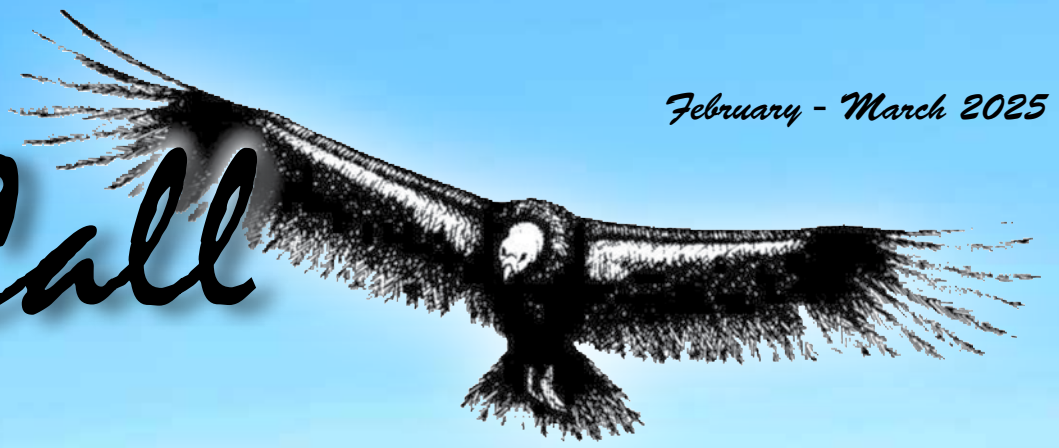


Vol. 25, No. 1 of 6

February - March 2025

Condor Call

Journal of the Sierra Club's
Santa Barbara - Ventura Chapter



© David Kilian Parziale, Ventura Wild educator

Leaders ... Divesting ... First Fridays ... Tomorrow Land ... Fires Etc

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"This is certainly the end of an era," said Joe Fabel, an attorney with State Lands. As a result of the 450,000-gallon Refugio oil spill, Platform Holly stopped producing in 2015. Venoco LLC quickly went bankrupt and deserted the facilities, leaving ownership of the platform to State Lands. (Photo by Glenn Beltz)

Meet our new chapter leaders

Editor's note: In January, several of our Executive Committee members were termed out and an election was held to replace them (below). As Condor Call editor I have the highest praise possible for those leaders: Chair Katie Davis and Vice-Chair Jim Hines, who have put in hours, days and years for the environment and fighting for social justice and wildlife. The good news is they are not leaving the chapter, simply taking on other positions.

Let's all welcome and help the new leaders. To get involved, contact our executive director: jonathan.ullman@sierraclub.org

LIZ LAMAR
Vice-Chair



I live in South Oxnard and have been a Sierra Club leader for a decade. I am fond of native plants and equitable access to nature.

KEITH NEVISON
Member-at-Large



I'm excited to join the Sierra Club's Santa Barbara chapter as an at-large Member to advocate on behalf of native plants, local ecosystems, wildlands and wildlife, water conservation, smart fire management, and other issues affecting our region and state.

I currently serve as the Director of Horticulture & Operations at Santa Barbara Botanic Garden, the nation's first botanic garden dedicated entirely to native plants. My background also includes extensive experience in the field of regenerative agriculture, and I'm highly interested in the thoughtful implementation of urban growth that protects productive farmlands, while balancing conservation of natural resources.

Other activities include serving on the City of Santa Barbara's Integrated Pest Management Committee, and as a Campaign Advisor to Fairview Gardens' Center for Urban Agriculture in Goleta."

In my spare time, I run marathons and am an aspiring triathlete.

STEVE COLOME
Member-at-Large



I am a long-term Sierra Club member, having served as Chair of the Greater Boston Group of the Sierra Club and Council Representative for the New England states forty years ago. My professional background is in Environmental Health Sciences; and I departed New England to take a faculty position at UC-Irvine, and subsequently the School of Public Health at UCLA.

I was actively engaged during those years in the regional and global challenges of acid rain and the stratospheric ozone hole, two issues that have been largely resolved due to regulatory control over the pollutants that cause these problems. We need similar success in reduction of GHG emissions.

I currently live in Ojai and am active working with city and county government on ways to locally address the climate crisis. Along with several residents we formed the Ojai Climate Action Network to inform the public on pathways to decarbonization and to advocate for climate policies:

www.electrifyojai.org
I am pleased to reactivate my involvement with the Sierra Club

Chapter in Santa Barbara and Ventura counties. This chapter has a long and valiant history addressing the environmental and climate challenges of oil and gas production along with protection of our precious natural resources and beautiful surroundings.

One of my goals serving the Executive Committee is to attract and pass leadership to a new generation of environmental and climate activists.

MICHELLE I. SEVILLA
Member-at-Large



I work on local environmental issues and policy in the California State Legislature as Director of Communications for Assemblymember Steve Bennett and I serve as the first Network Manager of the Central Coast Climate Justice Network.

My focus as a volunteer leader in various organizations is to work in the nexus of equity and justice in the environmental movement and I bring a unique lens as a young immigrant from the Philippines.

With more than a decade of environmental outreach and education experience, I serve as a Board Member of the Gaviota Coast Conservancy, CFROG (Climate First: Replacing Oil & Gas), our Santa Barbara-Ventura Chapter Sierra Club, and as a Steering Committee Member of 350 Santa Barbara.

MICHAEL BRICKMAN
Social Media - Internet



Michael moved to Ventura County in 2016 from the New York area where he worked in Marketing for several Wall Street Investment firms. Prior to that he owned a digital marketing agency supporting more than 50 music artists and entertainers with websites, social media and online stores.

As an avid outdoorsman and environmentalist, he can be found locally on the hiking trails of the Santa Monica Mountains and Conejo Open Space or backpacking and fishing in the Sierras. He believes strongly in the healing power of Nature and John Muir's famous line, "the Mountains are calling, and I must go" and loves this area because the Mountains are in our backyard!

Michael works with the Nature Conservancy in the Adirondack Park running a volunteer survey team looking for aquatic invasive plants in the pristine Lake system along with leading a Boy Scout troop, Riverkeepers and a trail alliance.

Since moving to Ventura County, he has been an active Sierra Club member joining hikes with the Conejo Valley outings group and writing articles for Sierra Club Climate action.

