

Redwood Needles



Summer 2026

Sierra Club Redwood Chapter

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Chapter Director—June Briefing

By Alicia Bales, Redwood Chapter Executive Director

Happy Summer Solstice everyone! Last week I celebrated my ONE YEAR anniversary as the Redwood Chapter Director. It has been a very eventful month full of milestones and important stories, and I'm really grateful to each of you for all the work and care you are putting in. It's been a powerful first year!

Please mark your calendars for these important upcoming events:

Wednesday, July 1 @ 9am, Sacramento and online: AB2494, Assemblymember

Rogers' bill to change the mandate of the Demonstration State Forest Program, will get a vote in the Senate Natural Resources Committee. The public is welcome to attend in person, and you can also watch the live stream [here](#).

July 9 and Every Two Weeks @ 4pm via

Zoom: Stop the Steal, Protect the Eel, biweekly meeting of the Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District in Southern California. Join via zoom for public comment, tell them why they should NOT attempt to purchase the Potter Valley Project. More information and zoom link [here](#).



Alicia Bales (photo from NatureBridge.org)

Saturday, July 11 @ 1pm, Napa: the Napa Group and the Chapter Outings Committee are hosting a CPR training for Chapter and Group Outings leaders at Skyline Park in Napa. Please contact our Outings Chair Samantha Shearman at [sa-manthashearman@gmail.com](mailto:samanthashearman@gmail.com) to attend. Free for Outings Leaders-in-training.

Tuesday, July 21 - Friday, July 24 @ Forks of Salmon, Salmon River, Western Siskiyou County: SRF hosts the Spring-Run Chinook Symposium in conjunction with the Salmon River Restoration Council's Annual Cooperative Salmon River Spring Chinook & Summer Steelhead Dive. Last fall's Redwood Chapter visit to the Salmon River will be rescheduled to participate in the Spring Chinook count this year, please let me know by June 30 if you'd like to attend!

Saturday, August 8 @ 9am-12pm Hanson Gravel Pits Restoration Site visit, Russian River, Sonoma County: Sonoma Group is planning a tour with Russian Riverkeeper's Don McEnhill, save the date! More info [here](#).

Read more about Alicia [here](#).



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Redwood Needles

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Redwood Chapter Leadership

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

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* Signifies voting member of the ExCom

Our Iconic Valley Oaks are Threatened by the Mediterranean Oak Borer! (MOB)

By Redwood Chapter Forest Committee Members Patricia Damery (Landowner) and Matt Banchemo (Arborist, Sandborn Tree Service, ISA#WI4432-A, TRAQ)

The beloved valley oak in Napa's historic Dry Creek Pioneer Cemetery, whose generous boughs have graced our lavender field for many years, is not leafing out. We feared her demise. Last year when a branch died abruptly, an arborist diagnosed Mediterranean Oak Borer (MOB). We cut the infected bough, irrigated the drip line intermittently in the hottest part of the summer, mulched with 3-4" of fresh arborist mulch and hoped that the tree's vitality would carry her through. When another branch died, we had it cut as well. The tree, once beautiful with its great limbs sweeping the heavens, became a shadow of itself. Our attempts to save her have only made her smaller and odder.

Our iconic valley oaks are showing signs of stress and dying. Those ancient trees have defined Napa Valley for centuries. Sadly, 98% of these Napa Valley oaks have already been cut for agriculture and development. Now those remaining are threatened by MOB.

This past January, two members of Redwood Chapter's Forest Committee spoke with Mike Jones, Forestry Advisor with UC Cooperative Extension, about the latest research he and Curtis Ewing, a CalFire entomologist, are conducting on MOB. MOB has been identified in California for about 7 years but may have been here much longer. MOB is an invasive species; we are only now learning about its habits. It favors the oldest oaks in a population first. This is a particular problem in urban forests where the largest and most charismatic trees are often the only ones retained during urban development. It makes the loss of these historic trees more emotionally poignant and financially painful.

MOB is an ambrosia beetle. A multitude of ambrosia beetle species are found around the world including native California species. Within native ranges, ambrosia beetles find stressed or damaged trees and are a contributing factor to tree mortality. In a healthy system removal of a few older, stressed trees makes room for young vigorous growth. However, we live in a globalized world where small, innocuous decomposers can become epidemics threatening whole tree populations.

