NEWS FROM MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

May—June 2013

Regional Planning

Public Forum to Consider Draft Plan Bay Area in Marin

A public Forum will be held on May 9, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at Angelico Hall, Dominican University, in San Rafael to discuss the recently released Draft Plan Bay Area. This is the third in a series of public Forums since 2011 put on by Marin organizations to engage the local community in addressing what effects regional planning to implement SB 375 might have on Marin County. At this writing, Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), joint authors of the Draft Plan Bay Area and its EIR, had also scheduled two public meetings in Marin—April 16, on the EIR, and April 29, on the Plan itself. The May 9 Forum differs from these in that it offers an opportunity for discussion of local issues by local speakers. The public comment period ends on May 16. A final Plan is expected in July.

The forum—"**Choosing the Future We Want: What Does Plan Bay Area Mean for Marin?**"—will feature a panel of speakers, moderated by Supervisor **Katie Rice** and introduced by President of the

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Marin's watersheds and their many "Friends"

Students at Willow Creek Academy show off some of the trash they have collected on the banks of Willow Creek in Sausalito

Allison Marshall

This is the second of a two part series in which MCL explores how watersheds of Marin County have become the subject of volunteer citizen stewardship over the past two decades. Part I (March-April 2013 Newsletter*) focused on Northern and Central Marin watersheds. This part features watersheds in Southern Marin—from Ross Valley/Corte Madera Creek to Richardson Bay—as well as West Marin watersheds.*

by Nona Dennis

Protecting Marin's watersheds is not new to Marin County. In 2008, the County adopted a watershed-based framework to integrate flood management, water quality protection, and habitat protection, and to work closely with local communities. Efforts to protect aquatic resources from pollution and enrich fish and wildlife habitats are far more effective when carried out within the defined boundaries of a watershed, especially when the watershed is treated as a social as well as a hydrological reality. Communities and neighborhoods can work together to pursue shared goals for protecting their watershed. Over the past two decades, citizen volunteers ("Friends" and "Stewards") have taken an active role in promoting the health of their own Marin County watersheds by building awareness and engaging local communities in hands-on projects—from monitoring water quality, to cleaning up debris, to removing barriers to fish migration, to replanting banks with native plants and restoring habitats—and more.

The following examples continue the story of what "Friends" are doing to protect and restore their watersheds in Marin County.

Ross Valley/Corte Madera Creek

The 28-square-mile Corte Madera Creek Watershed extends from Mt. Tamalpais and White's Hill through the communities of

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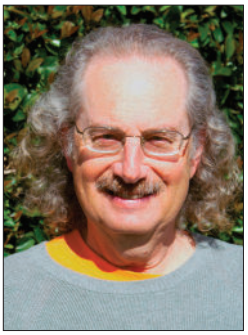
A Message from the President

I assume the Presidency of MCL very mindful of the fact that I lack the remarkable depth of experience and long history of involvement of my two predecessors—Susan Stompe and Nona Dennis. Both Susan and Nona have been very active in MCL for decades and have contributed enormously to the organization in so many different ways. They know just about everything that goes on in Marin and have been a tremendous resource to me as mentors and repositories of MCL history. A hearty thank you to both of them for their past efforts and for their continued involvement. MCL's success is attributable to its knowledgeable committees and the many volunteers who have devoted countless hours tracking issues, reviewing EIRs, attending meetings, writing articles, organizing events, leading walks, etc. It is truly exciting to be involved with so many people who are so deeply concerned with preserving Marin's environment.



I entered law school in 1972 filled with youthful idealism for preserving the environment, and spent many years practicing environmental law, including a four year stint in EPA's DC headquarters and then its SF Regional Office. I retired two years ago and was immediately drawn to MCL because I never lost the conviction that protection of the environment is the foremost issue facing mankind. While there has been tremendous progress since I entered law school forty years ago, much remains to be done. The issues we now face in an era of changing climate are as difficult as any, compounded by the fact that government funding and staffing are being cut. I am, at heart, a scientist and always try to view issues with a rigorous scientific perspective. My years practicing law have also taught me the benefit of pragmatic approaches to problem solving.

Marin has been my home for over 20 years, and no matter where I travel around the world, I always look forward to returning home. We live in one of the most beautiful spots on earth, and we all need to work hard to preserve what we have so that future generations also will be able to enjoy its benefits.

Walk into (Conservation) History #13: Olompali SHP

On March 23, a perfect spring day, an interested group of about 45 joined **Susan Stompe**, MCL board member and past president; **Diane Einstein**, Chair of The Olompali People (TOP); TOP's botanist **Clint Kellner**; and **Nick Tipon**, from the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, for MCL's 13th Walk into (Conservation) History at Olompali State Historic Park. Each of the Walk leaders sketched a piece of the site's history of human habitation, from 8,000-plus years ago, continuing up through the mission period, to a Jesuit retreat in the 1950s and the Grateful Dead and communal living in the 1960s, before purchase of the property by the State in 1977. It was due to the efforts of TOP that a general plan was funded and the Park was able to open to the public in 1990.

