

Sierra Sage

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

OCWR Trabuco Creek Habitat Restoration Project

Background

This 51-acre restoration and habitat enhancement project is sponsored by Orange County Waste & Recycling (OCWR) and is mitigation for habitat impacts associated with the Prima Deshecha Landfill Zone 4 Expansion Project in southern Orange County. The site was selected in cooperation with Orange County Parks staff familiar with O'Neill Park and Trabuco Creek habitats. Project plans were approved by the US Army Corps of Engineers, California Department of Fish & Wildlife, and the Regional Water Quality Control Board. OCWR has contracted with the Irvine Ranch Conservancy (IRC) to implement and monitor this project for several years.

Existing habitats include sycamore - alder and willow riparian forests near the main creek. Sycamore and coast live oak woodlands and savannah occur on higher banks and terraces. The Trabuco Creek watershed has been severely invaded by giant reed (*Arundo donax*), a non-native, bamboo-like grass that has significantly altered the hydrology and, in many places, completely displaced native vegetation and stream flow. As part of a regional planning effort, nearly all stands of giant reed upstream of this site were previously removed.

Implementation

The project includes the following activities and timelines:

- **Obtaining Plant Materials:** In 2021-2022, seed from 48 species of native trees, shrubs, grasses, and wildflowers was collected. All these species are characteristic of riparian and near-riparian habitats of Trabuco Creek. In addition to O'Neill Park, collection sites also included Casper's Wilderness Park and Peter's Canyon Regional Park. Seed of some species will be propagated in nurseries to produce the desired numbers of container plants; seed of other species will be sowed at the IRC Seed Farm in Irvine to produce the necessary bulk volume of seed.
- **Removing Giant Reed:** In October 2021, dense stands of giant reed were masticated in place and reduced to fine mulch. Where giant reed was intermixed with native species, crews

(article continues on page 5...)

JOIN US on **Tuesday, November 15, 2022, at 6:30 pm** for this timely presentation. The guest speakers will be streaming online, while our group meets in-person at:

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

You can register for both in-person & virtual attendance on our website calendar: <https://www.sierraclub.org/angeles/sierra-sage/calendar>

- **Register for the above free-and-open-to-the-public program on the Sierra Sage Calendar of Events. Our 4 guest speakers** for the **November 15** general meeting are leading the **30x30 Initiative** (below) for California.

— **Jenny Binstock** is the Senior Campaign representative of "Our Wild America" for the Angeles Chapter.

— **Kim Orbe** is the Conservation Program Manager for the Angeles Chapter.

— **Vicky Hoover** and **Anne Henny** are co-chairs of the California State 30 x 30 task force which includes representatives from most Sierra Club chapters.

PRESENTATION TOPIC:

The 30 x 30 Movement

The Sierra Club is at the forefront of the global movement to conserve 30 percent of wild lands and coastal waterways by 2030. We need to preserve nature so it can preserve us. When we hike on local trails on public lands, our health and wellbeing are being supported by nature. Wild land preservation also allows the movement of migrating species across vast landscapes and enhances their chances of survival. In addition to fighting species extinction, 30 x 30 directly addresses climate change.

In 2020 California became the first State in the Union to adopt "30 x 30" as an official policy by executive order of **Governor Gavin Newsom**. Protecting the lands that we hike on, marine habitats, and old growth forests are part of the State initiative. At present only 22% of California is considered to be "conserved" for future generations, so we have a way to go. But this is a good step forward.



Community Interest

Orange County Power Authority: Let's wait and see...

Picking even the low hanging fruit on the greenhouse gas emissions tree continues to be difficult in Orange County. With global warming's grip getting ever stronger and more destructive, this is an untenable situation. Back in February 2022, Sierra Sage sent a letter to the CEO of OCPA writing:

"Dear Mr. Probolsky, We are delighted with the choices OCPA customers will have with their kind of electricity you deliver to them. We're excited your consumers have the chance to receive 100% green energy. What's more we are impressed with the cities of Buena Park, Fullerton and Huntington Beach having decided to make the opt-in for their residents to be 100% from renewable sources. Reducing GHG emissions is important, and you can be assured of our support of your endeavors in this area.

