

Sierra Sage

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

Sierra Sage Group Bi-Monthly Meeting Tuesday, March 23, 2021 at 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm

The Sierra Club takes an active interest in legislative actions both on the national and state level. **March is Women's History Month.** Join us on March 23 to hear how two dynamic women are making their mark in Washington and Sacramento. Your representative in Congress, the **Honorable Katie Porter**, can help make a difference in her role as Chair of the House Committee on Natural Resources. Then hear from **Kathryn Phillips, Director of Sierra Club California**, how your Sierra Club has a voice in Sacramento. Learn how Ms. Phillips and her team represent our priority legislation in the state capitol, and how you can participate.

Speaker:

■ **KATIE PORTER, U.S. REPRESENTATIVE**
45th Congressional District, Orange County, California

Representative Porter was re-elected to her second term last November, representing the central part of Orange County. We are particularly interested in her work this year on the Natural Resources Committee. We, in the Sierra Club, are concerned about the Natural Resources of this country and would like to protect these Natural Resources instead of selling them to the high bidder. Also, she has been named as the Chair of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee. In that role, she plans to hold polluters accountable to Orange County Families.



Hon. Katie Porter

Speaker:

■ **KATHRYN PHILLIPS, DIRECTOR**
Sierra Club California

Sierra Club California is primarily the lobbying arm for the Sierra Club Chapters in California. They represent the Sierra Club and its members and meet with the California Legislators to make sure they understand the concerns that the Sierra Club members have about bills being considered. She and her staff do major work to educate the legislators that good environmental laws should be passed, and the not so good ones die and disappear.

■ **FOR ZOOM LINK AND MEETING I.D.**, please email either **Mike Sappingfield** (mikesapp@cox.net) or **Risa Koppel** (risa.koppel@me.com). **If you are new to ZOOM**, and would like some help to get on the system, just contact **Risa Koppel** at risa.koppel@me.com for assistance to get online and get the most out of the Zoom Internet Virtual Meetings. **Please include any questions for either Congressmember Porter or Ms. Phillips with your message requesting the Zoom link.**

Mike's Favorite Hikes

In these days of COVID-19, we have not been able to plan and lead Sierra Club hikes. However, we can still go out in the wilderness and enjoy it. Here are some local hikes that I enjoy.

1. **O'Neill Park Hike:** 6 Mi. 1500 elevation gain/loss.

Drive north on El Toro past Glenn Ranch to Valley Vista, right on Valley Vista and after the right bend in the road, it becomes Meadow Ridge.

Follow Meadow Ridge and park on the side of the road near the end. In front of you is the beginning of the Live Oak Canyon Trail. Walk south past the last house and turn left on the path before the closed and locked gate. Follow the Live Oak Trail into O'Neill Park. Follow the Live Oak Trail up, up, up until you see the Cell Phone tower. Climb the steepest trail up to Vista Point, which is the highest point in the park and has some benches and tables at the top. After you have enjoyed the view and rested, go east

down Vista Trail all the way to the bottom of the ridge to the Hoffman Homestead Trail. Turn right on the Hoffman Homestead trail and follow it south a short distance until you get to a bench and the monument of the Hoffman Homestead.

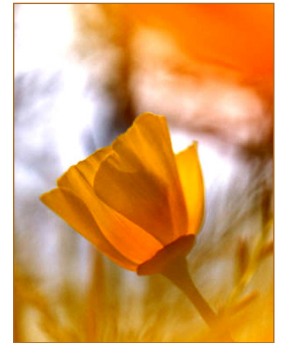


After your break, follow the Homestead trail south for little more than a mile until you cross a paved road to the junction of 4 trails. Turn right on the Coyote Trail and climb up following the trail until you get to the junction with the Live Oak Trail at the ridgetop. Turn right and down then up past the Water Tank, and back up to the Cell Tower. The rest of the hike is down Live Oak Trail back to the beginning and your car.

Note: Bring at least 2 quarts of water and a hat!

2. **Caspers Park East Ridge Hike:** 5.75 600 ft, up and down. Caspers Park is 7 miles east on Ortega Hwy from I-5—on the left hand side of road. Drive into Park, pay entrance fee (County Park Pass will get you in the park by showing it to the Gate Attendant.

Once you have entered the park, follow main park road across the creek and past all the camping areas. Go all the way to the north end of the road and park in the parking lot. After parking, take your munchies and water—at least 2 quarts—and walk back down the main road about ½ mile to a rest-room and showers by a campground.



On the left side of the road is a dirt road/trail taking a gentle climb up to the top of the East Ridge. The trail will turn to the North. Continue following it along the right, enjoying the views on both sides of the road. In the early spring, there are often many wildflowers on all types and colors. Follow the dirt road on the tip of the ridge north.

After about 2½ miles past the water tanks, you will have two choices to drop down from the ridge. The first, Sun Rise is quite steep going down but is shorter. If you want to continue along the ridge north, you can, and within a ½ mile the road will go down to a sort of plateau that joins with the Cougar Pass Trail.

