NEWS FROM MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

March—April 2013

Congressman Jared Huffman to speak at MCL's Annual Dinner April 19

Marin Conservation League is honored to have **Congressman Jared Huffman** (D—San Rafael), as guest speaker for its Annual Dinner on April 19th.

Huffman (D-San Rafael) was sworn in as a member of the 113th Congress on January 3, 2013 to represent California's second district, which spans from the Golden Gate Bridge north to the Oregon border and includes all of Marin, Mendocino, Humboldt, Trinity, and Del Norte, and much of Sonoma Counties.

Huffman is a member of the Committee on Natural Resources and the House Budget Committee.

Prior to his election to Congress in November of 2012, Huffman served six years in the California State Assembly where he authored more than 60 pieces of successful legislation and received

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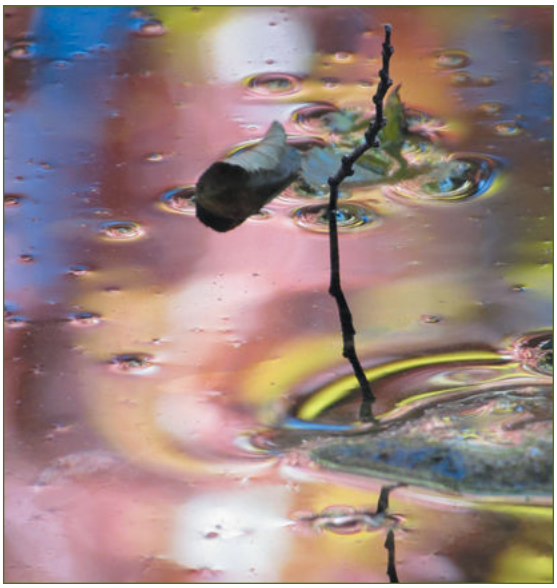
Congressman Jared Huffman

Every Watershed Needs "Friends"

In a two-part series, the MCL Newsletter *explores the watersheds of Marin County and how they have become the subject of volunteer citizen stewardship over the past two decades. Part I provides background for how we have come to think in terms of protecting watersheds, and focuses on North and Central Marin watersheds. Part II (May-June News) will feature Southern and West Marin Watersheds.*



"Pink Alder, Corte Madera Creek, Ross Valley Watershed," by Creekwalker Photographs/Sue Mace, from the Reflections on Water *series, sponsored by the Gallinas Watershed Council*

by Nona Dennis

"Every person lives within a watershed." So states the Tomales Bay Watershed Stewardship Plan (2003). " All of our actions—including hiking, driving on paved or dirt roads, building homes, raising livestock, gardening, boating, drinking water, or enjoying the benefits of indoor plumbing—affect the watershed in which these activities occur. As a resident or landowner within a watershed, each individual is responsible for being an informed watershed citizen who responsibly manages his/her impacts, while supporting conservation of the larger system."

Citizen stewardship of watersheds is not a new idea. It originated with the "bioregional" movement of the 1970's, which shifted environmental action away from protest as a primary strategy toward taking responsibility for local regions defined by natural boundaries—like a watershed—in which human communities co-exist with natural communities and can take action to protect their surroundings. The concept was memorialized by poet Gary Snyder: "Find your place on the planet. Dig in, and take responsibility from there!" A recent exhibit at the Bay Model in Sausalito, "Reflections on Water," celebrated not only the beauty of Marin creeks in stunning photographs by Creekwalker (pictured), but also the inspiration of citizen-activists like the Gallinas Watershed Council in taking responsibility for their own watershed.

More than two decades ago, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), charged with implementing the federal Clean Water Act, also embraced a watershed approach to "restore and maintain the

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A Message from the President—Spring has sprung!

Spring is here! If you have the time and inclination, hiking on our vast open spaces this time of year is great with the array of wildflowers changing every week (in some places, every day). The views are sharp from either the wind or (hopefully) rain. The hills are green and the air is fresh. We live in a wonderful place. Another joy of living here is exploring for different wildflowers, some are harder to find than others but certainly worth the effort.

The county watersheds that are the focus of this newsletter are so important to the mosaic of habitats our lands support. The people who put in their time and energies helping to keep them healthy are to be commended. We can all support their efforts by helping with the projects that need to be done, not the least of which is the California Coastal Cleanup—September 21 this year. (MCL sponsors clean ups at a few locations along creeks or coastline.) The webpages identified in the article can tell you the when and where of each watershed activity. It is a good way to learn a bit more about our county and to get that good feeling of helping our environment. You can also learn more about Marin's watershed issues by attending the MCL Water and Watersheds Committee that meets on the last Thursday of each month.

My term as president is coming to a close with the Annual Meeting on April 19. It has been an interesting and busy two years. The MCL Board of Directors is always an exceptional collection of talents and commitment. It has been challenging and rewarding as the organization became involved in diverse issues requiring the talents of our in house activists. From trail use changes to major development projects such as the San Rafael Airport sports facility which we unsuccessfully tried to reduce, we have been visible and engaged. We have sponsored events such as the Coastal Cleanups, Walks into Conservation History, Business—Environment breakfasts with noteworthy speakers, and our traditional holiday and picnic parties. I appreciate the opportunities I have had with MCL and continue to admire the people who shoulder up to the tasks that keep the organization vital, including the staff!

©Claire Woods, Flickr Creative Commons

Fremont's Star Lily, a native perennial herb, is one of the many wildflowers found blooming in Marin each spring.

