Vallejo Planning Commission Rejects Proposed Cement Plant

By Joe Feller, Solano Group Chair

On February 25 about a dozen Outings leaders from throughout Redwood Chapter got together with several conservation activists to figure out ways to revitalize the program, which has seen a reduction in participation in recent years, and is in particular need of new leaders to build on the inspiring success of the program. The meeting was quite the success, according to MacInnis, who reflected afterwards. “It was really awesome to see so many dedicated folks show up from across the chapter.”

Outings Program Moves Forward

By Victoria Brandon, Redwood Chapter Chair

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Berryessa Snow Mountain: Planning for the Future

By Victoria Brandon, Redwood Chapter Chair

About eighteen months after President Obama declared Berryessa Snow Mountain a national monument, effectively protecting the 330,000-acre section of sensitive public lands, Sierra Club joined other stakeholders and officials to discuss developing a comprehensive management plan for the land.

Sonoma Group Member’s Meeting

Thursday, April 20, 2017
5:30 to 7:30pm
Presentation at 6:00pm
Environmental Center, 55A Ridgway, Santa Rosa

Do you live in Sonoma County and want to get involved with local environmental work but don’t know how? We’d like to meet you! Drop in at any time for schmoozing, food & drink and a short presentation.

New members, old members and prospective members are all welcome.

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

The 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.

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Redwood Needles Deadlines

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Dec./ Jan. 15
Feb./ March 15
April/May 15

Redwood Chapter & Sonoma County Group Office
Location: Environmental Center, 55A Ridgway Ave., Santa Rosa

The Office is staffed most weekday afternoons. Call ahead to confirm, 544-7651. The Office is also open during evening meetings (see listings on last page) and at other times when volunteers are present.

Redwood Chapter Online
Redwood Chapter Website: http://www.sierraclub.org/redwood for Group Websites, use www.redwood.sierraclub.org and add: /napa, /north, /sonoma, /lake, /mendocino, or /solano

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

Redwood Chapter Website: www.sierraclub.org/redwood
Mendocino Group Supports Timber Harvest Lawsuit In Albion

Being an environmentalist on the North Coast can feel like standing in front of an armed tank in peaceful protest during a military battle. Sometimes there’s a standoff, sometimes there’s a peaceful retreat, and sometimes there’s destructive escalation. But the war never ends. It just takes on different forms.

For Mendocino Group executive committee member Linda Perkins and many of her neighbors in Albion, a town of about 800 people on the Mendocino coast, the battle is between residents and the Mendocino Redwood Company. It’s a battle to protect clean water in Railroad Gulch, part of the Albion River watershed, to reduce fire danger and to limit the effects of climate change through carbon sequestration by forests. The battle has taken the form of a lawsuit, filed last fall by the Forest Preservation Society. Sierra Club Mendocino Group filed an amicus brief in January to support the lawsuit.

The legal action calls attention to environmental problems associated with the Timber Harvest Plan, which cuts 758 acres of forest literally on the chopping block.

Even with the lawsuit, the THP is moving forward, Mendocino County Superior Court ruled against a temporary stay, and the case is now in District 3 of the Appellate Court. Sierra Club and Forest Preservation Society hope this case will set legal precedent on environmental regulations, said Perkins, an expert at dissecting Timber Harvest Plans. “Our group is very happy to add Sierra Club’s voice and support to the effort.”

Chief among the complaints, and the one that is most sound in today’s political climate, is that deforestation acts against the state’s efforts to curb carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions to fight climate change. In 2016, the State of California committed itself to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030.

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, also known as CalFire, enforces laws that regulate logging on private lands. When a THP is proposed, it must be approved by CalFire. Though CalFire states on its website that it will not approve a THP that doesn’t comply with “forestry and environmental regulations,” it is not set up to reject a proposal simply because it is “unpopular with the public.”

Yet, Perkins argues, the Railroad Gulch THP goes far beyond being unpopular with locals. “CalFire abused its discretion by not calculating cumulative effects or short-term effects for carbon sequestration,” said Perkins. “They dodged the issue, and that’s...the main legal argument.”

Other environmental concerns outlined in the amicus brief are the destruction of the threatened Northern Spotted Owl’s habitat and the local Albion River watershed.

“All these rivers are part of our daily lives,” Perkins said. “We live with the effects.”

While the Mendocino Redwood Company once pledged to conduct its harvesting plans with reverence to the environment, Perkins said a change in management has changed the company’s approach.

MRC’s new methods, she said, are much more aggressive with overcutting and with the use of an herbicide called Imazapyr to kill unwanted flora, such as tanoaks. “It’s a wide-spectrum herbicide, meaning it kills other things than the target plant, so it will go into the roots and get into the ground water and affect nearby plants. There’ve been no studies done on the effects of that,” she said.

