Mountains and Rivers Campaign Moves Ahead

BY VICTORIA BRANDON, REDWOOD CHAPTER WILDERNESS CHAIR

After more than four years of quiet grassroots organization and stakeholder outreach, Congressman Jared Huffman’s “Northern California Conservation and Recreation Act” seems to be on the verge of introduction. As previously discussed in the Redwood Needles, this legislation would establish ten new wilderness areas in Trinity, Humboldt, Del Norte and Mendocino counties and expand nine existing ones. It would also protect about 450 miles of rivers in the region as “wild and scenic,” designates a 700,000-acre special demonstration restoration area in the South Fork Trinity River watershed, restore public lands that have been damaged by illegal marijuana cultivation, work for improved fire management regimes, and enhance recreation by trail construction and repair: it is, very delicately, far more than the usual sort of wilderness bill.

The campaign wants to get off to a running start as soon as the bill is introduced, and to that end has held organizational meetings in each of the affected counties. Redwood Chapter’s newest executive committee member, Randy MacDonald, coordinated the Mendocino meeting, which took place at the Willits Environmental Hub on February 25. After a presentation by California Wilderness Coalition Policy Director Ryan Henson, about 15 local environmentalists got down to serious brainstorming to identify potential supporters in the county and the best individuals to approach them. “Don’t worry, we’ll get this done” said longtime Willits activist David Drell.

A few weeks previously, immediately after the big rally against offshore oil drilling on February 8 (“Redwood Chapter joined lively demonstration to Protect the Coast”), I had the privilege of driving down to the tiny town of Shoshone on the other side of Death Valley, to address the annual joint meeting of the California Wilderness and Desert Committees.

Knowing that most of the meeting time would be devoted to lamentations about the unprecedented assaults on our public lands currently being orchestrated by the Trump administration, the organizers had invited me to talk about the Mountains and Rivers bill, with particular emphasis on Congressman Huffman’s efforts to shift from defense mode and work for positive change. As hoped, the group in Shoshone—many of whom have devoted long lives to striving for the protection of sensitive natural resources, and who frequently find themselves in despair these days—responded very positively to this vision of a way forward. “What a great project!” was the most frequent reaction I heard, with “what can we do to help?” close behind.

More information about how you can support the Mountains and Rivers Campaign will appear in future editions of the Redwood Needles.

Redwood Chapter Joins Lively Demonstration to Protect the Coast

BY TOM ROTH, REDWOOD CHAPTER CONSERVATION CHAIR

Despite a Trump administration decision to hold the sole California public hearing on a plan to expand offshore oil drilling in Sacramento more than 100 miles from the nearest beach, hundreds of Californians, including a sturdy delegation from Redwood Chapter, descended on the state capital February 8th to let their voices be heard.

They were joined in on the Capitol steps by a slew of state legislators, including North Coast representatives, state Sen. Mike McGuire and Assemblyman Jim Wood. Both McGuire and Wood loudly decried the plan, which would open up 47 lease sales along the nation’s coastline, including six off of California. Earlier in the day, the state Assembly overwhelmingly passed a resolution condemning the plan.

Cities and counties around the state, including many in our region, have also passed resolutions stating the various reasons why this is a bad idea, including the inevitability of a devastating oil spill that not only would harm the ecosystems but quash tourism and coastline recreation.

Sierra Club and the Center for Biological Diversity sponsored buses to bring people throughout the state, including many from Southern California, to Sacramento. Redwood Chapter organized a bus from Santa Rosa that transported about 50 enthusiastic demonstrators. The Redwood Chapter bus was lively and friendly. Riders and bus captains used the opportunity to network, make announcements and ask questions about the drilling plan. As the bus traversed the baylands, Redwood Chapter Transportation Chair Steve Birdlebough took the opportunity to discuss the future of Highway 37, which is undergoing a transformation to mitigate the effects of sea level rise.

Arriving in Sacramento, we joined in a spirited rally with Native American leaders who shared the stage with environmentalists, scientists and a diverse group of legislators, including lone Republican Catharine Baker from the East Bay.

The subsequent march to the meeting held by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM), featured hand-made and printed signs, people transporting giant whales and sea turtles and friendly (though concerned) polar bears and sharks, chanting and singing.