Susan Stompe

Dru Parker

Tennessee Valley Multi-Use Pathway now open

The recently opened Tennessee Valley Class I Pathway Improvement is one of many projects in Marin County's WalkBikeMarin program that have been funded by a $25 million grant awarded to the County in 2005 by the federal Non-Motorized Transportation Pilot Program.

The 900-ft. boardwalk segment connects Tennessee and Tamalpais Valleys with the Mill Valley/Sausalito multi-use path, replacing an asphalt path that, like many other areas around Tam Junction, was frequently flooded by high tides.

Status Updates

MCL Opposes 101 Greenbrae/Twin Cities Interchange Project

by David Schnapf

The MCL Board opposes the proposed "Highway 101 Greenbrae/Twin Cities Corridor Improvement Project" as it is currently configured. (see also MCL January-February *Newsletter*). MCL has been monitoring the evolution of this massive Caltrans project for many years, and has concluded that the project is flawed for several reasons:

Caltrans

Rendering of the proposed flyover as viewed from Industrial Way.

1. The project fails to address existing flooding in the area, which will worsen with expected sea-level rise and increased storm intensity due to global climate change. MCL believes that preparing Marin's transportation infrastructure for sea level rise should be given high priority in any new highway projects.

2. The massive scale of the project is totally out of character for Marin. The substantial enlargement and complexity of the freeway access routes, along with the massive "flyover" structure that would, in itself, obstruct views, would be visible from many distant vantage points.

3. The elimination of the existing pedestrian/bicycle freeway overpass and replacement with a new street level route, across or under sixteen lanes at Wornum Drive, would create a safety problem for pedestrians and bicyclists attempting to cross traffic entering and exiting the freeway.

4. The cost of the project, currently estimated at around $150 million, is out of proportion to the modest benefits it might achieve.

5. The "Draft Environmental Document" circulated by Caltrans in December, 2012, contains serious flaws and is entirely inadequate in its failure to evaluate less intrusive alternatives or compare environmental impacts of each of the alternatives. An EIR/EIS, as required by CEQA and NEPA, should be prepared.

Community opposition to the project is widespread and has rapidly escalated. MCL representatives, along with hundreds of other project opponents, attended the January 29 Caltrans/TAM hearing on the project. The Town of Corte Madera has been particularly critical of both the project and the Draft Environmental Document. TAM, which had expected this project to move forward smoothly, is undoubtedly surprised by the intensity and breadth of opposition.

The principal justification for the project, according to the DED, is to improve freeway safety in the corridor. Accident statistics presented in Caltrans' own study, however, show that accident rates in the project area are generally about the same or lower than state averages, and that the project would actually increase congestion at points along Sir Francis Drake Blvd. In response, TAM shifted to different accident statistics to justify a safety "problem." The new accident statistics proved to be unreliable in that they include many accidents in San Francisco, and elsewhere outside the project area.

San Rafael Airport Recreational Facility Approval Challenged

This massive 85,700 sq. ft. indoor soccer facility with outdoor fields proposed at San Rafael Airport was given the green light on December 12 on a 3-1 vote by the San Rafael City Council (Council Member Damon Connolly dissenting). It was a disappointing but not unexpected outcome of a six-year review process. Gallinas Creek Defense Council, a coalition of citizens, has filed a lawsuit in Marin Superior Court that asks the court to vacate the City's approval of the project and its EIR.

Among other deficiencies cited in the suit, the EIR fails to seriously address the project's impact on the endangered California clapper rail; it does not analyze potential hazards associated with placing a large recreational facility used by both children and adults within safety zones of the airport runway; it dismisses significant cumulative impacts associated with the emission of greenhouse gases in that new rules were promulgated after the Draft EIR was prepared; and it does not address inconsistencies with City policies.

MCL has opposed the project since it was first proposed but did not join in the lawsuit as an organization. MCL encourages interested persons to make donations to the Gallinas Creek Defense Council. Contributions are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by the IRS.

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A notice posted at McInnis Park, across the creek from the proposed Airport sports facility, informs park users of the presence of California clapper rail

Dru Parker

Status Updates *from page 3*

County Red-Tape Committee Reaches Halfway Point

The RIAC ("Red Tape") Committee was convened by the Board of Supervisors late last year for the purpose of identifying and recommending various strategies to facilitate review of development projects that are consistent with Countywide Plan policies, consider streamlining CEQA review, and achieve greater efficiencies throughout the County's permit processes. The Committee has met four times and has spent the majority of its meetings learning how the Community Development Agency operates and what efficiency initiatives and CEQA procedures are already in place.

The most recent meeting on February 21 (too late for *Newsletter* print deadline) was intended to focus on the Countywide Plan and generate feedback from the Committee members.

A workshop will be held **Thursday, March 7, from 6:30 to 8:30** in Planning Commission Chambers to receive public input.

Marin County's 2012 Draft Housing Element Is a Mixed Bag

The County Planning Commission held its first hearing on the merits of the 2012 Draft Housing Element on February 11. The hearing was just one of a series of workshops and hearings in which the Commission and the public have had an opportunity to weigh in on this State requirement.

All California cities and counties are required by law to include a housing element in their general plan that responds to community housing conditions and needs and demonstrates how the county (or city) will accommodate its fair share of regional housing needs affordable to all income levels. The County is responsible for housing in unincorporated areas and has been working on the Element since 2009. With the help of a Housing Task Force in 2011, County staff identified 17 sites that could feasibly accommodate the 773 housing units, at densities up to 30 dwellings per acre, allocated by the State for the current cycle of 2007 to 2014. Because the next cycle from July 2014 to 2022 requires planning now to meet future housing needs, another 35 sites were identified to create a "menu" of options for affordable housing.

