

THE

Highlander

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The Rural Bonny Doon Association Newsletter

RBDA Public Meeting: San Vicente Redwoods Public Access Plan Update

Wednesday March 13

7:30 p.m.

Bonny Doon Elementary School Multipurpose Room
Pine Flat & Ice Cream Grade

Bryan Largay
Conservation Director
for the Land Trust of
Santa Cruz County



Bryan Largay will review the San Vicente Redwoods Public Access Plan which is presently under CEQA review by Santa Cruz County (see "Big Step Forward for San Vicente Redwoods Trails Plan"). Largay is responsible for management and planning on Land Trust properties, overseeing a team of seven staff. His training and early career focused on hydrology and the restoration of wetlands and watersheds. He lives in Felton.

Please join us and bring your questions! Note that this meeting will not be part of the official CEQA review. Comments on the CEQA document should be provided directly to the County by March 14.

Big Step Forward for San Vicente Redwoods Trails Plan

The Land Trust of Santa Cruz County (LTSCC) has published its Public Access Plan, a comprehensive document detailing how and where people can finally hike, bike, ride their horses and walk their dogs on the 8,160 acre property that slopes oceanward from Empire Grade. Bryan Largay, the LTSCC Director of Conservation, who has spearheaded the plan's development, will present it at the March 13 RBDA meeting. The details of the Initial Study for the plan can be found at sccoplaning.com/PlanningHome/Environmental/CEQAINitialStudiesEIRs/CEQADocumentsOpenforPublicReview.aspx. The full scope of the LTSCC's plan—trail use and location, construction methods, monitoring, management and enforcement—and how it will be implemented, are at landtrustsantacruz.org/san-vicente-access-plan.

The public has until March 14 to comment on the plan, which is in the form of a permit application to the Santa Cruz

County Planning Dept. The planners have decided that a full Environmental Impact Report will be unnecessary because potential impacts will be mitigated to a sufficient level. The plan contains elaborate safeguards to protect many rare plants and insects and other animals, including dusky-footed wood rats, some old-growth redwood and Santa Cruz manzanita; to minimize impacts on the mountain lions which roam the area; and to prohibit erosion into San Vicente Creek, which is Davenport's water source. However, after studying the plan, if anyone has objections or concerns, the Planning Department's approval of it can be appealed to the California Coastal Commission. Those concerns would have a stronger legal standing if they are expressed to the Planning Department by letter or e-mail prior to the March 14 deadline.

The trails will be built in three phases. Phase 1 will be the construction of trails
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North Coast Rail-Trail Plan

Creates Problems Instead of Solving Them

This is an invited contribution from Marty Demare, former RBDA Board Member.

In February, the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) released its final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed North Coast Rail Trail Project. Instead of a world-class trail north from Santa Cruz through rural agrarian surroundings, offering sweeping ocean views and increased access to public lands, the RTC offers a plan that will actually reduce parking spaces for visitors and offer no portals to visit the Cotoni-Coast Dairies National Monument across Highway 1.

The RTC could have asked for permission to remove the tracks north of Santa Cruz before contracting with Progressive Rail to operate trains in the County. The Land Trust of Santa Cruz County did not offer to transfer its financial support to a trail-only option, so a trail alongside the rails is planned, requiring extensive and expensive construction.

Although the trail does not connect to Federal property, the RTC was able to get a grant from the Federal Land Access Program (FLAP) to fund design and permitting. Because of the Federal funding, the Federal Highway Administration Central Federal Land division (CFL) is the lead agency for this segment of the Rail Trail, and it must perform a National Environmental Protection Act review, a process similar to the State's California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review. That process, which will also be required of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), when they complete the Cotoni-Coast Dairies management planning, will begin once the RTC officially adopts the final EIR. That is expected on March 7 at the RTC meeting in Watsonville, despite problems with the plan identified by draft version comments.

If the trail is constructed in phases due to funding constraints, the southern portion
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Rail-Trail Update

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Abandoned tracks above Bonny Doon Beach Photo: Marty Demare

from Wilder Ranch to Panther/Yellowbank Beach (5.4 miles) would be built first, over approximately eight months. The completion deadline attached to the funding has been extended by a year to 2021. The northern portion from Panther/Yellowbank Beach to Davenport would be constructed next and take four months.