Inside the meeting at the library on “I” Street, participants were directed to several tables with “Protect the Coast” cont. on page 3

Sonoma County Zero Waste Gaining Steam

BY CHRIS BENZ, NAPA GROUP CHAIR

The Sierra Club has endorsed Napa County’s Measure C, the Watershed and Oak Woodland Protections Act. This measure is on the June ballot. This initiative was developed with the support of the Napa Valley Vintners trade association. That support has since been withdrawn and the NVV has joined with other trade groups to oppose the initiative claiming that it will hinder the development of agriculture in the hillside watershed zones.

However, vintners and growers who are supporters of the initiative stated in a Feb. 10 letter to the Napa Register that “Enhancing oak woodland protections is not anti-agriculture. Rather, it is pro-responsible and sustainable agriculture, pro-water security, pro-community, and pro-people.”

“Protecting Napa’s Woodlands” cont. on page 7
Redwood Chapter Sierra Club Directory

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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 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/
“Zero Waste Gaining Steam” continued from page 1

County Transportation Conference Room at Sonoma County Administration Offices. This committee is creating a document to present to all local city councils on the best practices for creating a Zero Waste Ordinance. Zero Waste is the practice of waste management being adopted by many municipalities. The goal of zero waste ordinances is to divert 100 percent of waste from landfills. This goal, though extremely challenging, is necessary due to the lack of land to create more landfills.

If you are interested in attending the Zero Waste Advisory Committee meeting or the California Nevada Regional Conservation Committee monthly meetings contact Theresa Ryan, theresa411@comcast.net.


May 10 Zero Waste Symposium

The Zero Waste Symposium takes place on May 10 at Sonoma Mountain Village. The Zero Waste Sonoma website, https://zerowastesonoma.org, has more information, as well as the opportunity to register for the Symposium.

Keynote speakers for the symposium are: Captain Charles Moore has dedicated his time and resources to understanding and remediating the ocean’s plastic load. He recently returned from 6 months at sea in the South Pacific surveying the extent of plastic contamination in the South Pacific Garbage Patch and along the coast of Chile. His work has been featured on Good Morning America, Late Night with David Letterman, Nightline, the Colbert Report, Academy Award winner Jeremy Irons documentary “Trashed,” and the National Geographic special “Strange Days on Planet Earth.” Jared Blumenfeld has spent the last two decades fighting to create tangible benefits for communities and ecosystems alike. He has been at the forefront of the global zero waste movement and believes recycling is one of the single most important actions we can take to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Mr. Blumenfeld is a trusted source for environmental stories and has appeared frequently in the New Times, BBC, Economist, San Francisco Chronicle, CNN, Los Angeles Times, NPR and other media outlets. Speakers will also address a variety of topics, including local school, business and government efforts to achieve zero waste; the wildfire impacts on the local environment; food waste reduction strategies, and more.

Sonoma County Supervisor Lynda Hopkins will give the opening address and presentation, while Leslie Lukacs – Director of Zero Waste, SCS Engineers, will provide an Introduction to Zero Waste: Global and Local.

Food Coalition is Online

The Sonoma County Food Coalition has a website now: www.facebook.com/pg/socofrc/community/?ref=page_internal. This group has more information, as well as the opportunity to register for the Symposium.

Speakers will also address a variety of topics, including local school, business and government efforts to achieve zero waste; the wildfire impacts on the local environment; food waste reduction strategies, and more.

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“Protect the Coast” continued from page 1

posters and handouts about the “benefits” of offshore drilling, safety and the lease sale process. Visitors could also log in to computers where they could comment on the plan.

The BOEM meeting followed a bureaucratic playbook designed to control opposition, while meeting minimum requirements for public participation. There was no panel of experts and officials to hear the testimony of attendees. In fact, there was no agenda, no lectern, no microphones, and no opportunity at all for participants to address BOEM or the public. Several dozen participants outraged at the sham meeting gathered at one end of the room and began chanting, “Where is the meeting?” Other California officials and commissions had earlier expressed opposition to new rigs off our coast. The State Lands Commission highlighted the economic impact of drilling on California’s $19.5 billion coastal economy.

a segment that continues to grow twice as fast as other economic sectors. The California Coastal Commission, noting its mission to protect the coast, reminded BOEM of earlier spills and the devastation wrought on coastal ecosystems. State officials also decried how new drilling would sabotage the state’s efforts to lower greenhouse emissions, and would conflict with efforts to transition to clean energy.

