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To: robert@sierranevadaalliance.org
Subject: Sierra Climate Change News March 2009



SIERRA NEVADA ALLIANCE

Keeping light in the range.

Sierra Climate Change News

March 2009

Including Campaign Updates, Taking Action for the Sierra, Relevant News Articles, Useful

Reports and Resources and Cool Websites and Blogs

Campaign Updates

48 ORGANIZATIONS SIGN ONTO SIERRA NEVADA ALLIANCE ADAPTATION PLEDGE!

Pledge Highlighted in Tahoe Daily Tribune, DWR News and DWR's California Water Plan News

The Alliance's Adaptation Pledge is a commitment by organizations to incorporate when possible seven guiding principles of climate change adaptation into their planning processes. Some of those principles include educating others on the impacts of climate change, utilizing models to anticipate the impacts of climate change, and prioritizing projects that will succeed under multiple scenarios. The Alliance is creating this network of organizations pledging to adapt to climate change in order to promote better exchange of information, demonstrate the Sierra's commitment to the important issues of climate change and to leverage more research, planning and project funding for the Sierra to ultimately ensure robust Sierra ecosystems, resilient water supply and sustainable communities in the face of climate change. So far groups such as the South Lake Tahoe Public

Alliance Events

May 23, Birding in Tahoe
 Bird expert Sheryl Ferguson will lead a walk on Pope Beach, 7:30-10:30am. For more info contact Kay Ogden (530)-542-4546 x304.

June 12, Land Use Summit
 at the Sierra Health Foundation in Sacramento. The summit is free to attend, but you must register. Email [Trish Hickson](mailto:Trish.Hickson@sierranevadaalliance.org) or call 530-542-4546 ext. 313 for more information.

October 16-18, 16th Annual Sierra Nevada Alliance Conference at the North Tahoe Event Center.
 Mark your calendar! Check back at our [website](http://www.sierranevadaalliance.org) for more details!

Utility District, the Mono Lake Committee, and the California Wildlife Foundation (among 45 others!) have signed onto the pledge.

This past weekend, the Tahoe Daily Tribune ran a [comprehensive story on the Adaptation Pledge](#) in their Saturday edition. The Department of Water Resources picked up the story and included it in both their daily Water News and their California Water Plan News.

If your organization is interested in signing the pledge or if you have any questions, please contact AmeriCorps member Robert Collier at the Sierra Nevada Alliance (530)-542-4546 x323 or robert@sierranevadaalliance.org.

DRAFT 2009 CLIMATE ACTION TEAM REPORT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW

On April 1, 2009 the State released their [Draft 2009 Climate Action Team Report to the Governor and Legislature](#). The newly released report expands on the policy oriented 2006 assessment and provides new information and scientific findings. New information and details in the report includes 1) development of new climate and sea-level projections using new information and tools that have become available in the last two-years and 2) evaluation of climate change within the context of broader social changes, such as land-use changes and demographic shifts. The new assessment also discusses an attempt to consider the joint effects of increased urbanization and climate impacts.

For more information, head to the Climate Action Team [website](#).

ADAPTATION SPOTLIGHT: KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON

King County in Washington has taken aggressive measures to incorporate climate change in their planning processes. Each year the county publishes an annual report which documents the success it has had in confronting the issue. The county government's [2008 Climate Report](#) is a progress report on the implementation of the county's 2007 Climate Plan and county-wide actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from operations and regional activities. The new climate report also details efforts to anticipate and adapt to climate change impacts. For example, in 2007, King county was able to **reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 6 percent below 2000 levels**, far exceeding their goal of a 1.5 percent reduction. Here is a sampling of some of the actions King County is taking to achieve their mitigation targets and to adapt to climate change:

Mitigation

- Join the Chicago Climate Exchange, a voluntary cap-and-trade market.
- Add 22 hybrid-articulated buses to their Metro Transit fleet since 2006.

