Sierra Club Sues for Better Bay Area Regional Transportation Plan

By Steve Biedebough, Sonoma Group Ecow

The Sierra Club has filed its Metropolitan Transportation Commission and Association of Bay Area Governments alleging that their recently adopted Plan Bay Area Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is legally deficient. The Plan fails to implement sufficient transportation reforms to meet key greenhouse gas reductions goals, and fails to protect vulnerable communities from diesel exhaust, and the EIR is deficient for failing to report the true environmental effects of the Plan.

Over the past several years, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and the Association of Bay Area Governments have drafted a multi-decade $292 billion spending plan to make transportation and land use in the Bay Area more sustainable. Transit funding and climate protection measures in the Bay Area are directly affected by the Plan. The Plan will also affect the region’s ability to cope with rising sea levels and the other environmental effects of climate disruption.

As the plan has evolved, various environmental organizations have pointed out that contrary to the Plan’s admirable goals, it would actually result in more polluting traffic, including many more trucks on the highways. The Sierra Club alleges that the Plan/EIR is environmentally unacceptable in the following respects:

• Only 7% of the Plan’s total budget is dedicated to expanding public transportation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Instead, the Plan calls for constructing hundreds of miles of new toll lanes for more polluting single-occupant autos to use during rush hour.

• Housing developments are proposed without committing funds for public transportation to serve them.

• Little is proposed to address the rising housing costs that encourage people to move from urban areas to suburban areas with inadequate public transportation. The plan would drive more people to rely on cars for their daily commutes, worsening air pollution, quality of life, and traffic.

As a result, people would spend more time in greenhouse gas-emitting private automobiles and more time on the roads. By 2040 the number of daily trips is expected to increase by 22%, and the number of vehicle miles travelled during peak travel times is expected to increase by 51%.

There is no mitigation plan for increased goods movement by rail or other means that would protect communities like West Oakland. These places face increased toxic air pollution as more trucks are used to move freight.

The Sierra Club is represented in the lawsuit by Earthjustice, and a co-petitioner is Communities for a Better Environment, a non-profit health and environmental justice organization, with offices in Oakland, CA.

Interestingly, two other groups that are less-concerned about the environmental failings of the Plan/EIR have also filed suit: the Pacific Legal Foundation alleges that the Plan/EIR violates the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it does not justify high-density developments, and fails to analyze the feasibility of less-compact alternatives. The Bay Area Building Industry Association claims the Plan/EIR lacks sufficient housing for the expected population and does not have a realistic development pattern as required by state law.

You can read the Sierra Club complaint at: http://earthjustice.org/sites/default/files/Files/PlanBayAreaPetition(19-13).pdf.

The Sierra Club has also challenged the regional plan/ EIR process for the San Diego region, and obtained a favorable decision. That case is now on appeal. See: https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/news/press_releases/2012/ transportation-plan-12-04-2012.html.

Action Alert:

Ask Senator Dianne Feinstein to support the proposed Berryessa Snow Mountain National Conservation Area

This important landscape-level conservation proposal has been a top Redwood Chapter priority for several years. It would permanently protect 350,000 acres of federal public lands with outstanding conservation values, set up a structure to improve collaborative management among affected agencies, enhance recreational potential, and benefit the visitor-based economy. It took a giant step closer to becoming reality in July, when the House Public Lands and Environmental Regulation subcommittee held a hearing on implementing legislation (H.R. 1025) co-sponsored by all three members of Redwood Chapter’s Congressional delegation and covering land managed by three federal agencies in five counties, including three Wilderness areas and a state Wild and Scenic River.

There’s no predicting when a vote on the floor of the House of Representatives may occur, but in the meantime we need your help to push the proposal along in the Senate. Senator Barbara Boxer has introduced companion legislation, S. 483, but unfortunately Senator Dianne Feinstein has still not become a co-sponsor, and without her support the bill has little chance of moving forward.

Won’t you please take a moment to send Senator Feinstein a letter telling her what you love about the region and the reasons it merits protection? Letters should be sent to:

Honorable Dianne Feinstein
331 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510

Your own words are always strongest, but you are welcome to get started by copying and pasting the sample letter posted to the Redwood Chapter blog, sierracaliforniodinnesen Feinstein.com. After you send your letter, please send a copy via email to vrandaehloydjactive.info.

