



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

Volume 57 Number 2

Newsletter of the Redwood Chapter of the Sierra Club

April/May 2016

Benicia Says No to Crude by Rail

By ELLY BENSON,

SIERRA CLUB ENVIRONMENTAL LAW PROGRAM

Last month, six planning commissioners in this quiet Solano Group community dealt a blow to the oil industry when they unanimously rejected oil giant Valero's proposal to transport crude to its local refinery in dangerous oil trains. Valero's plan to receive two 50-tanker oil trains each day at the Benicia refinery is emblematic of broader industry efforts to ramp up transport of oil— including dirty tar sands crude from Canada and explosive Bakken crude from North Dakota— in mile-long trains to refineries along the West Coast.

The 6-0 vote came shortly before midnight on Thursday, February 11th, after four consecutive nights of public hearings that lasted until 11 pm or later. When the hearings began at Benicia City Hall on Monday evening, more than 150 people had signed up to speak and the crowd filled the hearing room, several overflow rooms, and the building's courtyard. The commissioners heard from scores of concerned Benicia residents and also from residents of "up-rail" towns and cities (including Sacramento and Davis) who would be endangered by the oil trains rolling through their communities on the way to the Valero refinery. Oil train derailments and explosions have increased dramatically in recent years, including the July 2013 oil train derailment in Lac-Megantic, Canada that tragically killed 47 people.

In denying the project, the commissioners went against City planning staff's recommendation to approve Valero's proposal. Staff recommended

approval despite concluding that the benefits do not outweigh the numerous "significant and unavoidable" impacts on up-rail communities (including derailments, oil spills, and explosions). The staff report insisted that federal regulation of railroads means that the legal doctrine of preemption prohibits the City from mitigating—or even considering— any of the serious risks that oil trains pose to communities and sensitive environments along the rail line.

During the public hearing, the contract attorney hired by the City repeatedly told the commissioners that they unquestionably lack any authority to deny the permit based on these rail impacts— and went so far as to say that mere disclosure of these impacts could be unlawful.

Attorneys from the Sierra Club, Natural Resources Defense Council, and the Stanford Law School clinic testified at the hearing, refuting this expansive interpretation of the preemption doctrine and urging the commissioners to reject it. Before voting to deny the project, several commissioners expressed skepticism that they are legally required to turn a blind eye to the grave dangers that oil trains pose to up-rail communities. One commissioner told the contract attorney that his interpretation of the preemption issue is "180 degrees different" from the view expressed by other attorneys. (Using more colorful language, another commissioner noted: "I don't want to be the planning commissioner in the one city that said 'screw you' to up-rail cities.")

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Klamath Dams to Come Down

By VICTORIA BRANDON,
REDWOOD CHAPTER CHAIR

For many years one of Redwood Chapter's top priorities has been the removal of four geriatric hydroelectric dams that are impeding fish passage and impairing water quality on the Klamath River, while sedimentation has reduced their capacity for electric generation. Retrofitting the dams to provide fish passage for salmon, steelhead and other fish as required by re-licensing authorization would be prohibitively expensive, making removal a more viable alternative for the customers and stockholders of dam owner PacifiCorp.

In 2009, a stakeholder process (in which the Sierra Club did not participate) resulted in the Klamath Hydroelectric Settlement Agreement (KHSA) and Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement (KBRA) by which dam removal was linked to upstream water rights allocations and other considerations. Members of the California and Oregon Congressional delegation then introduced legislation to implement the agreements, but after several years of Congressional inaction they expired at the end of 2015.

Now we are delighted to be able to announce that dam removal seems to be back on track. Early in February the state

of California, PacifiCorp and the federal government announced an agreement-in-principle to move forward with an amended version of the KHSA through the administrative process governed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), using existing funding and on the same timeline.

Once removal is approved through FERC's established processes (which include public comment) PacifiCorp would transfer title of the Klamath River dams to a non-federal entity that would assume liability and take the appropriate steps to decommission and remove the dams in 2020.

"This agreement marks an unprecedented coming together of parties to seek solutions to difficult problems," said California Secretary for Natural Resources John Laird. "California is committed to the implementation of the Klamath Hydroelectric Settlement Agreement and to continued efforts to achieve a broad settlement of the issues that have plagued the Klamath Basin. This is an important first step toward both of those goals."

The Klamath isn't running wild and free quite yet— but for the first time in years a degree of guarded optimism seems well justified.

Inner Coast Range Conservancy: Let's Make It Happen

By VICTORIA BRANDON, REDWOOD CHAPTER CHAIR

Redwood Chapter worked for years to ensure the permanent protection of federal lands in the Berryessa Snow Mountain region, and rejoiced when that goal was met last summer by the designation of the BSM national monument. Now it's time to take the next step to provide the resources needed to maximize good stewardship and recreational value in the region, both inside and outside monument boundaries.

On February 19 Senator Lois Wolk, with co-authors Senator Mike McGuire and Assemblymen Bill Dodd and Marc Levine, took a big step towards achieving those objectives by introducing SB 1396, a bill to create an Inner Coast Range Conservancy. California's ten existing conservancies were established legislatively to protect regional resources of statewide significance. Independent

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Clear Lake from French Ridge

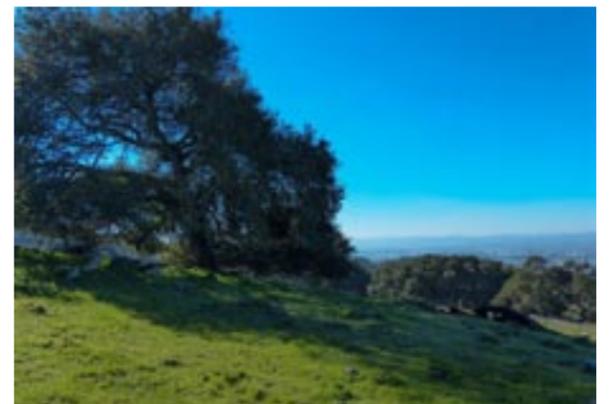
Supporting Parks, Supporting Trails

By VICTORIA BRANDON, REDWOOD CHAPTER CHAIR

Redwood Chapter is proud to announce that we recently contributed \$2000 to the Sonoma County Regional Parks Foundation in support of an exciting project to build eight miles of trails at Taylor Mountain Regional Park and Open Space Preserve in Santa Rosa. The trail expansion, one of Sonoma County's largest trail projects, will open the northeast section of the 1,100-acre park to public access.

The multi-use trails will be built as stacked loops that lead visitors through oak woodlands, across ridges with sweeping views of Santa Rosa and Bennett Valley, over the headwaters of Colgan and Cooper creeks, and past

"Supporting Parks, Trails" cont. on page 2



Wages and Housing: Why Sonoma County Workers Can't Afford the Rent

By MARTIN J. BENNETT

A widening gap between declining incomes and rising rents is fueling two powerful movements in the Golden State: one to raise the wage floor for low-wage workers, and another to control rents and increase funding for affordable housing.

According to the California Housing Partnership Corporation, a combination of falling incomes and high rents is driving the worst rental-housing crisis in California since World War II. Between 2000-2014 in California adjusted median household income fell 8 percent while median rents jumped 20 percent. *During this timeframe Sonoma County's median renter income dropped by 9 percent and median rents increased by 17 percent.*

As a result, a record number of renters in the state and the county cannot afford housing costs. In Sonoma County in 2014, 56 percent of renter households spent more than

30 percent of their income on rent, and 30 percent of county households were severely cost burdened, spending more than 50 percent on rent.

Sonoma County rents have spiked an astonishing 40 percent over the last four years. Of 3100 homeless county residents in 2015, more than two-thirds claimed in a survey "affordable rent" as the main reason for losing permanent shelter.

The foreclosure crisis targeted working class and minority home buyers and dramatically increased the number of renters, thus pushing rents sky high in most California metropolitan regions. The Bay Area's tech-induced job growth has resulted in an influx of highly paid technology workers, and displacement of working-class and low-income renters by landlords seeking higher profits.