Now, he's working now to help our Sierra Club chapter maintain and grow our presence in the area to better communicate across digital media and engage with members.

Let sun set on oil

By Katie Davis

Pacific Oil Ban

As one of his final acts on January 6, out-going President Biden signed an executive order banning all new oil and gas leasing in federal waters of the Bering Sea, Gulf of Mexico, Atlantic Ocean and Pacific Ocean offshore California.

The 1953 law used in the executive order does not allow for any future President to overturn the ban.

However, that didn't stop Trump from issuing an executive order reversing the ban on January 20. Trump's order will be litigated and will likely lose. Trump already lost a similar case in 2019 when he tried to overturn an Obama-era ban.

That said, Trump has appointed many friendly judges who

have reversed other precedents. Trump could also work with Congress to overturn the ban, which would be legal.

For the time-being, our Pacific Ocean is safe from new oil leases thanks to Joe Biden.

Oily Loopholes

Sadly, a ban on new oil leases doesn't stop the restart of oil drilling in existing leases.

A speculative startup, Sable Offshore, purchased and is eager to restart Exxon's three shuttered offshore oil platforms, its oil processing plants, and the corroded pipeline that burst and caused the 2015 Refugio oil spill.

The Santa Barbara Board of Supervisors is considering the change of ownership from Exxon to Sable on February 25, but apart from that, it will have no real say over restart.

Last year the County denied a permit to work on the compromised pipeline, but Exxon sued, and the County settled claiming limited jurisdiction. State agencies will need to approve any restart and are expected to schedule a public meeting in Santa Barbara to explain the process.

At Sierra Club California's prompt, I drafted a letter to Governor Newsom about this dangerous project and 130 organizations signed on, including California's leading environmental organizations.

Oily Infamy

On Jan 23 Jane Fonda's climate

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MAUREN ELLENBERGER
Chapter Chair



Hi everyone! As the new Chair of the Sierra Club Santa Barbara - Ventura Chapter, I'm excited to share a bit about myself. My passion for environmental work began back in 2009 when I was selected for the Massachusetts Clean Energy Consortium's CleanTech Venture Investor Fellowship - which was really my first deep dive into sustainable energy.

I have spent over 30 years in the software industry beginning at Bell Labs and more recently, starting and supporting new companies in the Software Services industry.

After retiring from a rewarding career as a Senior Executive at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, I moved to Santa Barbara in 2016. Since then, I've jumped into our local environmental community with both feet.

You'll find me wearing different hats - Sierra Club Chapter Treasurer, UC Climate Steward, and a very busy participant of the Exxon Be Gone Coalition and an active member of the Society of Fearless Grandmothers SB.

As your Chapter Chair, I'm focusing on bringing our communities together. My goal is to support and strengthen our regional groups and amplify our environmental and conservation advocacy. Also to democratize energy, that is helping to drive the transition to clean energy and ridding ourselves from Big Oil and Big Banks across our region.

I want us to tap into the incredible strength of the Sierra Club's national network while adding our own local innovative spirit.

When I'm not working on environmental initiatives, you'll likely find me walking my dog along Santa Barbara's beaches or exploring California with my husband Dave.

From our local coastline to Joshua Tree and Yosemite, I'm constantly amazed by the natural beauty around us - and that's what keeps me motivated to protect it. Please reach out to me with ideas and areas that you would like to see us focus on:

Melle2007@gmail.com

I welcome your input and engagement. I am looking forward to working together to support the Sierra Club mission: "to defend everyone's right to a healthy and beautiful world."

COVER PHOTO

The joy of being outdoors is captured by this child from Ventura Wild, which connects children and families to nature by nurturing awareness, knowledge, skills, and stewardship of our natural world. Registration opens Feb. 6th. Programs are available in both Ojai and Ventura for youth ages 2 - 13. (Photo by David Killian Parziale, VW educator) Follow the link: www.venturalandtrust.org/ventura-wild

You too can help out

Join the Santa Barbara Group today, kicking off a new year! Or if you live in Ventura County, its network is also seeking leaders and members.

Did you know that the club is the most enduring and influential grassroots environmental organization in the U.S. with chapters in every state? Our actions nationally and locally are dynamic and successful, and polls show the Sierra Club is more popular than either political party.

"With Trump back in office, we're gearing up for a fierce battle for our health and our future," noted the club's Executive Director, Ben Jealous.

As for local actions, the SB-Ventura counties chapter is split into four regions, south (Santa Barbara) and north (Arguello) and in Ventura County, Ventura Network (north) and Conejo Group (south). We have

common interests and challenges; for instance, oil/gas companies wanting to "drill baby, drill."

The SB Group meets every second Tuesday of the month at 12pm in downtown Santa Barbara at the Community Environmental Council Hub, 1219 State St. Contact Emily Engel to volunteer today and thank you!

emilyaengel@gmail.com

The Ventura Network is also seeking those who want to serve as leaders or advisors too; call Condor John at 805 4552-2885 or:

john@gnusman.com

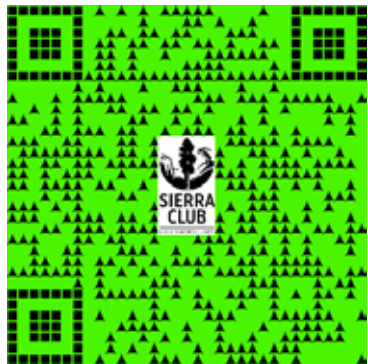
As for the Conejo contingent, it's looking for volunteers to perform trail work with various opportunities every month for about three hours of work. Tools and training are provided. If you are fit and willing to make yourself available, consider signing up:

<https://cosf.org/>

Throughout our region opportunities exist for taking hikes, trail work, overnight outings, planting trees, taking trash off our rivers and beaches and helping wildlife exist. How about just getting your neighbors out in nature? Check out page 6 for hiking opportunities.

Or maybe you have skills in land and water conservation, air quality or transportation.

We could use help no matter where you live. There are critical opportunities to advocate for our local wildlands and wildlife.



If you have a printed Condor Call in your hand, you can tap into this QR code to get a full color version that has hot links! Try it.