Additional information about the proposed NCA is available at: berryessaonsmountain.org.

And thanks so much for your help!

Dunes Restoration: Stalled by Unfeasible Bike Trail Appeal?

By Linda Perkey, Mendocino Group Conservation Chair

The Mendocino Group is reviewing a California State Parks project at the Inglewood Fen-Ten Mile Dunes Natural Preserve that aims to restore natural processes in the Preserve by removing 2.7 miles of an old logging road that goes through the dunes and by hand removing invasive European Beach Grass. The Preserve is part of the larger MacKerricher State Park.

The project continues to move through a lengthy review process. Having completed and gotten approval for a Mitigated Negative Declaration, the CEQA process has continued, with Parks’ next step being to apply to the county for a Coastal Development Permit (CDP) needed to satisfy coastal regulations. This permit was approved by the planning department bar appealed by the Westport Municipal Advisory Council (WMAC) to the Board of Supervisors. The BOS, on August 26th, denied the appeal, added some further conditions and approved the permit.

The project’s current status is that it may still be on hold. According to the WMAC’s website, “A group of concerned local citizens are appealing this permit to the Coastal Commission.” We haven’t gotten official notice of the appeal as yet or seen what its substance is. However, based on WMAC’s appeal to the BOS their primary purpose appears to be the desire to build a bike trail through the sensitive dune habitat.

Here’s what’s at stake:
First of all, Parks is operating in a Natural Preserve with the goal of restoring the Dunes Natural Preserve. A Natural Preserve is the most protective designation given to any State Park system unit. Protection of features such as rare and listed species is the paramount purpose of such a designation. The Dunes, a rare feature in California, has its own specialized communities of plants and animals, wildlife that is precisely attuned to the ever-shifting, wind-blown sands. Because the Dunes support numerous rare and endangered wildlife species, it is considered an Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area (ESHA) and is afforded special protections under our Local Coastal Plan.

Among the rare inhabitants, not to mention only two, is a tiny, imperiled shorebird, the Western Dunes Restoration Stalled!” cont. on page 4

Sierra Club Loses Activist Stephens

It is with great regret that we announce that long time Sierra Club activist John Stephens died on August 25, 2013, at the age of 70. A Napa resident and a Club member for nearly 30 years, John ably represented the Chapter on the California-Nevada Regional Conservation Committee from 2003 through 2012, and received Sierra Club California’s special Lifetime Achievement Award last year. His leadership roles in the Club included service as Napa Group Chair and Membership Chair.

John’s passionate advocacy for our local, air, wildlife, and water led to some notable victories and-- perhaps even more important—helped create the kind of robust dialog that lights the path to workable solutions. Above all, John always approached contentious issues with civility and a touch of humor. His rare combination of zealfulness and lightheartedness enriched the discussion of many environmental issues on both the Group and Chapter levels over the years, and made his many letters to the editor on subjects ranging from bears to solar panels arguably the Napa County citizen’s single most important source of environmental enlightenment.

We will miss him badly, and extend our deep condolences to his wife Sarah and other members of his extended family. No formal services will be held, but memorial donations may be made to the War Resisters League’s Endowment Fund, or a charitable organization of your choice.

Long-time Napa County activist John Stephens passed away in August.
Redwood Chapter Sierra Club Directory

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 466, Santa Rosa, CA 95402, Phone 544-7651, Fax 544-9861
Office Address: Environmental Center, SSA Ridgeway Avenue, Santa Rosa (West of off of Cleveland Ave., to the west of Hwy 101)

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 own officers as usual.

Chair - At Large - Political Chair - RCC Delegate - Wilderness Chair
Victoria Brandon* 994-1931 vbrandon@lakeinfo.info
Vice Chair - Sonoma Group Delegate to Chapter - Regional Conservation Committee Delegate Alternate
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Lakeside CA 95456
Chair - Chapter Delegate - Political Chair
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944-7651
Chair - At Large - Political Chair - RCC Delegate - Wilderness Chair
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Joyce Yowell 559-916-8575 jselph@sonic.net
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Treasurer
Jessica Jones 864-9873 carolljones@hotmail.com