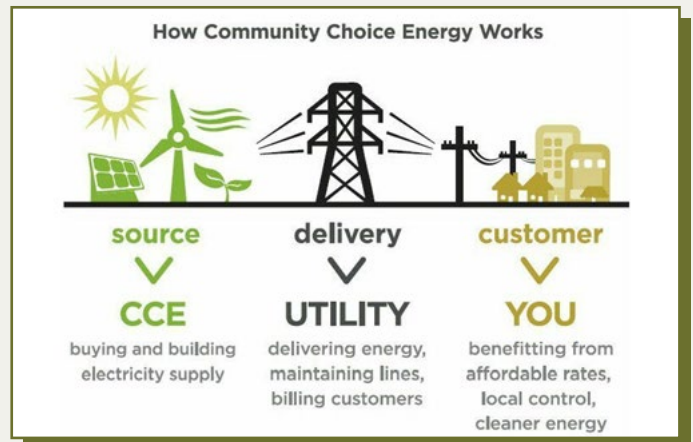
This menu of choices and the reasonable rates you have developed we hope will make it easier for city councils in our area to join OCPA. As soon as one of our city councils decides to put CCE and/or OCPA on the agenda, we will rally our members to voice their support."

COMPARISON OF RATES: OCPA states that an average three-bedroom household using 595 kilowatt-hours (kWh) per month can expect its bill to go up about 3% under the smart choice plan (38% renewable) and 5% under the 100% renewables plan. The expectation is that by paying the higher rate, the money will be used to purchase cleaner energy in the future. The basic rate is the same as SCE's.

— Szabo, Matt, *Daily Pilot*, 9/30/2022

To date, no South County city has decided to join OCPA! Its reputation has become tarnished, and the press has reported extensively on the agency's shortcomings. The lack of transparency and of professional knowledge at the top may have forced the City of Irvine, the County of Orange, and, lately, the State of California to ask OCPA to open its books to their auditors. Just before the Labor Day weekend, the OCPA board okayed over \$200 million on power purchases without giving many details or allowing much public discussion. Within a week, local legislators brought in the California State Auditor's Office to investigate the inner workings of OCPA.

Purchasing electric energy for almost 1 million customers is a difficult and risky business where millions can be lost or gained every day. Energy is purchased for both long- and short-term contracts in a lively open market where competitors include heavyweights such as SCE, PG&E, and SDG&E. OCPA's top honcho needs to have deep professional knowledge and experience to stay in and ahead of the game, and he needs this background to supervise a professional energy purchasing department. This seems not to be the case at OCPA, and, unsurprisingly, questions about energy contracts abound. The problem with transparency is that these contracts must be kept confidential, as nobody at OCPA wants to let the competition have a peek at what they are doing, and rightly so. But when confidence and trust in leadership is fading, insuperable conflicts arise. This is where we're at with OCPA.



We hope that this month's roll-out of service to over 800,000 residents proceeds well. OCPA, created primarily by the City of Irvine and supported by the cities of Buena Park, Fullerton, and Huntington Beach, needs to show low opt-out rates (customers deciding to stay with SCE or selecting the basic rate) to make itself attractive enough for other cities to consider joining. Note that OCPA stated a stellar, less than 8% opt-out rate for commercial accounts that came on-line in April 2022.

We're afraid that while uncertainties continue, many OC cities will remain reluctant to join OCPA and will therefore be unable to help their residents and businesses to have access to 100% clean electricity and reduce their GHG emissions. Some are already looking for solutions beyond the county's borders. Giving us local access to electricity from renewable sources is the least painful and easiest major measure in our struggle against global warming, and it must happen soon.

Ed Maurer



Sierra Sage News

EDITOR'S LETTER: November/December 2022

This issue of the Sierra Sage newsletter reaches you just as a momentous general election unfolds.

Here, in south Orange County, voters are electing officers for all levels of government, from local water boards, judiciaries, and city councils all the way to the United States Senate. Sierra Club volunteers have worked hard to endorse candidates whose views broadly align with the Club's. The dice have been cast, and soon we'll see how the voters decide.



■ Ed Maurer

The effects of climate change don't pause during elections. Therefore, all of us must make clear to our newly elected officials and incumbents that the time for grandiose statements and promises is past, and the time has come when we all must walk the talk for the safety and happiness of future generations.

And here's where the rubber meets the road: We need volunteers to become informed about what's happening in south county city councils. Specifically, this means to read agendas when they are published and to alert us if anything of concern to the Sierra Club is mentioned. We'll contact other concerned members in your community so that you can take appropriate action together.

Your help is needed in Aliso Viejo, Dana Point, Laguna Beach, Laguna Niguel, Laguna Woods, Lake Forest, Mission Viejo, Rancho Santa Margarita, San Clemente and San Juan Capistrano.

I'm closing with an exciting announcement: Beginning in January, our newsletter will appear in a new format and with a much larger audience as we are joining forces with the Orange County and the Rio Hondo groups for a new joint newsletter. The OC Sierran will reach over 20,000 members and supporters throughout Orange County.