The Climate Fridays SB group, the Fearless Grandmothers and the Community Environmental Council are working together to create a coalition for community members to engage in Climate Action and Environmental Issues called "First Fridays for the Future." Action is ongoing, as shown by the Fearless Grandmothers (and Fathers) at SB County Administration opposing Sable's push to reopen offshore oil. (Photo contributed)

First Fridays For Future

The first of the 2025 Climate Fridays Santa Barbara – based on Fridays for Futures -- monthly gatherings started on January 3, when over 50 dedicated local environmental advocates came together.

Community members, non-profit leaders, and many Sierra Club members rallied to bring environmental issues to the forefront in the new year. Kathi King hosted the event at the Community Environmental Council Hub on State Street in

Santa Barbara and Irene Cooke and Maureen Ellenberger facilitated the meeting.

Our Sierra Club Santa Barbara, CEC and the Fearless Grandmothers have partnered to bring these monthly gatherings to the central coast. With the grim reality of 2025 staring us in the face, we will join with fellow activists and friends to take collective action, get educated, and collaborate to protect our planet.

We will be stronger together, to face whatever the coming year throws at us. We hope to include representation from as many environmental and social justice groups as possible. Together, we will raise awareness and amplify our voices in the community. Please join us for climate action and engagement in 2025.

Climate Fridays SB gather every first Friday of the month from 3:30-5pm at the CEC Hub.

For more information contact Emily Engel at emilyaengel@gmail.com or Irene Cooke irene.cooke@gmail.com



EAVESDROPS

"Our natural wonders are the heart and soul of our nation . . . They unite us. They inspire us."

~ President Joe Biden during a signing ceremony for creating new monuments on Jan. 14, 2025: Chuckwalla National Monument south of Joshua Tree (624,000 acres), Sattitla Highlands National Monument (224,000 acres) near the Oregon border and banning oil drilling in offshore areas, notably the Pacific Ocean along our local coast up through Oregon.

"We are the only organization 100 percent devoted to the cultural history of the California islands . . . Saving their history, telling their stories," said Marla Daily, a firebrand of a historian who's led the Santa Cruz Island Foundation (SCIF) since Stanton founded it in 1985. "The California Islands. That's what our mission is."

Read our blog



Tiny post office will return

Editor's note: Thanks to the Ojai Valley News-Ventura Sun for allowing us to reprint this story about the rebuilding of USA's Smallest Post Office" (via Ripley's Believe it or Not") at Wheeler Gorge Visitors' Center, and to the author for spotting an old photo of the Ripley honor, suggesting it should get rebuilt. Wheeler Gorge also boasts a sitting rock and plaque honoring Teresa Norris who led our Wilderness Basics Course until she passed away.

By Perry Van Houten
perry@ojaivalleynews.com

Many who've driven Maricopa Highway (33) through Los Padres National Forest remember the tiny post office at Wheeler Springs.

Built by Wheeler Springs local Webb Wilcox back in the 1930s, it served as an official post office for roughly 80 families until 1962. Even after it lost official post office status, the 6- by 7-foot structure remained at Wheeler Springs for visitors to view for another 55 years.

"Now it's gone because it burned in the 2017 Thomas Fire," said Terry Wright of Los Padres Forest Association's Wheeler Gorge Visitor Center, which has launched a project to rebuild the iconic post office exactly as it was before the fire.

He points to a photo taken before the structure was destroyed. "That's the closest you're going to get, right there."

On Jan. 14, the project received

approval by the U.S. Forest Service, and fundraising began to purchase materials to build an exact replica of the post office. To donate, go to: <https://lpforest.org/>

In his approval letter, Flemming Bertelsen, acting district ranger for the Ojai Ranger District, told LPFA: "Thank you for your dedication and commitment to restoring our local treasures."

Leading the reconstruction of the USA's Smallest Post Office will be David Rich, a 30-year veteran with the U.S. Navy, and a retired master chief Seabee.

The new post office will have a composite tile floor and a shake cedar roof, most likely made of fireproof material, "just to keep it in code," Rich said. "But it'll still look like the original."



'USA's Smallest Post Office' (via Ripley's Believe It or Not) was recreated as shown, but it was destroyed by the 2017 Thomas Fire. Wheeler Gorge Visitor's Center wants to reclaim this lost history. Journalist Perry Van Houten got the ball rolling when he noticed an old photo of the original and asked if it could be rebuilt. The Los Padres Forest Assn. agreed. (Photo by Perry Van Houten)



Most meetings continue online for now

Group News

The public is welcome to our programs

CHAPTER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

~ Meets 4th Thursday 7pm of every month, via internet for now.

Email Secretary Gerry Ching for the agenda: gching@cox.net

~ Chapter website and blog at:

www.SierraClub.org/SantaBarbara-Ventura

SANTA BARBARA GROUP

~ We meet 1st Tuesdays, noon to 1:30pm of each month. For details and to follow the South Coast area, contact:

<http://www.sbsierraclub.org>

<https://www.FACEBOOK.com/SBSierraClub>

<https://TWITTER.com/SBSierraClub>

<https://www.INSTAGRAM.com/SierraClubSantaBarbara>

<https://www.MEETUP.com/SierraClub-SantaBarbara>

<https://tinyurl.com/SBGroupBlog>

ARGUELLO GROUP

Our North County Group will keep you informed on our Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/SierraClubArguelloGroup ~Volunteers needed; your talents could make a difference. Call 350-0629 or:

RebeccaAugust@mac.com

VENTURA NETWORK

~ For board meeting dates, times and location email:

sierraclubventura@gmail.com

~ Get latest info about the western Ventura County group via Facebook and a blog:

<http://tinyurl.com/VenturaSierraClubFB>

<https://tinyurl.com/VenturaSierraClubBlog>

~New MEETUP site for hikes, outings etc:

www.meetup.com/SierraClubVentura

CONEJO GROUP

~ Events, outings and meetings will be sent to you if you send an email request to:

ConejoGroupHiking@gmail.com.

Or view the Conejo Group website:

www.sierraclub.org/SantaBarbara-Ventura

www.sierraclub.org/SantaBarbara-Ventura/outings

Let's defend wild places.

Your donation supports our powerful and effective grassroots movement to protect vulnerable communities and defend the natural world. Give now:

sierraclub.org/santa-barbara-ventura

(805) 617-3106
jonathan.ullman@sierraclub.org

SIERRA CLUB

SANTA BARBARA-VENTURA CHAPTER

Climate Watch

Go electric to Tomorrowland!

By Katie Davis

If you are wondering how we power our lives if we phase out oil and gas, consider the good news about electricity.