The morning event was rounded out by a hike around the 2.7-mile loop trail, which passes through a number of different woodland and meadow communities and affords fine views of San Pablo Bay. Clint Kellner identified dozens of wildflowers in bloom along the route. Last year Olompali was one of 70 state parks that were slated for closure and rescued through voluntary efforts. Now, thanks to the strong support of The Olompali People and fund-raising efforts of Friends of China Camp and Marin State Parks Association, Olompali will remain open five days a week under an operating agreement with California State Parks.

For a complete account of the Walk and the Park's history, see Michael Hanrahan's blog at millvalley.patch.com/users/michael-hanrahan-6b852396/blog_posts.

Michael writes frequently on national and state parks, environment, and wildlife issues.

Left: Nick Tipon points out features of a Coast Miwok mortar used for grinding acorns. Above: Walkers examine replicas of Miwok huts at Olompali.

Photos by Michael Hanrahan

Status Updates

Martha Co. Lands: open space of the future?

After many months of "No News" on the proposed Martha Company residential project at Easton Pt. on the Tiburon Peninsula, the long-anticipated Final EIR is expected to be released in May. The Draft EIR was initiated in 2008 with the County as lead agency but was not released for public comment until March 2011 (See MCL *Newsletters* November-December 2009, May-June 2011, and January-February 2013).

Jocelyn Knight

The Martha Co. property as seen from the Old Saint Hilary Preserve's highest point looking southward towards Angel Island and San Francisco. Keil Cove is on the far left and the "Lands of Keil" are somewhere in the middle right area. The ridge extending from the far right towards the east and Keil Cove is slated for ten or eleven 8,000 to 10,000 square foot homes.

This will be the third EIR prepared for this 110-acre property in the 37 years since a stipulated judgment permitted 43 residences to be built on the property. The judgment also mandated that the County expedite the environmental review process by limiting the Planning Commission to one public hearing on the Draft EIR, and limit grounds for objections to issues of health, safety, and endangered species. Despite these limits, many questions and comments were submitted on the Draft, which addressed other significant issues, such as landslides, water rights to a spring on the property, construction traffic on narrow local roads and Paradise Drive, and visual impacts from the Bay and Angel Island viewpoints. Given the volume of comments, the adequacy of the EIR likely will be challenged on a variety of fronts.

Other complications that have arisen in the past two years include a compromise alternative proposed by the Town of Tiburon and agreed to by the owners that would limit the number of residences to 32 and relocate building sites away from the main ridge, but would increase the maximum size of residences from a range of 5,500 to 8,750 square feet, up to 10,000 square feet.

The Tiburon Open Space Committee has followed the project for many years with the intent of eventually acquiring this highly visible and resource-rich property. On April 11, Committee members Jerry Riessen, Chair, Bill Lukens, and Erica Williams met with the MCL Parks and Open Space Committee and described their committee's long-standing campaign to acquire the land by partnering with an interested public entity. One possible strategy under consideration is to "group" the Martha Property with adjacent open space lands (i.e., Old St. Hilary's Open Space Preserve, Tiburon Uplands Nature Preserve) and, in view of its cultural history and scenic values, with the nearby Romberg Tiburon Center for Environmental Studies. As an administrative unit, the properties could function as an "affiliate" of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, with day-to-day management responsibilities assumed by a local agency like Marin County Parks. Discussions with relevant agencies are ongoing.

In the meantime, the Committee hopes that once the FEIR process has been completed, there should be sufficient clarity to allow appraisers to determine fair market value. Once that is established, the Committee hopes to engage the Martha Company owners in meaningful purchase negotiations, for either all or part of the property. This is the process the Town Council followed in preserving the adjacent Old St. Hilary's Open Space in 1997.

Marin Conservation League has followed the project for Martha Company's land for more than three decades and in 2011 submitted critical comments on the Draft EIR. Like the Tiburon Open Space Committee, MCL believes that the spectacular Martha Company property should ". . . be preserved as open space for everyone and forever."

CEQA "modernization" debate continues in the Legislature

The 2013 legislative session began with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in the spotlight (See MCL January-February 2013 *Newsletter*). The 2012 session had closed with a last-minute but unsuccessful attempt to scuttle some of the main protections of the Act. Senate President pro-tem Darrell Steinberg made it clear, however, that "modernizing CEQA" would return in 2013. When Senator Michael Rubio, chosen by Steinberg to lead the charge as Chair of the Senate Environmental Quality Committee, left the Senate in February, 2013, much of the momentum went with him. In the wake of his departure, however, over two dozen CEQA bills have been introduced in the Assembly and Senate that could either weaken or strengthen the law.

