

Robert Collier

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Subject: Sierra Climate Change News May 2009



Climate Change News May 2009

Including Campaign Updates,
Taking Action for the Sierra,
Relevant News Articles, Useful
Reports and Resources and Cool
Websites and Blogs

Campaign Updates

FIFTY-THREE ORGANIZATIONS PLEDGE TO ADAPT TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is and will be reducing snowpack, increasing wildfires, species migration, and expanding the number and range of invasive species in the Sierra, affecting the health of Sierra ecosystems and the livelihood of Sierra communities. As of May 2009, fifty-three organizations recognize this current threat and have taken a pledge to adapt to these climate changes through education, local planning and implementing projects.

Diverse organizations taking the pledge, like the South Tahoe Public Utility District and local Sierra Club Chapters, acknowledge the need to reduce emissions and adapt to changes we can not prevent to protect communities and the environment. These groups form the core of a growing network of those taking action to adapt to secure a future with robust Sierra ecosystems, resilient water supply and sustainable local communities even in the face of climate change.

“The commitment of these organizations demonstrates that leadership and innovative solutions will be coming from rural areas like the Sierra, and not just from Sacramento or

Alliance Events

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, or view the [website](#) for more information.

July 10, You're your Voice – Sierra Environmental Law Workshop
Renewable Energy Development in the Sierra Nevada Region. Head the [website](#) for additional details or see the longer description in the body of the newsletter.

October 16-18, 16th Annual Sierra Nevada Alliance Conference at the North Tahoe Event Center in Kings Beach. Mark your calendar! Check back at our [website](#) for

Washington D.C.," stated Marion Gee, Water and Climate Program Associate at the Sierra Nevada Alliance. "Our Sierra communities can be safer, have reliable water, diverse wildlife and robust economies if we plan ahead. Their commitment is a model for the nation."

Over the past three years, the Sierra Nevada Alliance Water & Climate Change Program has raised awareness of the impacts of climate change, the need to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and particularly the importance of adapting to the changes we can't prevent. By distributing more than 1000 Sierra climate change toolkits, giving more than 51 presentations on climate change, and, as of May 2009, collecting 53 Adaptation pledges, the Alliance has been instrumental in empowering local action on climate adaptation.

For more information on climate change impacts in the Sierra and opportunities to adapt to those changes, check out our Sierra Climate Change Toolkit:

<http://www.sierranevadaalliance.org/programs/db/pics/1133215435>

Signatories to the pledge promise to be leaders on climate change adaptation by incorporating, whenever possible, seven adaptation principles into Sierra resource plans and projects. The seven principles will help local communities and ecosystems stay more resilient in the face of climate change. The principles are:

- Educate myself and others regarding global, national, statewide, and regional impacts of climate change;
- Identify possible future changes through modeling;
- Use adaptive management strategies to maintain flexibility;
- Monitor and track changes in weather, hydrology and ecosystems in my community, watershed and/or region;
- Promote the resiliency of existing ecosystems and minimize stressors to these systems;
- Prioritize projects that will succeed under multiple scenarios;
- Integrate and coordinate local efforts.
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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.

CHICO NEWS & REVIEW PRAISES THE ALLIANCE FOR CLIMATE CHANGE EDUCATION

After attending one of the Alliance's "Adapting Resource Management to Climate Change" presentations at the Chico Grange on May 11th, Chico News Review reporter Ginger McGuire summarized the key points of the talk and highlighted the Alliance's commitment to educating the public on the importance of climate change adaptation in a full-length article that appeared

more details!

Other Events

May 15-June 7 Tuolumne River Trust's 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](#).

June 14 Annual Foothill Conservancy Fundraising Dinner and Wine Tasting at 4pm at the Terre Rouge Winery in the Shenandoah Valley (10801 Dickson Road, Plymouth). \$30 for adults, \$10 for children. Contact Susan Bragstad at (209) 267-5506 or head to www.foothillconservancy.org

June 14-16 Western Governor's Association 2009 Annual Meeting with a focus on renewable energy, water, and climate change. More information can be found [here](#).

June 17 State Water Resources Control Board Climate change and urban water reuse workshop. The workshop will run from 9:30-4 at the Cal/EPA headquarters on 1001 "I" Street, Sacramento. Click [here](#) to view the agenda.

June 24 California Extreme Precipitation Symposium. The theme of the symposium this year is Droughts and Floods. Registration for the event costs \$50 before June 13, and \$75 afterwards. Go to www.arwi.us/precip for more information.

in the paper's May 13th edition.

