



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

Volume 53 Number 6

Newsletter of the Redwood Chapter of the Sierra Club

Dec. 2012/Jan. 2013

Hope Renewed: America Votes to Move Forward

BY VICTORIA BRANDON,
REDWOOD CHAPTER POLITICAL CHAIR

On November 6 the Redwood Chapter joined environmentalists around the nation in rejoicing at the victory of President Barack Obama. We look forward to working with members of his administration to achieve positive tangible policy gains on subjects ranging from public land preservation to carbon reduction strategy during the next four years.

Closer to home, the Chapter's three endorsed Congressional candidates all won, as did five out of six candidates for state legislature: at press time, Michael Allen was trailing slightly in AD 10, with that race still too close to call. Our positions prevailed on four out of five of the California Propositions on which the Club took a

position. Sadly, a massive ad campaign defeated Proposition 37, which would have required the labeling of genetically engineered food.

On the local level, ten out of sixteen endorsed candidates won on election night, led by Sonoma County supervisor-elect Susan Gorin. At press time John Eder was leading in Sebastopol though by a margin too narrow to call. Unfortunately we didn't fare as well on local ballot measures, with only one (renewal of Urban Growth Boundaries in Healdsburg) going our way. The failure of Lake County's Measure E, a sales tax benefitting Clear Lake, was particularly distressing since it garnered a strong majority of the votes cast but not quite enough to meet the two thirds supermajority needed for passage.

Election Results

All capital letters for won/lost indicates that the Sierra Club position was successful.
Small letters indicates that the Sierra Club position was unsuccessful.

Statewide Ballot Measures

- Prop 30, temporary statewide tax increase: **WON**
- Prop 31, exempting local government from some environmental laws **LOST**
- Prop 32, discriminatory campaign finance "reform": **LOST**
- Prop 37, GMO labeling: **lost**
- Prop 39, clean energy funding: **WON**

Local Ballot Measures

- Lake County Measure E, half-cent sales tax for Clear Lake: **lost**
- Napa County Measure U, land use designations in Angwin, **lost**
- City of Cotati Measure U, banning roundabouts, **won**
- City of Healdsburg Measure W, renewing Urban Growth Boundaries: **WON**

Federal Candidates

- President of the United States: Barack Obama **WON**
- Member of Congress, District 2: Jared Huffman **WON**
- Member of Congress, District 3: John Garamendi **WON**
- Member of Congress, District 5: Mike Thompson **WON**

State Legislative Candidates

- State Senate, District 3: Lois Wolk **WON**
- Assembly, District 2: Wesley Chesbro: **WON**
- Assembly, District 4: Mariko Yamada **WON**
- Assembly, District 10: Michael Allen still undecided
- Assembly, District 11: Jim Frazier **WON**
- Assembly, District 14: Susan Bonilla **WON**

Local Candidates

- Lake County
 - Lakeport City Council:
 - Suzanne Lyons **lost**
 - Sonoma County
 - Supervisor, District 1:
 - Susan Gorin **WON**
 - Cotati City Council
 - John Del Osso **WON**
 - Susan Harvey **WON**
 - Wendy Skillman **WON**
 - Petaluma City Council
 - Jason Davies **lost**
 - Alicia Kae Herries **lost**
 - Tiffany Renee **lost**
 - Santa Rosa City Council
 - Caroline Banuelos **lost**
 - Erin Carlstrom **WON**
 - Julie Combs **WON**
 - Gary Wysocky **WON**
 - Sebastopol City Council
 - John Eder still undecided
 - Robert Jacob **WON**
 - Sonoma City Council
 - Laurie Gallian **WON**
 - Windson Town Council
 - Deb Fudge **WON**

Illegal Cannabis Cultivation: an Environmental Plague on the North Coast

BY VICTORIA BRANDON

The Redwood Chapter has been very seriously concerned for several years about the consequences resulting from the illegal cultivation of marijuana on public and private lands in this region. This practice is causing severe environmental degradation to wild places and putting human health and safety at risk.

Marijuana is very probably the biggest cash crop in California, with by far the largest portion being grown illegally under the management of large-scale foreign drug trafficking operations. This illegal cultivation takes place primarily on federal lands managed by the National Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, but other federal, state, and local public lands are also affected, as are private lands that have been taken over without the knowledge or consent of the rightful owner. The adverse effects of these activities include the destruction of large expanses of natural vegetation, the diversion of natural water sources, and the pollution of entire watersheds with

dangerous pesticides and fertilizers, some of them so toxic that their use is not allowed in the United States under any circumstances. Wildlife habitat is degraded, and many kinds of animals systematically slaughtered to protect the crop. Even after the growing season ends, harm continues from massive amounts of equipment, trash, and human waste that are left on site post-harvest. In addition, heavily armed growers pose a danger to hikers, campers, and other persons who use federal and state lands.

These hazardous activities are consuming a disproportionate share of the federal land management budget: for example, the number of plants seized in California National Forests rose from 569,000 in 2003 to 2.4 million in 2008, and in that year the Forest Service spent \$15.1 million (11.5 percent of its total budget) on law enforcement directed at illegal marijuana cultivation. Despite these substantial expenditures, almost no funding is available for removing drip lines and other equipment

"Environmental Plague"
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Sonoma Group New Members Forum Tuesday, December 18, 6:30 p.m.

Environmental Center, 55A Ridgway Avenue, Santa Rosa

Join us for some holiday cheer as members of the Sonoma Group ExCom and the Outdoor Committee, plus general club members, will attend this forum to offer a full picture of the activities that your membership supports, and the many ways that members can stretch your activism or outdoor enjoyment by jumping in and getting involved with their Sierra Club Redwood Chapter and Sonoma Group.

Sonoma Group Environmental Forum Tuesday, January 15, 6:30 p.m.

Environmental Center, 55A Ridgway Avenue, Santa Rosa

Subject: TBD

Petition to End Clearcutting in California

The continuing clearcutting of thousands of acres of forestlands is harming water quality, fisheries, wildlife, forest health, and communities throughout the state. This destructive logging practice must stop once and for all. Please read more about the Sierra Club Stop Clearcutting Campaign and sign the online petition at www.sierraclub.org/clearcutting/ and send it to your friends and family members. Group leaders and activists will find a link to the Petition at <http://redwood.sierraclub.org/> Please download and pass the Petition around at events in December. Return signed Petitions in early January to: Clearcutting Petitions, Sierra Club, 85 Second Street, San Francisco, CA 94105

Get Well Soon Jay!