Visit CEQAWorks.org to protect the public's right to weigh in on community land-use decisions

To counter the widespread misinformation and ongoing attacks on CEQA by business and development interests, MCL has joined a broad coalition of CEQA supporters, coordinated by Planning and Conservation League and including Sierra Club, Natural Resources Defense Council, other environmental and environmental justice organizations, League of Women Voters, labor unions, and others

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Status Updates *from Page 3*

(See CEQAWorks.org). The coalition is tracking bills to ensure that CEQA is not weakened in the legislature. Several bills warrant interest and/or concern:

Senator Steinberg introduced **SB 731** as a framework for legislative intent to do the following: 1) facilitate infill development and streamline review of renewable energy, advanced manufacturing, and transit, bike, and pedestrian projects. 2) reduce duplicative CEQA review through greater use of "tiering"; 3) require establishment of local thresholds of significance for noise, aesthetics, parking, and traffic impacts, which often generate CEQA challenges against infill development; 4) clarify that only inadequate portions of an EIR need be remedied, rather than the entire document; 5) prohibit "late hits" at the end of environmental process designed to delay projects; and 6) make funds available to local governments to update their general, area, and specific plans and enable their use in "tiering" specific projects otherwise consistent with such plans. The CEQA Works coalition has not taken a position on these "intents" because the real content of this bill is yet to be developed.

SB 787 was introduced by Senator Tom Berryhill to reintroduce former Senator Rubio's bill from the 2012 session. This bill proposes a "standards-based" approach, which would exempt from CEQA review many projects if they comply with other federal and state environmental laws. This streamlining bill is favored by business interests but is unacceptable to the CEQA Works coalition.

Senator Noreen Evans, champion of a strong CEQA, has introduced **SB 617** and **SB 754** that address a variety of issues, among them the requirement that project reviews must examine the impacts of the physical environment on the project (to fix an unwise court decision last year in the case of Ballona Wetlands Trust et al vs. The City of Los Angeles). The bills would also enable certain efficiencies, require translation of public notices when non-English speaking communities are affected, enforce mitigation, and update existing provisions. The CEQA Works coalition is supporting Sen. Evans' efforts to improve and strengthen CEQA.

Echoing a recent Sierra Club *Yodeler* (April-May 2013): MCL encourages everyone ". . . to get the word out that CEQA does indeed work in protecting the environment and informing communities about the expected impacts of projects."

Want less paper?

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

California State Parks told to create a new operating model

At the end of March, California's Little Hoover Commission released the results of a year-long study on the status of California state parks titled "Beyond Crisis: Recapturing Excellence in California's State Park System." The report states unequivocally that a fundamental shift in how the nearly 150-year-old state parks system is organized and operated is essential if it is to remain a viable resource for present and future generations.

The Little Hoover Commission is an independent state commission appointed by the governor and Legislature to investigate state government operations and recommend changes to promote efficiency, economy and improved service. The report on State Parks grew out of last year's crisis in which 70 parks were slated for closure due to severe state budget cuts. Many of the parks scrambled to find partners, evidenced in the success story of Friends of China Camp, who are now keeping that park open. Under a similar operating agreement, both Olompali State Historic Park and Tomales Bay State Park are also able to stay open most days. Various other operating agreements have been crafted around the state between parks that were threatened with closure and their nonprofit partners. However, these agreements do not provide long-term solutions to the systemic problems that have plagued the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) in recent years. The discovery last year of previously hidden funds added urgency to the need for a major overhaul in management of the Department.

In conducting its research, the Commission took a wide-ranging look at the structure, function, and capacity of the parks system and sought input through many hearings and interviews with staff and the public and other stakeholders. Key recommendations in its report were that the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) should:

- Develop a vision within the DPR that fosters greater partnership with other agencies, nonprofit organizations, and groups.
- Assess, with help from the public, which parks should remain under state ownership and which ones primarily benefit local needs, and develop the right mix of management options for each park.
- Establish a de-centralized enterprise-based management model and operational approach that is collaborative and entrepreneurial, while still serving the mission of protecting the state's natural and cultural resources and promoting public access.
- Gain commitment of (State) General Fund support for DPR that matches the scope of parks that remain under DPR management after assessment of park resources.
- Provide DPR with the flexibility to hire and promote employees who have the necessary skill sets beyond traditional law enforcement training, for implementing a new operating model.

Marin Conservation League takes particular pride and interest in Marin's state parks because of the League's early role in securing these public lands. At this juncture, it is impossible to anticipate how these recommendations will play out, especially in Marin County. The new State Parks Director, retired Marine Maj. General Tony Jackson, visited Marin on March 8 and met with various groups at China Camp State Park. He presented himself as a strong leader, approachable, and committed to "turning

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the State Park system around." MCL has not completed its own review of the report, but we have at least two related concerns, among others:

- Does the "enterprise model" mean that state parks should be largely self-sufficient, and, if they do not generate sufficient revenue to support their operation, be turned over to local control under some form of operating agreement, yet to be devised?

Who will determine whether a park is of "statewide significance?"

- Who will determine whether a park is of "statewide significance," or instead serves primarily regional or local needs and therefore should be turned over to local control, and what criteria and public process will be used to guide such decisions?

