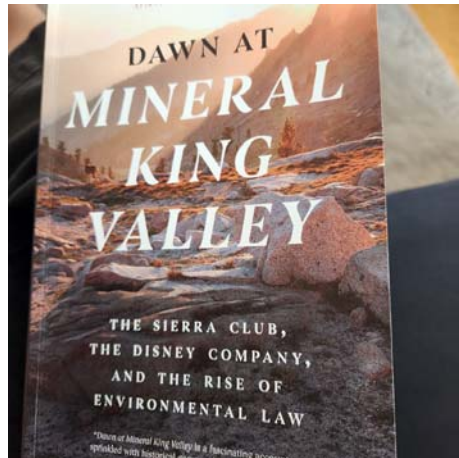
Book Review by Elayna Trucker,
Redwood Chapter and Sonoma
Group ExCom

Book by Daniel P. Selmi

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club for decades was largely a group of avid outdoorsmen who sought “to explore, enjoy, and render accessible” the natural landscape. That changed in the 1960s, when the organization made a rather tortuous turn towards conservation rather than recreation. In his new book, legal scholar Daniel P. Selmi explores how this shift in focus is exemplified, and was in part caused by, the fight over Mineral King Valley—a stunning Alpine area that until the 1978 was enclosed on three sides by Sequoia National Park. Run by the US Forest Service, Mineral King was at first thought to contain rich mines (as evidenced by its name) that never panned out (apologies for the pun).

In 1966, Walt Disney himself decided that Mineral King was an ideal place to build a huge recreational facility dedicated to skiing. Disney’s interest excited the Forest Service, who, a bit awe-struck, announced it would take bids on a development in Mineral King, with Disney the clear favorite. Despite opposition from a vocal minority, most of the Sierra Club board and membership were excited about the prospect. Many were lifelong skiers, and a recent fight against a ski resort at San Geronio lead the organization to appease its skiing membership with the mention of support for a ski facility in Mineral King.

But as the scale of the project came into focus, opposition to the Disney-Forest Service plan started to gain momentum. The project would require that a small road within Sequoia National Park be greatly improved and expanded on, not



Book by Daniel P. Selmi

to mention that ski lift counterweights would have to be located within the park as well. But Disney was a powerful political player, even after Walt’s death midway through the planning process,



and they convinced local and national politicians to support the project, even making the state of California agree to foot the \$30 million bill for road improvements.

The Sierra Club, despite its feeble response at the beginning, decided to go for the gold. Hiring a young San Francisco lawyer to argue its case, the Club sued to stop the Mineral King development. The main legal hurdle was the issue of standing: could SC prove that it even had a right to sue in this matter? With only one or two cases that could

be cited as precedence to the contrary, legal standing meant personal injury or harm had to or would befall the litigant. SC had to prove that even though they might not be personally harmed by a ski resort in a beautiful valley, letting the project move forward would represent a great loss to nature and to Americans in general. This was the delicate hinge upon which the Club’s case rested, and it would be argued in several courts for many years, all the way up to the Supreme Court in 1972.

Spoiler alert: the Club lost. But—and it’s a very important “but”—two Justices wrote dissenting opinions that would reverberate throughout the environmental community and change forever the way environmental disputes could be settled in the courts. Justice Douglas’s dissent became famous because it argued that *nature itself* had the right to exist and to have someone sue on its behalf to defend its rights. Justice Brennan argued in his dissent that SC had gone about it all wrong. If it had used its role as a frequent hike leader in Mineral King Valley, whose membership used it for recreational purposes that would become impossible should a giant ski resort be built there, then SC would have had standing to sue. Then the more pressing issues of the case could be considered on their own merits. Here, the Court was throwing the Club a bone—while they denied considering the case itself because of the Club’s lack of standing, they implied that an amended appeal might succeed.

As it turns out, they didn’t have to appeal. In the court of public opinion, the tide had turned against the Disney Company. A bombastic but popular congressman from San Francisco, Phil Burton, took up the plight of Mineral King Valley; and in 1978, Congress voted to

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A year of record global heat has pushed Earth closer to dangerous threshold

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the 1850-1900 global average, according to Copernicus.