Other Events

April 9 ARB Chair Seminar Series "Towards a New Deal in Climate Policy: A Consumption Based Approach for Mitigation of GHG Emissions." Speaker Klaus Hubacek, University of Leeds. 1-3:30 p.m. Sierra Hearing Room, Cal/EPA, 1001 I Street, Sacramento, CA. It will also be webcast. Go to the [website](#) to find out more.

April 15 Watershed Briefing and Rally at the Capitol 8:30 a.m. briefing at CalEPA building in Sacramento followed by a 1:00 p.m. rally for watersheds and jobs. Click [here](#) for more info.

April 22 National Conversation on Climate Action. This event will enable local governments to build broader, sustained citizen support for and involvement in local climate protection strategies. Visit [Climate Conversation](#) for more information.

May 15-June 7 Tuolumne River Trust Paddle to the Sea. This is a three week festival celebrating the Tuolumne River as it courses from Yosemite to the Golden Gate. Find more information on their [website](#).

- Increase public transit use to include over 108,000 hours since 2006 through Transit Now! Initiative.
- Cut King County Dept. of Natural Resources and Park's Wastewater Treatment Division use of diesel fuel by 145,000 gallons through the use of more efficient vehicles.
- Develop King County Equity and Social Justice Initiative to place court-involved young adults into green jobs.

Adaptation

- Improve the levee system to prepare for more intense flood events.
- Continue the Brightwater Reclaimed Water System South Segment which will transmit 7 million gallons per day of reclaimed water for non-potable uses.
- Develop a Vulnerable Facilities Inventory to identify infrastructure at risk from sea level rise.
- Incorporate climate change impacts in the King County Comprehensive Plan Update of October 2008.
- Continue modeling climate change impacts on instream flows.

You can find more information about what King County is doing to mitigate and adapt to climate change on the [Sims Global Warming Initiative website](#). Access the 2008 Annual Climate Report by clicking on the link to a PDF of the document located in the far right-hand column of the page. There are also resources and tips on how individuals can reduce their personal greenhouse gas emissions.

INPUT TO THE PANEL ON ADAPTING TO THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE DUE APRIL 17

America's Climate Choices' Panel on Adapting to the Impacts of Climate Change has issued a request for more specific input. The panel invites submissions about the messages your organization believes are critical for guiding effective adaptation to climate change. For example, if you were to provide advice to Congress regarding investments to prepare for climate change impacts like sea level rise, higher temperatures, and changes in water supply availability, etc., what message would you send?

As part of your submission, you may also choose to answer one or more of the following questions:

1. What types of support would be most useful in helping your constituency make decisions about the most effective investments in preparing for climate change impacts?
2. Are there particular adaptation strategies that would be useful in the sectors or regions with

which your organization is most familiar?

3. Are the government, private sector, and non-profit institutions that exist today prepared to implement effective adaptation strategies? If not, what changes in policy, incentives, regulations or institutions could improve adaptive capacity?

The input period is open through April 17, 2009. All submissions are limited to 500 words and will be considered. However, the panel will not be able to individually respond to each submission. Please submit input online at <http://americasclimatechoices.org>.

Taking Action for the Sierra

AB32 AND SB375 WORKSHOPS

The Local Government Commission, the Governor's Office of Planning and Research, and Senator Darrell Steinberg will host workshops to discussion the following topics related to AB32 and SB 375:

- How AB32 and SB375 relate to local governments
- Strategies for local government compliance
- Economic benefits
- How to take advantage of the new CEQA rules and exemptions
- Funding opportunities for planning and implementation
- Model programs and best practices that result in the most greenhouse gas emissions for your money

Speakers will include top staff from the sponsoring organizations as well as regional and local experts, who will showcase some of the best and most innovative steps that local governments are taking. Register for the workshops at <http://www.lgc.org/events/sb375.html>.

