

Western Region GAT Report – January 1, 2019

By Gary Mussell and Ron Weimer, AANR-West GAT Committee

Here is a summary of what has been happening in the Western Region since my last report in July for the summer AANR convention:

BEACH/COASTAL NEWS

From June through September, Friends of Bates Beach hosted monthly clothing-optional group picnics where 30-50 people attended. Other nudists came down on their own mid-week throughout the summer. Our goal is to get the beach officially legal, but so far, the politicians remain reluctant to take that final step.

During the summer I took the opportunity to have meetings with several Carpinteria city and Santa Barbara county officials and local law enforcement. Most were “off the record” supportive about the unofficial clothing optional designation for our 1000-yard stretch of sand, however, the state park and sheriff department leaders reminded me, if the county nudity law is not changed, deputies still have the right to come down and issue warnings or tickets to nude beachgoers. So, changing the law remains our long-term goal.

We continue to host community dinners monthly in Carpinteria and in Ventura for anyone interested in our beach efforts. We graduated another class of Beach Ambassadors this summer (formal “neighborhood watch” – type training)

On social media, we promoted heavily a Bates Beach picnics several times during the summer months. We had distributed flyers promoting the event at the World Naked Bike Ride in June, and also on Facebook and on www.Meetup.com. The result: we averaged about 50 nudists, some coming as far away as Orange County (100 miles to the south) and San Luis Obispo (75 miles to the north)! There were quite a few first-timer visitors as well.

In September, Friends of Bates Beach again helped coordinate the annual California Beach Cleanup Day in the area. In Santa Barbara County, over 1150 volunteers picked up 4500 pounds of trash from 27 beaches, hiking trails, and creeks. Statewide, over 57,000 volunteers collected over 376 tons of trash! We received a thank you in the local newspaper for our efforts.

OTHER BEACHES

The NitOC naturist club in Orange County organized the Beach cleanup Day at San Onofre Beach, and the Whales Cave Conservancy club cleaned up Pirates Cove near San Luis Obispo. The Bay Area Naturist Club, as they do every year, cleaned up Bonny Doon Beach just north of Santa Cruz. Good publicity for all the beach nudists!

The Whales Cave Conservancy group that oversees the nude beach at Pirate’s Cove had no hassles this year with the rich neighbors who live on the bluffs above the beach. The homeowner’s association there has received many fines over the years trying to obstruct access to the nude beach, and they may just be tapped out for the moment. San Luis Obispo County continues to talk about developing the beach for textile use, but the California Coastal Commission continues to oversee the well being of the beaches and has told the county the beach is to remain in its original undeveloped condition.

In related news, a new law effective January 2019 allows the state to designate dogs be allowed on certain state park beaches. They had been banned from most beaches in California for many decades.

AUGUST

GLEN EDEN CLUB EVACUATED FROM NEARBY FOREST FIRE

While AANR delegates were meeting at the annual convention at De Anza Springs in mid-August, the Glen Eden Sun Club in Corona CA was evacuated as the park was directly in the path of a fast-moving forest fire named the Holy Fire. The fire began several days earlier but raced up the canyons behind the park until it crested on the ridge above the rear mobile home area. All activities were cancelled on Wednesday and evacuations were recommended Thursday morning for all residents. That order was quickly elevated to “mandatory” as the fire perimeter reached the nearby hills and took aim at the resident’s area. Despite the order, we were told a few stayed behind with garden hoses. The fire burned right to the back of the park property, blackening all of the hills directly behind and adjacent to it. The Western Nudist Research Library was unharmed. Volunteers cleaned up the heavy layer of ash in a few days and the park reopened, good as new.

AANR-WEST SUPPORTS TOP FREEDOM RALLY IN DENVER

AANR-West had a booth at the annual “Denver Go Topless Day” held at Skyline Park in downtown Denver Colorado. The event happens every year on the Sunday closest to Women’s Equality Day (Aug 26) when women were first awarded the right to vote through the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. AANR-West VP Cyndi Faber, Board members Jeff Tendick and Ernie Wiese, as well as new AANR President Kathy Watzel and her husband Bob spent the afternoon promoting AANR and the AANR Western Region, signing up several new members using a WiFi computer hookup.

The booth was set up with 3 backdrops, literature and club information along with freebies such as pens, note pads, lip balm, emery boards, “Nudist and I Vote” buttons, temporary tattoos and AANR bumper stickers. One attendee was very proud of his bike helmet and immediately placed the round sticker along with many others on his “personal billboard helmet.” The AANR-West beach balls were blown up and distributed for playful activities in the open grassy area of the park. We also offered club brochures and Mountain Air Ranch, the nearest club, offered free day passes. At one of the other booths we saw body painters busily decorating people’s bodies with messages. At 3:00 pm, several hundred top free women and men paraded down Denver’s central mall and rallied at the capitol building with speeches and placards. Will we do it again next year? Absolutely! The Top Freedom Movement is a market ripe for AANR to work with at similar rallies across the country.

