

Redwood Needles



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Sierra Club Redwood Chapter

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On the Path

A note from

Victoria Brandon, Chapter Chair

Let's Make a Plan for Public Lands

Many of us whose passion is public lands conservation tend to concentrate our attention on achieving special designation. For example, right here in Redwood Chapter we're working for the permanent protection of Molok Luyuk by adding this sensitive habitat and its ancient sacred sites to the Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument.



But there's another crucial route to long term conservation—advocating for structuring regulatory policy in ways that prioritize management decisions supporting conservation values rather than opportunities for profit. As it happens, both the Bureau of Land Management (the nation's largest land management agency, overseeing 245 million acres of lands and waters) and the United States Forest Service (which administers 154 national forests and 20 national grasslands totaling 193 million acres) have recently initiated rulemaking processes that can profoundly influence the way these lands are managed.

BLM lands are critical to wildlife, watershed protection, outdoor recreation, and climate resiliency—but from the beginning, the agency has operated under a mandate that prioritizes destructive land uses like oil and gas extraction, mining, and livestock grazing over the protection of wildlife and healthy ecosystems. The only exceptions have been "Conservation Lands" with special designations such as "National Monument" or "Area of Critical Environmental Concern." The proposed rule would change that emphasis and take a big step toward keeping public lands and waters healthy. It would require the development of an upfront planning assessment which describes ecological, social, and economic conditions in the area and require the agency to protect intact landscapes, restore degraded habitat, and base its land use decisions on sound science and verifiable data.

A similar process is being undertaken by the Forest Service, which seeks to adjust management policies to meet the challenges of a changing climate, providing a perfect opportunity to emphasize protection of mature and old-growth forests. Not only do older forests bolster environmental resilience against wildfires and droughts, they are also powerful carbon sinks, capturing and storing large quantities of greenhouse gases.

Public comment on BLM rulemaking will have closed before this newsletter goes to print, but the Forest Service's public invitation for input has been extended until July 20. Please take a moment to ask the USFS to protect our most climate-resilient forests by conserving mature and old-growth trees on federal lands! **Click [here!](https://addup.sierraclub.org/campaigns/protect-our-old-growth-and-mature-forests)** [https://addup.sierraclub.org/campaigns/protect-our-old-growth-and-mature-forests]



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Create a legacy that protects and restores the natural world for future generations by naming Sierra Club's Redwood Chapter in your will or trust. Or, name Sierra Club Foundation as the beneficiary of your retirement plan for the benefit of your local chapter and leave less highly taxed assets to your loved ones.



To learn more about the advantages of making a planned gift and to become a member of the Rachel Carson Society, please contact us.

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Redwood Chapter Executive Committee

The executive committee is the governing body of the chapter, with one (1) member delegated by each of six (6) regional groups and six (6) members elected at large. Each group elects its own executive committee. The chapter ExCom meets every other month over Zoom.

**Chapter Chair • At Large • Political Chair •
CCC Delegate • Wilderness Chair:**

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**At Large, CCL Alternate, Conservation
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Political Compliance Officer:

Michael Melton

Transportation Chair:

Steve Birdlebough • (707) 576-6632

Forest Chair, At Large:

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Mendocino Group Delegate Alternate:

Robin Leler

Napa Group Delegate to Chapter:

David Campbell *

North Group Delegate to Chapter:

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Solano Group Delegate to Chapter:

Joe Feller* • (415) 902-3395

Sonoma Group Delegate to Chapter:

Shirley Johnson-Foell* • (707) 206-1138

Chapter Webmaster: Melanie Matway

* Signifies voting member of the ExCom



Redwood Chapter—Virtual Forum on Eel River Dam Removal

Save the Date! Tuesday, August 22 at 5 PM

At a time when positive environmental news has been hard to come by, the eventual restoration of the Eel as a free-flowing river (the longest in California!) is now all but inevitable.

PG&E's recent 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, has created an enormous opportunity to restore a great wild salmonid river, enrich habitat not only for fish but also for many other wildlife species, generate exciting recreational possibilities, and support the Native people who have lived in harmony with this land since time immemorial.

In March, seismic risks led the utility to reduce the capacity of the Lake Pillsbury Reservoir by 20,000 acre feet. That action was followed by regulatory cancellation of both the commercial and recreational salmon seasons off the whole California coast, and the appearance of the Eel on a list of the ten most endangered rivers in the entire United States.

Now PG&E has unequivocally confirmed its determination to relinquish any ongoing responsibility for Potter Valley Project infrastructure, including Scott and Cape Horn dams, and for the first time has explicitly stated its support for the expeditious removal of both dams.

Do you have questions about how the decommissioning and dam removal process will work? You're in luck! Redwood Chapter is delighted to announce that at 5PM on Tuesday August 22, Charlie Schneider, California Trout's Lost Coast Project

Manager and a member of the Chapter Conservation Committee, will provide an online update on the decommissioning schedule and how changes in project operations will impact our region's fish and people.