Redwood Needles
Newsletter of the Redwood Chapter, Sierra Club of California

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Redwood Needles - Redwood Chapter Sudanese (March)
Redwood Needles - Redwood Chapter Sudanese (April)
Redwood Needles - Redwood Chapter Sudanese (May)
Redwood Needles - Redwood Chapter Sudanese (June)
Redwood Needles - Redwood Chapter Sudanese (July)
Redwood Needles - Redwood Chapter Sudanese (August)
Redwood Needles - Redwood Chapter Sudanese (September)
Redwood Needles - Redwood Chapter Sudanese (October)
Redwood Needles - Redwood Chapter Sudanese (November)
Redwood Needles - Redwood Chapter Sudanese (December)

Discounted prices available for purchase and pick up of 2014 calendars at the Environmental Center on 55 Range Road, Santa Rosa. Wilderness (wall): $12, Engagement (desk): $13, both prices include sales tax. Call for hours: 544-7651.

Redwood Chapter Sonoma Group Office
Location: Environmental Center, SSA Ridgeway Avenue, Santa Rosa (West of off of Cleveland Ave., to the west of Hwy 101)

Redwood Chapter Online
Redwood Chapter Website: http://www.redwood.sierraclub.org
For Group IV Members, add:
/napa, /north, /sonoma, /lake, /redwood, /ot /sonano
Sequoia Paddlers: groups.yahoo.com/group/sequoiapaddlers
Redwood Chapter Blog: sierrabc.redwoodsierraclub.wordpress.com
Redwood Chapter Facebook Page: www.facebook.com/SierraClubRedwoodChapter
Who We Are

Over the past few years a Club-wide annual midsummer ritual called the State of the Chapters Survey has considered considerable time and attention of Group and Chapter leaders. The Survey asks for responses to diverse questions ranging from conservation objectives to political activities to the composition of executive committees, and since so much of Redwood Chapter’s conservation and outreach activities take place on the Group rather than the Chapter level, each of our six Groups, the Outing program, and Sequoia Paddlers had to contribute to the effort.

Thanks to the diligence of Club leaders throughout the Chapter we were able to submit the completed Survey on time– and as a reward, to learn quite a bit of interesting and mostly encouraging information about who we are and what we do. First of all, every Group is different. We all collaborate with a broad spectrum of other environmental organizations, but some Groups reach out much further afield, with diverse partnerships that include the Occupy movement, labor unions, Resource Conservation Districts, political parties, and the Farm Bureau. We also engage in many different kinds of activities: besides things like leading hikes, holding public meetings, tabling at events, and actively supporting political candidates and ballot measures, Solano conducts a recycling program, North sends kids to environmental camp, and Lake presents scholarships.

Some of our activities also involve a surprising number of kids to environmental camp, and Lake presents scholarships. Besides things like leading hikes, holding public meetings, tabling at events, and actively supporting political candidates and ballot measures, Solano conducts a recycling program, North sends kids to environmental camp, and Lake presents scholarships.

The following activities and events are not covered in this publication.

Chapter Chair Report

The survey also helped pinpoint the areas where we need to improve. Our connections with the business and faith communities are weak, and no one in the Chapter who needed to sign a petition or make a phone call to organize a letter-writing campaign to a Union or a business leader.

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By reservation only. Leader Tiffany MacNeil (707) 696-3387 asmftif@sonic.net.

Sat. Oct. 12 - Mare Island Shoreline Heritage Preserve in Vallejo.
Our walk takes us along a historic road to the highest point at the south end of Mare Island with spectacular views towards the Carquinez Strait, San Pablo and San Francisco Bays. Viewable wildlife include great blue herons and various raptors including the red-tailed hawk. The area is open to the public but volunteers are needed. Leader: Craig Deutscher craig.deutsch@earthlink.net, 310-477-6767. CNRCC Desert Committee.

Come join us as we restore wilderness values in this beautiful and remote national park. We will meet early Thursday afternoon. That afternoon we will work on the Darwin Falls trail, then drive to our primitive camping area and set up camp. Work Friday and Saturday; plan to spend a full day of hiking and camp and a full day of hiking and maintain the campsites. Leader: Kate Allen, kallen66@gmail.com, 661-948-4056. CNRCC Desert Committee Sat. Oct. 26 - Sonoma Group. Collis Ranch Exploratory Hike.
In the spirit of adventure, come hike from Collins Ranch, across Solomon Creek (dry crossing), and up the hills of the Collis Ranch through gorgeous canyons. Come stay dog friendly. Contact: Valley Object Mail, and this rain will cancel.

