

Wildfire-action for climate and environmental resiliency

by Mike Swezy

Climate change is driving wildfire risk

The news regarding climate change is not getting better. Loss of polar ice, loss of snowpack, sea level rise, extensive tundra fires in the Arctic, and ocean acidification are increasing. The degree of severity is the prime uncertainty. Californians are witnessing the immediate impacts of climate change while in the midst of one of the most severe long-term droughts that has ever been measured. Scientists believe that with continued increases in atmospheric CO₂, the "megadrought" will likely worsen.

Wildfire then and now

Due to our beloved Mediterranean climate with its rain-free summers and fall, California will always have wildfires. Before European settlement of California, the prevalence of low intensity wildfire, from stewardship activities by indigenous people and episodic lightning ignitions, limited the frequency and extent of extreme fires. Fires were sufficient to maintain fire-adapted habitats across California. Subsequent widespread logging and long-term fire suppression increased wildfire fuel hazards. Ever-expanding human development into wildlands compounded the risk and

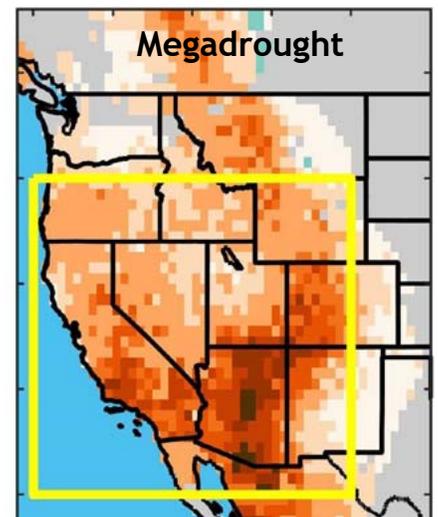
frequency of catastrophic fires due to human ignition sources and the presence of homes.

Tragically, human induced changes in the climate are accelerating the threat from this underlying condition: general atmospheric warming, lengthened fire season, and prolonged drought have caused incredible losses in California. We all watched in horror in 2017 as the Tubbs Fire in Santa Rosa killed 22 people and burned 36,807 acres. Worse, the following year the Camp Fire killed 85 people and torched a staggering 153,336 acres. Now in 2020, we are witness to massive wildfires destroying thousands of homes with the two most hazardous months of fire season still ahead. California's 2018 Climate Change Assessment predicts large fires (including megafires of 100,000 acres or more) will likely increase by 50 percent and acreage burned by at least 77 percent by the end of this century unless CO₂ emissions are dramatically curtailed.

Marin's and MCL's responses

Marin has its own well-documented history of wind-driven catastrophic wildfires whose boundaries overlap many of Marin's neighborhoods. The same recipe for disaster seen in other North Bay fires

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Areas of southwestern North America affected by drought in the early 2000s; darker colors are more intense. Yellow box shows the study area. (Adapted from Williams et al., Science, 2020)

What is a Megadrought?

Megadroughts are occasional events of unusual severity lasting for at least 20 years. During the past 1,200 years, four major mega droughts occurred in the American West: during the 800s, the mid-1100s, the 1200s, and the late 1500s. The current one is already at least as bad as the worst on record and could continue.

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A Message from the President: Environmental innovation continues

Bonnie and I moved from Oakland to San Rafael seven years ago after we found ourselves spending a lot of time in Marin, repeatedly drawn to the natural beauty of its parks and open spaces, and ranches. But the uniqueness was more than natural beauty—it also was the sheer amount of conserved land: over half of Marin’s land surface.



Over time we began to understand how that protection happened. The film [Rebels with a Cause](#) showed that dogged, considered, yet bold environmental advocacy and a combination of partnerships, cultivated relationships with decision-makers and their staff, and smart financial, legal, and political stratagems resulted in innovative ways to protect land. Examples include: making strategic land purchases to save Bolinas Lagoon and Tomales Bay, creating Point Reyes National Seashore (one of the first National Seashores), forming Marin Agricultural Land Trust to enable purchase of agricultural land development

rights and thereby sustain family farms, creating open space preserves--the list goes on. The film features bold environmental innovators like Marty Griffin—this year’s MCL Peter Behr Lifetime Achievement awardee. Fast forward to today’s Marin, and much environmental innovation focuses on implementing best practices and policies in: stewarding public parks and supporting agriculture land to conserve native ecosystems and biodiversity—such as improving soil, stream, wetland, grassland and forest health; preventing catastrophic wildfires; and increasing equity in access. All this must be done in an era when adapting to climate change—and its heat, drought, and flooding--makes conserving ecological systems even more challenging. Environmental innovation now also must include reducing greenhouse gases by implementing cutting edge renewable energy technologies, vehicle and building electrification policies, and carbon sequestration techniques.

So yes, it’s a different world, and much more science-based, but many of the same approaches still work now as then—the dogged yet bold environmental advocacy, the cultivated partnerships and relationships, and creative financial, legal and political stratagems when needed. As we’ve done consistently in our 86-year history, and with your help, we at Marin Conservation League will continue to advocate for, and help support and accelerate, the very best environmental practices and policies that benefit Marin and can be spread elsewhere.

