

The Roadrunner

A bimonthly publication of the Kern-Kaweah Chapter of the Sierra Club — March /April 2007

KERN-KAWEAH CHAPTER'S ANNUAL SPRING BANQUET

SATURDAY, APRIL 21, 2007 CHALET BASQUE RESTAURANT

200 OAK STREET, BAKERSFIELD.

A TIME TO CELEBRATE TOGETHER JOHN MUIR'S BIRTHDAY, EARTH DAY, ALL OUR ENVIRONMENTAL ENTERPRISES WITH SUCCESSES ON MANY DIFFERENT LEVELS, AND OUR JOYS AT THE PROSPECTS OF THE YEARS AHEAD

*GUEST SPEAKER: GARRETT BURKE,
DESIGNER OF THE JOHN MUIR QUARTER*

The Kern-Kaweah Chapter's Annual Banquet will be held, appropriately, on Saturday, April 21, John Muir's birthday, at Chalet Basque Restaurant, 200 Oak Street, in Bakersfield. It is our annual tradition to gather in the spring to meet new members and renew old friendships. Highlights of the evening include recognizing Chapter activists with awards, hearing about environmental issues, and enjoying a special speaker.

In honor of John Muir, this year's guest presenter will be Garrett Burke, designer of the California 2005 Commemorative State Quarter. The quarter features an image of John Muir with Yosemite's Half Dome in the background. Garrett, a creative art consultant from Los Angeles, will reveal how his winning design became part of the US Mint's 50 State Quarters program.

Our dinner this year is a complete Basque set-up, featuring soup, chicken, tri-tips, beans, salsa, salad, bread, tongue, French fries, vegetables, ice cream, and coffee, tea, and iced tea. The charge is \$24 per person, which includes tax and tip. A glass of wine is \$3 extra.

Social Hour is from 5:30 to 6:30, and dinner is from 6:30 to 7:30, followed by awards and our guest speaker. Please complete the coupon on page 8 and mail it to Georgette Theotig, P.O. Box 38, Tehachapi, CA 93581. Enclose a check for the total amount. Make the check payable to: Kern-Kaweah Chapter, Sierra Club.

IMPORTANT: As we are dealing with a restaurant situation, we absolutely must have your reservations in by April 16th. There can be no payments at the door this time. It is essential that all of us get organized and send in our money on time—before the 16th of April!

You know that you want to recycle your batteries but where to take them? The answer—to the Sierra Club Spring Banquet. Buena Vista Group volunteers will pick them up and dispose of them properly. (One exception: no CAR batteries.)

***SEQUOIA NATIONAL FOREST: NEW PLANS THREATEN TO CLOSE CAMPGROUNDS, PRIVATIZE OTHERS FOR PROFIT. ARE FUNDS AVAILABLE OR NOT? PUBLIC PRESSURE NEEDED NOW.
HELP!***

Sequoia National Forest (Sequoia) has released scoping for the Recreation Site Facility Master Planning program (RSFMP). RSFMP is a significant change in public land management policy that was created without the approval of Congress. Sequoia is considering decommissioning eleven campgrounds, including Long Meadow, Leavis Flat, and Coy Flat, reducing services at perhaps 60 other locations, and closing some sites in favor of privatized recreation sites for corporate profit. While the Forest Service (FS) says that these are not decision documents, it is clear that they indicate what the FS wants to do and that continuation of the process of closing these facilities will occur unless public pressure forces a change in FS direction.

The most important issue regarding the RSFMP process is that it violates forest management laws, which require analysis of the cumulative impacts from this national policy, and the Giant Sequoia National Monument proclamation, which requires preservation of recreational opportunities and historic sites. It is a deliberate unsanctioned administrative move. But according to the laws, only Congress-approved forest plans are supposed to set management policies for all forest resources, including recreation.

The FS claims that resources are not available for on-the-ground operation and annual maintenance of its recreation resources. I believe you will find that, in 2006, Congress allocated more than \$400 million dollars for recreation for 155 national forests. But some national forests say they received only about \$150,000 from the Washington office for recreation.

It sounds like the Forest Service's accounting, repeatedly cited by the Government Accounting Office (GAO) as faulty, is driving this Bush Administration policy decision to close developed recreation sites. The GAO said the agency's serious accounting and financial reporting problems "rendered the Forest Service's cost information totally unreliable."