MOB is tiny, smaller than a grain of rice. It can fly miles when aided by wind. MOB typically is attracted to the upper tree canopy. It chews through the bark into the sapwood where it inoculates the wood with a mix of fungal spores from an organ located under its jaws. MOB farms the fungus to feed to its young. Over a dozen identified species of fungus are associated with MOB; two of them are toxic to our native Oaks. When MOB reach maturity and temperatures are above 75 degrees, fledgling beetles fly to other parts of the same tree or find new trees to infect.



*Diseased (left) and healthy (right) valley oaks
(photo by Jeanne Chinn)*

Cont'd on page 5

Water Agencies, Tribes and Conservation Groups Defend “Two-Basin Solution” Amid Federal Meetings on Potter Valley Project

The following is reprinted from the June 16 issue of [Native News Online](#)

A coalition of water agencies, counties, Tribes, and conservation organizations behind the Two-Basin Solution is raising concerns over recent reports that Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins convened a meeting in Washington, D.C. with PG&E’s chief executive, Interior Secretary Doug Burgum, and the Eelsnore Valley Municipal Water District regarding the future of the Potter Valley Project on the Eel River.

The coalition says the reported federal-level discussions risk undermining a locally negotiated agreement that has been years in the making and is designed to balance water supply reliability with long-term river restoration.

The coalition noted that the partnership includes the Round Valley Indian Tribes, a federally recognized confederation of Native American tribes, with deep ancestral ties to the Eel River, water agencies serving roughly 600,000 people in the Russian River basin, county governments, and conservation organizations that have worked for decades on fisheries restoration.

“Restoring the Eel is about healing our river and our community, and it was important to us to come to an agreement that supported our neighboring communities as well,” Joseph Parker, president of the Round Valley Indian Tribes, said. “That is why we spent years at the table with our partners building the Two-Basin Solution, because we believe communities in both watersheds deserve a sustainable future. We are committed to that vision, and we will see it through.”

The Two-Basin Solution is the result of extensive collaboration among the Round Valley Indian Tribes, Sonoma Water, Humboldt County, the Mendocino County Inland Water and Power Commission, California Trout, Trout Un-

limited, and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. The agreement envisions PG&E’s removal of its aging and uneconomic Eel River dams, restoration of the Eel River, and the con-



The concrete arch Fernbridge is the first bridge to span the Eel above its mouth. (Photo/Public domain)

struction of replacement infrastructure to maintain water supply stability in the Russian River basin.

“We share the Secretary’s concern with maintaining water security in the region, but the USDA’s actions undermine our locally negotiated agreement that provides that security,” said Mari Rodin, a member of the City of Ukiah City Council and an appointee to the Mendocino County Inland Water and Power Commission. “It is incredibly important to us and our communities that control of resources stay in local hands.”

Charlie Schneider, Connectivity Program Manager for California Trout, emphasized that the agreement was built through local collaboration across both watersheds.

“The future of the Eel and Russian Rivers should be decided by the people who live along them and depend on them, not brokered in Washington between political appointees and outside interests,” Schneider said. “The Two-Basin Solution was built here, by this community, across both watersheds. It is the only plan that protects water supply stability for the Russian River while restoring the salmon runs that our northern California communities depend on.”

The proposed plan includes creation of the New Eel-Russian Facility (NERF), which would allow continued diversions of water from the Eel River to the Russian River while supporting modernized infrastructure. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), which is overseeing PG&E’s decommissioning process, has previously identified NERF as a viable replacement option in its scoping documents.

“We’ve been working diligently, and have secured the funding, to design the New Eel-Russian Facility to provide water supply reliability for Lake Mendocino, for future storage in Potter Valley and for the Russian River watershed,” said David Rabbitt, Board Chair of the Eel-Russian Project Authority. “The Two-Basin Solution is how water supply stability is maintained.”

Round Valley leaders also expressed concern about the involvement of the U.S. Department of the Interior in the Washington meeting, noting that there are no Bureau of Reclamation facilities in the region and pointing to the department’s federal trust responsibility to Tribes, including the Round Valley Indian Tribes.

The coalition’s conservation partners also urged continued adherence to the existing decommissioning process and locally negotiated framework.

“The Two-Basin Solution took years of detailed negotiations with tribes, irrigators, municipal users, and conservation groups to find a way to accommodate everyone’s interests when these dams are gone,” said Trout Unlimited’s California Director Matt Clifford. “It’s frustrating that a Southern California water agency would try to override what is a very locally focused and successful effort.”

The partnership says it remains committed to advancing the Two-Basin Solution and continuing coordination with PG&E to ensure the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission-led decommissioning process proceeds on schedule.

