



**SWEP**

Sierra Watershed  
Education Partnerships



EXPERIENCE

ACT

DISCOVER

## Student Environmental Action Coalition SEAC (like seek)

Truckee High students Chase Nunez and Paul Banson are interested in taking action in the community and getting their peers to join them! First they had to determine what others were already doing and what they might want to do.

The two took advantage of the 2nd annual Youth Service Symposium as a venue for distributing their survey. With over 250 middle and high school students to randomly give their survey to, they were able to collect a lot of information.

Their summary and interpretation from the survey results gives us adults some interesting information. Read on: "From what we can gather

from the small test group of middle school students, the biggest attractions to the group would not be food (although that is definitely important), but instead be the opportunity to lead and take action".

Paul and Chase have written a mission for SEAC and have established a structure for their group. Now all they need is some help to make their vision of a youth environmental action group a reality.

So far they have developed a mission and a basic structure for operating.

### MISSION STATEMENT

To empower students to take action in the

constantly changing future of our planet by involvement in community and national service projects, as well as involvement in local decisions made in town meetings and summits.

The group will start out small but will eventually grow to a board of nine members. In its infancy existing board members will elect the new members until the congregation of unelected members is large enough to elect their own board members. It will be organized into a basic pyramid fashion with all members having a specific and important purpose.

Ask SWEP about sponsorship opportunities for this program.

## Sierra Junior Naturalist Program Coming Summer 2007

When you're introduced to someone you learn a person's name and begin to develop a relationship. The same can be said for developing a relationship with the plants and animals of the Sierra Nevada. SWEP is excited to launch the Sierra Junior Naturalist Program this summer. This program is intended to teach youth to identify Sierra native plants and animals. SWEP staff will pilot the "Tree and Shrub" kit with the Kid-Zone Watershed Camp and our Watershed Walkabout Camp

at Rideout. We hope to include it in the Winter Kids Discovery program as well (see page 3).

Students advance through 6 levels of mastery to ultimately earn his/her Junior Botanist Certificate. The botanist portion of the program is modeled after the Marin Chapter of the California Native Plant Society. Scout troops, schools, clubs and church groups are invited to follow our protocol to help students learn how to identify native trees and

shrubs in their own backyard.

The test requires students to correctly match cones and needles – leaves and berries or flowers with the name of the plant. SWEP plans to add wetlands and sierra wildflower 'kits' as the program progresses. Additionally, wildlife identification (tracks and habitat), will be added to complete the Junior Naturalist program. This summer however, youth can earn the title of Junior Botanist. For more information on guidelines and how you can participate contact Jan Ellis at [jan@4swep.org](mailto:jan@4swep.org)

## Wetlands!

You may already know that the historic fish hatchery building on the corner of Lake Forest Dr. and Hwy. 28 (near TC) is slated for renovation and the surrounding wetlands to be restored. Additionally, the site will feature several BMP test plots, a raised walkway into the wetland and a native plant demonstration garden.

This spring SWEP began to pilot its wetland education program with middle school youth. Working with Marisa Lopez, a program evaluator, sixth graders were given a pre-test survey before engaging in our wetlands education program. SWEP will use the evaluation results from this spring's projects to inform or outreach and education efforts for the 2007-2008 school year and beyond.

NTMS science teacher Lindee Eckert and NTMS language arts teacher Shirley Turner are working collaboratively to help students produce wetland brochures. The student produced brochures will be made available to visitors to the historic fish hatchery building once renovation is complete.

As we move forward with our program, SWEP will be offering a wide range of activities to help youth and the community better understand the importance and functions of wetlands and how we can protect and restore them locally and beyond.

Funding from Prop 40 & 50 will allow SWEP to offer wetland education programs for the next 5 years.

## SWEP: 1994-2007

### 13 Years of Watershed Education

As most things do, it started with an idea, followed by passion and commitment. It was the 1994-95 school year; Toni Rockwell and her fourth grade students partnered with Karla McClure (CA State Parks) to complete a forest health study on the property adjacent to their school, Rideout Elementary. Things went from there. Toni recalls, "I remember getting a phone call from Sue Rae [Ireland], asking if I would be interested in supporting and promoting these kinds of projects" by starting a working group.