For the past three years the Alliance has presented on the topic of climate change adaptation to over 50 organizations and agencies throughout the Sierra. Audiences have included the Bureau of Land Management (Bishop Office), the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, and the Placer County Water Agency. Each presentation highlights the most recent climate change research and discusses how resource managers will need to modify their operations to account for those climactic shifts.

To view the entire article, follow the link: <http://www.newsreview.com/chico/content?oid=980951>.

If your organization would like Robert Collier to lead a presentation on adapting resource management to climate change, please call at (530)-542-4546 x 323 or email at robert@sierranevadaalliance.org.

Taking Action for the Sierra

YOUR VOICE – SIERRA ENVIRONMENTAL LAW WORKSHOP

“Renewable Energy Development in the Sierra Nevada Region Legal and Environmental Issues”

This one-day program will present experts in appropriate renewable technologies, project finance, and transmission requirements for an expanded alternative energy system. The program will also focus on the environmental impacts of these technologies and the planning and permitting process for potential projects. A concluding session will help Sierra Nevada residents find ways to participate effectively in decisions affecting the location and operation of renewable energy projects in their vicinity.

This is an opportunity for Sierra officials, agencies, non-profits, individual citizens and practicing attorneys to learn about the steps required for successful development of renewables in this region.

The workshop will take place on July 10, 2009 at the Lake Natoma Inn, 702 Gold Lake Drive, Folsom, California. Cost of the event is \$85 for members, \$160 for non-section members, \$65 for government/non-profit, and \$50 for the general public. For more information, a complete agenda, and a schedule of events, head to the State Bar of California's Environmental Law Section [website](#).

AB32 AND SB375 WORKSHOPS

The Local Government Commission, the Governor's Office of Planning and Research, and Senator Darrell Steinberg will host workshops to discuss 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 reduction of 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:

- June 25 – Los Angeles
- July 15 – Oakland
- July 30 – Sacramento

ADAPTATION SPOTLIGHT: VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA

In the Australian state of Victoria, extensive measures are being taken to prepare for the impacts of climate change. Located in the southeastern corner of the country, Victoria is Australia's most densely populated and urbanized state, accounting for a quarter of Australia's GDP. Already the region has seen some staggering effects from global warming and there is potential for more disruption to this vital area of Australia's economy and culture. For example, between 1997 and 2007, the average maximum temperature was 0.6 degrees Celsius warmer than the 30-year average (1961-1990). At the same time, many areas of the state have seen decreased rainfall, causing vast water shortages and deadly bushfires. Victoria is positioning itself to deal with such impacts.

Of the many projects taking place in Victoria to adapt to climate change, the Future Coasts project is a unique adaptation strategy designed to collect data on sea depth and land elevation to assess the vulnerability of coastal areas to rises in sea level. Topographic digital elevation modeling is being used for assessment to aid the development of coastal policy, planning, decision-making, and risk management ([click here to see some of the models](#)).

The Department of Sustainability and Environment has outlined the key adaptation projects and activities pertaining to agriculture, communities and local government, coasts, natural resources and biodiversity, water, business and industry, health, infrastructure, and research and information. Below are some examples of their recommended adaptation actions.

Agriculture

- \$205 million dollar initiative to improve productivity, competitiveness and sustainability of farm business
- Millions of dollars to research and develop of tools and technology for farmers to adapt to future climate conditions
- Development of efficient water and land use policies

Natural Resources and Biodiversity

- Attempts to strengthen the resilience of natural assets
- Research on genetics, ecology, species interaction, and land management is being used to guide management actions to conserve biodiversity

Water

- The Victorian Government is funding and building Australia's largest desalination plant in addition to modernizing irrigations systems
- Efficiently use recycled water (the goal is to recycle 20% of Melbourne's waste water)
- Economic incentives such as the Water Smart Gardens and Homes Rebate Scheme help make individuals' adaptation more affordable

Infrastructure

- Construction of resilient public transport infrastructure

Australia's first adaptation symposium took place June 3 and 4 in Melbourne to bring together 70 of Australia's, and the world's, best minds working in climate change adaptation. You can find more information about the extensive adaptation actions taking place in Victoria, Australia as well as an overview of the adaptation symposium at [Victoria's Climate Change website](#).

Relevant News Articles

Local

[Fifty-three Sierra organizations pledge to adapt to climate change](#) by Sierra Nevada Alliance, YubaNet.com, May 21. As of May 2009, fifty-three organizations recognize climate change as a threat and have taken a pledge to adapt to these climate changes through education, local planning, and implementing projects.