As many North Coast activists are already aware, Redwood Chapter Chair Jay Halcomb has been having some health problems these past few months, and is now recuperating in his home in Guerneville. Although he is still very much interested in the Club's many ongoing conservation activities and doing his best to offer guidance by phone and email, he's unable to take an active role at the moment, so the rest of us on the ExCom are having to do the best we can to fill his capable shoes. In the meantime, your good wishes mean a lot to him: cards and letters can be sent to 17760 Old Monte Rio Road, Guerneville CA 95446.

Sustainability: the wave of the future

On October 15 I had the honor and pleasure of representing the Chapter at a very stimulating informational hearing titled "Sustainable Food and Wine Production: California's Future." The forum was jointly hosted by the Senate Select Committee on California Food/Local, Organic and Sustainable Systems and the Select Committee on California's Wine Industry and chaired by Senator Noreen Evans. Assemblymembers Mariko Yamada and Michael Allen also participated.

The well-attended session centered on three panel discussions with a diverse group of ten panelists representing many segments of agricultural and other stakeholder perspectives. There was general consensus on several points.

Concentration on long-term economic, social, and environmental sustainability in the broadest sense is essential to maintain and transform California's food system. We need to find ways to "accelerate the emergence of a new mainstream" (Roots of Change President Michael Dimock) to meet the challenges of the future.

Water is the lifeblood of agriculture. Some very promising new technologies are being developed to reduce water use, but we also have to find creative, collaborative ways to balance the needs of farmers and urban residents.

California agriculture is uniquely vulnerable to climate change impacts including spikes in extreme weather, increased demand for water, and an inevitable rise in food prices, which are expected

Acting Chapter Chair Report

to double worldwide in 20 years. We have to find ways to build more resilience into the system, and also to recognize the special capacity of agriculture to sequester carbon -- any method that increases the level of organic matter in the soil will help.

Collaboration between public agencies and private landowners is essential to reduce the costs of regulatory compliance, limit unintended consequences, and increase the adoption rate of promising new innovations. Government needs to benefit from the wisdom of landowners who have their boots on the ground, many of whom have multi-generational ties to the same plot of ground.

We also heard about the threats and benefits of solar power generation on farm land, farming techniques that benefit waterways and the fish that live in them, the complexities of preventing food-borne illness, and the vital role of farmers markets in creating a local food distribution system and making small family farms economically viable. In closing, Senator Evans stressed her commitment to the stakeholder process and emphasized that "without farmers we have no food." Redwood Chapter looks forward to participating in this process as it moves forward.

Stornetta Update

As the end of the year approaches, President Obama has designated several new National Monuments, most recently Cesar Chavez monument in the San Joaquin Valley. Redwood Chapter activists are hopeful that the addition of the spectacular 1132-acre Stornetta Public Lands to the Coastal NM will soon follow. As described in the previous edition of the *Redwood Needles*, monument designation will provide the management tools needed to ensure the permanent protection of this special place, which is as fragile as it is spectacularly beautiful. Local support for the designation is overwhelming, and Representative

Mike Thompson has been doing all he can to achieve this goal through Congressional action, to be stymied by recalcitrant House leadership. So now we're asking the President to step forward. To learn more and to add your name to a petition to President Obama, visit <http://content.sierraclub.org/mypieceofamerica/stornetta-public-lands>

Berryessa Snow Mountain Update

The landscape-level campaign for the permanent protection of the 300,000-plus acres Berryessa Snow Mountain region as a National Conservation Area continues to gain momentum. As previously reported in the *Redwood Needles*, legislation creating the NCA (H.R. 5545) was introduced in the House of Representatives in May under the sponsorship of Representatives Mike Thompson, John Garamendi, and Lynn Woolsey, and Senator Barbara Boxer's companion bill (S 3375) followed in July. Despite the evident merits of the proposal, the legislation has been stalled by the same backward-looking House leadership that has held up Stornetta NM designation (along with just about every other beneficial action in the cause of conservation), who have blocked it from consideration by any committees. Despite this Neanderthal attitude, there may be a possibility of inclusion in one of the "omnibus" bills that characterize the final weeks of a Congressional session-- please stay tuned.

In the meantime back here among the grassroots, on October 25 Representative Thompson hosted a Community Meeting at Lake Berryessa with some 150 local residents in attendance. As reported by Napa Group Chair Nancy Tamarisk, this gathering gave community members a chance to voice their concerns, clear up a number of misconceptions (especially unfounded worries that designation would ban motor boats on the lake or that private land would be subject to seizure or restrictive management constraints) and get a commitment to clarify the language in the bill in response to community concerns. Rep Thompson's Facebook posting tells it all: "The NCA is the best way forward for the Berryessa-Snow Mountain Region and I will continue working with folks in our community to make sure this natural treasure is managed efficiently and effectively and preserved for our kids and grandkids."

—VICTORIA BRANDON, REDWOOD CHAPTER VICE CHAIR

"Environmental Plague"

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from grow sites (thus inviting repeated use in subsequent years), for cleaning up the garbage and toxic substances left behind, or for repairing damage to forests and watercourses.

In 2010 the Redwood Chapter brought our concerns to Sierra Club California, and with the objective of encouraging funding for cleanup projects and strengthening the Club's role as a proactive force for on-the-ground conservation proposed a position paper that

was adopted by the state Club (available at http://redwood.sierraclub.org/articles/December_12/marijuana%20resolution.pdf). Subsequently we have eagerly collaborated in several volunteer cleanup efforts on the Mendocino National Forest, and are looking for ways to broaden our role in this important effort. Please watch the *Redwood Needles* for ways that you can help in the future.

Non-Sierra Club Outings

The following activities and events are not sponsored nor administered by the Sierra Club. The Sierra Club has no information about the planning of these activities and makes no representations or warranties about the quality, safety, supervision or management of such activities. They are published because they may be of interest to the readers of this publication.

Saturday Saunters for Santa Rosa Area.

Every Saturday. Meets 9 am and usually ends around 11:30. These walks are moderate. Fun way to exercise with friends. For info call Bob Martin 707-539-6300.

Sonoma County Regional Parks trail work days.

