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Sierra Club Lake Group January-February 2015 Newsletter

Next Meeting: All About Development

Lake Group's first general membership meeting of 2015 will be held at **7PM Wednesday January 21**, at the **Lower Lake Methodist Church** Community Room, 16255 Second St. County Community Development Director Rick Coel will talk about how the development application process works: what are the steps needed to get grading, building or use permits, or subdivisions, rezones, and general plan amendments? How long does it take, and what does it cost? The kinds of conditions that developers must meet, the levels of environmental review required and the opportunities for public involvement are among the subjects that will be covered: these are very important topics with profound implications for the future of our community, but not very well understood by many people, and this is a rare opportunity to find out how the system really works, so please bring your questions! As always the meeting is free and open to the public: for details, contact Chair Ed Robey at 994 8304 or edrobey@wildblue.net.

Berryessa Snow Mountain Town Hall

On Friday December 19 Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell and Undersecretary of Agriculture Robert Bonnie joined Congressman Mike Thompson, Congressman John Garamendi, and other community leaders in a Town Hall meeting at the Napa Community College to gather public input on the proposal for the permanent protection of the 320,000-acre Berryessa Snow Mountain region as a national monument.

As has been discussed many times in this newsletter, the region is characterized by outstanding conservation values and a wealth of recreational opportunities. An economic report recently commissioned by the Winters Chamber of Commerce indicates that special designation is also likely to result in increased tourism, providing economic benefits to surrounding communities estimated at \$50 million over five years. Legislation introduced by (con't)




Lake Group Chair Ed Robey, Mother Lode Chapter Chair Barbara Williams, and Sierra Club California Director Kathryn Phillips

(Berryessa Snow Mountain, con't) Rep Thompson and Senator Barbara Boxer to designate the area as a National Conservation Area appears to be hopelessly stalled in Congress, but President Obama can sidestep congressional deadlock by using his powers under the Antiquities Act to create a national monument.

Even though the Town Hall meeting took place on a rainy Friday less than a week before Christmas and with only a few days advance notice, a near-capacity crowd was in attendance, with the vast majority expressing support for permanent protection as either an NCA or a national monument. Lake County was well represented with at least a dozen local residents, including Supervisor Denise Rushing (who sat on the panel) and Lake Group chair Ed Robey. The Club delegation also included national Deputy Director Bruce Hamilton, Sierra Club California Director Kathryn Phillips, the chairs of both Redwood and Mother Lode chapters and national Wilderness chair Vicky Hoover. Several of us were fortunate enough to have our cards drawn for a chance to speak at the meeting.

What next? First, let's thank our visitors from Washington for making the time in their busy schedules to see this special place with their own eyes and to hear our voices: please take a moment to visit berryessasnowmountain.org to add your name to a card of appreciation. Second, let's make sure the president knows about our support for national monument designation: please sign the petition at the Redwood Chapter home page, redwood.sierraclub.org, or call him at (202) 456-1111. Third, stay tuned for an exciting announcement!




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Help Wanted

Lake Group webmaster. The national Sierra Club is in the middle of completely modernizing its online world. In the process, the servers that host chapter and group websites are going down permanently by the end of March. This has left Lake Group with the choice of finding an independent host and thereby losing all sorts of built in social media tools and vital connections to the Redwood Chapter and national Club, or undertaking a complete remodel to fit new templates built on the Drupal platform. After serving as group webmaster for the past eight years, Victoria Brandon is hoping to pass the baton, preferably to someone who is already familiar with the Drupal environment. There are *certain* to be plenty of expert techies in Lake County who would enjoy the opportunity to help the Club by participating in the construction of the new site and keeping it updated. If that sounds like you, please send an email to vbrandon@lakelive.info or call Victoria at 994 1931.

Lake Group Membership Chair. Lake Group needs someone to welcome new and re-joining members every two months and to send gentle reminders to lapsed members. Draft "welcome" and "please don't leave us" letters will be provided along with training in the use of the Club member database. Interested? Send Ed an email at edrobey@wildblue.net or call him at 994 8304.