Mediterranean Oak Borer (cont'd from p. 3)

Jones says the latest research is examining chemical control of high-value trees. Currently, recommendations for treating trees with trunk injections of insecticide and fungicide are based on the relative success with treating Invasive Shot Hole Borers (ISHB) in Southern California. (ISOB is another nonnative invasive ambrosia beetle targeting a variety of native and ornamental trees common in urban California forests.)

Phosphorous Acid, a topical bark spray, commonly referred to as Agri-fos (systemic fungicide) and used to treat Sudden Oak Death, is also being tested.

Use of chemicals may be a double-edged sword. Hopefully, these chemicals, when properly applied, may save oaks. However, little is known about the impact these chemicals may have on the diverse ecosystem associated with our California oaks. Moths, butterflies, Gaul wasps, and a multitude of other invertebrates may be impacted by the chemicals intended to save these trees.

Stressed trees are at greatest risk, and all of our valley oaks are stressed. Valley oaks have traditionally thrived as part of river/flood systems. Elimination of beaver dams, salmon runs delivering ocean nutrients inland, lowered water tables, increased impermeable surfaces, interruption of low intensity fires reducing competition, and cycling nutrients have all contributed to stress on older trees in the last 175 years.

We're also on a warming planet, and in California, that means more severe cycles of drought and flooding. The severe drought from 2012 to 2016 stressed our oaks and likely made them more vulnerable to MOB. The most important thing we can do is keep our valley oaks healthy. Jones suggests mulching under the tree's drip line to cool the soil and retain moisture, sanitary pruning, and irrigating at the dripline before summer heat events may also help reduce stress on

the trees.

Regular monitoring of trees by arborists or educated tree lovers can detect early signs of upper canopy infections. When caught very early, sanitary pruning practices can remove infected branches. However, chemicals used prophylactically, before trees are infected, is the only option showing any promise of saving individual trees in high MOB population areas.



Diseased oak (photo by Jeanne Chinn)

But what do you do if a valley oak, like the one in Pioneer Cemetery, is obviously stressed and dying, and an arborist gives you the MOB diagnosis? Field evidence suggests the tree is too far gone to be helped. By the time trees show significant signs of infection including dead portions of the crown, leaf wilt, and beetle frass (sawdust) visible on the lower trunk, they should be removed.

Removing a large valley oak in an urban setting costs anywhere from \$5,000 to \$50,000 depending on logistics.

The next question is, what to do with the wood? Chipping, grinding, burning, or burying the wood is recommended. Many large tree companies and compost yards have high-capacity industrial wood grinders. Ideally, MOB infected wood should be prioritized for immediate grinding to a fine consistency to limit beetles

escaping the logs.

Many small to medium sized tree services use mini excavators or compact track loaders to handle large wood from removals. There are many options for modular attachments to these machines that can break down larger logs to fit into traditional tow behind chippers. Wood screws and wood crackers are well proven technology in this industry, but many small companies are unwilling to invest in the equipment. There is little incentive to follow best practices for managing waste material when there are no county or state quarantines and the best practices are not enforced by any agencies.

Air curtain burners are portable/semi-portable insulated fire boxes with powerful fans that keep smoke and most particulates inside the burn chamber until fully combusted. Air curtain burners are a true wood disposal system. Grinders make undesirable bulky wood waste into usable mulch products, but don't reduce overall mass of unwanted material.

Wood mulch still requires hauling to a final end-use destination. Air curtain burners reduce whole trees to ash leaving only 2-3% of the original mass. Siting and permitting for air curtain burners can be difficult. The number of Air curtain burners in use are increasing annually to deal with forest debris and storm damage.

However, local political will is needed for finding and funding appropriate sites and overcoming perceived air quality control concerns. Air curtain burners have been run in every California county so permitting is possible though sometimes onerous.

On large properties just digging a big hole with an excavator and dropping the wood in and covering it with at least a foot of soil can be done relatively cheaply.

Burying wood for sequestering car-

Cont'd on page 6

Mediterranean Oak Borer

(cont'd from p. 5)

bon and building soil is a well-known technique in Europe known as hügelkultur. When done with intention and skill, mounds of buried wood can be used to prevent surface water run-off, create privacy berms along highways, and be planted with native flowering or edible plant species. Bulldozer operators cutting fire lines will often blade soil over dry vegetation to reduce flammability so burying wood should not be looked at as a revolutionary idea.

The choice of what to do with the infected wood is contextual based on the setting, available tools, and local ordinances.

City/county municipalities must budget for care of trees and designated disposal areas for chipping or burning infected wood. MOB has escaped into our environment; other pests are on the horizon, and many more that we're not even aware of yet.