On the day of the project you can call 707-548-4424 for an update or if you get lost coming to the park. Your support and dedication to our County's trails really makes a big difference. To RSVP for any of these projects please call John at 707-565-3356. ParksVolunteer@sonoma-county.org The following activities and events are not sponsored nor administered by the Sierra Club. The Sierra Club has no information about the planning of these activities and makes no representations or warranties about the quality, safety, supervision or management of such activities. They are published because they may be of interest to the readers of this publication.



Built by Sierra Club members in 1934, this rustic, hostel-style lodge stands atop historic Donner Pass, just an hour and a half from Sacramento.

The Lodge grooms its own cross country ski and snowshoe trails, rents equipment for these activities and offers cross country ski lessons. The unbeatable location of the Lodge provides quick and easy access to the legendary Donner Summit backcountry ski terrain or any of its downhill or cross country ski resorts.

Guests enjoy excellent family style meals, a friendly staff and a casual and communal atmosphere.

See you on Donner Summit...



For more information about our special programs or to receive a full schedule and description of Clair Tappaan programs please visit our website at www.ctl.sierraclub.org or call (800) 679-6775.

Outings

Sat. Dec. 1 - Sonoma Group Mid-Holiday Reconnect Hike Sonoma Valley Regional Park.

In this time of year often spent indoors and in stores, take time to reconnect with nature and yourself. We will hike the Canyon and Ridge trails, skirting Lake Suttonfield, to make a scenic loop. Listen for Acorn Woodpeckers, breathe the fresh air, and enjoy the stunning views of oak woodlands and open meadows. Partial dirt trails and paved paths. Bring water and rain gear if needed, as hike will go rain or shine. Class E-3-A. Carpools: Meet 9:15 am Hwy 12/Calistoga Rd. Safeway Calistoga Rd. southwest end of lot or 10 am Sonoma Valley Regional Park Hwy 12. \$7 fee per car at park entrance.



Leader Jim Gannon's Benson Hut work party.

Leader Tiffany MacNeil (707) 696-3387 asmtif@sonic.net.

Sat-Sun. Dec 1-2 - Explore and Serve in the Carrizo Plains.

Pronghorn antelope will not jump fences to escape predators but rather attempt to crawl under.

For nearly eight years work has continued to remove fences and/or modify them to facilitate mobility of the pronghorn. The project has been very successful, and this will be one of the very

last of these work weekends. Saturday will be a work day. We will camp and have a pot-luck dinner that evening in one of the campgrounds. Sunday, at the choice of the group, will be either a hike in the Caliente Range or else a tour of popular viewing areas in the Plains. Leader: Craig Deutsche, craig.deutsche@gmail.com, 310-477-6670. CNRCC Desert Committee

Sat. Dec 8 - A walk at Mare Island Shoreline Heritage Preserve in Vallejo.

Our walk takes along a historic road to the highest point on Mare Island with spectacular views towards the Carquinez Strait, San Pablo and San Francisco Bays. December is prime time for seeing various migratory birds following the Pacific Flyway so bring binoculars if you have them. There are also various historical features to be seen including the oldest Navy cemetery on the west coast, bomb bunkers and the partially restored gardens of a caretaker's home. This walk a fairly easy 3.0 mile r/t walk on a gradually inclined paved road. Class E-4-A. 9:30-11:00. Take U.S. 101, I-80 or Hwy 29 to Highway 37 and take the Mare Island exit just west of Vallejo. Follow Walnut Ave. south to 'G' St. (1st stop sign)

and turn left. Take the 2nd right at Nimitz and go to 15th S. stop sign and turn right. Go to Railroad Ave. and turn left. Follow Railroad through the South Gate to the Park kiosk and park along the road. Leader Brian Collett 530 220-3121

Sat/Sun. Dec. 15-16 - Peter Grubb Hut Trip (Beginner-Intermediate).

Snowshoe/Ski 3 miles (800') to Peter Grubb Hut for a Saturday overnight and avoid the shopping crowd. \$23 (\$25 Non Sierra Club members) by Nov 14th to Jim Gannon; PO Box 1038, Rohnert Park, CA 94927. Non-refundable reservations. Please include email address/phone#. Optional stay at Clair Tappaan lodge Fri 14th. Make reservations early to avoid disappointment. Lodge reservations 530-426-3632. Indicate you are with Peter Grubb trip-Redwood Chapter. Sno-Park pass necessary for parking at Sno-Park trailhead. Central commissary is planned. Meeting time/location provided with trip sign up. Contact Jim Gannon jgannon99@sbcglobal.net (707)-525-1052. Leader Don Anderson donsluck@live.com co leader Jim Gannon.

Dec. 30- Jan. 1 - Napa Group Hutchinson Ski Trip.

Join us for the New Year 2013, in the Tahoe snow. Spend three days enjoying X-country skiing, snow shoeing, down hill skiing, or just playing in the snow. Hutchinson Lodge is located in Soda Springs, next to the Sierra Club's Claire Tappaan Lodge and between Sugar Bowl and Royal Gorge resorts. We will join Claire Tappaan for their New Year's celebration and talent show. X-country skis & snow shoes are

available for rental at CTL Lodge. Cost for the trip is \$78 for 2 nights, including 2 dinners & 2 breakfasts. Leader: Nanette DeDonato-Dover. Reservations are confirmed by payment. nandedo@netzero.net 707-645-8953.

Sat. Jan. 5 - Sonoma Group Gunsight Rock Hike.

We will hike to Gunsight Rock via Goodspeed Trail from Sugarloaf Ridge State Park. Start the year off right with an exhilarating climb to

beautiful Sonoma Valley views. Bring water, snacks, lunch and good hiking shoes. Class: H-7-B. Carpools: Meet 9:15 am Sonoma County Fairgrounds Park & Ride south-west corner (Leaderless) carpools leave shortly after or meet trailhead 10 am Goodspeed Trailhead Adobe Canyon Rd. Leader Tiffany MacNeil (707) 696-3387 asmtif@sonic.net. Heavy rain cancels.

Sat. Jan 12 - A walk at Mare Island Shoreline Heritage Preserve in Vallejo.