Last year, a bill that would have prohibited the lease of California waters (or renewals of leases of California waters) for new pipelines, wharves or piers needed to transport offshore oil, died in the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Companion bills have been introduced this year in the state Senate (SB 834) and Assembly (AB 1775).

Comments on the offshore drilling plan were accepted until March 9.
Instructions to Hikers

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

Guard against fire. Do not smoke on Sierra Club outings. Build fires only with the leader's permission, and extinguish them completely.

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

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

Visitors are welcome

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

Difficulty: Mileage: Elevation Gain

| Difficulties | Actual | Less than 1,000 | 1,000 to 2,000 | 2,000 to 3,000 | Over 3,000 |

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: Louis Vas, Outings Chair, (Ivas@sonic.net) by the 8th of the month. All leaders must coordinate their outings with their Group Outings Chair.

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

Sat. April 7 – Solano Group. Benicia History Walk. 10:30AM - 12:30PM. Join local historian and native Benician, Jerry Hayes, and Sierra Club trip leader, Doug Tracey on a walk along the shoreline of Benicia. The 2 mile walk begins at 9th Street Park and will head toward downtown through residential neighborhoods. Along the way we pass local landmarks, learn more about the former industries that were located here and hear about Jack London’s time spent in Benicia. The walk ends in downtown Benicia. Participants are welcome to check out the shops and restaurants in Benicia or walk back to 9th Street Park. Bring sturdy shoes, water, a hat, sunscreen and a snack. No pets. Rain cancels. Please pre-register by April 5. Doug Tracey dbtracey@gmail.com

Sat. April 14 – Solano Group. Las Posadas State Forest Wildflower, Mushroom, and Raptor Hike. Mushrooms, birds, and wildflowers should all be viewable for those with a watchful eye. Bring your “finders” (bird finders, binoculars, plant ID guides) for our trip around the hills and headwaters of Moore Creek in remote Napa County, with good views, a redwood forest, and a historic cemetery. Our route is a mixture of fire roads and single track, with plenty of ups and downs. Total trip time estimated to be 4 hours. Possible snake and poison oak encounters. The hike is limited to persons 14 and older, and persons under 18 must be with a parent. No pets. Rain cancels. Contact the Outings Department at (415) 977-5528 for a printed version.

Sat. April 21 – North Group. South Fork Trinity River (off Highway 299) Hike. Join us on this perennial favorite National Forest trail. Breathtaking vistas of the river’s gorge below. Trekking poles will be a plus. Expect an abundance of wildflowers and songbirds. No dogs. Dress for the day’s weather. Hikers must have water, lunch, sun/cold protection, good footwear, and some agility to cross a couple of small tributary streams and deadfall trees. Class M - 7.5-A. Carpools: Meet 8:30 a.m. at Ray’s shopping center in Valley West. Leader Ned, nedforsyth48@gmail.com, or 825-3652. Heavy rain cancels.

Sat. April 28 – Solano Group. Downtown Vallejo History Walk with Vallejo Naval and Historical Museum. Join local historian Jim Kern (Executive Director of Vallejo Naval and Historical Museum) and Phil Kohlmertz (Sierra Club Trip Leader) for a guided walk through the historic downtown neighborhoods of Vallejo. We’ll pass local landmarks including Temple Arts Loft, the Empress Theater, the site of the State Capitol, St. Vincent’s Hill, discuss redevelopment, pass the Yacht Club (with its Jack London Connection) and conclude on the waterfront at the Mare Island Brewing Co. Total trip time 2 hours.

The hike is limited to 20 persons 14 and older, and persons under 18 must be with a parent. No pets. Please pre-register for this hike by Apr 26. Bring sturdy shoes, water, a hat, sunscreen, a snack, and money if you want to continue the historic discussion afterwards at Mi Brewing. Rain cancels. Class M-2-B (Moderate, 2 miles, 1,000-2,000 ft elevation gain/loss).