Plus, she added, the size and scope of the plan is much larger than past plans. MRC intends to harvest about 60 percent of the trees in Railroad Gulch's forest.

As the plan moves forward, the group is hopeful to get a hearing in the appeals court. “This hearing is essential, as the only venue for review of the inadequate actions by CalFire is in the courts. This is the check on power of one agency to ignore the state’s commitment on greenhouse gas emissions,” said Rixanne Wehren, Sierra Club Mendocino Group’s coastal chair.

But, Perkins added, with more public outcry, vigilance and funding, projects like this will have a harder time moving forward without adequate environmental review.

What You Can Do:

• Join the Redwood Chapter and get active in your local group. Mendocino Group needs activists and new members throughout the county.

• Donate to Sierra Club Redwood Chapter directly.

• Write letters to the editor in opposition to deforestation and destructive logging practices.

• Attend public hearings on environmental issues affecting your community.

• Connect with Redwood Chapter on Facebook or Instagram for the latest updates on this plan and others.

—SHOSHANA HEBSHI, REDWOOD CHAPTER COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

“BSM: Planning for the Future” continued from page 1

similar but by no means identical. Melding the two into an effective partnership will be challenging, but both agencies appear eager to rise to the occasion.

Although the Jan. 20 meeting was not a part of the official planning process, National Monument Manager Rebecca Wong, MNF Forest Supervisor Ann Carlson and BLM Ukiah District Field Manager Amanda James and other staff members were active participants in the discussion, guiding us through the complex series of steps needed to devise a comprehensive management plan for BSMNM.

The public will have many opportunities to comment at the management plan coalesces.

Three “community conversations” were held in Upper Lake, Winters and Willows last year and were well attended. All recreational stakeholder groups are invited to participate in future meetings, along with scientists, tribes, state and local governments, non-governmental organizations, such as the Sierra Club, and interested individuals.

The contributions received will help create a reasonable plan that preserves the sensitive values that were the rationale for designation and also maximizes its recreational potential.

With a 2018 target date for the adoption of a completed plan, it’s time to roll up our sleeves and get to work.
Sat. April 1 - Lake Group. Six Sigma Ranch hike.
We will hike the historic old stagecoach route from Lower Lake to Knoxville, following the ranch road through Six Sigma Ranch to Six Sigma Ranch east toward Morgan Valley road. We will stop by the Ranch tasting room on the way, so bring along cash or credit card so we can do. Much of the hike will follow Asbill Creek and canyon to the confluence with Soda Creek. We will return aboard the Ranch’s Pinzgauer, a vintage 6X6 military vehicle, making the hike approximately 6 miles one way. This limits the number of hikers to 10 people. Class E-6-A. Meet 8:30 am Lower Lake Coffee Company, Main St., Lower Lake. By reservation only. Leader Tom McFarling (707) 994-5490. Rain cancels.

Sat. Apr. 8 - North Group, South Fork Trinity River (off Highway 299) Hike. Join us on this perennial favorite National Forest trail with breathtaking vistas of the river’s gorge below. Fisheye lenses will be a plus. We will expect an abundance of wildflowers, especially since the 2008 Half Hill mosaic fire has not yet burned up the deadfall trees. Class:M-6-A. Carpools: Meet 8:30 am. Ray’s shopping center in Valley West, Leader Ned, nedforsyth48@gmail.com, 825-4652. Heavy rain cancels.

Sat. Apr. 9 - Lake Group. Robert Louis Stevenson State Park Table Rock Hike. Enjoy gorgeous rolling hills, wooded forests, and a breathtaking view of the volcanic cliffs of the Palesidales Class: M-4-A-4. Carpools: Meet 9:30 am in front of Middletown Mugshots coffee shop or meet 9 am at Highway 29 & 175, or 10 a.m. on trailhead Robert Louis Stevenson State Park parking lot on east side. By reservation only. Leader Julie 707-987-9040, 707-671-5947 tskajak@yahoo.com, rain cancels.

Thur. Apr. 13 - North Group. Former Sutter Hospital Hike.
Enjoy gorgeous rolling hills, wooded forests, and a breathtaking view of the volcanic cliffs of the Palesidales Class: M-4-A-4. Carpools: Meet 9:30 am in front of Middletown Mugshots coffee shop or meet 9 am at Highway 29 & 175, or 10 a.m. on trailhead Robert Louis Stevenson State Park parking lot on east side. By reservation only. Leader Julie 707-987-9040, 707-671-5947 tskajak@yahoo.com, rain cancels.