The Washington office of the FS should be required by Congress to release all of these funds to the forest, rather than allowing this top-down policy decision to withhold money for recreation and chop recreation opportunities for the public. The whole RSFMP process should be the subject of Congressional hearings.

You can read more on all this at the following two web sites: <http://www.westernslopenofee.org/> and <http://www.westernslopenofee.org/nofee/rsfmp.pdfky>. Please call your congressperson, 202.224.3121, and ask them to make the FS properly manage its recreational components, the component most important to most citizens.

Ara Marderosian

MEET OUR NEW CHAPTER OUTINGS CHAIR, JIM NICHOLS.

How fortunate we are to have such an experienced person to take on this job!

Greetings. I'm Jim Nichols, the new chapter Outings Chair. Here's a little personal history of what I've been up to outings-wise and my vision for the future.

The Sierra seduced me first in 1949 with a winter snowshoe trip to Whitney Portals, and I fell in love again in the middle '50s when our family journeyed out here from our home in Indiana and I twice climbed Mt. Whitney. After graduating as a physicist from Wabash College, I secured a job with the US Navy at China Lake in 1961. My love affair with the mountains has continued in the China Lake/Ridgecrest area throughout a 35-year career with the Navy and into a happy retirement.

I became the 78th "Emblem" member of the Sierra Peaks Section of the Angeles Chapter of the Sierra Club in 1963. I was chairman and operations leader of the China Lake Mountain Rescue Group until my retirement/promotion to Life member in 1975. My love of the mountains led me overseas to, of all places, Nuristan in Afghanistan in 1965, on what was only the second modern mountaineering expedition to that part of the Hindu Kush. We made 7 first ascents, easy if you're among the first to an area. Our Rescue Group climb of Mt. McKinley in 1967 was the largest group, 3 ropes of 3, to safely summit in a single day up to that time. I've been poking around in the mountains and the deserts with my Sierra Club friends and other companions every week for 46 years, and now have climbed Mt Whitney 38 times and still counting. I have led or co-led some 75 monthly Sierra Club hikes for the Owens Peak Group since 2000.

As Outings Chair, I want to expand and improve outings opportunities for our members. I want to promote what works and fix any problems we may have. There are safety, first aid, and procedural issues that we need to address to bring us into compliance with state and national standards, which we will do with a minimum of disruption. I want the great enterprise I have had associating with the marvelous hikers in our Group to spread throughout the Chapter. I will join all the Groups on outings to meet the hard workers of the Chapter and the hikers they serve. I'm looking forward to this job as my good fortune to enhance my own outings experience with area experts and quality leaders.

Please feel free to contact me at any time with outings inspirations, issues, questions, and comments. I want to hear from all who have ideas to upgrade our outings programs. That is exactly what this job is all about. I can be reached at jnichols@ridgecrest.ca.us Jim Nichols, 857 E Kendall Ave, Ridgecrest, CA 93555, 760.375.8161.

**\$2,700,000 TO BE GENERATED TO BUY FARMLANDS FOR PRESERVATION
SPEARHEADED BY GORDON NIPP WITH COOPERATION OF SEQUOIA LAND TRUST**

For the first time, the City of Bakersfield has required developers to mitigate their conversion of prime agricultural land to urban use. The City's requirement gives the developers some options, but most likely they will contribute and set up funding for agricultural conservation easements that require other prime farmland elsewhere to be preserved forever in farming.

For years, Bakersfield has been allowing wholesale changes of prime farmland into housing. At a single City Council meeting a year or so ago, more than six square miles of prime farmland was lost. Bakersfield recently added 111 square miles, most of it farmland, to its sphere of influence to be readied for development.

Bakersfield has always argued that nothing could be done about the loss of prime farmland to development because there was no land trust operating in Kern County that could acquire and hold conservation easements on farmland; so we got them one. Through the efforts of the Sierra Club and others, the Sequoia Riverlands Trust, currently operating very successfully in Tulare County, has agreed to extend its service area to include Kern County. The City, left without an excuse and realizing that reason and the law is on the side of preserving farmland, has crawled on board.

Of course, litigation and the threat of litigation has been an important component in convincing developers and the City of Bakersfield that they have to address farmland loss. The Sierra Club has two current lawsuits pending in court against large developments on farmland. Without this leverage, it would be much more difficult to advance on this important issue.

