

BOARD ELECTION WILDLANDS QUESTIONNAIRE

Responses from Chad Hanson

Board Candidate Name: Chad Hanson

1. Land exploration and preservation have been a major part of Sierra Club's agenda since its founding. In recent years climate change and environmental justice have become important issues as well. **Please tell us how you see these issues intersecting and how you would prioritize action and funding to complement that intersection.** *Please keep your answer to 100 words or less.*

In recent years, I have seen hundreds of conversations in the Sierra Club—via email, Zoom, and in person—discussing, debating, and sometimes arguing about whether the Sierra Club should be a conservation organization protecting and enjoying wild places, or a social justice organization, focused on environmental and climate justice. That's a self-defeating, false dichotomy. Major conservation and environmental justice issues are inextricably linked, like our fight against the biomass logging industry, which harms biodiversity, pollutes environmental justice communities, and worsens climate change. We are much stronger making common cause.

2. The Sierra Club raises a sizeable percentage of its funding from appeals based on its work to protect wildlife and wild and natural places yet it does not invest a corresponding amount of money into those programs. **Would you support an increase in funding for the Conservation Campaign and associated Chapter and Grassroots Network led actions as a percentage of the overall budget? Why or why not?** *Please keep your answer to 100 words or less.*

Yes! That goal is the number one reason I am running for Board again. I fully intend to substantially increase volunteer funding, and staffing, for the protection of wild and natural places, and wildlife. The global scientific community and the UN recognize that the climate and extinction crises are existential, and heavily linked. Climate and biodiversity scientists, myself included, conclude we cannot overcome the climate crisis solely by shifting away from fossil fuels. We must also dramatically increase protection of wild places—our carbon sinks—so natural habitats can better absorb the dangerous excess of atmospheric CO₂.

3. The power of the Sierra Club comes primarily from its grassroots base and its participation in larger citizen movements. **As a member of the Board, what specific steps would you support to strengthen our internal volunteer structures (Chapters, Grassroots Network Teams, organizing staff) and diversify our base so that we become representative of the overall population?** *Please keep your answer to 100 words or less.*

As a Board member, I would work to substantially increase funding for Grassroots Network Teams. That is one of the most effective funding allocations in the entire Sierra Club, yet that annual allocation remains unacceptably small. Why? It makes no sense from a mission-advancement standpoint. The same goes for chapters. Much of the best and most effective work in the Sierra Club happens at the chapter level, yet chapters are underfunded relative to many other aspects of the organization. This is a mistake. To diversify our base, we need bold campaigns to excite and involve younger, more diverse generations.

4. There are conflicts between uses of and on public lands, with one of the biggest conflicts coming between public land protection and renewable energy siting, transmission and storage. **Describe how you approach decision making regarding the dichotomy between ecosystem protection/restoration and renewable energy siting.** *Please keep your answer to 100 words or less.*

Respectfully, the question makes an intrinsic assumption with which I disagree. I don't believe there is a dichotomy or conflict between wildlands protection and a clean energy future. There is a widespread lack of awareness in the Sierra Club, among both volunteer leaders and staff, about the extent to which rooftop, community, and distributed solar can meet all of our energy needs, and the evidence supporting this conclusion. We are nowhere near saturation of distributed solar in the U.S. (houses, parking lots, commercial buildings, etc.), yet we continue to mistakenly believe we must accept vast losses of wildlands. We don't.

5. Getting outside to explore the lands that the Sierra Club seeks to protect helps build commitment and passion for our land protection efforts. **What areas have you researched, explored and/or taken action to protect over the last two years?** *Please keep your answer to 100 words or less.*

I am a field ecologist and climate scientist. The places I have explored and researched to protect over the last two years are too numerous to list here (for some examples, please see: www.johnmuirproject.org), but I will give one key example. I spend much of my time fighting to protect giant sequoia groves on public lands in the Sierra Nevada from destructive logging projects, and the industry disinformation that is being used to promote these projects. I conduct extensive scientific field research and publish peer-reviewed studies on this subject and, when necessary, file lawsuits to protect sequoia groves.