

Sierra Club YODELER

THE NEWSPAPER OF THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY CHAPTER ♦ FALL 2024



- ♦ VICTORY! POINT MOLATE SLATED TO BECOME PUBLIC PARK ♦
- ♦ HOW HEAT BATTERIES ARE SAVING \$\$\$ AND THE PLANET ♦
- ♦ NEW WASTEWATER REGULATION WILL SLOW HARMFUL ALGAE ♦
- ♦ RESTORING SAN FRANCISCO'S NATURAL WATERWAYS ♦

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Greetings!

If we haven't met yet, allow me a quick introduction: I'm the new Chapter Director, having joined in April after many years as a member and then active volunteer on the Climate Literacy and Nominations Committees. My deepening engagement with the Bay Chapter mirrors the experience of many of our members, who find a home here to pursue their passions and contribute their talents. As I've settled into my role as your Director, I've been struck on a daily basis by the depth of knowledge and passion for action our members bring to our work here. It's what makes the Sierra Club such a special — and powerful — organization.

This has been a year of reflection, transition, and growth for the SF Bay Chapter. It's also our Chapter's Centennial. Over our 100 years, the SF Bay Chapter has supported the creation of the East Bay Regional Park District, the Save the Bay Movement of the mid-'60s, and the Wilderness Act of 1964, alongside many other victories.

In more recent years, the Bay Chapter has focused its efforts on addressing pressing environmental challenges such as climate change and urban sprawl, promoting renewable energy, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and advocating for sustainable land use policies. The Chapter has always balanced campaign priorities with a love of nature, encouraging community members to experience the outdoors for themselves through one of our vibrant activities groups (see pages 6 and 7 to get involved or learn how to become an outings leader).

As you turn the pages of the Fall Yodeler, you'll see this spirit of action and possibility on full display. Carolyn and Mars, our two new Chapter Organizers, are working on coalition building and campaign development across our chapter. Point Molate shoreline will finally become a state park, thanks to the sustained involvement by dedicated volunteers (page 5). And we're working hard to restore San Francisco's natural waterways (pages 12 - 15).

As we enter a historic election season, I hope you'll find new ways to volunteer your time and energy with the SF Bay Chapter — check out our website at sierraclub.org/sfbay for opportunities and ways to connect.

And don't stop there — you can directly shape the Bay Chapter by VOTING in our Chapter Elections, starting November 11th.

The SF Bay Chapter's advocacy has shaped our shoreline, our cities, and our communities. With your ongoing support, we'll continue shaping the future, too.

In solidarity,



Sarah Ranney
CHAPTER DIRECTOR



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Dipsea Trail. Photo by Daniel Darling.



FALL 2024 CHAPTER NEWS

Chapter and Group Elections Season Begins

The end of the year brings a unique opportunity to get involved with your local Sierra Club — by voting and applying for leadership roles! Our Chapter and Group Elections season has officially begun, and this is a huge opportunity to shape the Sierra Club.

You can nominate yourself as a candidate for your Group or the Chapter Executive Committees (nomination deadline September 4th). And, of course, you can speak with your vote: ballots will be released online and in the *Winter Yodeler* on November 11th. More information about applying, timelines, candidate statements as they come in, and general updates can be found online at sierraclub.org/sfbay/chapter-elections.

In the meantime, join or renew your membership online at sierraclub.org/sfbay to ensure you are eligible to vote.

Get Involved to Keep Toxic NOx Out of Berkeley Buildings

The Berkeley Health, Life Enrichment, Equity & Community Committee has been considering new building codes, aimed at eliminating nitrogen oxide emissions from residential and commercial buildings, to replace the ordinance struck down by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in late 2023. The committee recently decided to revisit and vote on the code again in mid-July of 2025, allowing additional time for input, adaptations to the code, and development of implementation strategies. This decision highlights Berkeley's commitment to environmental sustainability and public health. The Sierra

Club supports a low-NOx or single margin approach to energy reach codes which are cost effective and allow cities to easily incorporate it into regulations. This approach also aligns with the California Statewide codes and standards program. These types of codes already exist and have been adopted in places like San Jose, San Luis Obispo, East Palo Alto and Santa Cruz. It is time for Berkeley to follow suit. If you're interested in learning more or getting more involved, reach out to Mars Keith at Mars.Keith@sierraclub.org.

Just Adaptation to Sea Level Rise: Webinar Coming in September

On Wednesday, September 11th at 7pm, join us for our first in a series of two webinars. This year we have a key opportunity to address sea level rise in a way that centers community and ecosystem well-being. We have been actively engaging the Bay Conservation and Development Commission as it develops its Regional Shoreline Adaptation Plan guidelines, due by the end of 2024. These guidelines will dictate how every shoreline community around the Bay prepares for sea level rise. Let's ensure the guidelines are as strong as possible!

