



The Sequoia

Yosemite Reservation Plan for 2024 is Mostly a Nothing Burger

Sierra Club Tuolumne Group ExCom



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

INSIDE

FOREST SERVICE PROPOSES USING
HERBICIDES ON FUEL BREAKS
MORE SIERRA WILDLIFE
DESIGNATED AS "THREATENED"

Even for the 95 days requiring reservations, there is no information about how many vehicles will be allowed each day....

When it comes to Yosemite Park management policies, there is no doubt that Park officials face a lot of political pressure and lobbying. Local county supervisors, the local Congressman, and a wide range of business interests have all lobbied against Park officials setting firm limits on vehicles and visitors to try to curb congestion, traffic jams, and crowding.

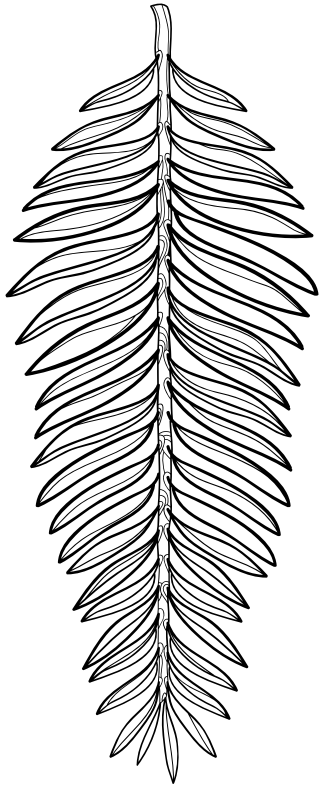
The politicians and businesses have strongly advocated for either no Day Use Reservations being required to control the number of vehicles, or some businesses have pushed for the least possible number of days requiring reservations and a high daily number of vehicles on those days so that businesses can still make high profits from Yosemite visitors.

All of this matters because the Park Service is halfway through a two-year Visitor Access Management Plan process that will set long-term visitor management policy in Yosemite. As a key part of that planning process, the Park Service announced in mid-December their short-term plan for managing visitor use in 2024.

From the Sierra Club's point of view, the Park's 2024 peak season Reservation "pilot system" is a disappointment, and it indicates the likelihood of an equally weak final Park decision on the long-term visitor plan. Over nearly 200 days from April through October, the 2024 plan only requires reservations for 95 days. That means that over half the time there will be *unlimited vehicles* and *unlimited number of visitors*. That is certain to result in an overcrowded visitor experience, traffic jams, and damage to natural resources – especially in Yosemite Valley, where most visitors go.

The 2024 reservation system only applies to weekend and holidays for most of the six-month peak season, with a six-week period from July 1–August 15 where reservations will be required all-week-long. Even for the 95 days requiring reservations, there is no information about how many vehicles will be allowed each day, plus all those with campground reservations, lodging reservations, employees, and others will not need reservations.

Despite the Park staff declaring to the media numerous times this past summer that having unlimited visitation was producing congestion that was "unacceptable," Park officials are now choosing a plan for 2024's peak tourist season that allows unlimited visitation for more than half the time. It's better than nothing, but nothing most of the time.



Forest Service Proposes Spraying Herbicides On 1000's of Acres of Fuel Breaks

Our Tuolumne Group of the Sierra Club has consistently opposed the use of chemical treatments in the local national forest. Unfortunately, the latest Forest Service “large landscape” SERAL 2.0 project proposes to allow herbicides to be sprayed by hand crews across thousands of acres of fuel breaks in the local forest.

One herbicide formulation (glyphosate) that could be used has been listed as possibly causing cancer by the World Health Organization. Other chemical formulations that could be used are not highly toxic, but their overall health effects and possible effects on wildlife are of concern.

Our Group submitted comments to the Stanislaus Forest recommending that the Forest use mechanical treatments or prescribed burn treatments to reduce the growth of brush and small deciduous trees that the Forest Service wants to remove across 13,000 acres of fuel breaks in the new project. With non-chemical alternatives available, the Sierra Club hopes to see those less controversial treatments chosen for use.

At-Risk Wildlife Species Designated for New Federal Protective Status



California Spotted Owl

After decades of scientists pointing to the decline of the *California spotted owl*, it's probably no surprise that a key federal wildlife agency (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) has proposed to list the owl in this region of the Sierra Nevada as “threatened.” That won't change most forest management projects that may affect the owl, but it does require federal agencies such as BLM and the Forest Service to “consult” with USFWS biologists before approving new projects so that mitigation measures can help protect the owl.

Similarly, the UFWFS has now designated the *foothill yellow-legged frog* in our region as “threatened” so that efforts can be made to increase the frog's declining population in the region. The frogs are disappearing due to climate change, loss of habitat, and a wide range of human effects. (photo courtesy USFWS)

The *western pond turtle* of our region has also been proposed by USFWS as “threatened.” While adult turtles can be long-lived, the tiny juvenile turtles are highly vulnerable to being preyed upon by invasive bullfrogs and by non-native bass. Turtles also suffer during increasingly frequent drought periods when ponds dry out.



