NEWS FROM MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

January—February 2018

Talking about Trash

By Ann Thomas

A new countywide campaign to abate the amount of litter on Marin County roads and public areas is being organized under the umbrella of a public/private collaboration called Clean Marin. The anti-litter coalition seeks to bolster partnerships between residents and local governments to reduce the amount of trash entering creeks, storm drains, and ultimately our bay and ocean. (See "Marin focusing on it's waste-line" in MCL's 2016 September-October newsletter.)

The escalated effort for a cleaner Marin County has been triggered by a recent directive from the State Water Resources Control Board, which periodically updates regulations to reduce waste and pollutants entering waterways. Federal and then state efforts to keep our waters clean began with the federal Clean Water Act and gathered strength in 1990 with US EPA regulations controlling runoff from large industrial sites and other urban areas. As concerns have mounted about the impact of deteriorating water quality on the health of both people and wildlife, the California state water board has ramped up mandates to keep waterways healthy, and Marin has kept pace.

The most recent round of state water board updates focused on trash, with a 2015 staff report stating that: "The presence of trash in surface waters, especially coastal and marine waters, is a serious issue in California...Trash is a threat to aquatic habitat and life as soon as it enters state waters. Mammals, turtles,

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Many hands . . . how volunteers get the work done

Jocelyn Knight

Volunteers use county-provided weed wrenches to remove broom on Horse Hill Preserve in Mill Valley.

Anyone, old or young, with normal strength can pick up a weed wrench and pull out invasive woody plants like French broom. The bright orange tools come in four sizes, including a "mini" that even a toddler can maneuver. With a vigorous pull, the weed wrench will uproot any plant with a stem up to two and a half inches in diameter – even a mature French broom plant. Marin County Parks Department has an ample supply of these tools. The Department also provides a leader to direct the efforts of the many volunteers who help to control invasive weeds on the county's 34 open space preserves.

"Day of Thanks" on Horse Hill

On a bright Saturday morning last November, 150 volunteers of all ages showed up at Alto Bowl/Horse Hill Open Space Preserve in Mill Valley to pull Scotch broom from the hill and be rewarded at noon with pizza. Leading the troops, as he has done with similar teams of volunteers for 14 years, was Greg Reza, one of two volunteer coordinators for Marin County Parks Department. Greg's volunteer activities focus on the open space

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A Message from the President-Purpose and Relevance

Imagine that you are entrusted with a great treasure and that your purpose is to protect it! A century ago, visionaries recognized the need to protect and preserve Marin's scenic lands and waters for the benefit of the public. In 1934, MCL's founders began helping to acquire and preserve many of the parks and open spaces that are the essence of Marin County's character today. Those who followed would come to also recognize the value of biodiversity and cultural heritage that resides in those "natural assets".

Every public acquisition and permanent protection in Marin has come at the price of many hundreds of hours by citizen activists who persisted over time, supported by local governments and funds from many sources. (Read the history "Saving Alto Bowl and Horse Hill") *www.marinconservationleague.org/images/stories/pdfs/events/WH14C_ProgramWeb.pdf*

How does protection of public lands and other natural resources continue today? For MCL, our efforts have shifted from acquiring lands to shaping public policy as a means to safeguarding the environment. A review of MCL's history offers an understanding of how the organization has responded to current and historic threats as they evolved over time, embracing new issues as they've arisen. (See editorial on MCL committees below.)

Among opportunities to protect Marin's treasures are volunteer events to participate hands-on. Opportunities to experience and positively impact the environment increase its relevance to us. As we come to more fully know Marin's assets, we form personal connection; we see what matters and that prompts our future action.

In Upstream, poet Mary Oliver's new collection of essays, she writes, "Something is wrong. I know it, if I don't keep my attention on eternity. May I be the tiniest nail in the house of the universe, tiny but useful." Also, ". . . we are at risk together, or we are on our way to a sustainable world together. We are each other's destiny."

Whether you organize an Adopt a Spot litter cleanup in your neighborhood, volunteer in a "broom bust," or participate in the work of one of MCL's committees, your contribution this year will express a purpose to protect. Opportunities abound throughout Marin to be a "nail in the house of the universe."

Kate Powers

Editorial

Ways to engage-MCL committees

There is no shortage of ways for MCL's environmental advocates to engage in issues they care about, nor is there a shortage of issues! Writing letters, testifying before the Board of Supervisors, convening public workshops, pulling invasive weeds or cleaning up streams and other habitats – all are ways to influence public opinion and public decisions, or simply get essential work done. Volunteer activities like these are demonstrated throughout this Newsletter.