We're making progress across our region by moving to 100% renewable energy. A quarter of cars sold in California are now electric and gas consumption is on the decline as a result. Having driven electric cars for over a decade now, I can attest that they are less expensive to fuel and maintain. Find out about rebates and incentives at: <https://driveclean.ca.gov/>

More recently, I've been electrifying my house as well. When I needed a new stove, I chose an induction cooktop. Cooking on a gas stove produces indoor pollution that increases the risk of childhood asthma by 40%. Induction is easy to control, simple to clean, and smoke-free. I love it. I also got an electric insert for my fireplace. Instead of burning wood, I just push a button to create heat and faux flames. It's cute and inexpensive (around \$100).

But the biggest use of gas in homes is for heating. I've moved to electric water heating, and I've also installed a heat pump for heating and cooling our upstairs rooms. One day soon I hope to turn off our gas connection entirely. Look for tax incentives and rebates for electrifying your home.

California is committed to helping homeowners and renters reduce greenhouse gas emissions from buildings and transportation.

Get started by upgrading your home water heating, space conditioning, cooking appliances, and electrical vehicle (EV) charging equipment. Find benefits of electrification, tips on avoiding panel upgrades, rebates and loans. Here's a link: <https://tinyurl.com/CAenergyInfo>

Here's more detail from the California Energy website:

Gas stoves and other gas appliances create nitrogen dioxide and carbon monoxide as byproducts of gas combustion, which are harmful to human health when not properly vented. They also create GHGs, which harm the health of our planet.

The American Medical Association and American Lung Association have recognized nitrogen dioxide as a significant health risk, especially for childhood asthma. Using a vent hood that vents to the outside during cooking can reduce residents' exposure. To eliminate the most additional indoor pollution from cooking, use an electric cooktop and oven instead of a gas-burning cooktop and oven.

Environmental Benefits: Using less energy or using electricity generated with renewable energy resources instead of burning natural

gas to power your home or business, reduces the amount of GHGs and other air pollutants emitted.

Cleaner cars mean cleaner air and better health. Electric and hybrid vehicles produce zero tailpipe emissions when operating in all-electric mode. This helps reduce smog pollution and cut GHG emissions where you live and work. More information here: <https://afdc.energy.gov/fuels/electricity-benefits>

Bill Savings

Most utilities have times of day where electricity use is at its highest and use during these times is more expensive. Locally, the most expensive electricity is from 4-9pm.

By shifting when you use

electricity for certain tasks (running your dishwasher and doing laundry, charging a car), you can help reduce the demand during its peak and receive utility lower bills.

Customers can also see bill savings by taking advantage of [load flexibility](https://tinyurl.com/LoadFlexibility), also called demand flexibility, the practice of adjusting energy use to match supply. Details here: <https://tinyurl.com/LoadFlexibility>

Electricity customers with smart devices, such as thermostats that respond to signals from the grid, can be programmed to automatically shift energy use to times when electricity is cleaner and cheaper, and use less energy when the grid is under stress or supplied by polluting power plants.



A trifecta of electric appliances in Katie Davis's home includes (from bottom up), an induction stove, a fireplace insert and a heat pump. (Photos by Katie Davis)

HINES CHRONICLES

Making some progress

Editor's note: There's some doom and gloom afoot with a new federal administration that likes the environment for its resources and riches as opposed to its soul. But the Sierra Club has been down this road before and has tremendous influence even in the Trump era..

Then there is our local watchdog and e-mail chronicler, Jim Hines, ever-hopeful, our premier lobbyist and activist. This covers the last two months (Jan 2025-Dec 2024). Jim is a Conservation Chair with the chapter and is available as a speaker.

By Jim Hines

Jan 31: **It's tough being** an employee of the federal government; everyday their boss President Trump bashes and threatens the many dedicated and knowledgeable civil servants.

So many people I have gotten to know over the years and who have helped us in the environmental community are now afraid for their jobs.

So, when you visit a national park, forest, marine sanctuary, wildlife refuge, take time to thank the dedicated staff and let them know you appreciate their hard work to protect all that is wild across America.

Jan 30: **I was told** by staff at Rep. Bruce Westerman's (R-Arkansas) office that the opening up of all known uranium deposits to mining on federal lands in the west will be tied to passage of the upcoming rise of the U.S. debt ceiling. Good way to get around public scrutiny of a bill!

Next month our Rep. Salud Carbajal (D-Ventura-Santa Barbara) will introduce legislation to protect federal lands within the Lake Casitas Watershed by including those within the National Wilderness Preservation System.

This bill is personal to me as it includes my family's ranch lands where I grew up in the Casitas Watershed.

EAVESDROPS

"There is a long history of oil companies telling our community that they are safe, reliable operators. But we have learned the hard way, over and over again, that they were not, and the consequences have been devastating for our coast, for wildlife, for our economy, and for the health of people living near toxic oil spills. Sable has already shown that it can't be trusted to operate responsibly or safely."

~ Alex Katz, Environmental Defense Center Executive Director.

Jan 30: **Howling with joy** . . . we did it. Montana legislature just voted (60-40) down a bill which would have allowed year-round killing of wolves.

Jan 27: **It seems overwhelming** that there is no hope in our gigantic fight to stop Trump 2.0 from destroying our environment, but we are making some early progress:

~ Several MAGA republicans in the U.S. House have introduced legislation to prevent the Trump Administration from selling off national public lands units, due to a massive outcry in their congressional districts, proof that public speaking up works.

~ Yes, we still have friends working in various Interior offices who are still giving us info and some of us are contacting new staffers.

~ Several organizations including the Sierra Club are using the court system to stop Trump 2.0

~ We have successfully used local and state governments to Trump proof our environment.

~ We are using the chaos in our nation's capital to our advantage and building an army of resistance.

Jan 23: **I just committed** our chapter to supporting the Angeles Chapter's Northern Angeles Forest National Monument campaign, which borders eastern Ventura county. The Angeles chapter members want to be aware of the issues facing Los Padres NF and are willing to help protect it.

We are one big Sierra Club family working together to protect our national forests.

EAVESDROPS

"Donald Trump's actions today (Jan 20) lay bare his determination to undermine the health and wealth of working families by polluting our air and water while ceding ground to China as he attempts to shutter the brand-new factories powering our nation with clean energy. Making our communities more dangerous, driving up respiratory and heart disease, increasing our energy bills, and shipping our jobs overseas is the furthest thing from American leadership and the promises he made to support working class families."

