



GREEN FOOTNOTES

COMMITTEE FOR GREEN FOOTHILLS www.GreenFoothills.org

SUMMER 2003

Where are we going in Santa Clara County? *The State of the County, Summer 2003*

BY BRIAN SCHMIDT

On one of my first weekends after starting work as Committee for Green Foothills' Santa Clara County Legislative Advocate, I brought out my camping gear and hiked to the Black Mountain backpack camp in the Monte Bello Open Space Preserve. The campsite perches on the inner edge of the Santa Cruz mountains, where one can look down east at the foothills and flatlands of the county, and look back west to the rolling green mountains heading to the coast. Just as the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District advertised, the campsite rewarded me with a beautiful sunset, the colors coming and going as winds ripped clouds across the sun. The view made sleeping on the ground completely worthwhile.

However worthwhile that view was, my best view of the state of our county happened when I couldn't exactly see it — at night. By 8 p.m. it was dark and I had finished dinner, but I wasn't quite ready to sleep. I got up and carefully walked a half-mile along the ridgeline, where the view opened up to see east and south over what seemed to be the entire county. What I saw is what we all have seen while flying into the Bay area at night: lights, grids and ribbons of lights extending everywhere. It feels different, though, so much more immense, when you stand there on the ground and

see the lights in front of you, instead of peering out, detached, from an airplane. This part of my view showed the state of the county to be strikingly, almost blindingly, full of humanity with all its needs and desires.

But the lights weren't really everywhere. The dark bulk of the eastern foothills and

The political state of Santa Clara County, and the chance to be proactive

The political state of the county can't be seen from Monte Bello Ridge, but it can be seen in the daily newspapers. So much in politics is driven by economics, and we all know the Bay Area to be mired in an economic downturn. But this economic misery does have a silver lining. It slows, for a brief moment, the tide of bad development projects threatening the open spaces and natural resources that the Committee has fought to protect for the last 41 years. This state of the county is an opportunity to consider what we need to do next, instead of simply having the choice made for us by the proposal of yet another monster development.

Cait Humik

Coyote Ridge; the diminished, scattered lights in the southern farmlands; and of course the hills and mountains where I stood all showed nature and open space to be as much a part of Santa Clara County as the artificial lighting. Within the same county I could look at the bright lights of San Jose while knowing I had to remember basic facts of mountain lion awareness. The physical state of the county is a place where human light and noise coexist, sometimes uneasily, with the dark quiet of open space that we can all still enjoy.

Un fortunately, the recession has only slowed — not stopped — bad development. As Jeff Segall reports in his article on page 6, too-loose zoning in Stanford foothills may permit destructive projects in the future. Further south, Coyote Valley needs monitoring, and attempts to eliminate required access to some public-private golf courses — and to build new courses — all ratchet up the development pressure. Add a proposed 23,000 square-foot house here and there, and CGF could easily spend all of its time and resources fighting bad

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COMMITTEE FOR
GREEN FOOTHILLS

Committee for Green Foothills is a regional grassroots organization working to establish and maintain land-use policies that protect the environment throughout San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties.

The mission of the Committee for Green Foothills is to protect and preserve the hills, forests, creeks, wetlands, and coastal lands of the San Francisco Peninsula through grassroots education, planning, and legislative advocacy. Founded in 1962, the Committee is a Bay Area leader in the continuing effort to protect open space and the natural environment of the Peninsula.

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From the *Executive Director...*

These are exciting times at the Committee for Green Foothills. For the first time in our 41-year history, we now have three Legislative Advocates "on the ground" working on behalf of the local environment in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties. In little more than two months, our new environmental advocacy team has gained traction and is surging ahead in what's proving to be a powerful regional force.

In Santa Clara County, we recently welcomed Brian Schmidt as our new full-time Legislative Advocate. A graduate of Stanford Law School and Georgetown University, Brian is a former fellow at the nonprofit public interest law firm Earthjustice (formerly known as the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund) and has worked with the Natural Resources Defense Council and the land use law firm Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger. He is experienced with the National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, and the California Environmental Quality Act. As the Committee's Santa Clara County Advocate, Brian will turn his considerable expertise to an array of open space and natural resource protection issues ranging from a comprehensive new riparian protection ordinance to a possible Countywide Habitat Conservation Plan.