Sat. Apr. 13 - Solano Group. Friendly Mare Island Hike.
Celebrate Earth Day with a moderate 3 m/m trail past a historic cemetery and then through the vineyards to the top of Mare Island. We’ll take in great views of the Carquinez Strait and Mt. Diablo. Vallejo never looked so good. Bring sturdy shoes, water, a hat, sunscreen, and a snack. 55 square miles of Mare Island Shoreline Heritage Preserve’s conservation efforts. Friendly, well-behaved dogs on leash are welcome. All ages. Trail is 2.6 miles long and can be accessed via one of 3 trails. Same. Class: M-3-A: Meet 10:30 am Trailhead at Mare Island Shoreline Heritage Preserve Parking at the end of Railroad Ave. Vallejo. Take Azur Dr. south through the roundabout. Left on 14th, right on Railroad Ave. Follow Railroad Ave. through the South Gate to the Park kiosk and park in the lot on the right. Leader Phi Kohlmetz philcoagogo@sbcglobal.net 707-647-4107.

Sat. Apr. 22 - Solano Group. Family-Friendly Mare Island Hike.
Celebrate Earth Day with a moderate 3 m/m trail past a historic cemetery and then through the vineyards to the top of Mare Island. We’ll take in great views of the Carquinez Strait and Mt. Diablo. Vallejo never looked so good. Bring sturdy shoes, water, a hat, sunscreen, and a snack. 55 square miles of Mare Island Shoreline Heritage Preserve’s conservation efforts. Friendly, well-behaved dogs on leash are welcome. All ages. Trail is 2.6 miles long and can be accessed via one of 3 trails. Same. Class: M-3-A: Meet 10:30 am Trailhead at Mare Island Shoreline Heritage Preserve Parking at the end of Railroad Ave. Vallejo. Take Azur Dr. south through the roundabout. Left on 14th, right on Railroad Ave. Follow Railroad Ave. through the South Gate to the Park kiosk and park in the lot on the right. Leader Phi Kohlmetz philcoagogo@sbcglobal.net 707-647-4107.

Fri. Mon. May 7 -  Bright Star Wilderness - Renovation Project.
We will be working on the Bright Star Corner corridor fence that was burned in the Eureka Fire of 2016. The fence we will rebuild blocked access to a cabin site that has been removed but still faces vehicle trespass issues. This project will be the beginning of an even larger fence project. We will be building a new corridor route to help protect the now vulnerable burned area. For questions or to sign up contact leader: Kate Allen, Kate@groombrother@gmail.com or 661-944-4056, CNRCC Desert Committee.

Sat. May 6 - Sonoma Group. Chanate Historical Walk.
Join us as we explore the property of the original Lord Chanate Rd. for building a maximum 800 housing units This property is next to the Paulin Creek Preserve. See this unique property and learn about the environmental. We will hear about the Bird Rescue Center (having Open House today), see the spectacular views from the ranch and make reservations. Jeremy Nichols local historian will be our narrator. Other speakers may join us. We will walk along paths with uneven surfaces and dirt trails so wear appropriate footwear. Class: E-2-A. Meet 1 pm by Bird Rescue Center 3400 Chanate Rd. Parking is to the east of the rescue center. Leader Carol Vellutini 546-6308 carolvo@sbcglobal.net. Rain cancels. Date May 20th.

Hike is on a trail with switchbacks for about 20 minutes through Fitch woods up to a dirt road leading to the mountains. On a clear day see spectacular views, including much of the San Francisco Bay area. View mountain ranges in a 360 degree panoramic view. On Mt. St. Shasta! Bring water, lunch, binoculars & snacks. Class: M-10-C. Carpools: Meet 9:30 am from St. Helena Home Place, Leader: Carol Vellutini, philcoagogo@sbcglobal.net 707-671-5947. Rain cancels. There is a lower peak as well, which is M-7-C round trip. You could sign-out and turn back from there, if 10 miles is too long.

A loop offering wide views over Bald Hills’ springtime meadows and woodlands, and passing a sheep shed, barn and cabin on slopes opposite Lyon’s Home Place. Bring ample liquids and lunch; prepare for wind, chill, and sun. No dogs. Class: M-7-C: Carpools: Meet 9 a.m. Ray’s Valley West or 10 am Lady Bird Johnson Parking. Trailhead is Lyons Ranch 10:45 a.m. Leader Melinda mgroomoster@gmail.com, 707-671-5947.

Two loop trails, each just over 2 miles, mostly on dirt roads: one to the west of our parking area, pastache old “Ski Run” with views of the King Range, the Siskiyous, and the coast, and another loop to the north and east around the upper pond. Low level mushroom picking. Bring lunch, water and good boots. No dogs. Class: M-5-A. Carpools: 9 a.m. your shopping center in Valley West, 10 a.m. Ray’s Valley West or 10 am Jody Johnson. Leader: Ned Forsyth nedforsyth48@gmail.com, 825-3652. Heavy rain cancels.