The need for affordable housing in Marin is well-demonstrated in the Draft Element, but where it might be located is a persistent issue, as are concerns about density. The majority of candidate sites are in East Marin, and many are constrained by existing uses and/or local conditions such as traffic congestion. Tamalpais Valley, for example, where several sites have been identified as "available," has numerous environmental constraints, including serious traffic congestion, frequent flooding and susceptibility to sea level rise as well as to ground shaking and liquefaction in an earthquake. Local residents have voiced their opposition strenuously.

Lucas Valley and Marinwood residents are concerned for different reasons. The largest number of units—70 percent of the total 2007 to 2014 allocation—would be located in their community, at St. Vincents/Silveira Ranch, Grady Ranch, and Marinwood Plaza, placing a disproportionate burden on the community and its schools. Further, the Grady Ranch is unsuited to the proposed 240 units of affordable housing due to its distance from transit and services, environmental constraints, and lack of infrastructure like water and sewers.

The Draft Element also contains numerous programs aimed at streamlining the County's review of affordable housing proposals. MCL is concerned that programs aimed at ministerial (as opposed to discretionary) review of projects, or short-circuiting CEQA environmental review, might erode public participation and transparency, a vital if often controversial component in the County's review procedures.

The Planning Commission will conduct a final hearing at **1:00 on Monday, March 11,** before sending its recommendations to the Board of Supervisors. Further hearings at the Board level will continue into summer 2013.

Dru Parker

240 units of affordable housing are proposed for Grady Ranch on Lucas Valley Road.

Progress on Plan Bay Area (SB 375)

MCL has been tracking the progress of the "Plan Bay Area," or the Sustainable Communities Strategy, process since 2009. Required by SB 375, the "anti-sprawl" bill passed by the legislature in 2008, the SCS will be a regional blueprint for future transportation and land use in the San Francisco Bay Region.

A primary objective of the SCS is to reduce per capita automobile-related greenhouse gas emissions to meet a regional target of 15 percent reduction by 2035. The SCS work effort by ABAG and MTC has produced a total of five alternative scenarios since 2010, out of which a Preferred Scenario was released in May 2012. At the same time, a Draft EIR was begun. After a lengthy hiatus, ABAG and MTC are expecting to release the Draft EIR and a Draft Plan Bay Area this March.

There will be another round of regional public meetings, with the Marin meeting scheduled for **April 29**. The schedule calls for adoption of the Final Plan and certification

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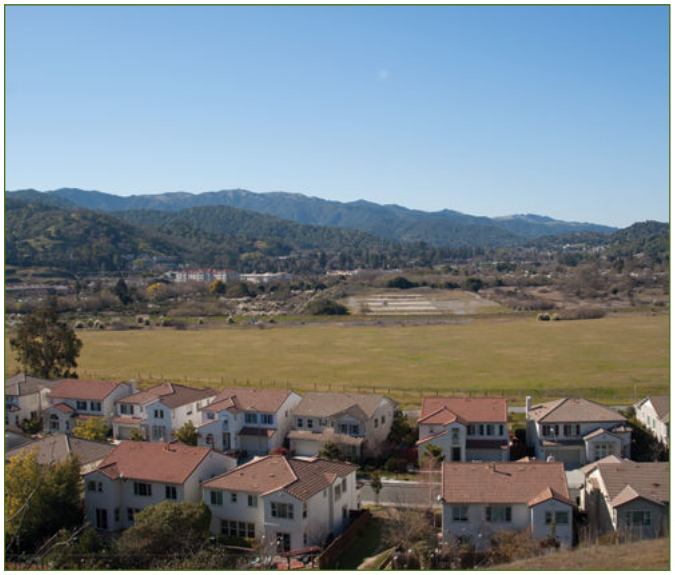
of the Final EIR in June, 2013, after a 55-day review period.

MCL has submitted several letters of comment during the planning process Our concerns have focused on excessive job growth projections, the need to respect the County's unique place and role in the Bay Region as a recreational and environmental resource, the limited land available in Marin for development, limited water supply, and significant areas of the County that are subject to sea level rise.

It was clear from the results of Alternative Scenario analysis by ABAG and MTC that shifting land use patterns and transportation investments alone would be unlikely to reach the 15 percent per capita GHG reductions target mandated by SB 375. As a consequence, the Final Plan may have to consider other policy and funding strategies to reduce vehicle miles to reach this target. MCL will review the Draft EIR when it is available and will continue to report on progress of the Plan.

Tracey Ruiz, Patch.com



Dru Parker

Above: Map of some of the areas included in the parcels that Marin Sports Academy would like to see used for a sports complex. Ammo Hill is not included in the plan, but Landfill 26 (circled in blue on map and pictured at left) would be home at least eight lighted baseball fields.

Sports Academy at Hamilton

The North Marin Unit of MCL recently heard a presentation of a proposal by Marin Sports Academy to construct a multi-sports facility at Hamilton. Still in concept form, the 88-acre complex would include nine baseball fields, four soccer fields, a 130,000 sq. ft. indoor sports facility ("hall of champions"), a 40,000 sq. ft."bunkhouse"/ hotel, and parking for 1,700 cars.

Eight of the baseball fields would be on Landfill 26 (a waste dump left over from military occupation of Hamilton that is still being monitored for possible groundwater contamination). The project proponents are leasing the site from the federal government for $10/year. They intend this commercial facility to become a regional sports center.