~ Ben Jealous, Sierra Club Executive Director, about Donald Trump's executive orders intended to slow the growth of clean energy and American manufacturing.

Jan 23: **DC phone call:** James Blair, Deputy Chief of Staff to President Trump. I briefly filled him in on some issues along our central coast region which would be impacted by President Trump's recent directives and executive orders.

He listened quietly, made a couple of comments and asked me two questions and that was it. He noted no one communicates with the Trump Administration about what they think on issues.

We meet with our friends to thank them, and we meet with our adversaries to express our views and gather important information on what is coming up so that we can plan an effective strategy.

Jan 21: **Presidential Directive** issued by President Trump instructing the Secretary of the Interior to no longer take part in a Federal/California joint effort to protect the nation's largest inland estuary, the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. Sierra Club California has worked hard to implement the delta protection plan which has literally saved valuable wildlife habitat.

Jan 21: **My first request** with the Secretary of the Interior is to have 64,000 acres of federal lands within the Lake Casitas Watershed withdrawn from any mineral mining for 20 years. It's the same area which

continued to page 5

What will your legacy be?

Ensure your environmental legacy by naming the Sierra Club Santa Barbara-Ventura Chapter in your will or trust. These gifts cost you nothing now, yet enable a powerful movement and vibrant outings programs for years to come.

(805) 617-3106
jonathan.ullman@sierraclub.org

SIERRA CLUB
SANTA BARBARA-VENTURA CHAPTER

PHOTO: ESTHER CHASE

Chronicles...

continued from page 4

was withdrawn by Interior in 1980 to stop a planned uranium mine.

Jan 18: **“Pathways to Darkness”** campaign will be lighting up the issue of nighttime illumination impact on lions and all wildlife in rural areas where mountain lions need to feed. Goals in mountain lion habitat are to turn the lights out and allow dark skies to prevail and enact regulations to prohibit night lights in those areas.

In our chapter region only two entities the City of Ojai and Ventura County government have enacted night light/dark skies ordinances.

Jan 16: **Our Small Chapter** is a ‘David’ as we challenged the high and mighty taking on President Trump and Resident Elon Musk over Space X’s plan to destroy the ocean and marine environment.

Jan 8: **Trump Administration** has released its guide to a 3-step approach to eliminate Monday’s offshore oil drilling ban levied by President Biden. 1) Write legislation to Congress to eliminate the ban, 2) Get Trump-friendly Supreme Court to declare the ban unconstitutional and 3) declare a national energy emergency.

Jan 7: **Petition rejected** by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service rejected by a wolf hunting organization, The Sportsman’s Alliance which would have removed endangered species act protections.

Jan 7: **Borchard Wetlands** in the Newbury Park area will be protected by our chapter working with the California Native Plant Society.

Jan 3: **Powerful ally/friend** Rep. Jared Huffman (D-San Rafael, California) who is now the ranking member of the House Committee on Natural Resources.

Jan 2: **White House** Wednesdays have paid off, Ruby Mtns in Nevada now protected and next week President Biden will designate two new national monuments in California.

Dec 20: **Together we had** many successes protecting wildlife, wolves, monarchs, mountain lions, Tule Elk and more. The new year will bring us new challenges and I know that we will be up to it by building upon our success this year. Renew yourself, find solitude and peace and be ready to defend Mother Earth and her wild creatures.

Dec 6: **Back in 2018** when I attended a meeting with then Secretary of the Interior Zinke under President Trump, I noticed a large wall map of the western U.S. which had bulls eyes drawn on it. I was told the areas on the map were targets for a massive campaign to open federal lands for oil and mineral extraction.

The largest bulls eye was on the Colorado Plateau region (Grand Canyon north through southern Utah), the second was central coast California.

For me it is deja vu all over again in 2025. I hear those same areas will be targeted once again.

Our chapter has it work cut out for us in 2025. The agenda to destroy is huge but our passion to protect is greater. Will I see another wall map once again?

~ Edited by John Hankins

Backpack class will be ‘interactive and fun’



Pictured in Sequoia National Park, Ojai resident Scott Nelson, instructor of the Sierra Club’s Basic Backpacking Course. (Photo by Homer Tom)

Editor’s note: Many thanks to the Ojai Valley News-Ventura Sun for allowing us to reprint its excellent article about our Basic Backpacking course that begins on Feb. 20. Kudos to the author who is a true hiker in our mountains and an excellent journalist. Register or learn more at: tinyurl.com/RegisterBBC.

By Perry Van Houten

Learn the fundamentals of backpacking during a Basic Backpacking Course offered by the Santa Barbara-Ventura Chapter of the Sierra Club.

The course, being offered for the first time, includes six weeknight classroom sessions and four outings, starting Feb. 20 and concluding March 30.

The Sierra Club’s Scott Nelson, a backpacker for some 50 years, will lead a team of expert instructors teaching students safe, enjoyable and responsible wilderness travel.

Snow, fire, winds, pollution...

By John Hankins

We are here to Explore, Enjoy and Protect the planet (Sierra Club’s motto), despite a looming anti-environmental cadre of officials in the Trump administration.

Check out the stories and links below on what happened in the last two months.

Join us by getting involved and having fun too. We offer activities and activism and free hikes. See Group News box on page 3 for contacts and links where you can get involved or enjoy our free hikes via links on page 5, including via MeetUp and internet lists.

If you’d like to be an official hike leader, contact our hike teacher Gerry Ching at: gching@cox.net

Donations help a lot, and the money stays here at home doing good stuff. Donate here: www.sierraclub.org/donate/1000

Feb 3: **Make Polluters Pay** for Climate Devastation, a call to action sponsored by our friends at CFROG and others statewide. It would try to pass the CA Polluter Pays Climate Superfund bill which accelerated the concept partly due to the massive fires in LA and Ventura counties. Get locally involved here: (805)263-7408 or info@cfrog.org

Jan 29: **Climate Action Hour** created by the Sierra Club will happen monthly via Zoom. The events will be recorded if you can’t make the specific date. Check it out here: <https://tinyurl.com/ClimateHour>

Jan 27: **Snow joke:** Highway 33 north of Ojai was closed due to ice and snow,

Jan 25: **Green policies** and war drive clean energy growth, notably from a record year for clean energy use in Europe as Trump pushes fossil fuels.