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, please treat it as you would a personal friend. Never change 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 with you. Do not leave the group without the leader’s permission. Be adequately equipped and prepared. You should carry lunch and liquids. Wear appropriate footwear for the outing. In most cases that would be hiking boots.

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 you from participants to read. Look at the difficulty of the hike. If the rating is high, you should all be experienced and fit. You may also ask questions, please call the leader to discuss your concerns. These are intended to help you decide if a hike is right for you. You may also ask questions, please call the leader to discuss your concerns. These are intended to help you decide if a hike is right for you. You may also ask questions, please call the leader to discuss your concerns. These are intended to help you decide if a hike is right for you. You may also ask questions, please call the leader to discuss your concerns. These are intended to help you decide if a hike is right for you. You may also ask questions, please call the leader to discuss your concerns. These are intended to help you decide if a hike is right for you.

DIFFICULTY ELEVATION MILEAGE 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, (carolvo@sbcglobal.net) by the 8th of the month. All leaders must coordinate their outings with their Group Outings Chair.

CST 208776-40. Registration as a seller of travel does not constitute approval by the California State of California.
Outings Chair Report

Making my annual trip to the Mare Island Flyway in February was the first day it hadn’t rained despite having some flooded roadways. I was happy I could get through, bringing my 12 year old neighbor for support and we had a great time. Big thanks go to Festival Director and Co-founder Myrna Hayes as each year is a huge undertaking. The main building had a leaky roof with the floors collecting a few feet of water on Friday. Volunteer help was obtained in place by Saturday. The Solano Sierra Club Group had a fantastic display manned by Jane Bogner. A group of high school students from Oakland with the SCA, the Student Conservation Association, were volunteering. They work as members of a diverse team of peers, gain knowledge of public land resources, environmental issues and career readiness skills. They were camping out. Students were polite, intelligent and good workers. If you have ever been to Mare Island you must go with leader Phil on April 22nd for an Earth Day tour. The Island is laced with trails, original settlements, historical buildings, old bunkers, osprey habitat, art work and so much more. I was astonished to see the addition of two rental yurts. What a place to stay overnight! The Spirit Ship at the top of the hill is an art tribute dedicated to the workers of Mare Island Naval Shipyard marking the closure of the Shipyard in 1996. The sculpture has a “dog tag” for many of the ships built and repaired on Mare Island and is a memorial to those who have served. See https://mariselandpreserve.org/VisitFeatures.html

Benson Hut, completed in 1959 at an elevation of 8,350’ has been maintained by volunteers. Ken Thatcher and Clark Nordkemper were involved from the 50s-90s in keeping Benson open and functional. I took over in the 90s and in 2005 Jim Gannon stepped up and is currently the leader. Dick Simpson, hut volunteer coordinator; Eugene Miyia; Val Rios and others have been collecting information on John Benson. A historical evaluation of Benson is happening for the Special Use Permit before the end of the year. Very little is known about John Benson, so volunteers are collecting info before the evaluation begins. John Benson of the 10th

Eugene Miyia, Benson Hut volunteer holding 10th Mountain Division patch with crossed bayonets forming a Roman number X representing the unit’s number. The shape on the patch is a powder–keg, suggesting the Division’s explosive power. The patch is red, white and blue which are the colors in the American flag, with the white word MOUNTAIN on a blue tab.

Mountain Division was killed in action by friendly fire in Italy on Feb.20th 1945. He was a member of the Sierra Club, an ardent skier, who skied the unbroken snows of the back country where the hut is located. Another Sierra Club member, Art Argiewicz, belonged to the 10th and died on Jan. 25 1945. The 10th came into being on July 13, 1943, at Camp Hale, Colorado. The Division entered combat on January 28, 1945 in the North Apennine Mountains of Italy. The 10th faced German positions arrayed along the 5 mile long Monte Belvedere-Monte della Terraccia ridge. Other divisions had attempted to assault Mount Belvedere three times, even holding it temporarily, but none had succeeded. To get to Mount Belvedere the division first had to take Riva Ridge. The Germans on Riva Ridge protected the approaches to Mount Belvedere. After much scouting, it was decided the assault would be at night, a 1,500-vertical-ascent. The Germans considered the ridge to be impossible to scale and manned it with only one battalion of mountain troops. During the process of preparing for one of the most daring mountain warfare actions in history, several members of the 10th gave their lives. John Benson was killed in a desperate, sometimes confused battle. We honor and keep John Benson’s name alive by our Sierra Club Hut. I was honored to help maintain the hut and am now involved with the Association who exists to preserve and enhance the legacy of the 10th Mountain Division for future generations.

