



SIERRA  
CLUB

FOUNDED 1892

explore,  
enjoy,  
and protect  
the planet

---

# Sierra Club Lake Group

## July-August 2015 Newsletter

# Annual Barbeque July 24

This year's midsummer BBQ will be held at 5:30PM on Friday July 24, 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 Victoria at 994-1931 or send an email to [vbrandon@wildblue.net](mailto:vbrandon@wildblue.net) for more information, and to RSVP (strongly encouraged!)

## Great Breaking News: President Obama Designates Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument!

Lake Group rejoices at President Obama's announcement that the Berryessa Snow Mountain region will be permanently protected as a national monument, with by far the largest portion here in Lake County.

Containing three federal Wilderness areas and a Wild and Scenic river, these 330,000 acres of federal public lands at the wild heart of the inner coast range are a place of extraordinary biological diversity. Iconic creatures such as tule elk, black bears and bald eagles live there,

as do impressive populations of other birds, bats, and dragonflies. Unique assemblages of rare plants make it a biodiversity "hotspot" of global importance. Stretching 100 miles north to south and with altitudinal variation ranging from just above sea level to more than 7000 feet, it offers a landscape level refuge to animals imperiled by climate change.

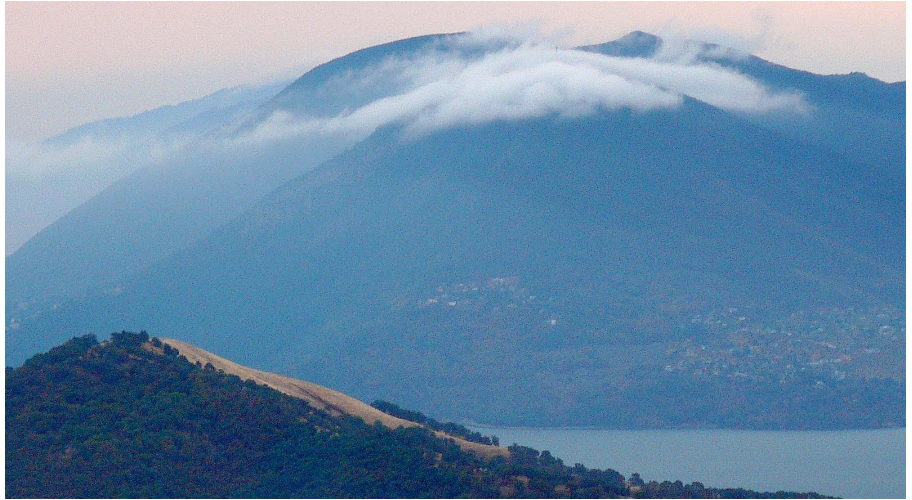
National monument designation gives this "undiscovered landscape" a name, provides collaborative tools and additional (con't)

# BSM National Monument, con't

funding sources to the Bureau of Land Management and National Forest Service, augments the region's recreational potential in ways consistent with good stewardship, and offers financial benefits to surrounding communities: it's good for the land, good for the people.

Permanent protection has been a top Lake Group priority for many years, starting at least as early as January 2008, when Lake Group hosted a town hall forum in Lower Lake that unveiled the public phase of the campaign. Since then we have kept the issue front and center among our membership, hosted several public meetings and conducted innumerable hikes into the region.

On this day of jubilation we thank the President, Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein, Congressmen Mike Thompson and John Garamendi, State Senator Mike McGuire, Assemblyman Bill Dodd and all the local elected officials, businesses, organizations and individuals who have made this great objective a reality.