SEPTEMBER

AANR-WEST MEMBERS FEATURED IN STUDENT FILM ABOUT NATURISM

Several SCNA, Olive Dell Ranch, and Associate members of AANR-West participated in a student film about nudism. The 8-minute film includes key interviews with AANR-West President Gary Mussell, Olive Dell co-owner Becki Kilborn, That video "The Natural Way" is now posted on YouTube and is receiving many positive reviews.

Here is the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fwfisS3AtXI>

OCTOBER

BURT REYNOLDS PHOTO PUTS AANR-WEST INTO FACEBOOK AND TWITTER “JAIL.”

AANR-West acknowledged the death of actor Burt Reynolds on September 6 by posting his iconic centerfold from the April 1972 issue of Cosmopolitan Magazine. The response from both Facebook and Twitter was immediate: “the post goes against our standards on u nudity or sexual activity” wrote Facebook as it took down the AANR-West FB site for 30 days. Twitter did the same a few hours later. Andy Walden, our Social Media coordinator, got Twitter to reconsider a few days later, but Facebook took a few days more to apologize and to restore nearly 100 web sites, including ours, who had been put into “Facebook Jail” because of the photo.

Unfortunately, a month later, our AANR-West Twitter page suddenly disappeared. Our repeated attempts to contact the Twitter administration to find out why were ignored. Did they change their mind about the Reynolds photo or was it something else? We never found out. Finally, at the end of December, we started a brand-new Twitter page. Other clubs are encouraged to follow us at <https://twitter.com/aanrWESTorg>.

AANR-WEST AVOCADO FESTIVAL DRAWS 120,000 VISITORS

The first weekend in October, we hosted an information booth at the Avocado Festival, an annual street fair in Carpinteria that attracted over 120,000 people in three days. We handed out literature about AANR and AANR-West, our local clubs, the local nude beaches, and we took an informal poll asking people what they thought of having a legal nude beach nearby.

The results of the poll (500 people) were very gratifying:

I agree that Santa Barbara County should designate a section of beach for clothing-optional recreation. The beach should have proper signage to let people know it is there, so they can decide where to go or not.

I do not agree.

	2018	2017
Agree	71.3%	68.0%
Disagree	7.1%	10.7%
No Opinion	21.6%	21.3%
Totals	479 votes	450 votes

The poll shows an overwhelming number of people in favor of our clothing-optional beach. The Carpinteria ZIP code results were: Agree: 73%, Disagree: 10% No Opinion: 17%

The next step is to take this information to the County Supervisors and begin the next and harder step, which is getting the law changed so the beach become legal.

NOVEMBER

SALINE HOT SPRINGS

The National Park Service completed and released its long-anticipated report recommending changes to the Death Valley National Park and adjacent areas under its jurisdiction, including the traditionally clothing-optional Saline Valley Hot Springs. To our relief, there were very few changes recommended to this remote and under-developed Springs except to officially approve the makeshift airstrip called the “Chicken Strip,” basically a strip of flat dirt used by people to access the Springs who do not want to drive the bone-crushing four-hour drive on a rutted 50-mile dirt road to get there. This lack of major improvements means the place will never become a major tourist destination; so much the better for both the resident nudists and occasional visitors who come during the spring and fall months when the pass to get there isn’t snowed in, or during the summer when the temperature average above 100 degrees!

CALIFORNIA’S SEXUAL HARASSMENT LAW STRENGTHENED

For many years, the relevant provisions of California’s Fair Employment and Housing Act (“FEHA”), sections 12950 and 12950.1 of the California Government Code, require employers with 50 or more employees to provide sexual harassment training for all supervisory employees. As of January 1, 2019, the law requires employers of **five or more** employees—including seasonal and temporary employees—to provide sexual harassment training for both supervisory and non-supervisory employees. **AANR-West needs to make sure its landed clubs in the state are aware of this change and make sure our clubs comply.**

AANR-WEST MEMBERS EVACUATED FROM HUGE WILDFIRES

In mid-November, California was ravaged by two major forest fires.

In Ventura County and northwest Los Angeles County the **Woolsey Fire** burned over 100,000 acres. Despite heroic efforts by firefighters on the ground, and many aircraft dropping water and fire-retardant, an estimated 1500 buildings were destroyed, including about 200 homes. About 200,000 residents were evacuated while firefighters struggled to contain the wind-driven flames. Many SCNA club members were evacuated, and we know of several who had to live for up to a week with friends or other members outside the disaster zones. At last report, all members are okay, and none of their homes were damaged.

