

## Charles Lester, Coastal Commission, to speak at Annual Dinner April 20<sup>th</sup>

Marin Conservation League is honored to have **Dr. Charles Lester**, Executive Director of the California Coastal Commission, as guest speaker for its Annual Dinner on April 20<sup>th</sup>. Last September, Dr. Lester became the fourth Executive Director to lead the Commission since its creation in 1972 with the passage of Proposition 20. He joined the Commission staff in 1997 and served as Senior Deputy Director from 2006. Previously, Dr. Lester was an Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Colorado, Boulder. He earned a Ph.D. in Jurisprudence and Social Policy from the University of California at Berkeley, his J.D. at Boalt Hall School of Law, and a B.A. in Geochemistry from Columbia University.

Dr. Lester brings an impressive knowledge of California Coastal issues.

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*Dr. Charles Lester*

## Linking flood protection, creek restoration in the Ross Valley

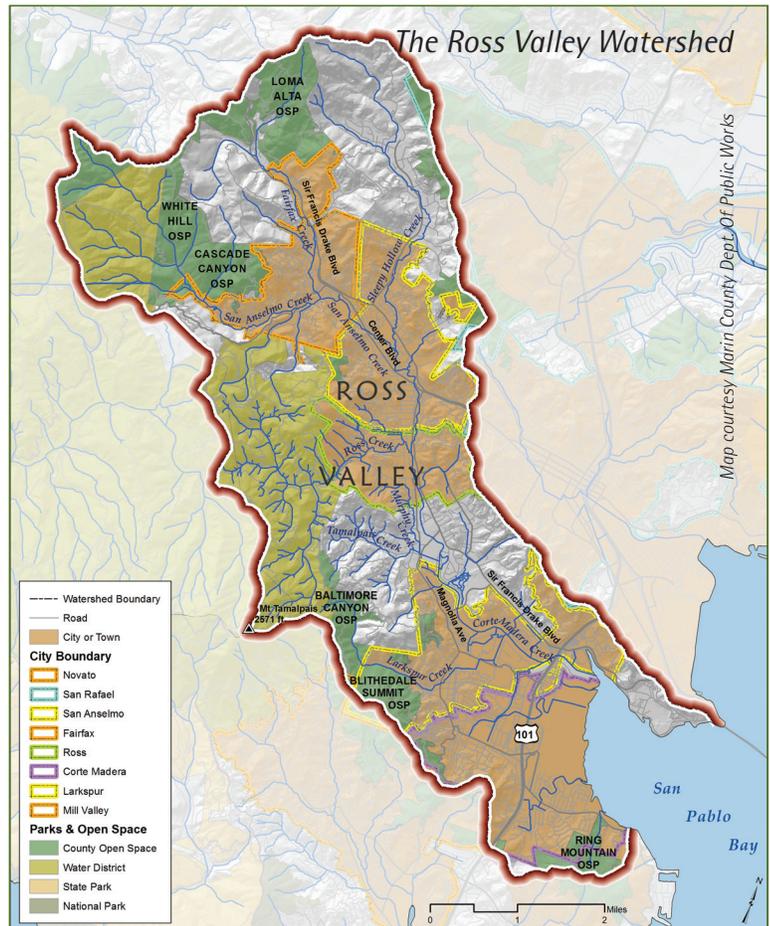
By Ann Thomas

The Ross Valley Flood Management and Watershed Project, to reduce flooding and improve water quality and aquatic habitat in the county's most populous watershed, was the subject of an illustrated talk at MCL's January meeting of the Water and Watersheds Committee.

The multi-goal project, born in the wake of the 2005 New Year's Eve flooding that caused millions of dollars in damage in the Ross Valley, will be funded over 20 years by a storm drainage fee on property within the Flood Zone 9 district, along with grants from other sources.

The project is a star in the four-year-old Marin County Watershed Program, which aims to integrate flood protection, creek and wetland restoration, fish passage and water quality improvements in each of Marin's seven watersheds.

Project Manager Jack Curley, who has shepherded the watershed program since



inception, gave MCL members and guests a preview of the Ross Valley program.

The first step was preparation of computer models of the valley's watershed to show the extent of flooding under different rainfall scenarios, and how that flooding could be reduced if various measures were taken to increase the capacity of Corte Madera Creek and its tributaries. The models were completed last year

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## A Message from the President



Having just suffered through a financial drought, Marin now faces a rain drought. Already there are troubling signs on the hillsides that should be bright green. I have kept a log

of wild flower appearances on Mt. Burdell for the last ten springs or so, during my regular hikes, and this is the earliest I have seen them appear.

This is also the first spring in three decades that I remember, that cows have not been grazing on Mt. Burdell. Hopefully by the time this newsletter gets published there will have been some rain and the creeks will be flowing, but long-range forecasts see continuing drier-than-

usual conditions. If rain does not come, we may be inconvenienced by having to adapt the way we bathe or garden, but the stress on trees and wildlife is real. Here is hoping March is a wet month!

A surge of governmental activities in recent months has kept our issue committees busy. In monitoring these activities our committee members have observed a troubling trend that has developed of governmental entities not wanting to engage the public in their decisions. The following are examples of this trend:

- The general public was invited to the One Bay Area meetings on the evolving Sustainable Communities Strategy but was constrained from giving meaningful input. These meetings are sponsored by the Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission presumably to gather citizen opinions to help guide land use and transportation planning in the Bay Area.

- Sonoma County's lack of notice to Marin neighbors on a massive fill project at Port Sonoma and Carneros Ranch, on the county line, for which there was no Environmental Impact Report.