[Scientists urge global action to preserve water suppliers for billions worldwide](#) by UC San Diego, May 13. Continuing climate changes threaten massive and progressive disruptions in the availability of drinking water to more than a billion people in two highly populated regions of the world near the Sierra Nevada Mountains and the Himalayas. An international group of scientists met for three days at the University of San Diego to promote solutions to the world's most pressing sustainability issues.

[Speaker preaches the importance of adaptation](#) by Ginger McGuire, Chico News Review, May 14. Robert Collier of the Sierra Nevada Alliance says it's important to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but it's equally important to begin adapting to climate change that is already occurring and that will occur in the future.

State

[Waves at work](#) by Guy Kovner, Press Democrat, May 15. Power generated by Pacific Ocean waves could help pump drinking water to 600,000 North Bay customers without generating any greenhouse gases. The proposal by the Sonoma County Water Agency is part of a national movement to tap "hydrokinetic energy," converting ocean's waves to electricity for homes, businesses, and utilities.

[Low snow, reservoir levels force rationing](#) by Kelly Zito, San Francisco Chronicle, May 1. Almost 30 water districts around the state have enacted some form of mandatory rationing, up from just over 20 last week. California may lose about 20,000 agriculture jobs and as much as \$644 million as a result of the drought.

[The provocative predictions of one Scripps water researcher](#) by Rob Davis, Voice of San Diego, May 11. Barnett projects that in 40 years, the warming climate will reduce runoff into the Colorado River so much that shortages will be more common than surpluses. The seven states that rely on the Colorado, a major source of San Diego's water, will have to handle shortages in as much as nine out of every 10 years.

[California biologists must reconsider protecting the pika](#) by AP, May 15. A San Francisco Superior Court judge says state biologists must reconsider whether the mountain dwelling American pika should be protected under the California Endangered Species Act. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is currently undertaking a study to review if the pika should be placed on the National Endangered Species Act.

[Berkeley sees local, sustainable food as solution to climate change](#) by Los Angeles Chronicle, May 13. Earlier this month, the Berkeley City Council unanimously approved its Climate Action Plan and consequently moved one step closer to becoming one of the first governments in the country to address climate change by developing a more local, sustainable food system.

[Rooftop solar just a small part of the energy solution](#) by Ed Fletcher, Sacramento Bee, June 2.

Utilities companies are under pressure not only to prepare for future energy needs, but to replace existing dirty power plants with cleaner sources. The state requirement is that 20 percent of a utility's power delivery must be from alternative sources. That minimum is expected to be 33 percent by 2020.

National

[As political winds shift, Detroit charts a new course](#) by John Broder and Micheline Maynard, New York Times, May 19. President Obama gathered the chief executives of 10 auto companies from around the world to announce his proposal for a single national fuel-efficiency standard of 35.5 miles per gallon by 2016.

[U.S. eyes ozone treaty to curb greenhouse gas](#) by AP, Apr. 30. Momentum was building Thursday for a novel strategy by the Obama administration to deal in part with global warming by using the existing U.N. treaty to fix the ozone hole as a way to enact mandatory reductions in a key greenhouse gas: hydrofluorocarbons.

[Permafrost melt poses long-term threat, says study](#) by AFP News Briefs List, May 27. Melting permafrost could eventually disgorge a billion tons a year of greenhouse gas into the atmosphere, accelerating the threat from climate change.

[Indigenous wisdom against climate change](#) by Stephen Leahy, ipsnews.net, Apr. 28. While industrialized countries like Canada continue to emit ever-higher levels of greenhouse gases, indigenous peoples around the world are working to survive and adapt to an increasingly dangerous climate.

[Rules to limit emissions in the making of ethanol](#) by Matthew Wald, New York Times, May 5. The Obama administration proposed rules to limit emissions of climate-changing gases from the manufacture of ethanol, a step that would probably curtail the expansion of corn ethanol production.

[Environmentalists attack House global warming deal](#) by Michael Weisskopf, Time Magazine, May 16. With the greenest lawmakers in charge and the President cheering them on, the prospects of sweeping controls on greenhouse gases seemed high. But, after a month of fighting among themselves, House Democrats announced an agreement that reflects more about the legislative process than the need to stop the planet from heating up.

[Climate change, winds conspire to create 21st century dust bowl](#) by Scott Streater, New York Times, May 14. Dust storms accelerated by warming climate have covered the Rocky Mountains with dirt whose heat-trapping properties have caused snowpacks to melt weeks earlier than normal.