“State of Jefferson”: Worst Idea of 2014

On December 2 a group of Siskiyou County tea party activists made a well-rehearsed pitch to the Board of Supervisors in favor of the creation of a proposed “State of Jefferson.” Consisting of a dozen or so northern California counties possibly augmented by a chunk of southern Oregon, this new state would instantly become the most impoverished in the United States, bankrupt at birth. Without the infrastructure of a modern economy—no east-west interstate highway or railroad, no deep water port, no significant airport, no major medical center or university (and next to no opportunities for higher education at all), and nothing remotely resembling a metropolitan area, its prospects would be most unlikely to improve anytime soon.

Proponents say the region is underserved by Sacramento despite receiving far more in state services than it pays in taxes. After secession, the new state would continue to be geographically isolated, sparsely populated and economically disadvantaged, lacking the resources to fund public education, highways, parks, or law enforcement to anything remotely approaching an acceptable standard. This is progress?

It’s hard to believe that anyone would advocate for proposal so ruinous to the residents of the region, but there would be beneficiaries, starting with multinational resource extraction corporations. Without the protections provided by California’s strict environmental regulations, the region’s abundant natural resources would be ripe for the plucking. Although proponents claim to favor environment protection, those who spoke to the Board attacked environmental laws and regulations right and left, opposing carbon reduction rules, cap and trade, the Endangered Species Act, pesticide regulations, etc.

The “State of Jefferson” campaign also represents a blatant power grab on the part of the most reactionary wing of American politics, with rich potential prizes in the form of two US Senate seats and three Electoral College votes—so it’s no surprise that the effort appears to be well-funded.

This silly idea offers no advantages to the residents of Lake County. So it was dismaying to see members of the Board of Supervisors taking it seriously, seizing the opportunity to make wisecracks, playing to the gallery of imported green t-shirted supporters, and taking cheap shots at state government. Rather than wasting time in this irresponsible manner, they should learn to work with our newly elected state representatives to obtain concrete benefits for our community, starting with protecting Clear Lake.

We’ll have a chance to learn more about this Very Bad Idea very soon. On Tuesday January 13 at 6PM Supervisor Anthony Farrington has been invited to discuss the subject with the Lake County Democratic Club, with ample opportunity for questions and answers. The meeting, which will be held at the Lower Lake Methodist Church Community Room, 16255 Second St., is free and open to the public—see you there.

CLEARLAKE VETERINARY CLINIC
3424 EMERSON ST CLEARLAKE, CA 95422



707-994-9100
M-F 7:00AM TO 7:00PM SAT 8:00AM TO 4:00PM EMERGENCY SERVICE AVAILABLE

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.

Chi Council Seeks Volunteers

Thanks to recent rains, Clear Lake's tributaries are running briskly for the first time in several years. If this pattern continues the Clear Lake hitch (*lavinia exilicauda chi*) may be able to spawn in significant numbers this spring.

As has been reported, in September 2012 the Center for Biological Diversity petitioned to have the hitch protected under both the federal and state Endangered Species Act, and on August 6 the California Fish and Game Commission listed them as "threatened" under CESA. Probable causes for their drastic population decline include reduction in spawning and juvenile-rearing habitat, competition from and predation by non-native fish, etc.

Every spring for the past ten years the Chi Council, a local conservation organization that began life as a Lake Group project, has organized a fish count: hitch live deep in the lake most of the year and are seldom seen, but adults move up into the tributaries every spring in a highly visible spawning migration. Council volunteers select convenient viewing locations, monitor the spawning run, count fish, and enjoy the wonders of spring: hitch-watching also provides a wonderful opportunity to see otters, eagles, and other iconic species.

Comprehensive reports on the spawning run are particularly important this year, and the Council is hoping to recruit some new helpers. Observation forms, instructions, pictures of present and past migrations, and a great deal of other useful information is available on the Chi Council website, lakelive.info/chicouncil. For more info attend their next meeting (3:30 Wed January 28, at the Ag Center) or send an email to chicouncil@lakelive.info.