–CAROL VELLUTINI, CHAPTER OUTINGS CHAIR

Outings

Fri.-Mon. May 26-29 - Mt. Grafton Wilderness Service

Join the CNRCC Wilderness Committee’s Memorial Day service trip in eastern Nevada’s Mt. Grafton Wilderness—another in our ongoing series with the Wilderness staff from BLMP’s Ely office. Useful work in a scenic area—a great way to celebrate Memorial Day out in the wilds. Optional central/comminitory. Contact Vicky V/Hoover, 415-977-5527; vicky.hoover@sierracclub.org. Project specifics available later.

CNRCC Wilderness Committee.


Start in a meadow, wind up a ridge, enjoy oak woodlands and the last blooming wildflowers as we reach Cache Creek, then well dose of people around the wye Chapman Canyon, and Neon Canyon. Be prepared to get your feet wet - hiking may be easier in the river if the banks are choked with tamarisk. Trip requires a car pool or caravan from Las Vegas vehicles best. Limit 10. David Hardy, 702-875-4826, hardyhikers@embarqmail.com. Email preferred.


This area has been described as one of “deep, rugged canyons, high bald peaks, elk and wet feet.” The trip begins on the North Twin River, near Carver, about an hour’s drive northeast of Tonopah, at an elevation around 6300 ft. After arriving at the trailhead we will hike in 2 or 3 miles to our first camp. The next day we will hike about 5 miles and camp. On day 3 we do a day hike (bring a day-pack) to the top of 11,773 ft Arc Dome, 12 miles with 4100’ elevation gain. Day 4 sees the start down South Twin, with a camp after several miles. The last day is the hike out. 16 miles, 3000 ft elevation gain with backpacks. The group has the option to do the trip in the opposite direction. Elevation gain to the top of Arc Dome is 300 less. Possibility of car pool or caravan from Las Vegas, details on trip sheet. Limit 12. David Hardy, 702-875-4826, hardyhikers@embarqmail.com. Email preferred.

April 29th March For Climate, Jobs And Justice

Sierra Club is an environmental leader within the People’s Climate Movement, which has organized the April 29th march in Washington D.C. and sister marches around the country “to resist attacks on our people, our communities and our planet.”

Before the Women’s March, held in locations across the nation the day after the inauguration, my sister, who lives in Arizona, expressed her frustration as a platform of their goals. As we went to the Women’s March, sister-marches/ to find a march near you, as historical examples of this. Please visit https://peoplesclimate.org/

Kit Carson Lodge

www.kitcarsonlodge.org
or call: (209) 258-8500

Redwood Needles April 1, 2017
Dollar General Doubleheader

As previously reported, Lake Group has challenged the proposal by Cross Development to construct a Dollar General outlet on the outskirts of Middletown on the grounds that it violates numerous policies in the Middletown Area Plan. The Planning Commission unanimously voted to deny the project last year, but the developer appealed to the Board of Supervisors, which approved the Use Permit by a 3-2 vote, conditioned on a new PC hearing on the design and environmental aspects of the project and certification of a mitigated negative declaration. By the time the Commission voted on these matters on January 26, four new Commissioners had been seated, all of whom appeared to have done plenty of homework and to understand the fundamentals of land use planning. After several hours of testimony, including that of Group Chair Ed Royse as well as many other members of the community (all of whom opposed the project), they again voted unanimously to deny a mitigated negative declaration and findings of consistency with the General Plan and Area Plan. The developer has since appealed this decision to the Board of Supervisors, which has two new members. A hearing date has not yet been set.

Then on February 23 the Commission heard three hours of testimony on a similar application for a Dollar General in the Clear Lake Riviera community: with the exception of the developer and the owners of the prospective site, comments were uniformly hostile, with objections ranging from Area Plan inconsistencies to negative impacts on quality of life and respected local businesses, and also an interesting assertion that considering the many applications individually rather than as elements of a single project amounts to CEQA piecemealing. Again, the Commission voted unanimously to deny all requested entitlements, and the decision has been appealed to the BOS.

Stay tuned!

Next Meeting: Earth Activism 2.0

At Lake Group’s next general membership meeting on March 22, executive committee member and former Supervisor Denise Rushing will share “permaculture” principles and practices that can keep us energized, sane and powerfully focused in these difficult political times. Learn about ecosystem services developed over millennia by life on Planet Earth and how to apply these strategies will help us not only to survive, but also to thrive in a hostile environment, while transforming the system itself. The meeting will be held in the Redwood Room at Mendocino College, 2565 Parallel Dr, and is always free and open to the public.

Beryssa Snow Mountain: the next steps.

Almost two-thirds of the BSM national monument is situated in Lake County, and Lake Group is excited to be able to participate in planning for both conservation and recreation in the region. For details, see the article elsewhere in this edition of the Redwood Needles.