Carlo Buontempo, the Copernicus director, said that as remarkable as the trend is, "this string of hottest months will be remembered as comparatively cold" without action to reverse it.

Emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases from burning fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gas act to trap heat within the atmosphere, preventing it from escaping into space.

A separate study published by a group of 57 scientists on Wednesday found that human activities were responsible for 92 percent of the warming observed in 2023, the planet's hottest calendar year on record. It said the rate of warming in the past decade is "unprecedented in the instrumental record."

Data on global temperature records come from direct observations from ground sensors dating back nearly two centuries, satellite observations in more recent decades, and evidence from historical records and geologic analyses that go further back in time.

While this data may not allow scientists to determine how hot it was on a single day or over a period of months many thousands of years ago, it does give confidence that the planet has not experienced such rapid and sustained warming since the end of the last ice age about 125,000 years ago.

As warming has surged, projections of Earth's temperature trajectory have accelerated.

The latest version of a periodic report on near-term warming, also released Wednesday, shows it has become nearly

a certainty that global temperatures will continue to cross into dangerous territory. At a sustained average of 1.5 degrees C above preindustrial levels, the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has warned that weather will become so extreme, many people will struggle to adapt to it.



Phoenix Fire Capt. John Prato demonstrates a new protocol that the fire department in America's hottest big city is adopting as the West braced for the first heat wave of the summer season this week. (Anita Snow/AP)

"The difference between 1.5 and 2 degrees could be the difference between extinction and survival for some small island states and coastal communities," Guterres said.

Many climate scientists say that the Paris agreement's target of no more than 1.5 C is already out of reach, though they stress that a single year above that level of warming does not mean the goal is lost.

Scientists now estimate an 86 percent chance that at least one of the next five years also surpasses the record average annual temperature observed across the globe in 2023.

An increasingly dire call to action

Guterres used the data to stress the urgency of climate action ahead of a June meeting in Italy of the Group of Seven

— the world's wealthiest democracies — where matters of war and global trade are expected to take center stage.

He repeated past calls for countries to stop investing in new coal power generation, and for developed countries to increase investment in clean energy and

extreme weather adaptation, especially in poorer countries that have done the least to contribute to climate change and are feeling some of its worst effects.

And Guterres is now demanding that all countries ban advertising from fossil fuel companies and that media and tech companies stop taking those companies' ad dollars.

Several cities and one country have already banned some fossil fuel advertising. Last month, the city council of Edinburgh, Scotland, voted

to ban advertisements for fossil fuels as well as ads for SUVs and aviation. Amsterdam similarly has prohibited advertisements of gas-powered cars and airplane trips in the city's center and subway stations.

And after French President Emmanuel Macron asked 150 ordinary citizens to help with climate policymaking, his nation banned advertisements for coal, petroleum and hydrogen made from fossil fuels in 2022, though fossil fuel companies can still sponsor events.

"We are playing Russian roulette with our planet," Guterres said. "We need an exit ramp off the highway to climate hell."

Shannon Osaka contributed to this report.

<https://wapo.st/4c9msPS>

A visit to an old dam yields a glimpse of the new future for the Eel River

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north of Santa Rosa, appeared united in their commitment to the plan.

Brought together by North Coast Congressman Jared Huffman, they were celebrating, for one, the \$2 million in bipartisan infrastructure funds from the Bureau of Reclamation's Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Program, a product of legislation Huffman championed "with this project in mind," he said.

Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner Camille Touton spoke of the value of improved fish passage in California's third-largest river system and water security for those who live along the Russian River, into which some Eel River water would still be diverted.

The new funding program is set up to provide \$250 million over five years for projects that bring widespread, regional benefits that enhance ecosystem restoration and climate resilience. It could be a source of future funding for the Eel-Russian river project, Touton said.

"Your success is Reclamation's success, and we are committed to that," she said. "I anticipate that as we move forward, there will be other funding announcements that you should all look out for."

In more good news for the Eel and Russian partners, PG&E has recently decided to include their recommendations in the draft license surrender plan it is preparing for federal regulators for the Potter Valley plant, to allow for closer collaboration on dam deconstruction and construction of the new diversion facility.