Our walk takes along a historic road to the highest point on Mare Island with spectacular views towards the Carquinez Strait, San Pablo and San Francisco Bays. There are usually raptors or various shorebirds visible along the way. There are also various historical features to be seen including the oldest Navy cemetery on the west coast, bomb bunkers and the partially restored gardens of a caretaker's home. This walk is a fairly easy 3.0 mile r/t walk on a gradually inclined paved road. Class E-4-A. 9:30-11:00. Take U.S. 101, I-80 or Hwy 29 to Highway 37 and take the Mare Island exit just west of Vallejo. Follow Walnut Ave. south to 'G' St. and go to 15th S. stop sign and turn right. Go to Railroad Ave. and turn left. Follow Railroad through the South Gate to the Park kiosk and park along the road. Leader Brian Collett 530 220-3121

Sun. Jan. 13 - Sonoma Group. Annadel Walk.

We'll go for a casual ramble through Annadel State Park, starting at Cobblestone trailhead, stopping for lunch at Lake Ilsonjo and returning by an alternate route to Cobblestone. Bring lunch, water, layered clothing for the weather, good hiking boots. Class M-7-B. Meet 10 am at the Cobblestone Trailhead on Channel Drive. RSVP to leader Carl Inglin, 707-538-8271 or chinglin@sonic.net. Rain cancels.

Sun. Jan 13 - Mendo Group. Valley View Trail Hike Cow Mountain Recreation Area Hike.

A hike through chaparral, oaks, and madrone with spectacular views of the Ukiah Valley. Wear sturdy shoes, bring water, and lunch. Class M-6-B. Carpools: Meet 9:30 CVS Pharmacy in the Orchard Shopping

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.



Benson Hut Work Party hiking in to Benson on the Pacific Crest Trail.

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Visit our Shop & Tour Center at 111 5th Street, Santa Rosa, in the heart of historic Railroad Square

Interested in Becoming an Outings Leader?

Contact your Group Outings Chair (see page 2) or Carol Vellutini at 546-6308 or carolvsr@sonic.net for information.

Outings

Center off Perkins St. or meet at trail head across the road from Mill Creek Park. RSVP, leader Yvonne Kramer 463-0342, kramer@saber.net Heavy rain cancels.

Sat.-Mon. Jan. 19-21- Bradley Hut Trip (Adv Beginner-Intermediate).

Snowshoe/Ski 5 miles (1500') to Bradley Hut for MLK weekend Sat./Sun. overnight and back out on Mon. midday. \$38 (\$40 Non Sierra Club members) by Dec 18th to Jim Gannon; PO Box 1038, Rohnert Park, CA 94927. Non-refundable reservations. Please include email address/phone#. Optional stay at Clair Tappaan lodge Fri 18th. Make reservations early to avoid disappointment. Lodge reservations 530-426-3632 indicate you are with Bradley trip-Redwood Chapter. Central commissary is planned. Meeting time/locations provided with trip sign up. Contact leader Jim Gannon (707)-525-1052 jgannon99@sbcglobal.net co leader Don Anderson donsluck@live.com

Fri.-Sun. Feb. 1 - 3 - Napa Group Hutchinson Ski Trip.

Spend three days enjoying X-country skiing, snow shoeing, down hill skiing, or just playing in the snow. Hutchinson Lodge is located in Soda Springs, next to the Sierra Club's Claire Tappaan Lodge and between Sugar Bowl and Royal Gorge resorts. X-country skis & snow shoes are available for rental at CTL Lodge. Cost for the trip is \$78 for 2 nights, including 2 dinners & 2 breakfasts. Leader: Nanette DeDonato-Dover Reservations are confirmed by payment. nandedo@netzero.net 707-645-8953.

Sat.-Mon. Feb. 16-18 - Ludlow Hut Trip (Intermediate - Adv. Intermediate).

Snowshoe/Ski 6.5 miles (1200') to Ludlow Hut for Presidents weekend Sat./Sun. overnight and backout on Mon. midday. \$38 (\$40 Non Sierra Club members) by Jan 15th to Jim Gannon; PO Box 1038, Rohnert Park, CA 94927. Non-refundable reservations. Please include email address/phone#. Optional stay at Clair Tappaan lodge Fri 15th. Make reservations early to avoid disappointment. Lodge reservations 530-426-3632 indicate you are with Ludlow trip-Redwood Chapter. Central commissary is planned. Meeting time/locations provided with trip sign up. Contact leader Jim Gannon (707)-525-1052 jgannon99@sbcglobal.net.

Sat.-Sun. March 16-17 Benson Hut Trip (Adv Intermediate - Advanced).

Snowshoe/Ski 6 miles (2300') to Benson Hut for a Sat. overnight. \$23 (\$25 Non Sierra Club members) by Feb 15th to Jim Gannon; PO Box 1038, Rohnert Park, CA 94927. Checks are non-refundable in case of weather cancellation. Please include email address/phone#. Optional stay at Clair Tappaan lodge Fri 15th. Make reservations early to avoid disappointment. Lodge reservations 530-426-3632 indicate you are with Benson trip-Redwood Chapter. Central commissary is planned. Meeting time/locations provided with trip sign up. Contact leader Jim Gannon (707)-525-1052 jgannon99@sbcglobal.net

Outings Chair Report

As our climate changes, leaders have a challenge as to what to expect on outings. Snow events, creek crossings, availability of water in springs, fog levels, rain cycles, etc. all were fairly predictable in the 50's-80's. Now the weather is very unpredictable. In Sonoma County, summer fog patterns changed. Usually July was our foggy month. Last summer it seemed to be foggy most of the summer. Then in November 2011 we experienced hot weather. Leaders will need to carefully monitor weather forecasts before taking a group out backpacking, winter snow trips to huts, or to areas with creek crossings.

Members who have been putting off going to the Sierra Club huts in the winter will have another chance this season. If you are a beginner, sign up early for Peter Grubb hut as this outing fills up fast. It is a great beginner winter backpack. Bradley is also for beginners but is 2 miles farther in. Call leader Jim Gannon for information and for an equipment list. Jim also welcomes leaders in training as we need more winter backpack leaders.

Yvonne Kramer has been leading amazing hikes in the Ukiah area. I attended the Montgomery Woods State Park Nature Walk. Naturalist Kate Marianchild talked about the biology and ecology of the Coast Redwoods. Montgomery Woods experienced a huge fire and many of the charred trees have unique features. The forest is peaceful as it is off the beaten path. Yvonne's husband Marvin teaches at the Buddhist University in the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. Students come from all over the world to study there. He invited some of his students to join us.

The Sonoma Group hosted the last Sierra



Yvonne Kramer's Montgomery Woods hike. Kate Marianchild talking to the group about redwood ecology.