Meet: Promptly at 2pm at Vallejo Naval and Historical Museum, 734 Marin St., Vallejo, CA. From I-80, take the Georgia Street exit and go west to Sonoma Blvd. Right (north) on Sonoma Blvd 2 blocks to Capitol St. Turn left on Capital and go 1 block to Marin St. and the Museum. Leader Phil Kohlmertz philcoagogo@sbcglobal.net 707-704-0350

Sat. May 12 - Solano Group. Medicinal Herb Walk. The hills are alive... with plants that heal. Join Clinical Western Herbalist and Biologist Anna Beauchemin and Phil Kohlmertz (Sierra Club Trip Leader) for a guided walk in Crockett Hills Regional Park. Come explore the flora and fauna along Edwards Creek with an emphasis on the medicinal herbs in the area. The hike is limited to persons 14 and older.

Ratings for Outings Leaders:
How fast or slow do you go?

Wonder if an outing leader walks fast or slow? Keep in mind that the leader’s speed is but one part of hiking. How high up a mountain the hike starts, the total mileage and elevation gain (up hill) and loss (down hill) greatly affect the difficulty of a hike, regardless of how fast or slow you walk. If you have any doubts about being able to do a hike or have other questions, please call the leader to discuss your concerns. These ratings only serve as a guide and are not a substitute for you being in appropriate physical condition before participating in an outing. Leaders are grouped according to how fast they normally hike. Please keep in mind that this info is to help you decide if a hike is right for you. The outing rating instructions to hikers is also important for participants to read. Look at the difficulty of the hike. If the rating is moderate with few or more frequent stops a fast pace hiker must hike slower to accommodate that rating.

Varies, see hike description for details.

Moderate pace with few stops:

- Lorrie Lagaas
- Julie Kreis
- Paul Farley

Moderate pace with more frequent stops:

- Carol Vellutini
- Yvonne Kramer
- Brian Collett
- Jon Freedman
- Steve Devoto
- Ned Forsyth
- Pete McGee
- Carl Inglin

Meet: Promptly at 10am at Angwin Plaza Shopping Center, cornerof Howell Mountain Road and Angwin Ave. in Angwin, CA. Leader Phil Kohlmertz philcoagogo@sbcglobal.net 707-704-0350
Volunteer Opportunity in Yosemite National Park

The Yosemite Conservation Heritage Center (formerly known as LeConte Memorial Lodge) is a National Historic Landmark building that represents the rich heritage of the Sierra Club in Yosemite Valley. The building houses several interpretive displays, a children's nature corner, a wonderful library, art projects and evening programs.

Since 1904 a curator and Sierra Club volunteers have provided information to park visitors. Today the program welcomes over 15,000 visitors to the Sierra Club's spiritual home in Yosemite Valley. Volunteers are currently needed in July, August and September.

Volunteers spend a week from Saturday to Saturday in the park assisting the club's curator Bonnie Gisel, PhD. by interacting with park visitors and carrying on the Sierra Club tradition of helping others appreciate and protect our natural environment.

The volunteer workweek consists of up to 25 hours for service in the YCHC, with Monday and Tuesday free days to explore Yosemite. This opportunity includes free admission to Yosemite National Park and free camping in a group campsite; and, is restricted to volunteers only—no family members, friends or pets are permitted. Camping is limited to tents only. Volunteers bring their food and supplies.

Potential volunteers must:

• Be current Sierra Club members
• Be outgoing and comfortable interacting with park visitors
• Have visited Yosemite within the last two years and have current park knowledge
• Be familiar with current Sierra Club programs and initiatives
• Be able to stand for up to 3 hours per day

To become a volunteer at YCHC, please contact Bonnie Gisel, curator at Bonnie.Gisel@sierracul.org.

