



greenfootnotes

COMMITTEE FOR GREEN FOOTHILLS



State Timber Bill Threatens Local Communities



BY LENNIE ROBERTS

The redwood-Douglas fir forests of the Santa Cruz Mountains are highly prized for their timber resources, for scenic and recreational opportunities, as fish and wildlife habitats, and as places for people to live. Many mountain communities and the entire County of Santa Cruz depend upon local forested watersheds for clear, clean, reliable drinking water supplies.

The California State Division of Forestry (CAL FIRE) which regulates timber harvesting, must necessarily balance the interests of local communities and the environment with the economic benefits of commercial logging. This is particularly true in the Southern Subdistrict's urban counties (San Mateo, Santa Cruz, and Santa Clara), where there are greater numbers of people living in or near the forests. Special rules adopted by the State address many urban/rural interface issues in our area.

Local rules adopted by the State Board of Forestry provide for our Southern Subdistrict counties to participate in the review of proposed timber operations on behalf of affected neighbors and communities, to recommend mitigations for potentially harmful environmental impacts, and to appeal locally approved timber harvest plans that fail to protect public health and safety to the State Board of Forestry.

These critical environmental and community safeguards that guarantee a modicum of public participation would be curtailed or eliminated by AB 904, authored by Assemblymember Wesley Chesbro.

The bill would create a new category of timber harvest plan, called a "Working Forest Management Plan" (WFMP) that, once approved, would be good "forever." There would be no notification to the public of future timber operations and counties would be unable to appeal on behalf of affected neighbors and communities.

The intention of the bill is to encourage timberland owners in other parts of the state to shift from clear-cutting to selective harvesting, which leaves a substantial percentage of the forest

Greetings from the Interim Executive Director

BY LIZ SNYDER



COMMITTEE FOR GREEN FOOTHILLS

We are a grassroots 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization working to establish and maintain land use policies that protect the environment throughout Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties.

Our mission is to protect the open spaces, farmlands, and natural resources of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties through advocacy, education and grassroots action.

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Bryan Beck - Pg 10

John Muir Laws - Pg 12

Since joining the Committee for Green Foothills (CGF), I have come to have tremendous respect for the work of our three Advocates. In addition to their tireless ability to champion open space against all odds, what impresses me the most is their understanding of the impossible

maze of legal and technical complexities involved in saving our forests, farms, and coastline.

This technical knowledge isn't something that easily translates into simple, easy-to-digest messages. When we talk about CGF's work, our struggle is to avoid being too "wonky" in how we explain our core issues, lest we turn this newsletter into a cure for insomnia! Yet all this technical, sometimes-snore-inducing work is the backbone of CGF's impact.

For this issue, we decided to dive into the complexity of CGF's work. At the same time, we are excitedly looking at the big picture with our new visioning project, "The Next 50 Years." As our new Board President, Matt

Burrows, explains in his letter, we are actively developing a vision of what CGF hopes to accomplish by 2062 -- the year that CGF turns 100!

Big vision and tiny details. It's a hard combination to balance. And yet, when something like AB 551 comes across our desks, details matter. AB 551 is a state assembly bill that will allow cities across California to create "Urban Agriculture Incentive Zones" - and

the difference between what makes this a bill that can dramatically help California's new urban farm movement and an empty piece of legislation lies in a small, easily overlooked amendment restricting these zones to a paltry 3 acres.

Without eagle eyes like those of Lennie Roberts, I'd never have known what was at

stake with the amendment to AB 551. Because of her keen reading of the bill, we were able to write a second letter to our representatives pointing out how a strict three-acre restriction undermines the purpose of the bill. As a result of letters like ours, the restriction was modified enough to allow for larger parcels to be included in this new zoning rule that will make it easier and less

expensive for new urban farms to not only get off the ground -- but thrive.

That's how it works - a one-sentence amendment to a long, hard-to-comprehend bill is the difference between urban farms being ubiquitous or pitifully absent from our future lives. Most of us drown in the details, but our Advocates thrive in the ocean of minutiae that will decide the fate of our open space in the future. For that, I am forever grateful! ~

"...a one-sentence amendment to a long, hard-to-comprehend bill is the difference between urban farms being ubiquitous or pitifully absent from our future lives."

From the President

BY MATT BURROWS

During the past seven or so years that I have been privileged to serve on the Committee for Green Foothills (CGF) board, one of the great satisfactions has been to witness the results of past campaigns coming to fruition. Whether it be the triumphant opening of the Tom Lantos Tunnel, the announcement of new open space acquisitions in the Coyote Valley area, or the preservation of old-growth redwoods in the Santa Cruz Mountains, the long-term impact of our esteemed advocates' efforts has been remarkable. This medley of past labors, present-day impact and the future assurance of an enhanced quality of life is the essence of our advocates' mission. We are constantly projecting the future shape and potential of our open spaces, farmlands and natural resources in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties in order to best protect them.

