Benicia Says No to Crude by Rail

BY ELLY BENSON, SIERRA CLUB ENVIRONMENTAL LAW PROGRAM

Last month, six planning commissioners in this quiet Solano County community dealt a blow to the oil industry when they unanimously rejected oil giant Valero’s proposal to transport crude oil to their local refinery in dangerous oil trains. Valero’s plan to receive two 56-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 mid-long line 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-Mégantic, Canada that tragically killed 47 people.

In closing 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.”

“Benicia Says No to Crude by Rail” cont. on page 8

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 destructive 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 inertia 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 Brryessa 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-author 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 “Inner Coast Range Conservancy” cont. on page 3

Supporting Parks, Supporting Trails

BY VICTORIA BRANDON, REDWOOD CHAPTER CHAIR

Redwood Chapter is proud to announce that we recently contributed $5,000 to Sonoma County Regional Parks Foundation in support of an exciting project to build a short miles of trails at Taylors Mountain Regional Park and Open Space Preserve in Santa Rosa. The trail expansion, one of Sonoma County’s largest trail projects, will open the northeastern 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 the headwaters of Colgan and Cooper creeks, and past the headwaters of Colgan and Cooper creeks.

“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 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.

“Wages and Housing” cont. on page 3

For more Redwood Chapter information: http://www.sierraclub.org/redwood
Redwood Needles

Newsletter of the Redwood Chapter, Sierra Club of California

Executive Committee Members

- Jill Baldwin*
- Steve Devoto*
- Mary Walsh*
- Joyce Yowell*

Redwood Needles

Redwood Needles Website: http://www.sierraclub.org/redwood

Redwood Chapter

Redwood Chapter is governed by an executive committee, with one (1) member delegated by each of six (6) regional groups and six (6) members elected at large. Each group elects its own executive committee.

Chair • Large - Political Chair - RCC Delegate - Wilderness Chair
Victoria Branden* 994-1913 victoria.branden@usa.net

Vice Chair • Large - Political Chair - Outings Chair
Renate Deming 994-4231 renatideming@usa.net

Secretary
Jill Baldwin 994-0395 jill@sbcrsonic.net

Treasurer
Mary Walsh 994-1913 mary@sonoma.net

Membership Chair
Melanie Leihy 994-03dream@usa.net

Outings Chair
Greg Peterson** 864-8573 gpeterson@usa.net

PC and Oversight Chair
Mary Walsh 994-1913 mary@sonoma.net

PC Chair
Joyce Yowell 994-0395 jayowell@hotmail.com

Options Chair
Greg Peterson** 864-8573 gpeterson@usa.net

Executive Committee Members

- Jill Baldwin*
- Steve Devoto*
- Mary Walsh*
- Joyce Yowell*

Redwood Needles Website: http://www.sierraclub.org/redwood

Redwood Chapter Online

Redwood Chapter Website: http://www.sierraclub.org/redwood

Group Websites: www.redwood.sierraclub.org and add: /napa, /north, /sonoma, /lake, /mendocino, or /solano

Redwood Chapter Facebook: www.facebook.com/Redwood.Chapter

Redwood Chapter is a member of the Sierra Club, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Your contribution to Sierra Club is tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

Redwood Needles

Redwood Needles Website: http://www.sierraclub.org/redwood

Redwood Chapter Online

Redwood Chapter Website: http://www.sierraclub.org/redwood

Group Websites: www.redwood.sierraclub.org and add: /napa, /north, /sonoma, /lake, /mendocino, or /solano

Redwood Chapter Facebook: www.facebook.com/Redwood.Chapter

Redwood Needles

Redwood Needles Website: http://www.sierraclub.org/redwood

Redwood Chapter Online

Redwood Chapter Website: http://www.sierraclub.org/redwood

Group Websites: www.redwood.sierraclub.org and add: /napa, /north, /sonoma, /lake, /mendocino, or /solano

