



SIERRA CLUB

TEHIPITE CHAPTER

Understanding the Sierra Club Organization

The Sierra Club Tehipite Chapter covers Fresno, Madera, Merced and Mariposa counties, plus Yosemite and Kings Canyon National Parks. Founded in 1953, we have approximately 1,700 dues-paying members. Our Native name (tuh-HIP-pit-tee) is based on Tehipite Dome, a magnificent, remote feature in remote Kings Canyon. Local residents organized to prevent a National Forest logging proposal near there. Our chapter is part of the national Sierra Club, founded in 1892, is headquartered in Oakland and an influential non-profit with approximately 600,000 members, 400 staff, and a budget of \$110 million. Hundreds of Club volunteers advocate for one or more Conservation issues of importance to them. What distinguishes the Club from other Big Green NGOs is our volunteer leadership, which is required by the Club's charter.

The national Sierra Club is comprised of: (1) a Board of Directors elected annually by the Club membership; (2) 64 chapters, covering all 50 states, plus DC and Puerto Rico, each managed by an executive committee (Excom) and officers; and (3) national and chapter staff. Each state has one chapter except California, which has thirteen. Chapters each have an appointed delegate to the Council of Club Leaders, a national volunteer body with the mission of advocating for and representing our chapters to the national staff, Board of Directors, and key national policy committees.

Because California has multiple chapters, we also have a statewide body, Sierra Club California, with lobby staff and organizing staff based in Sacramento. Its mission is to manage the state staff and to organize statewide Conservation campaigns. The California Legislative Committee makes decisions about which of the roughly 500 environmental bills introduced into the state legislature each year we will take a position on. The California Conservation Committee (CCC) addresses statewide issues and legislation, and the California Political Committee (CPC) manages endorsements for our two Senators and eight statewide Constitutional offices, and also ballot initiatives. Along with our national Political Committee, the CPC develops the process for chapter political endorsements of local, state legislative officials, and Congressional candidates.

In recent years, our Club have been whipsawed — first by Covid, then by two reorganizations, then by recent budget problems, which have now been resolved. Throughout, there has been an unusual lack of agreement as to the Club's core priorities. Proponents of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) maintain

that attracting younger, racially diverse staff and volunteers is essential for the Club's future and, specifically, for the Club to be effective in organizing Communities of Color targeted by toxic pollution (Environmental Justice). Toward the end of the decade of Executive Director Michael Brune (2010-2020), the Club became divided between traditionalists who focused on environmental protection and climate change, and others, who argued that it was imperative for the Club to recruit Black and Latino members and staff. In a 2012 speech by Brune to California chapter leaders, he opened with a line designed to shake up the audience: "When I look out at this crowd, I see old White people."

In 2022, the Club hired as our new Executive Director famed organizer Ben Jealous, formerly with the NAACP. With the median age of Club members now approaching 75, most Club activists are Boomers who began as hikers around the time of the first Earth Day (1970), and younger activists today are more likely to join newer NGOs such as the Sunrise Movement. Nonetheless, our Chapter has successfully recruited young organizers to our Excom for the past decade. Also, since 2019, our Chapter has supported the efforts of a local tribe, the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation — the original occupants of Yosemite Valley — with expertise and funding to assist them in submitting a petition for formal federal recognition of their tribe.

NOTE: The Tehipite Chapter is now seeking volunteers who wish to engage in one of the following Conservation issues. **No knowledge of the issue** is required, only **a willingness to learn**. We can connect you with others who are eager to share their knowledge.

- *Water supplies and agricultural water usage in the San Joaquin Valley.*
 - » *The Sierra National Forest, including Giant Sequoia National Monument.*
 - » *Kings Canyon National Park.*
 - » *Oil and natural gas production and their impacts on human health and the environment*
 - » *Natural gas (methane) leakage from dairies*
 - » *San Joaquin Valley air pollution and air quality regulation.*
- *Separately, we have a need for volunteers to join our Executive Committee, the voting body which makes decisions for the Tehipite Chapter.*

Contact Gary at 559-790-3495 (cell or text) if you have questions about any of these positions.

Join us on **Wednesday, Oct. 23 at 7 PM** at the **Woodward Park Library** as mycologist **Christopher Bivins** presents on his work on *Truffle Fungi of the Sierra Nevada Mountains*.

This talk focuses on the incredible biodiversity of truffle species that have been uncovered in the Sierra Nevada foothills as part of a local fungal biodiversity survey project. Truffles are an extremely diverse yet understudied group of organisms. Many fungi spread their spores through the wind by producing mushrooms, which are spore-producing structures that occur above ground. Truffles, on the other hand, are fungi that have evolved to produce their fruiting bodies completely underground. Come and learn more through this presentation and the Q&A afterward.

Christopher Bivins, is a mycologist based in Merced CA. He completed work for his master's degree at Fresno State. He is currently a Ph.D. student at UC Merced where he works on a number of fungal ecology projects in the Sierra Nevada Foothills and gives guided mycology hikes with the Sierra Foothill Conservancy.