Janet Walther, PG&E's senior manager for licensing and compliance, joined Huffman's tour in a sign of good will and said the cooperative approach would ensure disruptions to the river "occur one time" and "have the least impact."

The decision follows [a period of some consternation earlier this year](#) when the utility announced that the surrender plan would not include recommendations put forward by the partnership in hopes of avoiding delays in the decommissioning process.

The company has since requested a six-month extension from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, to coordinate planning with stakeholders in the two-basin partnership, which includes government agencies and non-governmental organizations, elected officials, and the Round Valley Indian Tribes. Many are represented by the newly formed Eel-Russian River Project Authority, whose members include county supervisors from Mendocino and Sonoma counties, the Sonoma County Water Agency, the Mendocino County Inland Water and Power Commission and the Round Valley Indian Tribes.

"It's an opportunity for us to go in with a good, solid proposal," Walther said, "one that FERC, our regulator, can clearly understand and see how it all ties together, which then allows, at the back end of the process, you know, we can move through that process quicker."

California Fish and Wildlife Director Chuck Bonham said he believes PG&E could finalize agreement for the surrender process and complete its submission to federal regulators by year's end, as is required under the "California Salmon Strategy for a Hotter Drier Future" unveiled by Gov. Gavin Newsom in January.

"For 100 years, in some form, people have been arguing about what to do in each of these outstandingly remarkable rivers — the Russian River and the Eel River," Bonham said. "For like 100 years, people have been arguing about, what do you do about a trans-basin

diversion? For my lifetime in this job, people have been arguing about what do we do for the fisheries and the tribal nations and the communities that depend on both rivers from sea to source. It's time to solve some problems."

[PG&E intends to tear down](#) the two dams during decommissioning of the Potter Valley plant, a 1908 hydropower plant that is no longer in use and is too old and inefficient to maintain.

The company also is eager to rid itself of liability stemming from seismic risk associated with Scott Dam, built in 1921 at the edge of the active Bartlett Springs Fault Zone, which is part of the San Andreas Fault Complex and runs beneath Lake Pillsbury.

PG&E hopes to have a surrender plan circulated for public comment and finalized in time for federal regulators to approve it as early as 2028, "if everything goes perfectly," Walther said.

Lake County officials, Lake Pillsbury landowners and others have long fought the dam removal, which will drain the lake and eliminate a long-standing recreational destination around which wildlife have adapted. The county recently received \$700,000 in state Department of Water Resources funds to study the impact of the lake's loss and potential mitigations.

Bonham said the focus should be on benefits that can come in the future, as the river reverts to a more natural state and "old infrastructure that's not working for anybody" goes away.

"Look," Huffman said, "this is not the end of the world for any part of Lake County, even Lake Pillsbury. They're going to get a wild, healthy river, with salmon and steelhead and probably world class elk habitat, and other incredible values. This is going to be a beautiful place."



A Billionaire-Backed City Promises to Be a Green Urban Paradise—but it may not be what it appears

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Clusters of sheep and cattle dotted the landscape. Trees were few and far between. “This would all be four, five, six stories tall,” said Kromm, who is a member of the Solano Orderly Growth Committee.

Before Flannery Associates can begin development, a host of barriers stand in its way—the foremost being Solano’s land-use restrictions. At the heart of the county’s development philosophy is “what is urban should be municipal,” Kromm explained. Concurrently, land zoned agricultural cannot be developed, which is what has kept large swaths of the region rural for so long. According to Solano County’s Orderly Growth Initiative, any zoning changes must be voted on, which is why Flannery is seeking voter approval this November.

Though Flannery claims on its website that the farmland poised for development is “non-prime,” only contributing approximately 1.6 percent of Solano County’s total agricultural revenue, Farley believes that Flannery’s plan threatens more than the local economy. This development, she said, would strike at the core of Solano’s identity. “They’ve disrupted a whole farming system. And they’ve disrupted families, many of whom have been on that land since the late 1800s,” Farley said. The loss of US farmland is rampant, she noted, with 2,000 acres of farmland lost to development every day, which threatens local food supplies in addition to the biodiversity that land supports.

