

Redwood Needles



Winter 2021

Sierra Club Redwood Chapter

Volume 63, No. 1



Looking Out on a Winter Wonderland: First Snow in Trinity County

On the Path

a note from
Chapter Director Jeff Morris

December 2020 marked my two-year anniversary as the director of Redwood Chapter. During these last two years, I've seen our organization grow in capacity, efficacy and influence across our nine-county region. One of the key drivers of this growth has been new volunteers.

In this new year, I expect our need for volunteers to grow, as well.

A number of projects that we're working on will require additional assistance including:

- The process for restoring salmon and steelhead populations on the Eel River, including removal of Scott Dam;
- Sea-level rise issues impacting areas adjacent to the San Francisco Bay;
- The emerging update of the Northwest Forest Plan;
- Forest management and fire resiliency issues and policy development;
- Continued work around land-use planning, enacting moratoriums on new fossil fuel infrastructure, and transportation planning region-wide.

All of these will be within the over-arching contexts of climate change, equity and environmental justice. This will require more volunteers to assist our limited staff to be sure that we have a positive and strong impact upon moving all of these projects forward.

Volunteering doesn't have to be hard nor a long-term commitment. Connecting your skills or passion to an organization with a mission that speaks to you while committing at a level that fits your life will bring you a feeling of joy and purpose.

Redwood Chapter has been lucky to acquire a few volunteers who bring their professional skills to their volunteer efforts in retirement. Jeanne Chinn, our Forest Committee chair, is recently retired from the state Department of Fish and Wildlife. Liz Johnson, our new legal chair, has been a lawyer and Superior Court judge. Other new volunteers have joined in to do everything from taking meeting notes, to assisting us with coordinating presentations and events, to building out public policy ideas and statements.

I've witnessed the long-term results of volunteerism. For almost 20 years, my family worked on the establishment of the Trinity Alps Wilderness Area, which was established in 1984 after almost two decades of public meetings, lobbying, congressional hearings and social gatherings. The result was the protection of some of the most pristine alpine territory on the West Coast, which, as part of the Klamath Mountains, also hosts the second-most biodiverse areas of conifers on the planet.

Volunteering can be incredibly rewarding and have long-term positive effects. Please get in touch with us if you're interested. We welcome your energy and talents.



Jeff Morris as a boy in 1977 with his father, who helped establish the Trinity Alps Wilderness Area.

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Jeff Morris".



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Cover Photo: Jeff Morris

Now is the time to roll up your sleeves

Become an active volunteer to promote environmental work in your community

By **Shoshana Hebshi**
Chapter Communications Coordinator

As we complete our collective exhale following the defeat of Donald Trump in the Nov. 3 election, it feels good to be able to have one less atrocious thing to fight. There are so many pressing issues that require our attention, including the biggest threat in modern history: climate change.

Following the 2016 presidential election, Redwood Chapter participated in a volunteer expo at the Sonoma County Fairgrounds looking to recruit new volunteers for our chapter and local groups. The expo was packed with people newly energized by that election who wanted to get involved and fight back. It was before the Women's March, and felt like the first collective gathering of the resistance.

The chapter's booth at the expo was busy all day. People picked up information, signed up for our newsletter and to volunteer. We ended the day feeling excited about the interest shown for Sierra Club and its work, new connections formed and all the work that lay ahead.

But, as you know, the four, long years of the Trump administration made us all tired, inured to the latest scandals or environmental regulation rollback. The initial energy and excitement that we felt waned. This effect, along with ongoing environmental catastrophes, including horrific wildfires, drought and flooding, have made volunteering for Sierra Club ever more important.

We have an incredible group of volunteer leadership throughout the chapter and groups, but there is a grave need for new energy. We need Sierra Club members to step up and get active in their local groups and this chapter to keep it going, to keep it relevant in all the important environmental policy and protection that happens in our region. The local level is the most effective place to get things

done, and we have not only room to grow, but vacancies to fill.

The following is a list of important volunteer positions we need filled to



continue working effectively. If you are interested in any of these positions, please contact Chapter Director Jeff Morris: jeff.morris@sierraclub.org

Chapter Secretary

The secretary has the overall responsibility of maintaining the records of the chapter. The secretary can function best in a close working relationship with the chair, including advising on meeting agendas and assisting with the conduct of executive committee meetings. This includes maintaining a basic familiarity with Robert's Rules and/or other basic meeting operating procedures.

Responsibilities include: keeping minutes of chapter meetings, tracking and recording votes of the chapter executive committee, securing and reserving meeting locations, coordinating annual chapter elections, maintaining chapter records.

