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Sierra Club Lake Group

July-August 2014 Newsletter

Annual Barbeque July 18

This year's midsummer BBQ will be held at 5:30PM on Friday July 18, at the home of Kathy and Peter Windrem, 7460 Kelsey Creek Drive. As usual, it's planned as a semi-potluck: the Club will provide a main dish (chicken most expertly marinated and grilled by our hosts) but guests are asked to bring beverages, and a side dish or dessert to share. To eliminate as many throwaways as possible, we're also asking guests to *please bring your own plates, napkins, and eating utensils*. This event provides an extremely enjoyable way to get together with old friends, meet new ones, and chat about the environmental issues of our community in a congenial informal atmosphere. It's always free, and all Lake Group members and their guests are very cordially invited.

Directions: turn south onto Kelsey Creek Drive off Highway 29 and go two miles to the Wight Way intersection. Take the left-hand fork and turn left into the parking area beyond the first driveway. Call Ed at 994-8304 or send an email to edrobey@wildblue.net for more information, and to RSVP (strongly encouraged!)

BSM National Monument: the Latest

Permanent protection of the Berryessa Snow Mountain region has been a top Lake Group priority for a number of years. These very special 350,000 acres of federal lands contain lush forests, wildflower meadows, three designated Wilderness areas, and a Wild and Scenic River. The region is home to tule elk, river otters, the second largest population of California's wintering bald eagle populations, and the rare Pacific fisher. Berryessa Snow Mountain is a biodiversity hotspot and also a paradise for fishing, hiking, camping, birding and horseback-riding.

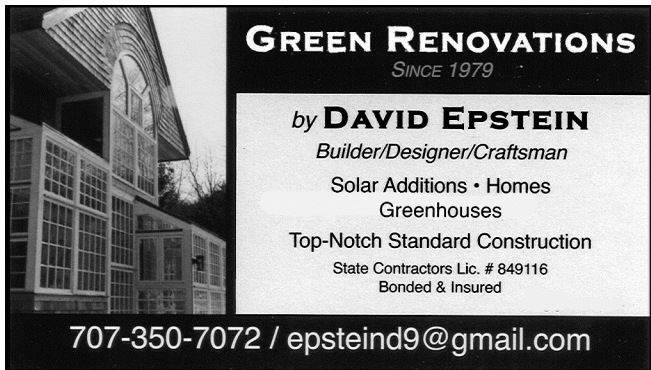
Under the leadership of Congressman Mike Thompson and with strong support from

Congressman John Garamendi, whose district now includes most of the area proposed for protection, we've been trying to persuade Congress to designate the region as a National Conservation Area. Since that legislation seems to be stalled in Washington gridlock, it's time to look for another quicker, surer route to the same destination, by asking the President to use his powers under the Antiquities Act to create a BSM National Monument.

Stating that "permanent protection of Berryessa-Snow Mountain will ensure the preservation of this special place and will grow the local economy by bringing visitors and jobs to the region year-round," the national (con't)

(National Monument, con't) Sierra Club has created an online petition urging President Obama and Department of the Interior Secretary Sally Jewell to designate Berryessa-Snow Mountain as a National Monument. By far the largest portion of the new Monument would be right here in Lake County: please take a moment to add your name to the petition to help protect it for the enjoyment of future generations. The easiest way to access it is to follow the link at the top of the Redwood Chapter home page, redwood.sierraclub.org.

By the way, an eloquent op/ed authored jointly by Lake County Supervisor Denise Rushing, Yolo Supervisor Don Saylor, and Solano Supervisor Linda Seifert recently appeared in several regional papers including Lake County News and the Sacramento Bee. These local elected leaders are also urging the President to protect the Berryessa Snow Mountain region—as a National Monument!