Mount Konocti from Bartlett Summit



Tule Elk are a common sight in some parts of the Berryessa Snow Mountain region



Twisted roots of McNab Cypress on Walker Ridge: just one of the many rare plants that make the region a botanical hotspot of global importance



# Community Choice Aggregation: Not So Fast

Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) is a cumbersome name for a very promising new way of supplying our energy needs. By “aggregating” consumer buying power to create an alternative to a utility company monopoly, CCAs can negotiate with competitive suppliers and developers to obtain better prices and a higher percentage of renewables. Nearly five percent of Americans in over 1300 jurisdictions now buy energy in this way, including residents of both Sonoma and Marin Counties

CCAs can offer lower rates, a “greener” power grid, good local jobs, locally sourced electricity, and a stable, long term power supply system that remains under local control rather than being operated for the benefit of long distance investors. It’s also a very safe investment, since there’s typically a 20-30 percent difference between the wholesale and retail price of electric power. After providing for a five percent rate decrease and allocating another five percent to run the program, 10-20 percent is left to build up a reserve fund, develop new local renewable power sources, and subsidize energy efficiency projects in new and existing buildings.

A CCA proposal was recently made in Lake County by a private for-profit company called California Clean Power that offers a “turn key” operation: they would pay upfront costs and guarantee minor savings to ratepayers and a more substantial payment to local government in exchange for future profits, none of which will necessarily be devoted to accumulating reserves, developing local renewable power sources, or financing energy efficiency.

A great many questions arise.

*\*Where will the money go?* A local CCA can be expected to reap a profit of about \$3 million annually—money that will enrich outside investors instead of staying within the CCA for the benefit of local consumers. According to an independent analysis conducted by the County of San Mateo, “The community benefits represented by CCP appear to be much smaller than the CCA could otherwise achieve under a self-administered model . . . In particular, CCP appears to be retaining a disproportionate share of the financial benefits that could otherwise accrue to the CCA under a self-administered model.”

As a corollary, why should ratepayers be offered a mere two percent savings (instead of the five percent that is usual elsewhere) while more than twice that amount is presented to local government? This is after all the ratepayers’ money.

*\*Is this proposal even legal?* Three specific points seem to be very shaky.

- California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) legal counsel and other experts have unanimously held that all ratepayer money (including return on investment) has to stay within the CCA: it is not available for payments to the general fund, much less to be siphoned off as profit.
- Transfer of ratepayer money to county coffers may also be impermissible under Proposition 26 since it could be considered a tax requiring voter approval.
- Entering into a contract without first investigating alternative providers evades the competitive procurement process normally required by governmental entities.

*\*What about public oversight and transparency?* Under the draft agreement, all revenues would go to CCP, with no apparent obligation on their part to provide an accounting, or for the county to conduct an audit. CPUC requirements for a CCA require “due process” and “disclosure,” which may be difficult to achieve when finances are not scrutinized by the local government that authorized CCA formation.

*\*What about risk?* Investors can protect themselves from a downturn by pocketing short term profits, declaring bankruptcy, and switching customers back to PG&E (at substantial cost to ratepayers), but the contract does not appear to promise ordinary risk management practices such as building significant operational reserves, establishing public fiscal oversight, and emphasizing long-term procurement. And without formation of a Joint Powers Authority (JPA), the general fund might be at risk for program liabilities.

*\*And finally, what’s the hurry?* Multi-year contracts are proposed, involving billions of dollars of ratepayer money. San Mateo County’s independent evaluation raises many serious substantive concerns. A different contractual model (for example based on fee for service), formation of a JPA between the county and cities, formation of a larger regional JPA, or joining the ongoing operations of Sonoma Clean Power or Marin Clean Energy are all options worth considering.

It’s time for the Board of Supervisors to step back, draw breath, and exercise the due diligence that the citizenry deserves -- before handing over millions of dollars of our money.

**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

## Watch out for Walmart (yet again)

After several years of delay, Walmart has again announced plans to move forward with expansion plans at their Clearlake store. The proposal will involve adding about 39,000 square feet of additional retail space, including a full-service grocery and hard liquor sales, and the closure of the tire and automotive service department.

The Environmental Impact Report on this project has been in preparation (on and off) for several years, and it is anticipated that a draft will be available for public review in several months. Lake Group has every expectation of submitting comments, that may among other considerations raise questions about the validity of basing a decision on studies that could be categorized as near-antique by this time. In the meantime we're wondering what has happened to the Clearlake General Plan update? We submitted comments on the draft EIR more than a year ago, with the expectation of seeing a final EIR in a matter of months, but nothing has been forthcoming, and rumors now are rife that the revisions were so extensive that the long overdue document will have to be recirculated for another round of public comment. In the meantime the city is moving forward with the (likewise long overdue) revision of its Zoning Ordinance. Since zoning is supposed to be based on the general plan this order of march seems to be going at things backwards.