Estimated Time Commitment: 15-20 hours per month.

Outings Chair

Provide leadership, direction and oversight to the chapter outings program, as well as the outings programs of all local groups. Work to make outdoor activities an integrated and vital element of chapter efforts. Qualifications include familiarity

with the Outings Leader Training and national and local Club outings policies and procedures.

Responsibilities include ensuring that all chapter and group outings follow Club policies and procedures, managing and minimizing the risks of local outings programs, maintaining training and First-Aid certification requirements for outings leaders, and ensuring active leaders meet these requirements, maintaining communication with Group Outings Chairs, coordinating scheduling, planning, and fulfilling publication requirements of all outings within the chapter, working

with leaders to integrate conservation issues into the outings program whenever possible, and maintaining records as required by the chapter and national outing program.

Estimated Time Commitment: 10-15 hours a month.

Membership Engagement Chair

Be the friendly face that introduces new members and volunteers to Sierra Club 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 events and activities throughout the chapter, welcoming new members, recruiting and tracking new members, engaging with other groups and attending events to promote Sierra Club membership.

Estimated Time Commitment: 10 hours a month.

Water Chair

The Water Chair will oversee all chapter activity dealing with water issues and coordinate water-related activities with groups. This is a posi-

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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 in either Santa Rosa or Willits. The meetings are being held over Zoom during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Chapter Director:

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Chapter Communications Coordinator:

Shoshana Hebshi • shoshana.hebshi@sierraclub.org

Administrative Staff:

Tom Devlin • (707) 544-7651 • tdevlin@sonic.net

Regional Coal Organizer:

Jacob Klein • jacob.klein@sierraclub.org

Chapter Chair • At Large • Political Chair • RCC Delegate • Wilderness Chair:

Victoria Brandon* • (707) 994-1931 • vbrandon95457@gmail.com

Vice Chair • Solano Group Delegate to Chapter:

Joe Feller* • (415) 902-3395

Secretary: Joan Dambros

Treasurer & Finance Committee Chair:

Jana Selph • (707) 829-5356

At Large • Council of Club Leaders Alternate • RCC Delegate:

Rue Furch* • (707) 823-3555

At Large • Conservation Chair • Council of Club Leaders Delegate:

Tom Roth* • (707) 632-5873

At Large • Energy and Climate Chair:

Randy MacDonald* • (707) 391-0833

Transportation Chair:

Steve Birdlebough • (707) 576-6632

Legal Chair: Elizabeth Johnson*

Grazing Chair: Felice Pace • (707) 954-6588

Forest Chair:

Jeanne Wetzell Chinn

Lake Group Delegate to Chapter:

Debi Sally* • (707) 235-9011

Lake Group Delegate Alternate:

Denise Rushing • (707) 560-1166

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Mendocino Group Delegate Alternate: Robin Leler

Napa Group Delegate to Chapter:

Chris Benz

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Ned Forsyth* • (707) 826-2417

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Joyce Yowell • (559) 916-8575

Sonoma Group Delegate to Chapter:

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

Chapter Webmaster: Melanie Matway

* Signifies voting member of the ExCom

Two wildfire events shed light on current trends

By Shoshana Hebshi

Chapter Communications Coordinator

In the last part of November and the first part of December, it really started feeling like winter, and like we were out of fire season. But then on Dec. 6 part of our region (Napa and Sonoma counties) received notice of a red-flag warning as winds spiked on Dec. 7 and the temperature climbed into the mid-70s. Apparently, the threat of wildfire continues to lengthen year after year.

Redwood Chapter turned its attention to this trend with two online wildfire events in early December to raise awareness and bring more discussion about what has been happening, some of the “fixes” that have been enacted and many of the challenges we face as climate-change driven wildfires continue to plague our region and beyond.

On Dec. 4, the chapter hosted a screening of “The West is Burning,” an hour-long documentary released a month earlier that leads in with the Tubbs Fire of 2017 and goes on to show the massive destruction wildfires have regionally and in Oregon and Washington, as well. The film was a launching point for us to bring more conversation around this complex issue that affects us all in a myriad of ways.

Following the screening we had commentary from four panelists: Melanie Parker, the Deputy Director of Sonoma County Regional Parks, who was featured in the film; Tom Roth, Redwood Chapter’s Conservation Committee Chair; Nick Goulette, the executive director of Watershed Research and Training Center in Hayfork, Trinity County, and Jeanne Chinn, Redwood Chapter’s Forest Committee Chair. The panelists also answered questions from the Zoom audience, many of whom wanted to know more about CalFire’s role in forest management and thinning of forests.