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“Supporting Parks, Trails”

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the site of a historic hot springs resort. Trailheads on Kawana Terrace, Linwood Avenue and Panorama Drive will make it easier for southeast Santa Rosa residents to walk or bike to the park.

“This will create a tremendous health resource for our community,” said Supervisor Shirlee Zane, whose 3rd District includes much of the park. “Last summer, we added a Petaluma Hill Road entrance that improves access for residents of Rohnert Park and the south county. Now, we can build trails and neighborhood connections that make Taylor Mountain even more accessible.”

“Taylor Mountain is a wonderful example of how we can provide opportunities to play and learn in protected landscapes,” said Supervisor Susan Gorin, whose 1st District takes in northern and eastern sections of the park. “Most of Taylor Mountain will be open to the public when these trails are built, yet the land will remain an important agricultural resource and urban buffer.”

In December, Sonoma County Regional Parks learned that the Federal Highway Administration’s Recreational Trails Program has approved a \$1.7 million grant for funding in late 2016; trail construction could begin in early 2017 and continue through 2018. The award

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Hiking on Taylor Mountain

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Why Falling Incomes and Rising Inequality?

Simultaneous with rising rents, incomes and wages are falling for the majority of California workers.

The most important factor driving income inequality is the “recovery’s” failure to create good jobs. According to the National Employment Law Project, 44 percent of new jobs added in 2010-2014 were low-wage (paying less than \$14/hr.); and a record share are part-time and temporary jobs. In contrast, mid-wage jobs paying between \$14/hr- \$20/hr. are only 20 percent of the new jobs created, and this trend is not expected to change soon.

Another major cause of rising inequality and falling wages is the demise of unions. In the mid-1950s, over 40 percent of California workers were union members but today less than 16 percent are in unions. According to the Economic Policy Institute, the wages of union workers average 27 percent higher than nonunion workers.

The falling value of the minimum wage is also a major factor driving inequality. This is due to the legislature’s failure to annually adjust the minimum wage for the rising cost of living. *Inflation-adjusted wages for the bottom 50 percent of California’s workforce declined between 1979-2013, according to California Budget and Policy Center.* Compared to similar workers in 1979, hourly wages in 2013 for workers earning in the bottom 20 percentile of the wage distribution dropped by 12 percent, while wages for the top 80 percentile increased by 17 percent.

Funding for Affordable Housing Slashed

Declining incomes and rising rents for most Californians since 2000 are accompanied by a sharp drop in funding for affordable housing at every level of government.

According to the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, the federal government provides Section 8 housing vouchers, the nation’s largest housing subsidy, to 300,000 low-income renters in California (but only 25 percent of eligible renter households actually receive vouchers). Further, in 2013 vouchers were slashed for 15,000 of these renters due to federal budget cuts. In Sonoma County, the Press Democrat reported nearly 30,000 eligible low-income families were on the waiting list, with a typical wait of eight years, for Section 8 vouchers in 2015.

The state also has drastically cut back funding for affordable housing. In 2011 Governor Jerry Brown eliminated local

redevelopment agencies that generated \$1 billion annually and were the state’s main source for affordable housing funding. Governor Brown has also stymied legislation that would provide funding for affordable housing.

What Is To Be Done?

Concerned citizens must continue to press the legislature to pass legislation that will fund affordable housing. We must also lobby the City of Santa Rosa to increase funding for affordable housing by implementing a jobs-housing linkage fee for large commercial, retail and industrial development. In 2005-2006, the county and four cities approved such linkage fees.

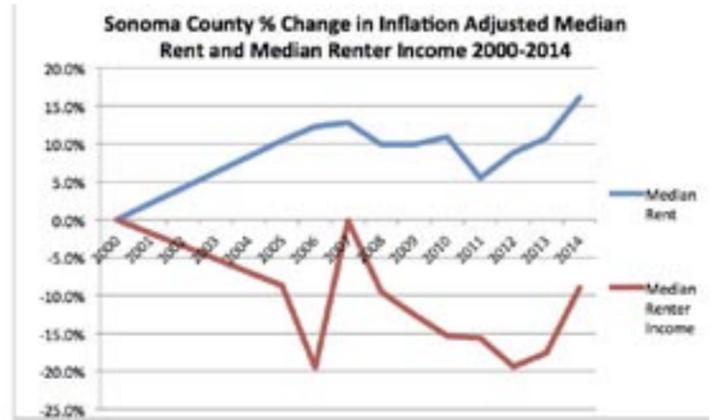
Rent control is an important component of rent stabilization that all cities in the county should adopt.

Twelve California cities have implemented some form of rent control. Numerous California cities, including Santa Rosa, are considering rent control while Richmond and others may place rent control measures on the ballot. Because of various restrictions, rent control can only be imposed on a limited number of housing units, and in Santa Rosa just 20 percent of housing units could be covered.

Fight for \$15 and Raising Wages to Pay the Rent

Growing inequality and federal and state governments’ refusal to raise the wage floor has ignited the national “Fight for \$15.” The Fight for \$15 is rooted in the 2011-2012 Occupy encampments that protested the concentration of wealth by the top 1 percent of Americans, and the living wage movement that began in 1994 in Baltimore. Today, 140 cities, counties, and airports have passed Living Wage Ordinances to mandate that employees of local government and private firms, who work on government contracts, will receive a living wage and become self-sufficient, instead of having to rely on public assistance.

According to the UCB Labor Center, 30 cities and counties have now implemented \$15/hr. minimum wage laws, and 15 are in California. This reflects changing public opinion and has influenced labor unions like SEIU to join with faith based, immigrant rights, student, civil rights, and Democratic Party organizations to place a wage initiative on the November ballot. That initiative would raise the California state minimum wage



Median Renter Income is **-\$4,713** less per year in 2014 than it was in 2000 when adjusting for inflation. Median Rent is **\$2,283.84** more per year in 2014 than in 2000 when adjusting for inflation (monthly it is \$190.32). Meaning that the median renter has lost nearly \$7,000 in purchasing power. Data analysis by California Housing Partnership Corporation.

to \$15/hr. by 2020. A recent Field poll reveals that 70 percent of Californians support this ballot measure.

Environmentalists will also no doubt support this \$15/hr. state minimum wage campaign. Low-wage workers in the North Bay and elsewhere in the Bay Area must commute longer distances by automobile to find affordable housing. The Metropolitan Transit Agency and Association of Bay Area Governments recommended in a 2014 report that to close the jobs-housing mismatch in the Bay Area, and to encourage smarter and more equitable growth, cities and counties across the Bay should implement living wage and minimum wage ordinances to establish a regional wage floor significantly higher than the current state minimum of \$10 an hour. For this reason the Sierra Club Sonoma Group has supported the living wage campaign in Sonoma County, and the Sierra Club Bay Chapter has supported living wage and minimum wage campaigns across the Bay Area.

Now is the time for environmentalists, affordable housing and higher wage advocates to join together to build a statewide economic and environmental justice movement to boost the current state minimum wage of \$10/hr. to \$15/hr. for all. Why? Because the rent can't wait!

Martin J. Bennett is Instructor Emeritus of History at Santa Rosa Junior College and Co-Chair, North Bay Jobs with Justice.

Excerpted from an article that appeared in the February 2016 Sonoma Gazette.

“Inner Coast Range Conservancy”

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agencies within the California Natural Resources Agency with an independent governance structure and their own funding lines, they provide a coordinated, regional approach to achieve forest resiliency and fuel reduction, water quality and aquatic habitat improvement, invasive species control, and many other on-the-ground projects. Conservancies are non-regulatory, collaborative, state-local partnerships that may work with local governments, nonprofit organizations, private businesses, academic institutions, and other organizations to carry out their mission.

Conservancies such as the Sierra Nevada Conservancy or the Coastal Conservancy are a major conduit for state allocations, bond funds, and grants with a proven track record of advancing environmental preservation and restoration while promoting a thriving local economy— but the northern Inner Coast Range region is unable to take advantage of these benefits, because it lies almost entirely outside the boundaries of existing conservancies. SB 1396 will rectify that omission.