- And, most recently, the Marin Board of Supervisors' use of the Consent Calendar to imply that the 2003 San Quentin Vision Plan for massive housing redevelopment of the prison site constitutes adopted policy, when in fact it has never been adopted.

The vigilance required to catch these infringements on public process is difficult, but the need to correct faulty process is critical. Democracy is not the most expedient means to govern, but it works when allowed to function openly. This cannot be a game of keeping the public out—we will be heard, but the question is can each infringement be caught in time—and will the public's voice be listened to?

*Susan Stompe*

## Announcements

### Are We Ready for Climate Change?

Friday, April 13, 2012, 8:30 am to 4:15 pm  
Sheraton Petaluma, 745 Baywood Drive

**North Bay Watershed Association** will hold a day-long conference on “Climate Change: How Can We Be Ready?”

The conference will bring together an impressive group of speakers, headed by keynoter **Assemblymember Jared Huffman**, to explore state, regional and local efforts to adapt to climate change. Panels will consider the wide-ranging effects of climate change on water supply, sea level rise, flood management, soils, and habitats.

The North Bay Watershed Association is a group of 15 regional and local public agencies located throughout Marin, Sonoma, and Napa counties. Its mission is to facilitate partnerships across political boundaries that promote stewardship of the North Bay watershed resources. For further information about the conference and to register, visit [nbwatershed.org](http://nbwatershed.org) or call 415-945-1475.

### Celebrate Earth Day with Novato Clean and Green

Saturday, April 21, 2012, 9:00 am to noon  
Scottsdale Marsh, Novato

Earth Day is Sunday, April 22. One way to commemorate the day is to help the North Marin Unit of MCL clean up trash and remove invasive, non-native plants around Scottsdale Marsh in Novato. Clean and Green Day is an annual Novato Earth Day community event, and the North Marin Unit has focused on Scottsdale Marsh for 18 years. To participate, meet at the end of Adele St. off South Novato Blvd., just north of Rowland Blvd.

The gate will be open for access to the marsh. Watch for further announcements on the MCL website.

## Status Updates

### Gross Field Runway Extension Draft EIR/EIS

Once again, the long-proposed Gross Field Runway Extension will disappear from public view while the preparers of the Draft EIR and EIS respond to comments and complete the final environmental documents. (See also Newsletter January-February 2012.) Given the past delays in this process, it may be 2013 before the Final EIR/EIS appears. MCL testified at the Board of Supervisors' hearing on January 10 and submitted a letter on February 6 detailing questions and deficiencies in the environmental documents, including the following:

- What is the largest aircraft that can use the 4,400 ft. runway, and will such aircraft change noise contours that were modeled based on use by the existing fleet?
- It appears that the flight paths developed to minimize impacts on the neighboring residential are not being respected. What mechanisms can be implemented to enforce adopted procedures, even though flyovers may comply with the Novato General Plan's acceptable noise levels?
- How will runoff that reaches the airport from Mt. Burdell be diverted around the runway extension to avoid flooding and

minimize harm to wetlands?

- Is the quality of surface and subsurface runoff from maintenance areas of the airport tested before it enters the Petaluma River?
- The impact of noise on Olompali State Historic Park, a significant historic site, is not discussed; most activities at the Park take place outside and therefore cannot avoid aircraft noise. The possibility of aircraft accidents on Olompali grounds also should be discussed.
- What are the safety hazards of moving the runway 1,100 feet closer to the SMART/NCRA rail line?
- Mitigating loss of wetlands at a ratio of 1:1 is contrary to County policy, and therefore should be increased to mitigating the loss at a ratio of 2:1.
- Since the preferred approach to wetland mitigation, i.e., "on-site, in kind," apparently is not possible, the next closest opportunity site should be found, for example, restoration of brackish wetlands at Black John's Slough, or restoration in the Novato Creek basin. More distant sites in Sonoma and Napa County should not be considered.

We look forward to reviewing the Final EIR and EIS for responses to these and other questions when they are available.



Grady Ranch photo by Dru Parker. Toy photo © Brendan Hunter /istockphoto.com

### LucasFilm at Grady Ranch

At press time it was impossible to predict the outcome of the contentious February 27 Planning Commission hearing on George Lucas' film production facility on Grady Ranch in Lucas Valley. (See also Newsletter January-February, 2012.) It seemed certain that the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (FSEIR) would be recommended for certification, and that the Precise Development Plan for the project would be approved, but with numerous conditions. A Master Plan that covered both the Grady Ranch and Big Rock Ranch complexes was approved back in 1996, and Phase I (Big Rock) has been completed in the interim. MCL objected at that time—and continues to object—to an industrial use on Grady Ranch that is totally out of character and scale for this location.

Since 1996, residences have been built to within several hundred feet of the project boundary. Protests have come from these and other Lucas Valley neighborhoods that will experience traffic, noise, air quality, loss of distant views, and other impacts from excavating into a narrow wooded valley to accommodate a massive building and outdoor stage for filming. The top elevation of an existing hill will be raised by 37 feet to hide the facility, including 85-foot towers,

*Olompali State Historic Park is located directly across the highway from Gross Field*



Dru Parker

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## Status Updates (from pg. 3)

from public view, at the same time obscuring distance views of western Lucas Valley for a number of residences. Neighbors are also concerned that a four-story building whose footprint is greater than two football fields might someday be vacated by LucasFilm and transformed into another kind of facility.