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

Wander 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 and down) greatly affect the difficulty of a hike, regardless of how fast you walk 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 outings lead is the best person, regarding difficulty and distance to be hiked, to look at the difficulty of the hike. If the rating is moderate with few or more stops a fast pace hiker must hike slower to accommodate that pace.

Fast-paced with few or no stops: Jim Gannnon. Paul Bozzo Call MacGill
Moderate-paced with few stops: Penny Proteau Don Anderson Steve Devoto Tiffany MacNeil
Isaiah Cun-Guly Lorrie Lagasse Boone Lodge Chip Bouril
Paul Farley
Moderate-paced with more frequent stops: McClee Tim Bartice Bill Knight Melinda Groom Vail-Nordin Callister Sara Haggard
Jean Crossley
Lorrie Lagasse
Chip Bouril
Neil Callister Sara Haggard
Paul Farley

Instructions to hikers:
Outings will not start 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, unless there is a real or perceived distance to the person ahead of you so you do not miss an intersecting trail. Do not lag behind the leader if you need help, the rear leader will remain to assist you. Do not leave the group without permission.

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

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

The Sierra Club does not have insurance for carpooling arrangements and assumes no liability for them. Participants assume the risks associated with travel. Reinburse the carpool driver. Carpools are not part of the outing but are 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/pages/formal, or contact the Outings Department at (415) 977-5528 for a printed version.

Visitors are welcome
All Sierra Club outings 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 outing.

DIFFICULTY  MILEAGE  ELEVATION GAIN
E - Easy Actual A - Less than 1,000
E - Easy Actual M - Moderate Mileage B - 1,000 to 2,000
M - Moderate Actual C - Hard for leaders 3,000 or more
S - Strenuous Actual D - over 3,000
V - Very Strenuous Actual

The actual mileage will be listed for each trip. Actual elevation gain will reflect the gain from the start of the hike to the highest point for you. 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, (carolv@sierraclub.org) by the 8th of the month. All leaders must coordinate their outings with their Group Outings Chair.

Dune Restoration Stalled? cont. from page 1
Snowy Plover, which over-winters, and sometimes nests, on these beaches. The beaches and dunes are officially designated as critical habitat for the bird. A second subspecies is endemic to the federally listed Howell’s snowplover, found only in MacKerricher State Park.

Snowy plovers thrash and display a wild energy as they peck at the sand, followed by a parade of a dozen or so plover chicks. The birds are particularly vulnerable during the summer, when young chicks are hatched and raise their wings to gain attention from a watchful parent.

However, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced last week that it is halting all new permits for the protection of the California coastal dunes, which occur along beaches, salt marshes, and tidal flats. The permits had been in place for years, and now the agency says that more information is needed to make a decision.

Feds suspend coastal dune permits

The delay is intended to allow the agency to review the new research on the California coastal dunes and to assess the risk to the species. The decision is expected to be made by the end of the year.

The permits were originally issued in 2008, when the federal government identified the dunes as a critical habitat for the snowy plover. Since then, the agency has been working to protect the dunes by creating a network of protected areas along the coast.

The permits were intended to help protect the species by creating a network of protected areas along the coast. However, the agency has been slow to designate the areas, and some conservation groups have expressed concern that the delays could harm the birds.

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The fundraiser at Clair Tappaan was a huge success thanks to Diane Boyer and her lodge committee (Olive Diaz and Ernie Malumad have been active for a long time.) The committee is always looking for new volunteers. I was asked, but I am trying to downsize volunteer commitments. If you are interested email Diane. Manager Peter Lehmkuhl with his never-ending smile always makes the stay at the lodge personal and is very accommodating to guests. Peter's brother is the cook and the food was fantastic. I hadn't been at Tappaan since the 75th anniversary in 2009. By coincidence, when I registered on Friday I noticed that Peter & I were wearing our T-Shirts from 4 years ago. My friend Josie took a picture of us. In the evening Rev. Dom Baldwin, accomplished photographer, presented a computerized show (complete with narration by "John Muir" and music) of scenes of the mountains. Clair Tappaan has a professional sound system and a very talented technician, who provided more than exceptional. Later "John Muir" (Dom Baldwin) met us at the supper and shared stories. Dom is a very talented impersonator, musician and photographer. I felt privileged to talk with him. On Saturday from SF there was talk about conservation & outings. Many of us asked questions about the way Chapters are required to manage local outings, especially in the Bay Area where there are many more than on the East Coast. I was interested in discovering the "valley". The history of the area is overwhelming. The old emigrant route, Yuba River, Soda Springs, Old Lincoln Highway, 20 mile museum signs & I could go on. For 30+ years I only went to the lodge on a Friday, so as to go backpacking into the huts by snowshoe in the winter. How delightful to discover the "valley". The valley is kept open by a gentleman by the name of Jim Cram who advises in knowing the history and claims to be the oldest guide in the county. It is a step back in time and a must visit. Jim Cram led the last Benston Hut party of the year. Thank you Jim. For a great leader, Mendo Group Outings Leader Val Nordan talked for the first time. (see photo on page 7)

