Berryessa-Snow Mountain National Monument Moving Ahead

By Victoria Brandon, Redwood Chapter Chair

During the past few weeks the proposal to designate the Berryessa-Snow Mountain region as either a National Conservation Area or a National Monument has gained key support from surrounding local governments. On October 7, the Solano County Supervisors voted unanimously to support efforts for the permanent protection of these public lands; on October 21, the Lake County Board, which had endorsed National Conservation Area designation in 2012, confirmed its support for Monument designation as well; then on November 4 both the Yolo and Napa Boards of Supervisors took similar action. Except for Yolo, these counties are all in Redwood Chapter, as is almost all the area proposed for special designation.

As has been previously discussed, securing the permanent protection of these remarkable 350,000 acres of federal public lands has been a major Chapter priority for several years. The region contains lush forests, wildflower meadows, three designated Wilderness areas, and a Wild and Scenic River. It is home to tule elk, river otters, California’s second largest population of wintering bald eagles, and the rare Pacific fisher, while its amazingly diverse assortment of plants make it a biodiversity hotspot of global importance. Berryessa-Snow Mountain also offers a wealth of recreational opportunities to hikers, campers, birders, anglers, and equestrians: in the words of Lake Group Chair (and former Lake County Supervisor) Ed Robey, “this landscape is truly an outdoor wonderland.”

With sensitive management, this recreational potential can be enhanced while preserving the conservation values that make the area so special.

Extending more than 100 miles from Solano County to the Snow Mountain Wilderness, this “undiscovered landscape” includes portions of five counties, and is administered by three federal agencies— but with neither formal recognition nor a unifying management framework, it gets hardly any federal funding for stewardship, law enforcement, invasive species eradication, and recreational enhancement. A special designation will give it a formal name, acknowledge its local and national importance, allow landscape-level management, and make funding much easier to obtain while simultaneously offering substantial potential economic advantages to surrounding communities.

Efforts to provide permanent protection by creation of a Berryessa-Snow Mountain National Conservation Area have bogged down in Congressional infighting. So we are seeking an alternative path to the same destination by asking the President to use his powers under the Antiquities Act to declare the region a National Monument. National Monument designation would offer the same advantages as a National Conservation Area, create no additional restrictions on land use or the rights of nearby landowners, and could provide additional benefits because the designation is better known and has a higher profile.

Last spring Redwood Chapter rejoiced in the inclusion of the Point Arena-Stornetta Public Lands on the Mendocino Coast in the California Coastal National Monument. Then in October the Sierra Club joined many other conservation and recreational organizations in applauding President Barack Obama for assuring the permanent protection of nearly 350,000 acres within the San Gabriel Mountains northeast of Los Angeles by designating the area as a National Monument. Will Berryessa-Snow Mountain become the next major addition to the President’s conservation legacy? Stay tuned!

NORTH GROUP CELEBRATES FIVE DECADES

On November 6, the North Group threw a party to commemorate the golden anniversary of its formation in 1964. The occasion also celebrated the 50th anniversary of Wilderness Act passage.

Thirty Sierra Clubbers mingled and mingled while enjoying appetizers, desserts, and beverages.

We’re Getting a New Look!

By Victoria Brandon, Redwood Chapter Chair

The Sierra Club is in the middle of a coordinated national effort to modernize and enrich our presence on the web and our electronic communication system generally. As part of that effort, all Chapter websites are moving to a new platform, with a new look and feel and— most important— new tools for connecting our members with ongoing conservation efforts.

The new system will make it possible to provide regular up to the "Visit Our Website" continued on page 3

NATIONAL WILDERNESS CONFERENCE INSPIRES

BY TERI SHORE, SIERRA CLUB WILDERNESS ACTIVIST AND BACKPACK LEADER

Aldo Leopold famously wrote in his foreword to the Sand County Almanac that there are some who can live without wild things, and some who cannot. About 1,200 of those who cannot converge on Leopold’s one-time hometown of Albuquerque, New Mexico, for the National Wilderness Conference in mid-October to mark the 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act.

A who’s who of today’s wilderness heroes, far too many to name, joined together in the largest gathering of the wilderness community since the Act was signed in 1964. Info and audio available here: http://www.wilderness50th.org/

Throughout the conference, wilderness advocates, Native Americans, natural resource managers, land stewards, academics and politicians shared compelling perspectives on wilderness successes, threats and challenges ahead. The program featured stimulating keynote speakers, panel discussions, workshops, trainings and field trips to the desert, mountains and rusty Rio Grande. Many of us learned the word “bosque,” which is the locally used Spanish word for the riparian corridors. At the time, tall cottonwoods along the river were peaking in yellow and sandhill cranes landing for the winter.