Also participating will be David Keller, former Bay Area Director of Friends of the Eel River, who drove the dam safety issues to the forefront of review by state and federal agen-



cies.

The presentation will be followed by an opportunity to ask questions. The forum is free and open to the public, but advance registration is required to access the Zoom room. Please visit the calendar on the Chapter home page, <https://sierraclub.org/redwood>, or follow this [direct link](#) to RSVP. Registrants will receive a confirming email with the Zoom link and a follow-up reminder the morning of the event.

Since space is limited, we will also live stream to the Chapter's [Facebook](#) page.

Protect Our Sonoma Coast



LocalCoastalPlan.com

By Richard Charter, Director, Coastal Coordination Program, The Ocean Foundation

We all know that the Sonoma Coast is a global natural treasure, and every few years our county decision makers update our Local Coastal Plan (LCP) as a way to keep pace with changing times and to address emerging threats. Sea level rise and increasing development pressures are just two of the most serious challenges now facing our coast.

On July 17, our Sonoma County Board of Supervisors will finalize the process of updating our LCP, and this hearing will be a very good time for all who value this coastline to stand up and be counted.

The Sonoma Coast LCP has always made it clear that environmentally-sensitive natural habitat must be protected, especially between the ocean and the first public roadway. The LCP also emphasizes that maintaining public access to the shoreline is a top pri-



Photo by Richard Charter

ority, and that our scenic viewsheds are to be kept intact for future generations. The basic purpose of the current update for our LCP is to strengthen this guiding document so that it will successfully address the next generation of environmental threats.

The completion of a strong LCP is clearly now within reach of our County Supervisors. The Sonoma County Planning Commission, after exercising due diligence and patiently listening to their own public hearings, got it right, voting to retain a key series of important parcel-specific protections that have long been in place along the Sonoma Coast.

Our LCP works, as can be seen on any visit to our coast.

The protections we have enjoyed to

Cont'd on page 6

Lake Group Awards Scholarship

The Lake Group was pleased to award a \$1000 scholarship on May 25 to Lower Lake High School graduate, **Archie Healon**. Archie plans to attend UC Santa Cruz where he will double major in Environmental Science and Music Education/Performance.

Archie has done a great deal of community service through his association with Upward Bound and the Citizen's Caring for Clearlake in their efforts to clean up trash around the south end of the lake and the town. He understands the need to control climate change and unsustainable use of natural resources. He looks forward to furthering his knowledge and teaching others what he learns.

We wish Archie much success in both his environmental and musical areas of interest.



Lake Group Chair Deb Sally presents award to graduating senior Archie Healon

Highway 37 at a Crossroads

by Steve Birdlebough, Redwood Chapter Transportation Chair

Highway 37, where it crosses the marshlands between Vallejo and Novato, is overcrowded during rush hours and threatened by rising sea levels. During the decades to come, the road is expected to be flooded more frequently by high tides and atmospheric rivers. It needs to be lifted onto a causeway.



(John Burgess/The Press Democrat)

Nevertheless, State and regional agencies are moving forward with a plan to spend an estimated \$430 million to build two new toll lanes on the shoulders of nine miles of the 21-mile road. The plan calls for the existing 2-lane roadway from Mare Island to Sears Point to be converted to high occupancy vehicle lanes.

Afternoon traffic backups between the Highway 101 interchange and Highway 121 may be temporarily reduced by the new lane. However, the morning traffic backups are likely to move from Mare Island toward the Novato Creek Bridge, where they will add to the existing "bottleneck" at the Highway 101 interchange.

The present congestion is due primarily to differences in housing costs. It costs about half as much to rent or own a house in Solano County as in Marin County. Until ample low-income housing is constructed in Marin and Sonoma Counties, the present traffic conditions are likely to continue regardless of the width of the highway. It is well known that traffic expands to fill the available pavement.

All of this is contrary to the California Air Resources Board's (CARB) plan for reductions in driving that are needed to deal with the climate crisis. The plan calls for a 25% reduction by the year 2030 and a 30% reduction by 2045.

For nearly a decade, the Sierra Club has participated in the effort to develop an environmentally sound and equitable plan to cope with the challenges to SR-37.

Environmental Issues:

The proposed toll would fund a nine-mile road-widening project that would result in more driving, but without any allocation of funds to establish and operate an express bus service. As was described during the recent joint meeting of the California Transportation Commission and CARB, California's path to carbon neutrality requires us all to drive less. The ARB Scoping Plan calls for an average 25% reduction in driving by the year 2030, and a

Cont'd on page 6

Call for ExCom Nominees!

The Redwood Chapter and Group Executive Committee election season has begun. Nominating Committee Chairs have been selected, and candidate recruitment is proceeding.