At that initial meeting, Karla McClure introduced the group to Adopt-A-Watershed (AAW) and their place-based learning model. The AAW model required that participants organize a 'community commit-

tee'. The goal of the community committee was to foster leadership within schools and the community by offering professional development workshops, curriculum support and venues for restoration and monitoring projects.

The community committee eventually evolved into SWEP and in 1997, SWEP incorporated as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Soon after an Americorps member was hired to carry out the mission of SWEP.

The Americorps position turned into a program manager position. Then, a formal partnership with AAW (prop 13) allowed for two staff members and leadership development that has helped SWEP tremendously in getting to where we are today.

In 2007 SWEP is going strong and looking to the future!

## SWEP Core Values

**1. Place is the context for learning.** Our watershed is our unique place. When students are able to discover how the world works, starting with the place they live, their education becomes relevant.

**2. Knowledge about environmental systems and a personal connection to the natural world produce stewards of the environment.** SWEP believes that time spent in the watershed is the simplest, most effective way for students to discover and develop a personal connection to nature.

**3. Civic engagement and service to community are the pillars of a democratic society.** Students must practice the skills of democracy; organization, communication, collective decision-making, and critical thinking.



### Dates to Remember

**June 28-29:** *Out of the Classroom and Into the Community*; Service learning workshop; Sagehen Creek Field Station

**July 16-20:** Watershed Walk-about Day Camp; Kid Zone Truckee

**July 23-27:** Watershed Walk-about Day Camp; Rideout Community Center; Tahoe City

**August:** Jim Toole mini workshop (exact date and location TBD)

**August 3-5:** Sierra Nevada Alliance annual conference; Kings Beach CC

**August 20-21:** California Biodiversity Workshop; Sagehen creek Field Station, Truckee

**August 29:** First day of School!!

**September 17, 3:30-5:00pm** TTREC Kick-Off Partnership Meeting

**October:** Teacher's Interpretive Hikes: Exploring Wetlands

"It's never too late to do something great"

—Dorothy Haddock, activist



### Place-Based Service

**Learning (PBSL)** is a teaching method that focuses on the local community throughout the learning process. Students learn to value what is local: the unique watershed, history, environment, culture, economy, literature and art of their place, through hands-on community projects that enhance their academic classroom goals.

## Summer Professional Development

### Free Workshops!

#### Out of the Classroom and Into the Community

**June 28-29, 2007**

Are you interested in motivating young people to action in their community? Do you have a desire to work more effectively within your community and schools? If so then this workshop is for you!

Whether you are a classroom teacher or someone who works with youth in after school, enrichment or other youth programs, this workshop

will give you the skills you need to engage youth in community issues.

Service learning is a teaching method that interweaves academic knowledge and skills with community service. Students engage with their peers and the community to investigate and find solutions to community issues.

This workshop is FREE and sponsored by CA Dept. of Ed., Service Learning Initiative.

#### Exploring CA Biodiversity

**August 20-21, 2007**

This workshop is intended for K-12 educators and pre-service teachers who are interested in strengthening their knowledge of concepts and techniques used in the study of biodiversity, incorporating field and schoolyard studies into their teaching programs, and integrating science, literacy and math in their curricula.

After completing this two day course, participants will

be familiar with concepts and techniques for the study of biodiversity, basic biology of organisms and ecological communities in the Sierra, and ways to use local biodiversity and the outdoors to teach science and improve academic achievement of K-12 students.

Participants will also be better able to understand current issues and research on biodiversity and its conservation.

Contact SWEP for more info.



## Why Does SWEP Matter?

SWEP is able to fill a unique niche in our community. There is no other organization quite like SWEP. We get kids outside—but not just for fun nor are SWEP programs an environmental education 'add on' to an already busy curriculum schedule. As our name suggests we rely on our partners and their leadership in recognizing the value and importance of restoration and monitoring projects with kids.

