

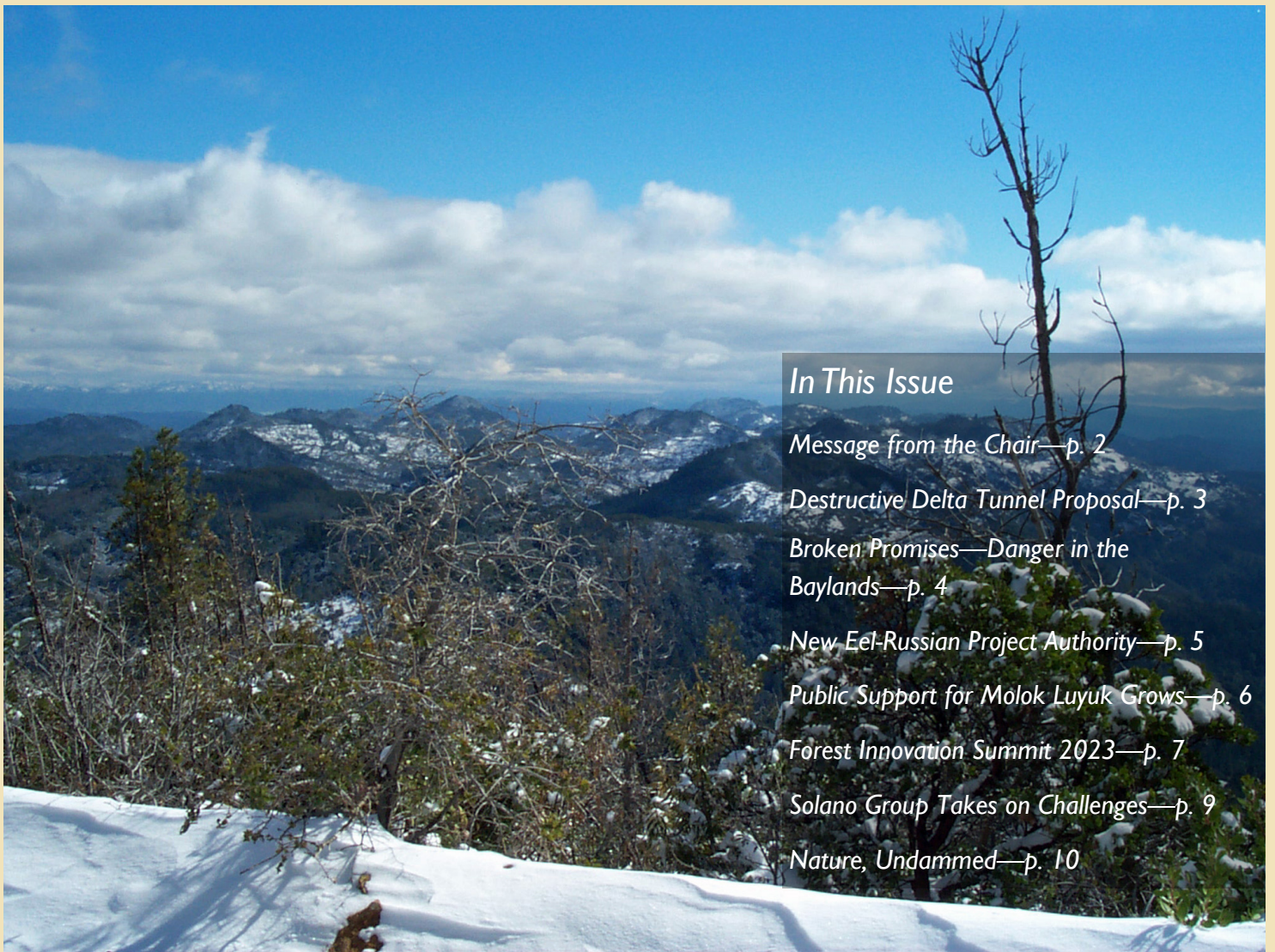
Redwood Needles



Winter 2024

Sierra Club Redwood Chapter

Volume 66, No. 1



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View from Mt. St. Helena, at the intersection of Sonoma, Napa and Lake Counties. Photo by Jim Horn

Message from the Chair

Victoria Brandon, Chapter Chair

The 16 years I've served on the Redwood Chapter Executive Committee, and especially the last ten years as chair, have included some of the most rewarding experiences of my life. The opportunity to work collaboratively with so many committed talented people -- some of them, like Jay Halcomb, Diane Beck, John Stephens, Randy MacDonald, no longer with us -- has been priceless. Reflecting on the great things we did together is also very gratifying. For me personally, the designation of the Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument in 2015 stands out.