Stretching from Solano County to the Oregon border and centering on the Berryessa Snow Mountain national monument, the northern Inner Coast Range region contains many rural communities committed to sustaining and restoring the region’s exceptional cultural and natural resource values; a strong agricultural and natural resource-based heritage; and a rich Native American cultural history. Its outstanding biodiversity is of global significance, and it includes many large public land areas that are open for recreational use.

Creation of a conservancy will support collaborative efforts to protect, conserve, and restore the region’s physical, cultural, archeological, historical, and biological resources; preserve working landscapes and restore resiliency to natural landscapes; reduce the risk and severity of wildfires; improve water and air quality; increase opportunities for tourism and recreation and enhance public use and enjoyment of public lands. Robust local and regional participation in conservancy governance structure ensures a strong local voice on project development and implementation.

The Sierra Club wants to make this great proposal a reality: it’s good for the land, good for the people, and good for our communities. Please stay tuned for ways you can help.

Redwood Valley Fights Back Against Dollar General

When Nancy Jameson, a sheep and goat rancher, heard that the empty field next to her farm had received a permit to build a 9100 square foot Dollar General store, she thought someone was joking. A lifelong resident of Redwood Valley, Jameson has long enjoyed her country lifestyle in a quiet backwater of Mendocino County. She shears her sheep, spins wool for sweaters, and practices sustainable ranching. The news that a multi-billion dollar purveyor of junk foods, cheap alcohol, and low-paying jobs will be laying asphalt within a few feet of her animals was confirmed at a Mendocino Planning Commission meeting last July, and so began a battle that has been joined by most of the 1700 residents of Redwood Valley against the Dollar General Corporation.

Outside the county seat of Ukiah there are few strip malls or “formula” stores to speak of in Mendocino County. Residents like it that way; it’s why many of them live here and feel Dollar General does not fit the profile.

Redwood Valley isn’t alone. Dollar General is pushing an aggressive expansion formula, modeling their corporation as the mini-version of Wal-Mart. Their plans call for 1,000 stores throughout California, sited in small communities within about 15 miles of a Wal-Mart. Low wages, minimal staff, and “loss leaders” such as below-cost alcohol and junk food are counted on to bring in the shoppers. The model is designed to under-cut local grocery and variety stores, pricing the older stores out of business. Local farm goods, textiles, and wine don’t fit the model. Neither do living wages and benefits, according to officials in many of the small towns that oppose the corporation.

Although the County Board of Supervisors originally voted unanimously to disapprove the permit pending further research

by County Counsel, that research led to a 3-2 Board vote to let the permit stand: their hands were tied because the site had been zoned commercial in the 2009 General Plan.

Redwood Valley residents haven’t given up. They have formed an action group, Smart Growth Rural Mendocino, and have promoted a letter-writing campaign aimed at denying an off-sale alcohol license to the Dollar General. Over 130 letters of opposition, including those from members of the Board of Supervisors, have been sent to the California Alcoholic Beverage Control Board, citing the many off-sale licenses currently existing in Redwood Valley. “In a two block area, there are already 3 licenses, with 7 more within a couple miles,” said Tom Schoeneman, a Redwood Valley resident who came to Mendocino County to escape unchecked development. “With its late hours, cheap beer and wine, and bright lighting, Dollar Generals serve each community they occupy as basically a nuisance that attracts just the wrong element to our little town.” He and others point to Dollar General’s OSHA violations nationwide, and its documented sales of cheap foreign goods, including hazardous materials that aren’t allowed in American manufacturing.

Whether small, generally cash-strapped communities that want to retain their rural character will have much success in stemming the growth of corporate chain stores, Redwood Valley is one small town that isn’t giving up. Says local artist and community activist Lou Brooks, “We’re going to fight this to the end. If we can’t stop them, we’ll boycott them. This is all about democratic rights and basic common sense prevailing over corporate rule; the stakes are that high.”

—CHRISTINE BOYD, SMART GROWTH RURAL MENDOCINO

National Club Election Coming This Spring

The annual election for the Club’s Board of Directors is now underway. Those eligible to vote in the national Sierra Club election will receive in the mail (or by Internet if you chose the electronic delivery option) your national Sierra Club ballot. This will include information on the candidates and where you can find additional information on the Club’s website.

The Sierra Club is a democratically structured organization at all levels. The Club requires the regular flow of views on policy and priorities from its grassroots membership in order to function well. Yearly participation in elections at all Club levels is a major membership obligation. Your Board of Directors is required to stand for election by the membership. This Board

sets Club policy and budgets at the national level and works closely with the Executive Director and staff to operate the Club. Visit the Club’s election website: <http://www.sierraclub.org/board/election>. This site provides links to additional information about candidates, and their views on a variety of issues facing the Club and the environment.

Please take the time to read the ballot statement of each candidate. Then make your choice and cast your vote. Even if you receive your election materials in the mail, please go to the user-friendly Internet voting site to save time and postage. If necessary, you will find the ballot is quite straightforward and easy to mark and mail.

Outings

Sat. Apr. 2 - Napa Group. Napa River and Bay Trail Day Hike.

We'll stroll at a leisurely pace along the water's edge as the tide recedes, and many shorebirds come to feed. Class E-6-A (6mi. flat, wheelchair accessible) Co-led with Mother Lode Chapter. Carpools: Meet 8:45 am parking lot behind In-n-Out Burger 820 W Imola Ave Napa. Sonoma Group call for trailhead parking and arrival time at trailhead parking lot. By reservation only. Leader: Martin Farber 707-253-9606 kowsoi@juno.com Rain cancels.

Sun. Apr. 10 - Lake Group. Valley Fire Overview Walk.

This short walk will give us an overview of the Middletown section of the Valley Fire. We will also look at maps of the larger fire area and share our own stories about evacuating the area and coping with the tragedy. On a lighter note we will rejoice in the renewal of annual and perennial plants in the area. We will also include a visit to Rabbit Hill, a Lake County Land Trust holding in Middletown, Class E-3-A Meet 9:00 a.m. at Perry's Deli in Middletown. By Reservation only. Leader Pete McGee 942-1373 or montesol@hughes.net, rain cancels

Sat. Apr. 16 - Lake Group. Payne Ranch Ponds.

We will do a tour of the ranch ponds

of the old Payne Ranch, now a part of the BLM's Bear Creek Unit of the Cache Creek Natural Area. After generous rains, the ponds should be close to full. This 9 mile hike will be in rolling oak and pine covered terrain, and wildflowers should be excellent. Dog friendly. Bring water, lunch and hiking boots. Class: M-9-A. Meet 8:00AM at Lower Lake Coffee Company, Lower Lake. By reservation only. Leader Tom McFarling (707) 994-5490. tom.mcfarling@gmail.com rain cancels.

Sat. Apr. 16 - Napa Group. Annadel State Park Day Hike.

We will hike in Annadel State Park on trails featuring lush meadows and marshes, wildlife and wildflowers. Bring lunch and liquids. Class: M-9-B. (8-1/2 mi. 1100 ft gain) Co-led with Mother Lode Chapter. Carpools: Meet 9 am parking lot behind In-n-Out Burger 820 W Imola Ave Napa. There is a parking fee. Sonoma Group call for trailhead parking and arrival time at Annadel. By reservation only. Leader: Martin Farber 707-253-9606 kowsoi@juno.com Rain cancels.

Sun. Apr. 17 - Mendo Group. Glen Eden Hike.

Hopefully the wildflowers will be out for this beautiful 8 mile roundtrip hike beginning in Scott's Valley and ascending 1800' to the ridges of Cow Mountain before dropping down

to Goat Rock. Hiking boots, poles (optional), layered clothing per weather, rain gear, at least a liter of water, and lunch. Tick season, recommend long pants tucked into socks and long sleeve shirt, and Deet if desired. Class: M-8-B. Carpools: Meet CVS in Orchard plaza 9:15 or trailhead by 10. By reservation only. Jonah Freedman, 4671877, jonfree99@pacific.net Rain cancels.