Foothill Yellow-legged Frog



Western Pond Turtle

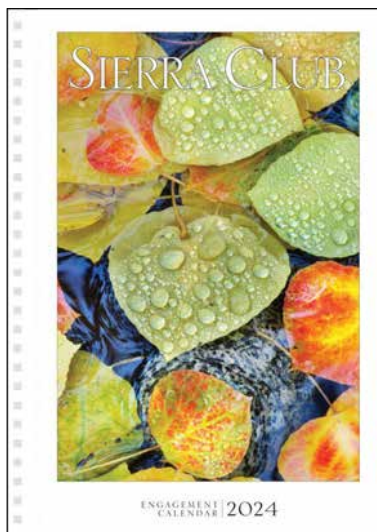
Six Local Students Win Sierra Club Scholarships in 2023

Scholarship Committee

Six students from Columbia College were each awarded \$500 scholarships funded by the Sierra Club Foundation and local member donations.

This year's awardees were chosen from a group of 27 applicants based on academic performance, personal interest, community involvement, and plans to pursue a Bachelor's degree and careers in environmental science and natural resources.

Congratulations to Fonda Thomas, Logan Maxim, Nathanyel Winans, Trinity Walter, Kaitlyn McGregor, and Heather Hatchell.



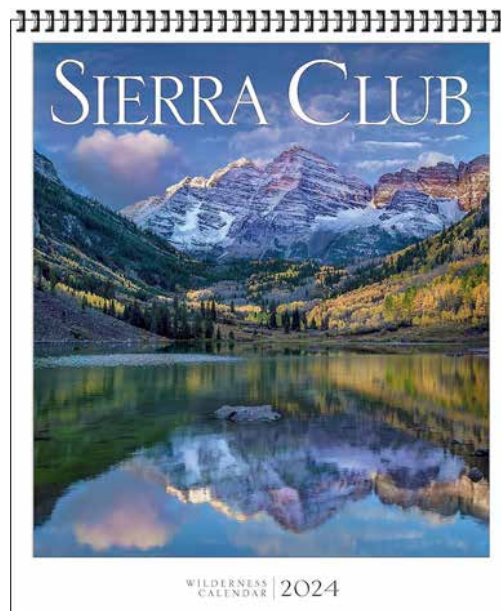
Engagement Calendar

Wilderness (wall) Calendars are \$19
Engagement (desk) Calendars are \$20

Save the Date: National Geographic Photographer Phil Schermeister, Mar. 27 at the Sonora Library

SAVE THE DATE — Our Sierra Club Tuolumne Group will host a live presentation and slide show by National Geographic photographer Phil Schermeister at 7pm on Wednesday, March 27th at the Sonora Library.

Professional photographer Phil Schermeister has completed more than 40 major assignments for National Geographic and other publications. He will share images and stories from his photo assignments and other projects. Look for more details in our March newsletter.



Wall Calendar

2024 Sierra Club Calendars Still Available

Useful and Simple Way to Support Your LOCAL Sierra Club Group

A few 2024 Sierra Club Calendars are still available for purchase. Our Tuolumne group directly benefits from the sale of these calendars because we get to keep 60% of the sale price! It is our group's main fundraiser.

Loaded with the best nature photography, Sierra Club calendars celebrate the outdoors and are an inspiration each day of the year.

To order calendars email Jennie Moiso at johnjen47@hotmail.com, or call 209-533-9417.

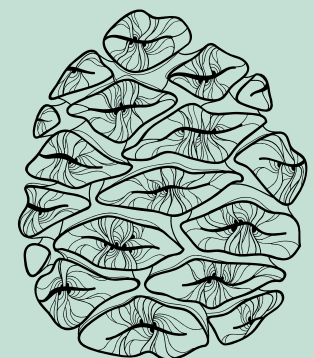
This Is Your Chance To Help the Local Club!

The Tuolumne Group "ExCom" is what we call the 9-member Management Committee for our local Sierra Club group. We normally meet once a month with a Zoom call that lasts about an hour or a little more. We hope to meet at least once in person this spring.

During each monthly ExCom session, we review local conservation issues, plan upcoming newsletters, and discuss possible presenters for Club meetings. We basically keep the local Tuolumne Group operating. It's a very casual meeting with a friendly atmosphere, and it accomplishes important work that needs to get done.

Can you help by volunteering? We have a minimum of one vacant seat on the ExCom, and it always helps to have at least one extra volunteer on board to fill gaps as "life happens."

If you are interested in joining the ExCom committee, contact membership chair Elaine Hagen at: elainehagen@att.net





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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

Secretary-Treasurer

Karen Swanson, tuolumnegroupsecretary@gmail.com

Outings Keith & Beth Martin, keithwmartin@sbcglobal.net

Chapter Delegate Keith Martin, keithwmartin@sbcglobal.net

Climate Action Chair Gisselle Bourns,
tsclimateaction@gmail.com

Webmaster Jim Bearden, jbearden@ieee.org

Membership Elaine Hagen, elainehagen@att.net

News Editor Joe David, jd@daviddesign.com

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 group. Interested members are invited to attend one of our ExCom meetings.

Contact Membership Chair, Elaine Hagen at elainehagen@att.net.

PHOTOGRAPHER PHIL SCHERMEISTER MAR. 27

Tuolumne Sierra Club will host National Geographic photographer Phil Schermeister for a slideshow presentation of his work Wednesday evening, March 27th at 7pm at the Sonora Library, 480 Greenley Rd. FREE - Come early for best seats!

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.