MCL's working committee members engage in all of these activities. Less obvious, perhaps, is behind-the-scenes committee work that determines how MCL makes decisions and acts on them. MCL's working committees have undergirded the organization's advocacy positions and actions for more than 80 years. Whether centered on land use, water supply, sensitive habitats and species, farmland, open space, quality of life, or climate change, they have provided MCL with a structured setting to study issues, engage in thoughtful discussion, and prepare informed positions on a wide range of issues under the rubric of "environment and conservation."

This deliberative committee work explains why MCL's well-considered positions are valued by decision-makers, even when they may disagree. The MCL committee meetings are also educational forums in their own right. As issues are studied and discussed, information is shared and non-experts learn from experts in a cycle of continuous learning. Everyone gains greater knowledge of issues, but ultimately it's the environment that benefits!

MCL has a broad charge to protect the environment

MCL's mission, dating from its early years, is to protect, preserve, and enhance Marin's natural assets – a broad charge that has taken a number of directions over the years. The committees to carry out this mission have varied over time, due in part to shifting current issues, and, in part, to the availability of volunteers to take on responsibility for tracking them. Committee meetings have also varied in how they are conducted.

The Land Use/Transportation Committee (LU/T), with its wide interest in county and local planning and the environmental consequences of proposed developments, is MCL's longest-running committee. For many years a Transportation Committee met separately until the obvious connections between the use of land and transportation brought them together. The combined committee has helped to formulate both land use and transportation policies through successive countywide plan updates, local general plans, and transportation tax measures. And over the years, the committee has influenced the

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Status Updates

Old business in the New Year

Two years ago, the January-February 2016 issue of this Newsletter, led with an article titled: "Old Business in the New Year." The article confirmed the truism that land use and other environmental issues don't end with the year – they simply carry forward into the next calendar year . . . and, in many cases, into the next and the next. What were some of the projects that carried over into 2016 and where are they two years later? We thought we'd take a look.

Dru Parker

Tam Ridge Residences in Corte Madera finally opened in late 2017. Will residents take public transit and bike or walk?

Tam Ridge Residences (aka "WinCup")

In January of 2016, after more than four years under construction, the highly visible 180-unit Tam Ridge Residences ("WinCup") complex still sat unfinished. It was not on MCL's Land Use agenda, but we hoped that in the coming year the controversial development, much-maligned for its density and bulk, insufficient parking, anticipated traffic congestion, and limited affordability, would have an opportunity to demonstrate whether "transit-oriented development" in Marin could work. Would Tam Ridge Residences prove itself a model for compact walkable, bikeable development?

Two years later, the four-story complex is finally finished and accepting residents after being shrouded by financial woes and extensive replacement of building materials. With transit bus service a stone's throw away and grocery stores, other retail establishments, professional services, a gym and spa, two schools, and a public library within walking or biking distance, MCL asks again:

Will Tam Ridge residents park their cars and walk, bike, or take transit to jobs and services?

We recommend that the Town of Corte Madera study the travel habits of the new residents during the new year to help answer that question.

Easton Point (the Martha Property)

Two years ago, the Easton Point development on Tiburon ridge, one of Marin's longest running development proposals, was in hiatus. In 2015 the Final EIR on the proposed 43-residence master plan had not been certified, pending resolution of outstanding issues and impacts such as inadequate fire flow water pressure, traffic hazards, and infeasible mitigation for projected loss of rare plant populations and impacts to endangered California red-legged frog habitat. Other health, safety, and biological issues also needed to be resolved before Marin's Board of Supervisors (BOS) would agree to certify the FEIR.

Late last year the Martha Co. owner-developers submitted a modified plan intended to resolve these issues. It included dedication of 75 acres of the 110-acre site to open space, of which six acres would protect a rare plant population. Responsibility for protecting the plant population and other sensitive resources in perpetuity, as required by the mitigation measure, would fall entirely on a Homeowners' Association (HOA), however. With grave misgivings but mindful of binding legal agreements, the BOS certified the EIR in October and approved the modified master plan, conditional on relocating three home sites to better protect the rare plants. At the same time, the BOS denied approval of an earlier Precise Development Plan because it was no longer consistent with the modified master plan.

As 2018 opens, the owner-developer Martha Company is challenging the County's actions. The case will go back to a federal judge on January 11. The Martha Company is also contesting a complaint filed in Marin Superior Court by a group of residents under the name Tiburon/Belvedere Residents United to Support the Trails (TRUST), which claims a right to use the network of trails on the property that have been open for public use for decades, until their recent closure by the landowner. Also, Tiburon Open Space Committee (TOS) has sued the County, stating that the safety mitigations that Martha proposes (e.g., water pressure) and that the Board has certified, are inadequate and will place residents of Tiburon in danger of wildfire.

At this stage no one can predict how

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Volunteers *from page 1*

preserves – totaling 16,000 acres – while his fellow coordinator, Kirk Schroeder, leads volunteer activities in the county's parks.

