



The Sequoia

In Case You Missed February Presentation: Climate Change Impacts in the Sierra Nevada

INSIDE

UNDERSTANDING THE
SERAL PROJECT
LOCAL CONSERVATION
UPDATES

Sierra Club Climate Action Group

Climate change is here, bringing heat, drought, wildfires and smoke to our Mother Lode towns, and extreme weather across the planet. We believe that the best way to address climate anxiety is to talk solutions, inspire one another, and get connected with a climate action community.

Interested in joining other members for collective action? We'd like to hear from you. Email us at tsclimateaction@gmail.com. Stay connected to local climate efforts by clicking the climate action blog at www.sierratuolumne.org. Together, we can make a difference.

ON FEBRUARY 24, 2022, we hosted a powerful presentation by author and scientist Dana Nuccitelli. Over 90 people across the Mother Lode dialed in to learn more about climate change, how we can advocate for change, and to ask their questions. In the words of one attendee, "the presentation was scarily eye-opening."

Dana presented the overwhelming case for climate action. The climate-weather connection is profound, and he walked us through how hotter temperatures lead to drought, snowpack shrinkage, wildfire, bark beetles, and health impacts like premature death, asthma, etc.

The good news is that investments in clean energy pay for themselves many times over. We could see clean air and health benefits right away and, in the longer term, fuel costs will come down dramatically as we transition from fossil fuels to clean sources such as solar and wind (which are free). Over time, we could save trillions of dollars by avoiding or lessening extreme weather disasters.

In response to climate change, Nuccitelli says, "there's going to be some combination of mitigation (reducing emissions), adaptation (resilience) and suffering. The more mitigation we do, and the more adaptation/resilience we do, the less suffering there will be." We must reduce emissions to curb global warming and we'll need to adapt. The level of suffering that will be inflicted on current and future generations will be up to us.

To view video of presentation, head to our website at sierratuolumne.org and click *Events*.



Donate to Our Scholarship Fund Help Foster Tomorrow's Environmentalists

Today's youth will inherit a myriad of environmental challenges. There is a way we can help support them now.

Tuolumne Group of the Sierra Club Conservation and Natural Resource Scholarship has assisted with the educational expenses of six Columbia College students through Sierra Club Foundation funds each year for the past two years. It has been our delight to share their amazing student profiles with you in

our newsletters. However, budget analysis shows waning funds, therefore in order to sustain this program from our local group, we need to raise a minor portion of the funds each year. Please consider making a charitable (tax deductible) donation toward this project and our local students. Your participation in the scholarship process is also welcome.

For details on how to donate or participate, email TuolumneGroupSecretary@gmail.com.

Stanislaus Forest Officials Plan Forest Treatments in SERAL Project Area to Reduce the Risk of Wildfires & Drought Impacts

John Buckley

SERAL Project Highlights

SERAL stands for Social and Ecological Resilience Across the Landscape.

The Project will focus on 95,000 acres of national forest north of Highway 108.

Treatments are a result of years of planning by the USFS and the YSS Stakeholder Group.

Fuel breaks are planned for 13,430 acres overall to help control wildfires and to provide anchor points for doing broadcast burn projects.

Forest thinning would treat 30,498 acres – selective removal of some medium and small trees will better protect large trees from high-severity wildfires and drought stress.

Prescribed fire treatments are planned for 43,859 acres. Many acres are planned for prescribed fire after mechanical treatments. Some are stand alone burn treatments.

Noxious invasive weeds would be treated on 231 acres. First priority is to use manual or mechanical treatments with herbicides only as last resort.

MANY YEARS IN THE PAST, the Sierra Club consistently opposed most national forest logging projects because the Forest Service used to target old growth trees and because many Forest Service projects featured clear-cut type logging treatments. Over time, in response to lawsuits and increased federal protections for threatened and endangered species, the Forest Service stopped all clearcutting on national forest lands in the Sierra Nevada region. The Forest Service also stopped selling large old trees to loggers, and instead, applied strict size-limit restrictions to logging projects.

Despite those positive changes, many conservation organizations continued to mistrust the Forest Service and agency plans. But here in our local region, the Stanislaus National Forest began to partner with the members of two forest stakeholder groups. ACCG (the Amador-Calaveras Consensus Group) is one collaborative group that deals with the northern district of the Stanislaus Forest and the southernmost district on the Eldorado National Forest.

The YSS (Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions) is a separate forest stakeholder group that focuses on the portion of the Stanislaus Forest that covers the MiWok-Summit and Groveland ranger districts. YSS has worked for years to attempt to increase the amount of forest health treatments in the local national forest to prevent another gigantic high-severity wildfire such as the 2013 Rim Fire.