See below for dates and locations nearest you:

- April 16 – Riverside
- May 7 – Fresno
- June 4 – San Diego
- June 25 – Los Angeles
- July 15 – Oakland
- July 30 - Sacramento

Relevant News Articles

Local

[Project raises Tahoe awareness about global warming](#) by Adam Jensen, Tahoe Daily Tribune, Mar. 27. While California rests on the verge of releasing a strategy to adapt to global climate change, the Sierra Nevada Alliance continues a more than three-year process to encourage groups in the Sierra Nevada to adjust to the global phenomenon.

[Lake Tahoe basin bracing for third round of drought conditions](#) by Nick Cruik, Tahoe Bonanza, Mar. 27. Even though the Tahoe snowpack stands at 80 percent of average levels to date, the combination of previous dry years, the fall precipitation, and a dry spring may conspire to produce summer water levels comparable to the past two drought years.

[Storm dropped 12 billion gallons into Lake Tahoe](#) by Jeff DeLong, RJG.com, Mar. 4. The most recent snow storm dumped enough precipitation into Lake Tahoe in three days to raise its water level nearly 12 billion gallons or 4 inches, increasing Tahoe's water storage by about 38,000 acre-feet.

[Placer biomass plant gets federal funding](#) by Ramon Coronado, Sacramento Bee, Mar. 14. An innovative energy-producing biomass plant in Placer County got a boost of green this week from the federal government. The plant was one of more than 800 projects earmarked in this year's \$410 billion federal spending bill signed by Obama.

[Inyo planners OK pumping of aquifer](#) by Louis Sahagun, Los Angeles Times, Mar. 12. With its own wells in decline, Coso Operating Co.'s geothermal plant was granted a county permit Wednesday to pump water from an aquifer that nourishes a 50-year-old private hunting club, Little Lake Ranch, and its spring-fed wetlands.

State

[State water allocation remains critically low](#) by DWR press release, Mar. 18. DWR announced today it will increase the 2009 State Water Project delivery allocation to 20 percent. Late winter storms increased snowpack to near 90 percent of normal, but water storage in the main reservoirs and runoff projections remain well below average.

[Dire scenarios presented on global warming](#) by Tom Knudson, Sacramento Bee, Mar. 12. New scientific studies informed California's Climate Action Team last week that global warming is likely to take a greater toll on the state than previously believe unless strong measures are taken to combat it.

[Rising seas could cost California more than \\$100 billion](#) by Jason Dearen, AP, Mar. 11. A new state-commissioned study has found that a rising sea level caused by a warming climate could cost California an estimated \$100 billion in property loss by the end of the century, two-thirds of which will occur in the San Francisco Bay area.

[Sacramento sewage agency looks at selling wastewater](#) by Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee, Mar. 2. The Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District adopted a strategy to sell treated sewage as drinking water. The technology is simpler and cheaper than desalinating water.

[State's in a drought, but it's not the worst ever](#) by Bettina Boxall, Los Angeles Times, Mar. 3. The warnings have been ominous this winter: California is headed into the worst drought in modern history. Those who would like to build new reservoirs and canals and to weaken environmental regulations have invoked the drought mantra in recent weeks. However, the snowpack levels, bolstered by recent storms that brought the pack to 90% or average, indicate that the drought isn't as bad as some have made it out to be.

[Sec. Salazar and Sec. Vilsack pledge coordinated federal response to CA drought](#) by Dept. of Interior. Feb. 26. Sec. of the Interior Salazar and Agriculture Secretary Vilsack announced the created of a Federal Drought Action Team that will work cooperatively to respond to

communities facing significant drought. With CA currently facing a crippling drought, the Action Team will work with the Governor's drought response team to minimize the social, economic, and environmental impacts of the current drought.

[As reservoirs fall, prices should rise](#) by Robert Stavins, The Huffington Post, Mar. 3. Currently water is priced too low for people to have an economic incentive to reduce their water use. Author Robert Stavins offers suggestions to curb our egregious misuse of water and to conserve the increasingly scarce resource.

