

greenfootnotes

Land-Use Planning in an Era of Rising Seas

BY ALICE KAUFMAN LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY DIRECTOR
HELEN WOLTER LEGISLATIVE ADVOCATE

Bird's eye of the San Mateo Bridge and Foster City/Redwood shores. With predicted sea level rise, much of the land seen in this image is threatened by climate change.

Sea level rise is here, and it is going to get worse. Recent projections show a strong likelihood that the Bay Area will experience at least 6 - 12 inches of sea level rise by 2030, about two feet by 2050, and three to six feet by the end of the century. This will put all of us at risk; even those with homes not directly impacted will suffer if the highways they drive on or the wastewater plants that treat their sewage are flooded out.

Of course, we must continue efforts to reduce carbon emissions to avoid even worse consequences. But our region must also plan for a "new normal," a normal with more floods and coastal erosion. How should we do this?

First, it's not enough to merely protect existing development – we must also begin to change our behavior with regard to how we grow our communities. Our past patterns of growth have resulted in over \$24 billion of development at risk from sea level rise in San Mateo County alone. Instead of continuing with business as usual, we need to start restricting development

in areas where flooding and bluff collapse are likely.

Second, we must look to nature-based solutions to protect existing development. Traditional "hard" levees are less effective than solutions that work with nature instead of against it. But we need to start taking action now – before the slow-moving catastrophe of climate change catches up with us.

Committee for Green Foothills' knowledge of local land use and planning issues gives us a unique perspective into this question. We are tackling this crisis head-on and educating

Continued on Page 4

IN THIS ISSUE

Join Us to Celebrate Courage_____	p. 2
A Flutter of Monarchs at Dunes Beach_____	p. 3
Apply to the 2019-2020 CALA Class_____	p. 6
Committee is Watching/Applauds_____	p. 7
Upcoming Events_____	p. 8

Join Us to Celebrate Courage

BY MEGAN FLUKE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, JOAN SHERLOCK PRESIDENT, AND MONICA NAÑEZ VICE PRESIDENT



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 San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties.

Our mission is to protect open space, farmland, and natural resources of San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties for the benefit of all through advocacy, education, and grassroots action.

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PHOTOGRAPHY

Marc Smith- Pg 1, Alan Grinberg- Pg 4, Matt Leddy- Pg 5, Ian Webb-Harding- Pg 6, Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority- Pg 7, Matt Burrows- Pg 8, Bryan Beck- Pg 8, Ian Webb-Harding- Pg 8



Pictured from left to right: Megan Fluke, Joan Sherlock, and Monica Nañez

Hand in hand with our members, we fight for what is right. In our early years, many powerful people told us that protecting open space from urban and industrial sprawl was impossible. We even lost some pretty major campaigns at first. It's easy to imagine that our heroic founders were dismayed by the forces working against them. Yet they embraced the uncertainty and decided to found Committee for Green Foothills.

Since those challenging early days, we have accrued a long record of conservation. Armed with persistence, expertise, and integrity, we are capable of successfully navigating even the most challenging of campaigns.

Yet we are still the contrarians of our time. We still have to make a case that nature is worth protecting for people and the planet. Will this ever change? For the sake of our future, we can no

longer treat nature as a secondary issue.

We must celebrate and honor the people who have the courage to fight for our planet, often against what appear to be insurmountable odds. As part of this effort, we are thrilled that our honoree for our annual celebration, Nature's Inspiration, is Joe Cotchett, one of the mavericks of our time. Joe Cotchett's sharp mind and no-nonsense attitude, along with his indelible passion for environmental justice, make him a force to be reckoned with. He has taken on the toughest cases in his 50+ year legal career, from representing Erin Brockovich to fighting for public access at Martin's Beach. Hear from him firsthand how to fight for justice and our environment.

Join us in September to celebrate the courage of our community and of Joe Cotchett. You won't want to miss this event. 🌿

Save the date!