State Parks Director Tony Jackson at China Camp Village March 8.

Michael Hanrahan

Every park has a story behind its entry into the universe of state parks. Typically it is a saga of lands saved from private development by diligent citizen effort. It will be important that the natural, scenic, cultural, and recreational values that originally prompted local communities to work to save these valuable lands and to promote their acquisition by the State to be held in the public trust be considered.

This summary was adapted from California State Parks Foundation (CSPF). The full 142-page report is available online at lhc.ca.gov.

Red-Tape Committee seeks citizen input

by Nona Dennis

The Marin County Regulatory Improvements Advisory Committee (RIAC, or "Red-Tape Committee") has been meeting monthly since it was convened by the Board of Supervisors last October to identify strategies to facilitate the County's permit application review process. All Committee meetings have been open to the public and posted online. (For background, see MCL November-December 2012, January-February and March-April 2013 *Newsletters*).

Much of the input to Committee discussions has come from County staff, which has outlined typical procedures for reviewing project applications and described current initiatives designed to provide greater clarity and certainty to applicants and public alike, improve coordination with other county departments such as Public Works, Fire, and Environmental Health, and promote greater efficiency through electronic communication. The group also heard from the public at a workshop on March 14 and has gained useful insights from representative architects and contractors who are experienced in the often lengthy and complicated process of applying for permits from the County and other jurisdictions. With this information, the Committee hopes to make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors that will improve the overall development process, for the benefit of both applicants, communities, and the interested public.

"The Committee's intent is to achieve balance by eliminating unnecessary procedures and ambiguity."

As a recent Marin Voice, (*Marin Independent Journal* April 20, 2013) submitted by Committee member Jan Alff Wiegel with input from fellow members, pointed out: "The committee is not 'streamlining' environmental review or public comment out of existence. Development is not being favored over environmental protection, or vice-versa. [The Committee's] intent is to achieve balance by eliminating unnecessary procedures and ambiguity which inhibit timely and beneficial land development decisions."

A second workshop scheduled for June will offer another opportunity for the public to comment on the County's review process: What is working well? What can the County do better? For further information, see the County's RIAC website at co.marin.ca.us/depts/CD/main/comdev/CURRENT/regulatory_improvements.cfm.

Nona Dennis is a member of the committee. Other members of the committee can be found at the RIAC website.

Plan Bay Area *from Page 1*

Board of Supervisors, **Judy Arnold**. Speakers include **Linda Jackson**, Planning Manager with Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM); **Chantel Walker**, Social Equity Policy & Programs Coordinator, Marin Community Development Agency ; **Michele Rodriguez**, Principal Planner, 2007 Marin Countywide Plan; **Marge Macris**, Co-Chair, Marin Environmental Housing Collaborative; and **Dave Edmondson**, former Marin resident and author of Greater Marin.

The panel will examine what Plan Bay Area is and what it is not, how land use and transportation patterns envisioned by Plan Bay Area might reduce carbon emissions and curb climate change, deliver equity and affordable housing options, and respect Marin's natural resources, community quality, and environmental constraints. Following the panel, the Forum will be opened for questions and comments.

The Forum is being sponsored jointly by **Marin Environmental Housing Collaborative**, **League of Women Voters**, **Marin Conservation League, Sustainable San Rafael**, **Sustainable Marin**, **Dominican University Institute for Leadership Studies**, and **Channel 26.**

Pre-registration is not required.

Events

Business-Environment Breakfast, Friday, June 14, 7:30—9:00 A.M.

Embassy Suites, 101 McInnis Parkway, San Rafael

MALT Director Watts to speak at June Breakfast

New Marin Agricultural Land Trust (MALT) Executive Director **Jamison Watts** will speak at Marin Conservation League's Business-Environment Breakfast on June 14 at the Embassy Suites, 101 McInnis Parkway, San Rafael.

The first farmland trust in the nation, MALT has protected over 45,000 acres of Marin's agricultural lands since its founding in 1980 by Ellen Straus and Phyllis Faber. Jamison assumed leadership of MALT in January, taking over the post held for many years by Bob Berner.

Prior to joining MALT, Jamison served as the Executive Director of the Northern California Regional Land Trust for six years, and as a wildlife biologist and environmental consultant for more than a decade. He holds a bachelor's degree in Environmental Biology with an emphasis in Conservation Biology from the University of California at Davis and a master's degree in Biological Sciences from California State University at Chico. He is a recipient of the Jack Rawlins Ecology and Conservation Award and the Research and Creativity Award, both from California State University at Chico.

The event begins at 7:30 a.m. and includes a full breakfast buffet. There will be an opportunity for the audience to ask questions after the presentation.

Tickets are $25 for MCL members and $30 for non-members.

Please pre-register by June 10 by calling 415-485-6257, by mail using the form below, or at **mclwattsbreakfast.eventbrite.com.**

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REGISTRATION FORM Business—Environment Breakfast: Jamison Watts, MALT, June 14, 2013

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Ticket price includes full breakfast buffet.