Redwood Chapter Facebook: www.facebook.com/Redwood.Chapter

Executive Committee Members

- Jill Baldwin*
- Steve Devoto*
- Mary Walsh*
- Joyce Yowell*

Redwood Needles Website: http://www.sierraclub.org/redwood

Redwood Chapter Online

Redwood Chapter Website: http://www.sierraclub.org/redwood

Group Websites: www.redwood.sierraclub.org and add: /napa, /north, /sonoma, /lake, /mendocino, or /solano

Redwood Chapter Facebook: www.facebook.com/Redwood.Chapter

Redwood Needles

Redwood Needles Website: http://www.sierraclub.org/redwood

Redwood Chapter Online

Redwood Chapter Website: http://www.sierraclub.org/redwood

Group Websites: www.redwood.sierraclub.org and add: /napa, /north, /sonoma, /lake, /mendocino, or /solano

Redwood Chapter Facebook: www.facebook.com/Redwood.Chapter

Redwood Needles

Redwood Needles Website: http://www.sierraclub.org/redwood

Redwood Chapter Online

Redwood Chapter Website: http://www.sierraclub.org/redwood

Group Websites: www.redwood.sierraclub.org and add: /napa, /north, /sonoma, /lake, /mendocino, or /solano

Redwood Chapter Facebook: www.facebook.com/Redwood.Chapter

Redwood Needles

Redwood Needles Website: http://www.sierraclub.org/redwood

Redwood Chapter Online

Redwood Chapter Website: http://www.sierraclub.org/redwood

Group Websites: www.redwood.sierraclub.org and add: /napa, /north, /sonoma, /lake, /mendocino, or /solano

Redwood Chapter Facebook: www.facebook.com/Redwood.Chapter

Redwood Needles

Redwood Needles Website: http://www.sierraclub.org/redwood

Redwood Chapter Online

Redwood Chapter Website: http://www.sierraclub.org/redwood

Group Websites: www.redwood.sierraclub.org and add: /napa, /north, /sonoma, /lake, /mendocino, or /solano

Redwood Chapter Facebook: www.facebook.com/Redwood.Chapter

Redwood Needles

Redwood Needles Website: http://www.sierraclub.org/redwood

Redwood Chapter Online

Redwood Chapter Website: http://www.sierraclub.org/redwood

Group Websites: www.redwood.sierraclub.org and add: /napa, /north, /sonoma, /lake, /mendocino, or /solano

Redwood Chapter Facebook: www.facebook.com/Redwood.Chapter

Redwood Needles

Redwood Needles Website: http://www.sierraclub.org/redwood

Redwood Chapter Online

Redwood Chapter Website: http://www.sierraclub.org/redwood

Group Websites: www.redwood.sierraclub.org and add: /napa, /north, /sonoma, /lake, /mendocino, or /solano

Redwood Chapter Facebook: www.facebook.com/Redwood.Chapter

Redwood Needles

Redwood Needles Website: http://www.sierraclub.org/redwood

Redwood Chapter Online

Redwood Chapter Website: http://www.sierraclub.org/redwood

Group Websites: www.redwood.sierraclub.org and add: /napa, /north, /sonoma, /lake, /mendocino, or /solano

Redwood Chapter Facebook: www.facebook.com/Redwood.Chapter

Redwood Needles
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 9,000 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 quieter backwater corner of Mendocino County. She shears her sheep, spins wool for sweaters, and practices sustainable ranching. The news that a Dollar General store is being proposed for the 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 company as basically a nuisance that attracts just the wrong element to our small town.” He and others point to Dollar General’s OSHA violations nationwide, and its documented sales of cheap foreign goods, including hazardous materials that are not 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. Ballots have been sent to the national Sierra Club membership (if you did not receive your ballot, please go to www.sierraclub.org and request it). The 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 and level, and works with the Board of Directors to conduct the Club. Visit the Club’s election website: http://www.sierraclub.org/board/election. This site provides links to additional information about the 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 your 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.
We will also include a visit to Rabbit Fire. We will also look at maps of the Middletown section of the Valley. This short walk will give us an overview of the Middletown area.