Three Chapter At-Large seats will be up this year, as well as either three or four Group seats.

If you are interested in running for a position, please contact your Group Nominating Committee Chair.

GROUP NOMINATING COMMITTEE CHAIRS

- **Chapter Elections Chair:** Jim Horn, jhorn@hornengineers.com
- **Lake Group:** Ed Robey, edrobey@zimbracloud.com
- **Mendocino Group:** Robin Leler, robin@leler.com
- **Napa Group:** Christina Benz, christinabbenz@gmail.com
- **Solano Group:** Princess Washington, pwashingtonsuisuncouncil@gmail.com
- **Sonoma Group:** Shirley Johnson, johnsons@sonoma.edu
- **North Group:** Gregg Gold, greggjgold@aol.com

ELECTION SCHEDULE

- **Aug. 19:** Chapter and Group candidate slates are complete and submitted to Elections Committee Chair Jim Horn (jhorn@hornengineers.com).
- **Sept. 5:** Deadline for submission of candidate statements for publication in the Fall Redwood Needles. Deadline for submission of ballot petitions to the Election Committee Chair.
- **October:** Ballots and candidate statements are published in the Fall Needles, and voting begins in both hard copy and electronic formats.
- **Dec. 31:** Voting closed. All votes must be in.

Highway 37 at a Crossroads

(cont'd from page 5)

30% reduction by 2045. (ARB Scoping Plan, Appendix E, p. 4*). Any road-widening should be limited to what's required to give express bus service and carpools priority in reaching the 2-lane roadway, where most traffic moves at speeds of 35-MPH to 60-MPH.

The Sierra Club is also concerned that an investment of hundreds of millions of dollars in a project that fails to elevate the roadway would constrain

Continued Congestion:

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission acknowledges that an added traffic lane would invite more people to make long commutes. **Figure 2** of the application for tolling authority also shows that the project would only move the "bottleneck" for most of the morning traffic from Mare Island to the 101 interchange. Only the vehicles headed for SR-121 and Lakeville Highway would see reductions in delay. The estimated value of time-

savings for commuters recognizes this factor and does not justify an expenditure of hundreds of millions of dollars. Preservation of most of the single lane road in each direc-

Figure 2 – 2045 Conditions Comparison of Alternatives



needed water flows and transfers of sediment into the marshes north of the highway. It is unnecessary to widen more than a few miles of the highway at the western end of the 2-lane road segment to give priority to buses and car-pools. Extension of the eastbound lane-drop could be on an elevated bridge/causeway that would reduce the overall cost of adapting SR-37 to sea level rise.

tion, with priority for express buses and carpools, could reduce the number of single-occupant vehicles on the highway. An extension of the eastbound lane drop to Solano Creek would suffice to minimize the afternoon congestion. (See the 2015 ["Induced Demand Fact Sheet"](#) and the Sierra Club's [SR-37 Restructuring Statement](#).

Protect Our Sonoma Coast

(cont'd from page 4)

date now face new threats originating from the private profit motive of a particularly invasive development proposal near Timber Cove. If that project sneaks by under the radar, other similar exploitive development plans will surely follow. This is not the time to let one developer get away with arbitrarily undoing critical protections all along the entire Sonoma coast.

The only potential impediment to adoption of the strongest possible LCP on July 17 appears to be originating from an East Coast developer's paid lobbyist. This lobbyist's goal is to try to gain an exemption from the LCP parcel protections to obtain a permit for a proposed new blufftop commercial "event center" between Highway One and the ocean in Timber Cove that would block the public's coastal viewshed with twelve high-end vacation rental homes, a "welcome center" and spa buildings, a swimming pool, and a new parking lot for eighteen cars, all of which would completely close off access to the coast there to the public for at least 24 days each year. The completion of a strong LCP is clearly now within reach of our County Supervisors. This is your coast, and now is the time to let our elected officials know in no uncertain terms that we want the strongest possible LCP and that we will praise them when they finalize this LCP with the essential parcel-specific protections intact. There is only one Sonoma Coast. If you cannot make the July 17 meeting, write to your Supervisor today. Learn more at <http://LocalCoastalPlan.com>.



The 2018 [Fourth National Climate Assessment](#) analyzes the effects of climate change on the earth and its inhabitants and projects major trends for the subsequent 25 to 100 years.

Here are highlights of the latest report:

1. Communities:

Climate change creates new risks and exacerbates existing vulnerabilities in communities across the United States, presenting growing challenges to human health and safety, quality of life, and the rate of economic growth.

2. Economy :

Without substantial and sustained global mitigation and regional adaptation efforts, climate change is expected to cause growing losses to American infrastructure and property and impede the rate of economic growth over this century

3. Interconnected Impacts:

Climate change affects the natural, built, and social systems we rely on individually and through their connections to one another. These interconnected systems are increasingly vulnerable to cascading impacts that are often difficult to predict, threatening essential services within and beyond the Nation's borders.

