



THE

Highlander

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The Rural Bonny Doon Association Newsletter

RBDA Annual Meeting: Sustenance, Songs and Sex in Elephant Seals

**Professor Emeritus Burney Le Boeuf
UCSC Institute of Marine Sciences**

Wednesday, January 9, 2019 at 7:30 p.m.
Bonny Doon Elementary School Multipurpose Room
Pine Flat & Ice Cream Grade

Elephant seal breeding season has begun at Año Nuevo! Come learn about their social and reproductive behavior from our distinguished guest speaker, Dr. Burney Le Boeuf, at our next RBDA Meeting. Dr. Le Boeuf will be summarizing recent research on elephant seals on three topics: 1) Diet, as revealed by these animal's remarkable diving patterns and migration tracks 2) Songs or changes in dialects in male vocalizations over the last 50 years; and 3) Sex and Darwinian fitness of individually tracked females.

Dr. Le Boeuf is a renowned research professor in Biology and has been studying elephant seals as a faculty member of UCSC's Institute for Marine Sciences since 1968. His findings are recorded in over 200 peer-reviewed scholarly articles and several books. Please join us on January 9 for this special lecture about these spectacular local animals.

Bureau of Land Management Takes First Step in Opening Cotoni-Coast Dairies

After 20 years of public ownership, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has taken the first step to open Cotoni-Coast Dairies (CCDNM) to the public. Proclaimed a national monument by President Obama a year ago, the property's 5,800 acres rise up the coastal terraces from Highway 1, stretching from Swanton to Bonny Doon.

Originally 7,500 acres, Coast Dairies was rescued from development as wealthy private estates by the Save-the-Redwoods League in 1998, after a campaign to protect it spearheaded by Friends of the North Coast and supported by the RBDA. The money came mostly from the David and Lucille Packard Foundation, with smaller chunks from other major donors, the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County (LTSCC), the State's Coastal Conservancy and the County. Save-the-Redwoods promptly turned it over to the Trust for Public Land (TPL) to manage it and develop a public access plan. In 2006 TPL deeded Coast Dairies' 5 miles of beaches, totaling about 400 acres, to State Parks, which opened them to the public. Since then, hamstrung by a lack of funds, State Parks has watched helplessly as the beaches have been vandalized by graffiti chiseled into and painted onto the cliffs, and trashed by broken beer bottles and garbage.

In 2014 TPL turned what is the present

national monument land over to BLM. About 1,300 acres of Coast Dairies was and is leased to farmers. Since BLM won't accept ownership of agricultural lands, those acres are still owned by TPL.

While portions of the public clamor for access to Cotoni-Coast Dairies, especially the mountain bikers organized by Mountain Bikers of Santa Cruz, BLM can't create trails and parking lots until it has a management plan in place. Public meetings in Santa Cruz, on Dec. 4, and Bonny Doon on Dec. 13, were the first step in creating that plan.

In preparation for the meetings, the LTSCC hired RRM Design Group, the same firm putting together a possible plan for re-use of the shuttered Davenport cement plant, to do some rough planning of possible access points to CCDNM. RRM came up with 9 spots divided evenly among the northern, central and southern portions of the monument. (The northern portion is bounded by Warrenella Road on the south, the central portion runs from there to Bonny Doon Road, and the southern portion ends at Laguna Road.)

About 80 members of the public attended each of the meetings. They were asked to identify what activities they'd most like to have there, and which access points/trails they preferred. Since very few people who

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Update on PG&E's Enhanced Vegetation Removal Program

Years of drought, extreme heat and diseased/dead trees have exacerbated the risk of wildfires throughout California, including in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Several recent and incredibly destructive fires have been determined to be caused by faulty electrical grid infrastructure, and the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has been under pressure to develop aggressive policies to protect our state from wildfires. CPUC's Community Wildfire Safety Program Plan outlines a multi-tiered approach, but emphasizes two actions that can be implemented in the short term: de-energizing the power grid during high risk weather conditions, and an Enhanced Vegetation Management (EVM) program.

