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enjoy,
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the planet

Sierra Club Lake Group

July-August 2020 Newsletter

Cyanobacteria: what’s going on in Clear Lake?

At 6PM on Thursday July 23 Lake Group is proud to sponsor a presentation by Sarah Ryan, Deputy Tribal Administrator/EPA Director, Big Valley Band of Pomo Indians: “Clear Lake’s Cyanotoxin Monitoring Program: Highlights, Resources, Next Steps.” In collaboration with Elem Indian Colony, Big Valley has conducted a monitoring program for cyanobacteria (commonly called “Blue-Green Algae”) since 2014. On June 23 water samples from 26 Clear Lake locations were tested, with eight evidencing toxins at the “caution” level or above. Elevated levels of cyanobacteria can pose health risks, and it is strongly recommended that people and pets avoid contact with llake water in an algae bloom area.

Because of the coronavirus pandemic the Sierra Club is unable to host in person meetings until the end of August at the earliest, but we are able to make this fascinating—and disturbing—information available to the public on the Zoom platform, and also plans to broadcast it on our Facebook page. For connection information and to reserve a space (highly recommended!) visit the online calendar on the Lake Group website, sierraclub.org/redwood/lake.

A great opportunity for the Eel River

Recently the Sierra Club learned about a proposed project that could lead to the restoration of the Main Fork Eel River (much of it in Lake County) as a freeflowing stream capable of supporting runs of threatened salmon and steelhead.

Since early in the last century fish passage has been blocked by a small Pacific Gas & Electric facility called the Potter Valley Project. PG&E now intends to step away when its license expires in 2022, leaving the facility’s future in doubt and potentially presenting significant risks and

liabilities to local communities and the environment.

To fill this void, a working group calling itself the “Two-Basin Partnership” has developed a decommissioning plan to present to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. The proposal would include removal of Scott Dam, modifications to Cape Horn Dam to improve fish passage, and construction of new infrastructure to maintain reliable water supply to the Potter Valley area and exports to the Russian River. Project objectives explicitly include (con’t)

(Eel River, con't) improved conditions for threatened and endangered native fish, maintainance of reliable water supply, respect for tribal rights, and mitigation of impacts to Lake County. For more information, visit pottervalleyproject.org.

Removal of Scott Dam would result in the disappearance of Lake Pillsbury, a 2000-acre reservoir in northwestern Lake County used for boating, fishing and camping. Although many of those recreational uses would cease or change with the removal of the lake, others can be developed to take their place. Concern has also been expressed about loss of the lake's function as a fire-fighting resource, and impacts to local wildlife such as the resident herd of Tule Elk. Obviously, issues like these will have to be addressed, along with others that have not emerged at this early stage of the project, but we remain cautiously optimistic that the benefits to the watershed and its endangered fish species can be realized.

Stay tuned!



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ExCom meetings are currently being held virtually at 2PM on the third Tuesday of the month. All members are cordially invited to attend, but requested to contact the Chair first to obtain connection details

Rent This Space

The Lake Group now accepting (in other words, selling) advertisements in this newsletter: a two-inch (business card size) ad like this costs \$25 per issue, or—Great Bargain—\$100 for a year (six issues) To submit an ad send an email to vbrandon95457@gmail.com or call Victoria at 994-1931.



Guenoc Valley Project delayed

On July 7 the massive Guenoc Valley Project (5 hotels, 1200 residential villas, varied recreational facilities and support structures on 16,000 acres in southeastern Lake County) came before the Board of Supervisors for certification of its Environmental Impact Report and consideration of a complicated set of entitlements. The Planning Commission had recommended approval of everything on June 25, and it was widely assumed that the BOS would follow those recommendations almost automatically.

But the first item of discussion when the meeting convened was an announcement that substantive comments recently received from at least three environmental organizations (Center for Biological Diversity, California Native Plant Society, and Sierra Club) needed to be addressed before action could be taken. Although presentations were made by the developers and EIR consultants and public comment was taken, any decisions were delayed at least until the continuation of the hearing scheduled for 10:30AM on July 21. Details about how to participate remotely will be included in the Board agenda posted to the county website on July 17.

Outings

Along with meetings, in-person events, and use of office space, all Sierra Club Outings have been suspended until August 31 at the earliest, and the suspension may be continued longer, depending on the coronavirus pandemic. In the meantime we encourage members and supporters to get out doors whenever they can do so in a safe, socially distanced way— and look forward to joining you out on the trails in a happier time.

Help Wanted: Outing Leaders. No experience needed, just a love for brisk exercise in the out-of-doors. There are many good reasons to become an Outing leader, including an opportunity for autocracy: as leader *you* get to choose where to go, and when. Interested? Get in touch with Outings Chair Deb Sally at 235-9011 or enviracat1@gmail.com

Let's Go Digital

Lake Group members are invited to help fight deforestation by receiving this bimonthly newsletter electronically rather than on paper. To get it as an email attachment in pdf format instead, send a request to join the "Lake Group Paper Free" list to vbrandon95457@gmail.com— not only does this save some trees, it also benefits the Group financially.

The COVID-19 crisis has not passed and continues to disproportionately harm Black, Indigenous, and Latinx people and other communities of color. The pandemic has revealed how the communities hardest hit are often the same people that suffer from high levels of pollution and poor access to healthcare. The fight for environmental justice cannot be separated from the fight for racial justice.

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