In addition to reading this Newsletter, [subscribe to the MCL e-News](#) for updates on presentations and discussions of smart ecological system conservation practices. Better yet, attend our committee meetings (currently held via Zoom) and come work with us on issues and projects.

Robert Miller, President

Editorial

Elk, wild nature, and ranches can coexist on Point Reyes National Seashore

(This Editorial appeared in a somewhat longer form in the [MCL November-December 2019 Newsletter](#). Nona Dennis)

The National Park Service (NPS) is about to release a long-awaited Final Environmental Impact Statement that analyzes whether and under what conditions cattle ranches and dairies that have occupied the land for more than 150 years will continue to operate on Point Reyes National Seashore (PRNS, or “Park” or “Seashore”). Marin Conservation League believes that ranching under an amended General Management Plan (GMPA) should continue. Here’s why.

Convergent histories

This need not be an either/or decision – continued ranching and dairies vs. elk and wild nature. A comprehensive understanding of the peninsula shows how histories have converged to form a unique place of natural beauty, scientific and historic/cultural interest, rare plants and wildlife, and public recreation. Humans and nature have intertwined on the Point Reyes Peninsula for millennia, beginning with the first indigenous inhabitants of coastal lands, who managed the landscape to satisfy

their needs; the centuries-old pastoral settlement of West Marin that included the peninsula; much later, the emerging idea of a West Coast national seashore; the evolution of national park management since the Seashore’s authorization in 1962; reintroduction of elk in the late 1970s; and more. One begins to understand how layers of human activity have left their mark in an otherwise enduring ecological and geologic setting that is eons old.

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Editorial

Seashore [from page 2](#)

Marin Conservation League’s own early history coincides with early visions of a national park on the peninsula. Founded in 1934, MCL identified the need to protect Marin’s scenic coastal lands for the public. From a planned list of priorities for acquisition, MCL’s first success was public acquisition of a 54-acre Drakes Beach, the first “piece” of the National-Seashore-to-come. Throughout the 1950s MCL worked closely with open space activists to prevent commercial and residential development and promote a national park on Point Reyes. Caroline Livermore, then president of MCL, was among local conservationists who expressed interest in preserving the human as well as the natural landscape of the peninsula under the NPS. She wrote, “as true conservationists we want to preserve dairying in this area and will do what we can to promote the health of this industry which is so valuable to the economic and material well being of our people and which adds to the pastoral scene adjacent to proposed recreation areas.”

MCL volunteered in the 1969 Save Our Shore (SOS) campaign to open up Land and Water Conservation funds for acquiring ranches within the boundaries of the park. MCL worked with other local conservationists to designate maximum park land as Natural in the preliminary master plan for the Seashore, and later to ensure that the maximum number of acres be designated as Wilderness. Today, Wilderness and Potential Wilderness

(33,000 acres) and Natural Area make up 75 percent of the park, while Pastoral (ranching – 18,000 acres) comprises 25 percent of the 71,000-acre park. (The EIS also includes 10,000 acres of ranches in the Northern District of Golden Gate National Recreation Area managed by PRNS.)

NPS’ conceptual approach to including the ranches on the peninsula into a park also evolved over time. Initially recognized as a means to maintain the “pastoral and rural character” of the peninsula, ranches were included in the 1962 authorizing legislation largely to cut costs and respect private property. Ranchers nonetheless played a key role in 1969 in supporting the park and willingly sold their lands to fulfill the park’s intent. Later amendments to the legislation in 1978 allowed NPS to extend ranch leases.

NPS management of the Seashore early on recognized that cows and cattle were not only part of the cultural history of the Seashore but, in a sense, also “co-managers” of a grazed pastoral landscape that would transition into brush without them. The ranches’ historic significance was reinforced over the years by recognition by NPS as a “vernacular cultural landscape,” and most recently, by national register listing of Olema Valley Dairy Ranches Historic District and Point Reyes Peninsula Dairy Ranching Historic District in 2018.

In a parallel timeframe, agricultural lands in Marin, roughly one-third of Marin’s land area, were increasingly threatened in the 1960s and 1970s with urban development. MCL had come to recognize the need to protect Marin’s working agricultural lands as the best means to protect the abundant natural resources – open space; wildlife habitat and connectivity;

watersheds, creeks and streams – on these lands. County agricultural records over the years reinforced the understanding that the ranches on the Seashore were an integral part of a single cultural heritage and single agricultural economy – a critical mass that has enabled the whole to remain viable.

Point Reyes National Seashore connects to its cultural and ecological surroundings

All of these “histories” point to Point Reyes National Seashore’s local, regional, and national connections to West Marin’s millennia-old indigenous heritage, generations-old agricultural and rural culture, regional metropolitan population within an hour’s reach, and a seashore of national interest. The park is also connected to the unrivaled marine and coastal ecosystems along the Pacific coast, including the rangelands that dominate Marin’s and much of northern California’s coastal landscape. Since the National Park System’s inception in 1916, national parks have been interconnected with the surrounding world, with deep economic and cultural connections to adjacent communities and ecological linkages to surrounding landscapes. Point Reyes National Seashore proves the case! MCL supports ranching on the Seashore because it is compatible with and does not compromise “the natural environment, recreational opportunities, and the scientific and historical merits” that prompted the park’s original authorization. Traditional family ranching can continue, but with the additional guidance of environmentally sound mitigation measures outlined in the EIS. Healthy populations of elk can be managed as they are in every elk preserve in the state. And three-quarters of the park will continue to be “natural” and “wilderness” in perpetuity.