The Sierra Club helped spearhead the jam-packed wilderness marathon. As a keynote speaker, Sierra Club President Dave Scott recalled the “17 years of blood, sweat and tears” that culminated in the Wilderness Act. He also reminded us that Sierra Club’s legacy of wilderness protection dates back more than 100 years to John Muir. Looking forward, he urged us beyond, to more diverse wilderness community and the need to tackle climate change in order to “leave for future generations”
Redwood Chapter
The Redwood Chapter, as an executive council, has 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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Women’s Trips to the National Parks!
5 days/4 nights guided hikes. Visit sierrastarers.net or Janet 707-874-2126.

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Redwood Needles Deadlines
Issue Deadline
Feb/March Jan. 8
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Jun/July June 8

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www.facebook.com/SierraClubRedwoodChapter
Although the recent election brought profoundly discouraging results for the environment in many places throughout the nation, Redwood Club has good reason for restrained optimism. All the Sierra Club’s endorsed statewide candidates won their seats, as did incumbent Congressmen Huffman, Garamendi, and Thompson. Both of our endorsed candidates for the state legislature, Mike McGuire for State Senate and Jim Wood for Assembly also won convincingly. We congratulate all these fine candidates and look forward to building our relationship with them in the future. Results in local Sonoma County were divided, as were the two Club-endorsed local ballot measures: Humboldt County Measure P (banning the cultivation of genetically engineered crops) won, but Lake County Measure S (a half cent sales tax to protect and restore Clear Lake) required a two-thirds majority and therefore went down to defeat despite gaining 63 percent of the votes cast.

State:
  Attorney General: Kamala Harris  won
  Secretary of State: Alex Padilla  won
  State Controller: Betty Yee  won
  State Treasurer: John Chiang  won
  Insurance Commissioner: Dave Jones  won
  Supt. of Public Instruction: Tom Torlakson  won
Congress:
  District 2: Jared Huffman  won
  District 3: John Garamendi  won
  District 5: Mike Thompson  won
  State Senate, District 2: Mike McGuire  won
  State Assembly, District 2: Jim Wood  won
Sonoma County Supervisor, District 4: Deb Fudge  lost
Cotati City Council: Carol Russell  won
San Rafael City Council: Mark Landman  won
John Moore  won
Petaluma City Council: Teresa Barrett  won
Janice Cader-Thompson  lost
Petaluma Mayor: David Glass  lost
Santa Rosa City Council:
  Curtis Byrd  lost
  Chris Coursey  lost
  Lee Pierce  won
Santa Rosa Junior College Trustee:
  Dorothy Battenfield  won
  Jordan Burns  won
Sebastopol City Council:
  Sarah Glade Gurney  won
  Una Glass  won
  Patrick Slayter  won
Sonoma County City Council:
  Ken Brown  lost
  Gary Edwards  won
  Jack Wagner  lost
Windsor Town Council: Sam Salmon  won
Humboldt County Measure P (Ban on cultivation of genetically engineered crops): Support:  won
Lake County Measure S (Half-cent sales tax to protect and restore Clear Lake): Support:  lost

Longtime wilderness activist Dave Foreman at the podium during the wilderness conference.

Highlights
One of the most memorable moments was when longtime wilderness activist Dave Foreman told how a musk ox charged and chased him across the Alaskan tundra on a recent expedition. Now that’s wild!

Foreman called for protection of 200 million acres of “forgotten” wilderness that remain at risk in places as iconic as the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks. Proposals to protect these cherished national wild lands have languished for more than 30 years. Foreman’s activist history is featured in a new must-see documentary about his late mentor Ed Abbey, titled Wrenched, that was screened during the conference.

Uhah-based author Terry Tempest Williams moved many of us to tears with her powerful testimony to wilderness. She asked “How serious are we” about protecting wilderness as she catalogued the rising threats to wild lands from fracking, mining and oil drilling.

Gwich’in activist Sarah James from the Arctic drummed and sang and chanted. She urged us to help protect the “sacred place where life begins” where porcupine caribou breeds in the coastal plains of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The story of the struggle is told in a new film, Gwich’in Women Speak.

World famous oceanographer Sylvia Earle showed amazing underwater photos as spoke eloquently about the beautiful, wild and livable planet that is their birthright.” See Scott’s remarks from conference: http://blogs.sierraclub.org/files/david-scott-wilderness-50-speech.pdf

Wilderness maven Vicky Hoover of San Francisco spent the past four years organizing the conference with legions of volunteers and agency partners. She co-hosted the event and was everywhere! The Rio Grande Chapter brought us all together one night to network and meet national Wild America campaign director David Chiu. I was honored to present Vicky with a check to the Sierra Club for $1,000 for wilderness protection that I raised during my John Muir Trail hike in July.

By the way, both the complete Needles and a full Outings list will continue to be available on line, and our address will remain the same: redwood.sierraclub.org. Please pay a visit.