MCL was critical of the Final Supplemental EIR, which failed to include many important project details that were available only by consulting some three dozen technical background documents posted online. Important elements of the project description, which would help in evaluating the merits of the project, were omitted, such as building elevations, dimensions of an excavated wine cave, and a coherent description of Miller Creek restoration. The Planning Commissioners were expected at the hearing to impose numerous conditions on the plan approval, such as careful monitoring to ensure that the extensive stream restoration (raising the channel bed of the deeply incised Miller Creek and tributaries with excavated rock and soil) would not harm downstream habitats. Residents also argued that the project approval should be conditioned so that any impacts of a future use would be no greater than those of the proposed film production facility, such as limiting the number of future employees to 340, as planned by the applicant.

## Airport Rec Facility

Still in limbo is San Rafael's decision on whether to allow the owner of San Rafael Airport to partner with soccer clubs in building an 85,400 square-foot indoor soccer and gymnastics/dance facility between the airport runway and the North Fork of Gallinas Creek. In MCL's view, this large-scale recreational use violates the intent of the covenant that was signed in 1983 to limit development intensity on the site.

The location of the facility presents problems and/or hazards sufficient to warrant denying the proposal: First, the North Fork of Gallinas Creek is home to a healthy population of the endangered California clapper rail and other water birds whose habitat could be disrupted by this intensive use coupled with existing activity at McInnis Park. Second, locating playing fields and children's activities

so near to airport runway operations presents significant hazards. Finally, the proposal to operate seven days a week, including primarily adult use at night, will generate noise, light, and traffic that are likely to be intrusive to residential neighborhoods. The San Rafael Planning Commission approved the Final EIR for certification on January 10, and has tentatively scheduled a public hearing on the merits of the project for March 27. MCL recommends that it be denied.

## MCL objections pay off in Carneros Ranch fill plan



*The Black Point neighborhood lies just across the Petaluma River from the Port Sonoma Marina*

*Dru Parker*

MCL's January-February 2012 Newsletter carried a story about the proposed 20-year plan to barge and truck up to 18 million cubic yards of dredged material from projects around San Francisco Bay to Port Sonoma and then pump it under Highway 37 to raise the level of Carneros Ranch some 8 to 12 feet for agriculture. Although the project site lies just across Petaluma River from Marin's Black Point neighborhood, no one in Marin County had been informed of this massive fill project, which was approved by the Sonoma Board of Zoning Adjustments (BZA) in July 2011 with only a "Mitigated Negative Declaration."

The Sonoma Group of the Sierra Club appealed BZA's approval to the Sonoma

County Board of Supervisors (BOS). In support of the appeal, MCL joined the Sonoma and Marin Groups of the Sierra Club, Marin Audubon Society, Black Point Improvement Club, and Sonoma County Water Coalition in hiring the Shute, Mihaly and Weinberger law firm to argue that a project of this magnitude would have significant impacts on the environment and therefore should be examined in a full EIR. The scheduled hearing at the Sonoma BOS on January 24 was baffling in procedure but successful in its outcome—at least for the present. The hearing on the appeal was not officially opened. Instead, the appellants were allowed

to comment on the project during the typical "Open Time for issues not on the agenda" that precedes BOS meetings. The Supervisors agreed informally to continue the scheduled hearing on the item to allow the project applicant to prepare an EIR. They did not vote on the continuance; they did not set aside the project approval; nor did they uphold the appeal. For the record, however, County Counsel did request that the attorney for the applicant confirm orally that the applicant was willing to pay for preparation of an EIR. MCL will continue to monitor this project to ensure that a thorough environmental review is performed.

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## Status Updates (from pg. 4)

### Local Coastal Program Amendments clear a hurdle

February 13 marked the ninth and last County Planning Commission hearing on Marin County's Local Coastal Program (LCP) Amendment, at which time the Commission voted to send "Recommended" drafts of the Land Use Plan and implementing Development Code on to the Board of Supervisors for continued public review. Public and neighborhood meetings and the recent public hearings have taken almost three years. The Planning Commission and the interested public have reviewed extraordinarily complex materials and tracked revisions, word by word, through several thousand pages of documents, which are available for review at [marinlcp.org](http://marinlcp.org).

The purpose of the LCP is to carry out the coastal resource protection policies of the California Coastal Act of 1976 in Marin's Coastal Zone. Marin's current LCP was the first in the State to be completed following the passage of the Coastal Act in 1976. It has served well in protecting Marin's rich coastal resources since it was certified by the Coastal Commission in 1980–81, but it is out of date in many respects. In his overview of the LCP at the recent hearing, Jack Liebster, Marin County Principal Planner, summarized the broad scope of the policies in the LCP, which protect productive agricultural land, protect and restore stream, wetland, and other sensitive habitat areas, guard against environmental hazards such as rising sea level and wave damage, support mariculture, preserve the unique character of each coastal community, balance the need for clean renewable energy against its impacts on biological and scenic resources, protect water quality and water resources, conserve historic and cultural resources, open up appropriate access to the coast to serve a growing public, and provide affordable housing, including farm worker housing.

Relatively few members of the public have followed the process closely. The "ranching community" has generally argued against what they regard as undue regulation of housing, agricultural practices, and ancillary activities on their land; and the "environmental community" has argued for

greater protections of streams, wetlands, and other "environmentally sensitive habitat areas", a term in the Coastal Act that includes endangered species habitats and other sensitive habitats.

Whether the amended LCP will protect coastal resources, preserve agriculture, and provide public access, as required by the Coastal Act, better than the current LCP remains to be seen. The test won't come soon. County review at the Supervisors' level will begin with scheduled workshops on March 20 and 27 and extend into the summer and fall of 2012. After the LCP is approved by the Marin BOS, it must then go to the Coastal Commission staff for laborious review to determine consistency with the Coastal Act. Eventually it will be certified by the Coastal Commission. Until that time, the 1980–81 LCP will continue to guide coastal decisions. All sides will probably agree with a recent comment by the Marin County Farm Bureau: ". . .there are many issues that still need to be worked out."