Under the stewardship of its former owners, the farmland, now owned by Flannery, has been carefully managed. The farmers practice dryland farming,

Farley explained, a practice of growing crops without irrigation, done to save water. Typically, farms will have a year growing grain, a year of fallow, and a year of grazing, she said. “It’s very sustainable.”

These grasslands are also “biodiverse ecosystems that are underrepresented in protected areas statewide,” said Nate Huntington, a resilience associate at Greenbelt Alliance, one of the environmental groups that oppose the project. “When they’re well managed, grazing areas can host important biological resources and mitigate climate change through carbon sequestration.” Though the carbon stores on this land have yet to be calculated, intuitively, Kromm said, if you pave it all over, “that’s not going to be good.” Data for the biological resources located on the land is still limited since the developers have yet to conduct an environmental impact statement, which likely won’t take place until after the November elections.

Adjacent to Flannery’s land lies Jepson Prairie, one of the few remaining vernal pool habitats and native bunchgrass prairies in California, owned and managed by the Solano Land Trust. Yellow California goldfields were at peak bloom, drawing yellow stripes around the pool. Farley, who was careful to stay on the narrow trail that winds the reserve to avoid disrupting the habitat, fears what the land would look like if it were to become the backyard of 400,000 new residents. “There’d be a lot of people here,” she said. “Who knows what they’ll do.” The reserve provides habitat for a host of threatened and endangered native wildlife, including burrowing owls, monarch

butterflies, California tiger salamanders, and 15 rare and endangered plant species.

The preserve is only a small part of the Jepson Prairie ecosystem, said Carol Witham, a vernal pool specialist. Little by little, that protected area has been expanding. But now, that door has closed. “Flannery has come out and bought a whole bunch of parcels that make it impossible to continue to do that,” she said. In the area surrounding the prairie, Flannery Associates now owns 60 percent of the county’s unprotected freshwater marshes, 50 percent of the high-value vernal pool conservation land, and 34 percent of the region’s priority areas for conservation, which conservationists fear is at risk of destruction.

The San Francisco Bay Area has suffered from one of the worst housing crises in the nation and one that local leaders have largely failed to address. For decades, rising prices have been pushing middle- and low-income residents out of urban centers like San Francisco. Housing experts agree that low-income and middle-class housing must be scaled up to meet the community’s needs, which Flannery’s plan—in theory—would provide.

In response to questions from a reporter, Flannery Associates said that it seeks to negate the harmful impacts of urban sprawl by building a city that is much denser than a typical American suburb. “We have proposed a community where people can live, work, and take care of most of their needs within walkable neighborhoods,” a spokesman said in an email.

The developers claim that building a city from the ground up allows them

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A Billionaire-Backed City Promises to Be a Green Urban Paradise—but it may not be what it appears

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to incorporate the newest, most efficient technologies. In addition to generating enough renewable energy from wind and solar to power 1.5 million homes—far surpassing the needs of the immediate community—they plan to deploy “ultra-efficient” water recycling and thermal energy systems. “Overall, we are confident that our project will provide one of the best models in the world for drastically reducing per capita greenhouse gas emissions,” the project claims. Developers also promise to create 15,000 local jobs.

“But there are some impacts that are going to be very, very difficult to mitigate. First and foremost is the need for transportation,” said Daniel Rodríguez, professor of city and regional planning and director of the Institute for Transportation at the University of California, Berkeley. He has studied similar “new urbanist” developments that, in their early stages, shared many of Flannery’s aspirations. “Over and over, we found that the transportation claims that the developers made rarely materialized. Residents of these communities traveled as much as residents of any traditional suburb.” Despite Flannery’s plans to create an “employment cluster” in Solano County, the reality is that “jobs don’t cluster because developers would like them to,” Rodríguez said. Flannery’s conception sounds like “magical thinking,” he said. Inevitably, residents will wind up commuting to already existing urban centers.

While the developers advocate for building a transit system to support a more energy-efficient alternative for commuters, existing public transporta-

tion in many California cities is nearing collapse and in need of major investment, said Rodríguez. It would be “fiscally irresponsible to even think about investing in a rail system for a city that hasn’t been built,” he said.