National

[EPA reverses Bush, says warming imperils public](#) by Juliet Eilpern, Washington Post, Mar. 24. The Environmental Protection Agency has sent a proposal to the White House finding that global warming is endangering the public's health and welfare, according to several sources, a move that could have far-reaching implications for the nation's economy and environment.

[States anxious as Obama shapes climate policy](#) by Peter Henderson and Timothy Gardner, Reuters, Mar. 20. Regional markets to trade air pollution credits, aimed at cutting emissions that heat the planet, could be overshadowed by a federal system President Obama sees as central to his environmental policy.

[America unprepared for climate change](#) by Suzanne Goldenberg, The Guardian, Mar. 12. America is woefully unprepared for climate change, and the government agencies charged with delivering the latest science to decision makers are not up to the task, a new report claims.

[Climate change accelerates water hunt in west](#) by Peter Henderson, Reuters, Mar. 10. It's hard to visualize a water crisis while driving the boulevards of Los Angeles or golfing Arizona's green fairways. So look to Australia. A decade into its worst drought in a hundred years Australia is a lesson of what the American West could become.

[Water 'more important than oil' businesses told](#) by Juliette Jowit, The Guardian, Feb. 26. Dwindling water supplies are a greater risk to businesses than oil running out, a report for investors has warned. CERES' president Mindy Lubber and Pacific Institute president Peter Gleik urged more companies and investors to work out their dependence on water and future supplies.

[Obama seeks US carbon emissions cap](#) by Tom Doggett, Reuters, Feb. 25. President Obama has called on Congress to send him legislation that places a market-based cap on U.S. carbon polluting emissions and pushes the production of more renewable energy.

[Droughts may lay waste to parts of US](#) by Suzanne Goldenberg, The Guardian, Feb. 26. The world's pre-eminent climate scientist produced a blunt assessment of the impact of global warming on the U.S., warning of droughts that could reduce the American south-west to a wasteland.

[Warming trends alter conservation](#) by Juliet Eilperin, The Washington Post, Jan. 25. As climate change begins to transform the environment in the United States and overseas, policymakers and environmentalists are realizing that the old paradigm of setting aside tracts of land or sea to preserve species that might otherwise disappear is no longer sufficient.

International

[Nations near Arctic declare polar bears threatened by climate change](#) by Andrew Revkin, New York Times, Mar. 19. Five countries that created a treaty nearly four decades ago to protect polar bears through limits on hunting issued a joint statement on Thursday identifying climate change as "the most important long-term threat" to the bears.

[Spring to emerge earlier than ever](#) by Paul Stokes, Daily Telegraph, Mar. 14. Spring is likely to arrive earlier as a result of climate change a survey by nature watchers suggests after they spotted birds nesting and plants flowering across the US already. This phenomenon comes

even after the UK had one of its coldest winters on record.

[Europe's carbon market plummets, exposing frailties](#) by Space Daily, Mar. 1. As world leaders scramble to buoy the global financial system, the economic crisis has quietly claimed yet another victim: Europe's nascent market for carbon pollution. After peaking at nearly \$38 a ton in mid-2008, carbon has recently traded as low as \$12.60, according to BlueNext, one of several European carbon exchanges.

[Australia fires release huge amount of CO2](#) by David Fogarty, Reuters, Feb. 26. Bushfires that have scorched Australia's Victoria state released millions of tons of carbon dioxide and forest fires could become a growing source of carbon pollution as the planet warms, a top scientist claims.

[Carbon tax only way to keep planet cool](#) by Space Daily, Mar. 11. Greenhouse gases must be cut more quickly and deeply than thought only two years ago to avoid dire consequences, and a carbon tax is the only realistic way to do it, according to climate scientist James Hansen.

[Carbon cuts only give '50/50 chance of saving planet'](#) by Michael McCarthy, The Independent, Mar. 9. The world's best efforts at combating climate change are likely to offer no more than a 50-50 chance of keeping temperature rises below the threshold of disaster, according to research from the UK Met Office.