With good reason, neighbors at Hamilton are voicing their concerns; lighted fields, noise, and traffic would have a dramatic effect on the quiet condition that now exists in the area. Because wetlands are scattered across the site, Marin Audubon Society is opposed to the project.

The neighbors have met with the developer, the city manager and council members and are contacting local Little League and Soccer groups to emphasize that this facility would not be limited to local use. They are also visiting similar sports facilities in other locations, such as Sunnyvale and Pleasanton, to determine what impacts can be expected on a local community.

The proponents have not yet filed an application with the City. If and when they do, MCL will study the application and its environmental impacts and take a formal position.

Good News for Marin State Parks!

In the November-December 2012 Newsletter we reported that Assembly Bill 1478 will return $20.5 million in "found" funds to keep State Parks that were threatened with closure open for a minimum of two years, and it will address critical maintenance needs. AB 1478 authorized the Parks Department to distribute $10 million in matching funds to those parks that were kept open through the donation of private funds and volunteer efforts (volunteer labor is given a dollar

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Watersheds *from Page 1*

chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters." By planning within hydrologically defined boundaries, the agency found that efforts to protect aquatic resources from pollution and enrich fish and wildlife habitats could be far more effective if the watershed were treated as a social as well as a hydrological reality, where communities, neighbor to neighbor, could engage, educate and persuade one another in pursuing shared goals.

Out of this concept has come a radical shift in water management, away from traditional engineering and towards the consideration of the physical and biological "health" of the entire drainage basin, for example by "slowing, spreading, and sinking" stormwater runoff in the upper watershed to reduce sedimentation and flooding downstream. The watershed concept also prompted a new environmental activism in which citizens, by taking responsibility for their watershed, could become part of the solution to prevent pollution. This activism has since coalesced into groups of "Friends," "Alliances," "Watershed Councils," "Watershed Stewards," and so on. More than a hundred such groups now exist around San Francisco Bay, and Marin has at least ten associations devoted to caring for particular Marin watersheds.

Marin's watersheds have changed over time

Marin County has over 3,000 miles of natural creeks. Some of them remain relatively natural in spite of changes to the landscape. These creeks drain about a dozen watersheds—or two dozen, including sub-watersheds. Stormwater that falls on the peaks and ridges of Marin is carried down through a fine network of ephemeral and seasonal creeks to year-round streams—through a succession of forests, woodlands, chaparral, grasslands and, to the east, densely packed homes, commercial and industrial areas, and pavement, and to the west, rolling farmlands and a few villages, ultimately to enter marshlands, bays, and the ocean. It is a system that connects wildlife and aquatic habitats from headwaters to bay; it is a source of much of Marin's drinking water supply; and, at the same time, it poses unpredictable hazards to inhabited lowlands that lie in the path of storm flows and/or tides from the bay.

Over the 250 years of European settlement since Miwok and Pomo habitation, the Marin County watersheds have undergone dramatic changes: erosion and sedimentation as native grasslands were converted to annual grasses and overgrazed, and forests and woodlands were logged; fish habitat lost as dams were built, channels were altered, structures encroached into creeks, riparian vegetation was stripped, impervious surfaces of streets and homes were introduced, and creeks disappeared into culverts; and creeks became dumping ground for wastes and other pollutants. It is a miracle Marin's streams continue to support viable fish populations and lush riparian habitat!

Marin County Department of Public Works

Watershed stewardship begins with local government

Land development decisions made long ago that contributed to the degrading of creeks and marshes and flooding of urban lowlands are being addressed these days as Marin's creeks and streams have come under scrutiny. A watershed approach is now fully embraced by Marin County's Watershed Management Program. In 2008, the County adopted a framework to integrate flood management, water quality protection, and environmental (habitat) restoration, as mandated by federal and state laws and regulations and countywide policies. Primary responsibility for flood management resides with the Marin County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, established in 1953 as a separate and distinct agency governed by the District Board (the Board of Supervisors), and staffed by the County Department of Public Works. Eight Flood Control Zones in the County address specific flooding problems, mostly concentrated in the eastern urbanized corridor.

The more recent Marin County Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program (MCSTOPPP) was added to District and Public Works

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responsibilities in 1993 to comply with federal and state laws and regulations governing water pollution. Since that time, MCSTOPPP has been working with Marin's 11 cities and towns and many other public and private partners to reduce stormwater pollution and to protect and enhance habitat and other beneficial uses in the Marin's creeks and streams. Together, the District and MCSTOPPP are engaged with local communities in developing comprehensive Watershed Programs for specific watersheds.

"Friends" play a critical role

Government can't protect Marin's watersheds alone! Over the past two decades, citizen volunteers have taken an active role in protecting and restoring the health of their own watersheds. "Friends" groups in Marin County range widely in scope of activities, depending on the size and complexity of their particular watershed and the age of the organization. Regardless of differences, they share certain fundamental goals. These include building watershed awareness by educating local communities—e.g., how stormwater drains through the landscape, problems of erosion and sedimentation, local fish and wildlife populations, how peoples' activities influence the flow and quality of water—and engaging the local community, schools and youth groups in hands-on projects that run the gamut, from water quality monitoring, removing invasive non-native species and replanting native plants, to studying habitats and protecting endangered species. Most of these groups also critique local development proposals that could have adverse impacts on their watershed.