Carlos Porrata

Cattle and Elk graze together in Point Reyes National Seashore.

Wildfire Action

Marin and Wildfire *from page 1*

exists here. Marin has had its own fire safe council ("FireSafe Marin") in place since the Oakland fire in 1991. A Marin County Community Wildfire Protection Plan was completed in 2016. An update of this plan is planned for later this year.

In response to heightened wildfire concerns, MCL formed a new issue committee in early 2019 called the Fire and Environment Working Group, aka "Fuego" (Spanish for fire) to study the intersection of ecology with wildfire and how land managers and fire agencies are managing the changing fire environment. One of the committee's initial actions early this year was to collaborate with Marin Chapter of the California Native Plant Society (CNPS), with the intent of bringing better information to residents on how to incorporate native and wildlife-friendly plants, including pollinators, retain heritage trees, and take other actions to enhance ecological values while creating defensible space in their individual yards. Such efforts could scale up to a community or even a regional level.

Out of this early collaboration, MCL worked with Marin CNPS, Bee Audacious (a pollinator advocacy organization), and Marin Art and Garden Center to produce a sold-out symposium called "Home Landscaping in a Changing Environment: Fire Smart, Water-Wise, and Biodiverse." It



Linda Novy

Paul daSilva was one of many expert speakers who presented to a sold out audience at the Home Landscaping in a Changing Environment Symposium.

featured experts in blending environmental initiatives with fire safety.

Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority

Days after the symposium, the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority (MWPA) was created with the passage of Proposition C. Over 70 percent of the voters approved MWPA as a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) composed of 17 taxing authorities that represent all of Marin, with the exception of Belvedere and Tiburon. The MWPA was formed to develop and implement a comprehensive wildfire prevention, education, and emergency preparedness plan throughout most of Marin County. The parcel tax will raise about \$19 million per year for ten years. Key elements of this program include: fuel reduction; improved wildfire detection, warnings and evacuation routes; low income grants; public education; defensible space evaluations; and local wildfire mitigation.

The MWPA scope reflects new thinking on limiting deaths and property damage associated with intense wildfires recognizing that home safety is most dependent on reducing the ignitability of structures from wind driven embers ("home hardening"), that people need to be prepared and know how to evacuate, and that escape routes must be passable and safe. Inspection programs and public education funded by the MWPA will center on these issues.

MCL's early support for Measure C

As early as mid-2019, MCL joined forces with climate activists in supporting the JPA concept at local agency hearings. Together we also worked to secure language in the JPA ballot statement that recognized climate change as a wildfire driver and the

importance of implementing the JPA's work in an environmentally sound manner. We secured language assuring environmental representation in the governance structure and on the citizen oversight committee. In October of 2019, the MCL board voted to support Measure C with the promise that the work, especially to reduce vegetation fuel hazards, would be done in an environmentally sustainable fashion and could actually improve environmental conditions.

Ecological Sound Practices launched

The launch of Ecologically Sound Practices Partnership (ESP) was marked by a January 8, 2020 meeting at MCL offices. Over 70 environmentalists, climate activists, agency staff, and other community experts worked to define concerns and opportunities. A primary product of the meeting was an in-depth inventory of environmental concerns (see graphic, page 5):

Following the approval of Measure C, ESP formed three committees which are now meeting on a regular basis:

1. Vegetation Management and Habitat Protection: This group is focused on developing best management practices that protect native plants and habitat resources in fuel reduction projects in the wildland urban interface, providing subject matter expertise for project development, and environmental regulatory compliance.

2. Carbon Resource Management: This group works on best management practices to reduce carbon emissions, enhance carbon sequestration and support a healthy Marin landscape. A biomass study to optimize recovery of the expected increase in green waste generated by fire prevention funds is an early ESP project.

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Marin and Wildfire *from page 4*

3. Defensible Space/Bio-diverse, Fire Smart, Water Wise: This team is providing best practices and ecological factors, such as information on wildlife and wildlife habitats, that can be incorporated into defensible space, for target audiences including residents, landscape professionals, and fire inspectors.

Joining forces with the ESP in interacting with the MWPA on environmental issues is the Fire and Environment Resiliency Network (FERN) a coalition of Marin Audubon Society, CNPS, and Environmental Action Committee. FERN members are also participating in the ESP committees and sharing information and perspectives on native plants, wildlife habitat, and environmental compliance.

Values of the ESP Partnership

ESP Partnership is a collaboration of fire authorities and climate and environmental

organizations of Marin working to mitigate wildfire risk. It provides a forum to bring questions, concerns and solutions to the table. The coalition also works as advisors, defining best environmental practices to guide the implementation of the wildfire prevention plans and gives recommendations on specific projects. This coordinated communication between fire professionals and the environmental community can develop solutions that draw on the wide expertise in the community and can reduce redundant efforts.