[Dust storms speed snowmelt in the west](#) by Nicholas Riccardi, LA Times, May 24. A series of unusual spring dust storms has left the snowcapped mountains of western Colorado stained brown and red, even a bit pink. The dust is speeding up runoff that supply millions with water, raising fears of an increasingly arid West.

International

[China puts its faith in solar power with huge renewable energy investment](#) by Jonathan Watts, Guardian, May 26. By 2020, the Chinese government is committed to raising the share of renewable energy in the energy mix to 6%.

[Concentrated solar power could generate 'quarter of world's energy'](#) by Alok Jha, Guardian, May 26. Industry groups call for solar thermal technology to expand in 'sun belts' around world as Spain leads the field. Solar power stations could generate up to one-quarter of the world's electricity needs by 2050.

[Climate Change Odds much worse than thought](#) by David Chandler, MIT News, May 19. Recent modeling on the likelihood of how much hotter the Earth's climate will get by 2100 shows that without rapid, massive action, the problem will be twice as severe as estimated six

years ago - and could be even worse.

[Forest fires mostly overlooked by climate modelers](#) by Jeremy van Loon, Bloomberg.com, Apr. 24. Forecasting models haven't incorporated the link between fire and global warming enough to date such that models may be underestimating the degree to which a positive climate feedback will exist.

[Bolivia's Chacaltaya glacier is gone](#) by John Enders, Miami Herald, May 4. At 17,388 feet above sea level, Chacaltaya, an 18,000 year-old glacier, is gone, completely melted away as of this March.

[Greenhouse gases continue to climb despite economic slump](#) by NOAA, Apr. 21. Researchers measured an additional 16.2 billion tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and 12.2 million tons of methane in the atmosphere at the end of December 2008, despite the global economic downturn and the decrease in fossil fuel use.

[Oxfam predicts millions more victims of climate](#) by AFP, Apr. 20. Hundreds of millions of people will become victims of climate change related disasters over the next six years, Oxfam said Tuesday, urging governments to change the way they respond to such events.

[Wealthy nations must lead on climate change](#) by Tyler Hamilton, TheStar.com, May 1. The citizens and leaders of rich countries who aren't willing to ditch their SUV's and embrace other facets of a low-carbon lifestyle will sabotage attempts at reaching a global deal for tackling climate change.

[Climate change menaces Galapagos](#) by Eric Beech, Reuters, Apr. 29. The unique wildlife of the Galapagos islands, including penguins, fur seals, swimming iguanas, and flightless birds, is profoundly threatened by climate change.

[Banner year for wind – and coal](#) by Phil McKenna, New Scientist, May 8. New wind turbine installations continued to grow by leaps and bounds in 2008, but coal still reigns as the world's supreme energy provider.

[The looming ecological credit crunch](#) by The Economy News, May 6. A new report, launched by Lloyd's and the International Institute of Strategic Studies, advised businesses to assess their vulnerability to the increasing scarcity of resources such as fresh water, food, and energy triggered by global warming.

[Snow cover turning to lakes in the Himalayas](#) by Stephen Leahy, Australia.TO, May 7. The Himalayas and Hindu Kush mountains are now losing their snow and ice due to climate change. The world's greatest repositories of snow and ice, they may melt away in just 20 to 30 years, leaving a billion people short of water.

[Useful Reports and Resources](#)

[Berkeley Climate Action Plan](#) serves as a guide for setting the Berkeley community on a path to achieve a sustainable city through a climate action planning process. The guide stresses the urgency of the challenge to make big changes in infrastructure, technological advances, and the decisions we make every day.

[Climate Change in the American Mind](#) reports on a survey by the Yale Project on Climate Change and the George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication. The findings show that 90% of Americans are ready and willing to take a stand against climate change, despite the current economic crisis. Moreover, the study indicated that a majority of American's were willing to make financial sacrifices in order to mitigate greenhouse gases.

[City of San Rafael, California Climate Change Action Plan](#) contains a list of specific actions that the city intends to pursue including a number of action items for adaptation. It highlights how the various actions will be implemented and monitored and what additional actions can be taken at different scales of governance.

[Microfinance and Climate Change Adaptation](#) by Anne Hamill, Richard Matthew, and Elissa McCarter explores the links between microfinance, vulnerability reduction, and adaptation to

climate change. It discusses possibilities of using microfinance as a tool for reducing peoples' vulnerability to climate change. The article also highlights the opportunity and the risks for reducing vulnerability among the world's poorest populations.