Marin County's watersheds and their Friends

Novato Creek Watershed

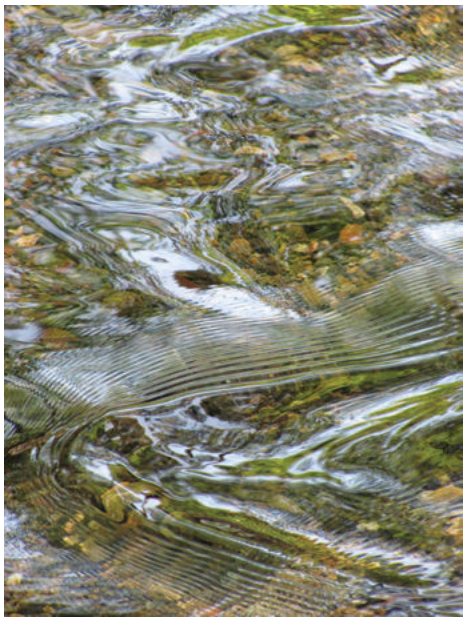
In northeast Marin, the 17-mile-long Novato Creek and its six main tributaries form the first major watershed south of the Marin-Sonoma County line. Covering some 45 square miles, it is the largest drainage basin in eastern Marin County and the driest. The headwaters originate among oak, bay and madrone woodlands and grasslands; the City of Novato covers most of the mid watershed; and the mainstem enters San Pablo Bay near the mouth of the Petaluma River. As with other east Marin creeks, Novato Creek has undergone dramatic transformation starting with introduction of annual grassland species, apple orchards on the valley floor, creeks channelized for irrigation, and tidal marshlands diked and drained for agriculture. After incorporation in 1960, the town grew rapidly through the 1990s, and continues to grow faster than other parts of eastern Marin, continuing to replace the natural landscape with hard surfaces and landscaping. Creeks in the upper watershed are still incising. Most channels through the town have narrowed, and urbanization has contributed to downstream flooding.

The lower marshes of Novato Creek contain some of the largest tidally influenced habitats in the bay region, supporting shorebirds and waterfowl populations as well as the endangered California clapper rail. Diked, formerly tidal baylands also provide seasonal wetland habitat for birds and waterfowl. The watershed also supports both rearing and spawning habitat for steelhead.

Since its founding in 2001 by environmental advocates and scientists, **Friends of Novato Creek** (FNC)—has been partnering with community and youth groups, schools, MCSTOPPP, and others to monitor water quality in Novato's creeks, monitor hazardous conditions at the former Hamilton Air Force Base, organize community work events to clear debris from creeks, such as on annual Coastal Clean-up Day, and protect endangered species. The group has placed 20 fish-shaped "Protect Our Creek" signs throughout the watershed to identify tributaries and raise awareness to keep creeks clean. FNC also advocates for sound land use planning in the watershed.

Miller Creek Watershed

Separated from the Novato Creek watershed by Big Rock Ridge, the Miller Creek watershed covers 12 square miles. The 30 miles of stream and tributaries originate in the open space and ranches that once supported dairies and grazing cattle in the upper Lucas Valley. The creek flows through multiple housing developments in Lucas Valley and Marinwood before passing under Highway 101 and through the Silveira Family dairy lands before entering diked baylands at the Northwest Pacific Railroad (NWPRR) Bridge. In the 1920s, the creek east of the bridge was redirected into a man-made



"Silver Run, Miller Creek" by Creekwalker Photographs/Sue Mace, from the Reflections on Water *series, sponsored by the Gallinas Watershed Council*

channel to the south and east before entering San Pablo Bay. Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District seasonally discharges treated effluent into the lower reach of the creek, very close to the tidal mouth of Gallinas Creek, in the next watershed to the south.

Unlike other east Marin creeks, the Miller Creek still has fairly intact riparian areas. In many locations, however, the banks are 20 to 25 feet high and often over 100 feet wide. Downcutting and bank erosion caused initially by overgrazing and removal of riparian vegetation in the headwaters, and, later, by housing development in the middle and lower reaches, continue to deliver fine sediment into the system, which degrades habitat for steelhead. Channel and bank conditions and riparian habitat, otherwise, are highly variable throughout developed areas of Lucas Valley and Marinwood.

Miller Creek watershed needs "Friends"! A group known as **Miller Creek Watershed Stewards** was kicked off in 2007 by activists who understood the creek's values and its vulnerabilities, but the group did not persist as an organized effort. Individuals have continued to promote projects with students and teachers to restore creek habitat behind Dixie School and Miller Creek Middle School, working under the guidance of **STRAW** ("Students and Teachers Restoring a Watershed"). STRAW, a frequent partner with watershed "Friends," evolved from a project

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at Brookside School in San Anselmo in1992, in which fourth-grade teacher Laurette Rogers engaged her students in saving endangered freshwater shrimp. The project took off and expanded into a collaboration with the schools throughout Marin in their environmental education programs. Now a program of PRBO Conservation Science, STRAW provides expertise in hydrology and biology, revegetation, habitat restoration, and other stream-related technologies.

The Miller Creek watershed is almost entirely privately owned, with hundreds of homes along the creek. This presents an obstacle to cooperative citizen action. Supervisor Susan Adams, whose District 1 encompasses the watershed, has initiated discussions with all affected interests to begin planning a multi-stakeholder Watershed Program for Miller Creek. It will be an opportunity for the volunteer Watershed Stewards to regroup and participate.

Gallinas Creek Watershed

The next drainage south is the 5.6 square-mile Gallinas Watershed. Two forks of Gallinas Creek extend from the hills of Terra Linda to the north and San Pedro Ridge and San Rafael Hills to the south and converge near the wetlands of Santa Venetia and McInnis Park. Today, the once-wooded watershed is highly urbanized, and remaining native habitats have been fragmented except for the still-forested San Pedro Ridge.