The leadership and vision of our partners, combined with SWEP's determination to involve youth in community projects has us seeking funding that directly benefits TTUSD students and teachers.

For instance, in the case of CA water quality grants propositions

13, 40, and 50, SWEP has partnered with local organizations, universities, and agencies to provide the education and outreach component of the proposed water quality improvement projects.

Often in these grants, the target audience for the education and outreach component is not necessarily a k-12 audience. However, over the years, SWEP has built a reputation among local land management agencies and organizations for conducting high quality outreach and education with youth and their families. Our programs are value added since we always go beyond traditional environmental education to include service learning projects. Students get their hands dirty, make a differ-

ence in their community and take ownership of their learning.

SWEP sees the value of using these projects as a way to engage classrooms in 'real world' projects, helping students to comprehend and master the CA state academic standards.



### SPONSORS

Make programs possible!  
Ask SWEP how you can become a SPONSOR today!

## NEW!! Coming Summer 2007 Watershed Walkabout Summer Camps

This summer the SWEP staff will be busy organizing and running two weeks of day camps. The first will be run in partnership with the Kid Zone Museum. This week long Watershed Science Camp will take youth to a different Truckee creek location each day. The second is being organized by SWEP camp directors, Nicole Deas and Marc Chaney (Americorps members) who are planning the first ever Watershed Walkabout Discovery Day

Camp or, as they like to call it, the WWDC. SWEP will be utilizing the Rideout Community Center as the host site. Rideout is a great base camp location because of its easy access to trails, creeks and Lake Tahoe.

In both camps, youth will learn about the unique ecology of Sierra forests, wetlands and fresh water through water quality monitoring, science activities, arts and crafts, nature journaling and discovery walks. During both camps

SWEP will be piloting the Sierra Junior Naturalist program, which is designed to help kids learn the names and functions of local flora and fauna, while acquiring a deeper connection to the natural world.

For more information contact:

Nicole Deas  
[deasnicole@yahoo.com](mailto:deasnicole@yahoo.com)  
(707) 599-2502 or

Marc Chaney  
[mchaney@ucdavis.edu](mailto:mchaney@ucdavis.edu)  
(831) 915-8818.

## Winter Kids Discovery Program Looking Forward to Winter '08

SWEP and the Tahoe XC Ski Education Assoc. have a shared vision of a winter ski day that goes beyond the experience of skiing to include the wonders of the forest and the winter environment. By combing the assets of both organizations, this vision can become a reality.

The Winter Discovery Center will provide an educational opportunity to youth who already use the Tahoe XC center and hope-

fully provide a value added educational experience that we anticipate will attract even more students.

We will pilot the program next winter ('08) with 3rd,4th and 5th grades. Lessons are inline with CA state content standards for science, math and language arts.

A nest egg has been started to get the project off the ground; specifically to purchase a 30' yurt to use as a classroom. We

are currently accepting sponsorships for this program. All students will leave the program with a field journal for Winter Discovery, wherever they are!



## Friends of SWEP

We all live in a watershed and it takes individuals like you to build community, improve our schools, and create a sense of place and connection for our youth.

Friends of SWEP are a diverse group of individuals who care about exposing the young people of Tahoe Truckee to the wonders of nature through exploration, discovery and action. By becoming a Friend, you allow us to provide youth with the knowledge, skills and experiences necessary for them to become active stewards of our communities and our environment, now and in the future.

Your tax-deductible donation, combined with contributions of other Friends like you has the power to involve even more young people in our comprehensive watershed education programs. Your contribution is a direct investment in our community.

Individual Friend	\$25.00
Family Friend	\$50.00
Community Steward	\$100.00
Watershed Steward	\$250.00
Community Advocate	\$500.00
Watershed Advocate	\$1,000.00

Become a Friend Today!