The ESP collaboration between fire officials and the environmental community is rare and could provide leadership for other regions struggling to improve fire safety and maintain environmentally healthy landscapes in a sustainable way. ESP is open to all interested.

Go to <https://www.marinwildfire.org> to learn more about the relationship between MWPA and ESP.

Related Events

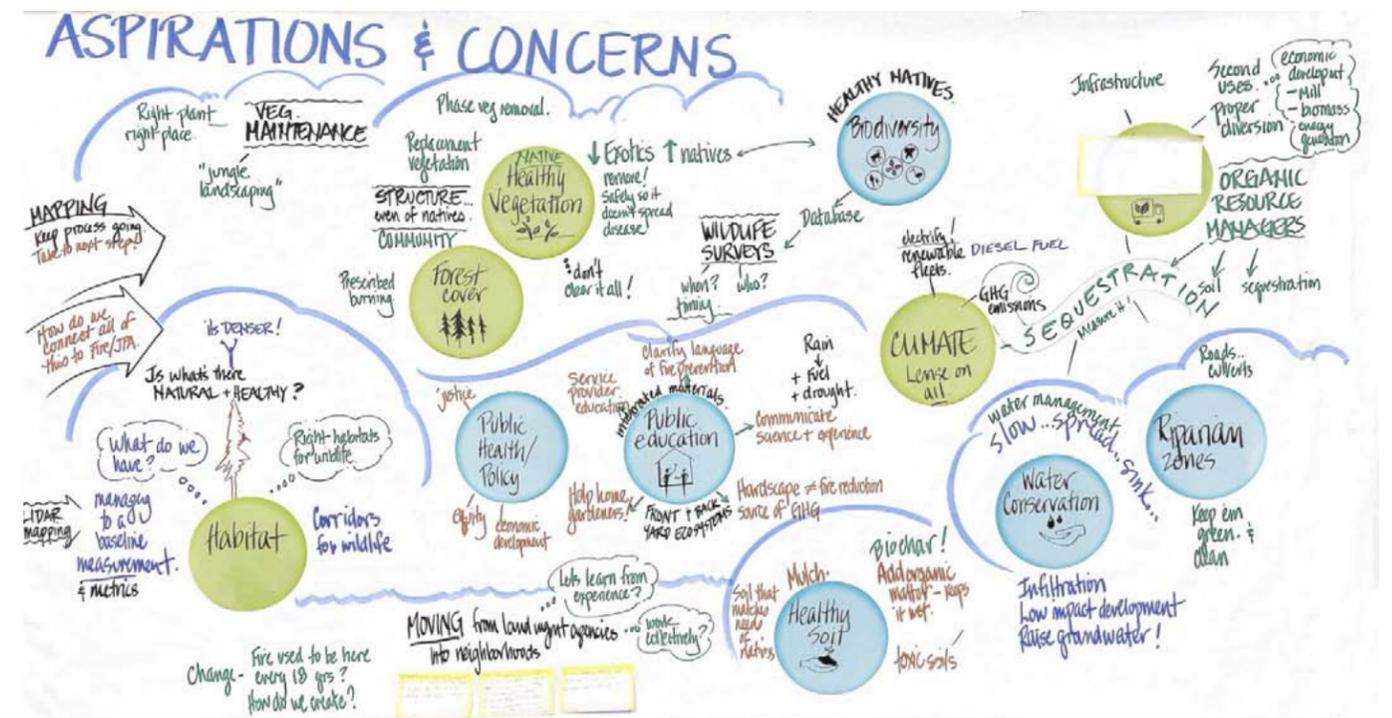
Webinar:
Community Organizing for Fire Preparedness & Incorporation of Ecologically Sound Practices (ESP)

Speakers:
Firewise Liason John Hansen;
Belle Cole, ESP Chair

September 29, 6:00 pm
[Join via Zoom](#) with meeting ID:
873 8241 5962

MCL Fire & Environment Working Group

Meets the second Monday of every month, 3:00 - 5:00 pm.
Visit marinconservationleague.org for speaker announcements and zoom links.



MCL 2020 ENVIRONMENTAL

ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Peter Behr Award for Lifetime Achievement:
Dr. L. Martin Griffin



MCL Green Award for Environmental Achievement:
Environmental Forum of Marin



John M. McPhail, Jr. Green Business Award:
Bellam Self Storage & Boxes



Ted Wellman Water Award:
Bay Shore Studies



Youth Award for Environmental Action:
Niklas Alexander Ugalde Recarte



MCL Volunteer Award:
Doug Wilson



**Peter Behr Award for Lifetime Achievement:
Dr. L. Martin (Marty) Griffin**

Months ago – before the social distancing of COVID-19 became our new reality – MCL had selected **Marty Griffin** to receive the Peter Behr Lifetime Achievement Award at its Annual Dinner in April. After all, Marty would soon turn 100, and the honor was long overdue – his environmental deeds in Marin are the stuff of legend! MCL's [March-April Newsletter](#) profiled Marty's key accomplishments as a kind of appetizer for the main dinner event, which, of course, had to be shelved.



