

Sierra Sage



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

Happy 30th Anniversary, Sierra Sage
from Founding Member, Mike Sappingfield

Our **Sierra Sage** was approved as a **Sierra Club** group some 30 years ago, in 1992—that was the same year that Sierra Club celebrated its 100th birthday?

Here's how it happened... First, south Orange County was growing fast, and the existing Orange County Group was mostly located in the north part of the county. We south county folks were looking for a group closer to our home. **Bev Full** began talking to members about creating a south Orange County group. Around that same time, the county created a new wilderness park—Whiting Ranch—in the east part of Lake Forest.

SIERRA CLUB MISSION:

To help all people to enjoy and appreciate the wilderness, and to keep our precious wild places wild.

So, Bev asked the ranger there to do a program on this new Whiting Park at a meeting, where members would also learn about the proposed new South Orange County Group. Approximately 25 people showed up, and enough were interested to help get the group started. Over several months of meetings, the members agreed on the details and then asked the Angeles Chapter of the Sierra Club to approve the new group—which it did. In addition to **Bev Full**, early members included **Merri Levy**, **Paul Carlton** and **Connie Carlton**, **Chet Stipe**, **Mike Sappingfield** and **Patty Sappingfield**, and many others soon joined.

From the very beginning Sierra Sage took our Sierra Club mandate to “explore, enjoy and protect the wild places of the Earth” seriously. We took people on hiking trips and taught them to hike safely, with respect for the wilderness.

Our biggest preservation project began only a few years after our group was established. When environmentalists

learned that a plan was afoot to extend the Toll Road through southernmost Orange County, into San Onofre State Park and the entrance to Trestles Beach, they formed a coalition called Friends of the Foothills to oppose it. Sierra Sage was an integral part of it. Our effort lasted more than 8 years, while we informed south county residents of the danger to remaining open areas if the Toll Road extension went through and gathered support. Ultimately, we went before the Coastal Commission at a very well-attended hearing, which led to its decision to deny approval of the Toll Road extension. The Friends of the Foothills have also worked with the Rancho Mission Viejo owners to convince them to preserve important areas of wilderness while designing their developments.

About 20 years ago, **John Kaiser** stepped forward to get us involved in protecting the wild areas of the Cleveland National Forest. As a result, John has been leading trail maintenance projects throughout the Cleveland ever since, repairing the trails from damage caused by weather and people. Our trail maintenance work is ongoing; it is one project that never ends!

Finding the funds to do all the things we want to do has always been a challenge. Over the years, we have raised money from ads in our newsletters, requests for donations, an annual Starr Ranch BBQ that once drew 300 members, and by planning and conducting Sierra Club trips to places like Costa Rica, the Black Hills of South Dakota, the New Mexico Balloon Festival, the Redwoods, and many, many more. We've been busy.

The last couple of years have brought changes and more challenges. While we don't know what the future holds, Sierra Sage remains committed to our Sierra Club mission: *To help all people to enjoy and appreciate the wilderness, and to keep our precious wild places wild.* ■

— Sierra Club & Politics —

No more LEAPS | Ed Maurer

Thank goodness that the giant leap of faith needed to realize the Lake Elsinore Advanced Pumped Storage Project (LEAPS) wasn't taken by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission! The agency instead decided it would not rehear arguments about this project and denied Nevada Hydro's request for a stay. One might think that this decision would drive a stake through the heart of this ill-advised project, but past history suggests that we haven't yet heard the last from Nevada Hydro.

The LEAPS idea was to pump water during daytime hours, when electricity is cheap, from Lake Elsinore up into a yet-to-be-built reservoir at Decker Canyon high in the Santa Ana mountain-range, and to release the water to generate electricity during the night when electricity can be sold at a premium. This would have required 32 mi. of transmission lines through the Cleveland National Forest, tunnels to allow the water to be lifted to the reservoir, then to rush down to a new power plant, and more.

The FERC's final no to Nevada Hydro is a **victory for the Sierra Club**, the city of Lake Elsinore, the Pechanga band of Luiseño Indians, and residents who have long opposed this project, which has been on and off the burner for decades. But we'll keep our eyes open for the company to come up with a new iteration of LEAPS, an idea that is one of our region's bad pennies, like the 241 Toll Road extension, that keeps coming up again and again. ■

JUNE 7: Primary Election

This is going to be a difficult election for us in south Orange County because the redistricting brought about major changes in the electoral maps for our newly adopted districts for Congressional, State Senate, State Assembly, State Board of Equalization, and County Board of Supervisors. [Click here to find your new districts.](#)

On **April 28** the Registrar of Voters will mail the Voter Information Guide to all registered voters; the Vote-By-Mail ballots will begin to go out on **May 9**, and the last day to register for the June 7 statewide primary is **May 23**. ■

New Hybrid Meeting Format for Sierra Sage | Leslie Fitch

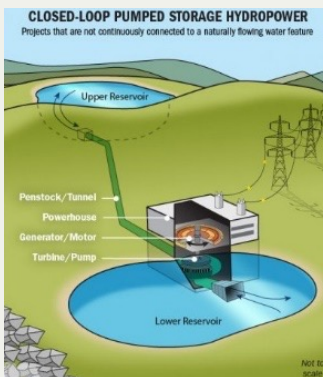
At our March 22, 2022, membership meeting we rolled out our inaugural hybrid format with both in-person and Zoom participants.