Turn to the left (South West) and start back to the car. You will join with the Sun Rise trail. Then continuing to the Bell Canyon Trail will take you south right back to the parking lot and your car.

Note: There is a restroom about a 50-foot walk south from the car (or you can take the car to the restroom if you prefer.

Photography by Mike Sappingfield

APB Alert: E-Bikes in our Wilderness Parks

Are you concerned about the presence of e-bikes on the trails in our OC wilderness parks? If you haven't yet noticed, yes, they are out there, and in increasing numbers, although such access is currently illegal. Over the past year, the OC Parks Commission has been looking for a way to amend the regulations governing our wilderness parks that would permit e-bike use. At this point, more public testimony is needed, and I'm asking you to weigh in.

The OC Parks Commission will hold its next meeting on 3.4.21. Public comment on matters involving the parks is invited; go to <https://www.ocparks.com/about/commission/agenda> and follow the instructions. Or communicate via email to ocparkscommission@ocparks.com. If using email, be sure to identify yourself and the nature of your interest in the parks (e.g., as a hiker, biker, birder, environmentalist, etc.)

The issues at stake fall into two broad categories: habitat protection and public safety. Our wilderness and open space areas are subject to restrictions established by NCCP/HCP (Natural Community Conservation Plan/Habitat Conservation Plan).^{*} Briefly and basically, this gives the preservation of habitat and protection of designated species top priority. Limited recreational use is permitted, so long as it doesn't interfere with these priorities—and if it does interfere, it can be stopped, either temporarily or permanently. Under this rubric, e-bikes are considered unauthorized motorized vehicles and are barred from wilderness trails. This position was confirmed in a joint letter from USFW and CDFW (US /Fish and Wildlife Service/California Dep't of Fish and Wildlife) to the city of Irvine in July 2019 regarding e-bike access. This letter further stated that "because e-bikes are not solely designed for individuals [with] mobility impairments and are unsuitable for indoor use, they do not qualify for a use exception [under the Americans with Disabilities Act] in locations where motor vehicles are otherwise prohibited."

Although this might seem to offer sufficiently clear guidance, e-bike proponents continue to invoke the ADA as well as two other sources of possible support. The first is AB1096, which in 2015 modified the California Vehicle Code to distinguish e-bikes from motorcycles, with the result that e-bikes are now subject to the same regulations as non-motorized bikes, "unless otherwise restricted by local ordinance." The OCPC and our Board of Supervisors subsequently amended a county ordinance in 2018 to allow e-bikes on certain paved, off-road bikeways in the county. Wilderness trail use was unchanged. A second possible source of e-bike support is Order 3376, issued by the Dept. of the Interior in August 2019, which

aimed at allowing e bike recreational use on federal lands. In the event, both the NFS and BLM did authorize their use on paved roads but continued to bar them from wilderness areas and backcountry trails. It may also be noted that this occurred during the previous Administration, and it seems unlikely that the DOI under President Biden will continue to pursue similar policies.

Trail safety: E-bikes can easily travel at speeds over 10 mph, which remains the speed limit in all OC parks. Weighing on average between 35–70 lbs. (more for cargo bikes), e-bikes are substantially heavier than non-motorized bicycles. This combination of weight plus speed could be severely damaging, if not deadly, in a surprise encounter between an e-bike and a walker/hiker or conventional biker (let alone the occasional horse!) on a narrow track. (And, as a sidebar, heavier bikes will cause more trail erosion, requiring more trail repair.) As our wilderness trails see increased use by both hikers and non-motorized bikers, would opening them to e-bike users lead to greatly increased risks? In addition, most e-bikes use rechargeable lithiumion batteries, which can pose catastrophic fire hazard if they fail. While these incidents are rare, they are the reason that airlines do not allow lithium batteries to be carried in checked luggage. Do we really want them in our often tinder-dry wilderness?



Full disclosure: I love the potential of e-bikes to get us away from our fossil vehicles as we transition to a non-carbon, sustainable future. They seem ideal for commutes, shopping, etc. (Fact: I used to ride a moped, and it was fun!) But I just can't see them on-trail in a wilderness park, even as I grow older and find it increasingly challenging to haul my own body up certain inclines. There are lots of places where they can go (and where I can still get to and enjoy!). If neither of us can go quite everywhere, that is just how it is and pretty much okay.

If you agree that e-bikes should continue to be barred from wilderness trails, please let the OC Parks Commission know your views.

^{*}This and other specific information comes from documents at <https://www.ocparks.com/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?BlobID=109009>.

Announcing... Sierra Sage Group's New Website

We are delighted to announce that we have created a new website for the Sierra Sage Group. Over the past months, Ed Maurer has created and led a committee to review and improve our communications with our members. A new and revamped website is now ready to be enjoyed. You can visit our new website at www.sierrasage.org. It has numerous 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 new web site, feel free 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 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 Mike Sappingfield at mikesapp@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 Mike Sappingfield, mikesapp@cox.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>

SIERRA SAGE WEBSITE: www.sierrasage.org

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