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Sierra Club Lake Group

March-April 2023 Newsletter

Community Forum March 23

At 6PM on Wednesday March 23, 2023 Seigler Springs Community Redevelopment Association Director and Cobb Area Council Forest Stewardship Committee chair Eliot Hurwitz (who is also the newest member of the Lake Group executive committee) will join us to discuss an innovative program to restore Cobb Mountain and its watershed. The Cobb Mt. Watershed Education and Restoration project has assembled a multi disciplinary team to focus on restoring the headwaters of key creeks that feed Clear Lake. This unique, tribal-centric program combines best riparian science, traditional ecological knowledge, landowner experience, and community process to facilitate long-term stewardship partnerships between tribal members and current landowners. The program is funded by the Blue Ribbon Committee for Clear Lake and the PG&E Nature Positive Innovations fund.

Although the meeting is free and open to the public as always, registration is required: everyone who signs up will receive confirmation and Zoom connection details, and a followup email a day or so before the event. To RSVP, go to the Lake Group website at sierraclub.org/redwood/lake and click the link in the embedded calendar.

Molok Luyuk Legislation Reintroduced

On Tuesday March 7 Senators Alex Padilla and Dianne Feinstein reintroduced legislation to expand the Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument to include approximately 4000 acres of adjacent BLM-administered public lands in Lake County. The bill would also establish an historic framework for tribal co-management of the Monument, require prompt development of a management plan, and rename the area now known as Walker Ridge “Molok Luyuk,” which means “Condor Ridge” in the Patwin language.

Congressmen John Garamendi and Mike Thompson also introduced parallel legislation in the House.

“Back in 2016, I worked to designate the Berryessa Snow Mountain region as a National Monument,” said Congressman Thompson. “I am proud to join Rep. Garamendi and Senators Padilla and Feinstein to reintroduce legislation to expand this designation and protect more of our pristine public lands. The Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument is crucial for protecting the biodiversity of the land and boosting our economy through recreational opportunities.”

In the last Congress, this legislation passed the House as part of the National Defense Authorization Act, and received **(con’t)**

(Molok Luyuk, con't) unanimous support from the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. Although the chance of Senate passage is now greatly improved, gridlock is expected in the House, meaning that probably the best chance of achieving long term protection and tribal co-management for Molok Luyuk is to ask President Biden and Interior Secretary Haaland for designation under the Antiquities Act. We can make this happen – with your help – in 2023.

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“Land Tending Days” at Rodman Preserve

This Spring the Lake County Land Trust is sponsoring a series of stewardship days at Rodman Slough, with the objective of restoring the native California bunch grasses that used to thrive there. Volunteers will meet at the Rodman Preserve Nature Center, 6350 Westlake Road at 10AM on March 12, 19, and 26. and

- Watch a “tending demonstration”
- Choose a patch of grass from among pre-marked areas
- Hand-pull the non-native grasses that surround the natives
- Learn about adopting a small patch to steward over time.

Lunch will be provided at noon on the Nature Center back porch.

You may attend any day you wish. If this sounds like an interesting and fun project, please RSVP no later than the previous Friday by sending an email to lclt@lakecountylandtrust.org, or calling 707-262-0707 and leaving a message.

Lake Group Executive Committee

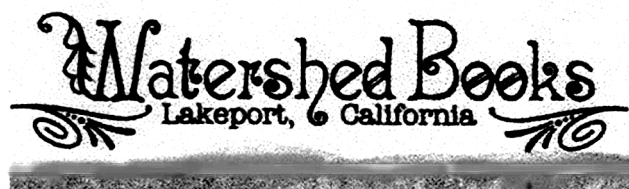
Deb Sally (Chair): 707 235 9011,
 Ed Robey (Vice Chair) 707 994 8304,
 JoAnn Saccato, (Secretary) 707 350-1719
 Victoria Brandon (Treasurer, Conservation Chair: 707 994-1931
 Tricia Evans (Membership Chair)
 Eliot Hurwitz
 Sally Peterson (Climate Chair), 707 533-3132

ExCom meetings are usually held at 5:00 PM on the third Tuesday of the month, on the Zoom platform. All members are cordially invited to attend, but requested to contact the Chair first to confirm the time and get connection details



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Let's Go Digital

Lake Group members are invited to help fight deforestation by receiving this bimonthly newsletter electronically rather than on paper. To get it as an email attachment in pdf format instead, send a request to join the “Lake Group Paper Free” list to vbrandon95457@gmail.com—not only does this save some trees, it also benefits the Group financially.

SAVE THE DATE: Trails Presentation
May 25 You heard it here first: at 6PM on Thursday May 25 Lake Group's community forum will feature a presentation by Community Services Director Lars Ewing on the comprehensive trail plan revision currently under way. More information coming soon!

Sulphur Bank Update

In January Lake Group representatives were able to join other concerned community members at the first of six workshops hosted by the Environmental Protection Agency to provide information about extensive remediation work to be conducted at the Sulphur Bank Mercury Mine SuperFund site on the Oaks Arm of Clear Lake.

This gold rush relic has been leaching heavy metal pollutants into the lake for many years, and is the reason it is officially listed as impaired for mercury, with restrictions on fish consumption and health impacts that bear especially hard on its next door neighbors, the Elem Colony of Pomo Indians.

The proposed cleanup plan will involve moving about a million cubic yards of contaminated soil at a cost of \$76 million, and take an estimated four years to complete, with the seepage into the lake prevented by an impermeable layer covered by clean soil and vegetation. Although many questions remain, there is finally reason to hope for real progress within several years rather than decades or centuries.

Last Chance for the Hitch?

The Clear Lake hitch, *Lavinia exilicauda chi*, is a medium-sized fish unique to Lake County that lives in deep waters for most of the year but surges up into the tributaries to spawn every spring. Hitch were once present in uncountable millions, providing food for many other fish, birds and mammals. They were also a crucial traditional staple for the indigenous people of the Clear Lake basin. The population started declining more than fifty years ago, from a variety of causes including barriers to spawning migration, predation and competition from introduced non-native fish, and loss of the shallow shoreline wetland habitat needed by juveniles. Although listed as threatened under the California Endangered Species Act since 2014, thousands were observed moving into creeks to spawn as recently as 2020. Then came 2021 and 2022, two successive years so dry that adults couldn't access their normal creek spawning territory at all, and California Fish and Wildlife population surveys observed hardly any juveniles.

This spring might be the last chance for this amazing creature, since there has been lots of rain and the creeks are flowing, but will they continue to flow during the prime spawning season in March and April? The Clear Lake Environmental Research Center (CLERC) has taken over the task of compiling volunteer sightings. Please take a little time to check out a creek or two near you, and record your observations on the CLERC website, www.clerc.co. The software works best if you send your observations directly from your phone when you are on site, so GPS points can be automatically included. Pictures can be uploaded too!

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a lake county naturalist's blog

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