Island Hopping in Channel Islands National Park, 2018

April 8-10; May 6-8; June 10-12; July 15-17; August 19-21; September 23-25; October 21-23

Join us for a 3-day, 3-island, live-aboard tour of the enchanting Channel Islands. Hike wild, windswept trails bordered with blazing wildflowers. Kayak rugged coastlines, marvel at pristine waters teeming with frolicking seals and sea lions. Train your binoculars on unusual sea and land birds—and an occasional whale. Watch for the highly endangered island fox. Look for reminders of the Chumash people who lived on these islands for thousands of years. Or, just relax at sea. All cruises depart from Santa Barbara. The cost, $675, includes an assigned bunk and all meals, snacks, and beverages. A ranger/naturalist assigned by the national park will travel with us to help lead hikes, point out items of interest and give evening programs. Kayaking will be overseen by our concessionaire; all hikes will be on trails, class 1 terrain. This trip is a fundraiser to support the Sierra Club political program in California. To reserve space send a $100 deposit, written to California Sierra Club PAC to Joan Jones Holtz, 11826 The Wye St., El Monte, CA 91732. For more information contact leaders: Joan Jones Holtz: jholztzh@aol.com; 626-443-0706. Wayne Vollaire: avollaire1@gmail.com; 909-327-6825

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. 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 Stewards is a fun and meaningful way to volunteer while enjoying the outdoors. http://lagunafoundation.org/volunteer_lagunastewards.html
Judge Rules Against Club Suit

On March 12th, Judge Thomas Warriner ruled against the Sierra Club and other plaintiffs in our suit against the Wele Ranch project. Given an earlier tentative decision by the judge against the plaintiffs, this was not unexpected. Each plaintiff will now need to decide whether to appeal the decision. Besides the Sierra Club, the plaintiffs included the national environmental advocacy group Center for Biological Diversity, and local entities Circle Oaks Homes Association, Circle Oaks Water District, and the Living Rivers Council.

Benefits of Measure C

An overflow crowd packed the Napa Library to hear a parade of speakers preach the benefits of Measure C, the Oak Woodland and Watershed Protection Initiative. The forum was sponsored by Napa Sierra Club and the League of Women Voters, who both support the measure. Perhaps the most eloquent speakers were Warren Winianski, a grand old man of Napa viticulture, and James Conway, who has written three books on the politics of Napa agriculture. Both agreed that our local political process has been corroded by big money, which is driving the opposition to Measure C. Both emphasized that building sustainable agriculture in Napa requires recognizing the limits of our resources, especially our water resources.

Earth Day is Coming

Come say hello to us. We will have a booth at Napa’s Earth Day Event, Sunday, April 22, on the Oxbow Commons from 11 – 4. Learn about our current causes and concerns, and share your ideas with us.

Helipad Decision Delayed

The Board of Supervisors has delayed a decision on the Palmaz Helipad application, until after the June ballot. If the ballot initiative against private heliports is passed, the Palmaz helipad to be developed in Agricultural Watershed Open Space zoned land near Mount George.

Supes Ignore Precedent

Departing from decades of precedent, the Napa Board of Supervisors voted in favor of a proposed ballot initiative to allow the Blakely family to continue operation of a construction operation in agricultural land. In this way, the Blakely operation avoids a “Measure J” vote by the people to approve or disallow this non-agricultural business. It is the first time since the creation of Agricultural Watershed that the County has given the go-ahead to a project without allowing a vote.

Keep Informed on Napa Environmental Activities!

Get our monthly e-newsletter, by contacting us at scnapapam@gmail.com, and follow Napa Group on Facebook.

–NANCY TAMARISK, NAPA GROUP VICE CHAIR

Climate Action

As part of our ongoing climate actions, the Sonoma Group unanimously endorsed a proposal by the newly formed Friends of the Climate Action Plan for the city of Santa Rosa to pass an ordinance prohibiting the use of natural gas in all new residential and commercial construction. The group asked the City Council to place the initiative on a future agenda item during public comment at the Feb. 27 council meeting. The initiative promotes economic resiliency issues surrounding natural gas that have come into focus due to the wildfires.

This local initiative supports the Sierra Club’s national campaign to move beyond fossil fuels and go to 100 percent renewable energy.

Your March 5 Conservation Committee meeting, expert Andy Ferguson described the threat posed by the continued use of natural gas as a so called “bridge fuel” that is still little understood by the public or even by some policy makers. Natural gas is composed of about 85% methane (CH4), and until recently the global warming potential and immediate threat of this gas to push the planet past global warming “tipping points” has been widely underestimated.