Lake Group Conservation Chair

Victoria Brandon

Napa Climate Matters

The proposed Napa County Climate Action Plan (CAP), which will be our blueprint for controlling greenhouse gas emissions has the potential to be a powerful local tool for environmental protection. However, the initial draft has severe flaws which will weaken its impact. The Napa Sierra Club Group has submitted comments, and has contributed money to the hiring of Ron Cowan, an expert in biological carbon cycles, to analyze the document and provide expert input. It will take strong pressure by environmental advocates to improve our CAP.

We are proud to be associated with Napa Climate NOW!, a local group educating citizens on climate issues and influencing policy and programs at the local and state levels. Their next meeting is Monday, March 20th, 6:30 pm, at 675 Cunard in Napa. If you would like to attend, or to find out more at the group please contact Kit Long at kitlong00@gmail.com.

Vallejo’s Orcem/VMT plant: why it matters to Napa

The proposal to construct a cement plant and deep water marine terminal at the mouth of the Napa River in Vallejo has generated strong opposition from Vallejo citizens. The project, though little publicized in Napa, has the potential to cause severe damage to Napa River habitat, as well as to pollute the air in the vicinity of American Canyon.

Bill Dyer, of the Napa Sierra Club executive committee, outlined Napa’s issues with the project in a letter to the Vallejo planning commission. He pointed out that toxic contaminants from the slag used in cement production have the potential to degrade both the air and the water.

Napa County has spent millions of dollars rehabilitating the Napa River to encourage the return of steelhead and salmon. Efforts have included Rutherford DUST and other projects which together will restore over 15 miles of fish habitat between Rutherford and Calistoga. In addition barriers to fish passage have been removed at Zinfandel Lane and other sites in the river and its tributaries.

But Napa salmon and steelhead travel to and from the ocean, right past the proposed plant. Pollution of the mouth of the Napa River by toxic chemicals could undo our progress in river rehabilitation.

The good news is that the Vallejo planning commission recently rejected the cement plant/marine terminal. But the battle is not over, since the project developers have vowed to appeal the decision to the Vallejo City Council. (See article on page one for more information.)

Nancy Tamarski, Napa Group Vice Chair

Mendocino Group Report

The Central Coast Transfer Station (CCTS) has moved off of the back burner. It seems that State Parks is unwilling to go with the program to swap 12 acres of older second growth redwood for an easement on a capped (and leaking) dump site. The plan was that Parks would swap the 12 acres of older second growth redwood for an easement on a capped (and leaking) dump site. The plan was that Parks would swap the 12 acres to Jackson Demonstration State Forest (JDSTF), JDSTF would swap 35 acres in the pygmy forest to the city of Fort Bragg and the county of Mendocino, and City and County would swap the aforementioned dumpsite to Parks. Parks has said no. Another property is being sought to mix into the mix. Attorney Paul Carroll has said that enabling legislation will have to be reworded and passed if the original proposal is altered. Mendocino Group is watching closely.

In Albion another area in the pygmy forest is threatened. The Albion School has seen its enrollment decline to the degree that it may not function as a school next year. This is a large property located in the pygmy. The community is being solicited to decide input as to what will happen on the property. The concern of Mendocino Group is not with the actual school building but with the remaining property, that the pygmy forest will be razed to build another something. Linda Perkins has already suggested that a large scale building project find another site by arranging a site walk for the proponents and local pygmy expert Teresa Scholars. We will be closely following this.

Mendocino Group will be making a presentation at the Mendocino College campus on the coast to drum up ExCom members. This will be part of an exciting extension class on citizen participation.

An interested member from Ukiah wrote to the Mendocino Group, but the email was lost in a hacker attack. Please contact us again, as we would like to reply and talk with you. Thanks.

Mary Walsh, Mendocino Group Chair
North Group Report

Pesticides on the Smith River Plain: Is Drinking Water Safe?