[A sleeping giant?](#) by Amanda Leigh Mascarelli, Nature Reports Climate Change, Mar. 5. Researchers have long speculated that warming could unleash vast stores of methane, a greenhouse gas, from where it lies frozen beneath the sea floor and locked up in Arctic soils. If those deposits of methane, which heats the atmosphere 25 times more efficiently than carbon dioxide, were to melt, it would almost certainly trigger abrupt climate change.

[Research warns that two degree rise will halve rainforest "carbon sink"](#) by James Murray, BusinessGreen, Mar. 3. The impact of global warming on tropical rainforests will be so severe that even increases in temperature that are widely regarded as "safe" could raise tree mortality rates to such a level that almost 50 billion tons of carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere.

[Adapting to climate change in Archangel](#) by BBC, Mar. 7. Changing temperatures means the hardy people of northern Russia have to adapt their lifestyles, but they are not yet sure to what.

[China plans 59 reservoirs to collect meltwater from its shrinking glaciers](#) by Jonathan Watts, The Guardian, Mar. 2. The far western province of Xinjiang, home to many of the planet's highest peaks and widest ice fields, will carry out a 10-year engineering project, which aims to catch and store glacier run-off that might otherwise trickle away into the desert.

[Changing wind patterns alter food chain in Antarctica](#) by the AP, Mar. 12. Scientists say changing wind patterns linked to global warming are altering the food chain in Antarctica and may also lead to further increases in greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Researchers said that the most basic food, plankton, is declining in the northern portions of the Antarctic peninsula reaching toward South America.

Useful Reports and Resources

[Air Resources Board Seminar Series](#). On March 19, California ARB board member Daniel Sperling gave a presentation titled "Two Billion Cars! Is this Sustainable?" In his talk, Dr. Sperling focused on the role of innovation and policy in bringing about low carbon fuels, electric-drive vehicles, socially-responsible behavior, enhanced mobility services, and low-carbon cities. To view a full version of his presentation go to

<http://www.arb.ca.gov/research/seminars/sperling/sperling.pdf>.

[Climate Change and Disaster Impact Reduction](#) by Komal Rajaryal and Zaina Gadema is the edited volume of the UK-South Asia Young Scientists and Practitioners Seminar on Climate Change and Disaster Impact Reduction held in Kathmandu, Nepal on June 5-6, 2008. The papers presented in the seminar provide a forum to share knowledge, good practice, and

experiences of developing pre- and post-disaster planning.

[Informing Decisions in a Changing Climate](#) by the Panel on Strategies and Methods for Climate-Related Decision Support and the National Resources Council, provides a framework and a set of strategies and methods for organizing and evaluating decision activities related to climate change. The book identifies six principles of effective decision support and recommends a strategy for implementing them in a national initiative to inform climate-related decisions.

[Dangerous Climate?: An Update of the IPCC](#) produces an update of the “burning embers” diagram of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s Third Assessment Report. The update provides evidence that climate change and its consequences are more severe than were presented in either the Third or Fourth Assessment Report.

[California Coastal Management with a Changing Climate](#), a report by Ellen Hanak and Georgina Moreno of the PPIC, examines the challenges California’s coastal managers will face as a result of a changing climate, the adaptation tools that are available, and the extent to which the government institutions are prepared for changing conditions. It finds that climate change will reinforce the management trade-offs that are already present. The report concludes with some priority areas for action to improve the state’s preparedness.

[Climate Change Challenges for Hong Kong: An Agenda for Adaptation](#), by Richard Welford of CSR Asia and the University of Hong Kong, looks at the risks associated with climate change in Hong Kong. It stresses the need for Hong Kong to demonstrate a high degree of leadership regarding climate change issues. The report recommends that Hong Kong should recognize the risks of climate change and implement an agenda for climate change adaptation urgently.