### GGNRA has (temporarily) called off the dogs

After reviewing 4,731 ideas and suggestions from the public on the Golden

Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) Draft Dog Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), the Park Service is considering a number of changes to the draft plan that may open some areas to greater access for dog walking, both on leash and under voice control. The Service is examining the effects of control methods, such as fencing, and will conduct a user survey of county, city and other parklands that might be affected if dog-walking opportunities on GGNRA lands were reduced. The Service is also revising its proposed compliance-based management strategy, which raised many concerns over criteria and enforceability, and the need for education.

These changes to the Plan, along with new information, will be analyzed in a supplement to the DEIS, which will be released for public comment in late Summer 2012, and a Proposed Rule is scheduled to be released in Fall of 2013. The sites of interest in Marin County have not changed: Stinson Beach, Muir Beach, Rodeo Beach, Marin Headlands, Fort Baker, Oakwood Valley and Alto Trail, and Homestead Valley.

You can read a summary of comments received on the draft plan and receive regular updates by visiting [nps.gov/goga/parkmgmt/dog-management.htm](http://nps.gov/goga/parkmgmt/dog-management.htm), or at (415) 561-4728.



*This (leashed) German Shepherd and her four-legged friends will continue to be allowed to explore Muir Beach—for the time being.*

© Jeff Gunn / Flickr Creative Commons

# Single-use bag law goes into effect in unincorporated Marin County

by David Schnapf

On January 1 Marin County's single-use bag law went into effect. The law, which bans single-use plastic bags and requires a minimum 5-cent charge for paper bags, applies only in the unincorporated areas of the county, and only to certain types of retail establishments—mainly supermarkets, pharmacies and convenience stores. Reportedly, public reaction to the new law has been generally positive. Nonetheless, the "Save the Plastic Bag Coalition," a plastics industry front that sued to block the law, has appealed the court decision allowing the Marin law to go into effect, and continues its lobbying efforts to block and undermine local bag ordinances.

Monica, and the counties of Los Angeles, Alameda, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz.

MCL has a long history of supporting efforts to reduce waste and, specifically, we support the ongoing efforts to reduce single-use bags in Marin. Accordingly, MCL's Board of Directors, recently adopted the following position statement:

**1) MCL supports an overall countywide goal to reduce waste and waste in landfills.**

**2) MCL supports county and local jurisdiction policies that discourage single use carry out bags and encourages use of reusable bags.**

**3) MCL supports bag ban ordinances that either ban both plastic and paper bags or bans plastic bags and imposes a fee on paper bags that is sufficient to encourage reusable bags and significantly reduce the total amount of single use carry out bags provided to consumers.**

lifecycle, paper bags generate methane, a greenhouse gas, when they decompose in landfills. While paper bags can and should be recycled, the recycling process itself uses lots of energy and water. Reusable bags are far better than either paper or plastic.

If single-use plastic and paper bags are both bad for the environment, why does the county ordinance only ban plastic bags? The answer is somewhat ironic. At the behest of the plastic bag industry, California passed AB 2449 prohibiting local jurisdictions from imposing any fees for single-use plastic bags. Thus, the only option available to localities for regulating single-use plastic bags is to ban them.

MCL is concerned that a 5-cent charge for a paper bag, as mandated by the county ordinance, is insufficient to significantly reduce single-use paper bags and that there is a risk that many people will simply

*The 5-cent fee is at the extreme low end of the many ordinances now on the books*

switch from plastic to paper. The 5-cent fee, which was arbitrarily chosen, is at the extreme low end of the many county and city ordinances now on the books in California—no jurisdiction sets a lower fee. Most California single-use bag ordinances require a minimum fee of at least ten cents, and many jurisdictions phase in higher fees. Mountain View, Alameda (which includes the entire county), Los Angeles county, Long Beach, Pasadena, Santa Cruz, San Jose, Monterey, Sunnyvale, etc. all impose a minimum ten-cent paper bag fee. In several jurisdictions, such as San Jose, Sunnyvale and Mountain View, the fee starts at ten cents and goes up in a year or two to 25 cents. Marin is California's wealthiest county and five cents is likely to viewed by many Marin shoppers as a minor inconvenience insufficient to change ingrained behavior.

Paper bags used in supermarkets

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Despite the plastic bag industry's well-funded efforts to block them, single-use bag ordinances have proliferated throughout California. To date about 40 California cities and counties have adopted single-use bag laws, including the cities of San Francisco, San Jose, Palo Alto, Sunnyvale, Long Beach and Santa

While the discussion regarding single-use bag ordinances often focuses on plastic bags, MCL believes it is equally important to reduce all types of single-use bags. Specifically, it would be a mistake if these ordinances merely cause a shift from single-use plastic to single-use paper bags, which are no better. Paper bag production and use has its own set of environmental problems. Paper bag production requires relatively large amounts of energy and water. Using current technology, paper bags strong enough to carry a load of groceries cannot have more than about 40% recycled content—meaning that about 60% (or more) of the bag fiber comes from new sources of "pulp," the fiber mash used in paper making. In the Western U.S., pulp for paper comes from timber, which is being logged at an unsustainable rate. At the other end of their



**"Get Rid of Plastic Bags"**

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# Two Marin State Parks remain under threat of closure—how you can help

A new fee at Muir Woods will keep Tomales Bay and Samuel P. Taylor State Parks open at least part time for the foreseeable future, but the struggle to keep China Camp State Park and Olompali State Historic Park open goes on. As we reported in the last Newsletter, numerous solutions are under study, with the clock ticking toward closure on July 1, 2012.