Singles potluck in November. I started Sierra Singles in 1985. For 20 years the group thrived, however in recent years leaders had a difficult time recruiting people to coordinate conservation activism. The group's main activity became potlucks with no new coordinators. So it was decided that the time had come to put the group to rest.

I attended a very informative Russian River Watershed symposium in Cloverdale on the 2nd of November put on by the Resource Conservation Districts. The keynote speakers were Assembly member Jared Huffman, Calif. Department of Conservation Director Mark Nechodom, and our new Calif. Department of Fish & Wildlife Director Charlton Bonham. There were many breakout sessions to choose from. Collaboration, cooperation, listening and learning were stressed. Supervisors Mike McGuire, Shirlee Zane and Carrie Brown were in attendance and spoke. The Sonoma County Water Agency and supervisors presented the Russian River Compact draft, an exciting pledge to work cooperatively to restore and enhance the 1500 square mile Russian River watershed, building trust between landowners, regulators and funding agencies. Moving forward with science-based restoration and enhancement projects is exciting to me and I can't wait to work on new partnerships.

Enjoy our winter outings. Our leaders work hard to ensure a safe and enjoyable outdoor experience.

-CAROL VELLUTINI, REDWOOD CHAPTER OUTINGS CHAIR

Ratings for Outings Leaders

How fast or slow do you go?

Wonder if an outing leader walks fast or slow? Keep in mind that the leader's speed is but one part of hiking. How high up a mountain the hike starts, the total mileage and elevation gain (up hill) and loss (down hill) greatly affect the difficulty of a hike, regardless of how fast or slow you walk. If you have any doubts about being able to do a hike or have other questions, please call the leader to discuss your concerns. These ratings only serve as a guide and are not a substitute for you being in appropriate physical condition before participating in an outing.

Leaders are grouped according to how fast they normally hike. Please keep in mind that this info is to help you decide if a hike is right for you. The outing rating instructions to hikers is also important for participants to read. Look at the difficulty of the hike. If the rating is moderate with few or more frequent stops a fast pace hiker must hike slower to accommodate that rating.

Fast-pace with few or no stops:

Jim Gannon Paul Bozzo Carol Magill

Moderate-pace with few stops:

Carl Inglin Penny Proteau Don Anderson Steve Devoto
Isabelle Saint-Guily Lorrie Lagasse Boone Lodge Val Nordeman
Chip Bouril Doug Condrotte Tiffany MacNeil Jackie Farley

Moderate-pace with more frequent stops:

Bill Arenander Pete McGee Tim Bartice Bill Knight
Susan Whiteside Carol Vellutini Yvonne Kramer Martin Farber
Brian Collett Jean Crossley Melinda Groom Tom McFarling
Nanette DeDonato

Slower-pace:

Allison Bronkall



Island Hopping in Channel Islands National Park, 2013

April 7-9; May 5-7; June 2-4; July 21-23; August 25-27; September 15-17

Join us for a 3-day, 3-island, live-aboard cruise to Channel Island National Park. Hike wild, windswept trails bordered with blazing wildflowers. Kayak rugged coastlines. Marvel at pristine waters teeming with frolicking seals and sea lions. Train your binoculars on unusual sea and land birds. Watch for the highly endangered island fox. Look for reminders of the Chumash people who lived on these islands for thousands of years. Or, just relax at sea. All cruises depart from Santa Barbara aboard the 68' twin diesel Truth.

The cost, \$590, includes an assigned bunk, all meals, snacks, and beverages plus the services of a ranger/naturalist who will travel with us to help lead hikes, point out items of interest, and present evening programs. To make a reservation send a \$100 check, written to Sierra Club to leader Joan Jones Holtz, 11826 The Wye St., El Monte, CA 91732. For more information call or e-mail leader (626-443-0706; jholtzhln@aol.com).

Lake Group Report

Endangered Species Act Petition for the Clear Lake Hitch

On September 25, 2012 the Center for Biological Diversity filed a petition to protect the Clear Lake hitch (*Lavinia exilicauda chi*) under both the federal and state Endangered Species Act. The hitch, an ancient fish in the minnow family found only in Clear Lake, live in deep water most of the year, but every spring the adults work their way up the tributary creeks to spawn. They used to be extraordinarily abundant, forming a vital part of the ecosystem and an important food source for birds, wildlife and the indigenous people of the Clear Lake basin, but in recent years the population has declined precipitously, for reasons including streambed obstructions, predation by introduced fish, impaired water quality and food competition.

The millions of hitch that used to migrate up into all the lake's tributaries during their spawning runs are now reduced to a few thousand spawners, found in significant numbers in only two streams. Their closest relative, the Clear Lake splittail, was driven to extinction by the middle 1970s, and without strong proactive corrective measures the hitch are vulnerable to the same dire fate.

CBD's petition proposes recovery measures such as removing or retrofitting barriers to fish migration, improving instream water flows, restoring fish to former spawning streams, and reducing predation near the mouths of spawning streams. The filing could also provide leverage to improve the chances of getting funding for the Middle Creek wetland restoration project and other conservation

projects benefitting many native species and improving the general health of the lake as well.

Lake Group is eager to collaborate with CBD to protect and restore this iconic species, and in the meantime hopes to help allay widespread anxieties about the possible consequences of ESA listing. The Group was therefore delighted to learn that on December 3 the Chi Council and county Fish & Wildlife Advisory Committee will jointly sponsor a public forum with an expert panel, with the objective of informing the public about the way the listing process works, and to the greatest extent possible helping the community pull together to benefit of all of Lake County. At press time, participants, time, and location were still undetermined: please check the Group website at redwood.sierraclub.org/lake where these details will be posted as soon as available.

Holiday Party coming up

Lake Group's eighth annual holiday party will be held on Friday, December 14, at Outing Chair Steve Devoto's house, in Buckingham—we'll have food, drink, a blazing fire and lots of convivial conversation. The Club will provide the main dish and our host is most generously supplying the wine, but guests are asked to bring a side dish or dessert to share as well as their own re-useable utensils. All Lake Group members are most cordially invited, along with visiting friends and relations. RSVPs may be made by calling Ed at 994-8304 or sending an email to edrobey@wildblue.net.

—VICTORIA BRANDON, LAKE GROUP

Sonoma Group Report

Port Sonoma Landfill Project at Carneros Ranch.