The first webinar will get you up to speed on the campaign and our vision for a robust adaptation plan. The second webinar will take place later in the fall after the release of the draft guidelines and will go over what the draft means for our communities and how we can be effective advocates. Keep your eye on our events calendar online at sierraclub.org/sfbay/events to register for these webinars, and be sure to join the campaign at addup.sierraclub.org/campaigns/sfbayalive. See you there!

Sierra Club Endorsements Out Now!

Locally and nationally, it is a huge election year. Luckily, the Sierra Club is here to help. We have meticulously reviewed candidates from the local level on up to help you vote for the people and the policy that will put our planet, our communities, and our health first. You can check out our voter guide online at sierraclub.org/sfbay/november-2024 and ensure that we elect environmental champions this November.

Welcoming New Chapter Organizers Mars Keith and Carolyn Cheng

This July, two new talented organizers joined our SF Bay Chapter team. Mars Keith joins us as our Clean Transportation for All and Building Electrification organizer and Carolyn Cheng as our SF Bay Protection, Water, and Shorelines organizer. We are thrilled to welcome them aboard.



A NOTE FROM MARS:

Hello everyone,
I am so excited and appreciative to be a part of the Sierra Club team. My name is Imari “Mars” Keith, and I am a new Chapter Organizer for the San

Francisco Bay Chapter. My passion for environmental justice began during my own lived experience growing up in Bayview/Hunters Point. I noticed at a young age the differences between my community and the others I visited for school and other programs. We didn't have as many trees and grocery stores, but the one thing that stuck with me the most was losing my own family member to cancer that was more than

likely caused by the pollution.

I look forward to working together with the Sierra Club to continue organizing the community to make long lasting changes. Currently, I have been working on an Indirect Source Rule for warehouses and ports, and it has been very exciting to be a part of the coalition building process. I have been able to build relationships with people who have so much great experience and background. I can't wait to get even more involved.



A NOTE FROM CAROLYN:

I'm Carolyn, the new Sierra Club SF Bay Chapter Bay Protection Organizer working on campaigns related to water and shorelines! I have been involved with environmental justice and

climate action work since I was a student, and most recently have been involved with the Asian Pacific Environmental Network doing outreach work in Richmond about climate resilience and refinery accountability. I am excited to work on creating a healthy, just, and resilient Bay through cleaning up toxic sites, reducing pollutants into the Bay, restoring ecosystems, and adapting to sea level rise with solutions that provide multiple benefits for our communities, biodiversity, and the land.



Join the shared EV charging network for free! Share your charger or find charging to reduce carbon emissions. We'll donate to Sierra Club for each new signup! Your first charge is on us with promo code: **CHARGECODE**

Use referral name **SF Bay Sierra Club** at signup



SUPPORT THE CHAPTER BY GOING SOLAR

Thinking of going solar? If you go solar through SunPower, you'll receive a \$1,000 rebate and SunPower will donate \$500 to the SF Bay Chapter. It's a win for you, your local Sierra Club chapter, and the planet. Head to bit.ly/sunpowerforthebay to get your free quote and find out how much you can save.

At Last: Victory at Point Molate

NORMAN LA FORCE



After close to 30 years of legal and political battles, the people have finally won: Point Molate shoreline will become a new regional park.

On Friday, July 12th, the Richmond City Council made the historic and unanimous decision to approve the letter of intent to purchase the Point Molate property and set it aside for public park. This is a huge win for habitat preservation and community open space — the area had previously been slated for luxury housing and casino development. Now, the shoreline will serve as an extension of the San Francisco Bay Trail and a beautiful historic park space that will be enjoyed by generations to come.

This victory was hard fought, and ultimately, the confluence of events and coincidences made it all possible. To quote Sherlock Holmes when asked about coincidences, “The universe is rarely so lazy.”

It took years of work on the part of many activists to achieve this victory. We helped to elect a progressive and environmentally dedicated city council that included Mayor Eduardo Martinez and council members Claudia Jimenez, Gayle McLaughlin, Doria Robinson, Melvin Willis, and Cesar Zepeda. Sabrina Landreth, the new general manager of the East Bay Regional Park District, stepped forward to seize the day and commit to creating a new regional park. Our State Senator Nancy Skinner secured \$36 million in the State budget for acquisition of Point Molate, while the Park District’s Measure WW secured \$4 million, which would add up to the total of \$40 million needed to acquire the site.