Three years ago, the Forest Service and YSS began to plan a huge forest project for the portion of the Stanislaus River watershed that lies north of Highway 108 - from Cedar Ridge east to Pinecrest Lake. YSS urged the Forest staff to plan thinning logging, biomass removal, and broadcast burn treatments that would spare large trees, protect the critical habitat where CA spotted owls can be found, and to otherwise use intense forest treatments to open up the forest to reduce the amount of fuel for destructive wildfires.

For the past two years the Forest staff worked with computer modeling specialists to analyze how thinning logging and fuel reduction work might benefit forest areas that currently are so densely stocked with small and medium size trees that windblown wildfires would likely destroy nearly all of the forested watershed.

That project plan became known as the SERAL project. As proposed, over 7-10 years the project would create a web of strategically designed fuel breaks to help fire crews to be more effective at controlling large wildfires. Thinning logging would apply thinning logging to dense forests to make them more open and parklike so as to not only reduce fire risk, but to also reduce tree mortality from too many trees all competing for limited water during drought conditions. The SERAL project would carefully apply prescribed fire to areas that are first treated with selective logging and biomass fuel removal, while in other areas the sole treatment would be prescribed burning.

Local Sierra Club representatives who participate in the YSS stakeholder group have joined with Audubon and the staff of the Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center to collectively support the Forest Service doing proactive forest treatments rather than waiting until extreme wildfires roast tens of thousands of acres of the local region. The Tuolumne Group, Audubon, and CSERC have agreed that doing planned forest treatments poses far less risk to our local

**LOCAL
CONSERVATION NOTES**

**Scar Site Project
Approved by County**

The so-called “scar” site near Big Oak Flat on the Highway 120 corridor has been slowly recovering for decades after being heavily bulldozed for a failed development project. Now a new project has gained Tuolumne County approval to be constructed on the site. In Phase 1, Yonder Hospitality developers will build an events center, a small number of lodging units, and employee housing. In Phase 2 the project will be significantly expanded to develop a total of 175 lodging units, a pool facility, a market, and the main lodge.

Local conservation groups did not raise opposition to the large project despite the traffic study showing that it will add more than 1,000 daily vehicle trips to the already busy highway corridor. The applicants promised to restore the eroded stream drainages on the site, to install a YARTs bus stop for trips to Yosemite, to plant trees to enhance the landscape view, and to take extra steps to reduce wildfire risk.

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Yosemite Day-Use

For the past two years, in order to adapt to the COVID threat, Yosemite Park has limited crowding in the Park by applying a day-use reservation system. Now that COVID intensity has dropped, the Park plans to still require day-use reservations this year. Traffic will be affected by many construction projects planned in the Park this summer plus Glacier Point Road will be closed all year for restoration work. Day-use reservations have long been endorsed by the Sierra Club as an appropriate way to reduce traffic jams, crowding, and congestion.



national forest than leaving vast areas chock full of dense forest fuel that burns so hot that even the biggest old growth trees are often killed.

If the SERAL project plan continues to move forward, there will be non-logging treatments started this summer on up to 6,000 acres of fuel breaks to better protect Highway 108 communities. Over the next few years, the combined forest treatments should result in far safer

forest conditions and much better protection for wildlife, water quality, and the recreational values that bring so many visitors to the local forest region.

PHOTOS: Top image shows dense forest in the SERAL project area currently at high risk for wildfires. Bottom image shows a more open, less fire-prone forest stand.



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Due to COVID-19, the Tuolumne Group Executive Committee is currently only meeting by phone or with online sessions. For information on how to participate in the next ExCom meeting, contact Elaine Hagen at the email listed below.

Chair Jim Bearden, jbearden@ieee.org

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We welcome your input and feedback.

NOTES & UPDATES

CONNECT WITH YOUR SIERRA CLUB TUOLUMNE GROUP

Want to put your support for the environment into action? Consider joining our Executive Committee. Have a great idea for a local Sierra Club presentation? There are many ways to volunteer with our local group. Interested members are invited to attend one of our ExCom meetings. Contact Membership Chair, Elaine Hagen at elainehagen@att.net.

SIERRA CLUB OUTINGS

Official local Sierra Club Tuolumne group outings have been curtailed due to COVID. For the most current information regarding scheduled hikes and current guidelines for Sierra Club outings, go to the outings page at www.sierratuolumne.org.

GET INVOLVED • TAKE ACTION

Today, years of hard-fought environmental protections are under threat—and to influence governments and businesses, we need everyone to speak up and shout out. Explore how you can get involved: go to www.sierraclub.org/take-action

RATHER RECEIVE THIS NEWSLETTER VIA EMAIL?

If you would like to receive this newsletter via email either instead of, or in addition to our printed edition, email your request to mail@sierratuolumne.org.

The Sequoia Newsletter is designed to provide local Sierra Club members with a trusted source of information on people, events, and issues impacting our environment. Members can also find additional information on our updated web page: www.sierratuolumne.org.