But passage of the 2006 Wilderness bill, the genuine preservation of the oddly named "Preservation Ranch" subdivision in Sonoma County, the defeat of the Orcem cement plant in Vallejo and the toxic coal train running through the heart of our rural communities, and Land Trust's acquisition of the woodland-destroying Walt Ranch in Napa are also points of pride.



Moving forward, we have great opportunities to expand our legacy. After many years of effort, four dams on the Klamath River are finally coming down, and there is every reason to expect the dams on the Eel River won't be far behind. Our activists are working hard to ensure that reconstruction of State Route 37 will help to revitalize the North Bay wetlands that are so crucial to the health of San Francisco Bay as a whole, and that the outstanding biodiversity and cultural heritage of Molok Luyuk will be permanently preserved. And throughout the chapter, we're striving to protect watersheds, aquifers and forests and to make the wild places we enjoy in such abundance welcoming and inclusive to all people.

The chapter is now poised to move in new directions. Our vibrant forest committee is doing great work, the water committee set to do the same, and the climate committee about to come roaring back with new leadership. Two new members, Elayna Trucker and Steve Scalmanini, are joining the Executive Committee in January, with Dan Mayhew, who has been ably serving as acting chair since July, taking over as chair when I am termed off on January 1. Redwood Chapter also expects to onboard a new Executive Director in 2024, to set new strategic priorities very soon, and to reactivate our once-vigorous outings program.

Chapter leaders will need your help to accomplish all of this, so please consider volunteering. Working together, we can move mountains!

Postscript from Dan Mayhew, incoming chair

Thank you, Victoria! The body of work accomplished during your tenure is truly awesome and has created a legacy that will never be equaled. While the Chapter's major environmental accomplishments are indeed noteworthy, your successful management of the Chapter, development of critical relationships and recruitment of new members and leaders over many years speaks volumes. Thankfully, your footsteps have laid a solid foundation for those of us who follow. With sincere appreciation — Dan



SIERRA CLUB

REDWOOD CHAPTER

Redwood Needles

A Quarterly Publication of
Sierra Club Redwood Chapter

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Support Your Passion

for a Just and Sustainable World

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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Vice Chair, At Large, CCC Delegate:

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Climate/Energy Committee Chair:

Peter Hess • petermjhess@gmail.com

Forest Chair, At Large:

Jeanne Wetzel Chinn*

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Mary Walsh* • (707) 937-0572

Napa Group Delegate to Chapter:

David Campbell *

North Group Delegate to Chapter:

Ned Forsyth* • (707) 826-2417

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

California Releases Final Environmental Impact Report on The Environmentally Destructive Delta Conveyance Project

On December 8, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) released the [Final Environmental Impact Report \(FEIR\)](#) for the Delta Conveyance project (Delta tunnel). The Delta tunnel would significantly harm the important biodiversity of the Bay-Delta region, at enormous cost to California taxpayers. Sierra Club California staff, volunteers, and supporters submitted comments on the draft of the document last year. These comments highlighted numerous problems in the Draft EIR, including impacts of construction on environmental justice (EJ) communities and Tribes, harm to freshwater flows, and impacts to endangered species.

DWR received over 7,300 individual comments on the Draft EIR. Each comment and DWR's responses are included in the FEIR.

Sierra Club California is strongly opposed to the Delta tunnel and its previous iterations. In 2020, the Department of Water Resources estimated the Delta tunnel would cost \$16 billion. Accounting for inflation, the costs are likely to be up to \$56 billion, with 47-65% of the tab picked up by Southern Californians living in the Metropolitan Water District. The tunnel will also cause mass environmental destruction for Delta communities and ecosystems during both construction and operation.

Instead of constructing this environmentally destructive project, which the FEIR claims would add only 500,000 AF/year, Sierra Club California has advocated for a [Smart Water Alternatives solution](#) that would increase California's water supplies by

over 10 million AF/year through a combination of conservation, efficiency, groundwater management, water recycling, and stormwater capture measures.

In response, Erin Woolley, Senior Policy Strategist, issued the following statement on the FEIR:

"The Delta tunnel's Final Environmental Impact Report shows that the DWR has widely ignored concerns raised by environmentalists, Tribal representatives, and local communities opposing the tunnel's construction and operation. The project would be a costly environmental disaster, and it's deeply concerning that after a decade of advocacy, these issues still aren't being properly recognized by the state.

[There are ample alternatives to the Delta tunnel](#) that will fulfill the state's water needs. Sierra Club California and our allies have consistently recommended the Newsom administration instruct the DWR to prioritize sustainable, local water management efforts instead of the tunnel. This fight isn't over, and we're committed to stopping the Delta tunnel and other environmentally destructive projects like Sites Reservoir - wherever they're proposed."