-- Val

Redwood Needles

Outings Chair Report


Once again return to the Carizzo Plain to celebrate the end of the year and offer service to the pronghorn antelope in this National Monument. Being between Bakenfield and San Luis Obispo, this vast grassland is home to pronghorn antelope, falclove, elk, fox, and a wide variety of birds. A welcome hike Dec. 29, two and a half days of service modifying barbed wire fencing, and a full day for hiking and exploring are planned. Use of accommodations at one of the old ranch houses is included. Limited to 12 participants, it covers four dinners and breaks for New Year's morning. For more information, contact leader Craig Deutsche, crag.deutsche@gmail.com, (310-477-6678). CNRCC Desert Com,

Redwood Needles

Peter Lehmkuhl, Claire Tappaan Lodge manager & Carol Vellutini at annual fundraiser.


Once again the Sierra Club Weekender is going to be held at the group's lodge on the Truckee Donner Ranch. This is part of the acquisition of 100 acres of Donner Summit led by the Truckee Donner Land Trust in 2012. This was an extraordinary effort by local groups to raise $111,250 million dollars in just a few months. I picked up maps of the area later at the museum and instead do all of Old Hwy 40, and the Heritage Trail. I saw capules, which I'd never heard of, but I thought I made a perfect fit. That was the highlight of my weekend. The history of the area is overwhelming. The landscape and the story of the bay, all the things that are the most interesting to talk with him. Saturday was full of events. Napa Valley leaders Chup布尔 & Penny Posteau led hikes. Some hikes needed to be scaled back due to the smoke. I was sad the smoke from the fire by the beautiful hills, made it impossible to see the mountain tops. A hikers' picnic was provided by a guitar player with Latin American influences. There was so much more, and I didn't have space to share all of it. Go to the Clair Tappaan web site for info.

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Middle Creek Update

For a number of years now it has been generally agreed that implementation of the Middle Creek wetland restoration project would be the single most important action available to reduce excessive nutrient loading on Clear Lake and to improve the health of the whole ecosystem. This proposal, which has been in the works for close to two decades now, would restore some 1650 acres of “reclaimed” land to its natural condition and remove the eminent threat to health and safety posed by miles of antiquated, crumbling levees. So it was with great interest that Lake Group representatives attended a Department of Water Resources update given to the Board of Supervisors on August 6. The board heard a lot of encouraging news: land acquisition is moving forward, with 12 properties (including nearly all residential properties at risk) having been bought out, appraisals completed or in progress on another 24, and an additional 12 “willing sellers” identified. The county has nearly enough funding available to complete all these purchases. Furthermore the Army Corps, which will be the eventual responsible agency, has indicated willingness to accept its responsibility to exercise its powers of eminent domain but will almost certainly have to make an exception in this case. Stay tuned!

Fall Hikes on Mt. Konocti

The county has scheduled a series of six docent-led hikes to Wright Peak this fall, with a stop at the historic Downen Cabin, and for participants over the age of 18 who sign a liability waiver, an opportunity to enjoy the spectacular views from the fire tower. All hikes begin at 8 a.m. from the main parking lot, and last about four hours. There’s a significant elevation gain, so participants should be in good physical shape, wear appropriate footwear and clothing, and carry food and water.

Barring unforeseen circumstances, the project is “not likely to have an adverse effect on the Red-Legged Frog” and a signed Record of Decision from the Army Corps is expected within the next 6-12 months. Representatives Thompson and Garamendi have accordingly written to the Assistant Secretary of the Army requesting that funding for the project be included in the 2014 budget.