Greg's volunteer team partnered on the November "Day of Thanks" with the Tamalpais Lands Collaborative (One Tam), a collaboration of the county's four main public land managers (Marin County Open Space District, Marin Municipal Water District, State Parks, and Golden Gate National Recreation Area), who are working with the Golden Gate National Park Conservancy to coordinate management of the lands that make up Mt. Tamalpais.

Alto Bowl and Horse Hill preserves occupy an extended ridge of Mt.Tam in Mill Valley. Fourteen horses live on Horse Hill, thanks to an agreement between the Alto Bowl Horseowners Association (ABHA) and the County Open Space District. The horse owners of ABHA have been rooting out broom and other invasive weeds for 21 years, supported by teams of volunteers. It's an ongoing battle! The target on November 11 was a patch of resistant Scotch broom that has invaded oak woodlands at the top of the hill. The tall piles of branches left at the end of the day – testimony to a productive day of weeding – will either gradually decompose or, as Greg explains, be used as dens by dusky-footed wood rats, a keystone species that is prey for the endangered northern spotted owl.

Greg Reza leads volunteers on open space

Greg leads his volunteers by combining weed pulling with fun, a sense of community, and valuable lessons in the ecology of grasslands and other habitats in the preserves. He explains why weeds are "bad" for native plants and wildlife habitat. On the Day of Thanks, he welcomed his large team by reminding them that there is much in nature and open space to be thankful for – space for healthy outdoor recreation, and a place for wildlife to forage, seek shelter, and raise their young. He offered gloves and demonstrated how to work with the tools. He pointed out the "good" plants,

Greg Reza leads the troops. Jocelyn Knight

like oak and toyon, and explained the high wildlife value of the abundant native poison oak while cautioning the volunteers against contact!

Greg started working with Marin County Parks as a seasonal assistant in 1996 as he was finishing his Environmental Studies degree in conservation and habitat restoration at Sonoma State University. His love for the outdoors started early in life. From birth to 20 years old, Greg enjoyed regular Sunday visits with his grandfather, who grew a variety of fruits, vegetables, ornamentals and even raised bees and chickens on an eighth of an acre of land surrounded by asphalt near downtown Buena Park. He enjoys a similar connection with nature on the lands of Marin County Parks and Open Space and enjoys sharing that connection with the people of Marin.

Programs for volunteers of all ages and abilities

Together, Greg and Kirk manage five parks and open space volunteer programs for Marin County Parks. It is a productive and rewarding way to engage Marin residents of all ages and abilities in active stewardship of the County's parks and open space lands and facilities. They reported recently that, in fiscal year 2016-17, 20,000 hours were logged by 4,267 volunteers. In Open Space alone, Greg led 92 group and individual programs, from pulling weeds to building and maintaining trails or serving as mounted patrol.

The day on Horse Hill was typical of *Community Volunteer Days* that engage people who seek hands-on land stewardship experiences. Projects like eradicating weeds on Kent Island in Bolinas Lagoon focus on habitat restoration. Other projects such as on White Hill Preserve and the 680 Trail involve building and maintaining trails. The work varies in physical demand, but most activities are suitable for all ages and abilities – beginners, children, and seniors. School "green teams" and Boy and Girl Scouts are ideally suited for these part-day events. For each event, staff provides gloves, tools, and training, and water. For special events like Martin Luther King Day, or Coastal Clean-up, or trail maintenance days at the Stafford Lake Bike Park, there may be morning treats or lunchtime pizza!

Highly self-motivated individuals and groups can participate in the *Environmental Stewardship Program*, which encourages independent projects. The "Broom Service Crew of San Geronimo Valley" meets weekly to pull broom on Giacomini preserve, and the "Broom Busters of Old St. Hilary's" meet monthly in the preserve on Tiburon Ridge. Groups like school service-based learning and corporate teams (Autodesk; Salesforce) can schedule service days with County staff and engage in stewardship of a habitat restoration site, a trail, a playground, or an entire preserve.

Similar to the Sheriff's Neighborhood Watch program, the *Trail Watch/Volunteer Mounted Patrol* is for citizen volunteers who act as the eyes and ears for Open Space District Rangers. Their focus is on educating users about safe, responsible land stewardship and about District rules

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Volunteers *from page 4*

and regulations. On foot, horseback, or mountain bike, they tour the preserves and can keep rangers informed on the day-to-day conditions of the preserves. The mounted patrol began in 1979, and in Fiscal Year 2016-17 patrol members logged 426 field reports and spent 1,065 hours in service to the Department.

MCL 1st Vice President Linda Novy (with Falco) has volunteered with the Trail Watch/Volunteer Mounted Patrol for 15 years. The program relies on citizen participation.

