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Sierra Club Lake Group

May-June 2015 Newsletter

Sierra Club Forum on Sustainable Viticulture May 27

A number of years ago Lake Group sponsored an informative discussion on sustainable practices in viticulture, with stimulating presentations by an expert panel followed by a rousing question and answer session. A lot has changed since then, not only within the wine industry but also in the community—so we think it is time for a sequel. Plans have now been finalized: the forum will take place at 7PM on Wednesday May 27, at the Lower Lake Methodist Church Community Room, 16255 Second St. Panelists include Erica Lundquist from the Mendocino County NRCS, Christian Ahlmann, (Six Sigma) Tracey Hawkins (Hawk & Horse), Randy Krag (Beckstoffer Vineyards), and Thurston Williams (Clover Creek Family Farm). We anticipate the discussion to be far-ranging, with subjects including an overview of best management practices, creative ways to integrate animal husbandry with vineyard management, organic and biodynamic practices, and—the hottest of topics these days—the best ways to use and conserve water. As always the meeting is free and open to the public: for details, contact Chair Ed Robey at 994 8304 or edrobey@wildblue.net.

Federal Listing for the Hitch?

As has been widely reported, last summer the California Fish and Game Commission took action to protect the Clear Lake hitch (*lavinia exilicauda chi*) by designating this endemic fish as a “threatened” species under the state Endangered Species Act.

This action culminated nearly two years of investigation by the Department of Fish and Wildlife that had been initiated by a Center for Biological Diversity petition with support from local tribes and University of California biologists. Found only in Clear Lake and its


tributaries and once almost unimaginably plentiful, hitch populations have declined drastically in recent years from causes that include water diversions, degradation of spawning and rearing habitat, migration barriers, and introduced fish species that include both predators and competitors.

Drought conditions over the past few years have made spawning conditions particularly difficult, and have stranded both adults and juveniles as creeks dried up prematurely. Although the extinction of this iconic fish (con’t)

(Hitch Listing, con't) has become a sadly real possibility, there is an encouraging side to the story, in that the actions needed to restore the species—ensuring minimum stream flows, removing barriers to fish passage barriers, improving water quality and restoring wetlands—are also the actions needed to benefit many other native wildlife species and to return the ecosystem of the lake and its watershed to a thriving condition.

Back in September 2012 CBD petitioned both the state and federal governments for protection under their respective Endangered Species Acts. CDFW moved forward promptly to assess the situation, but the US Fish & Wildlife Service was facing such a backlog that no immediate action was taken on the federal petition. Now the wheels are rolling.

On April 9 USFW announced that after a 90-day formal review they have found “substantial scientific or commercial information” indicating that listing under the federal ESA may be warranted. A year long status review has now begun, commencing with a two-month comment submission period. Expect updates later!



Fashionable Eyewear
Contact Lenses

Robert Bonner, O.D.

994-1488

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Sierra Club Awards Scholarships

Lake Group is pleased to announce that for the fourth year in a row we have awarded a pair of \$1000 scholarships to two graduating seniors from Lake County high schools who are planning careers that will support the Club's mission to “enjoy, explore, and protect” the planet.


Melissa Thibeau attends Clear Lake High School, and has been an ongoing activist in our community, participating in both Rodman Slough cleanup activities and in the hitch migration observations organized by the Chi Council. As a member of our global village, she accompanied her mother on a pear orchard-centered trip to South Africa. Although she has not yet determined her major field of study, Melissa is sure that, “ultimately, whatever I do, I want to make a difference.”

Cobb resident Joseph Swehla attends Middletown High School, and has participated in athletic, academic, and performing projects throughout his school career. Joseph enjoys outdoor activities, especially with his family, and believes that his chosen course of study as an athletic trainer or physical therapist will help and encourage others to enjoy and support an enduring legacy for America's wild places.

Congratulations, Melissa and Joseph!

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 by email in pdf format instead, send a request to vbrandon@lakelive.info—not only does this save some trees, it also benefits the Group financially




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Keeping It California

As discussed at length in previous editions of this newsletter, a small group of extremists has come up with a seriously bad idea: they want a group of northern California counties to secede from the state and set up a new (impoverished and underserved) "State of Jefferson." The Sierra Club strongly opposes this effort, which among other defects is specifically targeting California's landmark environmental laws.

Later on we expect Lake County to be at the center of this political firestorm, with the Board of Supervisors having declared their intention to place an advisory vote on the November 2016 ballot. Lake Group expects to take a leading role in opposing this proposal when the time comes

In the meantime we are delighted to learn that on April 7 concerned citizens from throughout the region met in Redding to form a new multi-county, non-partisan political action committee to represent the interests of residents who oppose separation from California and the formation of a new state.

"Keep It California is forming local coordinating committees in every county where State of Jefferson proponents are active and has volunteers in 20 counties building these committees to monitor and respond to any incursions by Jefferson proponents," stated Vice Chair Kevin Hendrick. "Keep It California will provide material and financial assistance to these local efforts." Hendrick was the director of the Keep It California campaign in Del Norte County which defeated the proposed State of Jefferson with 58 percent voting NO on an advisory ballot measure in June 2014.

Keep It California will encourage local agencies to evaluate the financial risks and uncertainties of this extremely ill-advised proposal and will inform voters and elected officials of the disastrous consequences of separating from California.

To learn more about these issues, and to donate, volunteer, and endorse the Keep It California campaign, visit KeepItCalifornia.org and the organization's Facebook page, facebook.com/KeepItCalifornia

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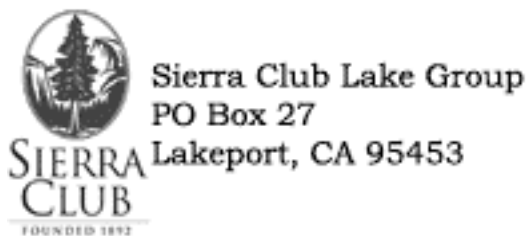
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Lake Group Executive Committee

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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



Outings

May 10 - **Glen Eden Trail Hike to Goat Rock.** It is time to view wildflowers in the North Cow Mtn. Rec. Area. It consists of grasslands, chaparral-covered slopes with stands of fir, pine and oak. Trail head at 1394' then 2600' at Goat Rock. Bring water & lunch. Class H-8-B. Car pools: meet 8:30 am Lower Lake Coffee Co. on Main Street, off junction of Hwy 29 & 53 or 9:30 am at Glen Eden Trail head 8 miles from Hwy 29 intersection with Scotts Valley Rd. to Glen Eden Trail head on left, park on right. From Ukiah take Hwy 20 E to Lake County and turn right on Scotts Valley Rd. just after Blue Lakes. Go a mile or more to pit toilet on left, trail head on right. Reserve with leader Julie Kreis at 707-987-9040 or tikaljak@yahoo.com
Rain cancels.

May 31 - **Mahnke Peak.** This hike starts at the south end of Kelsey Creek Drive and follows a moderately sloped dirt road to Mahnke Peak with a great view over the Geysers power plants. Elevation gain 2116 ft. Bring lunch and two liters of water. Meet at the car pool parking lot at the corner of Live Oak Drive and Highway 29 in Kelseyville at 8:00 a.m. Class H-10-C Leader Steve Devoto sdevoto@mchsi.com Reservation required. Rain cancels.

Note: at press time, additional hikes were in the planning stage. For details, check the next edition of the *Redwood Needles* and the online listing at sierraclub.org/redwood/lake/outings.html