We've made lots of progress on farmland preservation over the past several years. At this point, agreements with a number of developers will generate about \$2.7 million for agricultural easement funding as building occurs. Other much larger agreements are in the works. Naturally, none of this money goes to the Sierra Club; all will go to an entity like Sequoia Riverlands Trust that will mitigate farmland loss.

Much remains to be done. We are negotiating agreements with a number of developers that would not only satisfy Bakersfield's farmland loss condition but also set a precedent that we think would be workable, palatable to developers, and effective. The City's requirement itself needs to be clarified and strengthened, and we will continue to work on that on a case-by-case basis and, more generally, as part of the Metropolitan Bakersfield General Plan Update process. Other lawsuits, if necessary, are potentially in the works.

If you are interested in helping with this campaign or if you want more information, call Gordon Nipp at 661.872.2432 or email him at gnipp@att.net.

NOT ONE HOUSE BUILT—BUT THE DEVELOPMENT “SEED” PLANTED BY TEJON RANCH CORPORATION HAS GERMINATED INTO AN INVASIVE!

IS THIS PUSH FOR UNNECESSARY GROWTH INEVITABLE?

Look at the star on the map (p. 8). This marks the Tejon Ranch Corporation entrance located on top of the Grapevine, leading into its 270,000 acres of near pristine lands that connect the Sierras to the coastal mountains. The area encompasses essential wildland corridors allowing all living creations, plant and animals, to move freely in both directions, movements that help protect the biodiversity so valued. Admittedly, I-5 cuts through this nature travel corridor, but there are underpasses that can be made more inviting to wildlife travel and intermixing. *What is lacking is scientifically approved planning proposals to protect these pristine natural areas and corridors.*

Look at the map: 23,000 homes (Centennial), 500 homes (Gorman Ranch) 700 homes (Frazier Park Estates), 3000 homes (Mountain Village) plus possible commercial associated with each plan. Add it all up, nearly forty thousand new homes proposed for the middle of nowhere, in close proximity to I-5 and to each other. An average of 3 persons per home equals 90,000 new inhabitants at a minimum. All this in an area where infrastructure barely exists and services of all kinds are inadequate to serve the small population living there now. And just wait till the car traffic is counted to bring those folks into the country and those new country folk back into the city!

In addition to the probability that you and I will have to pay handsomely in extra taxes to support the amenities these new residents will expect, there will be the inevitable negative impacts of humans who, with their demands for shopping centers, golf courses and commercial entertainments, will change the natural world that needs our

protection. Little or no mention is made in the proposed plans of where the water is going to come from for all these developments or the possibilities of seismic disasters.

We are trying to keep much of this from happening. Look at the home page of the Center of Biological Diversity for more information and means to help us in these endeavors. On their website you can take a virtual tour of the ranch land, learn the history that has led up to this point, and get a start on contacting those decision makers who have power to help us protect the ever fewer lands that have not yet been needlessly destroyed by bulldozers and the money behind them.

KERN KAWEAH ROUND-UP

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY IF YOU PLAN TO PARTICIPATE IN SIERRA CLUB HIKES: Everyone is welcome, Sierra Club members and non-members, to join in any of the outdoor activities. Requirements: You must be in condition for type of hike, equipped appropriately for the activity, and prepared to sign a Sierra Club release from liability. You must be willing to follow leader's directions. Be sure to bring any personal medicines you might need. Customary appropriate equipment includes good hiking shoes, plenty of water, snack, sunglass suntan lotion, layered clothing. Long pants recommended. Unprepared for the prospective hike? It will be a no-go for you. Please let the leader know ahead of time that you are intending to participate. Change of plans may be necessary. *IF YOU DON'T WANT TO BE DISAPPOINTED, BE SURE TO MAKE THAT CALL.*

Buena Vista Group *More info? Call Donnel Lester, 661.831.6784 unless otherwise noted.*

Buena Vista Group's monthly free program meetings are the first Saturday of each month, 8:30 AM.

Tuesday Conditioning Hikes. 7 PM, 4–5 miles. Corner of Highways 178 & 184. Gordon 661.872.2432 or Larry 661.873.8107.

March 3 (Sat) 8:30 AM. **“From Tramping to Trekking: A history of ‘ed-venturing’ in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.”** Presentation by Savannah Boiano, Education Director, Sequoia Natural History Association (SNHA), at Hill House, 700 Truxtun Ave. Breakfast, optional, costs about \$7.