Jocelyn Knight

Now that Marty's 100th Birthday has been virtually celebrated (in July), this Newsletter feature, which honors all the Awardees who were denied public recognition at the canceled dinner, recaps a few of Marty's achievements and picks up on his current dedication, undiminished by age, to saving threatened environments!

Marty may be best known in Marin for his crusades to benefit three critical estuaries – Richardson Bay, Bolinas Lagoon, and Tomales Bay. His work resulted in sparing thousands of acres of Marin's coastal lands from development and generated countless stories about his encounters with both champions and adversaries. We are fortunate that his 1998 book "Saving the Marin-Sonoma Coast" – an account of mid 20th century conservation in Marin and Sonoma County – documents these stories.

It was during the "Saving of Richardson Bay" campaign that Marty learned a valuable lesson from Caroline Livermore, four decades his senior, that would last him a lifetime of negotiating strategic land acquisitions: "Flash the cash and let them know you mean business." Over the years, he made good use of his ability to secure land with a handshake and a modest check as a "down payment."

After the defeat of a 900-acre development in Richardson Bay, where thousands of migrating waterfowl spend the winter, Marty turned his attention to Bolinas Lagoon, the provisional site of a large resort. There, the first target was Canyon Ranch, home of an egret and great blue heron rookery. That was the first of several strategic acquisitions that form the overall [Audubon Canyon Ranch \(ACR\) preserve](#). A half-century

later the birds have moved on, but the educational programs for school kids, led by troops of trained docents, continue at the (now) Martin Griffin Preserve, and the Environmental Forum of Marin, conceived at ACR, carries on its programs to create new environmental advocates in the larger Marin community. These twin-legacies of Marty's efforts have touched the lives of thousands.

To the North, Tomales Bay was the third Marin watershed under development attack. Marty and his colleagues found ways to thwart a shoreline freeway and water transmission pipeline by acquiring key properties along the Bay, including the gift of Cypress Grove, the crown jewel on the east Tomales Bay shoreline. With the institution of A-60 zoning in 1970, Marin County was thus able to keep agricultural West Marin from transforming into a community of 150,000.

Marty's never-ending pursuit of protecting environmental integrity went on for many decades in both Marin and Sonoma counties and has not abated. His current crusade is to rid the Point Reyes National Seashore of cattle! He is passionate in his belief that cows and cattle do not belong in a national park, and sees this as a number one priority issue in the County. What about the next generation of activists? As he looks ahead, beyond the environmental gains and losses of his own lifetime, he broadly challenges young environmentalists to "save whatever is left of the planet!"

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**MCL Green Award for Environmental Achievement:
Environmental Forum of Marin**



EFM Master Class 45 Courtesy of EFM

Environmental Forum of Marin (EFM), an almost 50-year old non-profit volunteer organization, continues its tradition of innovation and leadership in environmental education. [EFM](#) "Promotes a Sustainable World through Environmental Education" by training and inspiring its students "to advocate for policies that enhance the natural and built environment." Its founder, Marty Griffin, and founding teachers, Kathy Cuneo, Nona Dennis, Remmy Kingsley, and Phyllis Faber, must be pleased. To-date EFM's Master Class Program has helped educate over a thousand graduates, many of whom have become leaders in government, business, and in other non-profit organizations including MCL.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, EFM's Master Class is going virtual as "[Forum 2020](#)", beginning in September. Its overarching focus will be on climate issues. As Susan Rusche, President, noted, "climate change is the existential issue of our time. Forum 2020 will educate and empower

people to better act to adapt and mitigate climate change." The first Forum speaker, Ellie Cohen, CEO of The Climate Center, will speak about "No More Business as Usual" and discuss scalable solutions for now and social equity, community resilience and other topics. The organization is aligning its climate focus with another important issue of our time: the intersection of climate change with social justice.

Susan believes the top environmental challenges in Marin are sea level rise, housing, and wildlife/urban interface areas. "Action needs to be taken on Sea Level Rise mitigation soon. Low lying areas such as Marin City and The Canal in San Rafael are especially vulnerable."

When asked what ideals or motives have driven her to advocate and protect Marin's environment, Susan said, "Most of my childhood was spent in Mill Valley and the Sierras in the summers and I developed a deep love of the natural world from those experiences. As Mrs. Terwilliger always said – we take care of what we love!" Susan encourages a visit to the EFM website, <https://marinefm.org/>, to sample past lectures, handouts, and a Biweekly Commentary on What's New and Newsworthy.

This all-volunteer organization of nine board members and five non-board members and Executive Director Kim Rago is a treasured Marin County gem and well deserves the MCL Green Award for Environmental Leadership for its outstanding and evolving environmental leadership.

**John M. McPhail, Jr. Green Business Award:
Bellam Self Storage & Boxes**



Courtesy Andree Jansheski

John and Andree Jansheski stand amidst their solar panel installation.

