

Hilary Hodge
Columnist

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Hilary Hodge: At the Edge, indeed

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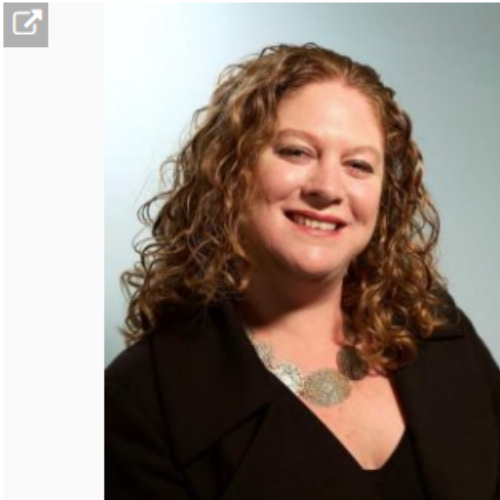
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Laura Mahaffy/lmahaffy@theunion.com | The Union

The weekend of the Wild and Scenic Film Festival, put together by the South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL) is one of my favorite weekends here at home in western Nevada County.

The towns come alive with smiling tourists donning puffy jackets. Locals take to volunteer shifts. Social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram buzz with accolades about our county. Our inns and restaurants fill with patrons and excited talk about the films and activities surrounding the festival. I applaud SYRCL for bringing such a quality event to our backyard.

I spent the entire weekend in one local venue or another between Nevada City and Grass Valley attending talks and watching films — 22 films altogether. I left the festival feeling inspired, humbled, and activated. According to the festival's website, "The Wild & Scenic Film Festival puts our local work — and yours too — into the broader environmental and social context, and serves to remind us that we're participants in a global movement for a more wild and scenic world." The festival made good on its promise.

In a world riddled with divisive rhetoric and an international community moving toward less inclusive international policies, it is comforting to think about the things we all have in common. The global community has more in common than most of our world's leaders would have us believe. We share the joy of birth and the sorrow of death. We want our loved ones to be healthy and happy. We love to eat good food. We sleep under the same stars and the same moon. We share just one single planet.

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In the film *Guided*, a 19-minute documentary about Ray Reitze, a professional wilderness guide from Maine, Reitze notes, “There is no wild. There is no wilderness. There is only home.”

For all of us, that home is planet Earth. We live on a planet with interconnected waterways. We share atmospheric vapors in our airstreams. When it comes to our planet and resources, each of us is affected by pollution and changes in our climate. We are not isolated from radiation at Fukushima or the pollution of the Yangtze River. We are not safe from chemicals dispersed into the air over China or India. What happens on our planet stays on our planet.

For people working on environmental issues, for people who care about wild and scenic places, and for people who understand science, the incoming administration of the United States government may seem like the beginning of a tragic assault on what we hold dear. I won't sugar coat the fact that much of our current government are climate science deniers, nor will I rebuff how damaging near-future policies may be at a critical time on our planet. We live at an unprecedented time in human history and face very real and serious planetary health issues.

At a time when many people feel fear and despair, I feel inspired and hopeful.

The theme of this year's festival was, “At the Edge.” I believe we are at the edge. There are critical issues facing our planet that need to be addressed with expediency. But we are also at a tipping point for humanity. We are at a tipping point on so many levels. We are at the brink of emergence.

More and more people are coming together noticing that we live at a time where we have no choice except to be in this together. More and more people are awakening to the fact that community matters. We are, each of us, learning that people are responsible, meaning both that humans are at fault and also that we can take ownership and be stewards for our planet and communities.

We are indeed at the edge but not at the edge of a cliff. We are at the edge of a global revolution to come together and take action for the good of our planet, for the people who live here, and for those that will inherit it.

The Wild and Scenic Film Festival made it clear that there is a lot of work to do for the preservation of our planet, for the people who live here, and for the places we love. And yet, there are a lot of people doing the work and more people joining every day. There are longtime organizations that have been trudging along doing the work for years and there are people starting to get involved for the first time in their lives.

We are at the edge of something wonderful.

Hilary Hodge lives in Grass Valley. Her column is published by The Union on Tuesdays. Contact her at hhodgewriter@gmail.com.