Coincidentally, but probably most importantly, environmentalists won a key victory under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Sierra Club, Citizens for East Shore Parks, Golden Gate Bird Alliance, California Native Plant Society, SPRAWLDEF, and the Point Molate Alliance sued the City of Richmond for failing to prepare an adequate Environmental Impact Report for the development planned for Point Molate. Thanks to the work of attorneys Stuart Flashman, Robert Cheasty, and the author of this article, the Court of Appeals agreed and ordered all approvals for the luxury housing project at the site to be rescinded, as the report did not take into account impacts to Ohlone cultural resources or emergency evacuation plans for the housing development. It was then that the developers realized that it was wiser to take \$40 million rather than continue their losing struggle to develop the site.

Finally, we cannot forget that it was the work of many, many Richmond and other Bay Area citizens who also made this victory possible.

While we celebrate this victory, we’re looking ahead to the planning of the park. The Sierra Club will continue to work to ensure this will be a park for all. If you would like to get involved in more of our public lands work, you can reach out to Norman La Force at n.laforce@comcast.net.

Norman La Force is the Chair of the East Bay Public Lands Committee.



DONATE YOUR UNWANTED VEHICLE

Donate your vehicle to support the Sierra Club Foundation's SF Bay Chapter! Not only will your generous donation continue to help us make a difference, but it can also help you qualify for a tax deduction. It’s easy, the pick-up is free, and our partners at CARS accept cars, boats, motorcycles, RVs, and more. To get started, visit our website at scfch.careasy.org or call (844) 674-3772.

ABOUT THIS CALENDAR

Activities listed here are abbreviated. For full listings, registration, and waivers visit: sierraclub.org/sfbay/activities. The online calendar will also include changes, cancellations, and outings submitted after the print deadline.

Hike and backpack ratings

Hike ratings are based on distance and elevation gain (the sum of all gains in elevation per day):

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. up to 6 miles | A. under 1,000 feet |
| 2. 6 - 10 miles | B. 1,000 - 2,000 feet |
| 3. 10 - 15 miles | C. 2,000 - 3,000 feet |
| 4. 15 - 20 miles | D. over 3,000 feet |
| 5. over 20 miles | E. over 3,500 feet |

Backpack ratings include a third digit for travel:

- T. trail
1. limited/easy crosscountry
 2. moderate crosscountry
 3. strenuous/difficult crosscountry

What to bring

For day hikes, always bring lunch and enough water. Consider layered clothing, sunscreen, good hiking boots with treads, and hiking poles. Non-service dogs are allowed only if specified in the listing; canine hikers should bring leashes, litter bags, and water for their dogs.

Liabilities

To participate in a Sierra Club outing, you will need to sign a liability waiver. To read a copy of the waiver form, call (415) 977-5630 or visit tinyurl.com/outingswaiver.

COVID-19 Protocol

Masks are optional for adults in outdoor areas but required in indoor close quarters such as vehicles, public transport, restaurants, or visitor centers. Vaccinations are not required, so please be aware you may be on trips with unvaccinated individuals. Masks are required at all times for unvaccinated minors. If you are experiencing any possible COVID-19 symptoms, do not attend the outing and contact the outing leader. Report any positive COVID-19 tests after an outing to the outing leader.

Carpooling

Carpooling helps the environment and allows people without cars to participate. You can arrange carpools on our Meetup group: meetup.com/sanfranciscobay. Outings will be listed there 2 - 3 weeks prior to the event. Masks are required in carpools.

FALL 2024 OUTINGS CALENDAR

WEEKLY • TUES

Lake Chabot Reservoir 1A Hike. Scenic weekly 3-mile hike. Park free on street, \$5 in lot, or annual pass from East Bay Regional Park District. MEET: 4:00 pm at boathouse/cafe. LEADER: Dolores Gruenewald, (510) 798-7897 or doloresgru@aol.com. (Solo Sierrans)

WEEKLY • WEDS

Lafayette Reservoir 1A Hike. Enjoy the lovely weather while walking around the beautiful reservoir. We have both faster and slower walkers, or you can walk at your own pace. COST: 5 quarters for 1hr, 15 minutes of parking. MEET: 4:00 pm at the west end of the parking area near the picnic tables and permanent bathrooms. LEADER: William Gilbert, wmgibr@gmail.com. (Solo Sierrans)

SECOND SUNDAYS AND FOURTH SATURDAYS

SEPT 7 • SAT (MOVED FROM SEPT 8) | SEPT 28 • SAT

Let in the Wow: Luxurious Walking in Delight Zen. A slow walking practice designed to relax and balance yourself resulting in deepening connection to your inner nature. MEET: 11:00 am at 1853 Solano Ave, Berkeley. ENDS: 12:30 pm. LEADER: Halley, sierragreenforest@gmail.com. (Hiking)