Finally, the *Trail Maintenance Team* is perfect for individuals who want to do strenuous work using hand tools and small power equipment to support rangers and work crews on trail improvement and restoration projects. Recently, volunteers worked on improving the Old Railroad Grade Trail near Fairfax in an area nicknamed "the Plunge" for a steep drop along the trail. Eight-year-old volunteer, Henry, was excited to help improve this section of trail because he had fallen off his bike and injured himself before the new bridge was installed and the trail tread was smoothed by volunteers.

These volunteer programs multiply the staff resources devoted to maintaining the preserves. Costly projects become feasible with volunteer labor. But the greater rewards are the intangible benefits that accrue to staff and volunteers alike. For the volunteers, it's learning about the land, sharing in its stewardship, and having a fun day. For staff, it's the letters of thanks, especially from kids. Says Greg: "The notes we get after an event are like windows into the kids' minds, revealing their impressions of nature and the earth and their pleasure in contributing to its well-being." For further information on volunteer programs on County Open Space, go to *https://www.marincountyparks.org/depts/pk/programs/volunteer*, or call Greg Reza at (415) 473-3778.

New Year *from page 3*

events will play out or when the modified master plan will move into the next stage of plan review. Many decisions, regulatory actions, and approvals must happen in coming years before the property owner will have a clear entitlement to develop the property. In the meantime, TOS continues to seek strategies and funding sources to acquire all or part of the site as open space, and MCL continues to support these efforts.

Strawberry – Seminary site

As 2016 began, North Coast Land Holdings' (NCLH) application to develop a new Branson School campus on this prime site in the Strawberry community near Mill Valley was barely off the ground, and already it was the subject of well-organized opposition. After extensive debate and continued opposition, the Branson School abandoned its involvement in the project. That left NCLH with an $85 million investment in land for a possible educational facility but no institutional partner.

NCLH returned in mid 2017 with a new plan. With a few differences, however, it resembled the previous plan in its intensity of uses: facilities for a 1,000-student population, multiple academic buildings, and more than 400 (with State density bonus) possible new and re-purposed residences unrelated to academic use. On October 30, the County Planning Commission conducted a four-hour hearing before a packed chamber before voting to allow the 1984 Master Plan, which had twice before been extended with little to show for it, to expire on January 1, 2018. The Commission also agreed, therefore, that it would be pointless to prepare an Environmental Impact Report.

The applicant appealed the Planning Commission's actions to the Board of Supervisors, who upheld the Commission's actions on December 11. The next step could be a new master plan application and/or an update of the Strawberry Community Plan and a fresh look at how the Seminary site is to be developed. Under any scenario, it will probably involve much needed housing and a continuing challenge of traffic to mitigate. Clearly what happens on the Seminary site will have regional implications. MCL will continue tracking proposals for the site.

Hanna Ranch hotel application returns

In northern Marin, the New Year will also see the return of a development plan for the 20-acre Hanna Ranch site south of Vintage Oaks Shopping Center. First considered in 2011, the proposal continues to feature a hotel with 125 rooms and space for three restaurants, and has added a large 24-pump Costco gas station. The current proposal avoids encroaching into the Beverly Ehreth Ecological Nature Preserve's 50-foot wetland buffer for the "mitigation pond," which dates from the development of Vintage Oaks. The Hanna Ranch preliminary proposal has been reviewed by Novato's Design Review Commission, which gave it favorable marks eight years ago. The next step will be hearings before the Planning Commission, which could come early in 2018. The North Marin Unit of MCL will continue to track progress and comment at appropriate junctures.

Briefs from Marin's public lands

Muir Woods reservation system

Beginning January 16, an advance reservation will be required to park at Muir Woods National Monument. At a public meeting on November 28th, the National Park Service (NPS) officials presented the parking reservation system that has been under study for several years and is a key part of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the County and NPS in 2014.

The intent of the MOU is to relieve peak traffic congestion and associated safety hazards along Muir Woods Road (aka Frank Valley Rd) for both visitors and local residents, who are often trapped in their homes by lines of traffic on busy weekends. Emergency vehicles have difficulty gaining access to the area. Spreading out visitation through reservations should reduce peak day, seasonal, holiday, and weekend traffic volumes at the monument. Other measures outlined in the MOU include reducing parking along the road down to 30 spaces in three years, enforcing parking restrictions, and expanding shuttle service from Pohono St. in Sausalito to run every weekend of the year and every day during summer, from mid-May to mid-August. The shuttle has been a particular success; last year it served 120,000 passengers.