Jan 22: **Report Values** Santa Barbara County’s Natural Resources at \$2.96

you can still find your way,” Nelson said.

Water treatment, sleep systems, shelters and leave-no-trace are also on the course schedule. “A lot of that is hands-on during the outings,” Nelson said.

The class size is limited to about 20 students to provide more personalized experience, said Nelson, who’s leading a group of 11 instructors. “We’re real excited about that,” he said. “People will get to know each other, and it’ll be a fun, interactive group.”

The four outings will be on a trail and moderately strenuous (5 to 7 miles in length). The six classroom sessions will be held at the Poinsettia Pavilion, 3451 Foothill Road in Ventura. Students will provide their own equipment for the course.

Going back to the days of John Muir hiking in Yosemite, “the Sierra Club has always had outings as part of its mission,” Nelson said. “Then, when it was threatened, those were the people that became activists to protect it. You don’t care about something if you don’t know anything about it.”

Nelson, who grew up in the Torrance area and for 20 years taught a wilderness travel course for the Angeles Chapter of the Sierra Club, has backpacked since high school in the local mountains and the Sierras. He moved to Ojai in 2017.

He picked the Sespe River, Gene Marshall-Piedra Blanca and Chorro Grande trails in the Ojai backcountry as some of his favorites. And more far-flung outings such as Mount Pinos, especially in the snow. “Because it’s higher elevation, it’s a real special place,” he said.

Tuition for the Basic Backpacking Course is \$200 for Sierra Club

members and \$235 for non-members. (Join the club for as little as \$15 a year at act.sierraclub.org/donate.) “The money goes to pay for the classroom,” Nelson said. “All of the instructors are volunteers.”

Nelson encouraged getting outdoors and into the local mountains but learning to do so safely and comfortably. “In Southern California, we have these big mountains that are really accessible and really nearby, and especially in Ojai,” he said. “It’s such a hiking town. We have such an opportunity for great hiking here.”

A basic medical information form and a liability waiver are required for registration. Register at tinyurl.com/RegisterBBC.

Schedule

- Thursday, Feb. 20: Classroom or physical conditioning, footwear and the 10 essentials.
- Saturday, Feb. 22: Day hike in local mountains.
- Thursday, Feb. 27: Outdoor clothing, backpacks.
- Saturday and Sunday, March 1 to 2: Car camp in Los Padres National Forest on campsite practices and navigation.
- Thursday, March 6: Leave-no-trace, water treatment, sleep systems, shelters.
- Thursday, March 13: Food planning.
- Saturday and Sunday, March 15 to 16: Backpack trip No.1 in LPNF.
- Thursday, March 20: Outdoor hazards, electronics and communication.
- Thursday, March 27: Trip-planning workshop.
- Saturday and Sunday, March 29 to 30: Backpack trip No. 2 in LPNF.

POLITIFACT

Jimmy Carter put 32 solar panels on the White House roof in response to the energy crisis of the late 70s. He also proposed taxing the oil industry to the tune of \$140 billion to underwrite a massive investment in green energy infrastructure, but he didn’t last that long. When Ronald Reagan moved into the White House, he quickly got rid of the solar panels.

widespread wildfires devastating Los Angeles and Ventura counties. The incident took place on a beach near Carpinteria, close to a nature preserve and residential areas, reports *The New York Post*. Cops were called and halted the dangerous activity. Check out the confrontation here: <https://tinyurl.com/Lantern-Balloons>

Jan 11: **Recreation Master Plan** for SB County published and available to residents to comment. This long-range proposal would fund

continued on page 6



Los Angeles’ Palisades Fire as seen from the Pacific Coast on Jan. 8 and below, Geologist Jim O’Tousa assesses how the soil will react to rain after the burn scar from the Mountain Fire. These devastating fires have killed at least 29 people, destroyed more than 12,000 structures and prompted evacuation orders for as many as 200,000 residents from the Palisades, Eaton, Hughs, Hearst, Castaic and Sunset fires. Future data will only increase these numbers. (Photos by CalFire and Ventura County Sheriff’s Dept.)

“They’ll be able to go and plan their own trips, have fun and feel safe,” he told the *Ojai Valley News*.

The course is designed for people who’ve done some hiking and want to go backpacking, but they’re not entirely comfortable with that. “Or they’ve done a little bit of backpacking and found out they’d really like to know more about navigation or that they have the right stuff,” Nelson said. “Or they just want to find other people to go hiking with and become friends with.”

Proper footwear, outdoor clothing and backpacks will be covered, said Nelson, who for 20 years worked for outdoor retail establishments REI and Sport Chalet.

Car camping, campsite practices and navigation in the wild (without a cellphone or GPS unit) are other topics covered. “You have to have a foundation of map and compass, so if you drop your phone and it breaks,

Billion. The Land Trust of SB’s report looked at the natural environment, open spaces, water resources and the role they play in the region’s economic vitality and ability to resist climate change. The review was released in collaboration with Earth Economics, a nonprofit organization that assesses and values natural habitats. Check out this eye-opening report here: <https://tinyurl.com/NatureWorthIt>

Jan 20: **Comment on whether** to allow eight underwater fish farms totaling 15,000 acres in federal waters of the Santa Barbara Channel by the Feb. 20 deadline. The Sierra Club is opposed and our Chapter Chair said: “Net-pen finfish farming, which is proposed in this document, can be a dirty business (pollution, oxygen-depleted dead zones, waste that can contain antibiotics, pesticides and fish feces, whale and dolphin entanglements, and releases of non-native fish—resulting in a ban in Washington state.) Here’s the link: <https://tinyurl.com/FishFarmPlan>

Jan 17: **“Abundance of caution”** to close some Sierra Club offices in California and Nevada due to “threatening emails and voicemails falsely linking us to the recent wildfires in California.” Business will still happen but likely via internet.

Jan 13: **Das Williams**, who served for 21 consecutive years in elected office in Santa Barbara County has accepted a job as senior advisor for policy and legislative affairs for Central Coast Community Energy (3CE) which serves SB and SLO counties. Last year he lost his SB supervisor role to Roy Lee of Carpinteria. 3CE manages where and how energy is generated, with an emphasis on renewable sources.