Marin State Parks Association (MSPA) is stepping up to take on a larger role in helping to keep the two parks open. One member group, The Olompali People, submitted a letter of intent to State Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) in late December to assume responsibility for keeping the park open its current schedule of four days a week. This arrangement was made possible by Jared Huffman's successful AB 42, which authorizes State Parks to enter into agreements with nonprofit organizations. Discussions with DPR in Sacramento are underway.

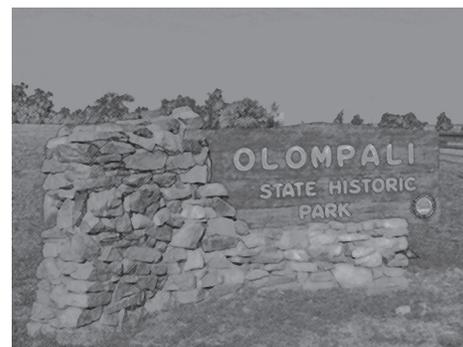
## Bags *from Page 6*

generally cost in the vicinity of fifteen cents each. While it has become customary in the U.S. for retailers to supply customers with "free" bags for their purchases, the bags have a cost which gets passed on to all customers, i.e., customers pay for the bags one way or another. Many Marin shoppers have already switched to reusable bags and those who bring their own bags should not be required subsidize those who do not. It makes sense to charge customers at least the retailer's actual cost for a bag. Again, this would be far more than five cents.

Now is time for the incorporated areas of Marin to follow the lead of the County and other California cities and adopt single-use bag ordinances. But to date only Fairfax has adopted a single-use bag ordinance, and no other incorporated area of Marin appears close to adopting a single-use bag ordinance. In the meantime, Marin shoppers should remember to bring and use reusable bags whenever they shop.

Friends of China Camp (FOCC) officially launched a "China Camp Needs You" campaign Saturday, February 11, at the Park Ranger Station. About 70 attendees applauded FOCC's plans to inform visitors from the larger Bay Area of the park's precarious status (50 percent of visitors to China Camp come from outside Marin), to raise substantial funds from new members, organizations, businesses and other sources, and to expand interpretive programs with more volunteers. FOCC volunteers have been underwriting costs to service restrooms, manning an outreach table at the fishing village, and contributing many other volunteer service hours. Two rangers from Mt. Tamalpais State Park are covering some needs at China Camp on a part-time basis. Donations to FOCC may be made at [friendsofchinacamp.org](http://friendsofchinacamp.org).

Marin County Parks also wants to keep China Camp open. The Park abuts the County's San Pedro Ridge Open Space Preserve. Linda Dahl, Director and General Manager of County Parks, told the group on February 11 that any attempt to shut down China Camp would cost the County in law enforcement



and emergency response as illegal camping, fires, and vandalism could increase on the adjacent Preserve. The County would prefer to make a positive rather than negative investment in the Park, she said, but money is the issue: County Parks already is faced with trimming about \$500,000, from its operating budget, roughly equivalent to the minimum amount needed to keep the park open even at a reduced level. The only major source of new revenue, she said, would have to be a sales tax ballot measure, initiated and broadly supported by a diverse county coalition. Other ideas include fees for cars that currently park along the road.

Jennie Callaway, aide to Jared Huffman, outlined Huffman's new bill AB 1589, introduced on February 5. The bill would begin to address long-term State Park budget issues by identifying sources of revenue other than the State General Fund, such as improved fee collection technologies, a State Park environmental license plate, and a State Park option for charitable donation on income tax returns. The measure also calls for greater transparency and accountability in the process used by DPR to select parks for closure. Huffman intends to handle the bill as an Urgency Bill, which needs a two-thirds approval for immediate action. According to Jennie, Huffman does not favor turning any park over to a commercial concessionaire.

Jennie also reported on the progress of Marin Open Parks Coalition, convened last year by Marin Community Foundation and Jared Huffman. The Coalition also is working to keep the parks open, preferably by funding existing State Parks staff to continue to operate the parks. It was clear on February 11 that numerous pieces must fit together to keep China Camp and Olompali from closing.

### Help Marin's State Parks!

Contact the County Board of Supervisors at (415)473-7331. Tell them you want them to work to keep the parks open.

Join, contribute to or offer to volunteer with:

*Friends of China Camp*  
([friendsofchinacamp.org](http://friendsofchinacamp.org))

*The Olompali People* ([olompali.org](http://olompali.org))

*Marin State Parks Association*  
([marinstateparks.org](http://marinstateparks.org))

See [savestateparks.org](http://savestateparks.org)  
or  
[marinconservationleague.org](http://marinconservationleague.org)  
for more information

# Will Travis believes in a regional approach to sea level rise

**W**ill Travis, recently retired Executive Director of San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, is a man on a mission. Although his basic purpose in addressing a large audience at MCL's February 16<sup>th</sup> Business-Environment Breakfast was to outline the impacts climate change will have on the Bay Area and the steps we must take to reduce these impacts, it was clear that he is fighting against time and public inertia, as well as the deniers who still question the science behind global climate change.

Travis' mission follows two themes: First, how to mitigate, or reduce, greenhouse gas emissions that are the primary cause of climate change; and, second, how to adapt to the inevitable consequences of sea level rise in a region with billions of dollars of past investment and future growth at risk of flooding.

He briefly reviewed California's landmark legislation aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions from all sources, noting that most air emissions come from the tail pipes of cars

and light trucks. We certainly need alternative fuels that pollute less and alternative vehicles that use less fuel, but plug-in hybrids won't solve the problem if the electricity comes from coal-fired power plants. We also need to drive less, which is hard to accomplish when homebuyers must look to the far edges of the Bay region to find housing they can afford.