Visit Our Website” continued from page 1

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

 Patriotic lifeblood of the modern world. Even worse, natural resource agencies are marring wilderness by using heavy equipment and trammeling the landscape.

What next?
Many of us concluded that we need to reignite America’s passion for wilderness. And that we need to mobilize young people to watchdog the Wilderness Act for the next 50 years. As a first step, 14 young activists were given full scholarships to attend the conference. And many more participated in the Wilderness Youth Leader Summit.

President Jimmy Carter in a videotaped address reminded us of the important scientific, educational, recreational, spiritual, cultural and intrinsic values of wilderness to all Americans. He also urged action on the iconic wilderness areas that were proposed but never designated.

To reinvigorate the wilderness idea in America, we must remind our friends, families, allies, and decision makers about the many benefits of wilderness protection. As Ed Abbey said, wilderness needs no defense, only more defenders.

Our region is home to 21 designated state and federal wilderness areas, as Chair Victoria Brandon detailed in the Redwood Chapter Wilderness Guidebook. The Chapter is now working to gain the Berryessa-Snow Mountain National Monument. New California wilderness bills that will protect more lands along the Central Coast and in the desert will provide new opportunities to protect additional wild lands and motivate and inspire wilderness lovers in 2015 and beyond.

“Visit Our Website” continued from page 1

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**Outings**

**Sat. Dec. 6 - Napa Group. Tilden Regional Park**

In the hills west of Berkeley, this hike follows a ridge trail to Vollmer and Wildcat Peaks, with sweeping panoramic views. Meet at the Bay to Bay Trail north and west, Briones and San Pablo Reservoirs to the east, and Mt. Diablo and the valley below to the south. The pace will be a bit on the slow side of Moderate, and there will be lunch at a favorite hilltop with a great view. Towards the end, we’ll drop down to the Visitors Center. Trail mostly flat or downhill, with a car shuttle. Bring a spare layer in case the ridge is breezy, lunch and liquids. Class: M-7-A. Please RSVP online or call (707) 538-8271 or chingin@sonic.net and (Napa) Isabel Saint-Guil Nepabell@gmail.com.

**Sat. Dec. 7-29 - Bradley Hut Trip**

Snowshoe/Ski 5 miles (1500’) to Bradley Hut for MLK weekend Sat./Sun. overnight and back out on Monday. 548 (559 Non Sierra Club members) reservations required. Call (707) 538-8271 or jimgammon99@sbcglobal.net and (Napa) Isabel Saint-Guil Nepabell@gmail.com.

**Sat. Mon. Jan. 17-29 - Bradley Hut Trip**

Snowshoe/Ski 5 miles (1500’) to Bradley Hut for MLK weekend Sat./Sun. overnight and back out on Monday. 548 (559 Non Sierra Club members) reservations required. Call (707) 538-8271 or jimgammon99@sbcglobal.net and (Napa) Isabel Saint-Guil Nepabell@gmail.com.


We’ll hike Johnson Ridge trail to Summit Trail, over the top of Hood Mountain and have lunch at Gunslit Rock, overlooking the Sonoma and Santa Rosa Plain. The moderate hike of the way to top and steady downhill coming back. Pace will be moderate - slow. Class: M-7-B. Bring lunch, liquid, good hiking shoes, layered clothing for winter weather. Carpools: Meet 9:30 am Safeway parking lot, corner of Hwy. 12 and Calistoga Road. Call Nanette DeDonato-Dover 707-671-9547. Rain cancels.


Snowshoe/Ski 3 miles (800’) to Peter Grubb Hut. We leave early Saturday overnight and avoid the shopping crowds. Space 523 (548 Sierra Club members) reservations required. Contact Don Anderson, 5701 705-877-9047 or 707-671-5947. Rain cancels.


Snowshoe/Ski 3 miles (800’) to Peter Grubb Hut. We leave early Saturday overnight and avoid the shopping crowds. Space 523 (548 Sierra Club members) reservations required. Contact Don Anderson, 5701 705-877-9047 or 707-671-5947. Rain cancels.

**Sat. Mon. Jan. 10 - Sonoma/Napa Group. Snowshoe Day Hike**

A day trip to ski or snow for an easy snowshoe hike. Destination and details will depend on the weather and snow conditions. Please check the posting on the Redwood Chapter-Sierra Club-Outings Group and/or http://www.meetup.com/Redwood-Chair-Sierra-Club-Outings-Group/ for up-to-date information and RSVP.