### Lake Group Executive Committee

Ed Robey (Chair, Treasurer, Political Chair): 994 8304, [edrobey@wildblue.net](mailto:edrobey@wildblue.net)  
 Cheri Holden (Vice Chair), 263 5787  
[cherisierraclub@gmail.com](mailto:cherisierraclub@gmail.com)  
 Win Stiles (Secretary): 367-1593, [win@w-s.com](mailto:win@w-s.com)  
 Victoria Brandon (newsletter editor, webmaster):  
 994-1931, [vbrandon@lakelive.info](mailto:vbrandon@lakelive.info)  
 Carolyn Ruttan, 295-0333,  
[caninoridge@digitalpath.net](mailto:caninoridge@digitalpath.net)

### Other contacts:

Steve Devoto (Outings): 279-8308,  
[sdevoto@mchsi.com](mailto:sdevoto@mchsi.com)

*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*

## 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](mailto:vbrandon@lakelive.info) or call Victoria at 994-1931.

**Watershed Books**  
 Lakeport, California

**305 North Main Street**  
**707.263.5787**

### 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](mailto:vbrandon@lakelive.info)—not only does this save some trees, it also benefits the Group financially.

## Redwood Chapter Sponsors Local Student

For the first time, Redwood Chapter is sponsoring sponsor a participant in SPROG (short for "Summer Program"), the Sierra Student Coalition's cutting-edge training program for youthful grassroots environmental activists—and Middletown High School student Jack Shrive has been chosen.

An environmental and social justice leadership training program for young people (ages 14-28) across the country, SPROG is an intensive week-long training program run by young people, for young people. It provides the skills needed to succeed as a grassroots organizer and make a substantial difference in the future of the community and the planet, and also connects participants with a supportive network of young activists who fight similar battles and share similar passions.

Jack will attend the West SPROG session near Los Angeles in mid-July. About to enter his junior year at Middletown High School and a self-described aspiring politician who says his ultimate goal is the presidency, for several years Jack has engaged in a solo 25-mile kayak trip across Clear Lake to raise awareness for protecting its ecosystem. "I want to make large change in my lifetime," says Jack, and to create "an environmentally conscious community that has the most modern technology such as solar roadways, wind turbines, and an effective public transportation system that produces no greenhouse gas emissions."

We think SPROG might just be able to provide the tools he needs to fulfill those lofty ambitions!

## KONOCTI POST

*www.konoctipost.blogspot.com*

**a lake county naturalist's blog**

**TAKE A RAMBLE. IT'S FREE.**

## Invasive Weed Tour July 23

Lake County's 11th annual Invasive Weed Tour will take place at 9AM on Thursday July 23, sponsored jointly by the county Department of Agriculture, Department of Water Resources, and the East Lake Resource Conservation District. Participants will gather at the ranch house at Anderson Marsh State Historic Park, take a guided walk of just over 2 miles to see the amazingly diverse array of invasive plants that flourish in the park and the effects of control mechanisms such as control burns, and return to the house for a (free!) lunch and discussion of aquatic invasives under the trees. RSVPs required: please call Katherine Blyleven in the Ag Commissioner's office at 263-0217 by July 17 to reserve your place.



**Fashionable Eyegare  
Contact Lenses**

**Robert Bonner, O.D.**

**994-1488**

**14595 Olympic Drive**

**Clearlake, CA 95422**

## Outings

At press time, Lake Group had no hikes scheduled during the upcoming hot months. For outings elsewhere in Redwood Chapter, check the Outings tab at [sierraclub.org/redwood](http://sierraclub.org/redwood)



SIERRA  
CLUB

FOUNDED 1892

Sierra Club Lake Group  
PO Box 27  
Lakeport, CA 95453