[Nottingham Declaration Action Pack](#) is a web-based tool offering guidance on the development of local authority climate change action plans. The Action Pack provides guidance to English authorities that have taken the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change, a voluntary pledge demonstrating one's commitment to tackling the challenges of climate change. Though the original concept of the Declaration, created at a Nottingham City Council meeting in 2000, centered on mitigation, revisions and additions to the document in 2005 gave greater weight to climate change adaptation.

[Community-based Risk Screening Tool – Adaptation and Livelihoods](#) is a screening tool designed to help project designers and managers integrate risk reduction and climate change adaptation into community-level projects. The tool helps project managers to understand the links between livelihoods and climate in their project areas; assess a project's impact on community-level adaptive capacity; and make project adjustments to improve its impact on adaptive capacity and reduce the vulnerability of communities to climate change.

[Sustainable Energy Practices: A Guidebook for Public Agencies](#) by Brown and Caldwell was commissioned by Sonoma County, California, but has the potential to help all public agencies benchmark their greenhouse gas emissions and devise workable, achievable plans for reducing them. The guidebook includes a structured set of sustainable practices and suggested policies, quantitative and financial analysis tools, and step-by-step "how-to" guidance for establishing and implementing an effective greenhouse gas reduction program.

[The Impact of Climate Change and Weather on Transport: An Overview of Empirical Findings](#) by Mark Koetse and Piet Rietveld presents a survey of the empirical literature on the effects of climate change and weather conditions on the transport sector. Despite mixed evidence on many issues, several patterns can be observed. For example, shifts in tourism and agriculture production due to increased temperatures may lead to shifts in passenger and freight transport. Despite these findings, the net impact of climate change on generalized costs of the various transport modes are, for the most part, uncertain and ambiguous.

[Green Cities: How Urban Sustainability Efforts Can and Must Drive America's Climate Change Policies](#) a new report from Living Cities finds that while most U.S. cities are starting to seize the opportunity to address climate change, few are prioritizing the needs of low-income people and communities as part of their green strategies and programs. Living Cities surveyed leaders and policy makers in forty of the country's largest cities by population and found that 80% of those cities rank sustainability among their top five priorities, while more than 75% have, or soon will have, detailed plans on how they are going to reduce greenhouse gases.

[The Carbon Footprint of Water](#) by the River Network explores the energy and carbon emissions embedded in the nation's water supplies. In the report, River Network develops a baseline estimate of water-related energy use in the U.S., as well as a comparative overview of the energy embedded in different water supplies and end-uses. The report also includes numerous examples of how water management strategies can protect our freshwater resources while reducing energy and carbon emissions.

[ICLEI \(Local Governments for Sustainability\) Releases Climate Change Adaptation Toolkit](#). The toolkit outlines an adaptive management process and provides a set of tools and exercises to be used to assist local governments in Australia. The toolkit also suggests how and when to use each of the included tools as a complement to the adaptive management process.

[How Do Recent Population Trends Matter to Climate Change](#) by Population Action International explores the relationship between population and climate change. It investigates how recent demographic trends matter to worldwide efforts to adapt to climate change. The paper is the first in a three part series that builds the knowledge base on the role of population dynamics in climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Cool Websites and Blogs

[California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's Climate Change Program](#). The objective of this website is to provide information about climate change effects on California forests, the role of forests in mitigating greenhouse gas emissions, and actions for adapting to climate change. It is intended to provide general and technical information and tools to the media and public at large, partner agencies and organizations, forest landowners and managers, conservation groups, and to other forest stakeholders.

[California Energy Commission Terrestrial Carbon Sequestration Staff Workshop](#), held on May 26th, was conducted as a public forum to discuss how different carbon sequestration methods in terrestrial ecosystems could be used in future cap and trade markets. The workshop began with discussions on the following terrestrial carbon sequestration methods: forestry management, range management, delta island management, biochar, agricultural management and afforestation methods. Afterwards, a panel of speakers discussed how such strategies can contribute to AB32's 2020 goal of reducing California's carbon emissions to below 1990 levels.

[Climate Change, Wildlife, and Wildlands Toolkit](#) from the EPA, in partnership with seven other federal agencies, was developed for classroom teachers and informal educators in parks, refuges, forest lands, nature centers, zoos, aquariums, science centers, etc., to teach middle school students about how climate change is affecting our nation's wildlife and public lands and how everyone, even young adults, can become climate stewards.

[U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services Sea Level Affecting Marshes Model](#) is a user-friendly internet tool that allows the public to view simulations of sea level rise.

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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