Pre-registration required by June 10.

Make checks payable to **MCL** *or pay total due by credit card. Mail form to:* **MCL, 175 N. Redwood Dr., Ste. 135, San Rafael, CA 94903, or call 415-485-6257, or register online (fees apply) at mclwattsbreakfast.eventbrite.com**

Refunds given only if the event is canceled.

Jared Huffman brings sober but optimistic message to sell-out Annual Dinner April 19

More than 130 attended MCL's sold-out Annual Dinner on April 19th at the Key Room at Homeward Bound to hear **Congressman Jared Huffman's** keynote remarks on the challenges of being a freshman Democrat in a Republican-controlled House. He hopes to be effective in pursuit of an environmental agenda as a minority member of the House Committee on Natural Resources by focusing on legislation such as land conservation, where there is a hope of bipartisan support. At the same time, he needs to play defense against daily attacks on major environmental statutes that for decades have protected our air, water, wetlands, endangered species and the national environment. Such is the reality of the current congress. His avowed opposition to the Keystone Pipeline got a round of applause, as did his account of legislative initiatives to hold "fracking" to the same standards as regulate other surface waters under the Clean Water Act.

At the Dinner, which for the fourth year was expertly catered by Fresh Starts Catering, a program of Homeward Bound, MCL recognized five individuals and organizations for their outstanding environmental achievements and volunteer efforts. Outgoing MCL President **Susan Stompe** presented the *Peter Behr Lifetime Achievement Award* to **Bob Berner**, recently retired as Executive Director of the Marin Agricultural Trust (MALT), for his many years of leading the organization in protection of nearly half of Marin's agricultural lands. **PRBO Conservation Science** received the *Ted Wellman Water Award* for outstanding work in restoring streams and analyzing the impacts of global climate change and sea level rise. The *John M. McPhail, Jr., Green Business Award* went to **Tamalpais Community Services District**, whose commitment to environmental sustainability is a model for local governmental agencies. Former Marin County Planning Director **Marge Macris** received the *Marin Green Award* for her leadership in coordinating multiple authors and inputs to bring the fourth edition of *Community Marin* to completion. **Barbara Ford,** a dedicated historian, was awarded the *MCL Volunteer Award* for giving her expertise and devoting many hours to organizing and cataloging MCL's archives.

The evening's gathering was adjourned by incoming 2013-2014 President **David Schnapf.**

Raffle prize winners were **Toby McPeak, Nancy Bell, Catherine Lee, Mary Ellen Wendt, Robin Carpenter, Jill Templeton, Mary Morgan, Sebastian Rivasplata** and **Liz Vezzani.**

Clockwise from top right: Ellie Cohen, Grant Ballard, Eric and Kiley Lucan; Barbara Ford, Betsy Bikle; Natalie Macris, Michael Bull, Marge Macris, Doug Lee, Don Dickenson; Molly Foley, Rep. Jared Huffman.

More photos on page 12.

Photos by Jana Haehl

Watersheds *from Page 1*

Fairfax, Sleepy Hollow, San Anselmo, Ross, Kentfield, Greenbrae, Larkspur, and Corte Madera to San Francisco Bay. With average annual rainfall of 50 inches, it is one of the wettest areas in the county. The 44 miles of stream channels include Fairfax Creek and Sleepy Hollow Creek, tributaries to San Anselmo Creek, which is joined by Ross Creek to form Corte Madera Creek. Corte Madera Creek then flows through more than a mile of concrete-lined channel before widening and ultimately discharging into Corte Madera Bay. The once extensive Ross Valley tidal marshes have been largely filled, leaving both historic and restored tidal marshes of Corte Madera Ecological Reserve, important bird habitat

Like the other watersheds in East Marin, the Corte Madera Creek watershed has been extensively altered over the past two hundred and fifty years, first by persistent logging and over-grazing with attendant soil loss, creek migration and bank incision. In more recent years, urban development gradually began to take over the lower and middle elevations of Ross Valley. Vacant areas where large development projects might occur are largely absent now, but infill of existing urban areas continues.

Marin County Department of Public Works

Upper creeks are relatively natural

Because much of the upper watershed is protected as public land, covered by diverse natural habitats—woodlands, redwood forest, serpentine grasslands and chaparral—the upper reaches of tributary creeks are relatively natural. In contrast, commercial buildings, fences, and backyards of residences abut the creek along its middle and lower reaches. Ross Valley has experienced some of the most devastating floods in Marin's history.

Despite this development, the Corte Madera Creek watershed supports a steelhead trout run. San Anselmo and Cascade Creeks provide the healthiest spawning and rearing habitats. Migration barriers exist throughout the watershed, however, and sediment from upland sources is a chronic problem. Once abundant, Coho salmon have not been sighted since 1984.

Since its founding by volunteers in 1995, the **Friends of Corte Madera Creek Watershed** (friendsofcortemaderacreek.org) has been among the most effective of Friends associations in Marin. It has obtained multiple grants to support key goals of increasing scientific understanding of the watershed's ecosystems and improving habitat.