Sat. Apr. 23 - Lake Group. Redbud Trail to Cache Creek.

Start in a meadow, wind up a ridge, enjoy oak woodlands and blooming wildflowers as we reach Cache Creek, then we'll double back the same route. Bring snack, water & hiking boots. M-5-A. Meet: 8:30 am Lower Lake Coffee Company, Lower Lake. By reservation only. Leader Julie Kreis (707) 671-5947. tikaljak@yahoo.com rain cancels

Sun Apr. 24 North Group. Smith River NRA-Jedediah Smith SP Hike.

From the trailhead off South Fork Rd., we climb past a succession of botanical communities and stunning views. Nearing 2,000', the trail levels and gradually descends through broken prairies to enter old growth redwoods as we near Howland Hill Rd., where our shuttled cars await. Bring lunch, water, hiking boots. No dogs. Class: M-10-B. Carpools: Meet 9:30 am Hiouchi Ranger Sta. (Hwy 199 opposite Jed. Smith Campground entrance) By reservation only. Leader Melinda mgroomster@gmail.com 668-4275.

Sat. May 7 - Napa Group. Jack London State Historic Park Day Hike.

This hike will feature historic sites, shady trails, spring wildflowers, peaceful lakes, and panoramic views. Bring lunch and liquids. Class: M-9-B. (9 mi. 1500 ft gain) Co-led with Mother Lode Chapter. Carpools: Meet 9 a.m. parking lot behind In-n-Out Burger 820 W Imola Ave Napa. Sonoma Group call for trailhead parking and arrival time at Jack London. There is a parking fee. By reservation only. Leader: Martin Farber 707-253-9606, kowsoi@juno.com. Rain cancels.

Sat. May 14 - North Group. Patrick's Point SP Ivy Pull and Rim Trail Hike.

Join Northcoast CNPS, other volunteers and State Parks staff for a morning ivy pull, then lunch and an afternoon Rim Trail hike. Check at the entrance station for the day's location. Work starts at 9 AM. No admission fee for ivy volunteers. Bring your work clothes and sturdy shoes and your favorite tools and gloves, or use those provided. Bring your lunch, and dress for the weather. No dogs. Class M-4-A. Carpools 8:15 at Ray's Valley West. Leader Ned, nedforsyth48@gmail.com, (707) 825-3652. For more information contact ivy volunteer Mitch at mitchell_williams@hotmail.com, or Michelle at 677-3109, email michelle.forys@parks.ca.gov

Sat. May 14 - Lake Group. Mt. Konocti hike.

We will hike to the top of Wright peak on Mt. Konocti, then ascend the fire lookout tower at the top for stunning views of Clear Lake and surrounding mountains. The hike is only 6 miles round-trip, but gains 1600 feet in just half that distance. The other half is back down, of course. M-6-B. Meet 8:30 AM at Studebakers Coffee Shop in Kelseyville, right on Main Street, or trailhead on Konocti Road by 9:00. Reservations only. Leader Tom McFarling (707) 994-5490 tom.mcfarling@gmail.com rain cancels.

Sun. May 15 - Sonoma Group. Taylor Mountain County Regional Park Family Hike.

Come explore one

of Sonoma County's urban accessible hiking gems with the family! This hike loops through the lower parts of Taylor Mountain's West and East trails. Children are sure to enjoy a close encounter with the grazing cattle and the ample opportunities for toddler walk times on the trail. Bring water and snacks. No strollers, toddlers OK if in backpacks. Great hike for all ages. Class: M-3-A. Meet: 9:00 a.m. trail-head 2080 Kawana Terrace, Santa Rosa. Parking \$7, free for Regional Parks Members. Nearby free parking on Kawana Terrace at base of park entrance. Reservation required. Leader Nick 291-3470.



MON.-THURS. MAY 16-19 - MENDO GROUP. YOLLA BOLLY WILDERNESS BACKPACK.

5 mile backpack into a beautiful but small lake in the Yolla Bolly Wilderness of Mendocino National Forest. Campsite is a spot with good drinking water but the lake is too muddy for swimming. Base camp is for 3 nights, and we will do day hiking. Participants must have backpacked within the last 5 years and have their own equipment including backpack, sleeping bag, tent, water filter, cooking gear, and 3 water bottles. Bring food for 4 days and 3 nights. Class: M-5-B. Meeting place to be determined later. By reservation only. Leader Val Nordeman 707 477-4199 nordeman@willitsonline.com Limit 10 people. Snow may be a factor this early in the season. Outing cancelled if the roads are too bad.

Sun. May 22 - Lake Group. Highland Springs Recreation Area.

Hike narrow, single-track trails that may at times traverse steep terrain. We'll take loop trails covering 3 - 5 miles. We will stop to view and identify wildflowers. Bring snack, water, flower I.D. book/apps. and hiking boots Class: M-5-A. Meet: 8:30 am Lower Lake Coffee Company, Lower Lake. By reservation only, Leader Julie Kreis (707) 671-5947. tikaljak@yahoo.com rain cancels.

Sun. May 22 - North Group. Prairie Creek SP Miners Ridge Loop West.

Starting from Miners Ridge Trailhead off Beach Road, we gradually ascend through lush coastal rain forest into hillside redwoods. In 2 miles, we meet the Clintonia Trail, connecting to James Irvine and Fern Canyon. A mile south on the Coastal trail closes the loop. Bring lunch and liquids. Prepare for wet woods, sun, wind. No dogs. Class: M-7-A. Carpools: Meet 9am Rays Valley West, Trailhead 9:45am Elk Meadow Day Use parking (off Davison). Leader Melinda mgroom@gmail.com 668-4275. Serious rain or winds cancel.

Fri.-Mon. May 27-30 - Black Rock Rendezvous.

This annual event makes a great first trip to the Black Rock; it typically includes speakers, guided tours, visits to hot springs, rocket launches, rock hounding, a Dutch Oven cook-off, drawings, and more. Co-Sponsored by Friends of the Black Rock, BLM and Friends of Nevada Wilderness. Bring your RV's and trailers. Primitive camping but w/ portable toilets. May be Kid's Camp activities hosted by Nevada Outdoor School. Bring your HAM radio and join the Ham activity. Dogs on leash; be prepared to pick up after them. For more info go to: www.blackrockrendzvous.com. Questions/sign ups: David Book 775-843-6443 Great Basin Group/CNRCC Desert Com

Sat. May 28 - Napa Group. Hood Mtn. Regional Park Day Hike.

We'll summit Hood Mountain via the coolest shadiest route, following Hood Creek along well-maintained trails, with peaceful lakes, panoramic views, and surprising late-spring wildflowers. Class: M-9-C. (9mi. 2000ft gain) Co-led with Mother Lode Chapter. Carpools: Meet 9am parking lot behind In-n-Out

Burger 820 W Imola Ave Napa. Sonoma Group call for trailhead parking and arrival time at Jack London. There is a parking fee. By reservation only. Leader: Martin Farber 707-253-9606, kowsoi@juno.com. Rain cancels.

Sat.-Sun. June 4-5, SF Bay Chapter. Austin Creek State Recreation Area Backpack.

Join us for an easy backpacking trip at a relaxed pace in Austin Creek SRA—perfect for beginners, lapsed backpackers or those who just like to take it easy in the backcountry. We'll hike through open grassland, oak woodlands, gurgling creeks and maybe we'll even find a hidden swimming hole to frolic in. The views of the coastal mountains are stunning as the trail angles steeply downhill to the campsite. The trail borders Gilliam and East Austin Creeks so water will be plentiful and we may find turtles, California newts and lingering wildflowers. We'll hike 5 miles each day (10 miles round trip) with an elevation change of 1,200 feet. Individual commissary, but guides will bring stoves for boiling water. Leaders: Inga Aksamit, ingasadventures@gmail.com (preferred) or (415)-470-1812, and Mike Bandrowski (Backpacking). Register: <http://tioga.sierraclub.org/oars-activity/pages/activity.jsf?activity=95935>

Sun.-Sat. June 19-25 - Escalante River Backpack.