AUG 30 – AUG 31 • FRI – SAT

Eastern Sierra Backpack. Green Creek to Virginia Lakes is a classic scenic hike in the Eastern Sierra near Bridgeport. Advance sign-up and leader approval are required. Please fill out the R.S.V.P. form and sign the liability waiver online at sierraclub.org/sfbay/events. The leader will contact you with specific questions about your experience/background. If accepted you will receive instructions about how to pay the trip fee. BRING: Individual commissary. Participants need to provide their own food and cooking equipment. A detailed equipment list will be provided. MEET: 8:30 am on August 30 in Bridgeport, CA. END: 3:00 pm on August 31. LEADER: Thomas Meissner at (707) 479-4465 or meissner.thomas2011@gmail.com. (Backpacking)


SEPT 11 – SEPT 17 • WEDS – TUES

Yosemite High Sierra Camp Backpacking Tour. Yosemite High Sierra Camp Loop. To sign up, please R.S.V.P and acknowledge the liability waiver online at sierraclub.org/sfbay/events. The trip leader will contact you to start the approval process and provide further information. The trip is

limited to 11 people using this permit. COST: \$105.00. BRING: Food is an individual commissary. You will need backpacking gear, bear canister, a tent, sleeping bag, stove, and food. LEADER will supply a detailed list after sign-up. MEET: 8:00 am on September 11 at May Lake, CA. ENDS: 1:00 pm on September 17. LEADER: Diane Appel at (925) 360-2249 or diane_appel@yahoo.com. (Backpacking)

OCT 15 • TUES

Pole Walking for Exercise & Maintaining Mobility, Finley Center, Santa Rosa. Sierra Club Military Outdoors special program provides free training for Veterans. When pole walking, you feel invigorated, taller, and more confident! Join us to learn skills and techniques to help improve balance, endurance, spine function, walking gait and posture. Easy-to-learn techniques can help people navigate everyday obstacles and strengthen muscles that support your joints. Top quality poles and special balance tips provided. Learn which poles fit you best and will help you achieve your goals. Easy pace and gentle practice. Registration required, class size limited. Top quality poles provided for your use (or bring and use your own). COST: Free for Veterans & Family members of Veterans, \$4 for other students. MEET: 9:30 am at 2060 W College Ave, Santa Rosa, CA. ENDS: 12:00 pm. LEADER: Jayah Paley. Sign up at sierraclub.org/loma-prieta/military-outdoors. (Hiking)



**WHAT WILL YOUR
LEGACY BE?**

Ensure your environmental legacy by naming the Sierra Club's San Francisco Bay Chapter in your will or trust.

If you have named your local Sierra Club chapter as a beneficiary or would like to discuss doing so, please contact us today:

MATT BIELBY
matt.bielby@sierraclub.org
(510) 848-0800 x 321

BECOME AN OUTINGS LEADER

If you enjoy exploring wild lands, meeting new people, and leading adventures for them, you could make a great Sierra Club outings leader!

The Sierra Club's outdoor activities aim to connect all people with the natural world and with the Club. As an outings leader with the San Francisco Bay Chapter, you can join others in exploring wild lands, grappling with conservation issues, and even changing perceptions. Because trips are often specialized around a unique theme or activity, you could be hiking, backpacking, kayaking, bicycling, or doing service work – it's up to you to choose, because you ultimately design and lead your very own trip.

To be an outings leader, you must be a current Sierra Club member, at least 18 years of age, and have completed First Aid training and the Sierra Club Outings Leader Training. You then must choose a current outing leader to act as your mentor and lead your provisional outing with them in attendance. Following the outing, the mentor leader will provide feedback. After a positive evaluation, you will be a full-fledged outings leader and able to lead outings on your own. And then, Happy Trails!

You can choose what type of outing you would like to lead and which activity section you would like to affiliate with. You can find a list and descriptions of our activity sections online at sierraclub.org/sfbay/activities.

For more information head to sierraclub.org/sfbay/how-become-outings-leader.

Want to Keep In Touch? Join Our Email List!

When you sign up for our email list, you'll be in the know about everything from shoreline clean-ups and public comment turn-outs to picnics and social hours where you can meet fellow activists. Don't miss out! Sign up online today at sierraclub.org/sfbay/email.