One important deficiency is a plan for how people will get across Hwy. 1 to access Cotoni-Coast Dairies National Monument, as the FLAP grant intended. CFL's plan identifies only a crosswalk from a new, as yet unfunded, formalized parking lot on Hwy. 1 in Davenport, leading not to Federal land but to the parking area in front of Cemitas restaurant. No other inland access is identified, even though any such information would be invaluable to inform BLM's planning, expected to begin with a Notice of Preparation in April.

To support their preferred Rail with Trail choice, the RTC's EIR consultants identify the rails as a historic resource: since they transported cement for monumental projects, the rails should not be removed. The tracks don't really tell that story. They look just like all rails nationwide, all of which carried historical significant products. The rails end at the CEMEX plant. If the County Supervisors who sit on the RTC adopt this "historic resource" position, how will they be able to vote for any cement plant reuse plan that would require demolishing the plant facilities?

Arguments over the application of CEQA requirements to the repair of tracks owned by the RTC, and renewal of freight service, per the RTC's contract with Progressive Rail, have been heard in court, as the result of a lawsuit by trail-only advocates. The RTC argues that Federal rules applying to rail operations preempt and absolve the RTC from compliance with CEQA. The case

will return to Superior Court on March 15.

Davenport/North Coast residents have noticed increased traffic volume in recent years, yet the EIR relies on traffic studies from 2016. With increased trail visitation comes increased need for parking, but the parking lot at Panther/Yellow Bank, now heavily used by beachgoers, will be shrunk from 160 to 48 spaces. The beach access from the parking lot at Laguna Road uses a rail crossing that would be closed also, despite objections from State Parks and Coastal Commission staff.

If funding is obtained, the project at buildout would reduce parking spaces at Bonny Doon Beach from 55 to 48 and in Davenport from 54 to 43. The RTC solution is that "informal parking lots" and highway shoulder parking would absorb overflow, but the shoulders near Yellow Bank are narrow and parking is currently prohibited. A new left-turn lane is also proposed which would add to what is already a dangerous situation for bicyclists. Are we heading for the traffic and parking problems from over-visitation that are already evident in Big Sur, Point Lobos and Muir Woods? Throughout the EIR there are only superficial references to the increased visitation that the opening of Cotoni-Coast Dairies will bring.

The trail with rail plan is disappointing after the 20-year effort to prevent development on the Coast Dairies property and protect the land so it could be available for enjoyment as a natural area. Now, thanks to bad decisions about rail corridor management by the RTC, more bad choices will be made, and we can look forward to hiking and biking the trail alongside stored tank cars, while the goals of regional connectivity and holistic visitor access management languish for lack of leadership and coordination among Federal, State and County officials.

Results from January RBDA Board Elections

At our RBDA Annual Meeting on Jan. 9 we held our Executive Board Member elections. There were three seats whose terms had expired. Previous Board Member Andy Davidson (Chair) and Jennifer Joslin (Membership Coordinator) were re-elected. Tom Hearn, former Treasurer, announced he would resign from the Board, after 12 years of service to our community. Thus, we are currently short two members on the Board, so if you are a member in good standing and would like an opportunity to provide service to your community, please consider serving!

The RBDA Needs You! Help Keep Bonny Doon Rural and Natural

We currently have two vacancies on the RBDA Executive Board, and are looking for community members interested in serving. We meet with other Board members and host public meetings every two months.

Responsibilities can be tailored to your availability and can include: 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 know it can be difficult to commit time and resources to serving on a board, but there are other ways to help out:

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? By working with us you may be able to help amplify your opinions beyond being a lone voice.

Volunteer to help out with Board logistics. There are lots of little things that we need to get done as a board that don't represent a huge time commitment. This could include helping us distribute The Highlander, volunteering to help us set up the public meetings, assisting with our website, and checking our post office box.

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.

San Vicente Redwoods Public Access Plan

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roughly parallel to Empire Grade, and a 1.5-mile path on the 373-acre separate parcel dubbed San Vicente Redwoods: Laguna Tract, which is adjacent to the Bonny Doon Ecological Reserve (BDER), and will be open only for hiking. A management plan for the Eco Reserve access trails may be required. The second phase will expand the trail network on the main property southward toward the coast. Phase 3 will connect that trail network to Cotoni-Coast Dairies National Monument, near Cal Poly Swanton Pacific Ranch.