As Terra Linda was developed, the North Fork, which had once supported steelhead habitat, was channelized and lined with concrete; no steelhead have been observed since that time. East of Highway 101, dense neighborhoods and industrial and commercial development occupy the 100 year flood plain of the creek. The unincorporated community of Santa Venetia, between the South Fork and San Pedro Rd., has experienced frequent flooding due in large part to its origins as a marsh. It was one of the first developments in Marin County to be constructed on fill over bay mud, and has since subsided. Sea level rise, land subsidence and aging infrastructure present key flood protection challenges. Two-thirds of the Gallinas watershed is in the City of San Rafael, and the remainder, like Santa Venetia, is unincorporated, a division that presents conflicts in watershed policies, governance, and/or funding between the two jurisdictions.

Gallinas Creek shares an outlet to San Pablo Bay with Miller Creek in the vicinity of McInnis Park. A planning effort under the direction of Marin County Parks will study the potential for restoration of both McInnis Marsh and the lower reach of Miller Creek, so as to improve habitat connectivity between the two watersheds and marshes for special-status species like the California clapper rail.

The **Gallinas Watershed Council** was formed by a group of concerned citizens seeking to connect their diverse neighborhoods to their creeks and wetlands. The group has been a model for citizen action and education through public programs such as the recent photographic exhibit "*Reflections on Water*" at the Bay Model, leading creek and wetlands clean-ups, advocating against land uses that could threaten creek habitats (e.g., San Rafael Airport soccer facility), and collaborating with the County on the Gallinas Watershed Management Planning process. Two top priorities of the Council are to release the creek from trapezoidal channels and restore a continuous greenbelt of habitat along its length, and to restore transitional habitats between wetlands and uplands in the lower floodplains, in part to buffer future rise in sea level.

Dru Parker

The county has posted road signs alerting the community to local watersheds.

San Rafael Creek Watershed

Between Gallinas Creek Watershed and Corte Madera Watershed to the south, is the 11-square-mile San Rafael Creek Watershed. Its tributaries originate on the grassy and wooded slopes above Mount Tamalpais Cemetery and on south-facing slopes of San Pedro Point. As these ephemeral creeks reach the City of San Rafael, they become highly urbanized, mostly routed under the city in culverts. An exposed reach of Mahon Creek between B Street and Highway 101 is tidal and bordered by wetlands and has been proposed for restoration. Along the San Pedro Ridge southern watershed boundary, small drainages flow through Loch Lomond, Glen Park, Peacock Gap and nearby neighborhoods, forming several isolated wetlands along the Bay shore About 80 percent of the San Rafael watershed is developed, and the city of San Rafael occupies almost 90 percent of the watershed.

East San Rafael, once a vast wetland of San

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Dru Parker

The North Fork of Gallinas Creek is lined in concrete and runs down the median of Del Ganado Road and Freitas Parkway (right) in Terra Linda

Mr. Levine Goes to Sacramento

Local environmentalists and political activists heard Freshman Assembly Member Marc Levine give his early impressions of the California legislature at Marin Conservation League's Business-Environment Breakfast on Friday, February 8, at the Embassy Suites. Marc has joined 37 other new members of the California State Assembly at a time when, as he says, the State is "flat broke"—when any further budget cuts will have an impact. Although a super-majority of Democrats currently control the legislature, their individual priorities are not all the same.

Marc's election last November took many by surprise. Outspent by about six to one, he nonetheless won by a comfortable margin. He has been given five committee assignments in the Assembly including Vice-Chair of Local Government, and a seat on Higher Education, Governmental Organization, and Arts, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Committees, as well as Select Committee on Agriculture and Environment. In the latter assignment, he hopes to build on Marin's and Sonoma's "best practices" in organic farm production as an example of California's leadership.

Marc is particularly interested in two current environmental issues—the need to regulate hydraulic fracturing ("fracking") and a statewide ban on plastic bags. According to Marc, fracking is largely unregulated; a permit to frack an existing well can be obtained in 10 days, with no paper work. California does not know where fracking is occurring, nor does industry disclose what chemicals are injected (the typical response is: water, sand and a "bunch of other stuff"). He believes that if fracking is to continue in California —and the potential is huge in Monterey Shale formations—it must be proven safe and a permit process required. On the plastic bag issue, Marc believes that because 62 jurisdictions in the State already have some form of ban on single-use plastic bags, it is time to renew the effort for a statewide ban and he has drafted a bill to that effect.

On other environmental topics he was less specific. As the Senate Committee on Environmental Quality considers possible reforms to CEQA, he claims to be a "spectator," watching the debate play out before it is "kicked over to the Assembly." He stated that he valued the utility of EIRs that he read as a San Rafael Councilmember and the importance of public process that CEQA provides but is concerned about projects being halted by CEQA lawsuits on non-environmental grounds. The audience received his remarks with interest but also urged him to not delay in defending CEQA at this time. MCL looks forward to working with Marc on statewide environmental issues of local importance.

Jana Haehl

Assemblymember Levine meets with constituent Rick Fraites after the February 8 breakfast talk.

Watersheds *from Page 8*

Rafael Creek, still supports a four-acre tidal marsh at Pickleweed Park—home to a small population of the endangered California clapper rail—as well as several diked areas of seasonal wetland accessed by the Jean and John Starkweather Shoreline Park trail. Just offshore, the two small Marin Islands, which support a large heron colony, are managed as part of the San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge. Black-crowned high-heron, snowy egret, great egret, and great blue heron forage in small wetlands on the San Rafael "mainland."