And, as you will read in this issue of *Green Footnotes*, Brian, along with Stanford Open Space Alliance and CGF Board members, recently tested their mettle by seeking tighter protections for the Stanford foothills through proposed revisions to the draft zoning language for Stanford's Open Space and Field Research (OS/F) district. While the Santa Clara County Supervisors ultimately approved final zoning language which fell short of our high expectations, Brian has nonetheless firmly established himself as a force to be reckoned with in the Stanford land use arena, and will continue to closely monitor Stanford's compliance with the terms of the 2000 General Use Permit. Monitoring Stanford's development plans for the beloved foothills has been a centerpiece of our work in Santa Clara County since the

Committee's inception.

In San Mateo County, legendary CGF Legislative Advocate Lennie Roberts has been joined by veteran environmental activist and organizer April Vargas. Many of you will recognize April as the Committee's past Treasurer and Green Foothills Foundation President; April is also finishing out her term as an elected representative on the MidCoast Community Council.

In her new role as our second San Mateo County Legislative Advocate, April successfully orchestrated a broad-based and powerful show of community support for the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's proposed coastal annexation, a move that resulted in that Board's unanimous and historic vote in favor of forwarding the proposed annexation to San Mateo County's Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) for approval. (For full details, see "Open Space District poised to expand to the Coast" on page 13 of this issue of *Green Footnotes*.)

In the coming months, April and Lennie will also work on a comprehensive set of revisions to the San Mateo County Midcoast's blueprint for development, the Local Coastal Program (LCP), seeking tighter restrictions on the development of substandard lots in the urban Midcoast area. The dynamic duo will also focus increased attention on coastal agricultural land protections and furthering the long-awaited Devil's Slide tunnel project.

The most exciting aspect of having additional advocacy staff on board is that the Committee is now better able to focus much-needed energy on proactive advocacy. While much of our work is and always will be reactive in nature, mobilizing local communities against precedent-setting development proposals, real power lies in creating new land use and habitat protection policies that stave off damaging development proposals altogether. Our new staff will be seeking out new opportunities to be proactive, to tighten existing zoning ordinances, and to craft new policies that create stronger

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San Mateo County Parks funding crisis leads to call for ballot measure

by Kathy Switky

San Mateo County Parks — including such highly visited sites as Coyote Point and Flood Parks — are among the most spectacular in the state. Yet San Mateo County is the only Bay Area county that has a park system without a dedicated source of tax funds for park operation and maintenance.

Although citizens have worked on a search for alternative funding sources for parks since 1992, the current budget crisis has brought this issue to a head. General Fund monies are being directed away from parks — and resultant cuts in maintenance, ranger staffing, and park hours have been drastic.

Several passionate citizen activists have been working with Committee for Green Foothills (CGF) to solve this problem by securing a dedicated source of funds for the County parks. We look now to the Supervisors to take the next step and offer San Mateo County voters the opportunity to provide this critical funding.

Parks operating budget slashed

If the Supervisors adopt the County Manager's recommended budget, the Parks' operating budget will have been cut by 30% over the past two years. This year's County budget has a shortfall of \$3.8 million in the Parks operating budget — the funds used for maintenance and ongoing operational needs. This doesn't include some \$77 million in deferred or new improvements.

The San Mateo County Parks system contains the widest variety of habitats and the most endangered species of any county parks

in the Bay Area. Our county government has an obligation to preserve and protect these invaluable assets for the future.

Parks Foundation dedicated to programs, not maintenance

Ironically, while maintenance and operational costs are being slashed by the County, private funding is already helping to supplement other expenses in County parks. The San Mateo County Parks and Recreation Foundation was established five years ago to provide additional financial support for recreational, environmental and educational programs and projects of the San Mateo County Parks and Recreation Department. This growing nonprofit has provided essential funding for a number of parks projects, but the Foundation's mission is not to fund operational needs. It's clear that San Mateo County must identify tax-based revenues to be dedicated for parks.

Thousands of citizens ask for ballot measure

For the very short term, the parks can limp along with a drastically reduced budget. Bathrooms won't be kept as clean, rangers will be scarce as they shuttle between parks, essential summer interns will be absent this year, and some areas of some parks will be closed. This reduced level of funding imperils both park resources and the enjoyment of visitors. Committee for Green Foothills is urging the Board to take action quickly and ensure that these important public assets are adequately maintained and protected.

With the support of Supervisors Jerry Hill

and Mike Nevin, CGF and a number of citizen activists have gathered signatures on a petition urging the Board of Supervisors to put forth a ballot measure that would provide a dedicated source of funds for County parks.