Travis' new role is that of Senior Advisor to the regional agencies charged with developing a plan (One Bay Area) that encourages compact, mixed-use communities in an effort to reduce vehicle miles and consequent greenhouse gas emissions, as mandated statewide by SB 375 (2009).

## *San Francisco historically vulnerable to sea level rise*

Travis' second theme followed from the first: even if we shut down all our power plants, turn off all our lights, and park all our cars, there's still so much greenhouse gas in the atmosphere that it will continue to get warmer for decades. The climate change impact that will have the most profound

effect on the Bay Area is sea level rise. Over the past century alone, Bay waters have risen over seven inches. Today the Bay is surrounded by 240 square miles of filled land. In total, over 280 square miles of low-lying land are in danger of being flooded from sea level rise by mid-century, and 330 square miles will be vulnerable by 2100. Over 60 billion dollars in urban investments are located in these areas.

Although BCDC has successfully prevented San Francisco Bay from getting *smaller*, it was never granted legal authority over a Bay that is getting *bigger*! Instead, BCDC has partnered with ABAG, MTC, and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD), the agencies responsible for regional land use planning, transportation, and air quality, to advance an integrated regional climate change strategy that both reduces greenhouse gas emissions and adapts to the impacts of climate change that are inevitable.

Travis outlined three basic approaches the agencies could take to sea level rise:

**Head in the sand!** Ignore the problem and wait until there's absolute certainty on the sea level rise predictions, or the economy recovers, or the problem becomes a crisis.

**Head for the hills!** Begin a planned retreat from the water's edge by prohibiting all new development in low-lying areas—but this raises some problems. Some low-lying undeveloped sites are small and in the midst of other development that will be protected by some means. Other sites (e.g., Mission Bay, San Francisco) are large enough to be planned ahead for sea level rise. Also, prohibiting all development in low-lying areas would conflict with the regional infill strategy to cut greenhouse gases.

**Use a triage approach** (the "preferred strategy"). Decide which areas must be protected, however high the cost—like airports or vital infrastructure—and construct protective levees; identify locations to focus on natural resource enhancement like restoring tidal wetlands to dissipate the energy of storm surges, and also sequester carbon; and consider which areas deserve special attention and turn to architects, engineers, scientists and planners for innovation. "If we innovated for earthquakes, then we can innovate for flooding."



Bob Spafford

Speaker Will Travis with Vicki Rupp and Katy Hallal of Environmental Forum of Marin

*Continued on Page 9*

Travis *from Page 8*

*No single approach*

Travis has learned from long experience that local solutions can't be legislated by any regional agency, and that cooperation alone has its limitations. The authority to effect change resides with the 101 cities and nine counties that have primary jurisdiction over land use and development in the Bay region. All nine counties and almost half of the cities front on the Bay. In Marin, that includes eight out of eleven towns and cities.

At the same time, Travis acknowledged,

*We can't solve future problems by looking backward.*

we can't solve future problems by looking backward. It's folly to think we can build levees high enough and strong enough to prevent flooding forever. It's equal folly to think we can restore the Bay ecosystem to the way it was in the past or try to preserve the Bay the way it is now. We need a regional strategy to determine where we should invest in shoreline protection, where we should concentrate on habitat enhancement, and what approaches we should adopt in the face of rising seas, increased storms, and a different climate in the future. The cost will be enormous, but the cost of doing nothing will be far greater.

Wearing his "new hat" as Senior Consultant, Travis sees as the next step the integration of sea level rise into the Sustainable Communities Strategy that ABAG and MTC are developing to guide growth in the region. Travis is convinced that the Bay Region, famous for diversity, innovation, and turning challenges into opportunities, can employ this approach to both reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to inevitable impacts of global climate change. It will be difficult, but ultimately, with effective political leadership, it is an achievable goal.

MCL is grateful to the always-professional **Linda Novy** for graciously volunteering to emcee this important and informative event, and to the lead sponsor **Environmental Forum of Marin** ([marinefm.org](http://marinefm.org)) and co-sponsor **Nute Engineering** of San Rafael ([nute-engr.com](http://nute-engr.com)) for their support.

MCL Board Members in the air and on the road

Marin Conservation League may place first priority on protecting and enhancing the natural assets of Marin County, but Board members are also engaged in other environmental activities, either on the job or as committed volunteers.

*Addressing Global Climate Change in Durban, So. Africa*



Michelle Passero



Jon Elam

MCL Board member **Michelle Passero** is an environmental attorney in her "day job" as senior climate policy advisor at The Nature Conservancy California. Board member **Jon Elam** serves as General Manager of the Tam Community Services District (TCSD).

In December, both Jon and Michelle travelled to Durban, South Africa, to attend the 17<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP17) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), in which 194 nations participated. Jon has participated in the past four UNFCCC conferences as a delegate with the California Climate Registry

and its parent organization, the California Climate Reserve and attended the Durban meetings in this capacity. Michelle and Jon shared their impressions of the meetings at a recent MCL Board meeting.

Among many important issues addressed at the conference, a major goal was to chart a path that, in order to avoid human-induced catastrophic climate change, would keep increases in global temperatures from exceeding 2 degrees Celsius, (the world is currently on a path of a 4 degree increase).

The participating countries focused on: **1) the fate of the Kyoto Protocol**, adopted in December 1997 and entered into force in February 2005; **2) development of a new, more comprehensive global climate change agreement**; and **3) the need to help developing nations cope with the unavoidable impacts of climate change**. While important and incremental progress was made during these high level talks, it was also apparent that it is the cumulative effect actions on the state and local level that will be critical to limiting global warming.