Separately, Climate and Energy co-chair Tom Conlon identified the fact that the City of Santa Rosa’s Climate Action Plan adopted in 2012 committed the city to implement CALGreen Tier 1 for new construction. This is the requirement that all new residential and nonresidential buildings perform at least 15% better than the minimum Title-24 energy code through 2020. However, the city is apparently not enforcing the measure. Tom is working with City Council member Julia Combs to resolve and take action on this important energy efficiency mandate.

In Rohnert Park, Sierra Club climate activist Christina Meyer worked with the City Council and staff and the county Regional Climate Protection Authority to pass a resolution to adopt the Climate Action 2020 measures in the countywide plan at the March 13 City Council meeting. The same night, the city took its first action step by replacing over 1600 streetlights in Rohnert Park with energy efficient LED’s.

Transportation

The Sonoma Group voted to endorse Regional Measure 3 on the June ballot. Transportation Chair Steve Birdlebough explained that RM3 proposes three successive $1 increases in bridge tolls (excluding the Golden Gate Bridge) to fund transit and highway projects in the nine-county Bay Area. Local projects to be funded include the SMART extension to Healdsburg ($40 million), San Rafael Transit Center & SMART station ($30 million), North Bay transit access ($100 million), SR-37 planning & design ($100 million), Marin-Sonoma Narrows freeway widening ($120 million).

In response to a recommendation by Executive Committee member Richard Sachen, the Sonoma Group submitted a letter supporting a new grant program to get more electric vehicles on the road by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District.

–TERRI SHORE, SONOMA GROUP EXCOM

Middle Creek Project Breakthrough

It has been acknowledged for many years that the single most immediate action that can move us toward ecological balance in the future of Clear Lake would be to complete the Middle Creek Flood Damage Reduction and Ecosystem Restoration Project. Besides eliminating flood hazards to homes and agricultural properties in the area, the project would restore approximately 1,600 acres of “reclaimed” agricultural land at the north end of Clear Lake as a functional wetland, with a significant beneficial effect on watershed health, Clear Lake water quality, wildlife habitat, and recreational potential.

Several years ago substantial state grant funding allowed the county to buy half the properties in the project area (a necessary first step), but further progress has been stalled for some time.

Now thanks primarily to the efforts of the Middle Creek Restoration Coalition, which includes Lake Group, the logjam appears to be broken. The Coalition came together in the spring of 2016 to coordinate local efforts and raise awareness among state agencies and legislators. Their efforts included an invitation to Assemblywoman Cecilia Aguiar-Curry to tour the site, an invitation she accepted in October 2017.

Last month she announced that by working with Secretary John Laird of the California Natural Resources Agency and the Department of Water Resources she had secured the $15 million in additional bond funding needed to purchase the remaining properties in the project area. “Last year, in my AB 707, we were able to establish a Blue Ribbon Committee to guide the future of Clear Lake water and watershed quality and regional economic development. $2 million for Clear Lake research and a stewardship plan, and $5 million in the water bond on this year’s ballot to protect the Lake,” she said. “This grant for the Middle Creek Restoration Project will continue those efforts, reduce flooding, restore wetlands, and reduce the amount of nutrients flowing into Clear Lake.”

Middletown Dollar General Rises from the Ashes

Last May the Board of Supervisors gave what looked like a decisive ruling against this project (which Lake Group has consistently opposed) by upholding a previous Planning Commission decision that it “does not meet the spirit and intent of the Middletown Area Plan,” and therefore “is not consistent with all of the mandatory findings for the approval of a Design Review.”

Now the applicants have come back to the county to request a modification of their previously granted Use Permit, downzoning the proposal from 9100 square feet to 7225 square feet. Since the Use Permit was contingent on Design Review, and failed to pass that bar, there are strong grounds for arguing that it became null and void, and that any development proposal has to start from the beginning.

Whether or not that argument is valid, nothing has changed to make the design less objectionable, or—what really matters—to bring it into consistency with the Middletown Area Plan. As stated in BOS findings last spring, this project “does not reinforce Middletown’s small town character, but rather, detracts from it.”