FALL 2024 EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Wilderness First Aid in Palo Alto

SAT, SEPT 14 - SUN, SEPT 15
8 AM - 5 PM

- OR -

SAT, OCT 5 - SUN, OCT 6
8 AM - 5 PM

Location: Peninsula Conservation Center, 3921 East Bayshore Road, Palo Alto

Learn how to recognize and avoid wilderness hazards and do first aid outdoors with wilderness emergency expert, Stephen Donelan. There is an opportunity for a one-day class to receive the Basic Wilderness First Aid certification of the National Association for Search and Rescue, which is essential knowledge for any frequent backpackers, hikers, or outdoor enthusiasts. You can also sign up for a two-day course and receive the higher-level WFA certification. For more information, go to wildernessemergencycare.com. Certification by the National Association for Search and Rescue is valid for two years and is included in the course fee.

Registration:

1. Send an email to instructor Steve Donelan at donelan@sonic.net and CC lisa.barboza@gmail.com. Steve will email you a schedule and instructions.
2. RSVP online on the Loma Prieta Chapter Calendar at sierraclub.org/loma-prieta/calendar.

Fee:

Basic Wilderness First Aid — Saturday only. \$50 for Sierra Club members, \$60 for non-members.

Wilderness First Aid — Both days. \$80 for Sierra Club members, \$100 for non-members. The second day is highly recommended and covers almost all necessary wilderness first aid skills and scenarios.

Payment: Pay the instructor in class. Either cash or a check made out to Steve Donelan are acceptable.

Textbook:

Wilderness Emergency Care, Third Edition Revised by Steve Donelan. Available from NASAR. Older editions of this textbook will also suffice.

Current Bay Chapter Outings Leaders:

The SF Bay Chapter will pay for your instruction! Please RSVP as normal and email firstaid@sfbaysc.org. Then, mail a \$50 deposit check (payable to Sierra Club SF Bay Chapter) to: Sierra Club, Attn: WFA, PO Box 2663, Berkeley, CA 94702. This check serves to hold your place in the class. It will be destroyed if you attend the class, but will be cashed if you do not show up. Include your mailing address, email, phone number, and which activities section. Indicate if you will be attending the one- or two-day session. The Chapter will pay for both days.



ICO Ends the School Year with Three Trips to the Sierras with Oakland High School Students

Sierra Club Inspiring Connections Outdoors (ICO) volunteers and 47 students from three Oakland high schools took to the Sierras in April. The group traveled to South Lake Tahoe with Oakland High School environmental science students where they camped, hiked, saw frozen waterfalls, and played in the snow, with many of the students seeing snow for the first time. The outing also brought an opportunity for experiential learning about water cycles, though a bit too much of it fell in the form of rain! At the other end of the lake, ICO and Arise High School students explored the Donner Lake area, overnighing at Sierra Club's Hutchinson's Lodge. After a snowshoe hike to the train tunnels, they had dinner at the Claire Tappan Lodge next door, hopefully inspiring the students to return on their own. The final April outing took English as a second language students from Oakland High School to Yosemite and spent two days hiking and being awed by the vistas and waterfalls. They camped just outside the park, sneaking in a visit right between two cold fronts. This was an easy trip for ICO volunteers, because the kids eagerly did all the cooking and clean-up!

Are you interested in hiking, camping and exploring natural areas with youth? Check out ICO at SFBayICO.org. ICO provides trip leaders, volunteers, transportation, gear and funding for these outings. You will have an enjoyable and rewarding experience, guaranteed.



Students in the snow on an ICO trip. Photo courtesy of Linda De Young.



Pole Walking & Hiking Classes for Veterans

Sierra Club's Military Outdoors program offers free classes to Veterans and their family members all around the Bay Area. Learn life-long skills to enhance your outdoor experiences and improve endurance, strength and spine function. For more information, go to sierraclub.org/loma-prieta/military-outdoors.

PHOTO CREDITS: California poppies in the Coyote Hills during a Pole Walking class. Photo by Jayah Paley.



Restore Hetch Hetchy 2024 Annual Dinner

Saturday, October 26 **Lafayette Veterans
Memorial Center**
*Reception, Live Auction
and Dinner*

Special Guest: Pulitzer Prize Winner Tom Philp

Tom Philp of the Sacramento Bee won the 2005 Pulitzer Prize for journalism after writing a deeply researched influential series advocating for the restoration of Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park. Please join Tom and Restore Hetch Hetchy at our Annual Dinner.

hetchhetchy.org

Heat Batteries Can Save You Money and Protect Our Planet

MELISSA YU

Willie Sutton famously said he robbed banks because “that’s where the money is.” If you want to decarbonize your home, look no further than your heating and hot water – because that’s where the pollution is. In fact, natural gas heating and hot water in our homes make up 98% of residential gas usage [1] and nearly 10% of all US carbon emissions [2].