(From Sierra Club California website, <https://bit.ly/3v302iK>)



Broken Promises—Danger in the Baylands



Two years ago, the board of Sonoma Marin Area Rapid Transit (SMART) made what most Sierra Club members, and many in the south Sonoma Valley, thought was a promise—it would NOT store dangerous LPG tanker cars at its rail yard south of Hwy. 121 at the foot of 8th Street East in Schellville.

Now it seems that promise may be broken—and the delicate marshlands and waterways of the Baylands and the San Pablo Federal Wildlife Preserve may be put at serious risk in the process.

In 2021, legislation sponsored by Senator Mike McGuire formed the Great Redwood Trail project, a 316-mile rail-to-trail project connecting California's San Francisco and Humboldt Bays. At the same time, it transferred ownership of the rail-freight service to SMART and provided funds to buy out the private rail operator. Later that year, the Board of SMART, responding to a strong outcry by the community in the south Sonoma Valley, voted almost unanimously not to store loaded LPG tanker cars at its rail yard in Schellville. The local people breathed a sigh of relief. And the conservationists who love the Baylands at the head of San Francisco Bay and have raised millions of dollars over the years to acquire them and protect them, also relaxed.

Now it seems that feeling of good will may have been premature. With a new Board in place at SMART, General Manager Eddy Cumins has proposed bringing the tankers back, citing a "loss" of up to \$500,000 a year in gross income if he is not allowed to

store 160 loaded LPG tankers in the yard in the winter months each year. Liquid Petroleum Gas is an admixture used in the "winter gas" that is mandated for use in California between November and March each year.

What would that mean for the environment of the Baylands, and for the people and the businesses in the area?

Well, first we should take into account that LPG is classified as a hazardous material, and that transportation of these materials has been involved in nearly fifty serious rail accidents in North America since 2012 that have caused serious loss of life and property and extensive environmental damage. In fact, the Sierra Club, working with Earth Justice, the Center for Biological Diversity and others, in a recent federal lawsuit (which they won) likened only 22 tank cars to "the equivalent energy of the Hiroshima bomb". We leave you to do the math for the 160 stored at close quarters on over a mile of double track in the Sonoma Valley.

Then we should be concerned that SMART intends to establish a hazardous materials storage yard in a sensitive wildlife area, all without a permit and while claiming an exemption from CEQA because "these tracks have been actively used for decades". Opponents point out that establishment of a HAZMAT storage yard is a new use that requires a County or State permit and that, like any other HAZMAT project in the County, it should have full CEQA review and an extensive opportunity for public input.

Under any circumstances, a HAZMAT yard located on deep and unconsolidated marshlands, be-

tween two earthquake faults, and in an area that routinely floods each year at exactly the time when 20,000 tons of loaded tankers would be stored there, seems to be a disaster waiting to happen.

Any leakage or overturning at the yard could also have devastating and permanent effects on the entire Baylands and the San Pablo National Wildlife Refuge. Petroleum contamination, and even toxic fire-fighting foams in the worst case, could find their way through the complex network of creeks and channels that border the site and extend to San Francisco Bay. Those channels lead directly to the critical migratory and wintering habitats of a wide variety of shorebirds and waterfowl; to the year-round habitat of many endangered and sensitive species that require tidal marsh habitat for their survival; and to the channels and waterways that eleven fish species swim through from San Pablo Bay to reach their freshwater spawning grounds. As we say, a disaster waiting to happen!

Like other Sierra Clubbers, we support rail freight as a way to get trucks and cars off the road, reduce traffic congestion, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. But not when it endangers lives and valuable environmental resources, and when the tankers can be better stored closer to their point of use—the refineries where the hazardous chemicals they carry came from and are best handled.

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Sonoma Water, Sonoma County Approve Formation of Eel-Russian Project Authority



[Press release from Sonoma County Water Agency, December 5, 2023]

The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, who also serve as the Board of Directors for the Sonoma County Water Agency, voted today to approve a Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement with Mendocino County Inland Water and Power Commission to form the Eel-Russian Project Authority.

The new entity will have the power to negotiate with the Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) as the utility moves ahead with plans to surrender operations of the Potter Valley Hydroelectric Project and to decommission the Scott and Cape Horn dams on the Eel River. The new authority will also have the legal capacity to own, construct and operate a new water diversion facility near the Cape Horn dam.

“This is another important step in the process to find a truly regional solution to the challenges facing the Eel and Russian River watersheds,” said Sonoma County Supervisor and Sonoma Water Director David Rabbitt. “We’re grateful to all of the partners who are working diligently to achieve our co-equal goals of continued diversions into the Russian River and improving fisheries in the Eel River.”