A hybrid system has two advantages. First, it makes it possible to have virtual speakers who live too far away to present at in-person meetings in Mission Viejo. And second, it gives our members a choice on how to attend.

Our excellent speaker, **Forest Leigh of Heal the Bay**, gave a virtual presentation titled "Know the Flow." This informative and engaging talk showed us just where our water comes from and explained the financial, social, and environmental problems that beset our current system of water delivery. Forest also told us about some of the current work being done to correct and improve our Southern California water system. We have had rave reviews of this program, which has been recorded for future viewing, along with the lively question and answer session that followed.

In order to produce a hybrid meeting, **Sierra Sage** invested in new equipment. Meanwhile, **Tod Fitch** studied and learned to use Open Broadcast System, the open-source software that allows users to become, essentially, broadcast engineers. **Jon Howard**, the Communications Coordinator for the Angeles Chapter of the Sierra Club, was part of our team. Jon showed us how to seamlessly blend a presentation with both virtual and live speakers for an in-person and Zoom audience and giving us tips on how to make it more interesting.

After three practice sessions to work through some unpredictable bugs, we arrived at a successful hybrid general meeting. Helping us with these rehearsals were **Leslie Fitch** as in-person presenter, **Ed Mauer, Helen Maurer, Vicki Hazley, Sharon Koch, Mike Sappingfield** and **John Kaiser** as representative Zoom participants. Thanks to this team, Sierra Sage is now on the cutting edge of hybrid meeting technology! ■



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Sierra Sage of

Outings

South Orange County

— May/June Hikes & Trail Activities —

We are experimenting with an abbreviated format for the scheduled events appearing in this newsletter. For full details, trailhead directions and registration requirements for most of these, please visit our website: www.sierraclub.org/angeles/sierra-sage/calendar.

We are also announcing a special outing: **Leslie Fitch's Provisional Hike**, presented here in full (but please go to the website to pre-register for it). We hope you will join us to welcome Leslie as our newest Sierra Club hike leader.

■ **Wednesday, May 4, 9:00 am: Buck Gully Hike.** Easy/moderate 5.6 mi, 900 ft. gain/loss partial loop exploring this cool coastal canyon with its own stream, hidden away in Corona del Mar.

■ **Saturday, May 7, 7:30 am: Trail Maintenance on the Tenaja Trail.** We will use the Fisherman Camp trail to hike 1.6 miles to reach the lower end of Tenaja Trail where we will begin our work. The primary need is for brushing to establish a proper corridor. Up to 6.4 miles round trip, 900 ft. elevation gain. There will be ample work in the first mile of Tenaja trail. Pre-registration, medical form required.

■ **Wednesday, May 11, 9:30 am: End of Season Party, Mason Park in Irvine.** Our traditional get-together picnic, with a short and easy walk around the park included.

■ **Saturday, May 28, 8:00 am: Falcon & Viejo-Tie Loop Hike.** 6.4 miles with 1000 ft. cumulative gain. Join us on a semi-loop hike in the Cleveland NF using several trails near Bluejay Campground. Trails pass through both forested areas and open chaparral areas. Some pavement walking at the start. This time of year should be a good time for wildflowers and perhaps we will find some 'green gentian' wildflowers along the way.

■ **Saturday, Jun 4, 8:00 am: Trail Maintenance in the San Mateo Canyon Wilderness.** Volunteers work on trails on a monthly basis—each month the location is selected based on current needs. Hiking distances may be 4 to 7 miles round trip with up to 1000 ft of gain. Return to the trailhead is typically around 3 pm.



SPECIAL EVENT—Leslie Fitch's Provisional Hike

Wednesday, Jun 22, 8:30 am: Bommer Ridge Trail to Laguna Beach. This moderately paced 5½-mile hike has an elevation gain of 1,200 feet, mostly at the beginning. Meet at the Willow Canyon staging area on Laguna Canyon Road at 8:30 am. Hiking up the canyon to Bommer Ridge Trail where there are views of San Clemente Island. From Bommer Ridge Trail, we walk down Water Tank Trail into Laguna Beach through a pleasant residential area. Arriving in Laguna Beach, there is an optional stop for lunch at Zinc or you can take the bus back to Willow Canyon.