In fall 2018, Bonny Doon became one of several communities in the state where PG&E launched their EVM program. As we reported in the October *Battle Mountain News* and November's *Highlander*, PG&E and Davey Tree worked on Braemoor Drive to implement new and aggressive tree-trimming and tree-clearing policies. Recent changes to CPUC General Order 95 (GO 95) specify that in high fire-threat areas, a 4-foot radius of clearance is required around 22kv lines. PG&E chose to

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Board Members up for Election in January



Andy Davidson

Board Chair

I have been a Board member for the last 5 years. I am a long-time resident of Bonny Doon and my wife is a life-long resident of Santa Cruz. She grew up on Branciforte Drive, in an area that used to be very similar to today's Bonny Doon. One main reason we moved here was Bonny Doon's rural nature and excellent school. I have been very active in several youth organizations, in particular the Boy Scouts, as Cub Master, Summer Camp Director, and Parent Committee member for 12 years. I coached soccer and was active in Little League. I recently left a position as Data Scientist and Software Architect in Apple's Applied Machine Learning Department to focus on other research interests. I am an avid surfer and mountain biker.

Some change is inevitable. Bonny Doon is a diverse community. It's important to listen to all voices to ensure that the Bonny Doon of the future is one we choose, while not losing what makes this place special.

Davenport Leery of Cement Plant Reuse

Although there are still no concrete plans for converting the closed CEMEX plant to other uses, Davenport residents are understandably worried about the effects it will have on their tiny town. While most people, including Davenporters, expect that part of the plant site will eventually be used as a visitor center and entry-point for Cotoni-Coast Dairies National Monument, financial reality demands that there be other uses as well.

Recently the Davenport/North Coast Association (DNCA) sent a memo delineating their thoughts to RRM Design Group, which has drawn up several possible scenarios for redeveloping the 100+ acre site. The DNCA's overriding concern is that whatever is built not destroy Davenport's small-town ambience and quality of life. However, given the value of the coast-side acreage and the enormous amount of money it will take to rehabilitate the site, the odds against the DNCA achieving its goals are long.

Among their goals are limiting in size and scope any industrial, residential or hotel development; addressing safety issues on Highway 1 and Cement Plant Road; and impacts on the town's limited water supply. Davenporters must also cope with the fact that while they already pay extremely high rates for water and sewer service, those systems need expensive upgrades. Without cement plant redevelopment Davenporters will have to bear those costs.

The complexities of redevelopment are daunting. First, CEMEX has to agree on a sale price with a buyer (or buyers) and developers, and that could well run into eight figures. There has to be a cleanup of any toxic substances left over from 100+ years of cement production, legal hurdles like re-zoning and permits cleared, and useless buildings removed or extensively remodeled. The enormous cost of all this makes it challenging to find any private developer(s), who would have to feel confident their investment would be profitable. This means the scale of redevelopment could well be beyond what Davenporters want.



Jennifer Joslin

Membership Coordinator

I have been a Bonny Doon resident for 30 years, having moved here with my husband in 1988. We chose Bonny Doon because of the lack of development and the amazing natural beauty of the area. I am a strong environmental advocate, and for many years ran the Marine Mammal Center's membership and direct mail fund raising activities.

I have a background in marketing and advertising as well as membership development. I am deeply appreciative of the unique environment and community of Bonny Doon and am excited to continue to be involved with finding solutions to the many issues facing Bonny Doon today as part of the RBDA Board.

Cotoni-Coast Dairies

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attended had ever been to the property, and the few who had only walked a small portion of it on guided hikes led by BLM in the last couple of years, they had little reason for picking one access point over another, except if they happened to live near one of the suggested trail heads. In that case, they were strongly opposed to it because of the likely negative impacts from cars and people. What did become very clear from the meetings is that every proposed trail head site faces several obstacles in order to safely get people onto and off the property, and some will be very expensive because roads need to be widened or a pedestrian bridge built.

The Santa Cruz meeting was dominated by mountain bikers, and of course that skewed the preferred activity to their passion. It is expected that the trails planned for the neighboring San Vicente Redwoods property will connect to trails on CCDNM to provide a southern access point. Depending on how this is done it could create a lot of friction with local residents.

The Bonny Doon meeting was split between North Coasters and people from Santa Cruz and south, and hiking and wildlife viewing were by far their preferred activities. Unfortunately, BLM didn't present any information about the natural or cultural resources of the property to help people better understand how and why access might be limited.