The concessionaire, Ace Parking Management, Inc., was on hand at the meeting to outline how the system will operate. They began assisting NPS parking staff on December 15 and were scheduled to begin taking reservations on line on January 1. They will continue to assist the NPS as "parking ambassadors" for arriving visitors. Reservations will specify arrival time but will not limit the time visitors spend in the monument nor the number of visitors per car. Parking for a single car will cost $8. Reservations on the Muir Woods shuttle from Pohono St. in Sausalito will cost $3 each for visitors 16 or over. Entry to the monument will continue to be $10 for visitors 16 or over. Visitors arriving at the main entry on foot or by bicycle will pay only the entry fee. Hikers can continue to enter via Ben Johnson, Bootjack, Fern Creek, Canopy View (formerly Ocean View), and Dipsea Trails, or by way of Alice Eastwood Road.

The reservation system has been the subject of extensive public outreach, but many questions are likely to be raised as the system becomes established. A special web site GoMuirWoods.com offers two dozen FAQs. In addition, the NPS set up a 24 hour multilingual call center on January 1st to field questions.

Steelblue

West Peak of Tamalpais, in the foreground, is a prime candidate for restoration.

In March of 2016, MCL hosted a Walk into Conservation History to explore the West Peak of Mt. Tamalpais.

Restoration of West Peak, Mt. Tamalpais

The leader was Gary Yost, a Mill Valley film maker who has earned the title of unofficial historian of a site that he "discovered" on one of his many rambles on Mt. Tam. It is the 106-acre remains of a former U.S. Air Force radar installation that operated for 30 years throughout the "Cold War." From the 1950s through the 1970s, some 300 servicemen and their families were stationed there. The base was closed in 1980, and most of the buildings were razed. Today, the acres of concrete foundations, asphalt roads, rusty chain link fences, infrastructure, a dank two-lane bowling alley and a debris-filled swimming pool are reminders of previous human occupation.

Gary was enchanted by the abandoned base, which is located at 2,573' elevation and offers spectacular 360-degree views of the Bay region and beyond. He wondered how the site might be restored after the U.S. Army had bulldozed 30 feet off the top of the peak, making it a few feet lower than the more prominent East Peak. Gary has now led innumerable hikes to the site, and the

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Public Lands *from page 6*

idea of restoring it is moving closer to a real possibility.

West Peak belongs to the Marin Municipal Water District. For the past year, the site has been under study to determine whether it is feasible to restore all or part to a semblance of its former natural condition and at what cost. Investigations have included geologic testing – the site has extensive outcrops of serpentinite rock; hazardous materials investigations – asbestos and remnants of lead paint will require remediation; and botanical surveys of rare plant species. The water district is sharing funding for the feasibility studies with Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, a partner in the OneTam collaborative and project manager. Project staff have also sought extensive public input through hikes, online surveys, public events, articles in both print and digital media, and a dedicated web page.

Results of these studies will be presented to the MMWD Board of Directors in early spring for consideration of alternatives and cost. Two rough concepts have emerged from the studies, bracketing possible alternatives. Estimates range from $9 million for a "light touch" that would leave much of the concrete in place but revegetate the site and improve access; to $13 million, which would involve more extensive removal of the remnant structural materials, and greater recontouring and replanting. Asphalt and other contaminants would be removed off site under any alternative. Options could also include interpretive materials to explain the 20th century history of the site. Most people queried on future treatment of West Peak expressed their preference for a low-key, natural approach, with restoration of vegetation, including rare plants as possible, and watershed functions, with few other amenities. MCL is following the project with interest.

Nature Note - Manzanita, harbinger of spring

By Nona Dennis with Doreen Smith

To seek the first wildflowers of spring, one might not think to visit chaparral, or even begin the search in December or January, when most wildflower habitats are still producing new foliage. Chaparral is the under-appreciated hero among the county's diverse plant communities. Viewed as an impenetrable thicket of stiff, thorny shrubs covering thin-soiled, rocky slopes exposed to year-round sun, chaparral can be a forbidding environment on a hot summer's day. In winter, it is a perfect watershed partner, shielding the ground from erosive rainfall and demanding little water in return. On close examination it is also full of surprises in its richness of species and adaptive mechanisms for surviving in an otherwise challenging environment. Chaparral makes up roughly ten percent of Mt. Tamalpais' vegetation and is well-distributed on the upper slopes of lesser peaks and ridges of the county, like Big Rock Ridge, Mt. Burdell, San Rafael hills, and San Pedro Ridge. It is found also in the Rush Creek-Bahia Open Space Preserve, and even on Deer Island.

"Spring" arrives in winter

Chaparral responds to the seasons in its own way. During the extended late spring-summer-fall drought, birds and other small creatures exhibit the only activity in the community, while plants wait for the first delivery of rain in late fall. With that rain, "spring" arrives, and winter months become the period of maximum plant growth. A January hike through chaparral can be rewarded by clusters of delicate white or pink, bell-shaped blossoms hanging from the tips of mahogany-hued branches of manzanita.