■ Leslie Fitch

Return bus is OCTA route 89 from Laguna Beach bus station on Broadway near Zinc. For bus times see <https://www.octa.net/ebusbook/RoutePDF/route089.pdf>.

BRING CASH FOR BUSFARE: \$0.75 for seniors (60+) or \$2.00 for regular fare. Masks are required on the OC transit buses.

BRING: \$3.00 parking fee at Willow Canyon trail head, water, hiking shoes, sun hat, daypack and money for lunch and bus fare, mask. ■

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.

Sierra Sage Members...

Remember to give us your new physical address and/or email address if it changes so you'll get your Sierra Sage newsletter at your new place on time!

Update on Aliso Creek East | Helen Maurer

THE FIRST STAGE OF REVEGETATION along the Aliso Creek East Trail in Aliso & Wood Canyons Wilderness Park (known fondly to some as the “Left Bank”) has just been completed. Over the past several weeks a mixture of native plant seeds was hydro sprayed over the disturbed areas adjacent to the new trail. During this process, the trail was closed on weekdays to allow the work to take place, while being open on weekends. For the time being, we expect it to remain open 7 days a week. On a recent visit, we saw a nice mix of hikers, runners and pedal-bikers (the latter including a family with kids, all pedaling their own bikes) using the trail. No e-bikes in evidence on this outing! Maybe they’re learning to read signs at the park entrances.

...it does seem reasonable to imagine a time in the not-too-distant future when the trail recovers some of the aspects that once made it so pleasant. We look forward to that time and will keep you posted.

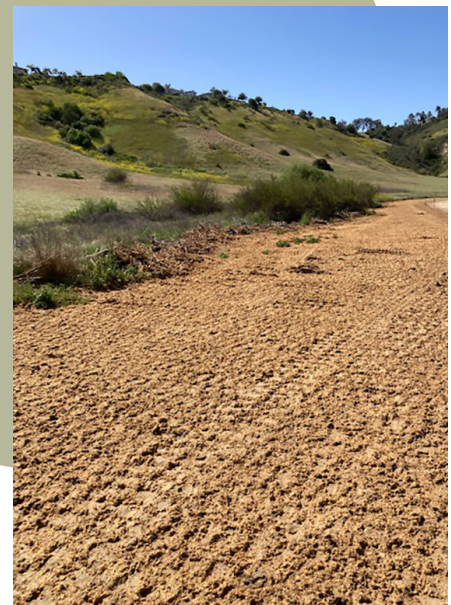
This first stage of damage repair is important. Although the hydroseeding took place a little late, at the end of our rainy season, arrangements have been made by the South Orange County Wastewater Authority (SOCWA) for it to be

regularly watered to ensure the survival of this planting. This seemed better than to let it wait for fall, which would give the invasives (largely mustard and wild radish, blooming profusely at this time) a head-start and free rein to take over the bare areas. If all goes well, a good crop of native plants will emerge in due course and continue to reseed themselves as Nature intended. For the meadowy grasslands that line big stretches of the trail, this may be sufficient.

But it is not the end of things. Other plants—shrubs and trees—were lost during the pipe replacement. The people at SOCWA are aware of the extent of the damage and have expressed a commitment to a mitigation program. SOCWA plans to hold community meetings to gather public input. They will let us know once they are planned.

What we expect to see—in due course—will be some strategic container plantings where more than just the hydroseeding is needed. Climate change will need to be considered in selecting what goes in. It may not happen all at once, and it will, in any case, take longer for larger things to grow to proper size. We should not expect things to miraculously return to “exactly how they were.” But it does seem reasonable to imagine a time in the not-too-distant future when the trail recovers some of the aspects that once made it so pleasant. We look forward to that time and will keep you posted.

STAY TUNED.



■ Aliso Creek East Trail in Aliso & Wood Canyons Wilderness Park

Photos courtesy of Ed Maurer

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Note: * Denotes voting member of the Executive Committee

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Subscription Information
Sierra Sage Newsletter

PUBLICATION NOTES

— Sierra Sage is scheduled for delivery on January 1, March 1, May 1, July 1, September 1, and November 1 of each year.

— Please note that submission deadline is *one month prior to publication*.

— Electronic copies are sent via email and are free. Just send an email to **Ed** at balois@cox.net and let us know that you would like the emailed Newsletter.

Newsletter Editorial Team

as of 3/12/2022

Interim Newsletter Editor Ed Maurer
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 Graphic Design Risa Koppel
 Copy Editor Helen Maurer
 News & Events Editors Sylvie Coté, Sharon Koch

Sierra Sage Meetings

- Executive Committee meetings are open to all members of Sierra Club who reside in South OC. Meetings are on the 2nd Thursday of each month.
 - **Contact Ed Maurer at balois@cox.net** for date, time and directions.
- 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, 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**

ANGELES CHAPTER WEBSITE:

<https://angeles.sierraclub.org>

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