The Sonoma and Marin groups, along with other environmental organizations, persuaded the Sonoma County Supervisors to require a full Environmental Impact Report for the Port Sonoma Landfill Project at Carneros Ranch. This project proposes applying dredger spoil to 500 acres of land at the mouth of the Petaluma River. The landowners want to raise the land more than seven feet over a period of about twenty years. Numerous issues such as water quality, waterfowl, noise and feasibility should be addressed. URS Consultants, Oakland, CA was awarded the contract as Consultant preparing the EIR. Scoping of the EIR is now under way.

SMART Lobbying.

We are preparing to lobby the Governor to deliver promised funding to help create walkable places near SMART Stations. In particular, the Railroad Square redevelopment has been denied an exemption from fund take-backs due to the demise of redevelopment agencies. There is a need to press the Legislature to re-establish agencies for this purpose. Developers are likely to propose projects in Sonoma County just outside of urban growth limits in the next decade, and now is the time to establish policies to prevent such projects from being approved.

Keeping Sonoma County Landfill on Right Track.

Following our success in preventing privatization of the Sonoma County landfill, policy makers are negotiating operating agreements with the same company that was slated to buy the property three years ago. The draft contracts have not yet surfaced, and regardless of the terms of any agreement we have some concerns about the ability of the County to manage the operation so that cities maximize diversion and reuse of waste products.

Russian River issues:

We are concerned that the comments on the Low-Flow DEIR may be affected by the December-January holidays, and are requesting adequate time to review the documents.

Once again this summer was filled with dozens of landowners cutting down trees in the biotic resource zoning in the riparian areas. A recent "exempt" and illegal timber harvest right on the Riverbanks in

Hacienda exposed permitting loopholes. County ordinances do not protect the Russian River equivalent to the General Plan goals. Discussions are underway with policy-makers.

The Recycled Water Act is coming back to state legislature as a two year bill. The bill would deregulate tertiary treated wastewater and pose a threat to surface and groundwater quality. Last year a county official supported the bill which seemed inappropriate, because a clean, safe water supply should trump wastewater issues. We are looking at the implications of the recent passage of AB 685—The Human Right to Clean Water.

Our Water Committee, headed by Len Holt, is watching the development of plans for the Graton Rancheria Casino. It appears that the Casino will discharge their waste water to the Sub-regional Treatment Plant through the Rohnert Park system. The status of their water supply is not clear, but it seems they are considering wells. We are told that another casino (Pomo) is proposed for land south of Petaluma—specific plans are likely to emerge soon.

Jessica Jones, an Associated Students officer and sustainability advocate at SRJC, reports that the Chancellor's office has issued a guide book and sustainability action plan for junior colleges statewide. Jessica is active in supporting efforts to utilize the action plan and guide book resources. A paid sustainability coordinator position for SRJC may become part of the plan's implementation.

The Sonoma County Conservation Council (SCCC) is planning a December 5th holiday networking party at the Omelette Express. The SCCC's March 9th annual dinner will be at the Santa Rosa Veterans Memorial building with a theme of Climate Solutions and Land Use.

We are holding an Environmental Forum on Nov. 20 to discuss 2012 election results and their possible impact on climate and other environmental issues. On Dec. 18 we will host a forum for new members. Both will take place at the Environmental Center.

Our Chair, Dan Kerbein, is launching a Food Security-Transition Support Committee, to bring attention and action to issues of sustainability in our local food supply. Meeting dates and times are due to be set in November.

—DAN KERBEIN, SONOMA GROUP CHAIR

Mendocino Group Report

Albion River TMP.

Some members are currently reviewing a long-term timber management plan on the Albion River filed by a non-industrial landowner. The plan is a "non-industrial timber management plan." Its reference number is 1-NTMP12-008 MEN. Our major concern relates to the protection of known, nearby great blue heron rookeries, osprey nests, nesting habitat for marbled murrelets and the noted presence of bald eagles. We are also opposed to the proposed use of herbicides for tanoak removal. If you would like more information, contact Linda Perkins, 937-0903.

Help Remove Roadside Broom.

Are you concerned about the Broom you see

along the road? We are continuing our efforts to remove it. It takes a lot of energy and the only way to do it is together. Come on out and help! Contact Carrie Durkee at cdurkee@mcn.org or 937-2554.

Willits Bypass Petition Denied.

The petition for injunctive relief for irreparable harm sought by the coalition to stop the Willits Bypass as it is currently proposed has been denied. We are disappointed that CalTrans potentially is now able to start topping and/or removing trees. Salmon are about ready to enter streams present in the area. The battle is not over. We look forward to our day in court.

—MARY WALSH, MENDOCINO GROUP REPORT

Please Vote in the local Sierra Club election!

Ballots and Directions on
Page C of the Election Section

Kit Carson Lodge

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Our Volunteers:

Thanks to Nancy McCoy, Brian Hoffman, and Adam Mangosing, and Jane for staffing the Sept 15, paper shredding. Thanks to Nancy McCoy, Jane Bogner, and Adam Mangosing, for staffing the Oct.20 paper shredding.

Thanks to all the Solano County Coastal Cleanup volunteers. We know Sierra Club members were all out there quietly making our waterways safe.

VALCORE Recycling and Confidential Paper Shredding in 2012 & 2013

Solano Group will be working every 3rd Saturday at 38 Sheridan Street, Vallejo from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. (Dec 15, Jan 19, Feb. 16, Mar. 16). There is a charge of \$10 per twenty pounds of paper shredded. (maximum: 100 pounds). 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.

VALCORE has \$40 composting bins for sale to Vallejo residents (\$75 for others). It's a great green holiday gift. Call 707 645-8258

We continually work at Lori's Native Plant Garden located at 225 Amador St, Vallejo. We weed, plant, prune and mulch year-round. If you have an hour, call Jane and she'll work with you to get you started.

Solano Group Volunteer Opportunities:

Membership Co-Chair – About 4 hours a month, mostly computer work.

Web Page Master – We need someone who knows Front Page to update the Solano Page (about 2 hours every other month).

VALCORE Recycling Board Alternate – You may need to attend one meeting per year.

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

HELP PAY FOR OUR LANDFILL LAWSUIT

(Our attorney's fees are 3000 cans per hour)

Solano Breeze Corner

Covering Benicia, Fairfield, Rio Vista, Suisun, Vacaville and Vallejo

sierraclubsolanogroup@gmail.com 707-319-6398

Please bring your CRV – CA Cash Refund containers down to VALCORE, 38 Sheridan St. Vallejo, Mon - Sat, 10am to 1 pm and 2 pm to 4:30pm.

