

# Sierra Sage

Sierra Sage of South Orange County, a Group of the Sierra Club ■ Bimonthly Events & Outings

## South Orange County's Water Woes—Residents Weep!

Penny Elia | *Save Hobo Aliso Task Force*

Water, water everywhere nor any drop to drink.  
— Samuel Taylor Coleridge

**W**hile the **Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner** tells of the misfortunes of a seaman and suggests that despite being surrounded by something, you cannot benefit from it, the tale of ocean desalination suggests the same. The South Coast Water District's proposed Doheny Ocean Desalination Plant in South Orange County is an excellent example of this conundrum.

Every day in the district that South Coast Water District services (Dana Point, South Laguna, and areas of San Clemente and San Juan Capistrano), there are millions of gallons of potable water, aka gold, flowing down the gutters into storm drains or puddling at intersections. One will also see the water district's service vehicles splashing through these large puddles in the intersections, but interestingly enough, they never slow down to look at where the water is flowing from or do any type of investigation into this chronic runoff that occurs 24/7/365 in their district. Furthermore, little is done to truly educate customers on water conservation because after all, it's their right to use and/or waste as much water as they wish since they are paying for it. Here is a small example of total potable water waste



The above photo was taken recently during a 35–40 mph Santa Ana wind condition during a heat spell. Multiply this by the hundreds of South Coast Water District customers that feel it's their right to waste water and run it as long as they want until it flows down the street. Do they even know

*Article continues on the next page...*

## Sierra Sage Meeting with Fire Watch Manager, Tony Pointer is Open to Sierra Club members & the public—September 27, 2022

**S**ierra Sage hikers have seen the drought conditions on the trails in South Orange County. Dry brush and hot weather with wind is the beginning of fire season here. The Irvine Ranch Conservancy (IRC) prepares for these potential fires all year long. Preventing and managing fires on these drought-stricken lands is the job of our September guest speaker, **Fire Watch Manager, Tony Pointer**.

Tony and his team train volunteers who monitor the perimeters of high-risk areas to detect threats of wildfire before they ignite. A part of the Fire Watch mission is to keep trail users safe. This presentation will provide us with information on how to identify and avoid high-risk areas, as well as what danger signs to watch for when we're hiking.



■ Fire Watch Manager  
Tony Pointer

Tony Pointer has more than 20-years experience in emergency response. Prior to joining Irvine Ranch Conservancy, he worked for the American Red Cross as a health and safety lead instructor. He is also an instructor for the Community Emergency Response Team and a lead volunteer for the city of San Juan Capistrano.

**Find out how individuals working together as a team can be part of prevention and restoration of South Orange County wildlands that are threatened by fire.**

**JOIN US on Tuesday, September 27, 2022, at 7:00 pm** for this timely presentation with both in-person and online attendance. The in-person location is the...

**Norman P. Murray Community Center**  
**24932 Veterans Way, Mission Viejo 92692**

**Register here** for both in-person & virtual attendance.



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that water supplies are scarce or do they see everyone else doing this and just take it for granted that we are surrounded by water? While the water district claims to have special metering available to them to monitor this type of waste, one has to think that perhaps it's just too lucrative to put a stop to this wanton waste—why look at the data on the meters?

However, even with all of this highly visible potable water surrounding these communities on one green lawn after another, South Coast Water District advises its customer base that there isn't going to be a "drop to drink" unless they pursue building, at great cost, a very expensive ocean desalination plant. The scarcity of water cannot be argued, but what can be argued is why, with all the potable water that is allowed to run down the district's streets and into the storm drains, we need an ocean desalination plant. Apparently, the concept of conservation has completely escaped South Coast Water District and its board of directors, and has escaped them for several decades. We know this because we have been watching and have been begging for solutions for decades. We have sought assistance from the cities' water quality departments, the Regional Board and the EPA, but simply put, South Coast Water District doesn't accept responsibility for monitoring their customers' waste of potable water.

South Coast Water District repeatedly advises in their presentations and board meetings that they have made substantial investments in conservation, recycled water, and groundwater recovery. However, they currently rely on 85%–100% of their water supply from imported sources. Numerous studies conclude that as much as 50% of water demand can be met with local recycled water which would decrease the reliance on imported sources. Combine that with conservation and wouldn't the problem be solved? Why are the simple solutions ignored?