**Sat. Jan. 3 - Lynch Canyon Trail to Turtle Pond in Cache Creek Wilderness Area Hike.**

Lynch Canyon, marked with oak hills & grasslands, starts out going south and then descends to a broad interior valley here, where we can be seen feeding, then one comes to the Road-kid Café, an old hunting shack with an entertaining history. We can continue on the way up to the valley of Turtle Pond trail - we hike to the pond that often resonst with the croaking of frogs, take a lunch break and then return. Class: M-6-A. Carpools: Meet 8:30 am Lower Lake Main St., in front of the Lower Lake Coffee Company. Trailhead 9:30 am from Clearklake-Oak turnoff from Hwy 53, travel east on Hwy 20 approx. 17 miles (you cross the county line), you see a turn off to the right, after a 180 degree curve to the left in the road, then immediately to your right is a road to the Lynch trailhead-1 don’t recall a sign. By reservation only-Leader Julie Kees 707-987-9040 or 707-671-5947. Rain cancels.

**Sat. Jan. 10 - Sonoma/Napa Group. Snowshoe Day Hike.**

A day trip to ski or snow for an easy snowshoe hike. Destination and details will depend on the weather and snow conditions.

**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 ratings for 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:**

Isabelle Saint-Guil Jim Garnon

Fast/pace with few or no stops:

Paul Bozzo Carol Magill

Moderate-pace with few stops:

Don Anderson Tiffany MacNeil Boone Lodge Lorrie Lagasse

Moderate-pace with more frequent stops:

Peter McGee Tim Bartice Melinda Groom Val Nordaneman Carol Vellutini Yvonne Kramer Martin Farber Brian Collett Carl Inglin Tom McFarland Nanette DeDonato Jonah Freedman Steve Devoto Julie Kreis Ned Forsyth

Sloppy/pace:

Allison Bronkall

**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 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 to assist you. Do not leave the group without the leader’s permission.

Be adequately equipped and prepared. You should carry lunch and liquids. Wear footwear appropriate for the outing. In most cases that would be hiking boots.

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

The leader does not have insurance for arranging trips and assumes no liability for them. Participants assume the risks associated with travel. Beimburse the carpool driver. Carpools are not part of the outing but a means of conserving natural resources.

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

**Visitors are welcome**

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

**DIFFICULTY**

**MILEAGE**

**Elevation gain**

E - Easy Actual

A - Actual

Less than 1,000

M - Moderate Mileage

B - 1,000 to 2,000

H - Hard

C - 2,000 to 3,000

V - Very Steep

D - Over 3,000

The actual mileage will be listed on the trip. Each elevation gain will reflect the gain from 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, (cardiovellutini. net) by the 8th of the month. All leaders must coordinate their outings with their own Group Chair/Chairs. CMT 208776-60. Registration as a rider does not constitute approval by the State of California.
Welcome to New Outings
Leader Ned Forsyth

Congratulations to Ned Forsyth for leading his first outing. Why did Ned become a leader? Ned states “I am excited to become an Outings Leader for North Group! The Humboldt Bay region is blessed with outstanding outdoor opportunities. I have spent many years hiking and camping with friends and various conservation organizations. I decided to lead Sierra Club hikes for the public in order to share our everyday natural wonders, fulfilling the Club’s motto, ‘Explore, enjoy, and protect our planet.’ I have taken part in North Group activities for over ten years. I spent a large portion of my formative years roaming the hospitable Santa Monica Mountains from my backyard redwoods, where I indulged a strong interest in natural history, mostly rocks, plants, birds and weather. My day jobs have been chiefly in electronics, specializing most recently in field service, which has continually history, mostly rocks, plants, birds and weather. My day jobs have been chiefly in electronics, specializing most recently in field service, which has continually...”

Redwood Needles
February 2015
Deadline: Due Jan. 8
Submit Articles/Reports/Ad Copy via e-mail to:
odavison@sonic.net
Send Outings to Carol Vellutini via email: carolvr@sonic.net
Send Meetings to Carl Inglin: chinglin@sonic.net

Outings Chair
Report
It is time to plan for your winter Sierra Getaway. Outing leaders offer winter backpack trips to the huts. If you don’t care for winter snowshoeing or skiing up to the huts then go to our lodges. Consider becoming a leader for winter hut trips. Jim Gannon our long time leader will show you what it takes to keep the group together, the route, safety issues, proper gear etc. while you are on your outing with the group. Jim’s work parties have stocked Benson hut with wood for the winter to keep the hut warm and cozy. You could also build a snow cave and sleep outside. Hutchinson Lodge next to Clair Tappaan Lodge is Napa Group’s winter getaway. Read a book by the fireplace, having a leisure weekend and relaxing. Want more exercise? Then go skiing on one of the groomed trails or go cross country. Don’t like skiing? Put on snowshoes and hike up to a winter wonderland taking photos as you go. Don’t have snowshoes? They have them for rent at many places nearby.

Work parties for the Riverkeeper Stewardship Park in Guerneville have been listed in the Needles since 2007. Victoria Winkle, Russian Riverkeeper Stewardship Park.