The Potter Valley Project, currently owned and operated by PG&E, has been diverting water from the Eel River into

the Russian River watershed for more than a century, playing a critical role in supplying water for agriculture, homes, and instream flows to benefit aquatic ecosystems and threatened salmonids in Mendocino and Sonoma counties.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission licenses the Potter Valley Project. In 2019, PG&E announced that it would not proceed with relicensing the project and would instead enter into a license surrender and decommissioning process. PG&E stated that its application would propose to remove Scott and Cape Horn dams and end any operations, including water diversions to the Russian River, unless it received a complete and credible proposal by July 2023.

To meet this deadline, in July, the Mendocino County Inland Water and Power Commission, the Round Valley Indian Tribes and Sonoma Water submitted a proposal to PG&E to preserve water diversions into the Russian River, while also prioritizing upstream and downstream fish migration in the Eel River. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife, County of Humboldt, California Trout and Trout Unlimited subsequently signed on to a revised proposal in November.

PG&E released an initial draft surrender application on Nov. 17, 2023, which includes several of the measures pro-

posed by the coalition. PG&E is set to release a final draft surrender application in June 2024. The final application is expected to be submitted by Jan. 29, 2025.

The New Eel-Russian Facility proposal submitted to PG&E also called for the creation of a regional entity, which today’s board action will move forward, with the capacity to develop a yet-to-be designed facility that would allow for ongoing water diversions through the Potter Valley Project’s tunnel between the Eel River and Russian River, while providing for fish migration to support naturally reproducing and self-sustaining native fish populations.

The Eel-Russian Project Authority’s five-member board of directors will initially consist of two representatives from the Mendocino County Inland Water and Power Commission, one from Sonoma Water, one from the County of Sonoma and one from the Round Valley Indian Tribes.

For more information, visit <https://sonomawater.org/pvp>.



Public Support for Molok Luyuk Grows



(Teri Shore and Crowd at Molok Luyuk public hearing)

On December 13 2023, efforts to permanently protect the outstanding biodiversity and rich cultural heritage of Molok Luyuk by adding it to the Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument took a major step forward when the Bureau of Land Management and National Forest Service hosted a “listening session” to assess public opinion on the proposal.

Despite short notice and looming holidays, about 200 people crowded into the Woodland Community Center to hear from agency leaders led by BLM Director Nada Wolff Culver and pick up one of the free purple t-shirts distributed by the Molok Luyuk campaign. Nearly 75 of them spoke in favor of adding the area to

the Monument and -- most unusually -- no one voiced opposition. More than 88,000 people have signed a petition asking President Biden to use his powers under the Antiquities Act to protect the area.

Sonoma County activist Teri Shore represented Redwood Chapter at the meeting, saying in part: “I strongly support President Biden using the Antiquities Act to expand Berryessa Snow Mountain Na-

tional Monument. I’ve hiked some of these lands and seen amazing rare wildflowers in Spring and tule elk grazing and rutting on the hills in fall. Molok Luyuk provides a critical wildlife corridor between the existing monument and other protected areas all the way to Pt Reyes National Seashore.”

Denise Rushing, who as a county supervisor was a major proponent of Monument designation in 2015, spoke for Lake Group, saying, “we are calling on the President and Congress to use all means possible to protect this special place.” We will keep you posted.

Article by Victoria Brandon

Calling All Climate Activists!

We are delighted to be able to announce that Forest Committee member **Peter Hess** has stepped forward with an offer to reactivate the chapter’s Climate and Energy Committee. Although we all know that climate disruption is the central environmental issue of our time, and Sierra Club members everywhere are eager to do what they can to fend off catastrophe and put the planet on a path towards recovery, the committee itself has been in a state of suspended animation since the sudden death of chair Randy MacDonald several years ago.

Here is the opportunity to change all that. Peter, a resident of Lake County, has worked as an environmentalist since the 1980s, and his doctoral studies at UC Berkeley focused on environmental ethics in the context of the wholesale slaughter of redwoods on the North Coast. Since his retirement he has continued to write and speak on climate issues, most recently including an address to the Forest Innovation Summit hosted by the Swedish consulate in San Francisco on the role of cultural and prescribed fire in maintaining forest health.