March 17 (Sat) 9 AM. Stroll on the Bluffs with the local California Native Plant Society, accompanied by Kern County Parks Landscape Architect. Opportunity to identify plantings in Panorama Park. Easy walk, suitable for kids and seniors. Meet at River and Panorama parking lot. Leader: Lorraine Unger 661.323.5569.

March 17 (Sat) 9 AM. Adopt a Highway Everyone invited to join us for the "Adopt-A-Highway" cleanup. Meet at the Monte Carlo Club parking lot, intersection of Hwy 119 and Old River Road. Bring water, gloves, and a hat. Work for about an hour and a half.

March 18 (Sun) 3:00 PM. **“The End of Suburbia”** (film). Location to be determined based on number of responses. Please RSVP to Donnel at 661.831.6784.

April 7 (Sat) 8:30 AM. Meet at Lassen's Health Food Store in Mervyn's Plaza on California Ave. (just west of Freeway 99). Program starts 9 AM. The manager at Lassen's, Jay Escover, will give a presentation on **organic foods and related topics**. A healthy breakfast is available for about \$5–\$8.

April 21 Adopt a Highway (see Mar. 17 entry for location and information).

Meeting Notices. If you would like to receive BV Group meeting and activity information by email, please contact Membership Chair, Ann Gallon, at amgallon@atg1.com, with *Add me to the email list*. You can opt out of the e-mail notices at any time. We try to keep this to once-a-month emailings.

Battery Recycling at BVG Meetings – bring us your old batteries, lithium ion, nickel metal hydride, NiCad, small sealed lead-acid batteries and ones from cordless & cell phones, power tools, laptops, etc. Brier Miron will add them to the Recycling Program bin she started at her company. No car batteries, please.

Condor Group *For further information call Lockhart 661.242.0432 or email: jmal@frazmtn.com Meets Pine Mountain Club. Call Dale Chitwood, 661.242.1076, for hike info.*

March 24 (Sat) 8AM. **Liebre Mountain**. Opportunity to observe the changes in vegetation as we climb. Excellent views of the flatlands of Antelope Valley. Overlook of proposed Tejon Corporation development, Centennial. Wear layered clothing for temperature changes. Wear good hiking shoes, take lots of drinking water and a snack. Be prepared for a long climb, approximately 8 miles round trip. Meet at PMC tennis courts at 8 AM. From outside areas plan to meet at the Flying J. Call Dale at 661.242.1076 to make arrangements.

April 7 (Sat) Bears Bears Bears. This is your great opportunity to learn about bears and their outlook on the world with humans in it and about humans who live with bears (that's you and me). Liz Bolden and friends will be the presenters. Potluck, 6 PM Program, 7 PM Pool Pavilion Room, PMC Clubhouse. Pine Mountain Club. Everyone is welcome.

April 28 (Sat) 8AM. Piedras Blancas National Recreation Trail. This is the only national recreation trail in our area, and we will be hiking only the first segment. Located at the western end of the Lockwood Valley, the trail begins near the Lower Reyes campground and continues along various creekbeds which should have running water and wildflowers at this time of year. Our destination is the Upper Reyes campground, which is located in a beautiful cedar grove. A short hike, approximately 6 miles round trip, there is an elevation gain of about 900 feet. Wear good shoes, there is a possibility of wet feet crossing the streams, and bring lots of drinking water. After the hike we can have burgers and a beer at rustic Camp Sheideck. Meet at the PMC tennis courts at 8AM. Arrangements can be made to meet in Lockwood Valley. Call Dale at 661.242.1076 to make arrangements.

Kaweah Group *More info? Call Pam, 559.784.4643 or Diane, 559.781.8897.*

Pam Clark attended the Ecological Farming Conference. See p. 6 for a full report.

Mineral King Group. *More info? Call Chair Kim Loeb. 559.798.1764.* Please visit mineralking.sierraclub.org for more info on group events and activities.

March 14 (Wed) 6:00 PM. Dinner Social at Crawdaddy's 1st Floor Restaurant, 333 E. Main St., Visalia. Please RSVP to Bev at 559.732.3785 or garciamachine@comcast.net by noon the day of the social.