Farber 707-253-9606 kowsoi@juno.com

By reservation only. Leader: Martin Farber 707-253-9606, kowsoi@juno.com. Rain canceals.

Sat. Apr. 10 - Lake Group. Valley Fire Overview

We'll stroll at a leisurely pace along the water's edge as the tide recedes, and many shorebirds come to feed. Classification: E-6 (easy to moderately accessible) Co-led with Mother Lode Chapter. Carpools: Meet at trailhead parking lot behind In-N-Out Burger 820 W Imola Ave Napa. Sonoma Group call 707-825-3652. For more info go to: www.sierraclub.org/campshop?

Sat. Apr. 29 - Napa Group. Napa River and North Channel

We'll look at maps of the Napa River and North Channel. We'll stroll at a leisurely pace along the water's edge as the tide recedes, and many shorebirds come to feed. Classification: E-6 (easy to moderately accessible) Co-led with Mother Lode Chapter. Carpools: Meet at trailhead parking lot behind In-N-Out Burger 820 W Imola Ave Napa. Sonoma Group call 707-825-3652. For more info go to: www.sierraclub.org/campshop?

Sun. Apr. 4-5 - Napa Group. Napa River and North Channel

We'll look at maps of the Napa River and North Channel. We'll stroll at a leisurely pace along the water's edge as the tide recedes, and many shorebirds come to feed. Classification: E-6 (easy to moderately accessible) Co-led with Mother Lode Chapter. Carpools: Meet at trailhead parking lot behind In-N-Out Burger 820 W Imola Ave Napa. Sonoma Group call 707-825-3652. For more info go to: www.sierraclub.org/campshop?

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

Starting from Miners Ridge Trailhead, we hike through lush coastal rain forest into hillside redwoods. In 2 miles, we meet the Divide Trail and find other species, such as the white fir and the Jeffrey pine. In the afternoon, we hike through the fern forest and arrive at the West Trailhead. Trailhead Parking is $7, free for Regional Parks Members.

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. Members must have 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 that you do not miss an instruction from the 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 drinks. Wear appropriate clothing and shoes.

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. Members must have 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 that you do not miss an instruction from the 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 drinks. Wear appropriate clothing and shoes.

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. Members must have 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 that you do not miss an instruction from the 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 drinks. Wear appropriate clothing and shoes.

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. Members must have 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 that you do not miss an instruction from the 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 drinks. Wear appropriate clothing and shoes.

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. Members must have 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 that you do not miss an instruction from the 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 drinks. Wear appropriate clothing and shoes.

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. Members must have 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 that you do not miss an instruction from the 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 drinks. Wear appropriate clothing and shoes.
Sierra Club Volunteer/Activist Opportunities

Seeking a bilingual volunteer to respond to questions from members of the public through Redwood Chapter’s Spanish website. This position should only take a few hours a month at the most, and will support our outreach efforts. For more information, please contact: Margarita@sierraclub.org

Napa Group Treasurer: This is an opportunity to serve the Sierra Club without too much investment in time, and without leaving home. To meetings are held on QuickBooks, and we have only a few transactions each month. The treasurer does need to become familiar with C5 vs C4 forms. If you might be interested, contact me at nancy@yale.edu

Group Hike Leaders: Many Redwood Chapter Groups need Outings Chair. This volunteer position is working with leaders, coordinating with the Chapter Outings Chair, training leaders, keeping records, encouraging new leaders and community outreach. Outing Chair training is available. Contact Carol 546-6038 or carolevs@sierra.org for information.