NATURE'S INSPIRATION
HONORING JOE COTCHETT

SEPT 22 1-4 PM WICKETT RANCH WOODSIDE, CA

Join us for hors d'oeuvres and wine as we honor Joe Cotchett for his exemplary leadership in coastal environmental justice including the fight for public access for Martin's Beach, generous pro bono work, and his commitment to the next generation of leadership.

The event will be held at Wickett Ranch, featuring beautiful pastures, surrounded by old growth redwood trees, and overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Our emcee will be Congresswoman Jackie Speier.

Sponsorships are available. Tickets go on sale June 24th.

A Flutter of Monarchs at Dunes Beach

BY HELEN WOLTER LEGISLATIVE ADVOCATE

The phone call came from a resident of Half Moon Bay with one magical word: monarchs. Monarch butterflies in flight at the Sweetwood Group Camp, adjacent to the Dunes Beach parcel where we have marshalled community support against a proposed hotel and luxury RV park.

Monarch butterflies have been in the news recently as their numbers were alarmingly low in 2018. The annual Western Monarch Thanksgiving Count revealed a reduction of California's overwintering butterflies to less than 0.5% of the historical population, and a decline of 86% compared to 2017. These historically low numbers follow a long period in which monarchs have declined 97% since the 1980s.

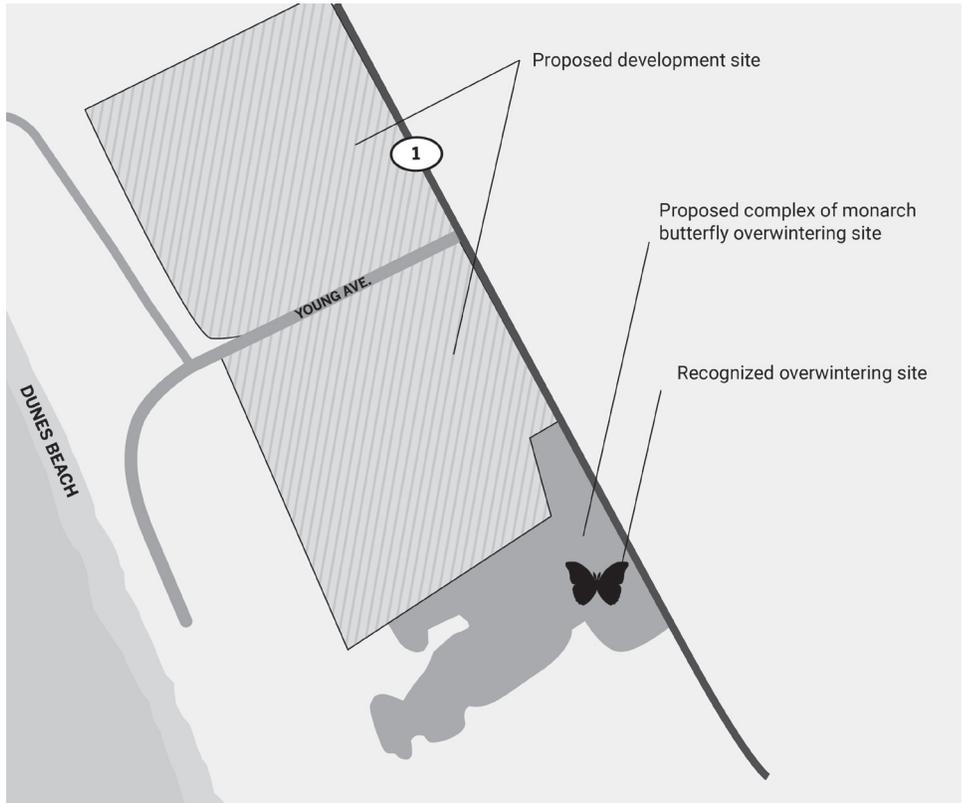
This year will be a real test of how resilient the western monarch population is

following such a precipitous decline. The population drop should be an urgent call to action for state, federal, and local governments, industry, agricultural producers, conservation groups, and the public to step up conservation efforts. Addressing and reversing widespread habitat loss and pesticide use throughout the monarch's range are necessary steps to reverse this downward trend.