By discussing the effects of climate change and the land use decisions that can make wildfires more destructive, the panel discussion helped fill in some holes in the film.

It also provided a perfect lead-in to the second event on Dec. 8, which featured a presentation from Alexandra Syphard, Ph.D., on recent wildfire trends in California, comparing the roles of climate change and land use change in altering fire patterns, and the importance of land use change in wildfire risk to human lives and property.

Three other panelists joined in the discussion: Teri Shore from Greenbelt Alliance and a former executive committee member of our Sonoma Group; Leyna Quinn-Davidson, an area fire advisor to U.C. Cooperative Extension and a co-chair for the statewide U.C. Fire Working Group; and Dr. Frank Aebly, District Ranger of the Mendocino National Forest Upper Lake District.

One of the main takeaways from this talk was learning Syphard’s research indicates that much of the massive destruction caused by recent megafires originates from medium-density residential construction in the Wildland Urban Interface. Homes in these areas are more vulnerable to fire than those in densely populated urban areas, and increased human activities in the wildlands spark more fires, as well. Wiser land-use decisions can work to make our communities safer.

In realizing there is still so much to discuss, Redwood Chapter will be facilitating another wildfire talk in late January to look at our own wildfire policy and hear from some more experts. Stay tuned for more info.

2021 Flyway Festival slated for Feb. 5-7 in hybrid fashion

By Myrna Hayes

Special to Redwood Needles

The San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival celebrates an estimated 1 million shorebirds, the highest concentration on the Pacific Flyway, that stop or overwinter on San Francisco Bay. As many as 250,000 waterfowl—ducks and geese—and tens of thousands of migrating hawks, along with millions of songbirds, pass through or overwinter in the Bay Area. The festival will continue on in 2021, slated for Feb. 5 to 7.

The free, annual Flyway Festival was founded 26 years ago by the Mare Island Heritage Trust. It is based on Mare Island, adjacent to Vallejo, to ensure that wildlife enthusiasts can experience the wild side of the island and to provide access to thousands of acres of wildlife habitat on nearby National Refuge and State Wildlife Areas, as well as nonprofit-operated protected lands. This habitat includes more than 3800 tidal and non-tidal wetlands on Mare Island and attracts many endangered species.

The festival also provides an exciting opportunity for people living on the “north shore” of the East Bay, many of whom are low income and come from diverse ethnic backgrounds, to experience the wildness of the region. These communities do not have year-round access to the nature centers to which those who live in the East Bay, on the Peninsula, in Marin and San Francisco may take for granted. The mission of the festival has been to provide access



The San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival is a spectacular event showcasing the wildness of the northeast Bay where millions of birds migrate through.

with no one being turned away from this once-a-year chance to experience the wildness where they live.

of people can participate in our party for our “wild neighbors!”

Covid 19 pandemic requires unusual approach to Flyway Festival this year

Due to continuing Covid-19 restrictions for large indoor gatherings, we are making plans to host a virtual Wildlife Expo. We expect to engage our commercial vendors, nonprofit and natural resource agency exhibitors and live wildlife presenters and guest speakers, through Zoom formats and Facebook/Instagram Live type broadcasts. This format is exciting and at the same time, quite technically challenging. Our headquarters for the Wildlife Expo has always been at Mare Island, until last year, when we had to quickly relocate. We are confident that our “virtual” headquarters this year will return to Mare Island from where we hope to broadcast live on Facebook and Instagram. With this format, it’s possible that an even greater number

Outdoor wildlife viewing, beginning birding field-guided outings being scheduled now

Our more than 60 outings throughout the “north shore” of San Francisco Bay, will take place with social distance practices. The majority of our Audubon Society and expert wildlife guided outings are in Sonoma and Napa Counties, as well as some specialty hawk watching in Solano County. We are certain that we will offer many of our past Mare Island-based beginning bird-watching field trips, beginning birding I.D. classes, and nature, hiking, biking and history tours on the island.

Do you want to get involved in planning and offering this year’s Flyway Festival? Visit our website, www.sfbayflywayfestival.com and or call/text organizer Myrna Hayes, 707-249-9633. Follow our Facebook page for update posts.

Volunteer with Redwood Chapter, make a difference in your community and our greater region

Continued from Page 3

tion for someone who has a passion and knowledge about water issues in Northern California, including groundwater management, agricultural irrigation, streams and rivers, lakes and reservoirs, storm runoff and flood management.