At the Board's June 25 budget hearings, we presented to the Board this petition, signed by more than 6,000 County residents — an outstanding show of support for our parks.

Recent surveys indicate that County voters will continue their long history of voting for parks funding: a 2001 Strategy Research Institute poll indicated that 74% of San Mateo County voters would support a tax dedicated to capital improvements and expansion of existing County parks and trails.

Ask the Supervisors to act now to fund parks

We need to let the County Supervisors know that the public supports parks funding now. Please take a minute to write a letter to the Supervisors, asking them to proceed expeditiously with this. Join us in asking the Supervisors to put this issue on the ballot and give San Mateo County voters the opportunity to vote for dedicated parks funding.

San Mateo County Board of Supervisors
President Rose Jacobs Gibson
Supervisors Mark Church, Richard Gordon, Jerry Hill, and Mike Nevin
400 County Center
Redwood City, CA 94063
Fax (650) 599-1027

CGF

For more information and the latest updates on this issue, visit our website at

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and better environmental protections.

In other staff news, the Committee is pleased to introduce our first-ever Associate Director of Development, Velma Gentzsch. Many of you will know and recognize Velma, who has served as the Committee's beloved Office Coordinator for the last two years. Velma has now been promoted to the vital role of Associate Director of Development, where she will concentrate on expanding our

sources of private Foundation funding and opportunities to connect with you, our members — our most valuable natural resources!

And finally, another familiar face has come back to the Committee, Andi (Levine) Fray. After a two year hiatus in Chicago in which she got married (and tired of the weather), Andi has returned to the beach and her position as the Committee's Office Manager. Welcome back, Andi!

Thanks to your generosity and support, the Committee has bolstered its staff in key and

strategic ways. We hope you are as pleased and proud of these accomplishments as we are. In these troubling times with unprecedented assaults on the nation's environmental protections, we can all draw comfort from the knowledge that here, on the Peninsula, our power to protect the local environment is stronger than ever. Lasting environmental protection begins at the grassroots level with people like you who care enough to take action. We thank you for caring, and the land thanks you! **CGF**



Michael Kahn

Whither Coastal agriculture: **Withering away, or saved by cooperation?**

by Lennie Roberts

Over the years, there have been numerous debates over the economic health of agriculture on the San Mateo Coastside. As is the case in many other areas of the state, farmers living and working in the ever-looming shadow of urban development, can — and do — feel beleaguered. The threats to local, small-scale agriculture are many, and diverse.

This winter, CGF was one of several co-sponsors of an agricultural summit that examined some of the issues facing farmers and farmland in San Mateo County today. The summit focused on two concerns: keeping productive agricultural land in production and ensuring dependable water supplies from local streams for agriculture while providing adequate water for fish. A third and critical topic, marketing local produce and flowers, was deferred, but the Committee hopes that this will become a central effort of the Farm Bureau and other interested entities in the future.

Is agricultural land actually disappearing?

The simplistic cry of “disappearing agricultural land” by some farmers doesn’t completely explain the many factors that are involved in decisions by individual farmers as to what — or whether — to farm. A major concern is that foreign competition is forcing farmers to innovate. This is no different from changes being required by other sectors of our economy, and should not be a big surprise. The good news is that the San Mateo Coast’s agricultural land base is not disappearing, thanks to strict zoning protec-

tions that give priority to agricultural uses in the rural area. Key to ensuring the long-term viability of agriculture is the permanent urban/rural boundary that has existed for 23 years around the Half Moon Bay area. This boundary protects the adjacent farmland from being paved over for sprawling development.

A more pervasive threat to agriculture is the trend of urban dwellers willing to pay huge prices for large parcels of rural land, and turn productive farmland into country estates with trophy homes. Often, owners of these luxury homes have a romanticized view of living in a working agricultural area. This can lead to conflicts with adjacent agricultural operations. Worse, sales of land at speculative — rather than agricultural — prices can make it impossible for new farmers to purchase or lease productive land in the future. When buyers of agricultural land have a vision that doesn’t embrace continuation of the area’s agricultural enterprise, there can be a domino effect on the region’s productive farmlands.

Fortunately, organizations like Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST), working with willing sellers, are actively stepping up to the plate to ensure that the land base will indeed be available as a resource in the future. By purchasing land and protecting it as open space for its habitat and resource values, while helping to ensure that viable agricultural parcels remain in production, this private land trust has been a national leader in saving threatened farmland from development. Several of POST’s land acquisitions have been from absentee owners who had trophy houses, condos, golf courses, and conference centers on the drawing boards.