While alternative options may require “a little more tinkering,” as Rodríguez put it, better alternatives are possible—and some are already underway. In the East Bay, the Concord Reuse Project, which will be developed on the site of a former naval weapons station, is slated to deliver over 12,000 homes, a quarter of which will be affordable and located adjacent to an existing transit station. In contrast to the project in Solano County, the Reuse Project has been developed across a diverse coalition of labor, environmental, and faith-based organizations. “It’s a climate-friendly and equitable development that is connected to existing commu-

nities,” said Sam Tepperman-Gelfant, managing attorney at Public Advocates.

Despite the well-funded campaigns behind Flannery’s plan, Kromm doesn’t feel threatened by their chances. A recent poll showed that 70 percent of Solano residents oppose the project. But activists expect Flannery’s fight won’t stop there.

What ultimately happens in Solano County “will set a precedent for what’s going to happen in the future with people who have the means to privately purchase land and develop open space,” Washington said. “This is not an isolated incident. It will continue to happen, and we are on the front line of this decision.”

Claire Greenburger is an editorial fellow at Sierra.

Dawn at Mineral King Valley

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include it in Sequoia National Park.

While a detailed description of this mostly obscure Supreme Court case doesn’t seem like it would make for exciting reading, the book is quite readable and rather enthralling. Selmi did an incredible amount of research and uses primary sources such as letters and meeting notes to paint a colorful picture of the people involved. And his explanation of how this case played a role in changing public opinion in favor of conservation as well as the legal landscape, making it easier for private citizens and nongovernmental organizations to be a check against governmental overstepping, is fascinating. It’s easy to take these realities for granted now,

but they were not a given sixty years ago. We owe much to the Sierra Club’s stand on Mineral King Valley for paving the way for environmental lawsuits today.

The Sierra Club mission statement now reads, “To explore, enjoy, and *protect* the wild places of the earth...” (emphasis my own). It can be inferred that the fight over Mineral King played a role in that important change. This book will be a great read for Sierra Club members, and especially for anyone interested in either American legal history or in how the strings of power are gently pulled—and sometimes unceremoniously yanked—to get things done.



Outings to Advocacy for 30x30

Sierra Club and outings go together like ice cream and cake or peanut butter and jelly. Sierra Club outings started in 1901 to get people familiar with special places that need protection -- and we have not stopped yet. Outings are a wonderful route to advocacy—especially for campaigns to preserve Nature. Outings helped the Sierra Club gain new national parks and new wilderness areas around the country. Now that we in California seek to conserve 30 percent of our natural lands and waters, we have a new campaign ready-made for advocacy via outings.

Sierra Club's 30 x 30 task force works with our California chapters to help them fight to conserve local special areas in their territory. Now is a good time to bring local outings to boost this 30 percent effort in Chapter after Chapter.

Some benefits for Chapters can be:

To publicize and build more awareness of places that we want to save—whether it's an urban green strip to connect two local parks, or a natural area threatened by commercial or residential development, or simply a parcel of land now available that will offer habitat connectivity. For example, the San Francisco Bay Chapter is eyeing a race track by the shore of the Bay that will soon close; the land that it's on could make an excellent extension of the current Bayshore Park.

Inviting local elected officials on walks or other field trips to such places can get them interested in specifically calling for funding for 30x30 to the state legislative budget committees. Inviting reporters from your local paper can help get the word out widely.

For Chapters that already have an out-

ings program going, how will you interest your outings leaders in leading such 30x30 focused outings? How about inviting a few outings leaders on a hike to a proposed site for preservation? Show them how bringing more people here can add voices to achieve the goal.

For Chapters that do not presently have an outing program, perhaps showing the need for 30x30 conservation of a particular place or places can get new potential leaders interested.

And since we work in the Power in Nature Coalition with other groups on 30 x 30, maybe invite different groups onto your trips—even consider a joint outing with a different Power in Nature group that works in your area. We seek to make our outings more inclusive, giving more diverse communities good access to Nature; thus, bringing other civic or diverse community groups outdoors with us can be extremely beneficial. It can also help increase the diversity of our volunteers and leaders.