Enjoy the stunning landscape of southern Utah on this backpack along 27 miles of the Escalante River and 10 miles of deep and narrow Harris Wash Creek. Side trips along the way will explore the narrow canyons and creeks. Arrive in the town of Escalante at the Escalante Interagency Visitor Center around noon MDT to get our free permit and latest route information. Then set up a car shuttle between the beginning at the Hwy 12 bridge and the end at Harris Wash Trailhead. Bring a daypack for the side trips and footwear appropriate for being in and out of the river all day. There is an option of ending the trip June 24 or 25. David Hardy, 702 875-4826, email preferred hardyhikers@embarqmail.com. S. Nevada Group/CNRCC Desert Com

Mon.- Fri. June 20-24 - Mendo Group. Marble Mountain Wilderness Backpack.

We will backpack 6 miles into the east side of the Marble Mountain Wilderness, a heavily used but gorgeous area. We will base camp for 4 nights and do some moderate day hikes with stunning views of the Marbles. Participants must have backpacked within the last 5 years and have all their own gear, a bear canister, sleeping bag, tent, water filtration system, cooking equipment, rain gear and hiking boots. You must carry all your own food for 5 days and 4 nights. There will be a long drive to the trailhead and we'll decide later where to meet. Class: M-6-B. By reservation only. Limit 10 people. Leader Val Nordeman, 707 477-4199 nordeman@willitsonline.com

Mon.-Fri. July 18-22 - Mendo Group. Yolla Bolly Wilderness Backpack.

This is a 4 mile backpack into a lovely lake in the highest part of this wilderness, the southeast corner. The lake is good for drinking water, swimming, and is an excellent spot to base camp for 4 nights with day hikes for 3 days. We might even bag a peak. Participants must have backpacked in the last 5 years and have their own gear including sleeping bag, tent if needed, cooking equipment and water filtration system. Bear canisters might be required and bring rain gear just in case. You must have food for yourself for 5 days and 4 nights. Meeting place and time to be decided later. Class: M-4-B. By reservation only. Limit 10 people. Leader Val Nordeman, 707 477-4199 nordeman@willitsonline.com

Instructions to hikers

Outings will start not later than 15 minutes after scheduled meeting time. The leader is in charge of the trip and is responsible for your welfare and the good name of the Club. He/she must have your cooperation to make the trip safe, pleasant and rewarding. Never charge ahead of the leader and keep within sight or shouting distance of the person ahead of you so you do not miss an intersecting trail. Do not lag behind rear leader: if you need help, the rear leader will remain to assist you. Do not leave the group without the leader's permission. Be adequately equipped and prepared. You should carry lunch and liquids. Wear footwear appropriate for the outing. In most cases that would be hiking boots.

Guard against fire. Do not smoke on Sierra Club outings. Build fires only with the leader's permission, and extinguish them completely. Guns, pets, or radios are not to be brought on hikes.

The Sierra Club does not have insurance for carpooling arrangements and assumes no liability for them. Participants assume the risks associated with travel. Reimburse the carpool driver. Carpools are not part of the outing but a means of conserving natural resources.

All participants on Sierra Club outings are required to sign a standard liability waiver. If you would like to read the liability waiver please go to: <http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms/>, or contact the Outings Department at (415) 977-5528 for a printed version.

Visitors are welcome

All Sierra Club trips are open to the public unless otherwise announced. You are free to bring all members of your family and guests. Children are usually welcome, but please call the leader to make sure it is an appropriate hike.

DIFFICULTY	MILEAGE	ELEVATION GAIN
E - Easy	Actual	A - Less than 1,000
M - Moderate	Mileage	B - 1,000 to 2,000
H - Hard		C - 2,000 to 3,000
S - Strenuous		D - over 3,000
V - Very Strenuous		

The actual mileage will be listed for each trip. Elevation gain will reflect the gain from the start of the hike to the highest point. If you need to know the cumulative gain, please contact the leader.

To submit outings write-ups

Send all outings write-ups to: Carol Vellutini, Outings Chair, (carolvsr@sonic.net) by the 8th of the month. All leaders must coordinate their outings with their Group Outings Chair.

CST 2087766-40. Registration as a seller of travel does not constitute approval by the State of California.

Silver Lake & Carson Pass

Come relax and enjoy the beauty. Fish, hike, or wander along the many lakeside and mountain trails abundant with wildflowers. After a hike, refresh in the cool water, lounge on our beach, or glide on the pristine Silver Lake waters, very peaceful and quiet. Then join us for a gourmet meal at our restaurant or spend the evening in your comfortable lakeside room or cottage, ending your day star-gazing from your deck or meeting others at the crackling campfire.

Kit Carson Lodge
www.kitcarsonlodge.com
or call:
(209) 258-8500

OPERATES UNDER USFS PERMIT

Uncontrolled Grazing Impairs Water Quality

After becoming aware of my work coordinating the Project to Reform Public Land Grazing in Northern California, Victoria Brandon asked me to serve as grazing chair for the Redwood Chapter and I accepted. The timing was good. The North Coast Water Quality Control Board had begun work on a new Clean Water Act permit for “non-point” sources of pollution on national forests in the North Coast Region, including the Mendocino, Six Rivers, Trinity and Klamath National Forests.

Unlike pollution that comes from a discrete source, like a pipe from a factory or sewage plant, non-point pollution is delivered to water bodies from numerous locations. Examples include logging, agricultural run-off, drainage from roads and pollution from livestock grazing. Non-point pollution can be controlled through use of best management practices (BMPs). BMPs for grazing include regular herding to make sure cattle do not graze in riparian areas and wetlands for long periods. The grazing monitoring work I and other volunteers have done on the Klamath, Shasta-Trinity and Rogue-Siskiyou National Forests consistently finds that grazing BMPs are not being required or are not properly implemented. The result is poor water quality, trashed springs, trampled stream banks and degraded wetlands.

While other livestock also graze on public lands, most grazing on California national forests is by cattle which can weigh up to 1200 pounds. The willow wetlands and emergent springs found in Northern California’s headwater basins are particularly hard hit by poorly managed cattle. One among the hundreds of trampled springs which the Grazing Reform Project has documented is shown in the photo to the left.

Instead of requiring modern grazing management methods which, if properly implemented, would control and minimize pollution and habitat destruction, Forest Service managers allow grazing permit holders to practice what has euphemistically been called Christopher Columbus Grazing. Those who hold grazing permits place their cattle on public land at the beginning of the grazing season and don’t come back until the snow flies and it is time to take the cattle to the home ranch. In essence, the ranchers forget about their livestock and “discover” them again in the Fall.

Failure of Forest Service managers to require livestock owners to rotate grazing among the various “pastures” within a grazing allotment guarantees that water quality, riparian areas and wetlands will be degraded. Water quality testing on Sierra



Nevada National Forests and on the Klamath National Forest by the Quartz Valley Indian Reservation confirm and quantify the nutrient and bacterial pollution chronically degrading streams issuing from those national forest watersheds where poorly managed cattle graze for 3 to 6 months each year.

Water quality and habitat degradation are not, however, the only impacts of poorly managed public land grazing. Streambank, spring and wetland trampling damages the ability of headwater meadows to hold and store water. A report by hydrologist Jonathan Rhodes on the Klamath National Forest’s Big Meadows Grazing Allotment documents livestock impacts which reduce late summer and fall streamflows which are so critical to salmon, irrigation and community water supplies.

In fact, a new report commissioned by Environment Now, which debunks the idea that we can increase California water supplies by increased logging, points to the elimination of public land grazing as one of three best methods to improve

late summer and early fall flows in California streams.

I used information from The Quartz Valley Tribe, the Grazing Reform Project and the Rhodes Hydrology Report to advocate that more stringent requirements for grazing be included in the national forest Clean Water Act permit which the North Coast Water Board prepared in 2015. Results were mixed. The Board did require that Forest Service managers more closely monitor the impacts of grazing on water quality, riparian areas and wetlands. The Board did not, however, require the modern grazing methods needed to adequately control grazing-related pollution and habitat destruction. As your Grazing Chair, I will continue to advocate that those who wish to have the privilege of grazing their livestock on public land be required to use modern grazing methods in order to effectively protect water quality and habitat and restore base flows in national forest streams.

