

NEWS RELEASE



SIERRA NEVADA ALLIANCE

Keeping light in the range.

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Expedition on Carson Pass Part of Global Events Highlighting Climate Change Impacts on Snow & Ice

Sierra Nevada Alliance and The Climate Reality Project Expedition showcased impact of climate change on California snow melt and water supply

South Lake Tahoe, California — On Thursday, January 5th, the Sierra Nevada Alliance led an expedition to a snow monitoring site on Carson Pass, highlighting the affects of climate change on California's water supply and snow melt as part of a global effort organized by The Climate Reality Project. The Sierra Nevada mountain range is one of eight places around the world that The Climate Reality Project selected to highlight due to the region's importance to California's economy, the eighth largest in the world. Climate change will inflict significant environmental and economic losses on the state as the natural reservoir that is the Sierra decreases and becomes more unpredictable.

On Thursday, a group of 13 citizens walked, not snowshoed, out to a snow monitoring site, called a snow course, off of Carson Pass where the group discussed the impacts of climate change on water supply in the Sierra. Joan Clayburgh, Executive Director of the Sierra Nevada Alliance, led the expedition. The snow course on Carson Pass is in a meadow normally blanketed by winter snow and requiring snow shoes or cross country skis to explore. On Thursday, January 5th however, expedition participants walked the course in light jackets and tennis shoes due to the extremely dry start to this year's winter season in the Sierra.

"The Sierra Nevada snow pack is monitored very closely by a cooperative of agencies in California because it is so important to supplying water for agriculture, business and residents throughout the entire state of California," said Joan Clayburgh. "Climate change is predicted to greatly reduce the snowpack by mid century, possibly as much as a 90% reduction by the end of the century. We must not delay in reducing greenhouse gas emissions while also planning how to adapt to changes that we will not be able to avoid."

During the expedition, participants learned about the California snow survey process, discussed how snow is integral to California's water supply system, and explored various strategies to adapt to reduced snow pack. On Wednesday January 4th, the state cooperative snow survey in

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California reported that the Sierra snowpack was only 19% of average for this time of year. One year does not indicate climate change, but the Alliance pointed out that such snow-free scenes are predicted to become more common in the Sierra due to climate change.

“It’s disturbing standing in this mountain meadow in early January in tennis shoes and not snow shoes,” said Kaitlin Meese, Program Assistant at the Alliance. “The Climate Reality Project is so important to calling attention to the impacts of climate change around the world. Reducing greenhouse gases requires action throughout the Sierra, nation and globe.”

Participants in the expedition included representatives from the state agency Sierra Nevada Conservancy, a local resort business owner, visitors from the Bay Area, an Alpine county supervisor, the leader of the Alpine Watershed Group, and Sierra Nevada Alliance staff and volunteers.

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The Sierra Nevada Alliance has been protecting and restoring Sierra waters, land, wildlife and rural communities since 1993. The organization builds the capacity of its network of over 85 conservation organizations and leads region-wide campaigns. The organization’s Regional Climate Change Program works to reduce emissions and adapt to climate change in order to help future generations enjoy the outstanding beauty and diverse resources of the Sierra Nevada that we enjoy today.

The Climate Reality Project brings the facts about the climate crisis into the mainstream and engages the public in conversation about how to solve it. It helps citizens around the world discover the truth and take meaningful steps to bring about change. The Climate Reality Project has more than 5 million members and supporters worldwide. It is guided by one simple truth: The climate crisis is real and we know how to solve it.