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Sierra Club Lake Group

March-April 2017 Newsletter

Next Meeting: Earth Activism 2.0

Denise Rushing shares “permaculture” principles and practices that can keep us energized, sane and powerfully focused in these difficult political times. Discover ecosystem strategies developed over millennia by life on Planet Earth and how to apply these strategies not only to survive, but to thrive in a hostile ecosystem, while transforming the system itself. The meeting will be held in the Round Room at Mendocino College, 2565 Parallel Dr, and as always is free and open to the public. For more information contact Ed Robey at 994 8304 or edrobey@wildblue.net

Dollar General Doubleheader

As previously reported, Lake Group has challenged the proposal by Cross Development to construct a Dollar General outlet on the outskirts of Middletown on the grounds that it violates numerous policies in the Middletown Area Plan. The Planning Commission unanimously voted to deny the project last year, but the developer appealed to the Board of Supervisors, which approved the Use Permit by a 3-2 vote, conditioned on a new PC hearing on the design and environmental aspects of the project and certification of a mitigated negative declaration.

By the time the Commission voted on these matters on January 26, four new Commissioners had been seated, all of whom appeared to have done plenty of homework and to understand the fundamentals of land use planning. After several hours of testimony, including that of Group Chair Ed Robey and Group Conservation Chair Victoria Brandon as well as many other members of the community (all of whom opposed the project),

they again voted unanimously to deny a mitigated negative declaration and findings of consistency with the General Plan and Area Plan. The developer has since appealed this decision to the Board of Supervisors, which has two new members. A hearing date has not yet been set.

Then on February 23 the Commission heard three hours of testimony on a similar application for a Dollar General in the Riviera: with the exception of the developer and the owners of the prospective site, comments were uniformly hostile, with objections ranging from Area Plan inconsistencies to negative impacts on quality of life and respected local businesses, and also an interesting assertion that considering the many applications individually rather than as elements of a single project amounts to CEQA piecemealing.

Again, the Commission voted unanimously to deny all requested entitlements, and the decision has been appealed to the BOS. Stay tuned!

A Bright Light in Dark Days

Especially during these difficult times, environmental activists seem to spend an enormous amount of time fending off one abomination after another, an activity that is depressing even when successful. The need for defense is urgent -- we MUST fight off Trump administration efforts to roll back 50 years of environmental protections and abandon crucial efforts to combat climate disruption -- but we also need to seek ways to work for positive change wherever possible.

One such opportunity arose on January 20, when the Woodland-based environmental organization Tuleyome hosted a gathering of agency representatives and stakeholder groups to discuss next steps for the Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument. Designated in July 2015, BSMNM permanently protects 330,000 acres of sensitive federal public lands in seven counties. Stretching nearly 100 miles from Cold Canyon in Solano County to north of the Snow Mountain Wilderness, the new Monument contains three federal Wilderness Areas and a Wild and Scenic River along with a remarkably diverse array of natural habitat types, ancient cultural resources, and recreational opportunities.

With acreage divided nearly equally between the Bureau of Land Management's Ukiah Field Office and the Mendocino National Forest, management is complex. Each agency has its own planning structure, established customs and corporate culture, and objectives that are similar but by no means identical. Melding the two into an effective partnership will be challenging, but both agencies appear eager to rise to the occasion.

Although it was made clear from the beginning that the January 20 meeting was not a part of the official planning process, National Monument Manager Rebecca Wong, MNF Forest Supervisor Ann Carlson and BLM Ukiah District Field Manager Amanda James and other staff members were active participants in the discussion, guiding us through the complex series of steps needed to devise a comprehensive management plan for BSMNM. Opportunities for public input will be available at many stages of the process, starting with three well-attended "Community Conversations" held in Upper Lake, Winters and Willows last year. All recreational stakeholder groups are invited to participate, along with scientists, tribes, state and local governments, non-governmental organizations such as the Sierra Club, and interested individuals.

We all have something valuable to contribute, and by working together can create a plan that preserves the sensitive values that were the rationale for designation and also maximizes its recreational potential. With a 2018 target date for the adoption of a completed plan, it's time to roll up our sleeves and get to work.

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 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

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a lake county naturalist's blog

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Outdoors

*MARCH 11, 8:15AM -- **nature walk at Anderson Marsh** State Historic Park led by docent Billy Gear. Bring binoculars and shoes that can handle mud and water and enjoy the sight of wildlife flourishing in the marsh flatlands under water, something that hasn't occurred for a number of years. Free parking for participants. For more information about the walk, email info@andersonmarsh.org, call 995-2658, or visit the AMIA Facebook page

*MARCH 11, 9:30AM -- Tuleyome-sponsored **demonstration on wildfire ecology** featuring Jeff Tunnell from the BLM, who will speak on how BLM manages wildfires and how that has changed over the years. He'll bring some tools for demonstration/hands-on. The event will include a hike through the burned area to discuss how the fire affected plants. Meet at the **Redbud Trailhead** just off Highway 20 five miles east of Highway 53. Free. Rain cancels. For more info and to sign up contact Nate Lillge, nlillge@tuleyome.org or 530-379-8697.

