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Sierra Club Lake Group

January-February 2017 Newsletter

Middle Creek Update January 18

Lake Group's first community meeting of the New Year will feature a presentation by **Dr. Harry Lyons** on the biology, economics, and politics of the **Middle Creek Marsh Wetland Restoration Project**. This multi-agency effort at flood damage reduction and ecosystem restoration would eliminate dwellings on low ground, add 1400 acres of wetland to the Clear Lake watershed and reduce nutrient input to the lake. Achieving the long-term economic and ecological benefits of the project requires an investment of over \$50 million by the County, State, and Federal Governments, and requires cooperation among a dozen agencies and support from a score of stakeholder organizations. The project is far from a done-deal; Dr. Lyons, as a member of the Middle Creek Restoration Coalition, has joined other citizens in an effort to generate the endless patience and political push to remove roadblocks. To encourage patience and push, Dr. Lyons will perform a relevant tune or two. As always, the meeting is free and open to the public: please join us at **7PM on Wednesday January 18** at the Lower Lake Methodist Church social hall, 16255 Second St. For more information contact Chair Ed Robey at 994 8304 or edrobey@wildblue.net.

Dollar General: It's Not Over Yet!

As was previously reported in this newsletter, the proposal by Cross Development to construct a Dollar General outlet on the outskirts of Middletown bounced back and forth between the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors last year. First the Commission rejected it on grounds of inconsistency with the General Plan and Middletown Area Plan (a position the Sierra Club believes to be correct), then the BOS supported the developers' appeal and granted a Use Permit while returning the application to the PC for "design and environmental review."

When the Commission met in August a lively discussion took place, with members of the public (led by Lake Group chair Ed Robey) urging

them to reject the project a second time, but since the "environmental" portion of their review had not been appropriately noticed no decision was possible. Instead local residents were asked to work with the developer to come up with a design that meets local needs—with the question remaining whether visual modifications can *ever* satisfy the fundamental discrepancy between the business, the building, and the will of the community as expressed in the Middletown Area Plan.

The follow up meeting expected in October did not actually take place until December, when it was preceded by a lawyer's letter on behalf of local residents pointing out that a 20-day legal noticing requirement had not been met. (con't)

(Dollar General, con't), The Commission was therefore precluded from adopting a Mitigated Negative Declaration as recommended by Community Development Department staff.

Another hearing on “whether to approve, conditionally approve, or deny the Major Use Permit . . . and Design Review” has been scheduled for January 26 “or as soon thereafter as the business of the Commission will allow.” With newly elected supervisors in Districts 1 and 4, new Planning Commissioners may have been appointed to represent those districts by then, and in the meantime longtime District 5 Commissioner Gil Schoux has also declared his intention to retire, thus creating another vacancy. Even if these seats are all filled expeditiously, the new Commissioners will need to come up to speed on the complex issues surrounding this project before reaching a decision, so further delays seem probable.

To complicate matters further, no matter what the Commission decides, their action is virtually certain to be appealed to the BOS, and the changes at that level make the ultimate verdict hard to predict—although it is safe to say that the retirement of District 1 Supervisor Jim Comstock, who consistently discounted planning discrepancies and maintained that Dollar General would be “good for business,” does not make approval more probable.

Stay tuned.

KONOCTI POST

www.konoctipost.blogspot.com

a lake county naturalist's blog

TAKE A RAMBLE. IT'S FREE.

Lake Group Executive Committee

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Other contacts:

Steve Devoto (Outings): 279-8308,
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ExCom meetings are held at 7PM on the third Wednesday of every month, at locations that vary. All members are cordially invited to attend, but requested to contact the Chair first to confirm time and location

Watershed Books
Lakeport, California

305 North Main Street

707.263.5787

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 *vbrandon@lakelive.info* or call Victoria at 994-1931.

Outings

At press time, Lake Group had no hikes scheduled. If any are planned later they will be posted to the Group website, sierraclub.org/redwood/lake. For outings elsewhere in Redwood Chapter, check the Outings tab at sierraclub.org/redwood.

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 Outing Chair Steve Devoto at 279-8308 or sdevoto@mchsi.com.

Going Solar to Save a Warming Planet

Transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable energy is essential if we are to have any hope of staving off the worst impacts of climate disruption—but many people have been deterred from installing solar systems by the necessity for making a substantial upfront investment. Now there's another way to go about it.

The Time Bank of Thrive Lake County is partnering with SolarCity to bring free installation to our community: you can make a big dent in your carbon footprint, and save money on your monthly electric bill besides. Just by requesting a free, no-obligation quote you'll help the Time Bank. Each installation also benefits the Pachamama Alliance, an organization that is helping to protect millions of acres of pristine Amazon rainforest.

To learn more and to request a personalized proposal visit powur.com/thrive.lakecounty/getsolar.

Berryessa Snow Mountain Update

There's no doubt about it: the election of Donald Trump is neither a bad joke nor a bad dream, but an all-too-grim reality. The national Sierra Club is expecting unprecedented assaults on clean air, clean water, public lands, and endangered wildlife, and is gearing up to combat them: in the words of Executive Director Mike Brune: "we're determined, not defeated."

Fortunately one of those assaults—the threat to undesignate the national monuments created by President Obama under the Antiquities Act—is little more than bluster. Although a monument can be originated by the stroke of a presidential pen, it takes an act of Congress to reverse the designation, so we probably don't have to worry about losing permanent protection for Berryessa Snow Mountain anytime soon.

In the meantime the responsible agencies (the Mendocino National Forest and BLM Ukiah field office) are moving ahead to create a management plan for the monument. Late in 2016 Rebecca Wong was appointed BSMNM manager, based out of the Ukiah BLM office, and a trails and recreation planning meeting has been scheduled in Woodland on January 20, with broad stakeholder participation from hikers, anglers, business folks, mountain bikers, equestrians, legal OHV users, botanists, ranchers and farmers.

The Sierra Club intends to participate fully as we work to protect, restore, and enjoy this awesome place.

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 vbrandon@lakelive.info—not only does this save some trees, it also benefits the Group financially.



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