There is no organized "Friends" group for the San Rafael Creek Watershed, but sometimes one "Friend" will do. That would be **Jean Starkweather**, who, with the support of Marin Audubon Society and Marin Conservation League, has cared for the remnant wetlands of East San Rafael for many decades. Individuals in the South San Pedro Road Coalition also have taken an interest in protecting the small remnant of wetlands along the San Pedro Peninsula shoreline, including a "managed" wetland at the San Rafael Rock Quarry.

Part II will focus on Corte Madera Creek, Richardson Bay and Tomales Bay watersheds, along with several smaller coastal watersheds.

Joyce Clements, Gallinas Watershed Council

Annual Dinner *from Page 1*

numerous awards for his legislative leadership. Huffman chaired the Water, Parks, and Wildlife Committee, served on the Budget Committee and was co-chair of the Legislative Environmental Caucus.

In the Assembly, Huffman distinguished himself as a legislator who tackles complex public policy challenges, works tirelessly, and gets results—often by forging bipartisan consensus on difficult issues. He played a leading role in crafting and passing the historic package of water reforms in 2009. Other notable laws authored by Huffman include California's pioneering lighting efficiency standards (AB 1109) which were subsequently adopted into federal law; the nation's largest programs for solar hot water heating (AB 1470) and paint recycling (AB 1343); and reforms that improve California's State Parks system (AB 1589) and Department of Fish and Wildlife (AB 2402).

Friday, April 19

5:30 pm

The Key Room, Hamilton

$75 per person

Pre-registration required

Prior to his election to public office, Huffman was a Senior Attorney for the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). One of his proudest accomplishments at NRDC was helping forge an agreement to restore a 153-mile stretch of the San Joaquin River in California's Central Valley.

Huffman also served 12 years in local government as a Director of Marin County's largest special district, the Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD), from 1994 to 2006.

MCL will also be presenting its annual Awards for Environmental Achievement at the dinner. *The John M. McPhail, Jr., Green Business Award* will be given to the **Tamalpais Community Services District**; **Marge Macris** will receive the *Green Award for Environmental Leadership*; **PRBO Conservation Science** will be awarded the *Ted Wellman Water Award*; and the *Peter Behr Award for Lifetime Achievement* will be given to **Bob Berner,** long-time Executive Director of Marin Agricultural Land Trust; and the *Marin Conservation League Volunteer of the Year* will be announced at the dinner.

The event will be again be held at **5:30 pm, Friday, April 19**, at the **Key Room at the New Beginnings Center, a program of Homeward Bound, 1385 No. Hamilton Parkway** in Southern Novato**.**

Tickets will be $75 per person and pre-registration is required. Invitations will be mailed to all members in early March. At that time, guests will also be able to register online at 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.**

Marin Conservation League
Annual Meeting and Election, April 19, 2013
The Key Room at Homeward Bound

1385 N. Hamilton Parkway, Novato, California

Proposed Slate of Officers and Directors for 2013—2014

The Marin Conservation League's Nominating Committee, chaired by Vicki Nichols, has nominated the following persons for election as MCL Officers and Directors at the 2013 Annual Meeting and Election. **All MCL members who attend the meeting are eligible to vote.**

Nominated for Election as Officers for 2013-2014

President—David Schnapf, Greenbrae
First Vice President—Jana Haehl, Corte Madera
Second Vice President—Vicki Nichols, Sausalito
Secretary—Nona Dennis, Mill Valley
Treasurer—Ken Drexler, Fairfax

Nominated for election as Directors new to the MCL Board

Term ending April 2015
Pamela Reaves—San Rafael
Jill Templeton—Mill Valley

Term ending April 2016
Sally Gale—Petaluma
Randy Greenberg—Tiburon
Robert Johnston—Pt. Reyes Station
Douglas Wilson—Mill Valley

The following Directors will continue to serve existing terms:

Term ending April 2014
Priscilla Bull—Kentfield
Jon Elam—San Anselmo
Fred Holden—Belvedere
Chris Yalonis—Fairfax

Term ending April 2015
Ann Thomas—Corte Madera
Judy Teichman—Pt. Reyes Station

Directors nominated for re-election

Term ending April 2015
Susan Stompe—Novato

Term ending April 2016
Larry Smith—Nicasio

Want less paper?

To receive this newsletter and other announcements electronically, please email us at mcl@marinconservationleague.org with the subject line "Email Only."

Expanded Stream Conservation Ordinance underway

The Marin Community Development Agency is beginning the process of expanding the County's Stream Conservation Ordinance to implement policies in the 2007 Countywide Plan. The Plan outlines standards for stream setbacks in unincorporated areas of the County and the kind of development and other actions that can occur within Stream Conservation Areas (SCAs). Although long contemplated by the agency, the task to develop the ordinance took on new urgency when Judge Lynne Duryee enjoined the County last September from approving applications for development within the SCA in the San Geronimo Valley until the County adopts an expanded SCA ordinance. The current injunction exempts certain applications, such as additions that don't expand the existing building footprint in the SCA. Nevertheless, the injunction has created uncertainty for building activity in the Valley after several years of controversy.

The process will identify what types of development are covered by the ordinance and what are exempt

At the same time as she issued the injunction, Judge Duryee held that the County had adequately fulfilled CEQA requirements in the Environmental Impact Report on the 2007 Countywide Plan, countering the charge made by Salmon Protection and Watershed Network (SPAWN) that the EIR had failed to address the cumulative impacts on endangered Coho salmon populations of numerous individual development encroachments into SCAs.

