

New Sierra Club Executive Director Spells Out Initial Thoughts, Priorities

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San Francisco, CA -Michael Brune began his tenure this week as the sixth executive director of the Sierra Club. Brune comes to the Sierra Club after, most recently, leading the Rainforest Action Network for seven years. On his first day as executive director, Brune spelled his initial thoughts and priorities in the blog post below. For a complete biography and additional information about Sierra Club's new executive director, please visit: www.sierraclub.org/ed

After 18 years leading the Sierra Club, Carl Pope has stepped aside into a new role and now serves as the Club's chairman. Pope will remain actively involved and will now focus primarily on the Sierra Club's top priority--climate change. Pope welcomed Brune and offered offered some thoughts on the Club and his time as executive director in his latest [blog post](#). Pope will continue to blog at www.sierraclub.org/carlpoppe.

"Sleepless in San Francisco, My First Day at the Sierra Club" by Michael Brune, Sierra Club Executive Director

There are two reasons why I haven't had much sleep the past few nights. The first is about three-and-a-half feet tall, wears diapers, has long eyelashes and a dangerously cute smile. It's our little boy Sebastian. He's 18 months old and the poor guy is getting three of his molars at the same time. During the daylight hours, all is good. But when the sun goes down and the moon comes up, the howling begins, and his mom can only nurse for so long. A few back-arching, full-throated roars would jolt anyone awake, but lately I've found it particularly difficult to get back to sleep. I'm starting a new job. The mind races. I left my post recently as executive director of Rainforest Action Network to become the next executive director of the Sierra Club. I'll be the sixth director of the Club in its 118-year history, and I'll be following people like Carl Pope, Mike McCloskey, David Brower, and Club founder John Muir. Gotta be on my game!

Posted at:

http://connect.sierraclub.org/post/ClimateCrossroadsBlog/sleepless_in_san_francisco_my_first_day_at_the_sierra_club.html

Today's my first day. I'm inspired and honored to be a part of such a democratic, volunteer-powered organization. From helping to protect Yosemite and millions of acres of wilderness to the more recent work of building powerful alliances with labor and impacted communities, Sierra Club volunteers and staff have played a pivotal role in many of the most important environmental victories over the past century.

But as effective as the organization has been over the past 118 years, we need to do our best work in the years ahead. The challenges – and opportunities -- are too great. Looking forward, here are a few of the projects we want to complete:

Shut Down Big Coal -- the Sierra Club and [a diverse, bottoms-up network](#) of grassroots community groups has stopped the construction of more than 115 coal-fired power plants, and we'll continue to fight the remaining coal plants still on the drawing boards. It's a good start to a much more ambitious project. Over the next twenty years, Sierra Club staff, volunteers, and our allies across the country will work to retire the existing fleet of more than 500 dirty coal plants and replace them with the efficient use of clean, renewable energy resources. Coal is the top source of greenhouse gas emissions and mercury poisoning, and [according to Physicians for Social Responsibility](#) contributes to four of the five leading causes of death in the United States. Putting Big Coal in America's rearview mirror will create more jobs,

make Americans healthier, and is the single most effective thing we can do to fight global warming. Let's shut down Big Coal in this generation.

Rising Sun -- the Sierra Club Board of Directors has made a firm commitment to be a solutions-oriented organization. For example, this means we can't just work to shut down a dirty coal plant. We need answers that are reliable and affordable to keep the lights on. We must be as elegant and effective in our advocacy for tangible and pragmatic solutions as we are in our opposition to bad ideas. The flip side of coal campaigning is our work to promote clean energy solutions. We envision all new buildings becoming energy self-sufficient and carbon-neutral by 2030. Increasing renewable energy to at least 25 percent of our country's energy supply in the next 10 to 15 years. Many people see fighting climate change as a moral obligation; something we have to do for future generations. We see the climate and energy crisis as not just an obligation, but also an opportunity. Creating a clean energy economy isn't just something we have to do, it's something we get to do.

Reinventing Wilderness Protection -- Draw up a picture in your mind of your favorite National Park or wilderness area, and there's a decent chance that some Sierra Club volunteer or staff member had a hand in helping to keep loggers, miners, or developers at bay. But as the earth warms and plant and animal species are placed under greater threat, our society can no longer draw a line on a map and consider an area protected. To minimize the loss of biodiversity and wilderness, we'll need to protect habitat resilience using the best available science. This entails connecting large parks and wilderness areas through wildlife corridors; restoring wetlands and other buffer areas, and building up the capacity of soils, forests, prairies and wetlands to soak up more carbon and, as we eventually reduce carbon in the atmosphere, accelerate climate recovery.

Inspired by Nature -- the Sierra Club invented adventure travel. Now we get to reinvent it. When John Muir took Teddy Roosevelt to Yosemite and the High Sierra, he helped inspire a President and generations of Americans to re-imagine their relationship to nature. Too many people today, particularly those living in urban America, don't have the resources, opportunities, or access to wilderness areas. John Muir believed that people who experience wilderness for themselves are much more likely to take personal to protect it. The Sierra Club will continue its Inner City Outings and Building Bridges to the Outdoors programs to increase wilderness access for all Americans. We must also inspire the adventure travel industry to make activism a core component of the experience, because the reverse of Muir's Law is also true: those who take action to protect wilderness are much more likely to want to have fun in it.

With chapters in every state and volunteers in every major city in the country, I could write all week about the work that the Sierra Club is doing. But I better go earn my keep. Come join us. And if you have any advice for me in my new job (or in keeping little babies asleep at night) let me know!

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