4. Actions to Reduce Risks:

Communities, governments, and businesses are working to reduce risks from and costs associated with climate change by taking action to lower greenhouse gas emissions and implement adaptation strategies. While mitigation and adaptation efforts have expanded substantially in the last four years, they do not yet approach the scale considered necessary to avoid substantial damages to the economy, environment, and human health over the coming decades.

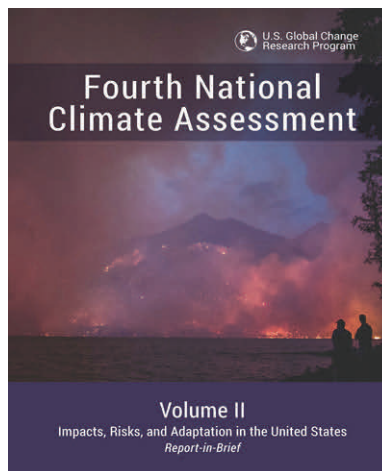
5. Water:

The quality and quantity of water available for use by people and ecosystems across the country are being

affected by climate change, increasing risks and costs to agriculture, energy production, industry, recreation, and the environment.

6. Health:

Impacts from climate change on extreme weather and climate-related events, air quality, and the transmission of disease through insects and pests, food, and water increasingly threaten the health and well-being of the American people, particularly populations that are already vulnerable.



7. Indigenous Peoples:

Climate change increasingly threatens Indigenous communities' livelihoods, economies, health, and cultural identities by disrupting interconnected social, physical, and ecological systems.

8. Ecosystems and Ecosystem Services:

Ecosystems and the benefits they provide to society are being altered by climate change, and these impacts are projected to continue. Without substantial and sustained reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions, transformative impacts on some ecosystems will occur; some coral reef and sea ice ecosystems are already experiencing such transformational changes.

9. Agriculture and Food:

Rising temperatures, extreme heat,

drought, wildfire on rangelands, and heavy downpours are expected to increasingly disrupt agricultural productivity in the United States. Expected increases in challenges to livestock health, declines in crop yields and quality, and changes in extreme events in the United States and abroad threaten rural livelihoods, sustainable food security, and price stability

10. Infrastructure:

Our Nation's aging and deteriorating infrastructure is further stressed by increases in heavy precipitation events, coastal flooding, heat, wildfires, and other extreme events, as well as changes to average precipitation and temperature. Without adaptation, climate change will continue to degrade infrastructure performance over the rest of the century, with the potential for cascading impacts that threaten our economy, national security, essential services, and health and well-being.

11. Oceans and Coasts:

Coastal communities and the ecosystems that support them are increasingly threatened by the impacts of climate change. Without significant reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions and regional adaptation measures, many coastal regions will be transformed by the latter part of this century, with impacts affecting other regions and sectors. Even in a future with lower greenhouse gas emissions, many communities are expected to suffer financial impacts as chronic high-tide flooding leads to higher costs and lower property values.

12. Tourism and Recreation:

Outdoor recreation, tourist economies, and quality of life are reliant on benefits provided by our natural environment that will be degraded by the impacts of climate change in many ways.

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Volunteer with Us!

MEMBERSHIP ENGAGEMENT CHAIR

Be the friendly face that introduces new members and volunteers to Redwood Chapter. This is a key position within the chapter to help it grow and maintain an engaged and active member and volunteer base. Responsibilities include: creating a calendar for member engagement activities, carrying out social events for members and volunteers, recruiting and leading a member engagement team to help plan activities, welcoming new members, recruiting and tracking new members. *Estimated Time Commitment: 10 hours a month.*

OUTINGS LEADERS

Outings leaders are a key part of Sierra Club, as they help create a constituency for nature by encouraging people from all backgrounds to enjoy and explore Redwood Chapter's incredible landscape. Sierra Club provides the training, you provide the inspiration and leadership. Here's where you can learn more about becoming an [outings leader](#).

Estimated Time Commitment: 5 hours a month.

OUTINGS CHAIR

We're looking for a committed, well-organized person to provide direction and oversight to the chapter outings program -- it is NOT necessary to be an Outings Leader to fill this crucial role. Work to make outdoor activities an integrated and vital element of chapter efforts. Responsibilities include ensuring all chapter and group outings follow Club policies and procedures, officially approving all outings, taking responsibility for publicizing outings in the Redwood Needles and elsewhere, and ensuring that active leaders meet training and first-aid certification requirements.

Estimated Time Commitment: 5 hours a month and up.

Interested? Contact chapter chair Victoria Brandon at 707 994 1931 or vbrandon95457@gmail.com to find out more.