Cost-effective wood disposal options are a requirement for tree health and dovetails with wildfire mitigation efforts. Inexpensive disposal keeps this wood out of commercial firewood lots. Moving firewood is the most significant cause of spread. **DON'T MOVE FIREWOOD.**

Most of all, we need to plant more oaks and protect existing young oaks from deer and livestock browsing. MOB is targeting older trees. We need to replace them with younger ones that may show resistance for many years. While MOB has escaped into California, the population of MOB will hopefully decline over time giving younger oaks a chance to thrive. MOB's impact will take at least 100 years to stabilize. When looking at protecting valley oak as a species, not just charismatic individuals, planting and protecting the next generation of trees must be a priority.

Lucille Vinyard- A Sierra Club Icon

By Dana Utman, Chair, North Group

(Read more here—<https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/lucille-vinyard.htm>)

History is always unfolding because, ironically, we keep learning new things about it. Archeologists unearth never before seen artifacts to help understand the story of a place.

The Sierra Club's founder, John Muir reportedly said: "I'll interpret the rocks, learn the language of the flood, storm the avalanche. I'll acquaint myself with the glaciers and wild gardens, and get as near the heart of the world as I can." It was this quote that recorded the first use of the word "interpret" to describe nature.

On the north coast we are lucky to have Redwood National and Prairie Creek State Parks. The majestic redwoods are a reminder of the timber wars that took place in the 20th century. If you visit those parks you will learn about some of the founders. But not all of them. Former Sierra Club Redwood Chapter leader Lucille Vinyard may be there in spirit, but you wouldn't know about her contribution to the park. Not in the visitor centers, not in the signage, or any park interpretive program.

The National Park Service's mission includes preserving the natural and cultural resources for the "enjoyment, education and inspiration of this and future generations." For a park visitor to be enlightened they would need to know the truth as we understand it today. Park interpreters in both the state and national parks study Psychologist Abraham Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs*. It begins with a human's basic needs and ends with self-actualization. But if you choose to walk that path to awareness, according to Maslow, you need knowledge and understanding for growth.

There is an article on the National Park Service's (NPS) website about Lucille Vinyard, describing her as the "Mother of Redwoods." The author Cole Manley cited Vinyard's tireless

and brave work, inspiring professors at Humboldt State University to form the organization *Citizens for Redwood National Park* in 1965 to push back against the timber companies and save the remaining 5% of the old growth tall trees. The NPS made her an honorary park ranger.

At Cal Poly Humboldt (as Humboldt State is now called) you can find the *Lucille Vinyard Papers*. The documentation helps to establish how her efforts

played a major part in creating Redwood National Park in 1968, and the expansion that came later.

Lucille Vinyard formed another group to help her achieve her goals, the Sierra Club Redwood Chapter North Group that I am the chair of today. Representing the North Group, Vinyard attended all the Redwood National Park hearings. Her life was threatened so often that she needed to be escorted in and out of meetings. She told Greg King, according to his book *Ghost Forest*, that it "... was the ugliest thing I ever went

through in my life."

In her 1969 diary she left this note: "The astronauts reported the earth to be a beautiful place as viewed from outer space. I still find the earth and all it holds a beautiful thing as viewed from the land—from the tiniest of insects to the largest of mammals; from the smallest of plants to the greatest of trees. Even the casual observer can find a great joy in a brilliant sunset or the graceful flight of a soaring hawk. The earth and all it encompasses is a place in the great scheme of nature from which one can continue to learn if he cares to slow down a bit and look around him."

We are hoping to have Redwood National Park include Lucille Vinyard's story at their visitor center and wherever it can be told.



Lucille Vinyard planting an evergreen tree in Humboldt Redwoods State Park, 1975. Photo by Bill Devoid.

Sheephouse Creek Logging Linked to Dirty Biomass

The following is a June 24, 2026, article by Helen-Teri Shore on the Redwood Chapter website, available at <https://www.sierraclub.org/redwood/blog/2026/06/sheephouse-creek-logging-linked-dirty-biomass>

While celebrating the defeat of the Timber Harvest Plan for never-ending logging in the redwood forest of Sheephouse Creek in Jenner, forest defenders learned that the operation appeared to be directly linked to advancing dirty biomass generation in Sonoma County and beyond.