The official planning process will begin in March. BLM will follow a federal process that is very similar to that required by California's Environmental Quality Act, with a meeting to ask the public what should be studied (called a "scoping" meeting), preparation of a draft environmental impact report, public comment and then adoption of the final report. BLM plans to do this on an accelerated basis, compressing what normally takes 2 or 3 years into 6 to 12 months. BLM has funds to do the planning, but actual implementation of the plan depends on funding from Congress. Only those who participate with oral or written comments at the scoping meeting(s) or to the draft environmental report will have legal standing to protest all or a portion of the public access plan.

We would have preferred to see the first meeting(s) be aimed at helping people better understand the natural and cultural resources that make CCDNM so special, so that they could be more knowledgeable participants in an access planning exercise. We are also concerned that BLM may be relying on an outdated and far from comprehensive study of the biotic resources done by TPL in 2001, and may not have sufficient information to inform planning for the broad range of plants and animals protected by the monument proclamation.

PG&E's EVM Program

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implement this regulation by actually clearing all vegetation within 12 feet of the lines and all vegetation existing above the lines. Property owners were simultaneously informed that no trees would be trimmed or removed without permission, but if they declined the suggested clearing, PG&E's recourse would be to shift liability onto the property owner. The threat of assuming liability was enough for many Braemoorians to consent to having trees removed.

Around Halloween, all work on Braemoor ceased. A drive around the neighborhood reveals the impact of this poorly communicated and rushed action by PG&E. There are areas of the neighborhood where large stumps remain, and completely limbed Doug Firs still stand. Residents have been unsuccessful in getting a commitment from PG&E to complete the job, which will likely result in turning the cost of removing large stumps, felled trees, and limbed trees to the property owners. There was support for this activity among Braemoor residents, many of whom feel strongly about mitigating the risk of wildfire, but PG&E fell short of meeting their stated commitments (including removing trees to the ground) to this neighborhood.

Stew Roth, PG&E's Senior Public Safety Specialist, led a discussion about their Community Wildfire Safety Program Plan at the RBDA public meeting on November 28. We learned that the choice to clear 12 feet around the distribution lines was a "knee-jerk" response to changes in GO 95. The EVM will look different going forward. The current plan is to re-implement the former 4-foot radial clearance requirements, and also remove dead trees outside the 4-foot area. PG&E will be installing "tree wire" (insulated wire) throughout Bonny Doon, although there was no time line provided. Many Dooners have been strongly advocating at the County and State levels for PG&E to focus more of their resources updating technology and "hardening the grid" (updating and better maintaining existing infrastructure) rather than on vegetation removal. Roth concurred that much of PG&E's equipment was old and outdated, and said that they are moving as fast as they can to make changes, but that equipment upgrades need to be engineered and it will take time, 10 years or more.

On December 15, Santa Cruz County submitted a formal comment on the rule-making process for Senate Bill (SB) 901, which will address wildfire safety and investor-owned utility wildfire management plans, including vegetation management. This process, known as requesting "Party status" in a CPUC rule-making process, is necessary to be able to submit formal comments, but does not equate to party status in a court proceeding. In their formal comment, the County strongly argued in favor of enhancing the safety of the distribution system, and criticized the focus on vegetation removal. The County emphasized that "Santa Cruz County would like to see IOUs [Investor Owned Utilities] invest in measures that will have proven preventative benefits: (1) updating equipment and replacing aging infrastructure, (2) hardening the system including expanding the use of covered conductors and even undergrounding lines where feasible, and (3) deploying technology such as remote cameras and remote-controlled automatic reclosers to mitigate fire risk and enhance fire response."

This is certain to be an ongoing issue. The fate of PG&E remains uncertain as investigations about the cause of the Camp Fire are underway. There are voices (locally and statewide) demanding that California's electric utilities become fully governmental entities, with the hope for lower rates and more transparent and accountable governing structures. *We believe it will be important to lobby our legislature to require upgrading technologies, hardening infrastructure and making PG&E a public utility.* We will strive to keep you informed about developments in *The Highlander*. The Facebook group "Citizens for Responsible PG&E Fire Prevention" has participants state-wide and is also a good resource for news and advocacy opportunities. Share your thoughts with us about these developments at board@rbda.us.