—FELICE PACE,
REDWOOD CHAPTER GRAZING CHAIR

Mendocino Group Report

Mendocino Group is shocked at recent developments at the Ca Coastal Commission, notably the firing of Dr. Charles Lester as Executive Director. We fear that development interests will find a more receptive audience at the Coastal Commission. Having the longest stretch of coastline in California we have a lot to be concerned with. In addition, Beach Fees are looming.

The Mendocino Group is engaging on a recruitment drive. The members of the present group are old and few in numbers. We are planning a meeting with a notable guest speaker for June. The guest speaker will be honored with the first annual Ron Guenther Memorial Award.

Mendocino Group commends the group opposing the development on Grist Creek. Find more information at friendsofoutletcreek.com.

—MARY WALSH, MENDOCINO GROUP CHAIR

Sebastopol to Renew Urban Growth Boundary

A group of motivated activists in Sebastopol are now organizing to renew the city’s voter-approved Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) before it expires at the end of 2016. The newly formed Citizens to Renew the Sebastopol Urban Growth Boundary 2016 are ready to start gathering signatures on a petition within the City of Sebastopol for the purpose of preserving Sebastopol’s small town character and preventing suburban-type sprawl into adjacent farmlands and open space.

Sebastopol voters were among the first to adopt a 20-year UGB to protect farmland and open space beyond its borders from sprawl development in 1996. Mayor Sarah Glade Gurney and the entire City Council are strongly in favor of renewing the UGB with minor, if any, changes.

Community members are now organizing to qualify and then pass a new urban growth

boundary measure that will promote smart growth, affordable housing, and prevent sprawl for another 20 years or more.

Greenbelt Alliance, Sonoma County Conservation Action, Sierra Club, Sebastopol Tomorrow, Western Sonoma County Rural Alliance, and other open space enthusiasts are supporting the UGB renewal and assisting the citizens group.

While all nine cities and the County of Sonoma are committed to city-centered growth, development pressures are increasing around the edges of towns and communities as the economy grows. Other Sonoma cities where urban growth boundaries are expiring soon include Windsor in 2017 and Cotati in 2018. The cities of Santa Rosa, Petaluma, and Healdsburg have already renewed and extended their voter-approved UGBs for 20 years or longer.

Allowing the expiration of voter protections

for any UGB opens the door to development beyond the growth boundaries with a simple majority vote of the City Council instead of a vote of the people. Additionally, if voter protections for a city’s UGB expire, then voter protections for community separators in adjacent county lands would also expire, according to the existing county ordinance. County supervisors could then change the use or zoning of community separators with a simple majority vote as well.

What’s Next

The Sebastopol UGB ballot measure has been drafted and submitted to the city clerk and county and is now approved for circulation. The UGB campaign will begin training volunteers from Sebastopol and across Sonoma County to help gather signatures. You don’t need to live in Sebastopol to help. If you can spend some time gathering signatures in scenic Sebastopol this spring, please contact Kathy Oetinger at backroad@sonic.net

If you wish your bequest to be used locally, be sure to specify “Sierra Club Redwood Chapter” or the name of your local Group in your bequest.

Explore, enjoy and protect the planet
Create a Lasting Legacy
By creating a charitable bequest to benefit Sierra Club or your favorite Sierra Club Chapter, you remain in control of your assets during your lifetime and help protect the environment for years to come.
For more info and confidential assistance, contact:
Sierra Club
Gift Planning Program
65 Second Street, Second Floor
San Francisco, CA 94105
giftplanning@sierraclub.org • (800) 932-4270

Become a Guide for the Laguna de Santa Rosa

Laguna Environmental Center,
900 Sanford Road, Santa Rosa, CA 95401

The Laguna Guides training program is a fun and engaging way to learn about the diverse habitats, flora, fauna and ecosystem services of the Laguna while making new friends! The program prepares volunteers to teach about the Laguna and the work of the Laguna Foundation during trail walks, talks, classes, workshops and open house events at the Laguna Environmental Center. The next 8-session training course is May-June 2016 with Wednesday evening classes and Saturday field trips. Laguna Guides volunteer year-round, primarily on evenings and weekends. For more details and an application, go to: <http://lagunafoundation.org/guide-training.html>

North Group Needs Your Help!

Volunteer opportunities are available. Please contact Gregg or Ned for details, or make plans to attend a regular Executive Committee meeting in Eureka. Your ideas and skills are welcome, from Internet communications to outings leaders and more.

Solano Breeze Corner

Covering Benicia, Fairfield, Rio Vista, Suisun,
Vacaville and Vallejo
sierraclubsolanogroup@gmail.com
707-319-6398

Thank You Volunteers!

Thanks to Joe Feller, Marilyn Farley and Jane Bogner for staffing the 20th Flyway Festival on February 19, 20, and 21

Thanks to Nancy, Jane, Justin, Alisa, Erin and friends for staffing the VALCORE Recycling and Confidential Paper Shredding event.

VALCORE Recycling and Paper Shredding updates:

Solano Group will be helping out with paper shredding every 3rd Saturday of the month at 38 Sheridan Street, Vallejo from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. There is a charge of \$10 (CASH or CHECK ONLY) per twenty pounds of paper shredded. (Maximum: 100 pounds).

NEW WEEKDAY SHREDDING from 10 am to 4 pm, closed 1 pm to 2 pm for lunch (CREDIT OR DEBIT ONLY). Sierra Club volunteers help tend the money and direct traffic. Once a year is all we ask, and you only need work an hour or so. Volunteers get FREE shredding!

Save the dates:

Vallejo Earth Day, April 16, 9 to noon at Vallejo Farmers Market. Other cities in Solano County will conduct watershed cleanups on April 23.

—CONTRIBUTOR: JANE BOGNER, EDITOR: GREG PETERSON

Sonoma Group Report

Upcoming Measures

2016 is a big political year, and this month we've been looking at ballot measures. Check out the separate Needles' articles about the Sebastopol Urban Growth Boundary renewal measure and an update on the Community Separators measure.

The San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority Parcel Tax would add a parcel tax to property in the nine counties bordering the Bay to raise money for climate adaptation and wetlands restoration projects. The restoration projects will be sited around the Bay in every county; more information can be found at <http://sfbayrestore.org/>.

As the Redwood Needles is going to press, a group is collecting signatures for a ballot measure that would ban growing Genetically Engineered plants in Sonoma County, while still allowing vaccines, research and selling of GMO products in the county. GE crops are a threat to our organic agriculture, tend to increase pesticide use, and may have unknown effects on the environment. See <http://www.gmfreesonomacounty.com/> for details.

Next Sonoma Group Meetings

(first Mondays of the month) Environmental Center, 55A Ridgway in Santa Rosa, west of 101:

April 4: Conservation issues from 5:00 to 6:30pm,

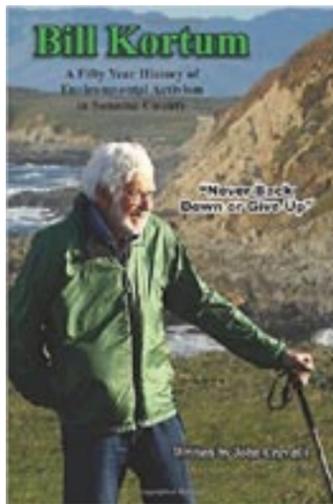
Executive Committee meeting from 6:30 to 7:00pm.

May 2: Conservation issues from 5:00 to 6:30pm,

Executive Committee meeting from 6:30 to 8:00pm.