Jan 12: **Seriously?** An anonymous TikToker documented a group of individuals launching lantern balloons, which are lit by candles, despite

Catalina Island in crisis

Editor's note: Melissa Baffa is the Executive Director of the Ventura Land Trust and wrote this article in place of Condor Call editor John Hankins who missed the tour no thanks to a Merry Christmas Covid.

By Melissa Baffa

Representatives from the Ventura Land Trust, Sierra Club, other conservation groups and elected officials were invited to participate in a tour of the conservation work being done by the Catalina Island Conservancy (CIC) on Catalina Island, 26 miles across the sea (as the song goes) from the port of Long Beach.

The tour highlighted flora and fauna issues that are like our own Channel Islands and on land.

After lunch and an overview, we split into groups and went to the island interior to see the project elements firsthand. The biggest challenge faced by the CIC is the island's population of voracious, invasive mule deer, introduced for the purpose of hunting. These deer, with no natural predators, are adversely affecting native species on the island and forcing type conversions from the native habitat to highly invasive species instead.

A lot of people don't know that mule deer exist on Catalina Island, but they do know that bison have also been introduced?

Why are the bison not as controversial? Because their population is easily controlled through birth control. Also, they do not browse on the native, endemic vegetation as much as the deer, because they are grazers, preferring grass and weedy material over shrubbery.

As on other islands, native species exhibit strange characteristics, with small species evolving to be larger and large species min-

iaturing. One such example is the island ceanothus. Its leaves are large and soft, leading to its common name "felt leaf ceanothus." When compared with the mainland variety, which has small, leathery leaves, which type do you think the deer prefer to eat?

To protect native habitat, conservation staff have constructed enclosures to keep deer out. The difference between plots of land thus protected and those which are not is starkly apparent, especially at this time of year. The enclosures are filled with lush, green vegetation adapted to the boom-and-bust cycles of precipitation on the island.

Additionally, the abundance of healthy lichen on the shrubs within enclosures shows the importance of fog (and fog catching) to the native island plants. Outside of the enclosures, tan, dry, invasive vegetation predominates. Much of the dry, brittle material you see across Catalina are invasive plants, which tend to take over in disturbed places.

The same is true here as on the mainland: native vegetation is more fire-resistant. But despite their adaptations to recover from fire, these plants will lose out and be replaced by fast spreading invasives if burnt too often, meaning more than once every 100 years.

But enclosures are not fool-proof - bison can easily breach them, so they need to be patrolled and repaired regularly. These are a simple but highly effective tool in protecting some of the rarest plants in the entire world, including Catalina Ironwood, with only about 115 in existence. Another, the Catalina mountain mahogany, is critically endangered and has only six members living in one spot in the wild. When a population gets this small,

it enters a genetic bottleneck that makes it less resilient and adaptable.

There is still time to save these species, but the clock is running out.

A lot of important work is being done at the CIC's native plant nursery at Middle Ranch on the island - seeds and cuttings collected from the wild are tended to with expert and loving care. Some of the rarest are being held in trust here until they can be reintroduced to the wild, but until the deer have been removed, restoration cannot happen in earnest. (VLT also has a native plant nursery).

Removal of the deer from the island is proving controversial, with improbable partners in opposition - animal rights activists and hunters are banding together to advocate for the persistence of the mule deer in this ecosystem. Simply reducing the size of the deer population through increased hunting has proven ineffective - after the last hunting season, when more take permits for the deer were issued than usual, the does responded with a bumper crop of young to replace the culled individuals, giving birth to twins or even triplets!

The issues that CIC face are familiar to VLT - from the proliferation of invasive species to threats to native vegetation, the ongoing and mounting effects from climate change, and human pressures, including human-induced wildfires, we share many concerns.

To learn more about the ongoing restoration project on Catalina Island, the Restoration Project section of CIC's website at <https://catalinaconservancy.org/>

To learn about the work that Ventura Land Trust is doing locally, visit: www.venturalandtrust.org



Numerous environmental groups are working hard safeguarding crucial native riparian habitat, notably the Santa Clara River Conservancy. Here's just one reason why, via the Santa Clara River estuary picture showing a vibrant wildlife habitat. (Photo by Marie Lakin)

Santa Clara River safeguards habitat

Editor's note: We asked Executive Director Shawn Kelly to educate us on the importance of safeguarding the last major coastal river system in Southern California and its native riparian habitat. We applaud the efforts of the non-profit Santa Clara River Conservancy (SCRC).

By Shawn Kelly

The Santa Clara River Conservancy's primary objective is safeguarding crucial native riparian habitat through restoration and conservation in collaboration with partners, public outreach and education. It includes all the natural resources within the Santa Clara River Watershed.

It's crucial because the river stands as the last major coastal river system that retains much of its original hydrology. Being located adjacent to industrial agriculture and an ever-expanding urban sprawl, the river has been exposed to several anthropogenic threats including habitat loss, pollution, fire, and the introduction of invasive species.

SCRC addresses these threats and impacts by implementing habitat restoration, raising awareness of river related environmental issues by educating the local community, getting youth from disadvantaged backgrounds involved in stewardship, and facilitating public access to the river.

The Conservancy has a broad community both in terms of partnerships and a target community for education, outreach, volunteer, and stewardship initiatives. A primary goal in the process of conducting habitat restoration while connecting local, disadvantaged communities to the river that flows through their backyards.

Over the last couple of years, the Conservancy has successfully established connections with, and implemented river visits with, local schools, youth groups from local disadvantaged communities: the Big Brothers Big Sisters, the Boys and Girls Club, Fillmore Youth Conservation Corps, and Santa Paula High School.

Too, the Conservancy is appreciative of the Ventura Sierra Club and the Friends of the Santa Clara River for their efforts in the watershed.

SCRC works closely with UC-Santa Barbara, extensively on project identification, grant writing, project planning, and project implementation. It also collaborates with The Nature Conservancy, CA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, the Wildlife Conservation Board, Santa Clara Valley Water and the cities of Fillmore and Santa Clarita.

The Conservancy seeks collaboration with the agricultural community to further common goals and create an integrated working landscape for permanent protection and conservation of irreplaceable lands.

Membership in numerous agencies help the Conservancy in its work, including SCR Watershed Committee, those dealing with weed management and Arundo abatement and Steelhead Coalition.