Remaininng obstacles include an estimated $2.7 million shortfall in non-federal funds and the need to deal with any remaining “non-willing” sellers as the acquisition phase draws to a conclusion. Lake County has always been reluctant to exercise its powers of eminent domain but will almost certainly have to make an exception in this case. Stay tuned!

Sonoma Group has taken this on in its mission to educate the public.

CEQA Forum Informs

Gary Patton, an Environmental attorney, former Santa Cruz County Supervisor, and member of the Executive Committee of Sierra Club California, was the main speaker at our August 29, 2015 Environmental Forum on the subject of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

He told us that one purpose of CEQA is to force government to respond to public comment. In many instances, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is the only process that will ever allow the public to have its say.

Another major purpose for CEQA is to allow the public and the proponents of a project to stop and think—do we really want to force a look at impacts before taking action. For this reason, CEQA is attacked for delaying good projects.

Some in state government are trying to “tweak” (and in many ways, weaken) the law so that the citizen expert has to have credentials in order to simply document impacts. Average citizens or even leaders of citizen groups will no longer be part of the input. One motivation at the Governor’s level for weakening CEQA is to fast-track projects such as Delta Tunnel, High Speed Rail, and several sports arenas. For more info on proposed legislation, go to www.leginfo.ca.gov.

On the subject of EIRs, the Carneros-Port Sonoma dredging project was withdrawn shortly after the Sonoma County Supervisors, after promoting it, the Sonoma Group and various Marin County interests, voted to require an EIR.

Sonoma Group Lobbies the County

Shirley Johnson represented the Group at a meeting with Sonoma County Supervisor Shirlee Zane, who also represents the County on the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD). Sonoma County organized the meeting. They have submitted a strong Resolution to BAAQMD calling for a regional Climate Action Plan. Shirley reports that Sup. Zane is very agreeable to pursuing this.

National Plug-in Day

Co-sponsored by the Sierra Club Sonoma Group, a crew in Petaluma on Sept. 29. Electric vehicles (EVs) are the most rapidly growing part of the 21st century’s oil-free electrified transportation network, and the

Protect our Communities: Close Fracking Loopholes for Oil and Gas Polluters!

Our nation is under a frack attack! Dirty oil and gas drilling and fracking are expanding—polluting the air, water, and nearby landscapes of communities across the country. Fracking— the process of injecting chemicals, water, and sand at high pressure into the ground to extract natural gas or oil— is dangerous and controversial. Yet the fracking industry doesn’t even have to follow the same environmental rules or laws that other industries do! Five bills just introduced in Congress, however, would make the oil and gas companies to obey environmental laws and would help better protect our clean air and clean water from toxic drilling pollution.

Tell your representative to sponsor these important bills to better protect our landscapes, air, water, and public health from fracking pollution: https://secure.sierraclub.org/site/Advocacy.cmd?displayPage=UseAction&kid=11769

The Associated Press recently reported on fracking occurring off the California coast, where oil companies are supposedly dumping untreated fracking fluids into the ocean, with unknown consequences to the marine environment. The California Coastal Commission is currently gathering information before deciding how to address the issues surrounding offshore fracing.
EXCOM Members Needed

The Solano Group is in need of people who want to make a difference in Solano County. Put on your Sierra Club Hat and join us for monthly meetings where we review local issues and come up with plans to protect our local environment. For more information, email mel@solanogroup.org or leave a message at 707-319-6398.

Who should you vote for in the Vallejo City Council race?

Solano Group is endorsing candidates for the Vallejo City Council Race. For the current list, contact us at sierrachubu nogroup@gmail.com or 707 319-6398.

Thanks to:

Nancy McCoy, Matt Hoffman, Adam Mangosn, Aaron Kofet, Jenn Perez, and Jane for staffing the July and August paper shredding.

VALCORE Recycling and Confidential Paper

NAPA GROUP REPORT

Loss of an Activist

The environmental advocacy community lost an active and diligent supporter in August with the passing of John Stephens. John rejoined the Napa Group executive committee in 2010, but was forced to step down at the end of the term because of illness. In November of 2012, John was awarded a special lifetime Achievement Award by Sierra Club California. A Sierra Club member for nearly 30 years, John represented the Redwood Chapter on the California-Nevada Regional Conservation Committee for 10 years. John’s activism and righteous persistence motivated that banana slugs moved all over people and the environment alike will be remembered. See the article on page one for more about John’s work.