If you are interested in joining with other committed activists to help the chapter make a genuine contribution to this most compelling of issues, please reach out to Peter at petermjhess@gmail.com

Article by Victoria Brandon

Political Endorsements

President of the United States:
Joe Biden

Vice President of the United States:
Kamala Harris

US Congress, California District 2:
Jared Huffman

Napa County Board of Supervisors,
District 4: **Amber Manfree**

Sonoma County Board of Supervisors,

District 3: **Chris Coursey**

As this edition of the *Redwood Needles* went to press, activists throughout the chapter were working on additional endorsements on the federal, state, and local levels, which will be posted to <https://www.sierraclub.org/redwood/endorsements> as soon as they are completed.

Please check the site frequently for the latest updates.

Lake Going Digital

To help fight deforestation, the Lake Group is announcing that their bimonthly newsletter will be published electronically rather than on paper. If you require a printed newsletter from the Lake Group, please email us at sierraclublakegroup@gmail.com, call:707-530-2340, or drop us a note at: Lake Group Newsletter, PO Box 4362, Clearlake, CA 95422

Forest Innovation Summit 2023

Presentation by Jeanne Chinn, Chair of the Sierra Club Redwood Chapter's Northern CA Forest Committee



A few people have asked me, "What is Sierra Club?" Sierra Club is the largest grassroots environmental organization in the United States. It was founded in 1892 and has national and state offices, and regional chapters.

I represent the Sierra Club Redwood Chapter's Northern CA Forest Committee. I am retired from the CA Department of Fish & Wildlife. Our Forest Committee has 24 highly knowledgeable members in six Northern CA Counties with expertise in forestry, botany, biology, prescribed burns, environmental non-government organizations, landowners, retired agency folks, and registered professional foresters.

Our 100+year Vision Statement:

A Northern California where forest ecosystems are diverse, resilient and conserved; where historic land management damages are approaching recovery, and forest management programs are adaptable to on-going changes while providing monitoring for best available science-based land use and forest practices, biodiversity, and where our forests maximize carbon sequestration.

Historically – What is a Natural Forest?

Indigenous people in California performed over 4.5 million acres of cultural burns a year for five thousand years. They were integral to the ecology as they managed the forests. These were disturbances that supported the health of the forests, woodlands, and grasslands. Their practices on the landscape supported wildlife habitat, healthy forests, and provided benefits for their personal needs such as ceremonial & medicinal use, hunting and gathering food, basket supplies, and tules for boats. In 1885, CalFIRE was founded and stopped all cultural burns, creating a fuel overload of forest materials and causing our forests to be vulnerable to wildfires.

In the late 1880s, early loggers began to clearcut forests, drove oxen pulling wagons up the forest watercourses causing great erosion issues, and then small trains were built through forests to take out timber at even greater levels. These disturbances resulted in significant overlogging and serious devastation in our forests that has continued to this day in some areas where clearcuts are still allowed according to the CA Forest Practice Act Rules.

What is Sustainability? – Here, in CA, we really need an alternative term, such as "responsible." Unfortunately, the term "sustainable" has been overused and abused. Our technology and culture have taken us beyond what the forest ecosystems can handle. The indigenous people worked within the boundaries of what was sustainable. Then, due to the many settlers and loggers overusing resources, we face a Tragedy of the Commons.

Regarding economic Interests, as you know from this Summit, we use wood products; that is a reality. There are many ecosystem services. How do we reconcile healing our forests and using wood products?

It's complicated. I want to provide an alternative, where you can overlay your commercial values. How do we coexist with the realities of land ownership and commercial operations?

My experiences in the forests I've worked in through CA Fish & Wildlife are from the Santa Cruz mountains up into Mendocino County. In the southern areas there is a concentration of small and large private landowners, with more state and federal forests to the north. CA is more advanced and government regulated in relation to forest landscape health than other states, although enforcement can be an issue. There are Timber Review Teams for industry harvest plans with CalFIRE & Forestry as lead. These Review Teams include professional foresters representing landowners, geologists, local agency representatives, Water Board and CA Fish & Wildlife staff. I was a timber harvest review team member with boots on the ground for many single-select harvest plans. Single selection removes individual trees of varying sizes to maintain uneven-aged stands. My work included protection of old growth and wildlife trees, special status plant species, seasonal wildlife habitat prohibitions, and measures to prevent erosion in riparian areas and watercourse crossings.

Some people say we should **Not** cut down another tree and not use any wood products; however, the alternatives they offer are not renewable resources. How do we meet the challenges to reconcile existing conditions with policies and goals, while taking into account important ecosystem services?

I've been asked to speak about "sustainability" in addition to economic considerations. Yet, we have to reconcile and meet the challenges presented for

Cont'd on page 8

Forest Innovation Summit 2023

(cont'd from page 7)



biodiversity, water, soils, climate change, and restoration needs.