Could it be that the simple solutions just aren't profitable enough? As proposed, the project will increase the salinity of discharge and wastewater volumes on regulated coastal receiving waters frequented by migrating whales as well as dolphins and other marine life. Increased discharges from the San Juan Ocean Outfall (SJOO) will expand the wastefield plume to degrade larger areas and represent "back-sliding" as it relates to the NPDES Permit. This begs the question:

Will the proposed Doheny project create toxic offshore brine pools where whales migrate? These deadly brine pools exist elsewhere in our oceans and because this salty "brine" is much denser than regular seawater, it doesn't mix with the

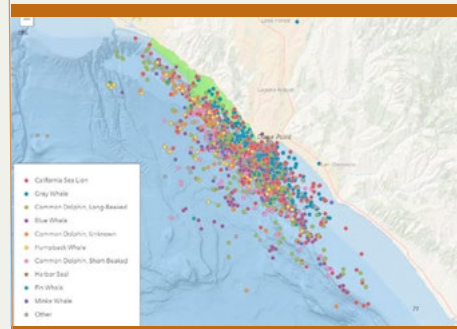
rest of the ocean but rather pools on the seafloor in lakes and sometimes even rivers.

This cetacean mapping graphic depicts the project's relation to the brine water discharges and federally protected marine life as well as potential migration of the Doheny Project's wastefield plume into South Laguna coastal waters.

A more suitable alternative could be to dry the effluent and export to some off-site location where, chemically inert, it could do little harm. Camp Pendleton in San Clemente, for example, uses solar ponds to dewater brine water.

It appears if we are contaminating the ocean in the vicinity of the intake with the sewage effluent from San Juan Capistrano, Dana Point and Laguna Beach, then we are harvesting pollut-

ed water to remove not only the contaminants of that effluent including viruses and pharmaceuticals, but also the additional salts and naturally occurring chemicals, that make the ocean water undrinkable.



Whereas the recycled water from Aliso Canyon, as an example, has many fewer contaminants to remove because it is much purer than the effluent they are presently discharging. The prohibition about not implementing toilet to tap is not satisfied in this ocean desal proposal because with all the discharges, the ocean becomes only a conduit for transmitting the toilet effluent back into the domestic water system.

These are just a few of the challenges with this proposed project, but the unknown impacts are too numerous to list. With this in mind, let's look at a few alternatives.

Number one, of course, is No Project.

Enhanced Conservation is at the top of the list.

Following immediately behind conservation is Enhanced Recycled Water.

As completely a nearly 40-year resident of South Laguna, I must comment on customer and ratepayer inclusion which is completely lacking for those of us living in South Laguna because we don't have a vote and haven't had a vote or voice for several decades. There are so many risks involved with a project of this size taken on by a small water district, but the customers in South Laguna must go along for the ride—no

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# Local News

## Outings September/October 2022

### November 8, 2022, General Election

Please keep these important dates in mind:

- **September 29:** Around this date, mailing of the Voter Information Guide commences
- **October 10:** First day that Vote-By-Mail ballots are available
- **October 29:** Vote Centers open
- **November 8:** General Election



Complete information is available at [OC Vote](#), a website of the Orange County Registrar of Voters.

The Sierra Club is endorsing many candidates—you can find them on the website of the Angeles Chapter.

### Communications Update

- Our website's content management system is being upgraded from Drupal 7 to Drupal 9. Visitors may not yet notice any changes as most of the up-grade occurs behind the curtain but can expect some design and of course content changes as time goes on. I'll use this upgrade to create a tighter coordination between our website and our newsletters, and I hope these changes will give members and supporters more opportunities to voice their views and opinions.



■ Ed Maurer

- Thanks to the tireless efforts and technical expertise of **Tod Fitch**, you can view our general meetings online, anytime, anywhere, and in any format. This is an additional benefit flowing from our decision to make our meetings as accessible as possible. Our speakers are always informative and worth watching:
  - ▲ **July 26, 2022, General Meeting:** **Dr. Kathleen Treseder**, Professor, Ecology & Evolutionary Biology, School of Biological Sciences speaks about Community Choice Energy and the Orange County Power Authority.



**Ed Maurer**, Communications Chair  
Sierra Sage of South Orange County

**O**ur hiking year begins in mid-September, and our leaders are looking forward to seeing you on the trail again after the hot summer. You will notice a new format here that avoids duplication of information that can be found on our [website's calendar](#). Our level of difficulty ratings—easy, moderate, strenuous—for each hike is based upon 3 factors: distance, elevation gain/loss, and nature of the terrain.