Ned Forsyth for leading his first outing. Why did Ned become a leader? Ned states “I am excited to become an Outings Leader for North Group! The Humboldt Bay region is blessed with outstanding outdoor opportunities. I have spent many years hiking and camping with friends and various conservation organizations. I decided to lead Sierra Club hikes for the public in order to share our everyday natural wonders, fulfilling the Club’s motto, ‘Explore, enjoy, and protect our planet.’ I have taken part in North Group activities for over ten years. I spent a large portion of my formative years roaming the hospitable Santa Monica Mountains from my backyard redwoods, where I indulged a strong interest in natural history, mostly rocks, plants, birds and weather. My day jobs have been chiefly in electronics, specializing most recently in field service, which has continually history, mostly rocks, plants, birds and weather. My day jobs have been chiefly in electronics, specializing most recently in field service, which has continually...

Group Hike Leaders: Many Redwood Chapter Groups need Outings Chairs. This volunteer position is working with leaders, coordinating with the Chapter Outings Chair, training leaders, keeping records, encouraging new leaders to take up the role, and doing administrative work parties have stocked Benson hut with wood for the winter to keep the hut warm and cozy. You could also build a snow cave and sleep outside. Hutchinson Lodge next to Clair Tappaan Lodge is Napa Group’s winter getaway. Read a book by the fireplace, having a leisure weekend and relaxing. Want more exercise? Then go skiing on one of the groomed trails or go cross country. Don’t like skiing? Put on snowshoes and hike up to a winter wonderland taking photos as you go. Don’t have snowshoes? They have them for rent at many places nearby.

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Redwood Needles
February 2015
Deadline: Due Jan. 8
Submit Articles/Reports/Ad Copy via e-mail to:
odavison@sonic.net
Send Outings to Carol Vellutini via email: carolvr@sonic.net
Send Meetings to Carl Inglin: chinglin@sonic.net

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Special tax to protect and restore Clear Lake fails to pass

Over the past few months Lake Group activists have spent many of their time and energy working on the campaign for Measure S, a third attempt to pass a special half-cent sales tax to benefit Clear Lake and other local waterways. It is hard to overestimate our profound disappointment at the failure of this ballot measure, which was the best investment we could make in our lake, our communities, and our children’s future. Without this essential funding, continuing cycles of noxious cyanobacteria, likely infestation of quagga mussels, and weed-choked waterways threaten to destroy Clear Lake’s ancient ecosystem and ruin our quality of life. Like Measure E in November 2012 and Measure L in June 2014 Measure S received well over 60 percent of the ballots cast, but was unable to reach the two-thirds threshold required for special taxes.

These figures confirm that most people in Lake County—far more than half—recognize the vital importance of protecting the lake, and were not misled by irresponsible, untruthful assertions that the money would be diverted were not misled by irresponsible, untruthful assertions that the money would be diverted

Movie Night in Time of Drought

At press time Lake Group was planning its next general membership meeting, which will feature a very timely California Water Board film “Slow Flow, Make your landscape act like a sponge,” followed by a short subject “Permeable Pavers - Breaking Up is Easy to Do.” These films will provide practical information about the impacts of storm water runoff, the benefits of getting rid of your lawn (or alternatively, ways to make it “greener”), and ways to transform soil to make it soak up maximum water and improve carbon sequestration. The showing will be held at 7 p.m. on Wednesday December 3 in the Round Room at Mendocino College in Lakeport. As always walking the walk, and the public is invited: for more info contact Chair Ed Robey, edrobey@wildblue.net

—VICTORIA BRANDON, LAKE GROUP CONSERVATION CHAIR

Walt Ranch Project

Grassroots power is burgeoning in response to the Walt Ranch proposal to develop 500 acres on Atlas Peak for new vineyards. This proposal would clearcut over 500 acres of oak woodland, pump 69 million gallons of water annually for irrigation and subject neighbors to 3 – 4 years of noise from blasting and rock crushing, as well as heavy equipment traffic up a steep, narrow, residential road. Generous donations have enabled us to hire an attorney and environmental experts to contest the draft environmental report. Residents have shown up time after time at the Board of Supervisors meetings and at the county public forum to voice their concerns over this destructive project.

Calistoga Sewage Crisis

Calistoga is facing possible sanctions by the San Francisco Bay Area Water Board for excessive dumping of wastewater into the Napa River. Question: since the city can’t handle current sewage needs, how will it accommodate the proposed Calistoga Hills Resort with its 110-room hotel, restaurant, homes and conference center?

Holiday Get-Together

Join us on Saturday, Dec 6th, 9:30-11:30 for a short walk at Oxbow Preserve in Napa, followed by refreshments and a discussion of the areas of Napa County that you would like to explore in the coming year. RSVP by December 2nd, to Chris Benz at 707-974-5565 or christinabenz@gmail.com.

Napa Communications

Keep up with fast-moving events in Napa by signing up for our monthly e-newsletter, at napa.WaltRanchnews@gmail.com, and by liking us on Facebook.