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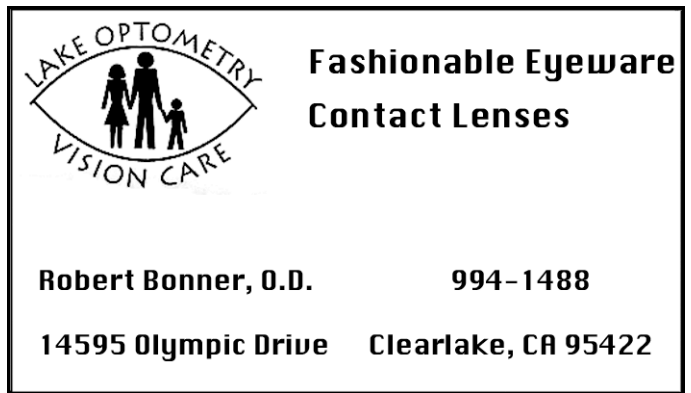


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Sierra Club Awards Scholarships

Lake Group is pleased to announce that for the third 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.

Middletown High School graduate Connor James Smith's application stated "my goal is to make a change for the better in the world. With an engineering degree, I hope to deliver technology that will help society live harmoniously with our planet without sacrificing our lifestyle. I am fond of combining my interest in cars with my passion for the environment to join the field of environmentally friendly transportation...." Connor will enroll in the University of California's San Diego campus in the fall.

A second award went to Upper Lake High School grad Marcella Stifter, who loves Clear Lake and its wildlife, and plans to major in Fisheries Biology at Humboldt State University with a minor in Marine Biology, with the intention of returning to Lake County with the skills needed to improve the fish population in Clear Lake. Lake Group congratulates both these fine young people, and wishes them every success on the next stage of their journey.



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June 2014 Election Results

Along with other friends of the environment, the preponderance of the business community, and a strong majority of Lake County voters, the Sierra Club deeply regrets the failure of Measure L, the half cent sales tax to protect and restore Clear Lake. After several thousand absentee and provisional ballots were reported just before press time, the final tally stands at 65.2 percent “yes” votes on the measure—just a few hundred fewer than the 2/3 majority needed. Low turnout—about 28 percent, countywide—probably played a role in this defeat.

What do these numbers tell us? First, the figures confirm that most people in Lake County—far more than half—recognize the vital importance of protecting the lake, the most important asset our community has. Most voters recognized that powerful safeguards built into Measure L would ensure that the revenues would be spent as mandated, realized that despite irresponsible assertions to the contrary no plausible alternative source of funding was available, and were willing to assume this minuscule financial burden for the sake of our quality of life and our children’s future.

On the other hand, we see yet again how extremely difficult it is for the will of the people to prevail given the crippling supermajority rules that Californians have saddled ourselves with. This is the fourth time in less than two years that a crucial special-purpose tax has gone down in flames in Lake County—with every single one of them getting more than 60 percent of the votes cast. The Measure L campaign committee is considering next steps, but in the meantime let’s not lose any opportunities to lobby our state legislators for a change in the law so we, the people, can act together for the benefit of our own community, without repeatedly seeing the will of the majority thwarted. Stay tuned.

In other election news, Sierra Club endorsed candidate for State Senate District 2, Mike McGuire, placed first and will be on the ballot in November, while Assembly District 4 candidate Joe Krovoza lost. Statewide, endorsees Kamala Harris (Attorney General), John Chiang (Treasurer), Betty Yee (Controller), Dave Jones (Insurance Commissioner) and Tom Torlakson (Superintendent of Public Instruction) all advanced to the second round.

To add a remarkable touch of drama, the results in the State Controllers race came down to the wire here in Lake County. After the rest of California had reported and with more than 5000 local ballots still outstanding, fewer than 1000 votes separated Sierra Club endorsee Betty Yee and John Perez as they vied for the second slot on the November ballot, giving registrar Diane Fridley had acquired an unprecedented degree of statewide fame. When all votes were accounted for it appeared that Yee had edged out Perez by 454 votes—out of more than 4 million cast!