Winery Definition Ordinance

The Napa Group is at the roundtable of public discussion regarding intent and application of the 1990 Winery Definition Ordinance. The ordinance was visionary when it was approved by the County Board of Supervisors. At the core of public debate were the potential impacts of winery and wine production expansion on the land, our natural resources, traffic, and a host of quality of life and environmental concerns. To provide a comprehensive look at the potential impacts of winery and wine production expansion under differing applications of this important ordinance.

For more information, please visit our Facebook page. Find us at Sierra Club Napa Group. “Like” us and help get the word out. Contact us at new e-mail: napavalley sierragroup@gmail.com.

MENDOCINO GROUP REPORT

Shredding 3.0

Solano Group will be working every 3rd Saturday of the month at 38 Sheridan Street, Vallejo from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. (Oct 19, Nov 16, and Dec 14) with a charge of $15 per pound 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.

Lori’s Native Plant Garden

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

Help Wanted:

Our attorney’s fees are 3000 cans per hour. Please bring your CRV – CA Cash Refund containers down to VALCORE (38 Sheridan St. Vallejo, Mon - Sat, 10am to 1 pm and 2 pm to 4:30pm). OR Cash them in at your local recycle center and send us a check for the refunded amount. We recently received donations from John Kolakar and others.

CONTACT: JANE BOGER
EDITORS: GREG PETERSON

NAPA GROUP REPORT

McKinney Honored

Long-time Humboldt Bay activist and Napa Group ExCom member Melvin “Cappy” McKinney, who passed away in June, worked for 15 years to establish a designated trail along the Elk River estuary in Eureka. In August the City of Eureka was easily persuaded to name a trail loop within the area after him. The Hikahon Trail — the first designated trail along Humboldt Bay in Eureka — has been much used and appreciated by walkers and bicyclists since its dedication ceremony in March.

Would You Like to Join Our ExCom?

Sierra Club Group elections are just around the corner. If you are interested in serving as a member of the North Group Executive Committee, which meets every second Tuesday evening from 6:45-8:45 p.m. at the Adorni Center in Eureka, contact Diane at dbbeck@northcoast.com or 707-445-2690. An ExCom member serves a two-year term, beginning in January.

Camper Essays

This summer, due to the generosity of our members, the North Group’s Environmental Education Fund was able to support three local children to attend overnight camps operated by the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry at the Wolf Creek Environmental Center in Redwood National and State Parks. (Four scholarships had been awarded, but one camper cancelled at the last minute.) Campers were required to submit an essay about their experiences. Here are excerpts from those essays:

Benson Hut Work Party. Leader Jimmerson top row second from right & Val Nordeman, Mendocino Outings Leader fifth from top right on last trip before winter.

Lead the Adventure!

Interested in Becoming an Outings Leader?

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

Solano Breeze Corner

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

sierrachubanellogroup@gmail.com 707-319-6398

Sierra Club Volunteer/ Activist Opportunities

Sonoma Group Hike Leaders: Sonoma Group outings leaders training. Always a need for more leaders for outings. If you would like to train, please email Carol carolbenlomir@gmail.com or call 546/6308 for info. People are requesting families with children, camping and easy hikes.

North Group Hike Leaders: North Group is desperately seeking hike leaders. Please contact Bill Knight, the Outings Chair, at bill.knight.email@gmail.com.

Meet with the Sonoma Group Water Committee! Your experience and dedication will be a boost to our meetings at the Environmental Center at 7:00 PM on the third Wednesday of most months. The Water Committee is working on issues related to measures to conserve, save, and reuse this valuable resource. Our goal is to preserve and improve the natural water environment, the responsible use of water by people, and the safe reuse or disposal of our wastewaters. Help protect the quality of our water for people, wildlife, fish and other aquatic life, promote water conservation and intelligent reuse. Recent activities include discussions concerning wells and groundwater studies including the Upper Williams, regulations under the Williams Environmental Center. A decision has not yet been rendered in the legal action brought against CalTrans by Sierra Club et al. This decision is due by the end of September.