Our AANR-West PO Box/office is on the inside edge of the mandatory evacuation zone in Calabasas, and access roads there were closed for over a week. Our Western Region’s attorney was evacuated from Thousand Oaks, and he eventually relocated in Moorpark, about 20 miles north and west of the fire line.

At the same time, in northern California, high winds drove the Camp Fire to consume 160,000 acres and destroy more than 13,000 homes, including most of the town of Paradise, about 75 miles north of Sacramento. Several members of the Northern Exposure nudist club lost their homes in the fire.

Rains finally assisted in the control of both fires, but with those rains come the risk of mudslides. Denuded hillsides offer little resistance to the flow of mud and debris that can flood and damage structures in low-lying areas. Homeowners and volunteers are preparing sandbags and other defenses in vulnerable areas.

December

GLEN EDEN FLOODED WITH MUD AND FIRE DEBRIS.

A heavy rainstorm prompted an evacuation at Glen Eden December 7 as mud and flood water overflowed their control channel and cascaded through the park, covering many of GE’s street with as much as a foot of mucky debris. No structures or homes were damaged, but the park asked AANR-West to contact nearby nudist clubs for volunteers to help with the cleanup. Glen Eden resumed its activity schedule after a few days and is “back to normal” according to its General Manager.

ADDENDUM

HOW DID THE 2018 MIDTERM ELECTIONS AFFECT NATURISTS?

The Government Affairs Team (GAT) is still assessing the effects of all the various state changes that occurred as a result of the November 6 midterm elections.

Some interesting factoids from this year's election:

- With Idaho and Utah voting yes, it is finally the law in every state that mothers can legally breastfeed in public.
- With the defeat of Gov. Scott Walker in Wisconsin, local nudists have emailed me they are hopeful the new Democrat administration will be more open to the restoration of the clothing-optional area at Mazo Beach, which Walker closed several years ago.
- "Trifecta states" (where one party controls the governorship and both houses of the state legislature) saw a net gain of six states for the Democrats. The current count is Republicans have 22 trifectas and Democrats hold 14. This means essentially "one party rule" in those 38 states.
- The only state left with a divided legislature is Minnesota. The remaining 49 state legislatures are all controlled by one political party or the other. Of those states, Democrats control 18 legislatures while Republicans control 31.

Some of the new legislative sessions will begin in December and others in January or even later. We will be watching for bills that affect nudists, and we will report these to you in future newsletters. Here is more election information about our region's individual states:

CALIFORNIA

This state remains the "bluest" of the "blue" states, with Democrats holding all statewide elected offices, and holding a 2/3 majority in both the State Assembly and State Senate. New bills can be introduced starting December 1.

Fifty-three members of Congress come from California. The election flipped four of these seats from Republican to Democrat, so the count is now 40 Democrats, 13 Republicans, depending on if there will be any recounts.

U.S. Senator Diane Feinstein (D) easily won reelection to her sixth (and probably her last) term. At age 85 she is the oldest and the longest current serving member of the Senate.

ARIZONA

Arizona remains a Republican "trifecta" at the state level. Republicans control the state Senate with 16 seats to Democrats' 13 seats. Republicans control the state House with 28 seats to Democrats' 26 seats with two not yet decided.

Republican Rep Martha McSally was defeated by Dem Kyrsten Sinema for the U.S. Senate seat previously held by GOP Sen. Jeff Flake. In mid-December, the other US Senator from Arizona, Jon Kyl, decided to resign. He was appointed to fill the seat held by John McCain until his death this past August 25. The governor decided to appoint McSally to the seat, so both Senate candidates now represent Arizona. McSally must stand for re-election in 2020.

The state's nine U.S. House seats remain split between five Democrats and four Republicans, a net gain of one for the Democrats.

COLORADO

The Democrats kept the Governorship in their column, and they also picked up a Congressional seat making that count now four Dems and three Republicans, with one not yet decided as of this writing. Congressman Jared Polis will be the country's first openly gay man to serve as governor.

Colorado's State Senate flipped with 18 Dems and 17 Republicans, while the state House now has a Democratic majority 37-23, a net gain of four for the Democrats.

HAWAII

Hawaii has been a Democratic trifecta for many years, controlling all state elected offices, and both state houses by wide margins. The party won the single US Congressional seat by a 50% vote margin, and Sen. Mazie Hirono was re-elected to the US Senate by a 71% margin over her Republican opponent.

Note: The closest AANR came to problem legislation this year was in Hawaii with HI 130, which asked for an investigation of all nude beaches. The bill died in committee without a hearing for the second year in a row. We will be watching to see if the same legislator tries for a third time in 2019.