Last year, Doreen Smith, well-known botanist and rare plant chair with the Marin Chapter of California Native Plant Society, welcomed the significant rainfall that had rescued California in late 2016 after the long period of drought. As she anticipated, it would lead to extra-early flowering of native shrubs like the manzanitas *(Arcostaplylos spp.)* as well as abundant annual wildflowers in spring. In early December 2016, she and her photographer husband Vernon hiked the Bahia Trail in Rush Creek Open Space Preserve and found

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Doreen Smith

Blossoms of common manzanita appear in early winter on the Bahia Trail in Rush Creek Preserve.

Events Recap

MCL Holiday Party Spirit

124 guests attended the December 1st holiday party making it the most well attended MCL party to date. Only greater than the party size was the amount of generosity; guests donated $575 to the North Bay Fire Relief Fund and half a barrel food to the Marin Food Bank. Now that's something to celebrate! See you next year on Dec. 7th.

Clockwise from top right: MCL Directors Greg Zitney, Judy Teichman, David Lewis; Rick Fraites, Stephen Keese, Larry Kennings; MCL Director Nona Dennis, Supervisor Kate Sears, Jean Berensmeier.

Photos by Kirsten Nolan and Melanie Cheng

Slow and Say Hello

A curious horse heeds the message of the Slow and Say Hello campaign to visit with MCL President Kate Powers.

PRNS GMP Public Workshops

Nona Dennis

Left: Brannon Ketchum of the National Park Service educates attendees about Alternatives at one of the Point Reyes National Seashore (PRNS) General Management Plan Amendment workshops.

Below: On November 3rd, Michael Wall, Co-Director of Litigation at NRDC, takes audience questions at the final MCL Business Breakfast of 2017.

MCL Business Breakfast

Kirsten Nolan

Upcoming Events

Jan. 28

Volunteer Opportunity: Plant willow trees in the Chileno Creek watershed

Sunday, January 28, 2018, 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Chileno Valley Ranch
5105 Chileno Valley Rd, Petaluma

We'll learn about the powerful benefits of native willow trees in restoring the watershed including sequestering carbon, and how to collect willow poles from existing trees and how to plant them. All ages welcome! Rain or shine! Bring a bag lunch and water along with loppers and gloves if you have them.

Register: https://chilenovalleywillows.eventbrite.com

Feb. 23

Environmental-Business Breakfast

California ReScape: Cultivating a New Landscape Aesthetic

Friday, February 23, 2018
7:30am - 9:00am

McInnis Park Golf Center
350 Smith Ranch Rd, San Rafael

Tickets: $15 MCL members
$20 community members
https://mclbb_rescape.eventbrite.com
or call (415)-485-6257

Manzanita *from page 7*

the large shrubs of common manzanita (*A. manzanita* ssp. *manzanita*) already in bloom. In contrast, in previous dry years they had bloomed later or not at all.

Taken by this early "show," she dubbed Arctostaphylos as one of Marin CNPS' "January 2017 Plants of the Month" and posted a photograph and notes on the Chapter's web page (www.cnpsmarin.org/plant-science/plant-of-the-month/2017-plants-of-the-month/item/486-january-2017-plants-of-the-month#!Arctostaphylos_virgata_cu). "This common species," she wrote, "is usually the earliest to flower if there is adequate rainfall, except perhaps for the glossy-leaf manzanita (*A. sensitiva*) on Mt. Tamalpais, which also blooms as early as December and January, but may have some flowers all year." This species, also called "sensitive manzanita" or "coin-leaf manzanita," can be viewed within steps of the parking lot opposite Mountain Home Inn or along the Matt Davis Trail above the Mt. Tamalpais fire station.

Doreen also writes: "The other manzanitas in Marin bloom later, during March and April. . . . One of the most beautiful local species is hoary manzanita (*A. canescens* ssp. *canescens*)." With its silvery leaves and rosy pink flowers, it occurs in low spreading, almost pure stands on south-facing sandstone slopes of Mt. Tamalpais. The Matt Davis Trail, east of Bootjack Camp, passes through a fine population that could have been pruned into its almost prostrate form. Two species of Eastwood's manzanita (*A. glandulosa* ssp. *cushingiana* and *A. g. ssp glandulosa*) are also common in the sandstone chaparral of Mt. Tamalpais. They occur, too, on Big Rock Ridge and less commonly on the Marin Headlands and Pt. Reyes.