Building on the Countywide Plan policies for setbacks from streams and creeks, the current process will identify what types of development are covered by the ordinance and what types are exempt. The draft revised ordinance contemplates, a tiered review process, in which agency staff would first conduct an initial site assessment of a development request to determine whether a proposed activity, such as installing a patio or accessory building or removing native trees, would fall within an SCA. If it does, staff would have to determine if the proposed project could be approved through a ministerial permit, or would require the more detailed review of a discretionary permit. As outlined in preliminary materials, a key test for any development proposed within an area covered by the ordinance would be whether it could have significant impacts on hydraulic capacity of the waterway; on habitat acreage, value, or function; or on water quality. Other related studies could be authorized to determine what standard management practices might be required to avoid or offset possible impacts.

Over the past month, CDA staff members have been meeting in small informational sessions with affected community groups and other stakeholders such as MCL to outline the ordinance and solicit feedback. The optimistic schedule calls for conducting an evening public workshop on **March 14, set for 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.**, in Planning Commission chambers (room 328). The Planning Commission will then hold meetings during April and May and submit their recommendations to the Board of Supervisors on June 18. Many details will need to be considered in drafting an ordinance that protects critical stream resources, meets with public support and creates a sense of stewardship for our waterways. The MCL Water and Watersheds Committee will be examining these details over the coming months.

Status Updates *from Page 5*

value for purposes of reimbursement). The remaining $10 million will go to deferred maintenance of parks and $0.5 million to administering fund distributions.

With much celebration, officials of Marin District State Parks, Friends of China Camp, Marin State Parks Association, and State Parks, Sacramento, signed an agreement on Saturday, February 16, at China Camp Village, that memorialized FOCC's successful efforts in obtaining AB 1478 funds to match the many donations that have kept the Park open. According to Ernest Chung, President of FOCC and instrumental in gathering donations last year, these funds will be supplemented by grants that were previously received from the Marin Community Foundation, the Dean Witter Foundation, the Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, and Marin County. By leveraging what was accomplished at China Camp, and with the additional support from these grants, China Camp will also receive matching funds to assure operation of Olompali State Historic Park and Tomales Bay State Park.

The matching funds will relieve much of the Parks' near-term financial stress

Marin State Parks Association (MSPA), FOCC's parent organization, will become the operator of Olompali and, together with National Park Service, Tomales Bay.

The matching funds will relieve much of the Parks' near-term financial stress and allow Olompali and tomales Bay parks to open more often. It will also provide a valuable window to improve the viability of the three parks—allowing more visitor access—by strengthening the parks' revenue generation capabilities, catching up on deferred maintenance, and building programs to enhance the experience of park users. Together with the projected revenues from the parks themselves, there should be sufficient funds to keep the parks open through June, 2016, and possibly beyond.

MCL will hold its 13th Walk into (Conservation) History at Olompali State Historic Park on **Saturday, March 23, at 9:30 a.m**. See page 12 or visit marinconservationleague.org/events for details.

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Ann Thomas, Corte Madera
Periann Wood, Mill Valley
Chris Yalonis, San Anselmo

Board of Directors meetings are held the 3rd Tuesday of the month at 7:30 PM and are open to the public.

Staff:
Dru Parker, Operations Manager
Molly Foley, Operations Administrator

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San Rafael CA 94903
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mcl@marinconservationleague.org

Committee Meeting Schedule
Land Use and Transportation: 1st Wed. of the month, 9:00 AM—Noon
Parks and Open Space: 2nd Thurs. of the month, 3:00—5:00 PM
Water and Watersheds: Last Thurs. of the month, 4:00 - 6:00 PM
Climate Action: 3rd Thurs., odd-numbered months, 6:30—8:30 PM
North Marin Unit (NMU): Day and venue varies
Meeting sites and times may vary; confirm at our Issues Committee webpage or call 415.485.6257.

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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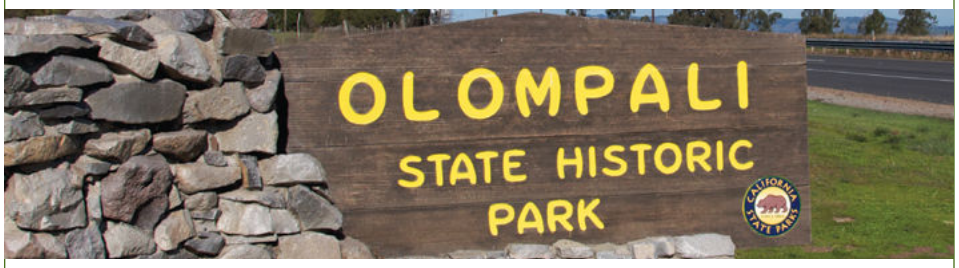
Walk Into (Conservation) History #13

Olompali State Historic Park

Saturday, March 23
9:30 am—12:30 pm



You are invited to join MCL for our 13th Walk into (Conservation) History at Olompali SHP, on the bay-facing slopes of Novato's Mt. Burdell. This moderately strenuous 2.7-mile hike on the Miwok and Loop Trails is free and open to the public. It will be led by MCL President Susan Stompe and biologist Clint Kellner.

Wear layers, sunscreen and comfortable shoes, and bring a snack or picnic lunch, water and camera. After the walk, meet at the Frame House (Visitor Center/Museum) to learn more about the Park's history.

Please RSVP to 415-485-6257 or at marinconservationleague.org/events.

Directions: From southern Marin, travel north of Novato on Highway 101. Exit at the Landfill Access, cross the highway and come back to the southbound entrance to the park. Meet in the paved parking area. The parking fee is $8; please bring exact change. Sorry—no dogs.