- **Wednesday, September 14, 2022 | 8:30 am** Buck Gully in Corona del Mar. 6 miles, 860' gain/loss. *Easy hike.*  
**LEADERS: Sherri Sisson & Sylvia Stevenson**
- **Wednesday, September 21, 2022 | 8:30 am** Caspers Regional Wilderness Park. 6 miles, 857' gain/loss. *Easy hike.*  
**LEADERS: Leslie & Tod Fitch**
- **Saturday, September 24, 2022 | 8:30 am** Flagpole Hike in San Juan Capistrano. 7 mi., 1200' gain/loss. *Moderate hike.*  
**LEADERS: John Kaiser, Leslie Fitch, Tod Fitch**
- **Wednesday, September 28, 2022 | 8:30 am** Arroyo Trabuco from Mission Viejo. 6 miles, 530' gain/loss. *Moderate hike.* with stream crossings.  
**LEADERS: Ed & Helen Maurer**
- **Saturday, October 1, 2022 | 8:00 am** Trail Maintenance in San Mateo Canyon Wilderness, up to 7 miles, up to 1000' gain/loss. *Strenuous hike.*  
**LEADERS: John Kaiser & Linda Ledger**
- **Wednesday, October 5, 2022 | 9:00 am:** Canyon Vista Loop in Aliso Wood Canyon Park. 5 miles, 730' gain/loss. *Easy hike.*  
**LEADERS: Sherri Sisson, Tod & Leslie Fitch**
- **Wednesday, October 12, 2022 | 9:00 am** Chapparosa Park in Laguna Niguel to Dana Point Harbor (Bagel hike). 7 miles, 850' gain, 1150' loss. *Moderate hike.*  
**LEADERS: Ed & Helen Maurer**
- **Wednesday, October 19, 2022 | 9:00 am** Irvine Duck Ponds. 4 miles, flat. *Very easy hike.*  
**LEADERS: Sherri Sisson & Helen Maurer**
- **Wednesday, October 26, 2022 | 9:00 am** San Clemente Hike. 10 miles, 1400' gain/loss. *Strenuous hike.*  
**LEADERS: Tod & Leslie Fitch**



## of Community Interest...

### Community Choice Energy Arrives in Orange County | Linda Kraemer, M.S., Chapter Chair The Climate Reality Project: Orange County, CA Chapter

**C**ommunity Choice Energy (CCE), sometimes called Community Choice Aggregation (CCA), has been monumentally successful in bringing clean energy to California businesses and residents. Since 2015 activists have worked to bring CCE to Orange County, and the Orange County Power Authority (OCPA) will begin to deliver clean electric energy to residential customers starting in October 2022. (Businesses were hooked up with OCPA in April 2022; the County of Orange signed on to launch next year.) The forward-looking cities Huntington Beach, Irvine, Buena Park, and Fullerton signed on with OCPA to bring their customers choice in sourcing of their electricity, which will reduce their carbon footprint by over 1 million metric tons per year, provided most customers opt for 100% clean energy!



■ Linda Kraemer, M.S.

Although OCPA is not without controversy, it's important to keep these facts in mind:

- **Next to water, electricity is arguably the most important utility for safety and security.** The source of that electricity should be in the hands of the ratepayers
- **We've had no choice for 100 years. Our investor-owned utilities (SCE & SDG&E) raise rates almost every year.**
- **The base rates for OCPA are the same as for SCE/SDG&E** and will be through 2023. Even in the "worst case" scenario, OCPA plans to keep its base rate the same as SCE/SDG&E.
- **Customers always have a choice.** They can stay with OCPA, or they can return to SCE/SDG&E.
- **OCPA is a locally governed not-for-profit entity.** Once the legally required reserves are accumulated (3–4 yrs.) OCPA will bring millions of dollars back to member cities annually that are now going to investors. This money will go back to OCPA member communities for energy programs.

Member cities will help shape the strategic plan for OCPA and decide on the programs. It is critical for cities to join now and help shape and govern OCPA.



- **Ask questions and get involved by learning about the power of Community Choice Energy** for reaching climate goals at [www.cal-cca.org](http://www.cal-cca.org) and learn how to attend meetings by going to [www.ocpower.org](http://www.ocpower.org) and help shape Community Choice in Orange County!

If you want to hear more about **Community Choice Energy** and **OCPA**, tune in to the **KUCI interview** between **Claudia Shambaugh** and **Linda Kraemer**. Also watch our **video recording** of **Dr. Kathleen Treseder's** presentation to Sierra Sage on July 26, 2022 on the same subject.