Friend us on Facebook, and check our website at: <http://www.sierraclub.org/redwood/sonoma>

—SUZANNE DOYLE, SONOMA GROUP ACTING CHAIR



Readings from Bill Kortum: A 50 Year History of Environmental Activism in Sonoma County

Friday, April 15, 7pm, Copperfield's Books, 140
Kentucky Street, Petaluma

READINGS BY: Noreen Evans, Lynn Woolsey,
Mark Green, Pam Torliatt, Tom Roth, Matt
Maguire, Lucy Kortum & Rick Theis

Saturday, April 16, 7pm, Copperfield's Books,
106 Matheson Street, Healdsburg

READINGS BY: Kate Fraga, Steve Birdleough, Marty Bennett, Rue Furch, Larry
Robinson, Denny Rosatti & Una Glass

Inspired by a nearly fifty-year friendship with Kortum, known as the father of the Sonoma County environmental movement, the late John Crevelli documented his friend's achievements. Selections of this short book will be read by local environmental activists at the event, which is co-sponsored by Sonoma County Conservation Action, North Bay Jobs with Justice, and the Sierra Club. This are both free events but you may RSVP at copperfieldbooks.com.

Napa Group Report

Walt Ranch: Disappointing Final EIR Released

A quick scan of the newly-released Walt Ranch final EIR finds nothing much changed from the draft, in response to literally thousands of pages of objections from the environmental community. The developers of this outsized project on Atlas Peak still plan on razing over 300 acres of woodlands, and tapping into groundwater, resulting in extensive habitat destruction and threats to the Circle Oaks community's water supply, and to the quality of the city of Napa's Milliken Creek water supply.

We have a last-ditch chance to influence the outcome by attending the April 4th hearing (see below), or by submitting comments prior to the hearing. Comments can be submitted to brian.bordona@countyofnapa.org.

Napa Cancer Cluster?

Napa County leads the state in cancer cases for children, and it is higher than the state average for the population as a whole. The high rates encompass a variety of cancers. The causes are unknown. One cancer cluster is in the Imola neighborhood north of Syar Industries. The group Stop Syar Expansion has asked the county to study whether airborne particles released by the Syar mining operations are dangerous to the nearby population.

Open Volunteer Opportunities: Treasurer Retiring

After decades assisting us in the treasurer post, Tom Davis is retiring and moving to Nevada. He will be missed.

We need a new treasurer. Tom has been keeping our accounts on Quick Books, though he tells me that we have so few transactions, that it is almost overkill. The treasurer does need to become familiar with C3 vs C4 forms, and some National Sierra Club reporting requirements. This is a great way to contribute from your home. No need to attend meetings. If

you might be interested, contact me at nancy@aya.yale.edu

Events

Walt Ranch EIR Public Hearing

Monday, April 4, 9:00 AM, County Bldg, 1195 3rd St
Napa

We need a massive turnout to show the County that it's citizens say it is time to protect our precious woodlands!

Napa County Supervisor Candidate Environmental Forum

Monday, April 4, 6:30 – 8:30pm, Napa Library – Free
Learn how the supervisor candidates stand on our local environmental issues!

Co-sponsored by Napa Sierra Club, Friends of the Napa River, Get a Grip on Growth, and Napa Valley Can Do

Napa Valley Healing Walk

Join an interfaith, inter-generational, and intercultural group on a peaceful pilgrimage along the length of the Napa Valley. The walk is rooted in the indigenous philosophy of invoking sacred space in order to heal the land and its people. The walk will raise awareness about local watershed, wildlife issues, and policy changes that will ensure their protection.

Sat. April 23 (Earth Day), Sat. May 21, and Sat. June 11.

For more information, Contact Xulio Soriano at mishteko@gmail.com

Keep Abreast of Napa Events and Issues

Contact us at napavalleyclub@gmail.com to receive our monthly e-mail newsletter. We promise not to bombard you with messages, or share your address with other organizations.

—NANCY TAMARISK, NAPA GROUP CHAIR

Napa Group Members

Our e-newsletter arrives in your mailbox on the 3rd of every month. If you are not seeing it: check your spam folder or send us an e-mail so that we can add you to our list: napavalleyclub@gmail.com

Lake Group Report

Clear Lake Hitch: Off and Running

For the first time in several years, Clear Lake's tributaries contained sufficient water in mid-February to support a spawning run of the hitch (*lavinia exilicauda chi*), an endemic fish listed as Threatened under the state Endangered Species Act. The first reports came from Adobe and Kelsey creeks on February 16, followed by the really exciting news of substantial schools in Middle Creek, where almost no hitch have been seen for nearly ten years. Full observation results to date including photos and a video are available at www.lakelive.info/chicouncil.

Berryessa Snow Mountain Celebration March 19

As the Needles was going to press, Lake Group was looking forward to participating in a Monumental Celebration co-hosted by the Bureau of Land Management and National Forest Service to dedicate Lake County's own national monument, which they rightly describe as "the hidden gem in the wild heart of California's Inner Coast Range." The festival will take place from 10:30AM-4PM on Saturday March 19, at Cowboy Camp, off Highway 16 about a mile south of Highway 20. There will be food, music, interpretive booths, demonstrations and activities, and special guest speakers who are expected to include two members of Congress, two cabinet members, and assorted other federal and state dignitaries. We wouldn't miss

it for the world!

Cleaning Up Watersheds and Communities.

The March 23 Lake Group general membership meeting in Lower Lake will feature a presentation by Barbara Christwitz, founder of Citizens Caring for Clearlake. In the year since the formation of this all-volunteer group they have made remarkable progress clearing up the highway trash, illegal dumpsites, and contaminated creekbeds that spoil the beauty of our community and pollute our streams and lakes besides. Barbara will share some inspiring stories, show some appalling pictures, and let us know what we can all do to help.

Walks and Wildflowers

The Outings offerings elsewhere in the newsletter list no less than five Lake Group hikes— and not surprisingly for the season, a key focus is on the recovery of the landscape in the wake of last summer's fires, and on the wildflowers that are often such a prominent feature of that rebound. In addition, the California Native Plant Society is conducting field trips on April 17 to observe plant response following the Valley Fire, and on May 8 to check out conditions in the serpentine meadows at the McLaughlin Reserve, almost all of which burned in the Rocky and Jerusalem fires. The floral display in the California desert this spring has been reported to be of once in a lifetime magnificence, and from evidence to date it seems probable that this area will match that standard— so do please come visit.

—VICTORIA BRANDON, LAKE GROUP CONSERVATION CHAIR



“Benicia Says No to Crude by Rail”

continued from page 1

For years, the Sierra Club and our partners have pushed back against Valero's attempts to conceal the true impacts of its oil train proposal. Benicia initially tried to approve the project without conducting full environmental review. In 2013, we submitted comments challenging that course of action, which contributed to the City's decision to circulate an “environmental impact report” (EIR) for the project. We then submitted comment letters identifying major flaws in the draft EIR (2014), revised draft EIR (2015), and final EIR (2016). Our allies in these efforts include Benicians for a Safe and Healthy Community, NRDC, ForestEthics, Communities for a Better Environment, Center for Biological Diversity, Sunflower Alliance, and SF Baykeeper, among others.

The Attorney General also weighed in on the inadequacies of Benicia's environmental review— specifically noting the failure to adequately analyze impacts on up-rail communities. And the Sacramento Area Council of Governments, which represents 6 counties and 22 cities, characterized the City's environmental review as “a non-response” to its public safety concerns about oil trains traversing the Sacramento area.

After voting to deny the project, the Planning Commission issued a resolution identifying 14 deficiencies in the final environmental impact report. The resolution also concluded that “Staff's interpretation of preemption is too broad...” (Notably, just a few days before the Benicia hearings, hundreds of people converged on San Luis Obispo to urge county planning commissioners to reject a similar oil train proposal at a Phillips 66 refinery. In direct contrast to the position adopted by the Benicia planning staff, the San Luis Obispo county planning staff recommended denial of the project, due in large part to the environmental and health impacts along the rail line.)

As expected, Valero Refining Company has appealed the Planning Commission's decision to the Benicia City Council. Both city staff and Valero will make presentations on March 15, and public comment will begin April 4.