Author, activist and top-notch researcher Greg King, who wrote the illuminating and devastating history of our redwoods in his book *The Ghost Forest*, was the featured speaker at the gathering at the Jenner Community Center on Friday, June 12. The event brought together a “who’s who” of West County activists that was originally set up as a legal fundraiser to challenge logging plans for 1,099 acres of private land surrounded by the Jenner Headlands Preserve. Instead, we shared an unexpected win for the land and habitat for spotted owls and coho salmon after a strong grassroots campaign to stop it by the Sheephouse Creek Alliance <https://agora.co/campaign/save-sheephouse-creek> and many supporting groups including Sierra Club.

King leveraged his decades of forest defense dating back to the timber wars and protection of Headwaters Forest to help stop logging of Sheephouse Creek’s remaining forest. As he joined in the celebration and in-person good energy, he opened his talk with an overview of the various extractive proposals for the Sonoma Coast defeated by community organizing, such as the nuclear plant at Bodega Head. He then revealed the close ties between Sheephouse Creek logging and the polluting biomass industry.

King discovered that the old sawmill in Duncan Mills is owned by the same

entity that wants to log in Sheephouse Creek and Jenner Gulch. Whatever “waste wood” from logging would be hauled to the mill for processing, including as conversion to fuel for bio-energy production—that is, burning wood for fuel in powerplants to make electricity that is dirtier than coal.

The push for logging to profit off the last of our county and state’s forest lands for biomass fuels is part of a widescale effort in Sonoma County and across California and the West from timber interests, claiming that



it benefits “forest resilience.” King cited a report by a group called Regenerative Forest Solutions that claims that about half of Sonoma County’s remaining forests would be a target for logging and wood biomass.

Another entity called Timbershed has received millions of dollars from CalFire, the US Forest Service and the state of California that have directly decimated our forests to purchase the local sawmill from Sheephouse Creek owners to process wood from all over the county in the name of forest health.

“Logging in the guise of “forest health” is a rapidly growing business model in the country and now especially in the West,” King told us.

“Assertions that the action is not logging but “thinning,” that the forest will become more “resilient” against wildfire, and that the “waste wood” can be turned into “green products,” particularly “green energy,” are themes that suffuse the recent literature.”

The facts prove otherwise. Biomass

energy is known to produce high levels of air pollution and climate emissions, threatens public health, and is expensive compared to cleaner energy. See the Center for Biological Diversity’s “Debunking the Biomass Myth” for more details. [https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/campaigns/debunking-the-biomass-myth/#](https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/campaigns/debunking-the-biomass-myth/)

Sierra Club has a clear policy against using wood from our forests to make fuel for biomass energy generation. See <https://www.sierraclub.org/sites/default/files/2025-06/sc-forest-biomass-policy.pdf>

King said he is not against all forest management. He has found that careful removal of some trees and bushes is beneficial such as in the Arcata Community Forest. There the land is managed for long term ecosystem benefits and wildfire resistance, not commercial logging profits.

To read the full text of King’s talk and research on the links between commercial logging, thinning and biomass, see his newly published piece “Giant Sticks of Coal—that’s logging in the 21st Century” here: <https://medium.com/@siskiyoland/giant-sticks-of-coal-thats-logging-in-the-21st-century-14db531da596>

While we can all be relieved that Sheephouse Creek is safe for now, and hope that it might be protected forever in the future, we need to continue to be vigilant in forest defense and cautious about proposals for thinning, forest resiliency and ties to dirty biomass energy.

*Ed. Note: **But not so fast!***

Update—unfortunately, the landowner (using a new LLC) apparently plans to submit a new logging plan for the same property, still linked to biomass energy. We will keep you updated as events develop.

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Come Volunteer with Us!

Outings Program Update—Our First Outing!!

Outings Leader Webster Marquez, along with Outings Chair Samantha Shearman and Chapter Director Alicia Bales, led a group of avid hikers through the beautiful Tolay Lake Regional Park near Petaluma on Fathers' Day(see photos). We're just getting started, folks!

Want to lead outdoor trips?

Minimum Requirements for Sierra Club outdoor trip leaders:

1. Be a current Sierra Club member 18 years of age or older.
2. Complete the Outings Leader Training
3. Possess appropriate level of First Aid required by the Chapter. Basic First Aid certification is the minimum.
4. Demonstrate proficiency of essential skills for the activity.
5. Complete all required training and provisional leads required by the Chapter. One trip is the minimum.
6. Receive final approval from the Chapter.



L-R: Alicia Bales, Webster Marquez and Samantha Shearman in Tolay Lake Regional Park

Interested in being an Outings Leader? Contact Samantha at samanthakshearman@gmail.com to find out more.