Bellam Self Storage & Boxes is a Marin County Certified Green Business, a long-time MCL Business Member, and probably one of the greenest businesses in town! John E. Jansheski, founded the business in 1982, and he and his wife, Andree, embarked on a program of environmental stewardship that continues to grow. Since John's passing, Andree has continued their shared vision of a clean, green and sustainable business. [Bellam's web site](#) highlights many of the steps they have taken to create sustainable business practices, reduce their carbon footprint, and reduce their "litter footprint".

The Jansheskis' personal commitment to "living and working without damaging or draining their environment" is a journey, amplified by a trip to Alaska in the late

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MCL 2020 ENVIRONMENTAL

ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

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1990's, where they learned that pollution of the ocean and climate change were threatening the majestic eagles. They decided to ramp up ways to reduce their impact on the environment

Andree and John met with Dana Armanino, Principal Sustainability Planner with Marin County, who guided them in how to make their 60,000 sq. ft. storage facility on Bellam Blvd., a greener business. First they tackled energy saving lighting; then they applied an E-Foam product on the roof to reduce heat transfer and the need for air conditioning. They chose environmentally friendly paint, maintenance and cleaning products, and they use and sell a non-chemical insect deterrent. Then they added low-flow toilets, sensor faucets, unbleached hand towels, and green cleaning products. Outside they converted to low water-use plants and drip irrigation. They took a big leap to solar in 2004 and now create more power than they use under the Marin Clean Energy Rebate program. In 2008, they removed all gas, thus making their building 100% solar-powered. Andree said that seeing their affirmative actions for the environment take hold has shaped their worldview.

Closest to Andree's heart, however, is her personal commitment to reduce litter. She patrols her building and nearby areas to pick up trash. In fact, litter pick up and consumer choice are her starting point "because we can solve it ourselves". Making "that connection between personal behavior and our own choices" is the most compelling environmental challenge in Marin. By connecting our actions with environmental impacts such as "pipeline spills and oil consumption; fossil fuels and climate change; micro-plastics in our rain and excessive packaging, we can make Marin cleaner, greener and healthier."

"It all starts with where you live and your personal responsibility to be part of the solution," says Andree, who learned

to take personal responsibility at a young age to "hold up her end of the deal." Even then, she was picking up the rare piece of litter as she walked home from school. Fast forward, the Jansheskis have set a high bar for environmental stewardship through their business practices and personal commitment. When you visit or drive by Bellam Self Storage, look up at the 272 solar roof panels and down at the clean sidewalk and street and appreciate how the business is helping to keep Marin County cleaner.

**Ted Wellman Water Award:
Bay Shore Studies**



Courtesy Bay Shore Studies

A docent led expedition.

Bay Shore Studies (BSS) is an educational outreach program of the Estuary and Ocean Science Center (EOS). EOS, a research and service organization of San Francisco State, is beautifully situated on the Tiburon peninsula at the Romberg Tiburon Campus. BSS was originally started in 1974 by marine naturalist Lani Uhry. It is a docent training and opportunity to teach children about the out-of-doors. It was inspired by the legendary Mrs. Elizabeth Terwilliger's approach, emphasizing inquiry and wondering for young people.

Teachers who bring their classes to the program receive a comprehensive guide explaining Bay ecology and conservation; their students explore the beach at low tides and receive an introductory handbook

of basic ecology and data sheets to record scientific data. The materials and activities support the Next Generation Science and Common Core Standards which introduce themes such as life cycles and interdependent relationships in ecosystems. Info can be found at [Bay Shore Studies' website](#), Unfortunately, COVID-19 concerns have cancelled programs this year. But when the program resumes, 3rd through 5th grade students will once again explore the model ecological community along the beach of the Richardson Bay Audubon Center and Sanctuary.

We recently spoke with Erin Blackwood, the program's coordinator, and Karina Nielsen, PhD, Executive Director of EOS, about what they believe are the top three environmental challenges facing Marin. They responded: "Climate change and the need to take action to slow and adapt [to it] . . . if not stop it!" They also believe that "Working with and for communities of color to achieve environmental justice in Marin County" is critical; and lastly, "Limiting the amount of traditional coastal armoring (rip-rap and sea walls) permitted and instead, facilitating green infrastructure and nature-based adaptations to sea level rise." On the latter issue, they are concerned "If we are not attentive, we may lose a lot of the natural bay shore and beaches of Marin's outer coast that we worked so hard to save."

Both Erin and Karina are deeply motivated to protect Marin's environment. Erin "believes strongly that children need experiences in nature for their own well-being . . . and should be encouraged to care about and protect their environment." Karina added that her "reasons center on personal awe and reverence for nature, and that people need a healthy environment to thrive."

BSS is working hard to "pass . . . gifts of nature on to future generations" and well deserves the Ted Wellman Water Award.

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**Youth Award for
Environmental Action:
Niklas Alexander Ugalde Recarte**



Niklas, center right, marches on Earth Day in San Rafael, 2020

Niklas Alexander Ugalde Recarte is a recent College of Marin (COM) graduate who, this fall, will be attending Pitzer College in Claremont, majoring in Environmental Studies. He is interested in the intersection of the environment with economic and social issues. This is no surprise when we learn more about Niklas' recent accomplishments and his two engaging internships.