Outdoors, on a hike, it is easier to get to know people and make new friends than on a Zoom screen or even in a civic meeting room.

One Chapter already using outings to promote a 30 x 30 local conservation priority is Loma Prieta: they led a fine hike in the Portola redwood State Park recently, focused on biodiversity protection.

And Angeles Chapter was gearing for a hike to a local priority area, Elephant Hill. Where will your Chapter go to highlight Nature protection?

--Vicky Hoover, Sierra Club 30x30 Task Force

Election Season has Begun!

The Redwood Chapter and Group Executive Committee election season has begun! Nominating Committee Chairs have been selected, and candidate recruitment is proceeding.

Three Chapter At-Large seats will be up this year, as well as either three or four seats in each Group.

If you are interested in running for a position, please contact your Group or Chapter Nominating Committee Chair.

GROUP NOMINATING COMMITTEE CHAIRS

- **Chapter Elections Chair:** Jim Horn, jhorn@hornengineers.com
- **Lake Group:** Deb Sally, debsal14@gmail.com
- **Mendocino Group:** Robin Leleer, robin@leler.com
- **Napa Group:** Nick Cheranich, ncheranich@yahoo.com
- **North Group:** Gregg Gold, gregggold@aol.com
- **Solano Group:** Princess Washington, prwashingtonsuisuncouncil@gmail.com
- **Sonoma Group:** Shirley Johnson, johnsons@sonoma.edu

ELECTION SCHEDULE

- **Aug. 23:** Chapter and Group candidate slates are complete and submitted to Elections Committee Chair Jim Horn (jhorn@hornengineers.com).
- **Sept. 13:** Deadline for submission of candidate statements for publication in the Fall Redwood Needles. Deadline for submission of ballot petitions to the Election Committee Chair.
- **October:** Ballots and candidate statements are published in the Fall Needles, and voting begins in both hard copy and electronic formats.
- **Dec. 31:** Voting closed. All votes must be in.

Redwood Needles

Sierra Club

Redwood Chapter

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Volunteer with Us!

NEW MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE—COME JOIN US!

We're seeking committee members who want to help recruit new members and volunteers and invite them into the Chapter. Committee members will help current members, Theresa Ryan and Elayna Trucker, build the committee and put into place policies that will make all new members feel welcomed, informed, and ready to help with this important work.

As the committee grows, we hope members will help with tabling and other recruitment events, as well as host regular orientation and onboarding meetings. We're especially looking for members who have worked within the Sierra Club framework for some time, but all assistance is welcome! Please reach out to us at redwoodmembership@gmail.com.

COMPLIANCE OFFICER

Redwood Chapter needs to recruit a Compliance Officer to help our political program follow Sierra Club rules and state and local law. Working closely with the Political Chair and other volunteer leaders, the Compliance Officer needs to be willing to become familiar with the latest version of the Political Compliance Guidelines prepared by the national Sierra Club political team, as well as any local ordinances in any of the chapter's nine counties that may restrict our political work. Familiarity with state election law would also be helpful though the state compliance officer can be relied up to provide guidance on that subject.

Time commitment depends on issues that may arise, but is ordinarily very slight. A full job description is available on the chapter website, at <https://www.sierraclub.org/redwood/help-wanted>. Chapter Political Chair Victoria Brandon is also glad to answer questions: feel free to call her at 707.994.1931 or to send an email to vbrandon95457@gmail.com.

OUTINGS CHAIR

We're looking for a committed, well-organized person to provide direction and oversight to the chapter outings program -- it is NOT necessary to be an Outings Leader to fill this crucial role. Work to make outdoor activities an integrated and vital element of chapter efforts. Responsibilities include ensuring all chapter and group outings follow Club policies and procedures, officially approving all outings, taking responsibility for publicizing outings in the Redwood Needles and elsewhere, and ensuring that active leaders meet training and first-aid certification requirements. *Estimated Time Commitment: 5 hours a month and up.*

Interested? Contact Chapter Chair Dan Mayhew at drmayhew356@gmail.com to find out more.