



SIERRA CLUB

TEHIPITE CHAPTER

Reprinted from

Sierra

THE MAGAZINE OF THE SIERRA CLUB

The Second Annual Diablo Range Convening California's Next Great Conservation Story



On June 4, 2026 there was a full house at the Lafayette Veterans Memorial Center for the Second Annual Diablo Range Convening. In attendance were members from close to 70 organizations, tribes and partner groups across the Diablo Range. Several Sierra Club Chapters were represented including the Tehipite Chapter, the San Francisco Bay Chapter, and the Loma Prieta Chapter.

The program opened with a blessing and invocation by the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe followed by a keynote address from Dr. Jennifer Norris; Executive Director, Wildlife Conservation Board, "Diablo Range as a 30 X 30 Priority". 30 X 30 is a worldwide environmental effort to protect 30% of the planet's lands and oceans by 2030 and a codified California statewide goal established to permanently conserve 30% of California's lands and coastal waters by the year 2030. According to Dr. Norris, there are 8.7 million other organisms besides humans. 30 X 30 wants to set aside just 30% of land and water for these animals, leaving 70% for humans to dominate. "Nature is not a luxury; it is a necessity. It's not about the number of acres. We need to protect what is left, intact ecosystems, large interconnected landscapes, habitat with high species diversity and endemic species". California has 2500 endemic species that require climate refugia, localized geographic areas that remain relatively buffered from regional or global climate change. We need to restore what we have and we can. The 200 mile long, 4-million-acre Diablo Range needs to be a California 30 X 30 priority.

Vishal Subramanyan, a 22-year-old award-winning wildlife conservation photographer and National Geographic Young Explorer gave a beautiful photographic presentation on the wildlife of the Diablo Range. His patience and persistence have allowed him to capture some incredible wildlife photographs within the Diablo Range.

A panel discussion led by Gordon Clark; President, Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) addressed Connecting Landscapes & People. Joining him on the panel were: Noelle Chambers; Executive Director, Amah Mutsun Land Trust, and Sean Burke & Juan Pablo Galv'an Martinez, Save Mount Diablo. The Pescadero Ranch and Sargent Ranch (located in southern Santa Clara County) comprise a massive 6,100-acre interconnected landscape recently transformed into one of the largest land conservation purchases in Bay Area history. It provides wildlife connectivity between the Santa Cruz Mountains and the Diablo Range/Gabilan Range. The 1,340-acre Pescadero Ranch acts as a massive wildlife corridor. The Sargent Ranch was the site of a highly controversial mining/quarry development battle. After the successful "Protect Juristac" campaign, Peninsula Open Space Trust purchased the core lands of Sargent Ranch in multiple phases to bring the total protected land to 6,100 acres. In partnership with POST, the Amah Mutsun Land Trust (a native American land trust) created "Protect Juristac" to prevent a 320-acre gravel pit on Mutsun sacred ground, a ceremonial site. They are now setting their sights

on the Altamont Pass Bottleneck. A BioBlitz is planned to document the species in the area. The East Bay Wildlife Connectivity Project is a major planning initiative led by the Alameda County Resource Conservation District to design safe passageways for animals across busy East Bay highways, reducing collisions and maintaining regional biodiversity. The goal is to identify, prioritize, and engineer 3 to 4 new wildlife crossings such as overpasses or underpasses and install wildlife-friendly fencing to restore habitat connectivity.

"Protecting land through Advocacy, Policy & Planning" was a panel discussion with Elias Funez-Founding member of Save Del Puerto Canyon, Steven dePaschalis-Land Use Advocate for Save Mount Diablo, Zachary Ormsby-Central Coast Field Manager for Bureau of Land Management and Juan Pablo Galvan Martinez-Senior Land Use Manager for Save Mount Diablo. The Del Puerto Canyon (The Door) is Stanislaus County's most diverse natural environment. Its habitats range from grasslands along the western valley floor to chaparral, blue oak woodland, and pines. The "Birthing Stone" and surrounding grinding rocks, cut pathways and rock art in Del Puerto Canyon are culturally sacred sites that provide evidence of indigenous Yokuts habitation in the area for thousands of years. These resources are continually threatened by proposed dam and reservoir projects in the Canyon. The San Joaquin Fault Line would lie under the proposed dam. Zachary Ormsby of the BLM discussed the sell off of lands to oil and gas drilling in the Diablo Range. He explained that there was probably no oil but the exploratory drilling would have an impact on the lands.

Following a catered organic lunch by Sunrise Catering and sponsored by Save Mount Diablo we began our afternoon sessions with a Panel with Q & A on Working Lands Perspectives. The panel included Celeste Garamendi-Rancher, Conservationists, Community Activist; Chris Barnhart and Diane Jorgensen-Board Members, Concord Mt. Diablo Trail Ride Association and Ben Weise-Agriculture Program Director, Contra Costa Resource Conservation District. Celeste Garamendi began the discussion with the regenerative ag perspective on working lands. Grazing can actually restore soil health by mimicking the natural movement of wild herding animals. Rather than continuous grazing, which leaves livestock in one massive pasture for an entire season, this approach groups animals at high densities for very short, intense periods before moving them, allowing the land a lengthy recovery period. Prescribed or intentional grazing using virtual fencing can control where the cattle graze. Chris Barnhart and Diane Jorgensen gave a history of the Mt. Diablo Trail Riders Association and explained how they are promoting conservation on private lands.

Finally we participated in peer breakout sessions which gave us all a chance to meet some of the other participants and discuss our ideas around the following topics: Land Use & Advocacy led by Juan Pablo-Save Mount Diablo and Mary Hsia-Coron-Protect San Benito, Working Lands led by Katie Connolly and Sean Burke-Save Mount Diablo, Parks & Open Space led by Clint Elsholz-California State Parks and Ted Clement-Save Mount Diablo and Legislation & Funding led by Shauna Whidden-Save Mount Diablo and Doug Houston-Houston Magnani and Associates. Notes were taken at all of the discussions and shared at the end with Highlights from Breakout and Closing Remarks by the Save Mount Diablo Staff, Diablo Range Advisors & Matt Freeman.