Michelle summarized the key outcomes of the 2-week conference:

**Kyoto Extension:** The European Union agreed to extend the Kyoto Protocol and continue to follow it until 2017.

**More comprehensive agreement by 2020:** All countries agreed to a negotiating mandate for new commitments from all major emitters by 2015. This means that

China and India and Brazil will be included in the next round of emissions targets for the first time, alongside the U.S., Europe, and other wealthy countries. Of course, this deal is about process, not substance, i.e., no new pledges were made to deflect the current 4 degree C warming trajectory. And the timing of the deal—an agreement by 2015 that would be in force by 2020—leaves



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*Zebras on the Hluhluwe–Umfoluzi Game Reserve, 174 miles north of Durban, anxiously await the fate of the Kyoto protocol*

*Continued on Page 10*

## World Travelers *from Page 9*

only the slimmest of margins to stay below 2 degrees.

**Fund for assisting in adaptation:** Countries finally agreed to the design of the Green Climate Fund, a fund whereby developed countries would provide \$100 billion annually to developing countries to finance climate change activities.

On the positive side, the international community made progress in agreeing to continue reducing emissions, and future international commitments will bring in other major emitting countries. The clear message of the meeting, however, was that we can't wait for an international agreement to be fully implemented before we take action to reduce emissions. Much of the current activity to address global warming has not happened through top-down international agreement, but rather through regional, state and local actions.

Michelle noted that California is recognized as one of the leading governments around the world that is taking action to reduce emissions (California is the 12th largest greenhouse gas (GHG) emitter globally). During many of the important side events at the Conference, California representatives and its lead regulator, Mary Nichols, Chairman of the CA Air Resources Board, shared California's climate law and comprehensive efforts like AB32 to reduce GHGs. As of December 2011, California finalized its package of regulations to reduce statewide emissions to 1990 levels by 2020, a major milestone.

California's programs are being watched and emulated by countries, states and provinces all around the world. So while we continue to pursue a comprehensive international approach to address climate change, it's important to keep in mind that the action currently is occurring at a more local level, among certain countries, states and communities. County and individual actions are also important and essential. Both Michelle and Jon reiterated the message: **all local actions are critical to reduce emissions, especially now.**

### *Other Environmental Action in California*

Travelling a much shorter distance (100 miles compared to 10,800), MCL President

Susan Stompe and Officers Ken Drexler and Nona Dennis attended the annual California Planning and Conservation League (PCL) Symposium in Sacramento on January 28.

For those unfamiliar with PCL, it began as an offshoot of the California Roadside Council, whose purpose was to fight billboard blight. The architect-husband of MCL co-founder Sepha Evers, Albert, was President of the Council in the 1930s, and removing billboards would become one of MCL's great campaigns as well. Son Bill Evers was active in the Council in the 1960s, and, with a colleague took his concerns a major step forward by forming a new group in 1965 to work on California environmental legislation: Planning and Conservation League for Legislative Action, later shortened to Planning and Conservation League (PCL). Past Executive Directors include Jerry Meral, Inverness resident and currently Governor Brown's Deputy Secretary for Resources in charge of Bay-Delta water issues.

### *"Think Small"*

PCL's annual day-long winter Symposium always brings together a wide variety of environmental non-profits, attorneys, legislators, public officials, and others from around the state to confer on legislation and other environmental issues of statewide concern. This year the title, "Think Small," was an apt metaphor for panels that explored "local solutions to protect our environment, strengthen our communities, and rebuild our economy." Of special note were panels on linking water usage and land use planning as the availability of water supply becomes more critical on both state local community levels; the effect that SB 375 may have in creating regional land use plans and channeling transportation funding toward projects that reduce GHG emissions; how to counter threats to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) cloaked as "reform"; the definition of a "green" economy; the promising future of locally-based renewable energy systems; the future of high speed rail in California; and more.

The Symposium is always an excellent opportunity to connect with state-wide advocates and issues, and PCL is a valuable resource as a legislative advocate. As it has in the past, MCL will continue to look to PCL's research for guidance on state environmental issues. For more information visit [pcl.org](http://pcl.org).

## Annual Dinner *from Page 1*

One observer said on the occasion of Lester's appointment: "I don't think a national search for a Director could possibly have come up with anyone who could hit the ground running the way Mr. Lester can." Another recognized "the unique experience, unwavering integrity, and clear vision Dr. Lester brings to this position."

In accepting the appointment, Dr. Lester acknowledged the importance of improving communications and collaboration with public agencies and local governments along the coast to achieve the purposes of the Coastal Act. "I am deeply committed to implementing the Coastal Act, but I am also a problem-solver, and I look forward to bringing people together around environmentally sustainable solutions that protect coastal resources and provide maximum public access to the coast for all Californians."

Lester succeeded Peter Douglas, who led the Commission for 26 years. (The first and second Directors of the Commission were Marin residents Joe Bodovitz and Michael Fischer.) At the Commission, Dr. Lester directs a current staff of about 140 and manages an annual budget of \$16 million.

MCL will also be presenting its annual Awards for Environmental Achievement at the dinner, which will again be held at 5:30 pm, Friday, April 20, at the **Key Room at the New Beginnings Center, a program of Homeward Bound, 1385 No. Hamilton Parkway in Southern Novato. Tickets are \$75 per person and pre-registration is required.** Invitations, which will also describe the winners of the Environmental Awards as well as announce the names of the nominees for the upcoming Board of Directors, will be mailed to all members in early March. Guests can also register online at [marinconservationleague.org/events](http://marinconservationleague.org/events) or by calling 415-485-6257. **This event has sold out the past several years, so register early –no tickets will be sold at the door.**

## Watershed *from Page 1*

along with a plan including more than 160 different projects, spread through the valley, to increase channel capacity in a way that also benefits habitat.