MARY WALSH, MENDOCINO GROUP CHAIR

Redwood Needles October 1, 2013
Redwood Chapter and Group Elections Schedule

Nominating Committee Chair contact information:
Lake Group - Julie Kreis - 987-9040
Napa Group - Nancy Tamarisk - 257-2131
Solano Group - Jane Bogner - 644-9183
Mendocino Group - Mary Walsh - 937-0572
North Group - Diane Beck - 445-2690
Sonoma Group - 823-4293
Redwood Chapter - Diana Nassar - 823-4293

August 8, 2013: Appointment of Chapter Nominating and Elections Committee.

September 3, 2013 Appointment of Nominating Committee by Groups.

October 3, 2013: Receipt of all candidates' applications (statement of intent to run) with contact information, for consideration by Group Nominating Committees.

October 10, 2013: Group Nominating Committees inform all potential candidates of their status and submit lists of candidates, with contact information, to their respective ExComs and Chapter Election Committees.

October 24, 2013: Nominating Candidates submit ballot statements to Election Committee.

October 24, 2013: Statements are sent for December Needles.

November 4, 2013: Receipt of ballot petitions and Petition Candidate ballot statements by Election Committee. Approved statements sent for December Redwood Needles.

December 30, 2013: Ballots due in office.

January 3, 2014: Ballots counted. Notify all candidates, Chapter ExCom and Redwood Needles Editor of results.

The Time is Now to Protect Our Trees in Sonoma County

"Exporting Wine to China" was the title of a recent conference in Napa, one of many promoting sales of California wine to virtually unlimited markets. This is an indication that the making of local wines is being overtaken by big business with its characteristic disregard for the web of life. The wine industry is a growth sector that brings with it destruction of habitat and increasing demands on very limited water resources.

The environmental costs of grape growing threaten to overwhelm its economic benefit to the county. Local nonprofit groups compete for millions of dollars of public and private money to restore our watersheds and salmon habitat. At the same time, restoration efforts are thwarted by business interests that are exploiting weak rules that allow the wine industry to be treated as if it consists of benign and diverse producers of healthy food. Small local winemakers that care more for the land will not benefit from the mega-expansion of industrial vineyards. It will mean less water, more competition, and the ruin of this bucolic region.

Updating the Tree Protection Policy is Necessary

Now that more than 75% of Sonoma County valley cropland is used for growing grapes, the wine industry is turning its attention to forested land, which is poorly protected in the county code by the outdated Tree Protection Ordinance. The term protection is currently used very loosely in the ordinance. That is to say, certain types of trees are 'protected' unless someone wants to cut them down. This applies to even very large vineyard proposals which will require leveling of fields of oaks that have provided ground water benefits, habitat, cooling effects, and beauty for centuries. The county's tree protection ordinance allows developers to either replace trees with small trees or to pay a fee. This was the best the County could do in 1985. These mitigations did not and do not apply to agriculture since agricultural projects (such as replacing a forest with a vineyard) do not have to mitigate at all.

Given the above facts, there must be a swift, full court press to update Sonoma County's tree protection ordinance. This update must be based on science including the recognition of the important role trees play in the climate, water, and habitat. Sonoma County will always be a desirable place to live and do business. It does not need to rush to convert forest, woodlands, and wetlands in the service of an unrestrained industry.

Reasonable Review of Highly Destructive Projects

Faced with the above realities, the public is attempting to mount an effort to protect more of the County's trees and natural areas. Currently, large vineyards developments are not subject to the same environmental rules that apply to other large developments. Possible changes in public policy should include establishing environmental thresholds that will be triggered by larger developments. Whether or not environmental review is necessary. Environmental review informs decision-makers and the public so that we can all understand potential impacts and properly avoid or mitigate them.

In the spirit of keeping up with development pressures, we are asking everyone to contact their Sonoma County Supervisor and urge them to update the Tree Protection Ordinance.

—Kimberly Burr, ENVIRONMENTAL LAWYER

2014 Sierra Club Calendars on sale now! See page 2 for details.

Reduce Your Carbon Footprint in 2013!

Join over 470 of your local fellow Sierra Clubbers! To receive future copies of the Redwood Needles via email send a message to: RedwoodNeedles@gmail.com with your name and address, and “newsletter by email” in the subject line; or to receive notification that the current newsletter is available online and a link to it, please specify: “Notification newsletter is online.”