SWEP promotes environmental stewardship by connecting students to their community and local environment through comprehensive watershed education and service learning

## Truckee Tahoe Regional Education Coalition (TTREC)

KICK OFF GATHERING

SEPTEMBER 17, 2007

3:30-5:30PM

Sierra Mountain Community Education Center, Truckee

Another school year has gone by and SWEP would like to thank all of the TTREC partners and beyond who made the **2nd Annual Youth Symposium** a success! 250 students participated.

This year we added a career exploration component that really enhanced the variety of learning and information that was shared. Community partners set up information and demonstrations that gave youth an idea of some of the aspects to their particular job.

Thanks to all the partners who contributed their time and expertise to be at the symposium. We look forward to seeing you all in the fall—if not before!

## Thank-You Nevada County!

Nevada County Forest Reserve Funds have provided SWEP with the resources over the past four school years to conduct forest related education with Nevada County students. As we conclude our last few field days and projects, we would like to gratefully thank the Nevada County Board of Supervisors for their support. SWEP has accomplished quite a bit in that time.

We are most proud of our Forest Health monitoring, restoration and public outreach projects. Hundreds of middle and elementary school students have taken a closer look at Nevada County forests through our programs. Students have worked with partners from Sagehen Creek Field Station, CA State Parks, US Forest Service, Truckee Fire Department, and Teichert Aggregates.

At the middle school, students monitor forest plots for vegetation and tree density. During the 2006-07 school year, students have monitored tree density in an

aspen stand and then they engaged in a project to thin the aspen stand of encroaching lodge pole pines. In the process, students learned a bit about forest ecology and the role of fire in a forest ecosystem and the effects of fire suppression and other issues related to Aspen populations.

Our programs with elementary students get kids into local natural areas, teaching them about the forest flora and fauna. Students are introduced to the issues related to forest health in our community. Sagehen Creek FS and Donner State park, have been the site for 5th grade monitoring and restoration projects.

As our formal relationship with Nevada County comes to a close, we are excited at the prospects for the sustainability of our forest education programs. Specifically we are exploring how to support teachers in creating a comprehensive 5th grade overnight program at Sagehen Creek Field Station. Additionally, we are exploring partnerships and projects for Prop. 84 funding.

## State Farm Insurance: 3 Year Initiative Comes to a Close

Three years ago, SWEP became one of six pilot project sites funded by State Farm Insurance companies to promote and enhance service learning within school districts and communities. The six pilot projects were intended to have students address two issues related to loss mitigation: Fire prevention/safety and home safety for the elderly. Our programs looked at defensible space and forest health.

Students investigated a wide range of forest health issues with community partners who have a stake in community and forest fire safety.

NT Fire's defensible space program has played a critical role in helping students to understand the elements that comprise defensible space and protecting your home. North Tahoe MS science day has been a great venue to get students outside in the



forest around their campus. For two years now, students have been removing trees and brush from around the new ropes course site. NT Fire defensible space program does a chipping demonstration with the materials cut. Additionally, it is a great opportunity for students to see the young men and women who comprise this crew and get an idea of the variety of jobs available in our community.

CA State Parks has been an instrumental partner in forest thinning projects that address forest health from the perspective that fire is a necessary component of Tahoe forests. Managers do not want a forest fire to burn uncontrolled in the urban-forest interface, so students learn the role of prescribed burning in forest management. Students study fuel ladders, make recommendations to managers about fuels reduction. See student made brochures on our website!

### SWEP Staff:

**Christine McMorro**  
Executive Director

Phone/fax: 530-525-9457  
christine@4swep.org

### Jan Ellis

**Project Director**

Phone/fax: 775-831-2723  
Mobile: 4530-412-2585  
jan@4swep.org

### Americorps Members:

Nicole Deas: 530-582-2584  
Marc Chaney: 831-915-8818

### Board Members:

Toni Rockwell  
Sue Rae Irellan  
Heather Segale  
Heidi Bushway-Verkeler  
Kristen Sura  
Monika Bock

Gratefully funded by: State of CA CalServe program; State of CA Prop.40; Truckee-Tahoe Community Foundation; Nevada County Forest Reserve; State Farm insurance; Teichert Foundation; Town of Truckee: YCOE SL Initiative