Cienega Springs

A task over the last few years continues with the Cienega Springs Ecological Reserve project, in partnership with UCSB. The project is actively restoring 234 acres of degraded river channel and floodplain within the Cienega Springs Ecological Reserve to a mosaic of wetland and riparian habitat types. It seeks to improve the site's hydrology for surface water retention

and groundwater recharge, and provide a wildlife-oriented recreational opportunity for the surrounding disadvantaged communities.

The project will have multiple benefits, including restoring habitat diversity and complexity, expanding floodplain connectivity, improving water resources, and providing climate change resiliency and recreation and educational opportunities.

Too, a trail network will provide the public access to the river once the Reserve opens.

SCRC has recently begun the Santa Clara River Artesian Site Habitat Restoration Project in Santa Paula on conservation property owned by The Nature Conservancy; project actions include reversing legacy impacts from agricultural operations, invasive species removal, habitat restoration, and hydrological restoration in emergent wetland habitat.

The Conservancy welcomes support in executing the organization's mission, whether you are able to contribute funding, a vehicle or equipment, or able to help in other ways. A donation to support SCRC's efforts to ensure a sustainable future for the river is tax-deductible. Visit the website for more information:

www.santaclarariver.org



Just like on land, the Catalina Conservancy has a native plant nursery, and bison! The article notes that it's the mule deer that are damaging the island's habitat, not so much the bison. (Photos by Melissa Baffa)

Sierra Club offers adventures in nature

[We Need Time In Nature—Now More Than Ever](#)

It has been a difficult week for democracy. In just a few short days, the new administration has begun its attack on our precious natural resources and public lands. Sierra

Club's grassroots movement mobilizes to fight these attacks with all we have, but even in the midst of our fight we must also make time for rest and revitalization. Nature invigorates, inspires, and heals, and we believe that the power of communing in the outdoors will be

especially necessary in the coming years.

With over 250+ itineraries in North America and around the world, Sierra Club Outings has countless opportunities for restoration in 2025. Head into the backcountry on a [backpacking](#) or

supported trekking trip, give back on a [volunteer vacation](#), make a splash on a [raft, canoe, or kayak](#) trip, journey abroad on an [international adventure](#), and so much more.

See all possibilities here:

<https://outings.sierraclub.org/>



A wide range of Sierra Club outings nationally include backpacking, bicycling, kayaking, multi-sport, skiing, hut-to-hut and service trips which are at a lower cost. And much more, like specialty trips. Pick your adventure here:

<https://outings.sierraclub.org/>

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Gearing up: zero to sixty

By Jon Ullman
 Chapter Director

Someone asked me how we're 'gearing up' for this year. My answer, what gears? It's zero to 60.

Amid the chaos in the first weeks of the new Federal Administration, we have plenty of ongoing fights in our region.

Our biggest challenge has been Sable Offshore, the company that seeks to restart three mothballed Exxon platforms off the Gaviota Coast. The Houston-based startup has marched through every supposed protection, every barrier to restart we thought existed. It is fueled by speculative investments from around the world.

Some say \$65 billion of oil sits underneath the Santa Barbara Channel. Are local, state and federal officials willing to risk it going through a highly corroded pipeline that broke in 2015? Watch the movie BROKE! online for free here:

<https://tinyurl.com/GaviotaSpill>

Last December, the California State Fire Marshal, at the direction of the Governor's Office, surprisingly waived federally required anti-corrosion measures for the pipeline system. The decision was shocking and out of the public eye. Nevertheless, there's still time for Governor Newsom and the agencies under his administration to hold the line.

Please call Governor Newsom and Secretary Wade Crowfoot,

leader of the California Natural Resources Agency, which directly supervises CAL FIRE. Their phone numbers and complete instructions are at this link:

<https://tinyurl.com/stopsable>

Many people are standing up. Leaders of our Chapter testified at the California Coastal Commission meetings many times last year, and we will keep going as long as the agency continues to protect the coast. We're headed to the Coastal Commission meeting in Long Beach on Feb. 5, and you can join us. Just email me at:

jonathan.ullman@sierraclub.org

Our Sierra Club Santa Barbara-Ventura chapter is now represented by Santa Barbara-based Environmental Defense Center. We happily join Santa Barbara Community Action Network and Get Oil Out! to round out the trio.

That's not all. On February 25, the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors will hear an appeal of the county's decision to grant Sable Offshore a "Change of Owner, Operator, and Guarantor." We invite you to join us for a rally before the hearing and to speak directly to your elected representatives to overturn this bad decision. We need all of you. Again, send me an email if you want to join to:

jonathan.ullman@sierraclub.org

If Sable wasn't enough, farther up the coast, SpaceX is seeking to

double the number of commercial rocket launchings at Vandenberg Space Force Base. Before 2020, the average was six. Now the company owned by Elon Musk wants to increase it from 50 last year to 100. On January 27, the national Sierra Club sent a letter with many concerns on behalf of the Santa Barbara-Ventura Chapter and the Santa Lucia Chapter in San Luis Obispo County to the Air Force. To read the letter, go to;

<https://tinyurl.com/VAFBspaceX>

These "scoping" comments help guide the upcoming Environmental Impact Statement. We will stay engaged and will need your help in the coming months.

Lastly, we are planning for a Santa Barbara County oil phase-out ordinance in response to deficiencies the Sierra Club identified in the County's Climate Action Plan last year. Last summer, the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors passed a Climate Action Plan (CAP) and directed staff to develop an ordinance in six months to phase out drilling. That six-month deadline is approaching, and we'll need you.

That's just some of what's going on. There are lots of ways to get involved with the Sierra Club in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties. There are hikes, environmental campaigns and roles to be filled.

If you want to volunteer, just send an email and we'll plug you in: jonathan.ullman@sierraclub.org



Broke Movie



Stop Sable oil



Space X expansion



State Senator Monique Limón (center) and State Assemblymember Gregg Hart (center left) have both expressed keen disappointment in the decision of the state Fire Marshal and governor's office to grant a "waiver" to Sable that qualifies as a key procedural victory in its plans to restart the oil pipeline that caused 2015's Refugio Oil Spill. (Courtesy Office of Monique Limón and Paul Wellman Photo)



Sierra Club is fighting the Musk plan to launch many more rockets from Vandenberg Air Force Base, following push-back from his Texas launches too. Read our chapter's letter about why it is important scrap that plan.

<https://tinyurl.com/VAFBspaceX>