OR Cash them in at your local recycle center and send us a check for the refund amount.

We recently received donations from Marion Conning, John Kolarik, Phil McCullough, and Ray Anderson.

Jenny O'Donnell Wins Scholarship

This year's Sierra Club scholarship goes to Jenny O'Donnell of Vallejo. She is a student at Solano Community College majoring



in Science. She is working towards receiving an AA in science, and hopes to have a career in the medical biotechnology field so she can continue her passion for science and helping others in her community. She enjoys chemistry, biology, and math. She has also achieved her Gold Award and is a lifetime member of the Girl Scouts of America. While involved with scouting she did a great deal of community service, and enjoys volunteering for organizations that have an

emphasis on environmental protection.

Jenny is the 17th winner of this honor. Congratulations.

AB845 and Measure E update

We suffered a grievous loss when Governor Brown signed AB845 in early October. AB845 is Fiona Ma's bill that targeted Solano County's Measure E. AB845 blocks local jurisdictions from adopting or enforcing local ordinances limiting solid waste

importations into their communities.

Not only did the bill pass both the Assembly and Senate, but it was championed by Assemblyman Wesley Chesbro. We thank Assemblymembers Mariko Yamada and Jared Huffman who both spoke eloquently against the bill on the Assembly floor. Assemblyman Michael Allen, while stating he opposed the bill, is on record as voting for it, as he says he made a mistake.

Senators Lois Wolk and Noreen Evans worked very hard to try and defeat this bill in the Senate, but they ultimately lost to an odd coalition of Republicans, Southern CA Democrats and Assemblyman Chesbro.

Our lawsuit to enforce Measure E continues. Our task is more challenging but our attorneys think we have a decent chance of winning on narrow grounds.

Solano was lucky to have Jessica Eckdish arrive from

the the Club's DC office to help organize on the Garamendi for Congress re-election campaign. Jessica organized a phone bank to Redwood Chapter members from Marilyn Farley & Duane Kromm's house and has worked tirelessly at Garamendi's Fairfield campaign office. It is always good to have young energetic folks engaging in the good fight for us. We encourage you to sign up to help your Sierra Club Solano Group.

A Sierra Club Solano Group donation went to Assembly candidate Jim Frazier.

Duane Kromm



Jim Frazier (left) receives a Solano Group check from Duane Kromm for his Assembly race.

CONTRIBUTORS: DUANE KROMM, JANE BOGNER

EDITOR: GREG PETERSON

Napa Group Report

Break out the "No on Napa Pipe Signs"!

After a 3-2 approval by the County Planning Commission, the Napa Pipe project now goes to the Board of Supervisors. We're hoping that the supervisors will vote down the project, and open the door to consideration of other futures for the land which will better serve our County. The county needs to hold the line on building large housing projects outside city limits.

Down with plastic bags!

Sierra Club is supporting Napa Can Do's campaign to ban plastic bags from retail outlets. A ban would forbid the large bags used to bag groceries and such, not smaller bags used to hold smaller items such as vegetables. Dozens of other municipalities have led the way with plastic bag bans, and we can learn from their experience. Can Do will begin with either the County or with the City of Napa, probably after the New Year begins. Stay alert for suggestions about how

you can support their efforts.

Opportunities for involvement

Outings Committee

The committee is re-organizing and looking for new members. This is a great opportunity to share ideas for new outdoor adventures. Contact Isabelle at izstguily@gmail.com.

Adopt-A-Park

Once or twice a month we gather for a couple of hours of gardening at Trancas Crossing Park in Napa. Usually we're pulling weeds and mulching around the young native plants. To join us, contact Nancy at nancy@aya.yale.edu

Membership Chair

A membership chair organizes outreach to members and plans events for education and socialization. To apply, contact Nancy at nancy@aya.yale.edu.

Help us go green!

We seldom send paper newsletters, due to cost. To receive our e-mail newsletters, send your e-mail address to nancy@aya.yale.edu

–NANCY TAMARISK, NAPA GROUP CHAIR

North Group Report

The North Group is giving major attention to two environmental issues which are of great import to the future of the North Coast.

The first issue affects us close to home. We continue to be involved in efforts to update the Humboldt County General Plan. As part of the Healthy Humboldt coalition, we've worked to achieve an update that will keep Humboldt County forests from being subdivided and will protect other sensitive environments while encouraging smart development.

A solid plan update was approved by the Humboldt County Planning Commission but review by the Board of Supervisors has dragged on. To sign up for e-mail updates and alerts from the Healthy Humboldt Coalition visit: <http://oi.vresp.com/?fid=ebb42ec0e0>

The second issue we're working on will impact the entire North Coast as well as California portions of the Klamath River Basin. A Clean Water Act implementation program is being developed which could finally bring effective control of agricultural pollution within our region. After years of lawsuits, the North Coast Regional Water Board is developing regulations for most agricultural operations;

dairies are regulated separately.

While the Clean Water Act has been around since 1972, agriculture, forestry, stormwater run-off and other "non-point sources" of pollution were not regulated until environmental activists sued to force the EPA and state agencies to regulate them. Getting to the point where control of agricultural pollution on the North Coast and Klamath River Basin is actually being implemented has been a long hard road. We must now make sure that the regulatory program for agriculture is properly designed and effectively implemented. To learn more or plug in to these efforts contact North Group Water Chair Felice Pace or Redwood Chapter Water Chair Daniel Myers.

The North Group meets on the second Tuesday of each month beginning at 6:45 PM at the Adorni Center on the Eureka Waterfront. Come by and get involved. You can view the current issue of North Group News as well as listings of upcoming outings and meetings on the Chapter website at www.redwood.sierraclub.org/north.

–FELICE PACE, NORTH GROUP

Classified Ads

Live potted Xmas trees, one to five feet tall. Douglas fir, redwood, blue spruce, Scotch pine. Self-service tree lot open 9-9 Nov. 26 to Dec. 24. M&M Ranch at 880 Austin Creek Rd. in Cazadero. (707) 632-5602.

WOMEN'S TRIPS- Yosemite, Pt. Reyes, Sequoia! Visit sierrasisters.net or call Janet at (707)874-2126



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- John Muir

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Supporting	<input type="checkbox"/> \$75	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100
Contributing	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175
Life	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1250
Senior	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$35
Student/Limited Income	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$35

Contributions, gifts and dues to Sierra Club are not tax deductible they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to Sierra magazine and \$1 for your Chapter newsletters.