Manzanitas – the "rock stars" of woody shrub diversity in California

In the recent comprehensive Field Guide to Manzanitas (Kauffmann, M., Parker, T., and Vasey, M. 2015), the authors are effusive in describing the wealth of manzanita species (more than 60 species and subspecies) in California and the astonishing array of environments in which they are found: "They occur on serpentines, dunes, volcanoes, sandstone outcrops, dense shale, granite, gabbro – the list goes on." With all their diversity, however, manzanitas occur most frequently in chaparral on shallow, rocky, and/or nutrient poor soils and all are dependent on fire for regeneration. As a consequence of decades of wildfire suppression on Mt. Tamalpais, manzanitas and associated chaparral species are gradually being shaded out by encroaching Douglas fir, leaving extensive tracts of dead undergrowth as fuel for future wildfire.

Many of manzanita species and subspecies are local endemics, that is, they are found in discrete populations and nowhere else. Doreen Smith points out that Marin hosts two endemic manzanitas. The rare Marin manzanita (*A. virgata*) grows on Bolinas Ridge and on Pt. Reyes (In past years it was also identified in Muir Woods, near Camp Alice Eastwood.). The other Marin endemic is the Mount Tamalpais manzanita (*A. montana* ssp. *montana*), which grows mostly on and around Mt Tamalpais in chaparral serpentine-derived soils (e.g., above Boot Jack Camp, on West Peak, Carson area, and Giacomini Open Space). It qualifies as a rare species, and recent trail projects have threatened to disturb known populations in Giacomini preserve (Hunt Camp Trail) and the Azalea Hill area on the MMWD watershed. We are fortunate, Doreen notes, to have thousands of the long-lived shrubs in the county.

So take an early winter hike! Bring a 10X hand lens and peer into the small but perfect bell-shaped corolla of an early-blooming manzanita. It means that spring is around the corner.

Editorial *from page 2*

disposition of major tracts of land in the county, such as the St. Vincents and Silveira Ranch properties. The committee meets regularly on the first Wednesday of the month from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. in the MCL conference room.

The MCL **Parks and Open Space Committee (P&OS)** has a full agenda keeping track of conditions on the publicly owned watershed, parklands, and open space that make up more than 50 percent of Marin County. In earlier decades, when acquisition of private lands for the public was a primary focus of the League, the P&OS committee led major campaigns to acquire target lands. Now, in an era of ecological pressures on public lands – such as wildland fire hazard and climate change combined with unprecedented popularity of outdoor recreation – the committee works with the four major agencies that manage parks and open space lands, providing constructive input and volunteering to protect these lands from impairment. To support Parks and Open Space, the **Invasive Plants Subcommittee** deals exclusively with the widespread threat of non-native invasive species to native habits and buildup of wildfire fuel on all of Marin's public lands. The P&OS Committee meets monthly at MCL offices on the second Thursday, from 3:00 – 5:00 p.m. The Invasive Plants Subcommittee meets on the third Wednesday, from 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Water and Watersheds, also a long-standing committee, currently functions as a Speakers Series rather than as a policy-making group. People attend its popular meetings to learn about current programs from officials and other experts engaged in managing water, wastewater, and related resources such as wetlands and fisheries in both the county and the state. Long-time members will recall that MCL played a key role in defeating the infamous Peripheral Canal in the early 1980s. MCL members continue to track the latest strategies by the state to divert Northern California water under the Delta for delivery to the south. The Speakers Series meeting dates and locations vary and are announced in e-mail notifications.

New MCL committees are formed in response to emerging issues

In recent years MCL formed two committees in response to emerging issues that warranted attention. **The Climate Action Working Group (CAWG)** was launched eight years ago in response to the critical need to combat global changes in temperature and increasing greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere. It regrouped in 2014 and since that time has served as a quasi-round table for representatives from numerous nonprofits and government agencies on topics related to climate change – e.g., renewable energy, local Climate Action Plans to meet California's greenhouse gas reduction targets, electric vehicles, carbon farming and other forms of sequestration, zero fossil fuel, and adaptation to sea level rise, among others. Committee members hear regular updates from officials and experts. In various configurations, the CAWG has worked collaboratively with other Marin groups to put on public meetings on climate-related topics, working toward broader public awareness that individual actions are essential to reducing our collective "carbon footprint." The CAWG meets at MCL offices on the third Friday of the month from 9:00 – 11:00 a.m.

The **Agricultural Land Use Committee (Ag/LU)** was formed in 2014 in response to a series of agricultural-related issues, such as the County's update of its Local Coastal Program, continued ranching on Point Reyes National Seashore, and others that affect all or part of the 35 percent of Marin that is primarily in rangeland-based agriculture. The Ag/LU replaced MCL's former Rural Land Use Committee and has been beneficial in re-establishing a constructive working relationship between MCL (largely focused on Eastern Marin) and the agricultural community (primarily in West Marin). The Ag/LU quarterly meetings in Pt. Reyes Station bring together a large mixed group to hear experts on diverse subjects ranging from managing tule elk herds in California to understanding the effect of fluctuating organic milk prices on the viability of the small dairy ranches characteristic of Marin. Meetings of the committee are held quarterly on the last Friday of the month in Pt. Reyes Station at the Marin County Farm Bureau, from 9:30 – noon.