Responsibilities include: maintaining communication with chapter leaders on water issues affecting the chapter’s region, coordinating with other organizations to stand up to threats to clean water and healthy waterways, recruiting and leading a water committee, providing leadership and direction on all Sierra Club issues and communications regarding water.

Estimated Time Commitment: 5 hours a month.

Beyond these positions, the chapter is looking for people who are passionate about environmental issues in their communities and want to help in whatever way you can lend a hand. If you’re interested in getting more involved but don’t see a volunteer position that calls to you and your skillset, please reach out. There are lots of ways for you to plug in, and we would love to have you.

For a fuller explanation of volunteer positions, please visit www.sierraclub.org/redwood/get-involved

CLIMATE CORNER

The time for climate activism is now, starts with us

By **Randy MacDonald**
*Chair, Redwood Chapter
Climate Protectors*

It is the worst of times for our climate, yet the best of times for climate action.

Never before has the American public shown more concern about climate change, and for good reason: evidence of global warming is all around us.

November 2020 was the hottest November on record worldwide. Unprecedented wildfires burned unchecked above the Arctic Circle this past summer. Hurricanes were so numerous that meteorologists had to break out their back-up list of Greek names to identify them all.

Yet in the face of all that, the United States elected a new president, who will make solving climate change a core goal of his administration. The reason Biden can do this is two-fold: a) The impact of our climate crisis is impossible to ignore any longer; and b) the majority of the American public understands that climate change is a real problem and they want real climate solutions.

Now is the time to act. At the federal level, the incoming administration is planning to take a “whole of government” approach to climate change, as recommended by the Climate 21 Project (climate21.org). Of course,

we must hold them to it—and we will—but it is such a relief to see the Biden-Harris team coming into office focused on our climate crisis after America suffered four years

and repeat the same message, there are no limits to what we can achieve.”

The people have the power to solve our climate crisis, but only

Nothing less than an ‘all in’ approach by all of us will be sufficient to meet the grave challenge we all face as our planet heats up.

with climate arsonist Trump in the White House.

We’re looking forward to climate progress at the federal level, but let’s not fool ourselves: Our national government can only do so much.

What we need is a “whole of society” response to the climate crisis, and that means you and me. We must demand climate action at the national and state levels, and we must make climate action happen in our communities and in our own lives. Nothing less than an “all in” approach by all of us will be sufficient to meet the grave challenge we all face as our planet heats up.

“There is hope...we are the hope – we, the people,” said youth climate leader Greta Thunberg in a recent address to a U.N. conference on climate progress. “For me, the hope lies in democracy—it is the people who have the power. If enough people stand up together

if we use it. Let’s use our power to make a real difference for our climate by doing what we can in our own lives to reduce our carbon footprint, and by working for climate solutions in our local communities where small numbers of climate activists have proven time and again that we can have a large impact.

For example, local activists working through the Sierra Club’s Ready for 100 campaign (sierraclub.org/ready-for-100) have persuaded more than 170 U.S. cities and towns to commit to use 100 percent clean, renewable energy in time to meet U.N. climate goals.

Whether you’ve been working for climate solutions a long time or are just getting started as a climate activist, we need your help.

Please visit our Climate Protectors website at climateprotectors.net and get involved!

ACTION ALERT: Ask Rep. Garamendi to support Eel River fish passage

Rep. John Garamendi, whose district includes portions of Redwood Chapter, has gone on record opposing dam removal on the Eel River. Dam removal is the most expeditious pathway to recovery of imperiled salmon and steelhead populations. Please ask Garamendi to reconsider by calling his district office at (530) 753-5301 or sending an email to Iain.Hart@mail.house.gov.

For more information check a recent posting to the chapter website: <https://www.sierraclub.org/redwood/blog/2020/12/second-chance-for-eel-river-salmon-and-steelhead>

Suisun Marsh: A wild gem of Solano County

By **Monique Liguori**

Special to Redwood Needles

The Suisun Marsh is a brackish-water marsh, part of the San Francisco Bay estuarine system, located where fresh water from the San Joaquin and Sacramento rivers meet tidal flow from the Pacific Ocean. It is the largest contiguous area of coastal wetland in California and is located entirely within Solano County. The name "Suisun" means "land of the west wind", and was the name of the local Native Americans, the southernmost group of the Patwin.