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RBDA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Yearly dues are \$20/pp or \$15/pp for multiple members at same address.

Memberships expire on Jan. 31 of the next year. *

Number of Members _____ Number of years you are joining or renewing for _____

Multiply years times number of memberships. Checks only, please, made out to RBDA.

Amount enclosed for dues: \$ _____

I also wish to support the RBDA with an additional contribution of \$ _____

Total amount of enclosed check \$ _____

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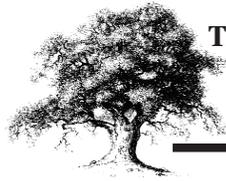
I certify that I (we) live or own property in the Bonny Doon Planning District.

Clip out and mail to RBDA, P.O. Box 551, Felton, CA 95018.

Dues mostly go for
printing and mailing
The Highlander,
your voice for keeping
Bonny Doon rural
and natural.

Additional contributions
are gladly accepted and
greatly appreciated!

*Dues paid after Nov. 30
count toward the next year.



THE Highlander

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Bonny Doon's voice in preserving our special quality of life, The Highlander, is mailed free 6 times a year. RBDA Public Meetings are usually held the second Wednesdays of January, March, May, September and November. We encourage you to participate. Send correspondence to The Highlander at the above address.

Access the RBDA on the Internet at:

www.bonnydoon.got.net

E-mail us at:

board@rbda.us

Facebook (RBDA Members Only):

RBDA, Rural Bonny Doon Association

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**Bonny Doon Resident
Santa Cruz, CA 95060**

Please join us for the RBDA Annual Meeting on January 9

Do You Want to Help Influence the Future of Bonny Doon?

Do you have opinions about the future of your Bonny Doon community? If so, RBDA has four options for how you can make your opinions count:

(1) ***Join the RBDA Board.*** Responsibilities can be tailored to your availability and include: meeting with other Board members every 2 months; keeping abreast of issues facing the County; deciding which have highest priority for our volunteer efforts; meeting with County officials; writing policy statements; writing *Highlander* articles; tracking membership; and planning events. We currently have a Board vacancy, so let us know if you want to join.

(2) ***Pick an issue and volunteer to work with the RBDA Board to affect policy.*** Is there a particular issue that you think is important, but you don't want to join the Board and you don't want to work alone? Perhaps you care about the noise policy that the County is working on, and you understand that working with the RBDA will make your efforts more effective. If so, get in touch with the Board (board@rbda.us) to discuss what you have in mind.

(3) ***If you have opinions about local issues but don't have time to volunteer, send the Board an e-mail outlining your concerns.*** We can't guarantee your issue will always receive all the attention it deserves, but it will help us know what issues are causing the most problems.

(4) ***Make sure your RBDA membership is up-to-date.*** This will keep the RBDA funded so that we can publish and mail *The Highlander* to all Bonny Doon addresses, host public lectures at the school, and conduct lobbying campaigns with the County Supervisors on significant issues affecting Bonny Doon, like the recent commercial cannabis regulations.

As you can see from the list above, the RBDA has a variety of ways you can help out. The RBDA has a 60-year history of action. The unifying factor of all of the options listed above is that by working with us you can make your opinions count more than if you are a lone voice.

Joining or Renewing Your RBDA Membership Is Now Easier

Inside this edition of *The Highlander* is a postage-paid envelope that you can use to send in your dues. Just fill it out, put in your check, and drop it in the mailbox. (Including your own stamp on the enclosed envelope will save the RBDA the cost of postage.)

We encourage our members to provide an e-mail address so we can continue to build a database to use in very time-sensitive and critical situations, and strictly for RBDA related issues and business. We promise that we will never share your e-mail address with a third party without your permission.

Thank you in advance for your support! Almost all dues and donations go to publishing and printing *The Highlander* and rent/insurance at the school for our public meetings.

The RBDA is a 501(c)(4) non-profit organization, so donations are not tax-deductible. We have that designation because it allows us to legally lobby for laws and regulations that are important to Bonny Doon.

Joining the RBDA isn't just good for us, it's good for you. The more members we have the more accurately we can represent the community.