With that in mind, our advocates Julie Hutcheson, Alice Kaufman and Lennie Roberts, in conjunction with the board and ultimately our membership, are setting forth on "The Next 50 Years," our vision of what the region we serve should look like by 2062 through the lens of CGF's mission. The next 50 years, with the unknown effects of climate change and increasing development pressures looming, promise to be the most critical years of our environmental lives. "The Next 50 Years" will assess these threats and present our plan to address them through community action, education, preservation and legislation. The goal is to create a document that will serve as a communication tool that can help anyone understand what CGF stands for, with a target audience of current and prospective members, elected officials, partners and donors along with our board and staff. This vision will be unveiled at our upcoming *Nature's Inspiration: The Next 50 Years celebration on October 6th at the Mountain Meadow Estate*.

In recent years, CGF has been the fortunate recipient of a number of spectacular sites for our Nature's Inspiration gatherings. This year, the Mountain Meadow Estate, with its towering redwoods, lush orchard and spectacular gardens, promises to continue our tradition of showcasing the natural gifts of our local open spaces. In addition to this incredible exclusive setting, we are most pleased to be honoring the

extraordinary naturalist, artist and educator John Muir Laws. Mr. Laws is immersed in imparting the power of participation in the natural world not only as a means for personal transformation, but also as a call to action for its preservation. If you have not done so already, **please mark your calendar for the afternoon/early evening of October 6th** for a renewing menu of great local food and wines along with an ambitious program focused on the protection of our cherished natural resources and farmlands in the next 50 years!

Board News: The CGF board has been gifted with a number of new board members the past six months who have added diversity and insight to our endeavors. Most recently, Bryan Beck of Redwood City and Christina Strong of Palo Alto have come into the fold of dedicated CGF board members, and we welcome them to our board. Combined with our other recent board additions, Ron Erskine of Morgan Hill, Ed Larenas of Moss Beach and Tate Cohn of Palo Alto, we are building a

renewed core of board members; one that bring us diversity geographically, generationally and in viewpoint. For any of you that are interested in finding out more about our mission and volunteering your talents to CGF, please feel free to contact us at info@greenfoothills.org, or (650) 968-7243.

Finally, as many of you have noticed, the familiar byline of Margaret MacNiven is no longer gracing this letter. Margaret, whose term on the board expired last April, is still showing her dedication to CGF by serving on a number of committees. She has our eternal thanks and appreciation for serving as Board President for an amazing three years. The amount of time, preparation and just plain work involved while volunteering for this role is extraordinary, as was Margaret's leadership of CGF. We look forward to saying hello to Margaret and all of you on October 6th at the Mountain Meadow Estate. 🌿

"The next 50 years, with the unknown effects of climate change and increasing development pressures looming, promise to be the most critical years of our environmental lives."

intact. However, clear-cutting is already prohibited in the Southern Subdistrict. Another goal is to reduce pressure on timberland owners to subdivide or convert to other land uses such as golf courses and vineyards. But strict zoning and environmental protections already in place in the Southern Subdistrict make forest conversion far less of a threat.

AB 904 also proposes to drastically increase the acreage “cap” for landowners to enroll lands in the existing “forever” timber program from 2,500 acres to 15,000 acres — the equivalent size of two cities of Menlo Park. Timber harvesting review teams from California Fish and Wildlife, California Department of Conservation, the relevant Regional Water Quality Control Board, and the county, would have a nearly impossible job of evaluating potential impacts from current and future logging on sensitive streams, endangered species, and steep, remote mountain terrain.

The bill has passed through the Assembly with strong support from the forest industry and some land trusts that gain revenue from timber harvesting on their otherwise protected land. The land trusts supporting this bill include Pacific Forest Trust, Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, Trust for Public Land, and The Nature Conservancy. Opponents of the bill include Sierra Club, Center for Biological Diversity, Sempervirens Fund, and the San Lorenzo Valley Water District.

At a hearing before the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee in late June, Committee member Senator Bill Monning (whose district includes portions of Santa Clara, Monterey, and all of Santa Cruz Counties) urged Assemblymember Chesbro to consider adoption of several amendments suggested by Central Coast Forest Watch, San Lorenzo Valley Water District, and CGF. These amendments are an alternative to total exclusion of the Southern Subdistrict, which CGF believes would address many, but not all, of the bill’s shortcomings.

The Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee Chair, Senator Fran Pavley, strongly suggested that Assemblymember Chesbro work with the Committee staff to incorporate the Amendments, and said that if an agreement was not reached, she reserved the right to bring the bill back to the Committee.

At the time of writing of this article, the legislature is on summer break, and the outcome of the bill is unknown. Senators Jim Beall and Jerry Hill are working with Senator Monning to ensure that residents and affected communities continue to have a say in critical public health and safety issues regarding timber harvesting, now and in the future. 🌀

Update: On August 30, 2013 the Senate Appropriations Committee voted unanimously on two amendments to the bill, excluding the Southern Subdistrict! CGF thanks everyone who was involved in the effort.

For more info. please see: <http://eepurl.com/EvO9L>

General Plans

They May Not be Sexy, but They Matter

BY JULIE HUTCHESON

General Plans are essentially a local jurisdiction’s rule book on how land will be used within its boundaries. As such, general plans are a key component in determining the future landscape of our cities and counties. For CGF, they are an indispensable tool in our efforts to advocate for sensible planning at the city and county levels. The content of these plans ultimately provides CGF with the foundation for opposing an irresponsible development proposal or zoning change, requesting reasonable amendments to a particular project, or advocating for new and better environmental protections.

Periodically, a city or county will review or update its General Plan. For CGF, these updates present a critical opportunity for proactive change. Taking part in the discussion with communities as to how and where they will grow in the future allows us to affect positive change at the source. The vision, goals, policies, and actions that emerge from the review process can mean the difference between unchecked sprawl or the responsible use of natural resources.

From a cumulative perspective, General Plans have regional

implications. For example, strong policies to protect farmland from development in one jurisdiction translate into continued access to locally-grown food throughout the region. Policies requiring urban development only within cities safeguard against urban sprawl, the decline of scenic hillside views, and human encroachment in areas rife in natural hazards and sensitive wildlife habitat.

Therefore, the final outcome of these processes is critical to the success of our mission. For these reasons, CGF is actively engaged in the General Plan updates currently underway for the County of Santa Clara, the City of Morgan Hill, and the City of Gilroy. These updates typically last several years and cover a diverse set of issues. Perhaps not the most stimulating subject matter for some, but they certainly tickle our fancy.

To ensure the integrity of these General Plans, CGF keeps a watchful eye on attempts to weaken them via amendments and continues its commitment to you and the natural environment by advocating for the implementation of plan aspects most critical to our mission. 🌀

Getting in on the Ground Floor of Your Community's Future

BY JULIE HUTCHESON

Ever wonder why your city or county has grown the way it has? Why is there an industrial park built beside a residential neighborhood? How come there is development so close to a creek? Why aren't there more bicycle lanes and pedestrian-friendly streets?

The answers to these questions can be traced back to your city or county's General Plan. This relatively unknown document contains the blueprint to a community's future. All growth and development decisions made by one's local Planning Commission, City Council, or Board of Supervisors are based on its content.

Unfortunately, most people's eyes glaze over at the thought of becoming – and more importantly remaining – engaged in updating their community's General Plan. Yet participation in the process means getting in on ground-floor decisions that will shape our quality of life for generations. It is your opportunity to share your vision, thoughts, and ideas about the kind of environment you would like to live in.

Do you want more climate sensitive planning? Increased access to open space? Development that promotes healthier living? Perhaps you would like to encourage better planned urban neighborhoods to help prevent further sprawl into open space? Or increase access to locally grown food by supporting protection of local farmland and the creation of urban farms and community gardens? Or promote the idea of a trail by your local creek for greater connectivity with nature in an urban setting?

For those residents of Santa Clara County, the City of Morgan Hill, and the City of Gilroy, the opportunity to weigh

in on the future of their communities has arrived. The County and both cities are updating their respective General Plans. Community involvement in these different General Plan update processes can take a variety of forms such as community meetings, online surveys and forums, and General Plan Advisory Committee meetings.

Your input will help determine how your community creates a healthier, more resilient environment in which to live. Is it worth your time? We certainly think so. And if you agree, get involved and bring a friend. 🐾

For information on these general plans and public participation opportunities, please visit:

Santa Clara County:
tinyurl.com/SCCGeneralPlan

Morgan Hill:
www.MorganHill2035.org

Gilroy:
www.cityofgilroy.org



MORGAN HILL STYMIES CRITICAL GENERAL PLAN DISCUSSION

Despite requests from CGF, residents, and members of the General Plan Advisory Committee, the City of Morgan Hill has refused to include review of its plans to annex and develop more than 700 acres of rural land known as the Southeast Quadrant within its General Plan update. This attempt to stymie scrutiny of its plans within this process runs counter to its current General Plan which states that the "[p]lanning of the Southeast Quadrant may occur as part of the next comprehensive General Plan Update." The City's obstructionism indicates a blatant willingness to push through a plan incongruent with the vision the community has for itself.