Work with the Sonoma Group Water Committee! NOTICE: The Water Committee is now meeting at 5:00 p.m. at the Environmental Center on the first Mondays of most months in conjunction with the Conservation and Energy Committee meetings. If you are not able to attend by 5:30, we can adjourn to the back rooms to continue our meeting later. If you are not able to attend our meetings, you may e-mail Len Holt with your concerns and ideas. The Water Committee develops and promotes measures to conserve, save, and reuse our water resources. Our goal is to preserve and improve the natural water environment, by promoting the responsible use of water and the safe reuse or disposal of our waste waters. Help protect the quality of our water for people, wildlife, fish and other aquatic life. Check our meeting dates in the Needles. To get on our Water Committee e-mail list, e-mail Len Holt at holtsonomac.net.

Get CHARGED by attending the Climate & Energy Committee. Join us on the 1st of the month at 5:00-5:30 p.m. at the Environmental Center in Santa Rosa, learn about what is going on in our community to fight climate change through renewable energy programs. Contact Chair Shirley Johnson-Foell: Email: Shirlgirl707@yahoo.com, home 206-1138, or call office 544-7651.

Sat. Sauneters for Sonoma Rosa Area. Every Saturday. Meets 9 a.m. and usually ends around 11:30. These walks are moderate. Fun for everyone. Call John at 707-566-2335 or for info call Bob Martin 707-519-6300 bhronheticom@comcast.net.

Sonoma County Regional Parks trail work day.

On the day of the project you can call 707-548-4424 for an update or if you got 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 707-565-3363. ParksVolunteer@sonomacounty.org

Volunteer Days Riverkeeper Stewardship Park in Guerneville, Every Wednesday. 9 a.m. - Noon, for all or for part of the time. Park is located on the north bank of Russian River directly upstream Guerneville pedestrian bridge. Access entrance from the driveway in front of Sonoma Necting Co. (1632 Main Street, just east of Armstrong Woods Rd.) At bottom of driveway look for blue & white “Russian Riverkeeper Stewardship Park” sign. Bring drinking water & wear sturdy footwear. Light refreshments provided. Info Victoria Wile 865-2474 VictoriaWile@usa.net. Laguna Keepers Workdays: April 16 and May 14: Saturday mornings from 9 am on.

Contact Maggie Hart for location details/ directions (707) 527-9277 x.100 or maggi ehart@lagunafoundation.org Volunteers assist in exotic plant removal, native plant planting, education and habitat project maintenance. Little or no experience is needed. Only heavy rain cancel. Dress for dirt. Snacks are provided but please bring water, gloves and friends!

Help Restore Windsor Creek: April 16, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Windsor Creek directly across from Hiram Lewis Park on Brooks Road, Windsor. To RSVP or for more information call Emily (707) 576-2690 or Nick at 707-576-2655 or email Emily. McClintock@cc.ucdavis.gov The AmerCorps Watershed Stewards Program and Russian Riverkeeper invite volunteers to help restore Windsor Creek by removing invasive species, sheet mulching and planting native plants! Learn about the importance of native species along a stream bank and how to prepare your local environment and community! Bring weather appropriate clothing, long sleeves, shoes. Equipment is provided. Snacks & refreshments provided. All ages are welcome. Windsor Creek is located directly across from Windsor Middle School on Brooks Road. Volunteers should plan to meet at Hiram Lewis Park, which borders the middle school. We ask that everyone please arrive on time so that the AmerCorps volunteer coordinators can distribute tasks and ensure success and significance. We hope to see you there!
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 emerging springs found in Northern California’s headwater basins are particularly hard hit by poorly managed cattle. One out of the hundreds of trampling injuries 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 ranchers to hold permits to practice what has euphemistically been called Christopher Columbus Grazing. Those who hold grazing permits place their livestock on public land in the subhumid 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 from 3 to 6 months each year.

Water quality and habitat degradation are not, however, the only impacts of poorly managed public land grazing. Steambank, 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 base flows in national forest streams.

