Marin Conservation League

NEWS

JULY - AUGUST 2005

MCL Questions $20 Million Appropriation for Port Sonoma Ferry Project

MCL has written Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey, questioning the wisdom of an eleventh hour $20 million appropriation contained in the massive Highway Trust Fund Bill that Congress recently passed. The legislation authorizes the appropriation of $20 million for "multimodal facility improvements, construction and ferry acquisition by a private company, North Bay Ferry Service, Inc., located at Port Sonoma in Petaluma, California."

In her letter to the Congresswoman, MCL President Jana Haehl described the huge environmental impacts that the project would have on critical baylands that ring the project site. According to Haehl,

> "Every aspect of the ferry operation would be damaging to this valuable habitat. Water pollution, wave generation, disruptive dredging and construction, storm water runoff, noise, and artificial illumination have serious adverse impacts on the environment. The numerous environmental impacts were well identified in the Water Transit Authority (WTA) Draft Environmental Impact Report, leading the WTA to state that a ferry operation at Port Sonoma was not feasible."

MCL also questioned the appropriateness of funneling valuable taxpayers' dollars into a private company, noting that it is,

> "incomprehensible how $20 million in federal funds could be given to a private company that exists only on paper and has no experience in operating any transit system, especially a ferry system. This appropriation makes a sham of the millions of dollars already spent on feasibility studies and the countless hours spent in public outreach to determine how best to meet public transit needs and provide congestion relief."

What you can do

- Write to Congresswoman Woolsey:
1101 College avenue, suite 200
Santa Rosa, ca 95404
- Call Congressman Woolsey:
(707) 542-7182

From the Executive Director

Helping the Marin Conservation League Plan Its Future

Dear Members and Friends,

I hope you are well as summer makes way for fall, the blue oak shadows across Marin's open spaces grow longer with each passing day, and our waterfowl and shorebirds awaken to the annual call to take wing and migrate to warmer climes. It has been a bountiful summer and, for the Marin Conservation League, an active one.

Our issues committees are developing comments on two major environmental impact reports – Lawson's Landing and the Redwoods Landfill. Our second Annual Picnic on the Porch was (despite the killer heat!) a festive and wonderful opportunity to say "thanks" to our members and supporters. Our August Business Breakfast featuring Congresswoman Woolsey was a huge success. This fall promises to be even busier and more exciting as MCL weighs in on the Draft Countywide Plan revision and the SMART Environmental Impact Report and as the Business Breakfast series continues with GGNRA Superintendent Brian O'Neill.

I want your help in ensuring that MCL addresses the needs most vital to you. Enclosed is an MCL Member Survey to complete, telling us what you think are the environmental priorities facing Marin. The survey takes less than five minutes to fill in and will be extremely important in helping us decide where to invest our programmatic energies and resources in the coming year. Please take a moment to complete the survey and drop it in the mail.

Thank you for your continued support. I look forward to receiving your survey soon and I hope you enjoy the autumn.

Sincerely,

J. Scott Feierabend
Executive Director

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MCL to Vector Control District: Don't Release Mosquitofish!

West Nile Virus in Marin County is now a reality. The recent expansion of the Marin-Sonoma Mosquito and Vector Control District to include west Marin has caused quite a buzz about mosquitoes, their habitat, and their control. One potential, non-chemical means of controlling mosquitoes is the use of mosquitofish (*Gambusia affinis*). Extremely prolific, each female *Gambusia* can produce 300-400 live young during its lifetime. In Australia, where mosquitofish are called "plague minnows," they have become widespread throughout many of the country's river systems and are now regarded as a major pest.

Gambusia are extremely aggressive, can tolerate a wide range of water conditions, and feed primarily on fish eggs. As a result, mosquitofish may out-compete native fish for limited food supplies and have been implicated in the decline of 35 fish species worldwide. Mosquito-fish, which have been introduced in California to help control West Nile Virus, are thought to be one of the factors causing the decline in our amphibian populations.

Mosquitofish can produce 300-400 young and have been known to out-compete native fish for food supplies.