Stormy view of Morgan Hill

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In Honor of Lennie Roberts
In Honor of Brian A Schmidt
In Memory of Ollie Mayer
In Memory of Ruth Baer
Spangenburg

CEQA

In the Line of Fire

BY ALICE KAUFMAN

Why does the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) matter to California residents? CEQA is the reason why development proposals are conducted in the public eye, with their environmental impacts reported on and made known to the public. It requires that when a project will have significant environmental impacts, those impacts have to be mitigated if feasible. In short, CEQA forces agencies to take a hard look at the environmental consequences of approving development.

CEQA also has a target on its back. Developers and business interests are constantly attempting to “reform” this pivotal environmental law, arguing that CEQA lawsuits are clogging our courts and that desired infill projects are hampered by CEQA review. These claims don’t hold up under scrutiny. Only 0.3% of CEQA reviews ever end up in court, and 90% of all development projects are either exempt from CEQA or undergo only minimal environmental review. Nevertheless, CEQA stands out as one of California’s most frequently amended laws, with 83 of its sections amended since 2008 (334 amended since CEQA was passed in 1970). Each year, dozens of bills are introduced in the legislature seeking to weaken CEQA. Most recently, development interests have been pushing for legislation that would prohibit legal challenges under CEQA if a project was in compliance with other environmental laws, thus essentially exempting many projects from legal review.

This legislation has been defeated twice thus far – but it may appear again.

However, environmental groups are now fighting back. In this year’s legislative session, several bills that would actually improve and strengthen CEQA have been introduced. Some of them aim to improve public access to information, requiring that information about projects be posted on agencies’ websites, or that CEQA documents be translated when 25% of the impacted community is non-English-speaking. These bills have passed the Assembly and are now in the Senate. Several other beneficial bills, though defeated for this year, may be brought up again next year.

What does the future hold for CEQA? It seems evident that the push to weaken this vital environmental law will not disappear any time soon. In response, environmental groups (including CGF) and other partners have formed CEQA Works (ceqaworks.org), a broad coalition whose goal is to defend CEQA’s important protections and to improve it where possible. The support of everyone in California who cares about the environment is needed to protect CEQA and keep it strong, to preserve the natural environment in California for future generations. ♻️

To receive updates on CEQA legislation, sign up at ceqaworks.org, or go to the Planning and Conservation League website, www.pcl.org, for information.



Coyote Ridge

Featured Member: Patricia McBrayer

Architect and Community Activist

BY MANDY HENRY

Patricia McBrayer is an architect and community activist who lives in Menlo Park. With the help of CGF's Legislative Advocate, Lennie Roberts, Patricia and her neighbors recently advocated at the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors against a new development being proposed on their street. Through this process the group from Perry Avenue learned a lot about advocacy and local government, and made sure their voices were heard.


Not one to shy away from important local issues, Lennie was quick to offer her support and guidance when she heard about the neighbors' concerns. As Patricia explained, in addition to educating the neighborhood group, Lennie "personally contacted county leaders to ensure our voice was heard; she attended public hearings and spoke on our behalf; she encouraged us to stay focused on our goal and positive in our tone; and she gave us the greatest gift of all, her friendship."

In the end Patricia and the folks on Perry Avenue were able to reach an acceptable compromise, and "Lennie's involvement was invaluable in gaining even small concessions from the developer." A strong advocate for community-driven change, Patricia believes that the main benefit from these efforts were the "relationships formed by neighbors coming together to work toward a common goal."

Patricia is grateful for Lennie and CGF. "A healthy environment needs a balance of thoughtful development, appropriate infrastructure, and protected open space. I

recommend anyone interested in the long-term quality of life on the Peninsula to support the Committee for Green Foothills' efforts through membership." 🐾

Get online to get the latest news! Visit greenfoothills.org for our latest events, photos and action alerts.

Connect with us : 



Staff News

BY LIZ SNYDER

We wish a fond farewell to CGF's Program Coordinator Karin Lin as she embarks on new adventures with The Nature Conservancy in San Francisco. Karin has been an invaluable member of CGF's staff and will be missed by all! 🐾



CGF Welcomes New Board Members!