Sierra Club Elections

Please vote in December for Napa Sierra Club Executive Committee candidates so that we may continue our work on behalf of the environment in and around the county.

We thank outgoing EsCom member Carol Kunze for her longtime participation on the EsCom and her ongoing dedication to the club and its causes.

In addition we bid farewell and thanks to outgoing EsCom member Phill Blake who will be missed but not off of our speed dial list. Both Carol and Phill have served the Napa Group and the Sierra Club as professionals and articulate advocates. The EsCom thanks you for the exceptional volunteer service.

—NANCY TAMARISK AND MARC PANDONE, NAPA GROUP EXCOM

North Group Report

The 2014 Happy Camp Fires

As with many North Coast residents, fires burning on the Klamath National Forest dominated my consciousness this summer. Worry about friends living near the flames, some under evacuation orders, was my prime concern. I was not concerned about the forest. Having walked and studied all the large fires which burned in the Klamath Mountains since 1987, I was confident that the natural wildfire would be beneficial—a mosaic of some hot and mostly cool burns which scientists tell us has been the pattern in these mountains since the retreat of the glaciers.

As the cost of fighting the fires rose, however, so did my concern. Fire maps available on InciWeb (http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/4078/) and reports on the community Facebook Page (https://www.facebook.com/groups/537554202959342/) established to share fire information indicated that Forest Service fire managers were constructing many miles of fire line with bulldozers. That meant they were also conducting large burn-outs. Experience walking and studying past fires had taught me that natural wildfire does little damage to Klamath Mountains forests or their watersheds and are typically beneficial. Discerning fire suppression actions of Forest Service fire managers, however, often produce significant watershed degradation and large swaths of 100% dead trees. Furthermore, soil and watershed damaging fire lines and burn-outs have never effectively controlled, much less put out, large fires burning in these mountains since 1987, only the coming of fall rain and snow in the high country put out the truly large fires burning in exceedingly rugged Klamath Mountains backcountry.

Then came the blowup: two days of strong canyon winds which drove the flames of wildfire and burn-out into the faces of firefighters who quickly withdrew. As the size of the Happy Camp Fires doubled in the short span of two days, my concern grew for humans and for the forest. Perhaps it was different this time; perhaps this time I would find miles of devastation from wind and wildfire.

As soon as sustained rain put the fires out I was into the wilderness and driving dirt roads studying the fires and the actions fire managers took in hopes of “suppressing” them. I found miles of black, particularly on the lower Scott River. But I also learned from locals that most large swaths of black and dead vegetation were the result of panicked back-fires lit by fire fighters at the bottom of long, steep slopes. Even the wind driven natural wildfire did not produce that sort of devastation. In fact, the fast moving flames spared or thinned that forest; the tree volume in the shortest time. The tree volume in the THP metering it out slowly, thus keeping sediment out of streams; they keep the soils from drying out and maintain soil micro-organisms and invertebrates; they keep slopes stable. The big trees are also more resistant to fire. In short, they create a micro-climate and maintain ecosystem functions for endangered plant and animal species that will be replaced by small trees, brushier, drier conditions, invasion of exotic plant species and habitat for the more numerous and more common animal species.

In addition, the larger trees are the ones that put the most volume on desirable species – the tule. The YNP now averages over 17,000 board feet per acre. After this cut, it will be less than 6000 board feet per acre. These stands will not produce merchantable wood for many years—bad for the economy, bad for jobs.

On hold is our attempt to place a conservation easement on the small (2000 acres) Railroad Gulch subwatershed. The industrial fire fighting complex—like modern warfare replete with corporate contractors—was developed with the goal of suppressing every wildfire by 10 a.m. on the following day. We now know that fire is a natural process in most forest ecosystems; forests in the western U.S. benefit from fire to function properly as ecosystems. Forest Service managers are talking the new talk; we must, they say, restore fire to national forest ecosystems.

But while they talk the talk Forest Service managers have fought the fire by the millions. The primary tool they have on hand—military-industrial fire suppression and timber sales—are incompatible with restoring fire as a natural ecosystem process in our forests. What they are doing now is akin to placing new wine in old wine skins and the results are not good. Some local organizations and tribes are working to change that reality. More on that in a future report.

—FELICE PACE, NORTH GROUP WATER CHAIR

Mendocino Group Report

We’re working on THP 1-14-080 MEN, Mendocino Redwood Company’s plan on the Albion River. It’s a large plan, taking 758-acre bite out of the small (2000 acres) Railroad Gulch subwatershed. It proposes removing 2/3 of the volume of the larger trees, mostly under selection silviculture. There are winter operations proposed on many miles of unstocked roads. The extensive removal of large trees has raised many concerns—these are the trees most valuable to wildlife; they intercept rainfall, holding water in the soils and metering out slowly, thus keeping sediment out of streams; they keep the soils from drying out and maintain soil micro-organisms and invertebrates; they keep slopes stable. The big trees are also more resistant to fire. In short, they create a micro-climate and maintain ecosystem functions for endangered plant and animal species that will be replaced by small trees, brushier, drier conditions, invasion of exotic plant species and habitat for the more numerous and more common animal species.