March 17 (Sat) Outing-Hike: the San Joaquin River Trail. We will travel to Fresno and hike part of the San Joaquin River Trail. Call Joanne at 559.733.2078 or David at 559.906.6189 for details, meeting time and place. Rain cancels.

March 22 (Thu) 7:00 PM. Program – Giant Sequoia National Monument: An Update. Sequoia Task Force Chair Carla Cloer will bring us up to date with the status of the Giant Sequoia National Monument and the Task Force's efforts to prevent logging and other threats to the Monument. Carla will be showing lots of slides. This program will be at Borders Coffee Shop, 3415 S. Mooney Blvd., Visalia.

March 27 (Tue) 5:30 PM. ExCom Meeting at Royal Indian Cuisine, 4545-B W. Noble Ave., Visalia. All members are welcome. Please RSVP to Bev at 559.732.3785 or garciamachine@comcast.net.

April 11 (Wed) 6:00 PM. Dinner Social at Panera Bread Bakery-Café, 4103 S. Mooney Blvd., Visalia. Please RSVP to Bev at 559.732.3785 or garciamachine@comcast.net by noon the day of the social.

April 14 (Sat) Outing – Wild Flower Hike in Three Rivers. Call Joanne at 559.733.2078 or David at 559.906.6189 for details, meeting time and place.

April 24 (Tue) 5:30 PM. Ex Com Meeting at Royal Indian Cuisine, 4545-B W. Noble Ave., Visalia. All members are welcome. Please RSVP to Bev at 559.732.3785 or garciamachine@comcast.net.

Owens Peak Group *For further information call Dennis Burge, Chair 760.375.7967 Jim Nichols, Hikes 760.375.8161 email: dennis93555@yahoo.com Ridgecrest, Maturango Museum*

Mar 17–18 (Sat–Sun) Ghost Town Extravaganza. Come with us to this spectacular desert landscape near Death Valley to explore the ruins of California's colorful past. Camp at the historic ghost town of Ballarat (flush toilets & hot showers). On Sat, do a challenging hike to ghost town Lookout City with expert Hal Fowler, who will regale us with tales of this Wild West town. Later we'll return to camp for Happy Hour, a special St. Patty's Day potluck and campfire. On Sun, a quick visit to the infamous Riley townsite before heading home. Group size strictly limited. Send \$8 per person (Sierra Club), 2 sase, H&W phones, email, rideshare info to Ldr: Lygeia Gerard, P.O. Box 294726, Phelan, CA 92329; 310.594.6789. Co-Ldr: Don Peterson 760.375.8599.

Mar 24 (Sat) Vermillion Canyon And Joshua Mountain. Located E of Olancho in the Coso Wilderness, 7130 ft max elevation, 2700 ft elevation gain, 9.8 mi RT to Joshua Mountain, or shorter to Vermillion Canyon. We will visit enigmatic, elusive, and beautiful Vermillion Canyon on our way up an undescribed route to Joshua Mountain. Joshua is one of the peaks forming the W edge of Joshua Flat. Scenic Vermillion Canyon is hard to reach, and makes a fine destination at 5.5 mi RT, 1200 ft gain. Joshua Mountain is rarely, if ever, climbed from the W and will make a fine further objective for our more active hikers. This is some of the most colorful terrain in the Coso Wilderness, and will inspire our photographers. The elevation gains aren't too great, but the

horizontal distance is moderate to strenuous. Therefore, this will be a moderate/strenuous hike depending on how far you go. Meet Sat, Mar 24 at 7:30 AM at the Ridgecrest Cinema parking lot. For more info, call Dennis Burge at 760.375.7967 or Jim Nichols at 760.375.8161.

Mar. 26 (Mon) 7:30 PM. An Ecological Look at New Zealand and Tasmania What was (a few places still have original forests), what is—tree farms, dairy farms, deer and elk farms, etc. and growing recreation—influence of Maori and European settlers on lovely small forested islands—can they stand it? Although I was there to ride steam trains, I did take some photos of “before” and “after” both in New Zealand and in Tasmania. Janet Westbrook will present. At Maturango Museum.