In addition to worsening the climate crisis, pollution from these appliances are invisible killers. In the Bay Area, gas furnaces and water heaters emit 4,267 tons of nitrogen oxides, a precursor haze and smog that fouls our air and causes between 37-85 premature deaths and 110 new cases of asthma per year [3].

Luckily, we have heat pump technology. Like magic, heat pumps transfer heat indoors even when it’s freezing outside and can also function to efficiently cool your home on a hot summer’s day – something that becomes ever more important as global temperatures rise. So swapping out your gas furnace and water heater to a heat pump is as important as switching from a gas-powered car to an electric vehicle.

One rebuttal we often hear to heat pumps is this: we typically need heat in the mornings and evenings when the power grid is dirty and more expensive. So when all homes switch to heat pumps, we risk overwhelming the grid, increasing energy costs and slowing down our journey toward 100 percent renewable energy.

The good news is that the solution is already here. We can keep our grid functioning and our rates low with heat batteries, a new technology that stores heat in the same way a typical battery can be charged to store electricity, saving that heat for when you need it most.

Some heat pump water heaters like the brands Rheem [4] and AO Smith [5] already do this. They heat a hot water tank during off-peak times so it is full of hot water for morning showers and evening dishwashing.

A Bay Area company called Harvest [6] has also come up with an ingenious solution that makes electrification more scalable than ever. They developed a smart controller that transforms heat pump water heaters into a combined system that cuts carbon emissions by 90 percent when compared to gas and 40 percent when compared to other heat pump solu-

tions. And because it uses off-peak electricity, it could save as much as 30 percent on monthly heating and hot water bills while helping to not overwhelm the grid. We’re thrilled as more technology like this comes online to help tackle the climate crisis.

Building decarbonization is a priority campaign for the SF Bay Chapter. The Chapter along with our allies won a landmark Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) rule to replace gas water heaters and furnaces with clean equipment starting in 2027 and 2029 respectively. The rules will apply only to new appliances, and do not mandate retrofitting of existing appliances. We are concurrently advocating for the next round of state building codes that would require replacing broken or failing air conditioners (AC) with heat pumps. Heat batteries will only make this easier, cheaper, and more scalable. By avoiding installing one-way AC units now, this will help save money when the BAAQMD rule is in place in 2029 to replace gas furnaces.

Sierra Club members have always been leaders in advocating for and adopting the cleanest energy alternatives. We can keep up that legacy by decarbonizing our homes with heat pumps and heat batteries. To find out what incentives are available in your zip code, go to the website *incentives.switchison.org*.

SOURCES

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- [6] [harvest-thermal.com](https://www.harvest-thermal.com)

Melissa Yu is the Sierra Club California Building Electrification Senior Field Organizer.

Your Advocacy Helped Limit Harmful Pollutants in the Bay

CAROLYN CHENG

On July 10th, the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board unanimously passed a new permit to limit the release of wastewater pollutants into the Bay. This is an enormous victory for the health of our bay and all of us who rely on it.

Our wastewater is riddled with excess nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus. When that wastewater is released into the Bay, the word “nutrient” doesn’t take on such a positive connotation. Instead, nutrients act as a fertilizer to damaging algae, and rather than nourishing the Bay’s health, they create harmful algal blooms.

The past two summers, harmful algae blooms turned the Bay water alarming shades of rust red and starved fish of oxygen. These blooms caused massive fish die-offs, harmed wildlife, and disrupted ecosystems. Moreover, as waters warm with climate change, the Bay becomes less and less resilient to these blooms, making them even more frequent and intense.

To stop these harmful algal blooms from continuing to happen, Sierra Club members and allies showed up in force to give public comment in support of a strong nutrient permit that would limit the amount of nutrients wastewater dischargers can release into the Bay. Thank you to everyone who raised their voices and our partners at Baykeeper. Because of your advocacy, we succeeded, and the Water Board passed a

permit that requires dischargers to reduce nitrogen pollution by 40 percent from 2022 levels over ten years regionwide. This is an important milestone to creating a healthier Bay!

Better yet, there are upgrades dischargers can make that reduce nutrient discharge into the Bay and provide other benefits, such as wastewater recycling and horizontal or “living” levees, and some dischargers in the Bay are already making these changes. For example, the Oro Loma Sanitary District in San Lorenzo which has partnered with other organizations to create the Oro Loma Horizontal Levee, a “living laboratory” that demonstrates how vegetation planted across a gradual slope can create vital wetland habitat, act as a buffer to sea level rise and storm surges, and process and remove contaminants like nitrogen from wastewater.