*MARCH 18, 9AM -- Tuleyome-sponsored **tour of the Silver Spur Ranch**. Meet **Walker Ridge Road** just off highway 20. In the summer of 2016, Tuleyome completed the purchase of the Silver Spur Ranch on the North Fork of Cache Creek. Recently, evidence of a herd of Tule Elk has been found on the property. Tuleyome Board President Andrew Fulks will lead participants on the tour and discuss some of the reasons behind the purchase as well as future plans. Free. Rain cancels. For more info and to sign up visit Tuleyome's MeetUp page or contact Nate Lillge, nlillge@tuleyome.org or 530-379-8697.

*MARCH 18, 9AM -- easy Redbud Audubon **bird walk at Clear Lake State Park** on Soda Bay Rd: the park is officially closed but walking is allowed; park outside and walk in to the visitors' center.

*MARCH 18, 9:30AM -- Tuleyome-sponsored **habitat restoration demonstration and hike**. Kay-Leigh Barnitz will speak about the animals in the region (bald eagles, elk, bobcats, mountain lions, rattlesnakes, etc.). Meet at the **Redbud Trailhead** just off Highway 20 five miles east of Highway 53. The group will hike to Baton Flat/Cache Creek (about 5 miles round trip.) Free. Rain cancels. For more info and to sign up contact Nate Lillge, nlillge@tuleyome.org or 530-379-8697.

*MARCH 19, 9AM -- Tuleyome-sponsored **hike on the Pope to Putah Trail** to see the results of many hours of volunteer work. Meet at Pope Creek bridge on Pope Canyon road. Tuleyome's trail "guru", Eric "Bam Bam" Barnett, led the volunteer building effort and will lead the group along the trail. Along the way, he will share many stories of the building of the trail as well as some local history. The trail winds through chaparral covered hills providing fantastic views of Pope Valley and Spanish Valley. This is a moderate 9.4 mile hike. Free, no experience necessary but sturdy hiking boots a must. Rain cancels. For more info and to sign up contact Nate Lillge, nlillge@tuleyome.org or 530-379-8697.

*not a Sierra Club event

For more Redwood Chapter Outings, visit www.sierraclub.org/redwood/outings



Sierra Club Lake Group
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Outdoors (con't)

*MARCH 25, 9AM -- **volunteer workday at Trailside Park** outside Middletown to replant some of the conifers lost in the Valley Fire. This is a collaborative project between the Lake County RCD, county Public Services Department, and Lake Area Rotary Clubs Association. Volunteers should bring water, shovels and other tree planting implements, and wear long sleeves, long pants, work gloves and closed-toed shoes. A BBQ lunch will be provided. Please RSVP to jennifer.strong@investmentcenters.com

*March 25, 9:30AM -- Tuleyome-sponsored **archeology demonstration** with BLM archeologist Chris Lloyd. Meet at **Cowboy Camp** just off Highway 16 a mile south of Highway 20, where he will speak about homesteading in the region. Included in this will be a hike to a homestead about 45 min - 1 hour from Cowboy Camp (which requires crossing Bear Creek). Representatives from Backcountry Horsemen will be on hand to give a packing demonstration. For more info and to sign up contact Nate Lillge, nlillge@tuleyome.org or 530-379-8697.

APRIL 1 -- Lake Group Six Sigma Ranch hike. We will hike the historic old stagecoach route from Lower Lake to Knoxville, following the ranch road through Six Sigma ranch heading east toward Morgan Valley road. We will stop by the Ranch tasting room on the way, so bring along cash or credit card if so inclined. Much of the hike will follow Asbill Creek and canyon to the confluence with Soda Creek. We will return aboard the ranch's Pinzgauer, a vintage European military 6X6, making the hike approximately 6 miles one way. This limits the number of hikers to 10 people. Meet 8:30 am Lower Lake Coffee Company, Main St. Lower Lake. By reservation only. Leader Tom McFarling (707) 994-5490. Rain cancels.

*April 8, 10AM-4PM -- **Spring Garden Tour** featuring six home gardens and two community gardens in the city of Clearlake. Plants and cuttings will also be on sale; the event benefits Citizens Caring 4 Clearlake. Tickets \$20: to buy tickets and for more information call Molly at 707 701 3554.

*not a Sierra Club event