Although the District and others distributing mosquito-fish caution against releasing *Gambusia* to creeks or large ponds, there is the strong potential that, once introduced, the fish will inadvertently escape to streams during large winter storms. Because Marin County is home to many sensitive aquatic resources – such as the California red-legged frog, California freshwater shrimp, tidewater goby, coho salmon and steelhead, MCL asks that The District use other means of controlling mosquitoes rather than introducing this non-native fish species. You can help in your own backyard by emptying stagnant ponds. For small ponds and backyard aquatic gardens, you can use a fountain to agitate the water, which helps to reduce potential mosquito reproduction.

While the full ramifications of West Nile Virus in Marin County are still largely unknown, MCL wants to ensure that our response to the outbreak does not lead to further, unanticipated environmental impacts.

MCL Urges Delegation to Renew The National Aquatic Invasive Species Act

MCL has urged its Congressional delegation to reauthorize the National Aquatic Invasives Species Act. The original law, passed in 1990 in response to the catastrophic invasion of the zebra mussel in the Great Lakes, required - among other things - the exchange of ballast water at sea to reduce the inadvertent spread of invasive species. The law was reauthorized and expanded in 1996 in an effort to prevent similar ecological and economic disasters.

The Zebra Mussel devastates marine life in the Great Lakes

Writing to Senators Boxer and Feinstein and Congresswoman Woolsey, MCL President Jana Haehl underscored the urgency of Congressional action, "because a recent study by the San Francisco Bay Institute has found that exotic organisms dominate many important habitats in the Bay ecosystem in terms of species, number of organisms and biomass leading to the conclusion that this is 'perhaps the most invaded estuary in the world.'"

Angel Island Project "Takes Wing!"

MCL has initiated a collaborative project with Angel Island State Park and the Angel Island Association to restore "Founders Grove," a landmark site on Angel Island that commemorates the tireless environmental advocacy of MCL Founder Caroline Livermore. Over the years, Founders Grove has fallen into disrepair and has become overgrown with briars and brambles. But all that is about to change as MCL's Parks and Open Space Committee begins laying the groundwork to give the site a major facelift! Stay tuned in the coming months as this important project takes shape and we begin recruiting for volunteers to help with the fun!

Sustainable San Rafael Gets Its Oar in the Water!

A new citizens group, Sustainable San Rafael (SSR), has formed to educate San Rafael's residents on sustainability issues and work with the City government to promote green policies. SSR takes its place alongside Sustainable Fairfax, Sustainable Mill Valley, and Sustainable Novato in advocating for polices and practices that sustain our natural assets, foster local economic independence, expand locally owned green businesses, and encourage civic cooperation and social justice.

SSR members have appeared before the City Council to promote the Cities for Climate Protection program, and will be working in the months ahead to educate San Rafael residents on Community Choice Aggregation for energy purchases.

For more information on SSR and the sustainable movement in Marin, go to http://sustainablemarin.org/.

MCL Says (Once Again!) " NO to GMOs"

MCL has joined environmental organizations and members of the farming community in opposing efforts underway in Sacramento to undermine local efforts to restrict the planting and use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Writing to State Senator Carole Migden, MCL President Jana Haehl expressed opposition to SB 1056 because it is not only "bad policy that will inhibit open public dialog and discussion," but because "it completely subverts the concerns of citizens that have already been expressed at the ballot box on this important issue."

In 2004, MCL supported passage of Measure B, which bans the growing of GMOs in Marin, because we believe the long-term effects of GMOs need to be better understood before they become embedded in our agricultural practices.

What you can do

- Write to Joe Nation, Marin's state senator: 3501 Civic Center Dr. Room 412 San Rafael, CA 94903
- Track actions on this bill at www.sen.ca.gov

More than 100 MCL members enjoyed the summer sun at MCL's annual **Picnic on the Porch**. Thanks to all of you who came out to help us celebrate. We hope to see everyone again next year!

Greg Shatkin
Music lover and environmentalist

MCL Member Profile – Presenting Greg Shatkin!