This nutrient permit is only the beginning to keeping our Bay safe from harmful algae blooms. At the SF Bay Chapter, we will continue to work to ensure the target nutrient reduction percentage is informed by the most up-to-date science to effectively prevent future blooms and ensure upgrades can proceed efficiently. We will fight to prioritize multi-benefit wastewater plant upgrades that incorporate nature-based solutions, and we will support the Regional Water Board’s efforts to secure state and federal funding for these crucial upgrades so costs are not passed onto ratepayers.

If you are interested in joining our efforts or continuing your advocacy to address nutrient pollution and create a healthy, thriving Bay, you can email the Chapter Bay Protection organizer at carolyn.cheng@sierraclub.org.

Carolyn Cheng is the Bay Protection, Water, and Shorelines Organizer at the Sierra Club SF Bay Chapter.



Read the earliest issues of the Yodeler online!
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Restoring Natural Waterways in San Francisco's Mission District and Mission Bay

KIERAN FARR

Beneath the streets of San Francisco's Mission District once flowed a rich network of natural waterways. A system of creeks, lagoons, and acres of tidal wetlands oscillated their salinity with the tides, swelled and contracted with the seasons, and served as a naturally modulating microbiome for countless forms of life at the interface between land and sea. [1]



MISSION CREEK | SEA LEVEL RISE ADAPTATION STUDY

Historical creek, tidal flats and bay in 1850 as compared to current infill and development. 2016 Courtesy SPUR. [1]

The first known people in the Bay Area were the Ohlone speaking tribes such as the Ramaytush in San Francisco. They lived as a partner with this ecosystem for over 10,000 years. But a brief 300 years ago, the Spanish and Americans arrived and changed the land and waterways for the worse. The Spanish began by diverting freshwater for farming and light industrial use, but it was the Americans who shifted environmental engineering into high gear after 1848, filling in land to make way for newly surveyed plots hosting heavier industries like woolen mills, tanneries, glassworks, steelworks, breweries, textiles, and railroads to connect them. [2]

After reaching a peak with polluted pools of water known locally as the “Mission Death Swamp” in the late 1800s, the City finally created a below-ground sewer system combining the wastewater with stormwater runoff. Today, San Francisco is the only remaining coastal city in California with a combined sewer system that collects and treats both wastewater and stormwater in the same network of pipes. [3]

Despite our attempts to bury the waterways, the water

returns to remind us of its presence each time there is a heavy storm. In December 2022, severe flooding devastated parts of the Mission District, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive water management strategies. The images from that day serve as a stark reminder of the area's vulnerability. This disaster not only caused significant property damage but also disrupted the lives of many residents and businesses. [4]



Flooding under the Central Freeway dividing the Mission and SoMa in San Francisco on Dec. 31, 2022 [4]

As a response to frequent flooding in the Mission District, the California Water Resources Control Board issued an Abatement Order to the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) to “abate the nuisance” of flooding by 2027. The SFPUC responded by proposing the “Folsom Stormwater Improvement Project” (FASIP), which would install a larger sewer line in the heart of the Northeast Mission Industrial Neighborhood with a combination of open trenching and tunnel boring. [5]

But water experts disagree that a “bigger pipe” is the best solution to flooding that has existed for thousands of years. The Sierra Club SF Bay Chapter Water Committee reviewed these plans and interviewed officials, hydraulic engineers, and community members, and found significant issues with the SFPUC proposed response.

In March, the Sierra Club issued a formal complaint [7] urging the City to take a more holistic “green infrastructure” approach to manage the area's water systems using natural methods while also restoring acres of natural wetlands to the vulnerable Mission communities who have expressed interest in more open green space.

The Sierra Club has raised several key concerns about the current approach:

- Lack of a Long-Term, Holistic Solution: The project focuses on short-term engineered fixes rather than



Project Area Map of the Folsom Area Stormwater Improvement Project (FASIP), Source: SFPUC San Francisco [6]

comprehensive, nature-based “green infrastructure” strategies that address the fundamental issues of water management and environmental sustainability.

- Insufficient Community Involvement and Transparency: There has been minimal public consultation and inadequate notification about the project’s impacts. This lack of transparency undermines trust and prevents meaningful community engagement.

Instead of proposing a specific solution, the SF Group followed the Jemez Principles and began direct engagement with the community through a series of outreach events with residents, business owners, community leaders, historians, environmental experts, architects, and more. These events spotlighted the rich history of waterways in the Mission District while fostering conversations about what other solutions might help with flooding while also addressing other community concerns such as lack of access to green & open spaces for children and families in the neighborhood.