Typical of improvements with multiple benefits is replacement of the box culvert under Sherman Avenue in Fairfax which is undersized and is also a major barrier to fish passage.

### *Flood damage reduction project's major purpose*

A major goal of the Ross Valley plan is to eliminate the damage that occurs in a 100-year flood. The 2005 event was approximately equal to a 100-year event.

The county shares responsibility with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USCOE) for flood management in the Ross Valley with the Corps leading the effort in the lower reach of the main channel in Ross and Kentfield. The USACE project must be completed before upstream capacity can be increased; otherwise the risk of flooding would increase in Ross and Kentfield.

Among the projects are 15 bridges that need to be replaced or modified to increase flow capacity underneath them. Fortunately, Caltrans helps fund replacement of bridges that are structurally or functionally inadequate and many of the old bridges in the valley are candidates for that funding.

Five publicly-owned open spaces that could be used as detention basins for short-term floodwater storage are a major part

of the plan. These are Lefty Gomez Field and Loma Alta open space in Fairfax, and Memorial Park and Red Hill Community Park in San Anselmo. The largest of the storage basins is Phoenix Lake above Ross which is owned by MMWD for backup water supply.

### *Phoenix Lake key component; earns \$7.6 million state grant*

Re-operation of the Phoenix Lake dam, the plan's keystone project, will involve retrofitting the spillway with an inflatable barrier that could be quickly inflated to raise the lake's surface elevation and increase storage capacity if a storm of sufficient strength were forecast. The water level would be lowered in advance of the storm so that the lake would have excess capacity for runoff and, after the storm had passed, water could be released in a controlled fashion.

The Phoenix Lake project has been awarded a \$7.66 million grant from the state's Department of Water Resources, covering half the total cost of \$15.6 million.

The environmental benefits of the Phoenix Lake Retrofit Project have two major components: improving water quality in Phoenix Lake by reducing the occurrence of algal blooms and decreasing the water temperature in Ross Creek and Corte Madera Creek.

### *Less algae lowers treatment costs; cooler water for steelhead*

In its present configuration, Phoenix Lake stratifies in the summer into a lower

cool zone with very little dissolved oxygen and an upper zone with high temperatures and high dissolved oxygen. Low dissolved oxygen increases the potential for dissolution of sediment-bound metals (iron and manganese). Indeed, water samples from upper Ross Creek, fed by mostly by seepage through the dam, contain levels of iron and manganese harmful to fish.

The upper level of the lake, with abundant dissolved oxygen and higher temperatures, favors the formation of algae blooms. This reduces water clarity and makes it expensive to treat Phoenix Lake water at the Bon Tempe Treatment Plant.

To remedy water quality issues, two circulation devices will be installed in the lake, one acting on the lake's upper level to reduce the growth of algae and thereby improve water quality and clarity, and reduce summertime treatment costs. The second device will oxygenate the deep, cool water and reduce dissolution of sediment-bound metals (iron and manganese).

Another goal of the Phoenix Lake project is to improve aquatic habitat below the dam in Ross Creek and lower Corte Madera Creek by cooling water temperatures in these creeks during the dry season. This will be done by installing a release valve that allows the release of cold water from lower lake levels, keeping temperatures in the creeks below 16°C, the maximum suitable for steelhead trout.



Constriction points on San Anselmo Creek include the Nokomis Bridge (left), shown during the disastrous December 2005 flood event, and just downstream of Bridge Avenue (right), in the downtown San Anselmo business district, shown during flooding in February 1998. Photographs courtesy Charles Kennard.

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*Board of Directors meetings are held  
the third Tuesday of the month at  
7:30 PM and are open to the public.*

**Staff:**

Dru Parker, Operations Manager  
Laura Schifrin, Operations Administrator

**Contact Information**

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415.485.6257  
www.marinconservationleague.org

**Committee Meeting Schedule**

*Land Use and Transportation:*  
1<sup>st</sup> Wed. of the month, 9:00 - 11:00 AM

*Parks and Open Space:*  
2<sup>nd</sup> Thurs. of the month, 3:00 - 5:00 PM

*Water and Watersheds:* 4<sup>th</sup> Thurs. of the  
month, 4:30 - 6:30 PM

*North Marin Unit (NMU), Climate  
Action:* Call 415.485.6257 or see our  
website for meeting details.

*Meetings (except for NMU) are at  
1623-A Fifth Avenue, San Rafael*

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.  
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## MCL Walk into (Conservation) History #11, China Camp State Park, May 5

MCL will lead its 11<sup>th</sup> Walk into (Conservation) History on Saturday, May 5, from 9:30 to 1:00, at China Camp State Park. The free, public walk will honor those who were responsible for saving China Camp from urban development in the early 1970s. It also will be a special event to support the Friends of China Camp campaign to keep the Park open: "China Camp Needs You!"

The family-friendly walk will include the meandering, oak and madrone-wooded Shoreline Trail with glimpses of San Pablo Bay, and feature a loop around Turtleback Ridge to see the salt marshes that are habitat for the endangered California clapper rail and other wildlife.

Details will be announced in early April. Please pre-register online at [marinconservationleague.org/events](http://marinconservationleague.org/events). Sorry, no dogs allowed. Contributions to Friends of China Camp can be made online at [friendsofchinacamp.org](http://friendsofchinacamp.org).