Apr 14 (Sat) UPPER PINE TREE CANYON AND FALLS (12 mi S of Jawbone Canyon) 4270 ft max elevation, 2400 ft gain, 7 mi RT) “Hidden behind the tranquil Barren Ridge lies a most exquisite canyon whose beauty and natural resources are protected by its inaccessibility.” So says Georgette Theotig, our guide for this hike. We will climb over Barren Ridge and descend into the upper end of Pine Tree Canyon. Turning SW, we climb up the valley to the confluence of the N and S forks, where we may find pools and waterfalls. The upper canyon may also have flowers and should be especially lovely this time of year. Moderate due to length and elevation gain. Meet Sat, Apr 14 at 7:30 AM at the Ridgecrest Cinema parking lot. For more info, call Dennis Burge at 760.375.7967 or Jim Nichols at 760.375.8161.

Apr. 21 (Sat), 7:30 AM. WORK PARTY for Route Restoration in the Rand Mtns. with ARR/SCA/OPG. Call or email Dennis Burge for further info. 760.375.7967 dennis93555@yahoo.com

Apr. 23 (Mon) 7:30 PM. Stan Hays will show Al Gore’s “An Inconvenient Truth.” At Maturango Museum.

Other Sierra Club Events of Interest

March 11–12th. California Nevada Regional Conservation Committee meeting at Rancho El Chorro near San Luis Obispo. One of the features will be at 10 AM, Saturday morning: Tejon Ranch...let’s keep it for all of California, presented by Ilene Anderson, ecologist, Center of Biological Diversity. Great opportunity to meet fellow conservationists from all over California. Call Lorraine Unger for further info.

Apr 28–30 (Sat–Mon) Birds, Flowers, and Fences in the Carrizo. Saturday (and Monday if you wish) we remove fence wires to allow pronghorn antelope free access to the range. Sunday: sightseeing. Spectacular views from Calientes, spring flowers may still be blooming; monument known for number and variety of raptors. Contact leader, Craig Deutsche, 310.477.6670, or deutsche@earthlink.net. Sierra Desert Committee Hike.

June 17–23, Walk Among Giants in California’s Sequoia National Monument. On day hikes with veteran leaders Cal and Letty French and former Sierra Club president, Joe Fontaine, learn of the ongoing threats to these unique big trees and their ecosystem, related to current management proposals. (National Sierra Club Hike. Trip 07191A, \$395.) More about this and other nationally sponsored trips in Sierra Magazine.

Spinach Farmers, Ph of the Gut, and You

The Ecological Farming Conference, a convergence of growers, distributors, grocers, restaurateurs, educators, and consumers, is held annually at Asilomar. An issue was raised in several workshops this year that is relevant to us both as environmentalists and as people who like to eat.

You may recall that spinach was absent from restaurant menus and pulled from grocery store shelves last summer, when bagged spinach was found to be contaminated by E. coli 0157, a virulent strain which resulted in numerous hospitalizations and several deaths. This matter is being litigated, and it is not yet clear where a court will fix responsibility for the outbreak. However, it is likely that cattle manure played a role, probably from a feedlot or dairy, because that is where cows are fed grain. A grain diet alters the Ph of the animal’s gut, allowing the bacteria to thrive.

The Western Growers Association, an umbrella organization of producers and packers, is responding to the problem by proposing new rules for the handling of fresh greens. They want to be seen as protecting public health, and they seem to be leaning toward forbidding any practice that might have caused the contamination rather than discover the actual source.

In an effort to prevent ANY animal manure of ANY kind from coming in contact with plants destined for human food, a twenty-foot buffer of bare ground is proposed between crops and other vegetation. If adopted, this rule would fall hardest on farmers going the extra mile to make their farms friendly to wildlife by providing corridors of native vegetation and hedgerows. One farmer was even advised he would need to remove owl boxes used in

rodent control.

The rule-making progress is an in-house program of the WGA, and the public has little opportunity to participate directly. However, several organic grower organizations will be at the table, representing an environmentally sane point of view.

As you know, politicians also like to be seen as protecting public health, so a bill may be coming soon to a legislature near you. More information is available at www.wildfarmalliance.org, www.audubon-ca.org, www.organic-center.org and www.caff.org

Pam Clark of the Kaweah Group

MIDGEBUZZINGS

THE MOOD of optimism in which I wrote my last column has not been diminished. Terrible things go on happening here and elsewhere in the world, and in this country, as in others, people in high places continue to make appalling decisions out of the reach of intelligent comprehension.

