

John Howard Zierold was the Sierra Club's first state-level lobbyist and represented the Sierra Club before the California Legislature between 1969 and 1984. His service spanned three governors' administrations, during which he successfully guided many of the Club's most historically significant legislative accomplishments. He did so with remarkable strategic and tactical political skills, the higher and more subtle arts of diplomacy, and a calibrated, erudite, and not infrequently ironic, humor.

The Sierra Club and the people of California, the nation, and the world owe John a great debt of gratitude for his vision, finesse, tenacity, and, perhaps most of all, his willingness to teach us by example how to out-think the adversaries of environmental protection. John, objectively and passionately led the fight to pass an unequalled procession of landmark environmental measures of that time to:

- Protect San Francisco Bay (the nation's first coastal program), Lake Tahoe, the outer California coast, the Santa Monica Mountains, and many other areas of environmental sensitivity and concern.
- Increase the extent and protected status of state parks, wilderness, and other natural areas, and provide for their successful public funding.
- Enact, defend, and strengthen through diverse (and sometimes wily) techniques the California Environmental Quality Act, as well as statutes to protect or restore clean air, water quality, solid waste management, endangered species, and environmental/public health, and to strengthen land use planning and controls.
- Adroitly enact nuclear safeguards.
- Reform forest and energy utility practices.
- Keep dams off wild and scenic rivers.
- Speed the demise of many environmentally ill-considered or adverse bills, plans, and schemes, including, but not limited to inter-basin water transfer, liquefied gas importation, power plant siting, transportation infrastructure, and infringements against public opportunities to participate in environmental reviews, which he tellingly named "justice by tollgate." And,
- Work behind the scenes and in public to achieve the appointment of qualified environmentalists to the plethora of agencies, boards, commissions, and departments that have bloomed on the political landscape, and to derail the appointment of others who bucked the Club's objectives.

John also battled valiantly on behalf of the preservation of agricultural lands, both as a sustainable source of the world's food supply and as a key to open space conservation. A practicing member of the celebrated "Society of English Majors," John was an accomplished practitioner of environmental *Realpolitik* - by which he understood that lobbyists give legislators the public credit for enacting beneficent laws, hold their legislative friends' feet to the warmest fires when they err (and then move on, without descending to auto-da-fés), and become adept at the arts of close-hauled or even bare pole sailing when turbulent and adverse political seas mount the environmental ships of state. At his retirement from the Sierra Club, he became the first and only lobbyist in modern times to address the State Senate in public session.

John developed key strategies and nurtured strong Capitol relationships with Assembly Speaker Leo McCarthy, as well as with both Senate President Pro Tems Jim Mills and David Roberti, Committee chairmen, other long-time and promising prospective environmental legislators, and more than a few members from the minority party (preferably, but not only, when they occupied key subcommittee positions that affected environmental budgets).

In the process, John educated Club volunteers and leaders from the Board and RCC's to Chapters, Groups, and Task Forces in the political theory and practice that made realization of many their high objectives possible, and consistently - if not always joyously - returned their many calls and letters in the era before email.

In all his work, John was guided by an intense personal commitment to the protection of what he called "the planet's life-support systems" - our wetlands, estuaries, and prime agricultural soils - for the benefit of all the current and future inhabitants of the earth. As former Club Executive Director Michael McCloskey has observed, John was among the very best lobbyists that have represented the Club. John, in turn, frequently acknowledged that he benefitted from the strong rapport he had with Club members who read the bills, thought and acted strategically, understood the evolving political landscape, and otherwise supported the Club's considered positions in the Capitol.

Previous to becoming the Club's "California Legislative Representative," John had worked and traveled widely in post-World War II Europe and in South America, taught at the Defense Language Institute and assisted in its administration, served as one of the State legislature's first environmental legislative consultants and further advanced the common good on behalf of the California Roadside Council and the California Planning and Conservation League.

John was preceded in death by his wife Mary Allaman Zierold. He is survived by his stepson Marc Allaman and family, of Folsom, California.

John Zierold, Lobbyist Directory photograph