Enclose a check and mail to Sierra Club, P.O. Box 421041, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1041

or visit our website www.sierraclub.org P94Q IW 0300 1

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. Dec. 3 - Sonoma Group.

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

- The Climate & Energy Committee meets at 4:30, Info: contact Shirley, shirlgirl707@yahoo.com, 206-1138.
- Sonoma Group Conservation Committee at 5:30 p.m. Info: Dan Kerbein, dkerbein@sonic.net
- Sonoma Group Executive Committee at 6:30 p.m. Info: Dan Kerbein, dkerbein@sonic.net

Thurs. Dec. 6 - 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., Dec. 11 - North Group ExCom.

The public is invited to attend the monthly meeting of the North Group Sierra Club's governing committee. Join us for a discussion of local conservation issues between 7:45 and 8:45 p.m., following the Executive Committee business meeting from 6:45-7:45 p.m.

Meet at Adorni Center Conference Room on Eureka Waterfront. For more information, call Gregg at 707-826-3740.

Tues. Dec. 18 - 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

Sonoma Group Water Committee - No December Meeting.

Thurs. Jan. 3 - 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. Jan. 7 - Sonoma Group.

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

- The Climate & Energy Committee meets at 4:30, Info: contact Shirley, shirlgirl707@yahoo.com, 206-1138.

• Sonoma Group Conservation Committee at 5:30 P.M. Info: Dan Kerbein, dkerbein@sonic.net

• Sonoma Group Executive Committee at 6:30 p.m. Info: Dan Kerbein, dkerbein@sonic.net

Tues. Jan. 8 - North Group ExCom.

Monthly North Group Sierra Club Executive Committee meeting. See Dec. 11 for details.

Sat., Jan. 12 - Redwood Chapter ExCom.

Location: Willits Environmental Center. Conservation Committee meets at 10 a.m., ExCom meets 1-3 p.m. Info: Victoria, vbrandon@lalive.info

Wed. Jan. 16 - Sonoma Group Water Committee.

7:00 PM in the back room of the Environmental Center, 55A Ridgway, Santa Rosa. Contact Len Holt: 707-527-7516 or lholt@sonic.net

Wed. Feb. 20 - Sonoma Group Water Committee.

7:00 PM in the back room of the Environmental Center, 55A Ridgway, Santa Rosa. Contact Len Holt: 707-527-7516 or lholt@sonic.net

Sierra Club California Honors Volunteer for New Laws on Solar Panels

EXCERPTED AND REPRINTED FROM THE SIERRA CLUB YODELER

On Nov. 10, volunteer Kurt Newick received Sierra Club California's John Zierold Award recognizing an individual who has served Sierra Club California in the area of legislative advocacy. The award specifically honors Kurt's efforts—and tremendous successes—in cutting the permit fees charged for installing new solar panels.

Few volunteers can boast of the achievement of Kurt Newick: two bills were signed into California law that would not have happened without him. They were the outcome of his hard work over seven years, and he helped draft them. Lots of other volunteers were involved, of course, but it was Kurt's initiative, hard work, and expertise that made the laws possible. Kurt notes with appreciation, "There was always someone willing to work with me."

The story goes back to 2005. Kurt, who works for a solar contractor, saw a problem that was discouraging people from installing photovoltaic solar panels. Every city and county charges a permit fee for a new solar system, but in many cases the fees were much greater than the costs involved in issuing the permit—and large enough to be a significant discouragement to homeowners and businesses considering an installation.

Kurt didn't just grumble—he organized. He worked with the Global Warming and Energy Committee of the Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter to conduct a survey of the permit fees for residential solar installations in his chapter, and the committee then publicized the results and encouraged jurisdictions to cut high fees. The results were astounding—lots of cities started lowering their fees.

Kurt and the committee didn't rest on their laurels. They extended the survey to include the Bay Chapter and several others, and to include commercial installations. The project depended on Kurt's hard work—and on his insider's knowledge of the solar business.

In 2011 state Sen. Mark Leno and Assemblymember Nora Campos contacted Kurt for advice about statewide policies on the permit fees. They needed to be fair to enable cost-recovery for the cities, yet not so high as to discourage new installations. Kurt worked with legislative staff to craft bills. Along with Sierra Club California senior advocate Jim Metropulos, Kurt provided advice and presented amendments that the lawmakers included in the final bills.

Kurt was invited to Sacramento to testify before legislative committees. Kurt comments: "I was impressed with the legislative process. It was important to the lawmakers to make the legislation simple, and fair to all parties."

The two new laws are:

1) SB 1222 (Leno), which caps PV permit fees for rooftop systems by restricting a city or county from charging more for a solar permit than the estimated reasonable cost of providing the service for which the fee is charged, and providing specific limits on the dollar amount local governments may charge for a PV permit:

- residential systems: \$500, plus \$15 for every kilowatt (kW) over 15 kW;
- commercial systems: \$1,000 for systems up to 50 kW, plus \$7 for every kW between 51 kW and 250 kW, plus \$5 for every kW over 250 kW.

2) AB 1801 (Campos), which requires solar permit fees to be computed based on actual jurisdictional costs and specifically prohibits fees from being computed based on PV-system valuations. This will impact solar permit fees for all sizes and types of solar energy systems.

For more information on the Sierra Club's solar-permit-fee campaign in California see www.SolarPermitFees.org.

(Editor's Note: During 2011, the Redwood Needles ran many articles informing members about Kurt Newick's efforts and progress in lowering solar fee rates in several cities and counties within the Redwood Chapter.)

Presented by Sonoma County Conservation Council and the Sierra Club, Sonoma Group

Holiday Networking Party!

For Environmental and Social Justice Groups

Enjoy food, wine and hot cider provided by local businesses and talented volunteers! Mingle with your friends and local movers & shakers!

Wednesday, December 5, 2012, 5-8pm

At Don Taylor's Omelette Express
112 4th Street, Railroad Square, Santa Rosa

Suggested Donation: \$20 includes dinner and one drink!!
Open to the public - family and friends welcome!

RSVPs requested but not required. www.envirocentersoco.org

Thank You: Don Taylor's Omelette Express, www.omelette.com
Save the Date!! Environmental Awards Dinner, 3/9/2013, Santa Rosa Vets' Auditorium