

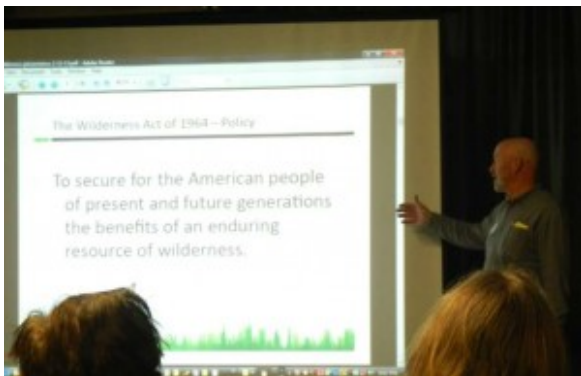
Tahoe Sierra Club chapter wants wilderness protected

By Kathryn Reed

Peace, beauty, quiet, serenity, creatures, no machines, watershed.

Those are some of the reasons people at the Feb. 20 Tahoe Area Sierra Club meeting said they walk in the forest. And it is for those sentiments and others that this group wants to protect the wilderness.

Wilderness has a loose definition of being out in the woods, whereas wilderness area is a distinct region. In those regions – like Desolation Wilderness, Mount Rose, Granite Chief and Mokelumne – mountain bikes and snowmobiles are not allowed.



Bob Anderson with the Tahoe Area Sierra Club talks Feb. 20 about wilderness areas. Photo/Kathryn Reed

The Wednesday night meeting in South Lake Tahoe was supposed to feature Steve Evans, conservation director of the Friends of the River. He came down ill and in his place Fred Roberts and Bob Anderson, both members of the local Sierra Club chapter, spoke.

Roberts, who used to teach biology at Lake Tahoe Community College, said fewer people are experiencing their natural environment.

“We are losing every day to asphalt and social media and whatever forces there are that disconnect us from nature,” he said.

He also said how nature is disappearing and changing in various locations because of the bark beetle infestation, as well as because of climate change.

Roberts said it’s time to have a national conversation about the environment, adding, “We went through a presidential election and there was no mention of the environment.”

Locally, he advocated for the starting point of the Upper Truckee River getting a scenic designation.

“If we come together, we can leverage our power,” Roberts said.

Anderson, who is the group’s president and a member of the Tahoe Institute for Natural Sciences, picked up where Roberts left off. His talk focused on how the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit of the U.S. Forest Service is in the midst of reviewing comments to the Forest Plan update.

The Sierra Club actively lobbied for and still touts the desire that the Meiss Meadow area to become a wilderness area. This is the headwater of the Upper Truckee River.

“The U.S. Forest Service failed to identify and include in the alternatives an analysis of all of the wilderness-eligible land in the basin,” Anderson said. “There should also be a backcountry zone for mountain bikers.”

Alternative D in the Forest Plan would create 29,000 acres in the Meiss-Dardanelles area as a wilderness area. While the Sierra Club supported that idea, members also thought that

alternative did not go far enough.

(The plan by the Forest Service should be released soon.)

The other designation the Sierra Club would like is to make the Upper Truckee River a wild and scenic river. This would take an act of Congress.