Recently I received a notice¹ announcing that the State Water Resources Control Board has proposed establishing a Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) of 5 parts per trillion (ppt) for the chemical 1,2,3-Trichloropropane (1,2,3-TPC) in drinking water. 1,2,3-TPC is a man-made chemical used as a solvent and degreaser. It is also commonly found in many pesticides, including soil fumigants that are now banned in California. The most common agricultural pesticide containing 1,2,3-TPC is Telon II which was banned for use in California in 1990. The State’s notice referenced the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) which, in 2009, established a Public Health Goal (PHG)² for 1,2,3-TPC of 0.7 ppt based on the cancer risk posed by this chemical. The chemical is especially dangerous because it remains in groundwater for a long time. In fact, there is no evidence that 1,2,3-TPC can naturally decompose and removing it from groundwater is complex, expensive and not always successful. Until it was banned in 1990, Telon II and other chemicals containing 1,2,3-TPC were used as fumigants to control nematodes. A lot of the chemical was used on lily bulb fields adjacent to the Smith River Estuary because what is known locally as Smith River Plain. Other less-studied soil fumigants are now used. The area north of the Smith River Estuary, known as the Smith River Plain, produces most of the lily bulbs sold in the USA. Greg King’s Siskiyou Land Conservancy³ reports that in some years more pounds of pesticides per acre have been used on the Smith River Plain than were used anywhere else in California. The State Water Board’s announcement notes that 1,2,3-TPC has been detected in numerous drinking water sources in California. Since it was banned in 1990, 1,2,3-TPC has not been found in drinking water in either Humboldt or Del Norte Counties. But I’ve discovered that the cancer-causing chemical has, in fact, been detected in community drinking water wells operated by both the Reservation Ranch and Smith River CSD. Drinking water wells reveal other problem contaminants, 1,2,3-TPC is the most dangerous chemical detected in groundwater which is pumped and piped into numerous homes.

I found it curious that these detections were apparently not reported to the State Water Board. So I began questioning the Redding based officials who are responsible for overseeing these drinking water systems and who are required to report 1,2,3-TPC detections. Those officials would not respond when I questioned their failure to report the detections. I’ve now filed a compliant about that with Cal EPA; the State Water Board is an agency of Cal EPA. I’ll report Cal EPA’s response when I receive it and I’ll keep advocating for clean-up of groundwater north of the Smith River Estuary. Groundwater pollution there puts residents and workers, as well as fish and other wildlife, at risk.

Entities like Reservation Ranch and Smith River CSD have a responsibility to inform the public when the drinking water systems they operate are contaminated. State Water Board officials are responsible for making sure that happens. When it comes to the Smith River Plain, however, systems that are supposed to protect the public are not operating properly. That must change.

–FELICE PACE, NORTH GROUP WATER CHAIR

3. http://siskiyouland.org/about/
5. https://sdwis.waterboards.ca.gov/PDWW/index.jsp

Solano Breeze Corner

Covering Benicia, Fairfield, Rio Vista, Suisun, Vacaville and Vallejo
sierraculbsolanogroup@gmail.com
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Orcem/VMT Update

The Vallejo Planning Commission voted 6 - 1 to support city staff and reject the port and cement factory which is known as the Orcem/VMT project. Staff has stated that the project doesn’t meet the city’s waterfront development plan along with many other objections. (See page one for more details.) The opposition by Sierra Club’s Solano and Napa Groups, Redwood Chapter and the national staff was crucial for getting this project rejected. The Project Manager for Orcem plans to appeal with the City Council. Once the appeal is submitted, a later hearing will be scheduled.

Joe Feller, joesfeller@gmail.com

Solano County Earth Day activities:
• Fairfield-Suisun Sewer District Coastal Cleanup is on Saturday April 23, from 9:00am to 11:00am. There will be two cleanup sites: Lower Lodgewood Creek in Fairfield and Lower Union Creek in Suisun City. Sign up at http://www.fsdl.org/earthday/
• City of Vallejo Earth Day - Solano Group will have a booth at the Vallejo Farmers Market, Saturday, April 15th, 9 am – 1 pm
• City of Fairfield Earth Day Solano Group will also have a booth here Saturday, April 22nd, 9am-1pm, at the Fairfield Civic Center
• Sierra Club Book Fair, a fundraiser for the Solano Group, in partnership with the Barnes and Noble Bookstore Earth Day Program, at the Fairfield BN&N location. It will be a book fair, and student speech/essay contest, sponsored by the Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District. Saturday, April 22nd 3pm-6pm

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

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

Non-Sierra Club Outings & Events

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.

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

Garden Volunteer Days: First Friday of the Month, 9am – noon. Laguna Environmental Center, 900 Sanford Road, Santa Rosa. Enjoy our native plant garden! Volunteers are essential in beautifying our site. Share your expertise or learn new skills by getting involved today! http://lagunafoundation.org/volunteer_garden.html

Laguna Stewardship Days: Once a month on a Saturday from 9am – noon (Apr 8)
Details of the site location announced 2 weeks in advance of the workday (various sites along the Laguna) Help care for the Laguna and restore critical wildlife habitat! Joining the Laguna Stewardship is a fun and meaningful way to volunteer while enjoying the outdoors. http://lagunafoundation.org/volunteer_lagunastewardships.html

Redwood Needles April 1, 2017

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National Sierra Club Elections are Underway - VOTE!

A Democratic Sierra Club Demands Grassroots Participation.

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

Your participation is critical for a Strong Sierra Club.

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.