The Sierra Club agrees completely with this conclusion.

–VICTORIA BRANDON, LAKE GROUP CONSERVATION CHAIR

Lake Group Report

Redwood Needles

April 1, 2018
Energy calling on the company to clean up their mess. The coal ash pollution, rallying outside the headquarters of Duke have been living on bottled water for over 1,000 days due to number of issues related to fossil fuels in general,” said Wilbert, worried about exactly that, as she expressed in this article:

“My colleague Connie Wilbert in Wyoming is slow-motion disasters still unfolding in dozens of communities nationwide. My colleague Connie Wilbert in Wyoming is plagued by high rates of asthma and cancer, have appealed to state and federal regulators for help. And for years those pleas have gone largely unheard, thanks to the complex web of regulations that address — or more often, fail to properly address — coal ash.”

This is the legacy Pruitt’s proposal will leave for dozens more communities. We will fight it in the streets and in the courts, to prevent it from being finalized. He and the Trump administration are trying to pull the wool over the American people’s eyes about the dangers of gutting our clean water administration are trying to pull the wool over the American courts, to prevent it from being finalized. He and the Trump administration are trying to pull the wool over the American people’s eyes about the dangers of gutting our clean water protections against coal ash is a betrayal of all the families across this country who have been living on bottled water for years, or have lost their health and property, due to coal ash pollution. Families are looking to EPA to solve the coal ash problem—not abandon them.

The EPA will take comments on this proposal until April 30 and will hold a hearing on these rollbacks in the Washington, D.C. area, on April 24. Please join us in letting Scott Pruitt know that the American people won’t stand for this pothole power grab: https://eservice.bts.gov/actions/ NationalActionId=AR0107600&sid=7010Z000001PHk QAG&stum_medium=web&stum_source=sierraclubstum_ campaign-beyondcoal

"Protecting Napa’s Woodlands” continued from page 1

I recently spent time with families in North Carolina that have been living on bottled water for over 1,000 days due to coal ash pollution, rallying outside the headquarters of Duke Energy calling on the company to clean up their mess. The stories of these families were heartbreaking, and they aren’t alone. Today, over 1,400 coal ash waste dumps are spread across the nation, and in at least 200 cases, the toxic waste is known to have contaminated water sources. More than 1.5 million children live near coal ash storage sites. Seventy percent of all coal ash impoundments disproportionately impact low-income communities.

The EPA’s 2015 coal ash protections were basic common sense — they required utilities to test the water near their coal ash dumps to make sure hazardous chemicals were not leaking into drinking water sources. Requirements to monitor the water around dump sites — and to clean it up, if poisoned — went into effect at all coal ash dumps in 2018, and as noted above, the first round of findings from these reports were horrifying. Further proving the point of just how terrible this idea is, the first state to take back the reins of managing its own coal ash is Pruitt’s home state of Oklahoma, which has an abysmal and notorious track record that ThinkProgress described this way:

“In the eastern part of Oklahoma, near the Arkansas border, sits a small town named Bokoshe. Along with a population of just 512, Bokoshe also happens to be home to several old coal mines, which have been turned into landfills for another sort of coal product: coal ash. The byproduct that results from burning coal...For more than 20 years, residents of the town, plagued by high rates of asthma and cancer, have appealed to state and federal regulators for help. And for years those pleas have gone largely unheard, thanks to the complex web of regulations that address — or more often, fail to properly address — coal ash.”

This proposal clears the way for polluters, and polluter-funded politicians, to write weak standards for groundwater monitoring and coal ash cleanups, and attacks several core health and environmental protections included in the standard that was enacted in 2015. This comes as the first round of water testing, carried out under the new EPA standard, revealed some shocking results. As the New Republic reported:

"At more than 70 sites across the country, toxins like arsenic, mercury, and radium are leaching into groundwater from pond-like storage pits filled with the sludgy leftovers of coal burning. That’s the most alarming takeaway from reports that the coal industry was required to submit to the Environmental Protection Agency this month, part of the first-ever federal regulations of the waste product known as coal ash...So far, the reports have shown coal ash leaking into groundwater at storage sites in Iowa, Nebraska, Arkansas, Georgia, Montana, Washington, Michigan and Florida.”