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 first Wednesday of every other month, at locations that vary. All members are cordially invited to attend, but requested to contact the Chair first to confirm time and location

A Chance to Weigh in on Food and Ag Policy

Last spring the national Sierra Club appointed a special task force, charged with updating an Agriculture Policy statement that has been on the books since 1976 (!) The objective was to bring the policies up to date, incorporate more detailed policies on things like biotechnology and public lands grazing, achieve a workable balance that recognizes regional differences and allows local activists the flexibility they need to achieve tangible on-the-ground benefits, and emphasize support for sound practices, some of which have enormous potential to make a positive contribution to carbon sequestration.

Comments on the draft statement are now being accepted, with a January 15 deadline. Links to both the new and the old policies and a comment submission form are posted at clubhouse.sierraclub.org/people/committees/board/Ag-Policy-Comment-Period.aspx (username=clubhouse; password=explore) Comments from Club members who are actually engaged in some form of agriculture (that's lots of us in Lake County!) are particularly invited.

Outings

February 14—**Pope to Putah trail.** Hike a brand new trail still in the making. The P2P trail connects the two upper arms of Lake Berryessa. Tuleyome (see tuleyome.org) is pioneering a new connector trail between these two arms. We'll hike as far as the trail goes, overlook the secluded Putah Creek arm, then hike back, getting wonderful views of Pope Valley and Pope Canyon. Bring water, lunch and hiking boots. Class: M-9-A. Carpool: 8:30 AM, Store 24, north end of Middletown across Hwy 29 from high school. Rain cancels. Leader Tom McFarling, (707) 994-5490. tom.mcfarling@gmail.com

February 15—**Robert L Stevenson State Park Table Rock.** Enjoy gorgeous rolling hills, wooded forests, interesting volcanic rock formations and stunning views of Napa Valley! Bring lunch, snack, water, hat and treaded shoes. Class M-4.2-A Carpool: 8:30 am in front of Middletown Mugshots coffee shop on corner of Hwy 29 & 175. Meet 9 am in RLS State Park Parking lot on Hwy 29, 6.1 miles south of Twin Pine Casino in Middletown. RSVP Leader Julie Kreis 707-987-9040 or tikaljak@yahoo.com Rain cancels.

February 25—**Rabbit Hill in Middletown.** Join us in a history stroll up Rabbit Hill with some natural history thrown in. Class E-1-A Meet 9 am. Perry's Deli at south end of Middletown. Leader: Pete McGee 942-1373 or montesol@hughes.net

March 7—**Knoxville Wildlife Area.** This 20,000 acre CA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife preserve is little used by hikers. We'll hike up a secluded valley, discover an old gravesite above Knoxville, pass an old windmill along a beautiful meadow and creek, cross a 600 ft. high ridge and get excellent views of Mt. St. Helena to the west and look right up at Blue Ridge to the east. Then down into Long Canyon and back to the cars. Bring lunch, water and hiking boots. Class; M-8-A. Carpool 8:30 AM Lower Lake Coffee Company, main street Lower Lake. Leader Tom McFarling (707) 994-5490. Rain cancels.

March 15—**Mount St. Helena Robert Louis Stevenson State Park.** Hike switchbacks about 20 minutes through fir woods up to an old access dirt road, this leads to the very top of St. Helena Mountain. We will go to the Lower Peak which looks out over Napa Valley. On a clear day see spectacular views, including much of the San Francisco Bay area, binoculars advised! Bring water, Lunch & snacks. Class M-7.3-C. Carpool: 8:30 am in front of Middletown Mugshots coffee shop on corner of Hwy 29 & 175. Meet 9 am at Robert Louis Stevenson Park - parking lot. By reservation only. Leader Julie 707-987-9040 or 707-671-5947. Or tikaljak@yahoo.com Rain cancels.

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.



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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