I wish you all happy and joyful Holidays,

Ed Maurer

If you'd like to get your feet wet in this process, please complete our (online) volunteer form today.

Outings

November/December 2022

Our Outings Chairs, Sylvie Coté and Sherri Sisson have arranged a great schedule of diverse hikes with multiple hikes offered almost every week. Detailed descriptions of each hike can be found in our calendar (<https://www.sierra-club.org/angeles/sierra-sage/calendar>). The level of difficulty rating for each hike organized by the Orange County Group and/or Sierra Sage—easy, moderate, strenuous—is based upon: 1. distance, 2. elevation gain/loss, and 3. nature of terrain.

■ **Wednesday, November 2:** Laguna Coast Wilderness. 6 mi, 700' gain/loss, moderate.

LEADERS: Sherri Sisson & Mike Sappingfield

■ **Saturday, November 5:** O'Neill Park Hike, 6 miles, 700' gain/loss, moderate. **LEADERS: Vicky Hazley & Mike Sappingfield**

■ **Wednesday, November 9:** Serrano Ridge from Willow parking lot: 5.5 mi, moderate. **LEADERS: Leslie Fitch & Tod Fitch**

■ **Saturday, November 12:** Trail Maintenance in the San Mateo Wilderness. 4–7 mi, up to 1,000' gain/loss, strenuous. **LEADERS: John Kaiser, Daniel Donovan, Kim Crane, & Linda Ledger**

■ **Wednesday, November 16:** O'Neill Regional Park. 6 mi, moderate. **LEADERS: Sherri Sisson & Mike Sappingfield**

■ **Saturday, November 19:** Sugarloaf Peak from Blue Jay. 8 mi, gain/loss 1200', strenuous. **LEADERS: Leslie Fitch & Tod Fitch**

■ **Wednesday, November 30:** Morgan Trail from Candy Store: 10.2 mi, 800' gain/loss, strenuous. **LEADERS: Tod & Leslie Fitch**

■ **Saturday, December 3:** Trail Maintenance in the San Mateo Wilderness. 4–7 mi, up to 1,000' gain/loss, strenuous. **LEADERS: John Kaiser, Daniel Donovan, Kim Crane, & Linda Ledger**

■ **Saturday, December 3:** Crystal Cove Sunset Walk: 4 mi, minimal gain/loss, easy. **LEADERS: Tod Fitch & Leslie Fitch**

■ **Wednesday, December 7:** Bell View Trail Loop: 5 mi, 1150' gain/loss, moderate. **LEADERS: Ed Maurer & Helen Maurer**

■ **Saturday, December 10:** Saturday Saunter to San Mateo Peak: 7 mi, 1600' gain/loss, strenuous. **LEADERS: Sylvie Coté & Todd Clark**

■ **Wednesday, December 14:** Colinas Bluffs South: 6.5 mi, gain/loss 1340', moderate. **LEADERS: Ed Maurer & Helen Maurer**

■ **Saturday, December 17:** Newport Beach Boat Parade Walk: 7 mi, 300', easy. **LEADERS: Sylvie Coté, Todd Clark, & Vicki Hazley**

■ **Wednesday, December 21:** Dilley Loop: 6 mi, 1100 gain/loss, moderate. **LEADERS: Helen Maurer & Ed Maurer**

■ **Wednesday, January 4, 2023:** Aliso & Wood Canyon Park Grand Tour: 11.5 mi, 900' gain/loss, strenuous.

LEADERS: Ed Maurer & Helen Maurer

Sierra Sage Bulletin Board

— 2022 DIRECTORY OF SIERRA SAGE OFFICERS —

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Note: * Denotes voting member of the Executive Committee

> > > BE SURE TO VISIT...

Sierra Sage Group's Website

OUR WEBSITE is ready to be enjoyed at www.sierrasage.org. It contains new pages, interesting items, and many features to keep you busy and learning about everything that the Sierra Sage group has to offer.

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

Newsletter Editorial Team as of September 2022

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

Sierra Sage Meetings

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

SIERRA SAGE WEBSITE: www.sierrasage.org

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

SIERRA CLUB NATIONAL: www.sierraclub.org

OCWR Trabuco Creek Habitat Restoration Project

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cut the stalks by hand, and piled them outside the floodplain for mastication. Regrowth was mowed repeatedly in 2022 to weaken the plants, which were then spot sprayed with an herbicide in August 2022. In areas along trails, giant reed roots were manually grubbed from the soil.