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—MARY WALSH, MENDOCINO GROUP CHAIR
Solano Breeze Corner
Covering Benicia, Fairfield, Rio Vista, Suisun, Vacaville, and Vallejo
sierraclosolsanogroup@gmail.com 707-319-6398

VALCORE Recycling and Confidential Paper Shredding 2014.

WEEKEND:
Solano Group will be working every 3rd Saturday of the month at 38 Sheridan Street, Vallejo from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. (Dec 20, Jan 17, Feb 21). There is a charge of $10 [CASH ONLY] per twenty pounds of paper shredded. (maximum: 100 pounds), Sierra Club volunteers help tend the money and direct traffic. Once a year is all we ask and you only need work an hour or so. Volunteers get free shredding.

NEW WEEKDAY SHREDDING:
From 10am to 4pm – closed 1pm to 2pm for lunch, CREDIT or DEBIT ONLY.

We continually work at Lori’s Native Plant Garden located at 225 Amador St, Vallejo. We also weed, plant, prune and mulch year-round. If you have an hour, call Jane and she’ll work with you to get you started. 707-319-6398

Trecyde: Each city has a program, call your recycling coordinator. Numbers listed on recycle.solanocounty.com

Executive Committee members and Volunteers needed: Come join us for our monthly meetings which rotate between Vallejo, Fairfield and Vacaville. We meet on the first Thursday of the month and are making a positive impact on our county and need a few more people to help us! Contact John at 707-599-6156.

Executive Committee:
Debbie Funderburk
Marilyn Krevolin
Adam Mangosing
Justin and Alicia Ashorn
Errol Dempster, Matt Hoffman, and Jane for staffing the October and November paper shredding events.

Sonoma Group Report

At our November meeting, we installed Adrienne Lebihias our newest member of the Executive Committee. Adrienne, a sustainability advocate in the Santa Rosa area, particularly at Santa Rosa Junior College, where she is active as a student.

We are encouraged that pro-sustainability candidates Jordan Burns and Dorothy Battenfeld won seats on the Santa Rosa Junior College Board of Trustees. Campus parking spaces in the J.C.’s parking garage are full and “excess” carpools are being turned away from designated parking. Students have alerted the Board that carpool spaces are a good thing, and more of them need to be assigned.

Members of the Sonoma Group attended public comment sessions to understand and comment on the County’s new proposed standards for water well construction. According to staff, the rules for well drilling setbacks from streams will be referred to in the Riparian Ordinance which county supervisors plan to pass this year, although the standards themselves won’t be passed until next year. Our comment is that this is a backward way to implement critical stream protection, and we are drafting a letter with our recommendations to the Board of Supervisors. The supervisors put this item on their Nov. 24 agenda.

We have opened a new and active Twitter account: @sieracalb707. Feel free to follow us for up to the minute notices about recycling & conservation tips, upcoming meetings, and things that impact us who live in the Sonoma County habitat.

We voted to contact supervisors in support of an ordinance to ban the propagation of GMOs – genetically modified (i.e., genetically damaged) seeds in Sonoma County. As of press time this item has not reached the supervisors’ agenda, despite a request for it by Supervisor John Grotz. An ordinance has to be passed before Dec. 31, since the new law AB2470 will ban any regulation of GMOs in California beginning January 1, 2015.

Dan Kerbein, Sonoma Group Chair, supported the Living Wage Coalition in meetings with individual county supervisors, and requested a living wage ordinance that not only raises the base pay level, but includes Responsible Bidder provisions, card check and labor harmony for the county’s private contractors. The supervisors put this on their Nov. 24 agenda, with the likelihood of passing a raise in base pay but excluding most contractors from it, and leaving our Responsible Bidder and all other provisions. We have let the supervisors know this is a short-sighted approach, since many contracted county workers will continue making $8 an hour, and the lack of a Responsible Bidder provision allows bidders with very poor environmental practices to be approved for contracts.

Members attended the Rohnert Park City Council meeting to once again voice our opposition to the massive expansion of WalMart operations, which have taken over 100,000 sf of that city’s commercial space, and have been campaigning to take over even more of the city’s commerce. This is the last step in a grass-roots process that has spanned nearly a decade, and as of press time the City Council is expected to approve WalMart’s request.

We co-sponsored, along with North Bay Organizing Project, a speech and book-signing in Santa Rosa by Naomi Klein, author of the paradigm-shifting books No Logo, Shock Doctrine, and her newest work, This Changes Everything – Capitalism vs The Climate. In her speech at the Santa Rosa Veterans Building, Ms. Klein tackled what she called the “really insoluble problem.” The economics of global capitalism are at war with our existence on this planet, and that a mass movement could switch our system from extraction, to renewal.