Innovative efforts are underway to resolve water conflicts

Balancing the needs of threatened fish and farming that both depend on the limited water found in Coastal streams is a major challenge that has, out of necessity, forged new relationships between often dissenting parties. Rather than pitting threatened fish vs. threatened farmers, this has led to the successful formation of a historic coalition.

On the San Mateo Coast, farming interests, environmentalists, land trusts and park and open space agencies are working together to remove existing on-stream dams that interfere with fish migration, and replace them with off-stream impoundments. This will ensure dependable and adequate water supplies for farming — and also enhance the recovery of steelhead trout and Coho salmon, both listed as threatened species in central Coast waterways. Such cooperation may be anathema to individuals who would prefer to fight or complain, but it’s essential to moving forward in today’s more complex society.

Marketing offers real hope for sustainable agriculture

Without customers, even well-watered agricultural land is worth nothing. As Jered Lawson points out in his article, “Looking for local,” in this issue, targeted marketing efforts offer real hope for local agriculture.

The greatest untapped resource for San Mateo Coastal agriculture is the urban marketplace right over the hill. There are more than 700,000 people in San Mateo County

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Looking for local

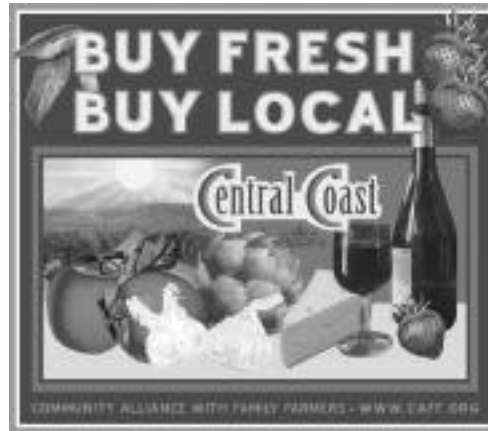
By Jered Lawson

Heading up Highway One, I recently stopped for a burrito at a popular Half Moon Bay taqueria. Waiting in line, I got to wondering how far the beans traveled to get there. While I drove about 45 miles from Santa Cruz, there's a good chance the contents of my lunch came even farther — the average food product travels 1500 miles before reaching its final destination.

Could Half Moon Bay's buzzing burrito bar include local beans, lettuce, and salsa? San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties produce more than 750,000 pounds of beans a year — which could amount to a lot of burritos. Most of the other ingredients in my lunch are already being produced in our region — or could be produced locally.

Besides burritos, how can local farmers get more of their goods into the bellies of local residents? Farmers' Markets — including the new coastal market at Cetrella's restaurant on Main Street in Half Moon Bay — are one sure way. A number of restaurants feature local products, including Café Gibraltar and Pasta Moon on the Coastside and many on the Bay side. But most of us still find it difficult to "buy local." Think about it for a second. What did you eat at your last three meals? Was any of it from a local farm or garden? When you went to the market, was it easy to discern which foods were grown locally?

The Central Coast Chapter of the Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) recently started a program on the Central Coast to help identify which businesses support local farms, and to



help consumers find locally grown foods in the grocery store and on restaurant menus. CAFF is working hard to develop constructive relationships among consumers, distributors, retailers, food buying institutions, and farmers.

To best reach consumers, CAFF is creating a presence in the retail sector. We are using a buy-local label — coupled with outreach, education activities, and media coverage — to heighten understanding and recognize the values people place on our local agriculture.

We imagine people will "vote with their food dollar" and begin to hold "their" agriculture in higher esteem. We want people to develop a sense of place through their food. Ultimately, such a connection will lead to greater protection and enhancement of our agricultural lands — and will also help develop practicable local food sources for our community.

In our program's pilot year, we have begun campaign activities in Santa Cruz County. We have plans to expand to surrounding counties in the Central Coast region — those whose watersheds feed into the Monterey Bay Sanctuary — including San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties.

Someday, maybe we will be able to walk into that taqueria and see the local label on the menu — and know that we are helping to preserve local farm land, one burrito at a time. **CGF**

Jered Lawson is a Regional Coordinator for the Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) on the Central Coast. With regional chapters throughout California, CAFF is a nonprofit founded in 1978 to build a movement of rural and urban people that fosters family-scale agriculture that cares for the land, sustains local economies, and promotes social justice. For more information about the Buy Fresh, Buy Local program, visit www.caff.org.