Coal ash is the toxic waste left over from coal-burning power plants and contains some of some of the deadliest known toxic chemicals, including heavy metals like arsenic, lead, mercury, and chromium. For decades, coal ash disposal was subject to no EPA oversight, and this waste was dumped into giant unlined pits, where toxic chemicals then seeped into water and soil and blew into the air in many communities nationwide. Exposure to these toxins raise the risk for cancer, heart disease, and stroke, and can inflict permanent brain damage on children. Pruitt’s latest proposal would replace science-based federal requirements that would fairly and consistently address water quality issues nationwide with a patchwork of state-by-state requirements that can easily be influenced by polluter interests. And yet federal requirements were put in place because state regulators had not implemented adequate water protections against coal ash! In reality, state oversight failed families for decades, resulting in catastrophic spills like those in Kingston, Tennessee, and the Dan River in North Carolina, as well as slow-motion disasters still unfolding in dozens of communities nationwide. My colleague Connie Wilbert in Wyoming is worried about exactly that, as she expressed in this article:

“"We aren’t seeing the state take a strong position on any number of issues related to fossil fuels in general,” said Wilbert, director of Sierra Club Wyoming. “This proposed revision introduces a level of flexibility that we’re pretty uncomfortable with.”

This article first appeared on the Sierra Club website.
Redwood Chapter Notes

It’s been a rocky road since the 2016 election. It feels like every day there are attacks on our republic, both from without - hostile foreign countries and their agents - and from within our own government. The environment has been a target since the current administration began. With Ryan Zinke heading the Department of the Interior (and determined to open up our protected parks and monuments to drilling and mining) and Scott Pruitt in charge of the Environmental Protection Agency (the name is ironic now that protections for the environment are being gutted at an astounding pace) it truly is a case of the foxes guarding the henhouse.

What’s a nature-loving person to do? One answer is to redouble our local efforts. As a grassroots organization, the Sierra Club offers volunteers the opportunity to truly make a difference near their own organizations, the Sierra Club offers being gutted at an astounding pace). With Ryan Zinke heading the Department of the Interior (and determined to open up our protected parks and monuments to drilling and mining) and Scott Pruitt in charge of the Environmental Protection Agency (the name is ironic now that protections for the environment are being gutted at an astounding pace) it truly is a case of the foxes guarding the henhouse.

What’s a nature-loving person to do? One answer is to redouble our local efforts. As a grassroots organization, the Sierra Club offers volunteers the opportunity to truly make a difference near their own homes, as well as to be leaders on a variety of local, regional and national environmental issues.

Join with others who are fighting hard to protect our local environment. Whether it’s working to protect our beloved coast from offshore drilling or oak woodlands in Napa, or striving to expand wilderness and zero waste strategies, opportunities abound to participate (see page one for more information about these efforts).

Maybe what you really need is fresh air and a chance to relax in these trying times. Sharing your love of the outdoors by becoming a hike leader will benefit yourself and others.

Check out our website, https://www.sierraclub.org/redwood/get-involved for opportunities, or page two of this newsletter, which lists local leaders that would welcome your call or email. Together, we can make a difference.

—MARY DAVISON, REDWOOD NEEDLES EDITOR

REDWOOD NEEDLES

June 2018 Deadline:
Due May 8th
Submit Articles/Reports/Ad Copy via e-mail to: odavison@sonic.net
Send Outings to Louis Vas: lvas@sonic.net
and Meetings to Carl Inglis: chinglin@sonic.net

National Sierra Club Elections are Underway

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 will receive in 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 website.

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. That means 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 website for additional information about candidates: http://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 25, 2018.

Support Our Effort Against ‘Green’ Cement Plant in Vallejo

The Solano Group Sierra Club sponsored TV ads at the end of January and early February that calls on the City Council to reject a deeply flawed EIR and reject the Orcem/VMT project. This project will insert many hazardous wastes into a poor part of Vallejo and insert 500 truck trips a day through a residential neighborhood. This project has already been rejected by city staff and the City’s planning commission. We are now raising money to run the ads against when the Final Draft EIR is issued sometime in May.

Please visit https://www.sierraclub.org/redwood/solano to donate.