For example, as the local cosponsor of the State Coastal Conservancy's Bay Area-wide Invasive Spartina Project to remove non-native cordgrasses, the Friends received $100,000 to continue work in the 2011-2013 treatment season. Several years of follow-up monitoring will be necessary. The group also received funding to replace an old, undersized culvert connecting the downstream end of the marsh at Hal Brown Creekside Park to Corte Madera Creek. The new, larger culvert will help meet two major goals: to improve marsh habitat for birds and other wildlife, and to increase the tidal prism (the volume of water flowing between mean high tide and mean low tide). It will also reduce the need for dredging Corte Madera Creek. The "Friends" are also replanting a half-acre of marsh vegetation and upland refuge habitat, funded by the City of Larkspur as compensation for the unavoidable impacts to tidal marsh that are expected to occur when the Bon Air Bridge is replaced as planned.

These projects are in addition to the Friends' ongoing work with local volunteers in conducting clean-ups, monitoring water quality monitoring, and restoring riparian habitat. This group's collaboration with regulatory agencies, engineers, businesses, schools, other non-profits, and the community is a model for other "friends" groups. But the work is never over: "Being a Friend," says volunteer President Sandy Guldman, "is a full-time job!"

Richardson Bay: Mill Valley and Coyote Creek Watersheds

Richardson Bay is one of the most pristine estuaries on the Pacific Coast in spite of its urbanized periphery. The Bay is recognized as an Important Bird Area (IBA) and, during the winter months, hosts hundreds of thousands

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Watersheds *from Page 8*

of shorebirds and waterfowl. The inhabited shoreline is also one of the most vulnerable areas of Marin County to the impacts of climate change. Already subject to frequent tidal flooding, the shoreline is expected to experience more erosion from rising tide levels and increased flooding.

Arroyo Corte Madera del Presidio: The Bay is linked to Mt. Tamalpais and to the Marin Headlands by the Mill Valley and Coyote Creek watersheds. The larger Arroyo Corte Madera del Presidio covers about eight square miles, including Mill Valley itself, Homestead Valley, unincorporated areas, and Water District land. In the upper reaches of the watershed on Mt. Tamalpais, chaparral and mixed evergreen forest habitats provide important connectivity between adjoining watersheds that are managed for conservation and trail recreation by Marin County Parks, Marin Municipal Water District, Mt. Tam State Park, and Golden Gate National Recreation Area. The Old Mill and Cascade Creek tributaries support the healthiest remaining steelhead habitat in the watershed. Coho salmon were observed in the 1940s to 1960s but have not been sighted since 1981.

The smaller Coyote Creek originates in the Marin Headlands on Golden Gate National Recreation Area lands and drains the unincorporated Tennessee and Tamalpais Valleys and Almonte to Richardson Bay. The area is particularly susceptible to flooding during high tides.

In both watersheds, the lower slopes and valley floors have been developed with urban land uses. Stream banks have been armored, fences and other structures have replaced riparian vegetation, and typical urban debris and pollutants find their way into the streams. Both watersheds drain into the tidal marshes of the upper Richardson Bay. In spite of a long history of filling and fragmentation by dumps, diking and dredging, and waterfront development, a few shoreline areas such as Bothin Marsh Open Space Preserve have been restored to a fully tidal marsh and now support a small population of California clapper rail as well as many shore birds and waterfowl.

In 1998, as a continuation of the Mill Valley Watershed Project, the **Mill Valley StreamKeepers** (millvalleystreamkeepers.org) was founded. The StreamKeepers have numerous projects in active or in planning stages: advising on the "Natural Environment and Hazards" section of the recently released Mill Valley General Plan Update; collaborating with boy scouts on a major stream cleanup; working with a citywide committee to control litter and pollution in the creeks; partnering with school groups to restore salmonid habitat; and planting native vegetation to restore the creek near downtown Mill Valley with the help of STRAW (Students and Teachers Restoring a Watershed), and school classrooms. Past funding paid for installing a stream gauge, improving fish passage through concrete culverts, and monitoring sediment and stream life.

StreamKeepers is an advocate for sound environmental law in projects that might have an impact on the floodplain and creek habitats and in promoting environmentally sensitive development in Mill Valley. The StreamKeepers ask: "With so much change to our watershed, how can we welcome back the Coho salmon and enrich the streams for the steelhead?"

An instructor and Willow Creek Academy students replanting with native plants

Steven Moore

Coyote Creek has its "Friends" in the watershed group of one of the oldest volunteer organizations in the County—the **Tamalpais Valley Improvement Club**. TVIC has been working to protect the natural habitats of Coyote Creek and the semi-rural character, open spaces, wildlife, and marshes of Tam Valley since 1921. The organization regularly sponsors projects to increase community awareness of the environment and the watershed. The watershed group stages at least one event per year, such as its recent "Up the Creek Day." TVIC received a grant from **Marin County Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program** (MCSTOPPP) to produce a documentary featuring marshes—a project for and by kids, with the help of a local filmmaker and TVIC member.