Endangered Species Update

At their meeting in Fortuna on June 4 the California Fish and Game Commission formally accepted the Department of Fish and Wildlife status review on the Clear Lake hitch, recommending that this unique native fish be given “threatened” status under the California Endangered Species Act. Note that this action does *not* yet constitute a determination that the species is threatened or that listing is warranted. That decision is expected at the Commission's next meeting, which will be held in San Diego on August 6.

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.

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.

Sneak Preview

Please mark your calendars and plan to attend the first Lake Group meeting of the fall. On Wednesday September 24 Lake Group executive committee member Carolyn Ruttan, who is also the county Department of Water Resources Invasive Species Coordinator, will give us an advance look at an exciting proposal to repurpose the old Carnegie Library in Lakeport as a UC Davis environmental research center focusing on Clear Lake itself. Exciting! The meeting will begin at 7PM at the Lower Lake Methodist Church Community Room, 16255 Second St., and as always is free and open to the public. For details, contact Chair Ed Robey at 994 8304, edrobey@wildblue.net

Lake Group Executive Committee

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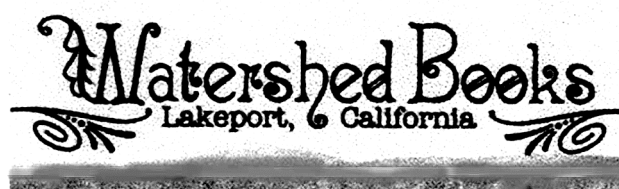
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ExCom meetings are held at 7PM on the first Wednesday of every other month, at locations that vary. All members are cordially invited to attend, but requested to contact the Chair first to confirm time and location



305 North Main Street
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Outings

At press time, there were no Lake Group hikes scheduled (it's *hot* out there!) but several other local organizations will continue to lead walks through the summer. The Lake County Land Trust conducts weekly Saturday walks at their Rodman Slough Preserve, starting at 8AM June through August; docent-led walks will start from the Visitor Center at Clear Lake State Park at 8:30AM every second and fourth Sunday; and the Anderson Marsh Interpretive Association (AMIA) offers guided nature walks followed by docent-led tours of the historic ranch house starting at 8:15AM the second Saturday of every month.

For Sierra Club outings elsewhere in the Redwood Chapter, check the next edition of the Redwood Needles or visit redwood.sierraclub.org.

Protecting Clear Lake Water Quality by Stopping Sediments at the Source

By now most people in Lake County recognize that excessive sediment and nutrient loading is the primary cause of rampant algae growth in Clear Lake, but fewer individuals seem to be aware that roads—not agriculture, not sewage disposal—are the single largest man-made source of sedimentation in our watershed.

Recently federal Clean Water Act funding administered by the State Water Resources Control Board allowed the US Forest Service and West Lake Resource Conservation District to collaborate on a project to “stormproof” approximately 41 miles of deeply rutted, eroding dirt roads in the Middle Creek watershed on the Mendocino National Forest, and thereby to significantly reduce the amount of sediment entering Clear Lake. The Sierra Club submitted a letter in support of the grant application several years ago, and on June 21 was invited to check out the results.

Danny Hagans of Pacific Watershed Associates, who very literally wrote the book on environmentally sound management of unpaved ranch and forest roadways, led the tour, with help from RCD District Manager Greg Dills and Forest Service employees Frank Aebly and Hilda Kwan. We saw the results—up close and personal—of techniques such as outsloped grading and rolling dips. These are techniques that drain standing water off the road surface before it can create potholes and ruts, and correctly performed also divert flows harmlessly into the forest floor to soak into the soil and replenish the aquifer instead of letting them form channels that rush headlong down steep slopes to create gullies and cause erosion. Recontouring these roads the *right* way has increased driveability, cut the amount of sediment reaching natural watercourses by about 50 percent, *and* reduced ongoing maintenance costs as well.



This rutted road is actually an illegal OHV route that had been washing out the road below, right down the hill and eventually into the lake, but many of the official roadways were as bad or worse Fixed now!



Danny Hagans explaining some fine points of grading



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