While attending COM, Niklas and one of his professors, Joe Mueller, discussed the idea of COM divesting from fossil fuels. Niklas researched this idea, collaborated with 350Marin, and built support with COM's Environmental Action Club. His efforts prompted COM's president to form an advisory committee to explore COM Foundation's fossil fuel divestment. True to his values, Niklas promoted a COM zero waste campus and organized the second climate justice strike this year, which attracted over 200 activists and heightened awareness of the Green New Deal.

Currently, he is fulfilling two informative internships: One with Terra Cycle Foundation in their Water Way Clean Up initiative, specifically waste recycling in Thailand and India; the other, with Environmental Action Committee - West

Marin (EAC), coordinating renewable energy solutions for Marin with a focus on in-pipe hydro-power turbines.

We asked Niklas what environmental actions Marin County should prioritize. He believes that Marin should use the "COVID economic recovery as an opportunity to accelerate transition towards a low-carbon future." He also believes the three top environmental challenges in Marin are: "impacts of climate change on fragile terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems of Marin (for instance, ocean warming and acidification, and increasing wildfires) and the growing problem of waste, lack of adequate infrastructure to recycle waste, and high rate of organic waste going into landfills and emitting greenhouse gases." Lastly, Niklas believes that "pollution and carbon emissions from the transportation sector in Marin are creating health issues and contributing to climate change." This outstanding young environmentalist says he is "deeply concerned about our human future on earth," and he finds inspiration from "the conservation champions who were able to protect vast areas and ecosystems of Marin County."

Niklas recently started a consulting group focused on improving environmental, social and economic sustainability of companies www.claremontsc.com. We applaud its mission: "Strongly dedicated to conceiving and implementing solutions to human-caused environmental issues, in hope of creating sustainable societies that enhance human and non-human lives." We extend our appreciation to Niklas for his many environmental contributions and wish him good luck with his future.

**MCL Volunteer Award:
Doug Wilson**

Doug Wilson, a bay area native, has had a lifetime of giving to his community. His degrees in Political Science and Philosophy from UC Berkeley and early career in art, building, and project management helped

to prepare Doug for navigating a host of social, political, and environmental issues.

In the 1980's Doug took on a controversial issue in the Town of Fairfax and was a leader in successfully protecting a local school. This gained the attention of a County Supervisor who appointed Doug to the Parks and Open Space Commission, where he learned about countywide issues and enjoyed hearing from the public.

Doug's contributions to the community took another step in 1990, when friends encouraged him to run for Fairfax's Town Council. He served for eight years, including as mayor. While serving, Doug also represented Marin County on the Metropolitan Transportation Commission.

Doug continued his community service by joining the Sierra Club Board, then volunteering for Marin Conservation League (MCL), where his wife, Periann Wood, served on the board of directors. In 2013 Doug joined MCL's board and became involved with Land Use and Transportation and Parks and Open Space Committees. In 2014, when MCL formed a new working group - [Climate Action Working Group \(CAWG\)](#) - to educate the organization on causes, adaption, and mitigation of climate change, Doug stepped up to be co-chair and now continues to serve as CAWG's chair. He said, "I knew climate change was an accelerating threat to Marin and the world and wanted to do something



Courtesy Doug Wilson

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about it." CAWG monthly convenes a climate conscious community and hosts speakers with a wide array of expertise and perspectives. Doug collaborated with members of other groups to create a county-wide program to draw down carbon emissions – [Drawdown: Marin](#).

We asked Doug's opinion on the most compelling environmental challenge facing Marin. He said, "The challenge is bringing participation from every diverse corner of Marin into conversation, planning and implementation to protect Marin's natural environment in a changing climate." Doug believes the three most important priorities in Marin are: "protecting and enhancing Marin's natural environment from misuse and the effects of climate change; maintaining long-range and equitable perspective in the face of social and budgetary turmoil; and growing a more inclusive conversation, planning and implementation in preparing for the coming effects of climate change." These are what motivate him and renew his humility and gratitude for the incredible privilege of being here!

Doug, indeed, has a North Star: It is his commitment to take responsibility for the health of the planet. When Doug is not volunteering, he spends his time both as painter and ceramic artist with friends in his studio in Sausalito.

Interviews and profiles by Linda Novy

MCL Seeks New Treasurer – Apply your Financial Acumen to Our Environmental Work!

MCL has a great volunteer opportunity for one of our members with financial expertise. If you've been looking for a way to get hands-on with MCL, this could be your chance.

Visit marinconservationleague.org for role responsibilities and next steps.

National Public Lands Day is on September 26!

Did you know that the nation celebrates a day in September that is dedicated to "making the environment more accessible, relatable, relevant, and connected to the daily lives of all Americans"? It may seem unnecessary to set aside a special day at a time when the public appetite for being outdoors is seemingly insatiable. Stifled for almost 6 months by the restrictions of COVID-19, people and their families continue to flock to our open spaces, welcoming the gratification that comes from being in the out-of-doors.