The discovery of monarchs next to the Dunes Beach site is nonetheless exciting, and highlights the need for Half Moon Bay to protect this important habitat along with equestrian and agricultural uses at Dunes Beach.

YOU CAN HELP MONARCHS

• Please join us for an informational presentation on monitoring butterflies at Dunes Beach and how you can assist with their conservation the morning of June 22.



The proximity of spotted monarchs to the Dunes Beach site which currently is under risk of development only makes our work of protecting the site even more significant.

- Plant native milkweed species if you live in an area where they naturally occur. Refrain from planting them within 5 miles of the coast.
- If you live in California, planting early emerging species such as heartleaf milkweed (*Asclepias cordifolia*) or woollypod milkweed (*Asclepias eriocarpa*) may be especially important.
- Plant nectar resources that bloom throughout the season, especially those that bloom during spring and fall migration.
- Reduce or eliminate pesticide use, particularly insecticide use. Support agricultural producers who minimize pesticide use and provide wildlife habitat. 🦋

As a Legislative Advocate, Helen Wolter has been able to combine her love of the outdoors with her passion for the public process. You can often find Helen hiking in our local parks, reading, and chasing her son.





Recent king tides in Pacifica and Redwood City. The infrequent king tides of today are expected to be the daily tides of tomorrow.

Continued from Page 1

elected representatives and the public about this threat. Please help us spread this message so our region can plan for rising seas in an environmentally sound manner.

BAYSIDE AND COASTSIDE – TWO DIFFERENT WORLDS

The effects of sea level rise, and the adaptation measures needed, will be very different by the Bay as opposed to the coast. Along the Bayside, where the land typically slopes down gently towards the water, the primary concern is flooding. Several areas that were once mudflats or tidal marsh and were filled for development several decades ago already experience flooding during yearly king tides (peak high tides that occur in December and January). During king tides, these paved former wetlands are below sea level. That means that the seawater doesn't even need to wash over the tops of levees to cause flooding – it backs up through the storm drains. Other low-lying areas are subject to flooding from creeks overflowing during heavy storms. Those areas can be expected to flood more often and more severely because higher sea levels mean the creeks can't drain into the Bay.

On the Coastside, although there are some creeks and streams that experience bad flooding, the primary problem is bluff erosion. While bluff erosion is episodic, some bluffs in Pacifica have collapsed and retreated by as much as four feet

per year in recent years, in some cases leaving buildings perched precariously on the edges of cliffs. The rate of bluff erosion is highly variable and difficult to predict along the coast; rocky promontories are relatively resistant to erosion, but the coastal terrace bluffs interspersed among them are unstable and erodible.

The iconic coastal beaches are also at risk as higher sea levels and increasing wave action wash away the sand. Beach erosion has always occurred, but in past times the sand was replenished by sediment that washed down the hills through the creeks. Now, with many creeks dammed or otherwise altered, that source of new sediment is greatly diminished. Sand replenishment can be artificially done, but it is an expensive and continual process.

“Recent natural disasters, such as the California wildfires and hurricanes in the Southeast, have made the point that when flooding occurs, the economic and societal consequences are far higher if the flooded area is densely developed.”

STOP “BUSINESS AS USUAL” DEVELOPMENT

We have built homes and businesses, wastewater treatment plants, and landfills in areas that are right at sea level, areas that tides formerly inundated regularly. These places will be the first to flood as sea levels rise. On the coast, the lure of beachfront views and a mistaken belief in the stability of bluff tops have resulted in many neighborhoods now perched on the edges of cliffs.

