Introduction to Sierra Club Conservation Policy Survey

Last May, the Board of Directors approved a recommendation to create a new Conservation Policy Committee with responsibility for policy development. Appointed by the Board last July, this committee of seven members will advise the Board on when new policy or revisions are needed and justified. Where the Board finds that new policy is needed, a task force of Sierra Club volunteer and staff experts will recommend new language, following our current procedures. Existing Conservation Policies are found here:  [http://www.sierraclub.org/policy](http://www.sierraclub.org/policy)

The Board of Directors establishes all conservation policy for the Sierra Club, except when it is established by a vote of the membership. Policy consists of statements of Sierra Club conservation objectives and principles, along with appropriate limits outside of which Club entities may not operate. Policies are generally framed in broad terms and embody the ideals to which the Club aspires, interpreted in accordance with local circumstances  (See Jurisdiction within the Sierra Club, Governance and Jurisdiction, Section I, B: [http://clubhouse.sierraclub.org/administration/policies/institutional/jurisdiction-within-sierra-club.aspx#governance](http://clubhouse.sierraclub.org/administration/policies/institutional/jurisdiction-within-sierra-club.aspx#governance))

Policy is important, of course. Good policy gives us clarity and moral force. But it is important to understand that policy development within Sierra Club takes substantial volunteer and staff resources that could be devoted to other work. New policy is usually not a prerequisite for activism: chapters can generally take positions on matters within their geographic area, consistent with policy we already have (Jurisdiction within the Sierra Club, Positions and Discussion Documents, Section II: [http://clubhouse.sierraclub.org/administration/policies/institutional/jurisdiction-within-sierra-club.aspx#governance](http://clubhouse.sierraclub.org/administration/policies/institutional/jurisdiction-within-sierra-club.aspx#governance). (Note: any chapter decisions to oppose renewable energy projects require national approval per Board policy.  [http://www.sierraclub.org/sites/www.sierraclub.org/files/uploads-wysiwig/Renewable%20Energy%20Project%20Siting%20Policy.pdf](http://www.sierraclub.org/sites/www.sierraclub.org/files/uploads-wysiwig/Renewable%20Energy%20Project%20Siting%20Policy.pdf) Any questions about positions on issues should go to the Vice President for Conservation, currently Robin Mann.)

Too often, we act as if making policy creates the real-world change that is our goal. It doesn’t. Broadly speaking, we don’t need better policy as much as we need the most effective campaigns and activism we can bring to bear. Given the reality of finite resources, especially volunteer and staff time, this can’t be overemphasized. We need to focus on what will most help us achieve the goals of our campaigns.

With those caveats, the Conservation Policy Committee wants to know your thoughts on what, if any, specific policy changes your experience suggests would make your work more effective. Is there new high-level policy we need to help do our work – on national campaign goals or issues common to chapters? Is there policy we should repeal? Revisions you suggest we consider? Please look over our existing policies before making any recommendations - in some cases your concerns may already have been met through current policies and positions. We
appreciate your time in completing this short survey. If you have any questions, contact david.scott@sierraclub.org  Please respond by February 28, 2017.

You can find the survey at https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/7YSJHYG