MCL member Greg Shatkin is the kind of guy who makes you wish there were more days in the weekend. He is an active, fun loving Marinite with a laid back attitude, and a new member of the Marin Conservation League. Greg originally joined MCL when he learned about our campaign to save San Rafael's Gold Hill Open Space, a place where he regularly runs.

When we first met Greg, back in March, his arm was in a cast from a surfing accident. When we sat down for this interview, Greg had just returned from a business trip to Hawaii. Besides a love for the out of doors, two of Greg's greatest passions are music and travel.

Despite what you may think, Greg isn't all fun and games! He works as a biotech salesmai throughout Northern CA, Nevada and Hawaii. Greg has a strong drive to support the environmental issues that concern him the most: open space and sustainable development. His frustration over the last presidential election spurred him to get involved in the community and he joined MCL because it reflected his values of grassroots involvement and taking reasonable approaches to environmental issues. "Supporting and working witl MCL makes sense from an ecological, aesthetic and financial perspective for those who ca Marin home," said Greg in an interview at the MCL office.

We are thrilled to have Greg as an MCL member and hope he continues to enjoy the Gold Hill area that he and other MCL members successfully saved from development. Next tim you see Greg at an MCL event or a rock concert, be sure to say "hi" and ask what he's doing next, because it's sure to be exciting!

Committee Meetings

Meetings are held monthly at the MCL office in San Rafael.

Land Use
Meets first Wednesday at 8 a.m.

Parks and Open Space Committee
Meets second Thursday at 4 p.m.

Transportation
Meets second Friday at 8:30 a.m.

Water Resources
Meets third Thursday at noon

Creeks, Wetlands & Watersheds
Meets third Thursday at 4 p.m.

Marin Conservation League
1623A Fifth Avenue
San Rafael, CA 94901

Marin Conservation League was founded in 1934 to preserve, protect, and enhance Marin County's natural assets.

Executive Director
J. Scott Feierabend

Office Supervisor
Lora Martens

Our board of directors and issue committees meet monthly. Meetings are open to the public. We welcome your membership and participation.

Contact us at:
Phone: (415) 485-6257
Fax: (415) 485-6259
mcl@marinconservationleague.org
www.marinconservationleague.org

NEWS

JULY - AUGUST 2005

Non Profit Organization
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Permit No. 151
San Rafael, CA

We are looking for volunteers! If you have free time and would like support MCL with more than a check, please contact Lora at lora@marinconservationleague.org. We would appreciate the help and would love to get to know you better!

Call for Email! MCL is trying to reduce its use of paper by increasing our electronic correspondence. If you would like to receive emails from MCL please send an email to mcl@marinconservationleague.org so we can add you to our database.

Community Calendar

Business Breakfasts! Don't Miss Out!

We have two Business Breakfasts left in 2005! Our speakers address topics of interest to the business and general community, so come and check out what our county's movers and shakers have to say about issues that affect YOU! All breakfasts are from 7:30-9:00 am at Embassy Suites in San Rafael Tickets are $25 each an include a yummy breakfast!

For reservations or more information, please call Lora (415-485-6257).
See you there!

Wednesday, October 5th
Alex Hinds
Community Development Agency, County of Marin

Tuesday, November 8th
Paul Helliker
General Manager, Marin Municipal Water District

Save the Date – The Magic of Mushrooms Tour

MCL member and expert mycologist Lorraine Berry will lead an MCL "Members Only" field trip this fall to explore the magic and wonder of mushrooms. Depending on the weather (the wetter the better!), we'll be going afield in late November or early December. Stay tuned, and be ready for a fantastic day with friends and colleagues as Lorraine helps to "discover a world of wonder at your feet!"

Roll Up Your Sleeves and Join the Fun for California Coastal Cleanup Day!!

MCL is hosting a Coastal Cleanup event in San Rafael on **Saturday, September 17th** as part of **California Coastal Cleanup Day**. Meet at the MCL office (1623A Fifth Avenue) at 9am with gloves in hand. We will provide bags for trash and coffee cake to get your energy level up. Our cleanup projects will include a marsh on Woodland and the creek that flows by the Corporate Center. Come join the fun and help clean up our wetlands!!