Willow Creek, Sausalito

The smallest watershed in Marin to be adopted officially by a "Friends" group is Willow Creek, which originates in GGNRA park lands west of Hwy. 101 and discharges into Richardson Bay. In 1978 a 1.29-acre parcel on the corner of Bridgeway and Nevada, now known as "Willow Grove," was dedicated by the City of Sausalito as an open space easement for scenic enjoyment. The parcel is owned by the Willows Homeowners Association and maintained by the City of Sausalito. But it is really the Willow Creek Academy (WCA), a charter school that serves K-8 children, that has taken on the stewardship of Willow Grove and the creek, for its significant educational and environmental benefits.

Restoring the creek's "rightful place in the sun"

Most of the creek is contained in underground pipes, but it "daylights" at Willow Grove before returning underground and entering the bay. After discovering the creek, some parents and teachers at WCA formed the nonprofit **"Friends of the Creek"** to foster its protection and restoration, working with the school children and the neighbors. The short term goal is to improve stewardship and public enjoyment of the Willow Grove, but the long-term goal is to daylight the creek in other locations in the City—to restore "its rightful place in the sun."

With help from National Atmospheric and Oceanic Administration (NOAA) programs, the Friends have led the community in clean-up and planting events that have transformed Willow Grove from an abandoned lot to usable open space. In the past two years, volunteers have cut and hauled away more than 120 cubic yards of invasive vegetation

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and replanted the area with native plants donated by the GGNRA Marin Headlands Native Plant Nursery. Students and teachers plan to make signs to educate residents about the kinds of native plants that thrive in creekside environments. Students and parents are also maintaining some 2,000 native plants for eventual planting when the creek can be daylighted on the school campus.

Engaging in community outreach

In 2012, Willow Creek Academy and the Friends were recognized by NOAA as an exceptional Ocean Guardian School and received a "Community Outreach Award" for engaging the community in volunteer stewardship of Willow Grove. The volunteer work is guided by professional naturalists, who have received several hundred dollars in short term funding. The Friends of the Creek and WCA students and teachers will maintain new plants, monitor water quality, study stream life, and continue their successful stewardship of the parcel with the community. The Friends of the Creek have established a website at friendsofthecreeksausalito.org.

Tomales Bay Watershed

The largest and by far most complex watershed in Marin is that of Tomales Bay, covering almost half of Marin—approximately 220 square miles. Many small coastal streams drain Pt. Reyes Peninsula on the west, Olema Valley on the south, and ranchlands on the east. The bay's two major subwatersheds are Walker Creek, which drains into the Bay from rolling ranch lands and rugged woodlands to the north; and Lagunitas Creek, which enters from the south after its journey from the upper watershed of Mt. Tamalpais ridgelands and MMWD reservoirs. Its main tributary is San Geronimo Creek, which traverses the developed communities of the San Geronimo Valley. (See San Geronimo watershed below.) Literally hundreds of small creeks feed into Tomales Bay's two major subwatersheds, carrying sediments, nutrients, pathogens, and other pollutants from agricultural lands, urban streets, septic systems, and more.

Tomales Bay is recognized internationally as a part of the Gulf of the Farallones National Marin Sanctuary, Central California Coast Biosphere Reserve, and Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network for the thousands of wintering shorebirds it supports. The Bay also hosts thousands of migrating and/or wintering waterfowl and supports critical populations of endangered Coho salmon and threatened steelhead. Tomales Bay is also a center of commercial oyster production. The area also is home to Marin's premier dairies and other farmlands; it provides recreation for millions of visitors annually; and it is inhabited by some 11,000 full-time and seasonal residents whose homes are clustered in a number of small villages or dispersed on ranches.

Chicken Ranch Beach in Inverness during a King Tide in December 2012.

Richard James, coastodian.org/Flickr Creative Commons

Diverse ecosystems and land uses

The diverse ecosystems and land uses of this watershed demand stewardship far beyond a typical "friends" group. The **Tomales Bay Watershed Council** (tomalesbaywatershed.org) was convened in 2000 as a non-profit collaboration of representatives of federal, state and local public agencies, national and state parks, environmental organizations, citizen groups, agricultural and shellfish industries, and recreational interests. The Council was charged with developing a coordinated plan to improve the water quality of Tomales Bay and to protect and restore the entire watershed. Its Tomales Bay Stewardship Plan was unanimously adopted in 2003 as a means for "preserving and protecting the water and land resources for sustainable uses by agriculture, aquaculture, business, environmental, recreation and residential interests." That plan was integrated into the Tomales Bay Integrated Watershed Management Plan (ICWMP) in 2007.