**Reach out with other questions to Linda Kraemer** at [climaterealityprojectoc@gmail.com](mailto:climaterealityprojectoc@gmail.com).



### The Sierra Club: 130 Years of Change

**T**he Sierra Club is celebrating 130 years of change. This has been a 130-year journey of learning, growing, and overcoming challenges along the way while becoming a stronger and better version of ourselves. Check out some of the victories we are celebrating and the voices we are lifting up, and be sure to visit [this page](#) again as we will regularly update it.



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matter what the risks no matter what the cost. This is truly the definition of 'taxation without representation.'

While many may be able to find a thin thread to grasp in support of this desal project, stating that, "it isn't as bad as fill in the blank," there is absolutely no reason to support ocean desalination when the water purveyors have not begun to "tap" into the alternatives that are available to them. It's time to put greed and profit aside and think about what is best for our planet and Mother Ocean. Put an end to the proposed Doheny ocean desalination project—NOW!

(Note from the editor: We received this article with the request that it not be edited.)



# Sierra Sage Bulletin Board

> > > BE SURE TO VISIT...

## Sierra Sage Group's Website

**O**UR WEBSITE is ready to be enjoyed at [www.sierrasage.org](http://www.sierrasage.org). It contains new pages, interesting items, and many features to keep you busy and learning about everything that the Sierra Sage group has to offer.

After you explore the web site, you are very welcome to send an email to Ed at [balois@cox.net](mailto:balois@cox.net) and let him know what you like and what changes you'd like to see.

### Sierra Sage Members...

Remember to give us your new physical address and/or email address if it changes so you'll get your Sierra Sage newsletter at your new place on time!

## Sierra Sage Meetings

- Management Committee meetings are open to all members of Sierra Club who reside in South Orange County. Meetings are on the 2nd Thursday of each month and are listed in our calendar.
- Preserve the Coastal areas of Orange County?  
— **Contact Penny Elia** at [greenp1@cox.net](mailto:greenp1@cox.net)
- Interested in electing environmentally-supportive politicians into local offices?  
— **Contact Sharon Koch** at [slkoch99@att.net](mailto:slkoch99@att.net)
- Want to keep the Santa Ana Mountains wild? Want to help maintain trails in the San Mateo Wilderness Area?  
— **Contact John Kaiser** at [jkai39@gmail.com](mailto:jkai39@gmail.com)

**SIERRA SAGE WEBSITE:** [www.sierrasage.org](http://www.sierrasage.org)

**ANGELES CHAPTER WEBSITE:**  
<https://angeles.sierraclub.org>

**SIERRA CLUB NATIONAL:** [www.sierraclub.org](http://www.sierraclub.org)

## Join Sierra Club Wilderness Guardians

(MONTHLY DONORS)

**Y**OU CAN HELP PROVIDE CRITICAL SUPPORT TO THE SIERRA CLUB by becoming a Wilderness Guardian, or monthly donor. This reliable funding gives the Sierra Club the resources needed to engage in the on-going battle to protect our environment. It also gives you the advantage of knowing that your membership is always current, and that the Sierra Club does not need to bother you with wasted renewal mailings and telephone solicitations.

By becoming a Wilderness Guardian, you get all the regular benefits of membership and much more! As a Wilderness Guardian, you will receive a subscription to Sierra magazine, the Sierra Club Wilderness Wall Calendar, access to webinars, calls, and events with conservation leaders, the Wilderness Guardian newsletter, as well as automatic membership in your local chapter and exclusive discounts on products and services to help you explore, enjoy and protect the planet.

Become a Wilderness Guardian today and enjoy all these benefits for as little as \$5.00 monthly. [Sign up here > Wilderness Guardians.](#)

### Newsletter Editorial Team

as of September 2022

Interim Newsletter Editor	Ed Maurer
Senior Advisor to the Editor	Mike Sappingfield
Graphic Design	Risa Koppel
Copy Editor	Helen Maurer
Outings	Sylvie Coté & Sherri Sisson
Rules & Chapter Business	Sharon Koch
Events & Programs	Leslie & Tod Fitch

## Sierra Sage

Subscription Information  
Sierra Sage Newsletter

### PUBLICATION NOTES

- Sierra Sage is scheduled for delivery on January 1, March 1, May 1, July 1, September 1, and November 1 of each year.
- Please note that submission deadline is *one month prior to publication*.
- Electronic copies are sent via email to all members and supporters, and are free.