In a typical year less than 10% of eligible members vote in the Board elections. A minimum of 5% is required for the elections to be valid. Our grassroots structure is strengthened when our participation is high. Therefore your participation is needed in the voting process.

How can I learn about the candidates?

Members frequently state that they don’t know the candidates and find it difficult to vote without learning more.

Each candidate provides a statement about themselves and their views on the issues on the official election ballot. You can learn more by asking questions of your group and chapter leadership and other experienced members you know. You can also visit the Club’s election web site for additional information about candidates: www.sierraclub.org/board/election. Then make your choice and cast your vote!

Voting Online is Quick and Easy!

Even if you receive your election materials in the mail, we encourage you to use the user-friendly Internet voting site to save time and postage. If sending via ground mail, please note your ballots must be received by no later than Election Day, April 26, 2017.

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. Visitors should call the committee chair to verify time and place. The Sonoma County Environmental Center is located at 55A Ridgeway 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 Coddingtown).

Five Things You Can Do to Stand Up for the Environment

With nearly daily attacks on the environment coming out of Washington, it’s hard to stay optimistic about healthy ecosystems, protection for wildlife and the future of the planet. These things we hold dear need us now more than ever. Thankfully, there are small things we can do every day to help.

1. Drive less.

It’s sometimes hard to get around in Northern California without a car, especially if you live outside of urban centers. According to the Department of Transportation, the average American drives about 29 miles each day. U.S. Energy Information Administration notes almost 20 pounds of carbon dioxide are produced by burning one gallon of gasoline.

If you want to reduce your carbon footprint, think about reducing your trips and your mileage. You can carpool, combine errands into one trip, use transit systems, go by bike or foot. It might feel awkward at first, but the more you do it, the less you feel reliant upon your car for transportation.

2. Eat less meat.

If you’re already a vegan or vegetarian, thank you for helping to reduce greenhouse gases. But for omnivores, giving up meat can feel like an impingement on basic human rights. Still, reducing meat in your diet can go a long way toward curbing climate change and improving water quality.

Raising livestock contributes to about 18 percent of greenhouse gas emissions globally, according to a 2006 study published in the journal Climate Change. Reducing consumption of beef and pork especially, can alter land use and result in a “large carbon uptake from regrowing vegetation.” Methane and nitrous oxide emissions would be substantially reduced. Americans eat more meat than any other nationalities, except one. The average American consumed 71.2 pounds of red meat and 54.1 pounds of poultry in 2012, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

To reduce your meat consumption, look for plant-based protein sources, like beans, lentils, seeds and nuts. Order a quinoa salad instead of the burger for lunch. Try adding tofu to your curry instead of chicken for dinner. Experiment with alternatives for one or two meals a week to replace meat and pat yourself on the back for being open to helping the environment through your diet.

3. Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.

Californians are used to recycling, and composting has been on the rise for the last decade. But what often gets overlooked is reducing consumption of products and reusing them before recycling them.

Felicia Smith, a waste management specialist from the Sonoma County Waste Management Agency, said moving away from single-use products, like plastic wrap, to-go containers and coffee cups, can be a challenge because of easy availability and habit, but can go a long way to reducing what gets sent to the landfill.

You can also use rechargeable batteries at home, donate unwanted household items like books, appliances, toys and clothes, use rags to clean instead of paper towels and pay bills online instead of receiving paper statements. To be informed about how to dispose of potentially hazardous materials, check out SCWMA’s website, www.recyclenow.org.

4. Volunteer.

Participation is key for our democracy to remain healthy. Whether that’s attending a city council meeting, getting involved in a community action group or becoming a hike leader, this is the time to stand up for your values.

There are many ways to volunteer locally, and lots of organizations, like Sierra Club, looking for good help. Decide how much time you have a week to donate, what skills you can offer and approach groups to find out what help is needed. Our chapter has a volunteer page on our website, where you can see local Group or Redwood Chapter open positions. Other environmental groups like 350 Sonoma have similar pages on their sites.

Volunteering can also look like being a watchdog for the environment. Sharing credible information about environmental issues in your area is a great way to get involved. Be an active citizen by calling your elected leaders and thanking them for their work on the environment or urging them to do more. Subscribe to your local newspaper and support community journalism to ensure a free press so you and your neighbors stay informed on important local issues. This is a great time to think globally and act locally. Your individual work always matters.

5. Donate.

If you don’t have enough free time to volunteer but want to make a contribution, money also helps an organization’s efforts. Donating to the Sierra Club at a local level ensures that your money is spent primarily on local issues and advocacy.

Small donations count, so don’t shy away from giving $20 if that’s what makes sense for your pocketbook.

Go to sierraclub.org/redwood/join-donate to donate to the chapter, or become a member.