More than 80 miles of roads and trails exist on the property, acquired in December 2011 from CEMEX cement company, which used it for commercial logging operations. About 11 miles of the existing roads/trails will eventually be incorporated into the public trail network, which will total 36.5 miles. The first phase, 8.4 miles, are on the main property. Phase 2 will extend the trails another 9.3 miles, and the third phase, the connection to the national monument, will add 16.5 miles. It is envisioned that Phase 3 will result in access to both Cotoni-Coast Dairies and SVR through the planned Rail Trail coming up from the City of Santa Cruz.

The Land Trust has contracted with the County Sheriff to patrol the area, and has agreed on a three-year contract with County Parks to provide stewardship, interpretation and maintenance services. CalFire will handle emergency medical and fire fighting needs.

The small parking area off Empire Grade, in the 11,000 address area across from Crest Ranch, will have an initial capacity of 25 to 40 spaces, plus room for a couple of horse trailers. The entrance will be gated and locked at night, and visitors will be required to register and keep their permit with them while they are on the property.

The maintenance, monitoring and upkeep will be expensive, even though the Land Trust hopes to start a docent volunteer program, and the possible small visitation fee that may be charged will not offset the ongoing costs. The Land Trust estimates capital improvements (trail construction, bathrooms, signage etc.) will run between \$3- and \$5-million, and annual costs will range from a quarter-to half-a-million dollars, while potential revenues from fees will yield only \$100- to \$500-thousand annually. Thus, a lot of fundraising will have to be done constantly. Millions of dollars have already been raised, including \$1-million from the national mountain biking organization (the money mostly donated by big commercial bike equipment companies) through its local chapter, Mountain Bikers of Santa Cruz, which is working with the LTSCC to design and build the trails.



Wildflowers in San Vicente Redwoods
Photo courtesy of the Land Trust of SC County

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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.

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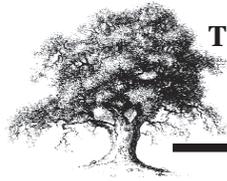
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Clip out and mail to RBDA, P.O. Box 551, Felton, CA 95018.

Dues mostly go for
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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.



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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**

RBDA Public Meeting March 13: Plan for Opening San Vicente Redwoods Trails

Bonny Doon Loses an Outstanding Citizen Paul Hostetter (1946-2019)

In mid-February, many members of the Bonny Doon community were shocked and saddened to learn of the death of Paul Hostetter, who contributed in many ways to making the Dooniverse the special place it is.

Born and raised in Detroit (where, as a young man, he was a Motown studio musician), Paul lived in Bonny Doon for more than 40 years, and his life was deeply intertwined with our community. A guitarist and luthier, Paul played at many Bonny Doon celebrations, expertly repaired countless stringed instruments for local players, and hosted house concerts that introduced international folk musicians to the local community. His house and studio were filled with stringed instruments from around the world, and his shelves were loaded with the recordings of musicians from many nations. He even travelled to Madagascar at one point to make a CD of the island's indigenous songs.

In addition, Paul worked constantly to preserve the quality of life in Bonny Doon, serving as the RBDA chairman in the 90s, and developed and then maintained the RBDA website almost to the day of his passing.

All the people whose lives Paul touched recognized his keen and comprehensive intellect, his deep knowledge of Bonny Doon history (as well as many other subjects), his sharp sense of humor, his worldly gastronomic expertise and his generosity.



Photo: Frans Lanting

Paul kept his 3-year struggle with colon cancer private, and few knew of the bravery with which he fought the ravages of the disease.

Paul is survived by his multi-talented wife, musician and expert potter Robin Petrie, who delighted audiences with her hammer dulcimer performances, accompanied by Paul on guitar; and by his two very musically accomplished daughters: Marandi, a violinist, who plays chamber and other music in New York City, and Kaethe, who lives in Addis Ababa and tours internationally with her Ethiopian music band.

I, like many others in Bonny Doon and Santa Cruz, plus his many musician friends around the world, already greatly miss him.
—Ted Benhari