[Restructuring Federal Climate Research to Meet the Challenges of Climate Change](#) by the National Academies Press is a book that proposes six priorities for restructuring the United States’ climate change research program to develop a more robust knowledge and support informed responses.

[Urban Governance for Adaptation: Assessing Climate Change Resilience in Ten Asian Cities](#) by the Institute of Development Studies examines how to manage climate-related impacts in an urban context by promoting planned and autonomous adaptation. It presents the findings of the assessments of ten South and Southeast Asian cities (Bangkok, Chennai, Chittagong, Cochin, Dalian, Da Nang, Hangzhou, Ho Chi Minh City, Ningbo and Surat) and the characteristics of a climate resilient urban governance assessment framework.

[U.S. State of the Birds](#) was developed by a partnership among the U.S. Fish and Wildlife, the U.S. Geological Survey, state government wildlife agencies, and NGOs. The report, a culmination of 40 years worth of data, documents the decline of bird populations in many habitats due to habitat loss, invasive species, and other factors. At the same time, it highlights examples of how sustained habitat conservation and other environmental efforts can reverse the decline of many bird species.

[Cool Websites and Blogs](#)

[Climate Feedback Climate Change Blog](#) is hosted by Nature Reports: Climate Change to facilitate lively and informative discussion on the science and wider implications of global warming. The blog aims to be an informal forum for debate and commentary on climate science in their journals, in the news, and in the world at large. Go to their website to view the most recent posts and current discussions.

[Get out Now!: Eight places soon to be uninhabitable because of climate change](#) is a slideshow of eight incredible destinations that will become submerged as sea level rises. For some islands, such as the Maldives, and beach communities around the world, sea level rise will play a role much sooner than most people think.

[UK Climate Impacts Program Adaptation Wizard](#) will take you through a 5-step process to

assess your vulnerability to current climate and future climate change, to identify options to address your key climate risks, and to help you to develop a climate change adaptation strategy. To access the adaptation wizard, click on the link, then click on "Getting Started." Explore the "Useful Resources" tabs at each step for additional guides and examples of climate change.

[Water Footprint](#) is a website that tries to make individuals consider their water consumption in dietary items such as beef, grain, coffee, and milk. The site offers startling statistics about the cost in water that goes into producing many common commodities. You can also calculate your own water footprint: <http://www.waterfootprint.org/?page=files/WaterFootprintCalculator>. [Summit on America's Climate Choices](#) brings together top scientists, members of Congress, administration officials, business leaders, and representatives of nongovernmental organizations to share their perspectives on climate change. The Summit [agenda](#) includes remarks from Representatives Alan Mollahan (D-WV) and Bart Gordon (D-TN), NOAA Administrator Jane Lubchenco, OSTP Director John Holdren (invited), ConocoPhillips CEO Jim Mulva, WWF President Carter Roberts, former CIA Director James Woolsey, OECD Environment Director Lorents Lorentsen, NAS President Ralph Cicerone and many other distinguished speakers. For those of you not attending, you can view the live video webcast, available from <http://americasclimatechoices.org>. There will be opportunities to submit questions both for those attending and for those watching the webcast.

The purpose of the Sierra Nevada Alliance Climate Change Electronic Newsletter is to provide you with relevant information, news, media, events and resources combed from local, state, national and international sources regarding Climate Change. If you have any suggestions or contributions, please feel free to email them to robert@sierranevadaalliance.org.

[Climate Change Campaign Background](#)

Climate change is occurring now. The Sierra's precious resources including flora, fauna and rural communities are feeling the impacts now and will continue to be negatively affected unless we make greenhouse gas emissions reduction and adapting resource management practices to climate change high priorities. The Sierra Nevada Alliance is committed to educating the general public, resource planners and community leaders of the Sierra about climate change impacts while empowering them to take the necessary actions to reduce emissions and adapt to this new future. For more info, check out our [Climate Change Campaign Website](#).

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