The Suisun Marsh currently comprises around 116,000 acres, but historically covered over 720,000 acres with wetland. It is home to Tule Elk, at least 220 species of waterfowl and other birds, and is an important feeding and resting station for waterfowl traveling the Pacific Flyway. Endangered species include the salt marsh harvest mouse and the Suisun aster, and nine species of raptor, including the uncommon black-shouldered kite, are found there in good numbers.

The marsh also supports a substantial population of resident shorebirds and waterfowl, and three heron rookeries of great egrets and great blue herons.

Twenty-one species of mammals, not including bats, have been identified in the Suisun Marsh. These include river otter, beaver, mink, muskrat, jackrabbit, striped skunk, raccoon, Suisun shrew, and the salt marsh harvest mouse.

Marshes provide measurable benefits to surrounding communities and beyond. Their warm shallow waters are ideal for the development of baby fish, so they function as a "fish nursery." Striped bass, catfish, crappie, sturgeon, and occasionally steelhead trout are all found in the Suisun Marsh. In the Fairfield/Suisun City area, the marsh acts as a temperature moderator, keeping temperatures around 5 degrees warmer in winter and 5 degrees cooler in summer.

In the larger picture, marshes are important in water purification, acting like a kidney in removing toxins and

For many years, the Suisun Wildlife Center has been leading the education efforts about the Suisun Marsh. The center has also provided wildlife recovery facilities for all kinds of native wildlife on the marsh. Unfortunately, with this year's fires, it lost several buildings, including its squirrel habitat, which has damaged the center's abilities to offer its full range of services.

If you would like to assist the rebuilding efforts, please consider a donation to the center.

Its address is 1171 Kellogg St, Suisun City, CA 94585. You can call to (707) 429-HAWK (4295) or visit its website at suisunwildlife.org. It is a recognized charity, and contributions are tax deductible.

pollutants from water entering them. Their value for shoreline protection is also enormous, as seen in areas like the Gulf of Mexico, where wetland removal has greatly increased destruction from hurricanes.

The Suisun Wildlife Center property is surrounded by Peytonia Ecological Reserve, a California Fish & Wildlife unit of the Suisun Marsh located just south of Suisun City. Since 1978, we have provided education on the Suisun Marsh for students and the public. In 1983, with a Coastal Conservancy loan, we created at Peytonia the first set of public access trails in the marsh, which are used in our field trips. In 1993, we carried out marsh restoration on our property in partnership with Suisun City, creating tidal wetland.

In 2016, our Suisun Marsh Natural History Association was honored to receive the John Muir Association Conservation Award. The Muir Association's description of our education efforts reads:

"In addition to its wildlife care effort, the organization has an extensive environmental education program, serving over 300,000 children and adults since 1978. A primary focus is the Suisun Marsh, at 116,000 acres one of California's largest wetlands and part of the San Francisco Bay estuarine system. Suisun Marsh

interpretation for schools covers birds and animals, marsh ecology, and Native American history. The association also presents a wide range of other natural history. The Suisun Marsh Natural History Association continues to devote time and effort to ensure the Suisun Marsh is effectively maintained, while educating the public as to the importance of the Marsh to the local ecology."

The Suisun Marsh is subject to many pressures and threats. One of the most difficult to resolve will be its 130-year history of use for waterfowl hunting. Past and current management practices keep wetland soils dry during summer heat, resulting in soil subsidence. This practice continues despite the full understanding that there will be future negative consequences for sustaining traditional management practices and waterfowl conservation.

This and many other problems faced by the Suisun Marsh will require complex solutions. It is our belief that two of the most effective ways to address them are education and marsh reconstruction.

Another great benefit of the Suisun Marsh is recreation. The more people are encouraged to learn about, visit, and enjoy the marsh, the more likely it is they will care about and defend it. This is the goal of all our education!

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SAVE THE DATE

"The Story of Plastic" Film Screening & Discussion Panel
Friday, Feb. 25 • 4:30 - 5:15 p.m.

"The Story of Plastic" offers a detailed look into the environmental damage and human rights abuses that occur throughout the lifecycle of plastic. It exposes the role of the oil and gas industry that has successfully manipulated the narrative around plastic production and its disposal. An inspiring film, "Story of Plastic" asks what companies, countries and people can do to fix the devastation plastic is creating.

You will be able to watch this film prior to the discussion panel on the 25th, which will include local zero waste experts who will offer solutions to plastic recycling and productions and actions you can take to address plastic pollution.

For details and connection information visit our website and watch for an email alert.

www.sierraclub.org/redwood

Sonoma • Napa • Solano • Lake • Mendocino • Humboldt • Del Norte • Trinity • Western Siskiyou