- **Managing Secondary Weeds:** Other weeds that germinated in the footprint of the former giant reed groves were mowed or manually removed. Palm trees, eucalyptus, and other woody non-native trees and shrubs were cut beginning Aug. 2022.
- **Restoring Creek Hydrology:** The massive rhizomes of giant reed created an "armoring" effect on the Trabuco Creek channel, which can prevent water from reaching the floodplain during flood events. Giant reed also causes sediment to pile up along channel edges, often blocking secondary channels of this formerly braided river system. Restoration of hydrologic function is necessary to ensure renewal of the riparian forest. In Fall 2022, giant reed root balls will be extracted and removed from the site. Limited recontouring will be conducted to re-connect secondary and main channels.
- **Reintroducing Native Vegetation:** By spring 2024 and 2025, as the abundance of non-native vegetation decreases to a manageable level, gaps in the native vegetation will be planted and seeded. Frequent maintenance will be needed for five years to ensure establishment. Over 300 sycamore trees will be planted.
- **Protecting Wildlife:** Project activities are timed to occur outside the nesting season whenever possible. Nesting bird surveys are conducted each spring, prior to the main surge in maintenance activity. Project staff trained in ornithological surveys re-check sites each day before commencing work.
- **Creating Wetland Habitat:** The project site is contiguous with a golf course that discharges water into an oak woodland habitat. These "nuisance flows" have damaged that habitat, promoting invasive weeds, and complicating road maintenance. This component of the project involves diverting flow away from oak trees and into a constructed basin, which will be planted with wetland vegetation to provide additional wildlife habitat.
- **Monitoring:** Project success is evaluated based on field measurements of vegetation composition, complexity of vegetation structure, and hydrologic and geomorphic indicators. OCWR submits quarterly reports to all regulatory agency stakeholders. Successful project completion requires concurrence from all these parties.

(article completes on next page, p.6...)

A Fond Farewell to our Departing Management Committee Members

Five of our committee's voting members have left or will leave the board at the end of this year, and we want to express our appreciation for all they have done and thank them for their tireless service:

- ★ **Mike Sappingfield.** Mike led our group for many years. Under his leadership we thrived in many ways, especially with an active program of outings and trips. Mike's trips to northern California and out of state were extremely popular and will be missed.
- ★ **Patti Sappingfield.** Patty was our treasurer and was in charge of hospitality at our general meetings as well as on many trips. Without her, many happy hours and lovely spreads at local meetings would not have been there for members to enjoy. She was also in charge of our annual **Chili Cookoff** that drew large crowds before Covid-19. What's more, she mailed the printed copies of our newsletter to those with subscriptions.

For her tireless efforts on behalf of Sierra Sage, Patty was honored with the prestigious **2022 Atlas Award**.
- ★ **Linda Ledger.** Linda is a hike leader extraordinary and much missed as secretary and membership chair of the Management Committee.
- ★ **Alex Berk.** Alex was recruited to the Management Committee last year, they brought a fresh, young wind to the group. Alex had just graduated from Cal Poly Pomona and represented us on the Political and Executive Committees. They received a full ride for a Master's program at UC Davis beginning this Fall. We wish Alex all the best as they pursue their studies and a new life in Northern California.
- ★ **Ed Maurer.** Ed's second term on the board ends in December, and he will continue his work as editor of the newsletter and webmaster in an appointed, rather than elected, position.



Trabuco Creek Habitat Restoration Project

(...continued from page 5)



■ Before Giant Reed Removal



■ After Giant Reed Removal

Long-term Management

Upon completion of this project, OCWR will provide a long-term endowment to cover all on-going maintenance needs of the restored habitat. Anticipated needs are covered in a resource agency-approved Long-Term Protection and Management Plan (LTPMP). Close coordination of the work with Orange County Parks staff ensures that all management needs are considered.



■ Map of OCWR Trabuco Creek Restoration Area at O'Neill Regional Park

Article published with kind permission of the Irvine Ranch Conservancy.

VOLUNTEER HELP WANTED:

1. Communications Technology Assistant. Our current meetings are "hybrid" with some participants viewing a live stream and others in the room. In addition, our featured presenter(s), may be in the room or may be remote. We are looking for computer savvy people to assist in setting up and running the streaming and audio-visual equipment used for these hybrid meetings. No prior experience is needed but good computer skills are strongly recommended. After some training, work is about 2 to 3 hours for each meeting which occur 6 times a year.

2. Meeting Hospitality. Our general meetings with a featured presentation occur every other month. The hospitality portion requires setting up simple nonalcoholic beverages and snacks prior to the meeting and then cleaning up, with assistance from other attendees, after the meeting. A party-platter from a grocery store is more than adequate. The estimated time for this work is about 3 to 4 hours per meeting.



Please use the volunteer form on our website, and be sure to indicate the volunteer position that interests you.