Biodiversity – There is great loss from lack of cultural burns, degradation, overcutting, and climate change effects. How to get it back? For example, Marbled Murrelet is now a highly endangered seabird, coming ashore to coastal forests annually to hatch 1 egg without a nest on an Old Growth tree branch a minimum of six inches in diameter with a 4-inch flat spot next to the trunk. Every tree in a timber harvest plan must be examined to leave trees with these large branches and their surrounding protective screen trees as wildlife habitat.

Watercourses – We need protection measures for salmon, trout and other aquatic species with erosion protected clean water, maintaining canopy cover for shade, cool water temperatures, and woody debris recruitment for refugia.

Soils – Why should we not clearcut? Mycelium are tiny threads of fungal organisms that wrap around tree roots in a mycorrhizal network connecting forests together in an exchange of nutritional resources, transferring water, nitrogen, carbon and other minerals – and allow trees to send signals to each other in a forest. These forests are alive and com-

municating with each other. When an area is clearcut these connections are broken.

Climate Change – Severe drought and has led to invasions by native bark beetles. In timber harvest plans other invasive non-native plants like Pampas Grass and Scotch

& French Broom must be taken out prior to daylighting from logging or they take over. Wildfires from decades of fire suppression, drought and overstocked forests are wreaking havoc on our forests. What are natural disturbances? And given climate change, how do we meet these challenges? In part, by allowing prescribe & cultural burns, and providing restoration activities with measures for adaptive management.

Forest Management – What do we have currently and how can we create and enhance forest resiliency into the future long-term?

There is profound uncertainty, and we need to look at both stands and landscape levels. Example, inland from the coast, land managers are incorporating “Clumpy/Gappy” measures with acres of high wildlife habitat off limits to trimming during the nesting, denning, & fawning season. These clumps are surrounded by grassland gaps for protection from wildfires, with the idea that fires drop to ground level to prevent them from dancing unimpeded through the canopy and with a better chance of being suppressed.

Conservation – Provide an ecosystem-based approach for structural, functional & genetic diversity, and Sierra Club gen-

erally doesn't support herbicides and pesticides for use in National Forests. Protect all old growth and wildlife trees; protect watercourses, and listed wildlife species habitat including connectivity linkages to enable their genetic flow. One example is the Northern Spotted Owl, whose status is federally threatened and in CA the Coastal-Southern Distinct Population Segment is endangered. It is an indicator species for all wildlife in its Northern CA habitat upon which they depend. Our Native Northern Spotted Owls live in the forest canopy and are very fragile and vulnerable to harvest plans and fires. Opening up the forest exposes them to predators and heat, with invasive Barred Owls coming in and taking over – this could lead to their extinction. Mitigation measures require 2 years of 6 surveys for active nest detection prior to harvest implementation. Their nest-roost areas and surrounding foraging habitat are off limits to harvests.

Adaptable Management – needs to be a priority. We need to evaluate, monitor, and adapt with measures utilizing and contributing to best scientific available information.

Ecosystem Services – Prioritize select cuts, leaving Old Growth Mother Trees, wildlife trees, key snags and granary trees, protect watercourses, and protect soils with wide cushioned rubber tires. How do we have a soft impact on our forests while harvesting for wood products?

Collaboration and Education – We need all Stakeholders working together to address these challenges. An example is the Northwest Forest Plan designed to protect old growth forests and critical habitat for the Northern Spotted Owl. It covers 17 National Forests across 24.5 million acres of federally managed lands in Western Washington and Oregon, and 5 National Forests in Northwestern CA.

Small but Mighty! Solano Sierra Club Group Takes on Multiple Challenges

The Solano Group is tackling several environmental protection and social justice issues

- A secretive billionaire’s group plans to develop thousands of acres of farmland outside mandated urban growth boundaries, creating the sprawling new town of “California Forever.” The encroachment would threaten both endangered wildlife and Travis Air Force Base, the county’s largest employer. Our fight has gained national attention. (See update *this page.*)
- Solano County’s Suisun Marsh, the largest brackish wetland in California, shelters rare plants and animals including wild salmon. Two developments threaten this pristine area. Fossil fuel prospectors want to drill for natural gas; and pipeline builders plan to pump CO2 slurry from oil refineries across the Carquinez Strait shipping lanes and under the marsh to extend the lifetime of those polluting facilities.
- Caltrans wants to widen Highway 37 between Vallejo and Novato by dumping millions of tons of dirt onto protected wetlands. Their proposal would charge a \$100 million toll to lower income commuters from Solano and Napa Counties while fixing the Marin and Sonoma portions for free.
- The developer of Mare Island, a former Naval shipyard, has brought in hundreds of jobs without building affordable housing. This lengthens commutes, promotes sprawl,

and displaces nearby lower income residents. Prime parkland on the south end of the island is threatened by luxury home development.