Since 1994, when National Public Lands Day was established by the National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF) for every fourth Saturday in September, it has become the nation's largest, single-day volunteer event for public lands. The NEEF was congressionally chartered in 1990 as a nonprofit to connect people to public open space and thereby improve the quality of their lives and the health of the planet. It is non-partisan and non-advocacy. National Public Lands Day, its primary educational program, has grown to attract several hundred-thousand volunteers participating in myriad events on local, state, and federal public lands across the country.

This year, the COVID-19 pandemic has upended many aspects of daily life, including our public lands. Due to social distancing requirements, most public lands in Marin have cancelled group volunteer events for the foreseeable future. With this in mind across the country, the theme for NPLD 2020 is "More Ways to Connect to Nature." To commemorate the Day, many agencies will convene virtual events designed to connect the public to iconic parks, national forests, wildlife refuges, and other public lands.

You can still participate as individuals in National Public Lands Day. In addition to visiting a national park on this "Fee-Free Day," you can simply connect with nature by planting a tree or a native plant, refurbishing a trail, removing trash and invasive plants, restoring a historic site, monitoring an endangered species – or simply by taking a hike or a bike ride or getting on your horse! These are your lands! With enjoyment, however, come responsibilities. These are also your lands to care for. Be a public land steward – on September 26 and on every day!



The majesty of Point Reyes National Seashore



The foggy coast at Point Reyes National Seashore.



A whale vertebra on Limantour Beach.



Woodward Valley Trail—the area where the Woodward Fire began.

In response to sadness induced by the Woodward Fire, Jacob Dinardi initiated a moving tribute to Point Reyes National Seashore on the social media platform [Nextdoor](#). Many community members joined Jacob in sharing their photos, memories, and love for this area. Jacob proclaimed, "Point Reyes is one of my all time favorite places on Earth." These images capture why so many others shared his sentiment.

Jacob Dinardi is a San Rafael local who enjoys running, hiking, and biking on all of the Marin trails. He shares his love of the outdoors at www.hikeitlikeit.com

Photos by Jacob Dinardi

Time for a transition



This September-October issue of the MCL Newsletter marks the beginning of new editorial leadership for the MCL Newsletter. After 12 years and great satisfaction in constant learning, I am stepping down as Editor to make room for new (and younger) blood to take over editorial responsibilities. On a provisional basis, Kate Powers will chair a new Newsletter Advisory Group and take primary responsibility for assigning writing, editing news and editorial content, and working with designer and producer Kirsten Nolan, MCL's Communications and Outreach Coordinator. The Advisory Group will support Kate in exploring newsworthy ideas and content as well as serve as potential writers. I will continue to participate as advisor and writer as appropriate. (I have a compulsive urge to edit!)

The MCL Newsletter has taken many forms and gone through many transitions in serving its primary purpose as the



design traces and has continued to produce an attractive and engaging publication. Over the years Ken Drexler has added his discerning eye for editorial clarity.

The MCL Newsletter plans to continue to serve its membership and the general public as a crucial and relevant voice for "... preserving, protecting, and enhancing Marin's natural assets."

Nona Dennis



informative voice of MCL. Over the dozen years since I became President (2008) and, at the same time, de facto editor of the Newsletter, I have learned something new with every one of the 60-some issues that followed. It would not have been possible, however, without partnering with Office Manager Dru Parker, who took on the design and production with skill and imagination. Without her constructive critique and eye for presentation, the Newsletter would have been mere words. When she left, Kirsten Nolan picked up the



The One Tam Science Summit is returning, virtually, in October 2020

Mark your calendars now for five Thursday mornings in October, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm and join One Tam for this year's virtual Science Summit. The One Tam partners, together with Drawdown Marin, are bringing you a symposium that will explore this theme of Climate: Change and Resilience. Through a series of presentations, conversations, and self-guided field trips, the Summit will first set the stage for climate change impacts here in Marin: Marin's Ecological and Social Climate, and follow with sessions on Resilient Forests, Changing Shoreline, Resilient Species, and Local Solutions. Topics will also include intersections of climate with public health and equity. Registration opened in mid-August and will continue through the end of September.

For more information visit onetam.org/summit

**MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE
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Board of Directors meetings are held at 6:00PM on the 3rd Tuesday of the month at the MCL office and are open to the public.

Staff: Martha Richter Smith, San Anselmo Office Administrator

Kirsten Nolan, San Rafael Communications & Outreach Coordinator

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

Land Use and Transportation:
1st Wed. of the month, 10:00 AM—12:00 PM

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

Fire and Environment Working Group:
2nd Mon. of the month, 1:00 PM—3:00 PM

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

*Agricultural Land Use: meets quarterly;
North Marin Unit: Check website for times*

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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It's that time of the year again!

MCL memberships are calendar year - Renew now for 2021

Join online at marinconservationleague.org or complete and mail the form below.

Name

Address

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Email

**Join at the \$250 level or above and you will be invited to MCL's Fall Leaders Circle Event!*

SIGN ME UP AS A:

\$35 Steward

\$100 Baylands

\$500 Redwoods

\$50 Creeks

\$250 Woodlands*

\$1,000 Peter Behr

I will renew via credit card

My check, payable to MCL, is enclosed

Card Number

Exp. Date

Name on Card

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All contributions and dues are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.