Welcoming Christina Maki Strong

The Committee welcomes Christina Maki Strong to our Board. A Palo Alto resident, Christina is an environmental scientist working at a major environmental consulting and engineering firm. Previously, she worked at Stanford's Natural Capital Project on a study designed to enable decision-makers to incorporate the economic values of conservation land into public policy. Christina has long been engaged in efforts to engage her community about the importance of ecological preservation and responsible land stewardship. Christina holds a Master's degree in environmental science from Plymouth State University and a Bachelor's degree in environmental studies from Bates College. Her work in environmental science has taken her to Alaska, Canada, Iceland and Costa Rica. When not working as an environmental scientist, Christina has been an active environmental educational volunteer with Acterra and the Tuolumne River Trust, bringing children out into the field to gain a deeper understanding of watersheds and the importance of conserving our natural resources. 🐾



Christina Maki Strong

Welcoming Bryan Beck

The Committee is honored to welcome Bryan Beck to the Board of Directors. Bryan is a Redwood City resident and enjoys bicycling and nature photography. His love of open space has contributed to his understanding of and dedication to the importance of preserving our natural environment. Bryan holds a degree in Architecture from U.C. Berkeley and works as a statistical programmer in the biotech industry. 🐾



Bryan Beck



Windy Hill

The Committee is watching...

In San Mateo County:

THE CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE — which is considering numerous bills this legislative session that will have a great impact on the environment.

MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT — which has engaged multiple stakeholders, including CGF, in a Vision Planning Process to help the District staff and board prioritize future land conservation, stewardship, public access, and land management decisions over the next 40 years.

STANFORD SEARSVILLE ALTERNATIVES STUDY ADVISORY GROUP — composed of key stakeholders, including CGF, that will provide input and recommendations to Stanford decision-makers regarding a range of actions for Searsville Dam and Lake, including: No Action, Dam Modification, Dam Removal, Sediment Removal to restore reservoir capacity, Alternative Water Supply and Storage, Restoration of Fish Passage and/or combinations of these actions.

SAN MATEO COUNTY HARBOR DISTRICT — which was recently granted an Emergency Coastal Development Permit by the Coastal Commission for maintenance dredging of its silted in boat launch ramp, but now must study beneficial locations for future dredging spoils such as Surfer's Beach.

In Santa Clara County:

THE COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA, THE CITY OF MORGAN HILL, AND THE CITY OF GILROY — which are updating their respective General Plans.

LAFCO — which will be voting on an annexation request by the City of Morgan Hill after twice granting the City a continuance. The annexation would allow for the unnecessary expansion of the City's urban service area as it already has more than sufficient supply of residential and commercial land within its boundary.

MORGAN HILL — where the draft Environmental Impact Report for the annexation and development proposal for the Southeast Quadrant, together with new Agricultural Policies are expected to be submitted for public review in September.

YOUNG RANCH (YCS INVESTMENTS) — the developer is nearing completion of their pre-application for this 87 unit residential subdivision on the highly sensitive hillside habitat of Coyote Ridge. Once ready, the pre-application is expected to go before the County Planning Commission in early fall for a review of the project's conformance to the General Plan.

The Committee applauds...

THE SANTA CLARA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION — which voted not to recommend a request to allow a 60-acre hillside property to increase its development density, thus upholding long-standing County policy of keeping rural areas rural.

THE SIERRA CLUB LOMA PRIETA CHAPTER — which achieved a settlement against the Lehigh Permanente Quarry requiring the quarry to reduce its selenium discharges into Permanente Creek down to legal levels.

SAN MATEO COUNTY SUPERVISORS — who recently approved a comprehensive Energy Efficiency Climate Action Plan (EECAP) that has adopted a target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the County by 17% by the year 2020, using the base year of 2005.

SURFRIDER FOUNDATION — for their lawsuit against Martin's Beach, LLC that seeks to require the owners to obtain a Coastal Development Permit for closing off public access to this popular surfing and fishing spot just four miles south of Half Moon Bay. Hopefully, the courts will agree that public access should be maintained.





COMMITTEE FOR
GREEN FOOTHILLS

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Save The Date!

Nature's Inspiration: The Next 50 Years

Sunday, October 6th

Join us at the historic and beautiful Mountain Meadow Estate for an afternoon of food, fun, and forward-looking vision! We'll be unveiling "The Next 50 Years," CGF's long-term plan to preserve and protect open space for future generations. We are delighted to be honoring John Muir Laws, extraordinary naturalist, artist, and educator.

Mark your calendars to join us on Sunday, October 6th and stay tuned for more information about this event. 🐾

Interested in becoming a Sponsor?

There's still time to become a sponsor and help support Committee for Green Foothills in protecting open space for future generations. If you'd like to learn more, please call Mandy Henry, Development and Outreach Coordinator, at (650) 968-7243 x314.



Illustrations by John Muir Laws