It's time to rethink our ideas about where development



should go. Recent natural disasters, such as the California wildfires and hurricanes in the Southeast, have made the point that when flooding occurs, the economic and societal consequences are far higher if the flooded area is densely developed. And yet, cities are still approving more and denser development in the path of sea level rise. This must stop. We must locate new development, including essential public infrastructure, well away from areas threatened by sea level rise.

WITH NATURE, NOT AGAINST IT

Many of the best and most cost-effective adaptation measures involve environmental restoration – working with nature instead of against it. One local example is the effort already underway to restore many former Bay wetlands that were converted to salt ponds a century ago. These salt pond restoration projects are the ideal site for “horizontal levees” – long, sloping tidal marshlands that provide sufficient protection against storm surges to allow the engineered levees behind them to be lower than would otherwise be required, reducing costs. And there are additional salt ponds – namely, in Redwood City on the Cargill site – that could be restored just as easily.

On the coast, nature-based solutions are less easily available. However, we must face the fact that hardening the shore with riprap (rocks piled up along the shore) is not a long-term solution. Armoring the coast with riprap changes the pattern of sand movement along the shore and restricts the natural

ability of the beach to move inland, resulting in the eventual loss of the beach. Furthermore, this can worsen erosion on neighboring properties as the waves deflected from the armored areas strike adjacent unprotected areas – causing both beaches and bluffs to erode more quickly.

The Bay Area can survive the worst impacts of sea level rise if we plan ahead and plan wisely. That means taking steps now to create natural infrastructure for flood protection and reducing our risk by limiting future development in vulnerable areas. Committee for Green Foothills is working with local, state, and regional agencies to educate the public and help craft sustainable approaches to these challenges. Please stand with us as we advocate for cities to follow this path in the coming years. 🐾

Alice Kaufman is our Legislative Advocacy Director and has been on staff since 2012. She is a founding member of Redwood City Neighbors United, a community group working to defeat the massive Cargill/DMB Saltworks development on the Redwood City salt ponds.



As a Legislative Advocate, Helen Wolter has been able to combine her love of the outdoors with her passion for the public process. You can often find Helen hiking in our local parks, reading, and chasing her son.





Apply to the 2019-2020 Community Advocates Leadership Academy

The Community Advocates Leadership Academy is a ten-month program for change makers, risk takers, and extraordinary people who make our region a better place. Join the network of **200+ alumni** who drive the change they wish to see in our society and understand the connection between the environment, social justice, and resilient cities.

Participants explore systems thinking, power in politics, campaign planning, and their personal mission. Graduates have enhanced advocacy skills and a powerful network.

Guest speakers include Santa Clara County Supervisor Joe Simitian, East Palo Alto Councilmember Carlos Romero, Menlo Park Councilmember Ray Mueller, San Mateo County Parks Foundation Executive Director Michele Beasley, Committee for Green Foothills staff, Lightbox Collaborative, and more!

SCHEDULE - ALL SESSIONS ON SATURDAYS, GENERALLY 8:30AM-1:00PM

September 7, 2019
October 5, 2019
November 2, 2019
December 7, 2019
January 11, 2020

February 1, 2020
March 7, 2020
April 4, 2020
May 2, 2020
June 6, 2020

We encourage all interested people to apply, regardless of financial means. Cost per participant is \$3,000. Full and partial scholarships available thanks to the financial support of San Mateo County Health System, Google, Knight Foundation, and Committee for Green Foothills' members.

APPLY TODAY AT [GREENFOOTHILLS.ORG/LEADERSHIP-ACADEMY](https://www.greenfoothills.org/leadership-academy)

The Committee is Watching...

San Mateo County

REDWOOD CITY — where Cargill has announced that it will bring out a new development proposal for the salt ponds. Overwhelming opposition from residents, environmental groups and elected leaders resulted in Cargill dropping its previous proposal in 2012. We are working with other groups and mobilizing opposition to any development on the Redwood City salt ponds.

HALF MOON BAY — where a proposed 200-unit luxury hotel/conference center and a high-end 170-space RV park threaten prime farmland, horse facilities, wildlife habitat, and scenic coastal views at Dunes Beach.