Thousands of people engaged with the open-air history “Treat PAST PRESENT FUTURE” exhibit featuring 7-foot tall wooden interpretive panels sharing the history of the Mission Creek waterways from Indigenous peoples to Spanish colonization, modern-day industrialization, and beyond. Volunteers and partner organizations led conversations with community members to explore what the neighborhood

could look like with more resilient, green stormwater infrastructure.

Instead of burying pipes underground to mix stormwater overflows with wastewater, what if we were able to separate storm and gray water into a natural above ground greenway that daylight the historic creek along its original path with open space access and mobility improvements for the surrounding neighborhoods?

Not only are green infrastructure solutions to stormwater drainage practical and feasible, the practice is employed by coastal cities around the world. In some cases these solutions have been employed for centuries as in the case of the network of canals in the Netherlands. More recently cities are choosing to restore or “daylight” their waterways, as was the case for Cheonggyecheon river in South Korea and the ongoing restoration of the Duwamish River in Seattle.

Working with our partners Terrain Studio and Multistudio we were able to incorporate this community feedback into conceptual drawings to illustrate how these neighborhood requests can mix with hard infrastructure requirements to create an outcome that benefits everyone. Even small Right of Way streets can accommodate a rich ecosystem for restoring natural vegetation and wildlife.

The pictures following this article show a few different examples of potential “asphalt to creek” treatments along the

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

proposed site of the Folsom Stormwater Project.

We're proud that the Sierra Club's complaint and community outreach around the proposed Folsom Stormwater Project have ignited a vital discussion about the future of water management in San Francisco's Mission District. This project is symbolic of the systemic issues facing the beleaguered SFPUC and the City's combined sewer system – time and again the City chooses a short-term solution instead of investing the necessary resources to create a natural, robust, long-term solution to stormwater runoff and overflow.

But the challenge is just beginning. Stay tuned to our blog to learn more about the next phase of this project and other issues affecting San Francisco's water management policies.

SOURCES

- [1] https://www.spur.org/sites/default/files/2016-09/Mission_Creek_Sea_Level_Rise_Adaptation_Study.pdf
- [2] Elizabeth Creely, Treat PAST PRESENT FUTURE, Stand 3 - 1848 - 1920, Panel B: 1878 - 1920, <https://www.treatfuture.com/#download-exhibit>

[treatfuture.com/#download-exhibit](https://www.treatfuture.com/#download-exhibit)

- [3] <https://www.sfpuc.org/about-us/our-systems/sewer-system/our-combined-sewer>
- [4] Flooding under the Central Freeway dividing the Mission and SoMa in San Francisco on Dec. 31, 2022 photograph by Gerry Diaz <https://www.sfgate.com/travel/article/why-san-francisco-mission-floods-17708686.php>
- [5] https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sanfranciscobay/board_decisions/adopted_orders/2021/R2-2021-0021.pdf
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- [7] <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1GI8-x-Gjq5X9rmoDvBeWhXWc-Ec3nYJz/edit>

Kieran Farr is a San Francisco Group Executive Committee member.



A typical cross-section example of conversion from traditional street with underground stormwater drainage to a shared use greenway while still maintaining existing uses by Scott Slaney from Terrain Studio. Illustration for prototype and discussion purposes, not intended as a final engineering design.



LEFT: An example of a conversion from asphalt and concrete parking lots to restorative waterways and open spaces from Multistudio, BASE, and Badiner Urban Planning. Illustration for prototype and discussion purposes, not intended as a final engineering design.

BELOW: Converting an unmaintained street of broken asphalt and polluted wastewater to green, open spaces for the community from Terrain Studio for Treat Plaza North. Illustration for prototype and discussion purposes, not intended as a final engineering design.



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#SierraSnapshots | Sierra Club advocates and partners at the ribbon cutting celebration of Safer 17th, the successful four year campaign to get safer bike lanes on 17th St in Potrero Hill in SF. Photo by Odin Thien-An Marin. For a chance to get your snapshots featured in the next issue of the Yodeler, email photos to yodedit@sfbaysc.org or share them on Twitter or Instagram with the hashtag #SierraSnapshots. Include your name, the names of any people in the photo, and where and when the photo was taken.

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Our website is home to helpful information and resources including:

- Our blog, updated regularly
- The full events and activities calendar
- Group information and leadership roster

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Chapter and Group Elections season begins (p. 3)
- Sierra Club November endorsements out now (p. 3)
- Welcoming our new Chapter Organizers (p. 4)
- Wilderness First Aid classes offered now (p. 8)

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Visit sierraclub.org/sfbay/email to sign up for Bay Chapter emails, including monthly bulletins and action alerts.