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 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 Referendum 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.
Sierra Club. This are both free events but you may RSVP at copperfieldsbooks.com. co-sponsored by Sonoma County Conservation Action, North Bay Jobs with Justice, and the Selections of this short book will be read by local environmental activists at the event, which is the county. GE crops are a threat to our organic agriculture, collecting signatures for a ballot measure that would ban growing an update on the Community Separators measure. 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://dbtrustore.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 agriculture, research and selling of GM3 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 the http://www.gmofreeSonomacounty.com/ for details. Next Sonoma Group Meetings (first Mondays of the month) Environmental Center, 55A Ridgeway 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 6:30pm-8:00pm. Friend us on Facebook, and check our website at: http://www. sierraclub.org/redwood/sonoma/ –Suzanne Doyle, Sonoma Group Acting Chair

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, Alia, Erin and friends for staffing the VALCORE Recycling and Confidential Paper Shredding event. VALCORE Recycling and Paper Shredding updates: Sonoma Group will be helping out with paper shredding every 3rd Saturday of the month at 38 Sheridan Street, Vallejo from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. 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’s Earth Day, April 16, 9 to noon at Vallejo’s Fisherman’s Market. Other cities in Sonoma County will conduct watershed cleanups on April 23.

Solano Breeze Corner Covering Benicia, Fairfield, Rio Vista, Suisun, Vacaville and Vallejo sierraclubsolanoigroup@gmail.com 707-319-6398

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 6th 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 leaders note 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 Iomla 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. It might be interesting, contact me at nancy@aya.yale.edu Events Walt Ranch EIR Public Hearing Monday, April 6, 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 6, 6:30 – 8:30pm, Napa Library – Free Lunch. 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 wildfires, wildlife issues, and policy changes that will ensure their protection. Sat. April 3 (Earth Day), Sat. May 21, and Sat. June 11. For more information, Contact Xulio Soriano at msatnh@gmail.com Keep Abrace of Napa Events and Issues Contact us at napavalleysierracalclub@gmail.com to receive our monthly e-mail newsletter. We promise not to bombard you with messages, or share your address with other organizations.

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: napavalleysierracalclub@gmail.com

Reading from Bill Kortum: A 50 Year History of Environmental Activism in Sonoma County Friday, April 15, 7pm, Copperfields’ Books, 140 Kentucky Street, Petaluma READINGS BY: Noreen Evans, Lynn Woolsey, Mark Green, Pam Torlitt, Tom Roth, Matt Maguire, Lucy Kortum & Rick Theis Saturday, April 16, 7pm, Copperfields’ Books, 106 Matheeson Street, Healdsburg READINGS BY: Kate Fraga, Steve Birdlebough, Marty Bennett, Rue Fuch, 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 is both free events but you may RSVP at copperfieldsbooks.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 exulacidae), an endemic fish listed as Threatened under the state Endangered Species Act. The first reports came from Adobe and Keeley 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/chiscouncil. 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, interactive 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 Christwits, 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 offers 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 McLauglin 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 one of a lifetime magnificence, and from evidence to date it seems probable that this area will match that standard-- so please come visit. –Victoria Brandon, Lake Group Conservation Chair

Sonoma Group Report

Napa Group Report

Redwood/Needles April 1, 2016 7
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 appease the West SPROG movement by conducting a full environmental review. In 2015, 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 (2016), 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 Sonoma County Board 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 a Benicia city commission meeting to protest the plan for an 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.

```
Redwood Needle News
April 1, 2016

Redwood Needles

---

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 
Organize!"

We need people in every area in 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 care about greenbelts and who support greenbelt protection!

Civic groups–Do you know folks who care about greenbelts?

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

Business– Do you 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! We then submitted comment letters identifying major flaws in the draft EIR (2016), 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 Sonoma County Board 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 a Benicia city commission meeting to protest the plan for an 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.

```
Redwood Needle News
April 1, 2016

Redwood Needles

---

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 

Redwood Needles

June Deadline: 11:59 PM Pacific Time (PST) 1:59 AM Pacific Time (PST) 5/14/2016

Redwood Needles June Deadline: Due May 4 – Early!

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

davadison@sonic.net

Send Outings to Carl Inglis via email: carolvsr@sonic.net

Send Meetings to Carl Inglis: chinling@sonic.net