

Greetings,

The Tulare Lake Yacht Club and the Mima Madness Support Group are pleased to invite you to the 2025 Full Tilt Hogwallow Power Mosey, scheduled for 11-13 April.

This annual confab began in 1982, when an informal group of vernal fools - mostly botanists - was invited to camp for the weekend at a 13 kiloacre cattle ranch east of Merced. Since then, the disciplinary spectrum has expanded to include zoologists, ecologists, soil scientists, geologists, archeologists, hydrologists, and sundry enthusiotherists, united in their interest in natural history. No name tags. No agenda. No Powerpoint. No dumb questions. Just lots of friendly folks that collectively know more than you can imagine. Many are working professionals. More are knowledgeable laypeople. Some are unabashed amateurs of every age, stripe, and skill. Walk up to anyone and strike up a conversation. Everyone learns.

We camp in the middle of the largest, densest aggregation of vernal pool habitat that survives. It goes from one horizon to the other, and beyond. Come when you can, leave when you must. Bring your own everything (including instruments) and haul away your trash. Lawn chairs mandatory. It can be windy. Pot luck supper Saturday evening, anchored by Ginny's Moroccan lamb stew. Brother Al's daughter, Allison, has volunteered to emcee the river kitchen.

Our hosts ask that we each sign a liability release. We will rent chemical toilets and request a \$50 contribution to defray this and other expenses. Seek me out upon arrival to attend to these details.

RSVP to Bob Holland at 530 823 7430 with a best guess as to party size. We will answer any questions and tell you how to get there.



This early spring photo of cattle grazing at the Flying M is verily dripping with geobotanical phenomena. Temperatures had not yet warmed. The grasses still are short – below your ankles. There is just a hint of goldfields around the pool margins. Water still is standing in the vernal pools.

Most people would call all this vegetation naturalized annual grassland and leave it at that, but there are two distinct cover types that reflect the underlying geology. Soil in the foreground is derived from granitic gravelly alluvium deposited about 750,000 years ago. The vegetation is sparse, dominated by filaree, and has a variegated, brownish cast due to bare ground showing through the canopy. The soil surface is littered with quartzitic cobbles as large as 15 inches. It takes lots of fast-flowing water to transport cobbles this large: it must have been a dramatic flood. The floodwaters fanned out to the south and west, leaving behind a 1-2 m thick deposit unconformably overlaying much older (5-8 million years) sediments derived from Mehrten Formation volcanics. The Mehrten sediments are clayey and lack any cobbles or gravel. There is no filaree and no bare ground showing through the canopy. The canopy is smooth and uniform green, like a putting green.

The two cover types are intimately intertwined, like fudge ripple ice cream. The Mehrten-derived soils are considerably more fertile and produce much more nutritious forage. The cattle know this. All 16 of the cattle in this view are standing on fudge (Mehrten). If cows can learn to see this difference, probably you can too.