With limited staff, the Council has been successful in advancing such important projects as long-term water quality monitoring at eleven tributary sites and four bay sites; monitoring bacteria levels at popular beaches and other swimming spots; promoting an Adopt Our Watershed program to engage citizens in the monitoring program; reaching out to ranchers to help reduce sedimentation and nutrient loading to streams, with **Marin Resource Conservation District** as a key player; prompting communities to address failing septic systems; removing barriers to fish migration; keeping Tomales Bay free of debris in clean-up days; and taking on many specific projects such as restoring habitats and water quality at the popular Chicken Ranch Beach in Inverness.

The Council's website posts activities of current importance, such as the monitoring of bacteria levels at beaches which began on April 1. To inform a larger public as well as its many members, the Council hosts a biennial day-long State of the Bay Conference. As one member said: "Our stewardship can be a model, but to succeed will take all of us working together." While the Council can claim many successes, it is an on-going work-in-progress.

San Geronimo Creek Watershed

The San Geronimo Valley occupies a special position in the Tomales Bay Watershed as the last un-dammed headwaters in the Lagunitas Creek subwatershed. As a consequence, it is critical Coho salmon spawning and juvenile rearing habitat. Known as "The Valley," its local communities value their forested surroundings and the creek that flows through its valley. They also cherish their independence. Residential areas that gradually developed along the creek over

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many decades, although low in density, pose a continuing and cumulative threat to the creek habitat that supports a diminished Central California Coast population of Coho salmon. Stream banks have been altered, riparian vegetation has been removed, and impervious surfaces abound. Sediment from the upper watershed also is a chronic problem. These issues were well-documented in the San Geronimo Valley Salmon Enhancement Plan, but how best to protect and restore the creek is currently being debated as the County works to develop a Stream Conservation Area Ordinance to carry out long-standing policies in the Countywide Plan. Gaining homeowner cooperation in comprehensive protection of the creek is an ongoing challenge.

As a "Friend" of the San Geronimo Creek Watershed, **SPAWN** (Salmon Protection and Watershed Network—spawnusa.org) occupies a unique role among watershed "friends" in Marin. SPAWN's specific focus is on protecting Coho habitat. Its reach, however, encompasses the entire watershed that affects the health of Coho habitat. Since its inception in 1999, SPAWN has prompted thousands of people—volunteers and just ordinary folks—to become "creek watchers" and trained hundreds of volunteers to assist in monitoring and restoring habitat. Among the numerous public and private actions and investments to restore Coho in Marin, SPAWN is only one player, but it is an important one. The **San Geronimo Valley Planning Group**, formed in 1972 to preserve the rural and environmental qualities of the Valley, is also a devoted "friend" of the San Geronimo Creek and a strong advocate for its protection and restoration.

Many groups and individuals are watershed Friends

In conclusion, no account of voluntary conservation action can possibly include all the groups and individuals in Marin who advocate for creek protection, clean their creeks and protect them from pollution, and generally look after their welfare. Nor can watershed health be maintained through voluntary action alone. Strong policies, supported by regulations and enforcement, must undergird these efforts. For the collective concern of all these Friends, however, we are grateful!

A Coho spawns in Lagunitas Creek.

Dru Parker

New Director Profiles

Marin Conservation League elected six new Directors at its April 19 annual meeting. Two are introduced here; the others will follow in upcoming issues.

Randy Greenberg, Tiburon

Randy Greenberg is a former MCL board member who last served in 2003-2004. She has just completed a nine-year stint as a Marin County Planning Commissioner. Her volunteer experience includes the Tiburon Planning Commission,1989-1997 and 2002-2004, as well as the Tiburon Parks and Open Space Commission. In addition she has served on the Marin County Grand Jury.

Randy regularly attends MCL issue meetings and is an experienced member regarding land use issues. In her past careers, she has worked as a Marriage, Family and Child Counselor including work at San Quentin. Her early avocation was performing advertising research for well-known magazine publications. She lives in Tiburon.

Bob Johnston, Inverness

Bob Johnston, Professor Emeritus of the Department of Environmental Science and Policy at University of California, Davis, taught environmental impact assessment and land use planning courses for 34 years. He earned a BA in Art History/ Architecture from Dartmouth, a Master of Planning from USC, and a Master of Science from the University of Nevada at Reno.

Bob served on the Truckee Planning Commission from 2004 to 2010 and he has critiqued regional transportation plans all over the U.S. He was a member of citizens groups in Davis that got two major initiatives passed to stop a road widening and to expand the downtown park. He now lives in Inverness.

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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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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- 5:30 PM
Climate Action: 3rd Thurs., odd-numbered months, 6:30—8:30 PM
North Marin Unit (NMU): Varies
Meeting sites and times may vary; confirm at our website or 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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Annual Dinner guests enjoy a perfect evening

Clockwise from top left: Jill Templeton, Mary Morgan, Tony Williams, Erica Williams; Cicely Muldoon, Heather Furmidge; Jon Elam, Olivia and Jim Jacobs, Supervisor Kate Sears; Judge Bill Stevens, Raphael Durr; Roger Roberts.

Story and more photos on page 7.

photos by Jana Haehl