In previous decades, MCL also supported unit committees that focused on geographic regions of the County. The **North Marin Unit** persists today after more than 40 years of continuous activity, and continues to address issues that are distinctive to the northeastern gateway to Marin.

We welcome new committee members. For further information on joining an MCL committee, call 415-485-6257, or email mcl@marinconservationleague.org.

Nona Dennis, Editor

Agricultural Land Use Committee
Meets quarterly on the fourth Friday of the first month of the quarter at the Marin County Farm Bureau.

Climate Action Working Group
Meets the third Friday of each month, 9am-11am at the MCL office.

Land Use and Transportation
Meets the first Wednesday of each month, 9am-11am at the MCL office.

North Marin Unit
Visit www.conservationleague.org for meeting dates

Parks and Open Space
Meets the second Thursday of each month, 3pm-5pm at the MCL office.

Invasive Plant Subcommittee
Meets the third Wednesday of the month, 3pm-5pm at the MCL office.

Water and Watersheds
Visit www.conservationleague.org for meeting dates.

Trash *from page 1*

birds, fish, and crustaceans are threatened following the ingestion of, or entanglement by, trash. (These) can be fatal for freshwater, estuarine, and marine life. Similarly, habitat alteration and degradation due to trash can make natural habitats unsuitable for spawning, migration, and preservation of aquatic life…."

The Marin County Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program (MCSTOPPP) is helping to facilitate the Clean Marin campaign. A major goal of this agency, which comprises representatives from the county and all 11 cities and towns, is to protect the water quality of urban runoff entering creeks and wetlands. The stormwater network already sponsors numerous programs for businesses and members of the public, including anti-pesticide drives, contractor workshops, and educational materials promoting creek and water quality stewardship.

The water board's current Trash Amendment requires jurisdictions to undertake one of two trash-reduction programs in priority land use areas, i.e., areas of high density residential, industrial, commercial, mixed urban, and transportation stations: 1) install devices that are capable of capturing particles five millimeters or larger (less than a pencil eraser) in all storm drains; or 2) install the devices where most beneficial, while implementing programs that reduce trash to the same level of full-scale use of trash capture devices. Many Marin County communities will opt for the second alternative, and volunteer anti-litter groups play an important role.

A Trash Summit on November 1 kicked off the countywide program with a keynote address by Save the Bay Executive Director David Lewis. Anti-litter groups in Mill Valley, San Rafael, and Novato were already in action in cooperation with local businesses and public officials. The goal is to have similar groups active in all areas of the county.

Cleanup activities that are underway or being developed include Adopt-A-Spot, Green Business projects to engage merchants in taking the "Clean & Green Business Pledge," Scoop the Poop to pick up dog stool that can spread diseases to kids, pets, and creek species, and Tarp Your Load to cover unsecured truck loads.

At the most recent Tarp Your Load event in November, MCSTOPPP staff and volunteers, with assistance of the California Highway Patrol, handed out 78 tarps to trucks with uncovered loads coming to the Marin Resource Recovery Center in San Rafael. Another approximately 40 drivers who came in with covered loads were given a 'thank you' gift card. Unsecured loads, such as yard and landscaping cleanup debris, are required to be covered by the California Vehicle Code.

MCSTOPPP invites anyone interested in being involved in the Clean Marin efforts to contact MCSTOPPP staff at McStoppp@marincounty.org.

Angela Clapp

Passing out free tarps at the November Tarp Your Load event at the Marin Resource Recovery Center were Jill Young of Clean Mill Valley, Melissa Apuya with the office of State Assemblyman Marc Levine, CHP Officer Patrick Roth, and Laurie Sheldon with San Rafael Clean.

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Issue Committee Meeting Schedule (subject to change—check website)

Land Use and Transportation:
1st Wed. of the month, 9:00 AM—11:00 AM

Parks and Open Space:
2nd Thurs. of the month, 3:00—5:00 PM

Invasive Plant Subcommittee of POS:
3rd Wed. of the month, 3:00—5:00 PM

Climate Action Working Group: 3rd Fri. of the month, 9:00 AM—11:00 AM

Agricultural Land Use: meets quarterly; Water and Watersheds, North Marin Unit: Check website for times and locations

Marin Conservation League was founded in 1934 to preserve, protect and enhance Marin County's natural assets. MCL is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization. All contributions and memberships are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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