NEW MEXICO

The Governor's office flipped to the Democrats this year, and all the other statewide elected officials are also now Democrats. Democrats control the state Senate with 26 seats to Republicans' 16 seats. Democrats regained control of the State House in November 2016 and increased their six-seat margin to 22 with two still undecided.

The U.S. Senate seat remained in Democrat hands by a 54% to 30% margin. New Mexico has three U.S. Congressional seats, and the Democrats now hold all three after flipping the last one.

NEVADA

The Democratic "blue wave" hit was never more evident than in Nevada this year, with Democrats taking the Governorship for the first time in two decades and toppling the incumbent Republican U.S. senator.

However – only in Nevada! - a brothel owner and reality TV star, Dennis Hof, who died a month before the election, still won his race for Nevada's 36th Assembly District. Hof, who ran as a Republican and calling himself “The Trump of Pahrump” defeated Democratic challenger Lesia Romanov by more than 7,000 votes, proving the old cliché that some people would rather vote for a dead man than for someone from the opposition party. According to state law, county officials will appoint a replacement, but as of this writing, this has not yet happened.

In other Nevada news, the **Burning Man Festival**, held August 26 – September 3. Nevada courts have maintained that simple public nudity in Nevada, outside specific types of businesses set aside for it, may be charged with both indecent exposure and open/gross lewd behavior for the same offense. Despite this, deputies did not cite any Festival participants for nudity, despite there being many hundred people there who were openly nude. Arrests were made for drug use, however.

UTAH

Utah remains a Republican trifecta, controlling the governorship as well as a majority in both the state Senate and state House (58-17 seats) although the Democrats had a net gain of two seats in the lower house. Former Republican Presidential nominee Mitt Romney won election to the U.S. Senate with 62% of the vote.

THEATER OWNER WINS LAWSUIT

Lawmakers and the governor in the conservative, predominantly Mormon state had backed a law that is largely aimed at strip clubs but also prohibited serving booze during films with simulated sex or full-frontal nudity.

Until now.

A movie theater sued in 2016 after Utah regulators threatened to fine it up to \$25,000. The state defended the measure in court, calling liquor and sex an "explosive combination"

In September 2018, after a lengthy trial, a Federal judge struck down the law last year as a violation of First Amendment rights, ruling the theater is not an adult-oriented establishment, and *Deadpool* is a mainstream, R-rated movie. The judge ordered the state to pay more than \$475,000 in legal fees after it lost a court fight over a law that banned serving alcohol during the racy, foul-mouthed superhero film *Deadpool*.

Liquor authorities were concerned about a suggestive scene in the film's credits involving a cartoon unicorn, among other things. The theater's attorney and former Salt Lake City Mayor Rocky Anderson argued that the law was so vague it would apply to Michelangelo's "David."

His office was awarded attorneys' fees and an additional \$3,800 in other legal costs. *Deadpool* star Ryan Reynolds held a fundraiser that raised \$22,000 for the plaintiffs, and this was deducted from the final financial award.

Idaho lawmakers repealed a similar law last year when a theater sued after its liquor license was threatened for showing *Fifty Shades of Grey* while serving alcohol.

WYOMING

Wyoming is also a Republican trifecta, with that party holding the governorship and a wide majority in both the state Senate and state House. The Republican U.S. Senator was re-elected easily, as was the state's sole member of Congress, Liz Cheney, daughter of the former U.S. Vice President. The state's legislative session starts February 12.

FEDERAL LAWS AND REGULATIONS

Several bills were introduced in the U.S. Senate this year affecting recreational areas in California and Utah where nudists like to hike and camp. They deal primarily with land transfers between Federal agencies and redefining the boundaries of existing Federal wilderness areas so that more of these protected lands can be used for oil drilling, mining, cattle grazing, and for other farm or agricultural use.

- Senate Bill S2809 (Hatch-Utah) affects over 500,000 acres in Utah are designated as national wilderness areas, including Candland Mountain, Crack Canyon, Desolation Canyon, Devil's Canyon, Horseshoe Canyon (North), Mexican Mountain, Muddy Creek, Nelson Mountain, San Rafael Reef, and Sid's Mountain.
- Senate Bill S140 (Flake -Arizona) amends the White Mountain Apache Tribe Water Rights Quantification Act of 2010.
- House Bill HR 857 (Cook-CA) This bill amends the California Desert Protection Act of 1994 to reduce its size and to allow off-road vehicles (ORV) in previously protected areas.

None were heard by Congress committees before it adjourned, but the Trump Administration went ahead and designated many of these proposals via revised regulation and executive order.

Because we lack the financial ability to retain a lobbyist or make the necessary political contributions, AANR is basically powerless to stop or amend any of these proposals. We will continue to monitor these proposals and regulations and report back to the GAT Committee on any future changes.