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Sierra Club Lake Group

May-June 2023 Newsletter

Trails Forum May 25

At 6PM on Thursday May 25 Community Services Director Lars Ewing will join us to discuss the comprehensive revision of the Lake County trail plan that is currently in progress. It has been more than 10 years since the formulation of the Konocti Regional Trails Plan, and a lot has changed since then, not only for recreational users but also regarding things like bike paths and safe routes to school. The revision process provides an opportunity to influence many aspects of trail planning that affect all of us -- please join us to find out what is going on and to share your thoughts.

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.

Eel River Update

PG&E's decision to decommission the Potter Valley Project, the antiquated hydroelectric facility that operates Scott and Cape Horn Dams on the main stem of the Eel River in the far northwestern corner of Lake County, has created an enormous opportunity to restore a great wild salmonid river, enrich habitat for fish and many other wildlife species, generate exciting recreational opportunities, and support the Native people who have lived in harmony with this land since time immemorial. These dams are well past the end of their useful life, and with no solvent entity willing to assume responsibility for their maintenance their removal is inevitable. The big question is whether it will come in time to prevent populations of salmon and steelhead from disappearing forever.

Several recent events have made the need for

prompt action even more compelling. First, although it has been known for a long time that the unstable Bartlett Springs Fault runs through the middle of the Lake Pillsbury Reservoir, late in March PG&E admitted that seismic risks are so severe that they intend to keep the supplementary gates on Scott Dam open permanently—a decision that reduces the capacity of the reservoir by 20,000 acre feet, and also reduces the amount of water available for diversion to the Russian River.

Then early in April plunging fish populations led regulators to cancel both the commercial and recreational salmon seasons off the whole California coast. The Eel, which once supported an estimated annual run of more than a million salmon and steelhead, now sees something between one and three percent of their **(con't)**

(Eel River, con't) historic numbers.

To underline the gravity of this situation, on April 18 the river advocacy nonprofit American Rivers listed the Eel as one of the 10 most endangered rivers in the United States, putting it in the company of the Colorado River, grievously impaired by many years of overconsumption, outdated management rules, and now climate change, and the Ohio River, at risk from toxic pollution from both agriculture and heavy industry.

Recent statements from PG&E confirm the utility's unwillingness to assume any ongoing responsibility for Scott or Cape Horn dams, and for the first time state explicitly that expeditious removal of both dams is their intended outcome. It's time to stop struggling against the inevitable and instead to push for a removal and restoration plan that is environmentally beneficial, includes wildfire resilience strategies, and maximizes long term benefits to Lake County.

Time for the Weed Tour

The 2023 Lake County Weed Management Area's annual Invasive Weeds Tour is planned as a double header. From **9AM to noon on Thursday May 11** the county Department of Water Resources and the Resource Conservation District will host an exploration of the world of aquatic plants and wetland weeds at Clark's Island in Clearlake Oaks, including a successful tule replanting project conducted in partnership with local tribes.

Then from **9AM to noon on Friday May 12** there will be an opportunity to learn about the weeds and wildflowers of the University of California McLaughlin Reserve, 26775 Morgan Valley Road. Discussion led by Reserve staff will include the use of prescribed fire, cattle grazing, herbicides, mowing, and hand pulling as tools to control weeds and restore wildflowers—which are spectacular this year!

Both events are entirely free, with no reservations required: please bring hats, sunscreen, water, and your questions about plants and the lake.

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 5:30 PM on the second Thursday 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.

Time to Stop Power Line Fires

On March 17 Redwood Chapter sponsored an eye-opening presentation by Sierra Club Wildfire Utility task Force member Kevin Collins that details the extraordinarily risky way PG&E transmission and distribution lines are constructed, why they cause so many fires, and what can be done about it. This tutorial has now been posted to the Chapter YouTube channel and is available for the world to see—please check it out by going to YouTube.com and searching for “Sierra Club Redwood.” And while you are there, please take a moment to “like” the video and subscribe to the channel—more exciting content is on the way.

Good news for the Hitch

After two consecutive years of being unable to access their normal spawning grounds in Clear Lake tributaries, in the first half of April schools described as containing “thousands” of migrating adult hitch (*Lavinia exilicauda chi*) were reported in creeks throughout Big Valley as well as other locations from Alley Creek in Upper Lake to Seigler Creek in Lower Lake. Apparently fish need water!

KONOCTI POST

www.konoctipost.blogspot.com

a lake county naturalist's blog

TAKE A RAMBLE. IT'S FREE.

Earth Day 2023

This April Lake Group leaders had the pleasure of participating in three Earth Day events, at Woodland College, Big Valley Rancheria, and the CalPine Visitors Center. We collected signatures to protect Molok Luyuk, raffled off Sierra Club swag, and had lots of great conversations.





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