- Cities like Vallejo are dragging their feet to permit affordable housing. Less than 100 units of supportive housing have been built in Vallejo, while almost 600 units of market rate housing have been approved. Gentrification is spreading. The Sierra Club’s California Housing Policy promotes equitable orderly growth within city limits. <https://www.sierraclub.org/california/housing-land-use>
- Solano Sierra Club is researching ways to lessen bird kills by the county’s windmills.
- We’re working with labor and elected officials to snag EPA and state grants for environmental protection and to support disadvantaged communities.

The Solano Sierra Club Group is not all work and no play! We’re planning outings to enjoy our beautiful county, following Sierra Club guidelines.

Want to help out? Contact Paul Theiss at theiss.paul@gmail.com.



Solano Sierra Club Chair Princess Washington speaks at press conference opposing California Forever (Fairfield Daily Republic)

Flannery Update



Rendering by CA Forever. Article by Duane Kromm

This is a brief update on our efforts to defeat the Flannery LLC investors’ (dba California Forever) plan to develop some/all of their 55,000 acres of Solano County farmland.

To date, Flannery has not revealed any plans, only AI generated drawings and pie in the sky language about some kind of utopian city.

Local farmers, the Sierra Club, the Jepson Chapter of the California Native Plant Society, Greenbelt Alliance and Solano County Orderly Growth Committee are working together to stop this massive sprawl development threat. The Napa Solano Audubon Society has also come out strongly against Flannery.

But we need more allies. If you are part of other groups who would be willing to take a position against Flannery, please contact me at dkkromm@gmail.com or 707-580-7321.

Press coverage, local, regional, national and now international, has been fabulous. It seems like almost everyone gets the outrageousness of uber rich technocrats and venture capitalists trying to take over Solano County land use.

Our coalition will unveil a name and website soon. We will focus on providing factual information about the impacts on Solano County agriculture and the diversion of resources from our existing cities.

Nature, Undammed

The largest-ever dam removal is underway, a milestone in the nation's reckoning over its past attempts to bend nature to human will



[By [Reis Thebault](#), [Alice Li](#) and [Melina Mara](#), *Washington Post*]

It was a small moment, with little fanfare, in one of the most remote patches of northern California. Just the rat-a-tat of three Caterpillar excavators gnawing through concrete signaled the beginning of [the largest](#) dam removal project in the history of the country, and perhaps the world.

There was no ribbon cutting or ceremonial dynamite detonation. But the demolition on that June day arrived only after decades of argument and activism.

The Klamath River dams, built between the early 1900s and 1960s, fundamentally reshaped one of the West's most important watersheds. They electrified this hard-to-reach part of the country for the first time, powering the nation's vision of a Manifest Destiny.

The hydropower dams, which altogether stand at 411 feet, also devastated the salmon population and the Indigenous tribes who had subsisted on the fish for millennia. For many Native people here, the structures always have been monuments to American imperialism.

When all four dams have been reduced to rubble, scientists and tribes will begin a desperate restoration attempt to secure the future of a river whose struggles have grown more severe with climate change.

"It's like you're removing a clot — we've got four clots in our artery," said Charley Reed, who grew up along the river and descends from the Hupa, Yurok and Karuk tribes, three of the Native groups who consider the Klamath their sacred and spiritual lifeblood. "And now we're getting surgery done."

For environmental advocates, this is a milestone. But in a region famous for its fiercely contested water politics, the project is controversial. Ranchers and recreationalists see removal as a government overreach and a threat to their livelihood.

(Excerpt from *The Washington Post*; full article at this link: <https://wapo.st/48l5agB>)

Take a Hike!

The Redwood Chapter Needs Volunteers to...

Become Outings Leaders, as we reinstate our outings program post-pandemic. Lead hikes, mountain biking or backpacking trips, kayaking excursions - whatever you love in the outdoors. This can be an awesome way to meet friends and find a like-minded community in your local area.

Help us organize campaigns in conservation, forest protection, water sustainability, environmental and social justice, and more. You can join a current campaign, such as our effort to hold PG&E accountable to update their infrastructure to prevent igniting catastrophic wildfires -- or you can be instrumental in driving a new initiative for the Chapter.

Assist in the regional and statewide 30x30 initiative to conserve 30% of California's land and waters by 2030.

We have many more ways we could put you to work, from helping generate social media and newsletter content to vetting candidates for office seeking Sierra Club's endorsement. Whatever your interests or niche skills, we have a job for you!