We are still looking for a Sonoma Group Outdoor Chair. Please contact Carol Villullini, Redwood Chapter Outdoor Chair.

Jonathan Alexander-Barkley

Jonathan is a physics major. He says he has not made any lasting impressions on the environment yet other than a few coastal clean ups in the San Francisco area and helping continue a Haiti partnership program to give Haitians environmentally friendly sources of power called solar suitcases, but he “wants to be a part of something that gives our smaller problems permanent solutions, destroying the roots of the larger ones.”

Redwood Chapter is saddened to learn of the deaths of notable Sonoma County environmental heroes Leonard Swenson and Helen Libue. A tribute will appear in the next edition of the Redwood Needles. In the meantime, we extend deepest sympathy to their families.

Non-Sierra Club Outings

Solano Group Solano College Scholarship for 2014

Jonathan Alexander-Barkley

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Redwood Needles

December 1, 2014
Increasingly, corporations are using these perverse rules in free launch nearly 600 challenges against almost 100 governments, including protections from dirty fossil fuels. Such rules have fuel reserves must stay in the ground in order to avoid climate catastrophe. We have to move beyond fossil fuels here at home and stop exporting them to other countries. Current free trade rules once again stand in the way. The U.S., for example, is legally bound to automatically approve all exports of natural gas to countries with which it has a free trade pact. (If no free trade pact is in place, the Department of Energy must conduct a public analysis to determine whether exports are consistent with the public interest before granting a license.) And there is increased talk of a potential free-trade challenge to current U.S. restrictions on crude oil exports. In fact, the EU is pressuring the U.S. to lift its current export restrictions in the context of its negotiations on TTIP, the U.S. EU trade pact. According to Oil Change International, lifting the crude oil export ban would lead to 9.9 billion barrels of additional crude between 2015 and 2050, which would release as much carbon dioxide as 42 coal-fired power plants.

Restricting local and low-carbon economies: Another part of solving the climate puzzle relates to production and consumption. We need to start producing and using products, from our food to our energy, closer to home. Sadly, the current trend is to produce goods wherever labor is cheapest and environmental protections are lowest and ship them across the world. (This trend, incidentally, was made possible– even encouraged– by the executive branch secures “Fast Track” authority, allowing signed pacts to be rushed through Congress without any oversight by the Senate or the House, circumventing ordinary review, amendment and debate. The only way the TPP and TTIP can get approved is if the public supports– efforts to combat the climate crisis. If these agreements move forward, they lock in a new set of rules that can challenge the power of the fossil fuel industry. Bigger and badder threats from the fossil fuel industry have set a fire under the climate movement. New, dangerous trade deals such as the TPP and TTIP, which threaten health, environmental, and worker protections, have set ablaze another movement of the people instead of on behalf of the polluters. The climate movement must stand up to the free trade rules and ideology that helped get us into this climate mess and that will thwart our ability to act to save the climate. TAKE ACTION The only way the TPP and TTIP can get approved is if the executive branch secures “Fast Track” authority, allowing signed pacts to be rushed through Congress with a guaranteed vote in 90 days, under rules that circumvent ordinary review, amendment and debate. And without such a vote, we can never make sure that doesn’t happen, go to sierraclub.org/trade and drop us a note at responsibletrade@sierraclub.org. Why the Climate Movement Cannot Ignore Trade
Environmental Center Benefit
Presented by Sonoma County Conservation Council and the Sierra Club, Sonoma Group

Holiday Networking Party!
For Environmental and Social Justice Groups
Enjoy food, wine, music and hot cider! Mingle with your friends and local movers and shakers!

Thursday, December 4, 2014, 5-8pm
At the Sebastopol Grange
6000 Sebastopol Ave., Hwy. 12, just east of Sebastopol

Suggested Donation: $25 includes dinner and one drink!!
Open to the public - family and friends welcome! RSVPs requested but not required.

Advance Purchase:
www.envirocentersoco.org
http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/912180
Checks To:
SCCC, PO Box 4346, Santa Rosa, CA 95402

Volunteers Needed:
Dec. 4: Set-up; food & drink servers

For More Info:
Wendy Krupnick, wk@sonic.net
544-4582

Make This Your Group’s Holiday Party!
$22 each for groups of 6 or more, with advance purchase!

The Sonoma County Conservation Council
The SCCC is the federation of non-profits that operates the Environmental Center in Santa Rosa.
The Council supports the work of member organizations, serves as an information and referral service, and provides connectivity for ad-hoc collaborations.

Thank You to our sponsor – Sebastopol Grange!

Save the Date!! The 2015 Environmental Awards Dinner
March 15, 2015, 5:00-9:00 pm, Sebastopol Community Center
Nominations open Dec. 1; envirocentersoco.org/awards