Calling Young Activists

Redwood Chapter is proud to announce that for the second year in a row we plan to sponsor a participant in SPROG (short for “Summer Program”), the Sierra Student Coalition's cutting-edge training program for youthful grassroots environmental activists.

An environmental and social justice leadership training program for young people (ages 14-28), SPROG is an intensive week-long training program that provides the knowledge and skills needed to succeed as a grassroots organizer and make a substantial difference in the future of the community and the planet. Past SPROG participants have described it as one of the most inspiring and fulfilling weeks of their life.

The 2016 “West SPROG” will be held at Harwood Lodge in Los Angeles from July 17 to 24.

Interested? More information about the program is available at www.ssc.org/sprog. To apply for the Chapter's sponsorship— which covers the full cost of the weeklong program plus travel expenses— contact Victoria Brandon at vbrandon@lakerlive.info

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Redwood Needles

Sierra Club

Redwood Chapter
P.O. Box 466, Santa Rosa, CA 95402

Meetings

Send all Meeting events by the 8th of the month to Carl Inglin: chinglin@sonic.net Sierra Club meetings are open to all members. You are welcome to participate or observe as often as you wish. Meetings are located in Sonoma County unless otherwise noted. Visitors should call the committee chair to verify time and place. The Sonoma County Environmental Center is located at 55A Ridgway Avenue in Santa Rosa (West of Hwy 101, two blocks North of College and 1 1/2 blocks West off of Cleveland Ave, South of Coddington).

Mon. Apr. 4 - Sonoma Group.

Santa Rosa Environmental Center, 55A Ridgway is the site of related meetings:

Water Committee meets 5:00 - 5:30 p.m. Contact Len Holt: 707-527-7516 or lholt@sonic.net Climate & Energy Committee at 5:30 p.m., Contact Shirley, shirlgirl707@yahoo.com, 707-206-1138.

Conservation Committee at 6:00 p.m. Info: Suzanne Doyle carsort@gmail.com

Sonoma Group Executive Committee at 6:30 p.m. Info: Suzanne Doyle carsort@gmail.com

Thurs. Apr. 7 - Solano Group ExCom.

Come join us for our monthly meetings which rotate between Vallejo, Fairfield and Vacaville. We are making a positive impact on our county and need a few more people to help carry the load. Call Jane for information. (707)319-6398.

Tues. Apr. 12 - North Group.

The public is invited to attend the monthly meeting of our governing committee. Join us for a discussion of local conservation issues between 7:45 and 8:45 p.m., following the ExCom business meeting from 6:45-7:45 p.m. Meet at Adorni Center Conference Room on Eureka Waterfront. For more info, call Gregg at 707-826-3740.

Waterfront. For more info, call Gregg at 707-826-3740.

Mon. May 2 - Sonoma Group.

Santa Rosa Environmental Center, 55A Ridgway is the site of related meetings:

Water Committee meets 5:00 - 5:30 p.m. Contact Len Holt: 707-527-7516 or lholt@sonic.net

Climate & Energy Committee at 5:30 p.m., Contact Shirley, shirlgirl707@yahoo.com, 707-206-1138.

Conservation Committee at 6:00 p.m. Info: Suzanne Doyle carsort@gmail.com

Sonoma Group Executive Committee at 6:30 p.m. Info: Suzanne Doyle carsort@gmail.com

Tues. May 10 - North Group ExCom.

The public is invited to attend the monthly meeting of our governing committee. Join us for a discussion of local conservation issues between 7:45 and 8:45 p.m., following the ExCom business meeting from 6:45-7:45 p.m. Meet at Adorni Center Conference Room on Eureka Waterfront. For more info, call Gregg at 707-826-3740.

Sat., May 14 - Redwood Chapter ExCom. And ConsCom.

Location: Willits. Conservation

Committee meets at 10 a.m., ExCom meets 1-3 p.m. Info: Victoria vbrandon@lakerlive.info

Tues. May 17 - Napa Group ExCom.

7 p.m. Our location varies; it is generally at a member's home. Anyone wishing to attend the meeting should contact the chair, Nancy Tamarisk at nancy@aya.yale.edu

Thurs. May 19 - Solano Group ExCom.

Come join us for our monthly meetings which rotate between Vallejo, Fairfield and Vacaville. We are making a positive impact on our county and need a few more people to help carry the load. Call Jane for information. (707)319-6398.

Mon. June 6 - Sonoma Group.

Santa Rosa Environmental Center, 55A Ridgway is the site of three related meetings:

Water Committee meets 5:00 - 5:30 p.m. Contact Len Holt: 707-527-7516 or lholt@sonic.net

Climate & Energy Committee at 5:30 p.m., Contact Shirley, shirlgirl707@yahoo.com, 707-206-1138.

Conservation Committee at 6:00 p.m. Info: Suzanne Doyle carsort@gmail.com

Sonoma Group Executive Committee at 6:30 p.m. Info: Suzanne Doyle carsort@gmail.com

Sonoma County's Greenbelts Need You!

Renewing voter protections for Sonoma County's community separator greenbelts will be the most important, and only open space measure on the November 2016 ballot! We need to extend Sonoma County's longstanding commitment to city-centered growth and prevention of sprawl for another 30 years!

The community separator greenbelts protect open space and agricultural lands in between our towns and cities from subdivisions and commercialization. They are the companion measures to the Urban Growth Boundaries in each of the nine cities.

We need you to speak up for the existing eight community separators that have protected nearly 17,000 acres of ag land and open space from sprawl for more than two decades. And we need local activists who love the land to stand up for the long overdue designation of other areas as community separators. The county is considering adding priority greenbelt areas around the county as well as lands around Penngrove and between Cloverdale and Healdsburg.

The public process to renew and strengthen community separators is now underway. The first was held in Santa Rosa on March 2. The first public comment deadline is April 15. Next is a date with the Sonoma County Planning Commission on May 5 where we'll need to show up in force!

Three more public workshops are planned in Petaluma, Sonoma, and Cloverdale before a first draft proposal is presented to the Sonoma County Planning Commission. Dates are to be announced. Sign up here for county updates: http://sonoma-county.org/prmd/community_separators.htm

At Sonoma County's first public workshop to renew and strengthen community separator greenbelts, a crowd of about 40 people marked maps to show the important lands needing protection from sprawl and development. We were conservationists, business owners, elected officials, city planners, teachers, water experts, old-timers and new residents.

The staff from Permit and Resource Management Department were organized, helpful and prepared. But, clearly, not everyone who was there shares the county's vision to complete the circle of greenbelts around our cities, towns and communities. The usual suspects and special interests are getting ready to derail the supervisors' clear direction to strengthen community separators for the long term.

We won't let that happen.

Organize!

We need people in each area to come together for your community greenbelts! Reach out so we can activate teams in Petaluma, Sebastopol, Windsor, Healdsburg, Petaluma and Cloverdale.

We also need folks who can organize critical constituencies:

Cities— We need cities to identify and support us. Do you know your City Council?

Ag and Farmers— Do you know ag folks and farmers who support greenbelt protection?

Civic groups— Do you know people in Rotary, Kiwanis, or other civic groups who care about greenbelts?

Churches— Do you belong to a church congregation who cares about greenbelts?

Business— Do know business people who care about greenbelts and how they support our economy?

Outings— Can you help me plan walks and bike rides to your community separator?

By April 15 we need to provide the first round of detailed written comments on policies and lands needed to complete the circle of greenbelts around our cities, towns and communities. We'll need lots of letters and emails to show the Planning Commission, and the Board of Supervisors, how much we care!

Get the latest at www.greenbelt.org and <http://www.sierraclub.org/redwood/sonoma>

Contact Teri Shore, tshore@greenbelt.org, 707 575 - 3661

—TERI SHORE, SONOMA GROUP EXCOM

Redwood Needles

**June Deadline:
Due May 4 - Early!**

Submit Articles/Reports/Ad Copy via e-mail to:

odavison@sonic.net

Send Outings to Carol Vellutini via email:
carolvsr@sonic.net

Send Meetings to Carl Inglin:
chinglin@sonic.net