The Redwood Chapter of the Sierra Club welcomes volunteers from all backgrounds. We strive, however, to constantly deepen the diversity and representation in our membership, so we especially welcome volunteers from historically marginalized communities. We also welcome people of all ages, from college students to mid-career adults and retirees.

We're looking for people who want to take an active role in enjoying and protecting our home planet. So if you have an hour or two (or more!) per week to fight for your fellow species and the resources upon which human life depends, please drop us a line. Email

redwoodmembership@gmail.com

and include the words "NEW VOLUNTEER" in your subject line.

We can't wait to meet you!



Broken Promises

(cont'd from page 4)

If you are as concerned about this as we are, we urge you to write to the Board of SMART through its Chairman at ELucan@marincounty.org in time for SMART's meeting on **January 17, 2024**. Pass the word to other advocates, and to representatives of other State and local agencies you know which would have concerns, or even jurisdiction, in a matter of this kind. Also, to ensure coordination of effort, let us know at mobilizesonoma@vom.com.

In the meantime, some of us are working on a local campaign to change the decisions being made, and even to find other ways to help SMART secure the revenues it needs to keep its freight operation running. We hope to be able to write an article in a future Needles publication that confirms a positive outcome to this dilemma and the saving of the Baylands from yet another threat to its very existence.

Norman Gilroy, Mobilize Sonoma.

Federal Regulators Reject Controversial Pumped Storage Project Proposed for Sonoma Coast

Federal regulators have denied a requested preliminary permit for a highly [controversial hydropower facility](#) on coastal land near Fort Ross, all but shutting down a proposal that aroused anger and opposition throughout the region.

In a six-page decision issued Tuesday, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission noted a wide range of public and governmental objections to the proposed project, its potential environmental impacts and ramifications for protected public lands, including the Fort Ross State Historic Park and the Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary offshore.

Forest Innovation Summit 2023

(cont'd from page 8)



There is a Federal Advisory Committee called FACA established by the U.S. Forest Service to solicit advice and recommendations on landscape management approaches to update the Plan framework guiding management in consideration of current science and local economic, social, and environmental conditions. FACA includes 21 representatives from key constituencies including: the scientific community with specific expertise related to forests and fire ecology, wildlife, aquatics, vegetation and adaptive management, indigenous traditional ecological knowledge, conservation organizations, the forest products industry, outdoor recreation, government agencies, and the general public. Sierra Club has an internal committee

The Tuesday decision still allows Alabama-based [Hydro Green Energy](#) to seek a rehearing before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission within 30 days.

But the commission particularly highlighted legal prohibitions on authorizing projects in the California Coastal National Monument — more than 20,000 federally protected islands, rocks, pinnacles and exposed reefs off the California coast, as well as six onshore units, one of them in Point Arena, overseen by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.

tracking the progress of FACA and providing additional support and input.

We are challenged as caretakers of the land – how can we create opportunities out of the constraints? How can we both accomplish being responsible forest stewards and produce needed wood products?

My prayer to our trees since the early 1970s, upon seeing timber trucks loaded with old growth going down the highways, is this:

Thank you for being here, and providing shade and beauty. Thank you for giving yourselves over for our wellbeing. May you be used completely and may your future generations be healthy and thrive.

For more information on the Forest Summit, visit <https://www.forestinnovationsummit.com/>

(Photos by Jim Horn, taken at Sue-meg State Park, (formerly Patrick's Point), and Taylor Mountain)

(Photos by Jim Horn, taken at Sue-meg State Park, (formerly Patrick's Point), and Taylor Mountain)

"We've always said this project was dead on arrival," California Senate Majority Leader Mike McGuire, D-Healdsburg, said Tuesday. "I'm glad that it's now official."

(Excerpt from Press Democrat article by Mary Callahan: <https://bit.ly/3v6LqPr>)



Redwood Needles

Sierra Club

Redwood Chapter

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Volunteer with Us!

NEW MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE—COME JOIN US!

We're seeking committee members who want to help recruit new members and volunteers and invite them into the Chapter. Committee members will help current members, Theresa Ryan and Elayna Trucker, build the committee and put into place policies that will make all new members feel welcomed, informed, and ready to help with this important work.

As the committee grows, we hope members will help with tabling and other recruitment events, as well as host regular orientation and onboarding meetings. We're especially looking for members who have worked within the Sierra Club framework for some time, but all assistance is welcome! Please reach out to us at redwoodmembership@gmail.com.

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

[\[https://www.sierraclub.org/redwood/outings-leaderappandresources\]](https://www.sierraclub.org/redwood/outings-leaderappandresources) *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 Dan Mayhew at drmehew356@gmail.com to find out more.