Nevertheless, I find something hopeful in the news every day. Scientists from all over the world are uniting in their commitments to public education about man's contribution to global warming, and to the promotion of efforts to mitigate, and perhaps even reverse, some of the damage already done. Many evangelical Christians have come together in a declaration of concern for what they believe is the created earth, and in an effort to save it. The futility of the war in Iraq is drawing more criticism from our citizens. On a recent Saturday people gathered from all over the United States for a protest march in Washington DC. Two days later I found hope in the words of Bob Herbert, a columnist for The New York Times: "The fact that so many Americans were willing to travel from every region of the country to march against the war was a reaffirmation of the public's commitment to our peaceful democratic processes. It is in that unique and unflagging commitment, not in our terrifying military power, that the continued promise and greatness of America are to be found."

Optimism, as I mentioned before, is contagious. Mine was increased recently when I was introduced to a local citizen who is nothing if not hopeful. Ed De Boer is an eighty-two-year-old gentleman who lives in Bakersfield, having come a long way from his flight to this country just ahead of the Nazi invasion of the Netherlands at the beginning of World War II. He is now retired from the dairy business which he practiced for many years. Through his writings and radio programs one can feel his passion for healing the farm land from which we draw the food that sustains us. He is concerned about the depletion of healthful trace elements from the soil by the application of chemical fertilizers, and about the implications therein for public health. His advocacy for organic farming parallels Sierra Club philosophy as it was represented recently in our *Sierra Magazine* for November and December. That issue was devoted almost entirely to the subject of natural farming, both of crops and of animals, and to the consequent benefits to public health. Ed introduced me to a monthly publication which enlarges the *Sierra Magazine* theme and offers volumes of information on organic farming and public health. It is *ACRES USA, The Voice of Eco-Agriculture*, and I am now a subscriber. Ed looks and talks like a man much younger than his eighty-two years. He is a living testament to the good health that is derived from natural farming and from a strongly positive attitude that fosters belief in change for the better.

For many years I was dubbed a Cassandra because of my dire predictions about the fate of the earth. It was poor Cassandra's punishment that no one would listen to her. Now, though, thanks to voices stronger than mine, the wooden horse has been stopped at the gate. Of course one horse does not an optimist make, nor does it change a world. But increasing numbers of concerned and vocal people inspire hope for the continuation of the "promise and greatness" in mankind. I like the sound of that, and if it were to be put in the form of an offer, I would take it.

Ann Williams

FROM THE CHAIR. *Your house can help save the world*

If you are not among the six per cent of Americans who have switched from incandescent bulbs to compact fluorescent bulbs, please switch and minimize the global warming our planet is enduring.

A bulb costs about \$2.50. Watch the super market for \$1.00 off brand bulbs. All the big boxes and many other stores stock them. Trial and error will show if the bulb you buy is too bright. Multiply the wattage of a compact fluorescent bulb by almost four to see how many watts it replaces. Compared to polar bear extinction, I never thought compact fluorescent bulbs buzzed, came on too slowly, flickered or gave harsh light. They are now much improved and easier to fit into most fixtures. (Mine are a few years old; they lower my electric bill about 13% a year.)

Use other energy saving equipment? Please contact me (alunger@juno.com 661.323.5569). Art Unger

KERN KAWEAH CHAPTER OFFICERS for 2007:

Chair: Arthur Unger (Bksf), 661.323.5569. *Vice-chair:* Gordon Nipp (Bksf), 661.872.2432. *Secretary:* Georgette Theotig (Tehachapi), 661.822.4371. *Treasurer:* Lorraine Unger (Bksf) 661.323.5569. Jan de Leeuw (PMC) 661.245.1725. Richard Garcia (Min King), 559.592.9865. Mary Ann Lockhart (PMC), 661.242.0432. Ara Marderosian (Kernville), 760.378.4574,

Meetings: All Sierra Club members welcome to attend. Future meeting dates: *Sunday, March 18*, Saturday, April 21. Call 661.323.5569 or e-mail alunger@juno.com to check for location.

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I wish to attend the 2007 Annual Banquet of the Kern-Kaweah Chapter, Sierra Club, on Saturday, April 21. I include a check at \$24 per person. Name(s) _____ Tel. no. _____

Number Attending: _____ @ \$24 each Total Amount _____

Please mail check, coupon to Georgette Theotig, P.O. Box 38, Tehachapi, CA 93581

PLEASE REMEMBER THE MONDAY, APRIL 16TH DEADLINE