Santa Clara County

COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA — where the Planning Department will submit for public comment proposed amendments to the Zoning Ordinance for non-residential uses in rural districts.

COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA — where the Board of Supervisors will consider amendments to the Zoning Ordinance to facilitate small-scale agricultural worker housing.

COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA — where the Planning Commission will consider whether to approve the Cordoba Center, an urban level project located in the rural community of San Martin. Also, the Planning Commission must make a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors for approval or denial of a cemetery for the Center. This Cordoba Center proposal is substantially larger and more intensive in use compared to the version approved by the Planning Commission in 2012.

COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA — where the Draft Environmental Impact Report for a sand and gravel quarry on the Sargent Ranch/Juristac property is expected to be released in August. This quarry would destroy hundreds of acres of land that is sacred to the Amah Mutsun Tribe and is part of a critical wildlife corridor. CGF is working with the Amah-Mutsun leaders to defeat this proposal and ensure permanent conservation of the land.

SAN JOSE — where the General Plan update process will begin this year. We will be advocating for the update to include stronger protections for Coyote Valley.

The Committee Applauds...



Assemblymember Ash Kalra speaks on proposed AB 948 at an April 5th press conference with a special shout out to Committee for Green Foothills.

San Mateo County

REDWOOD CITY CITY COUNCIL— who indicated the need for developer Jay Paul to revise the massive Harbor View office tower project. We thank the Councilmembers for recognizing the potential impacts of the project on the environment and the community.

CITY OF MENLO PARK — which adopted an Earth Day Resolution recognizing and committing to protect its natural resources as part of its climate action and adaptation strategy.

Santa Clara County

ASSEMBLYMEMBER ASH KALRA — for introducing AB 948 for the Coyote Valley Conservation Program. Thank you Assemblymember Kalra for helping to protect Coyote Valley!

PALO ALTO CITY COUNCIL — for adopting a Sea Level Rise Adaptation Policy and approving a vulnerability assessment and implementation plan to help Palo Alto prepare for sea level rise.



COMMITTEE FOR
GREEN FOOTHILLS

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Join us for Our Upcoming Events

Space is limited, please RSVP online at: www.greenfoothills.org/calendar



UNVEILING OF INTERPRETIVE SIGN IN HONOR OF LENNIE AT DEVIL'S SLIDE

Half Moon Bay – Friday, June 21, 10am-12:30pm

Celebrate our very own Lennie Roberts and her decades of advocacy with Committee for Green Foothills. On the summer solstice, join us to hear about the epic 40-year campaign that culminated with the Devil's Slide tunnel and help us unveil a new interpretive panel featuring Lennie.



MONARCH BUTTERFLIES AT DUNES BEACH

Half Moon Bay – Saturday, June 22, 10am-12pm

Please join us for an informational presentation on monitoring butterflies at Dunes Beach and how you can assist with their conservation.



MEMBERS ONLY: COYOTE VALLEY BY MOONLIGHT

San Jose – Saturday, August 17, 7pm-10pm

Join us for a moderately strenuous 4-mile hike in the Coyote Valley Open Space Preserve, experiencing its ecology and night life under the setting sun and rising moon. Not an experience to miss. Not a member, but want to join us? Donate today!



KICKOFF: COMMUNITY ADVOCATES LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

East Palo Alto – Saturday, September 7, 8:30am-12:30pm

Calling on all change makers, risk takers, and extraordinary people who want to make our region a better place. Apply now to enhance your advocacy skills to better effect change in your community.



COYOTE VALLEY BIKE TOUR

San Jose – Sunday, November 9, 9am-12:30pm

Explore the Coyote Valley region by bicycle on a flat 21-mile loop co-led by Keep Coyote Creek Beautiful and former Santa Clara County Supervisor Ken Yeager. Learn more about the history, wildlife, water, and agricultural story of this area.