AGRICULTURE, from previous page

alone who presumably eat three meals a day. Consumers today appreciate — and increasingly demand — the flavor and nutritional benefits of fresh, local produce, particularly organic.

In nearby counties, innovative efforts are under way to encourage buying local agricultural products through organizations such as the California Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) "Buy Fresh, Buy Local" campaign. The model of promotion and marketing of local fresh produce and flowers has been successfully established in Marin, Sonoma, and other counties in the state for some time. Although Committee for Green Foothills and other environmental groups have been suggesting this approach for many years, the San Mateo Coastside agricultural leadership has been slow to respond.

A marketing campaign with a unique

logo that celebrates San Mateo Coastal fresh produce, flowers, and locally-caught fish and seafood is way overdue. It is encouraging now to find strong agreement that this crucial step is a priority for the agricultural community. For a relatively small investment, the payoff from this untapped market could be enormous, and could help ensure that agriculture will remain a vibrant and appreciated land use on the Coast.

Saving local agriculture will take all of us, working together

Revitalization of Coastal agriculture is going to take support from the community as well. Consumers must seek out and buy local, fresh produce; flowers; and seafood. Grocery stores need to label the sources of their food. And restaurants need to follow the model of several restaurants in Half Moon Bay, which describe on menus the farm origins of such Coastal specialties as

artichokes, fava beans, leeks, baby beets, and fresh peas. Connecting consumers and farms through roadside stands, farmer's markets, community supported agriculture programs, and green grocer tags all bring the urban bayside and rural Coastside communities closer together.

On the San Mateo Coast, our climate and soils are among the best in the world for agriculture. We have some excellent policy tools and protections that provide a conducive environment for profitable farming enterprises. Despite these favorable conditions, as with other economic sectors, those farmers who remain entrenched in old ways may indeed find their future withering away. The farmers who are willing to innovate and change with the times will successfully rise to today's challenges and opportunities, and will enjoy the positive support of consumers, land management agencies, and environmentalists. **CGF**

Supervisors disappoint with final zoning for Stanford foothills

by Jeff Segall

In early June, the Santa Clara County Supervisors handed down a disappointment — they failed to create zoning standards for the Stanford foothills that fully live up to the open space protections promised under the 2000 Stanford Community Plan.

The Stanford foothills have been of special significance for Committee for Green Foothills (CGF) for years, and where we achieved an early victory for preservation some 40 years ago. In 2000, CGF, along with others groups, again advocated for long-term protection of the entire Stanford foothills in exchange for granting Stanford the right to develop some five million square feet on the core campus. In the end, Santa Clara County redesignated most of the foothills area as "Open Space and Field Research" under the Stanford Community Plan. This newly created land use designation allowed for only very limited uses in the area and promised to protect its open space character and scenic viewsheds.

In early 2002, Santa Clara County planning staff released draft zoning language for the Open Space and Field Research (OS/F) district, which are the specific set of rules that would govern any development in the area. Unfortunately, this draft zoning fell well short of what was promised under the Community Plan. For example, the draft language called for "reasonable protection" of viewsheds, with no definition of what that might mean. Worse, the body to determine this and other matters was the Architectural and Site Approval (ASA) Committee, a group usually sympathetic to development.

Because of tireless advocacy by CGF and others, County planning staff was persuaded to consider the visibility of various portions

of the foothills as it considered potential development. Staff developed a creative approach that uses Geographic Information System (GIS) software to rate regions on a scale of their visibility from surrounding roadways. Sizeable projects proposed for more visible areas

will require special findings to demonstrate that the projects could not be located elsewhere. Significantly, this determination must be made by the Planning Commission, a body with a higher level of public accountability than the ASA Committee.

This moderate success, achieved while the zoning language was under consideration by the Planning Commission, gave us hope that other flaws in the zoning proposal would be fixed by the Board of Supervisors. Other remaining issues included low viewshed protection for the "gateway" area of the Page Mill/Junipero Serra intersection, exclusion of the proposed trails in the viewshed analysis, lack of specific protections for biological resources, and allowing commercial antennas in the area. Unfortunately, none of these issues were substantively addressed by the Supervisors when they approved the OS/F zoning on June 3.

Once again, CGF has shown that careful research and reasoned argument, an active and vocal membership, together with participation from nearby jurisdictions and other community members can have a substantial impact on how Santa Clara County governs development at Stanford University. The remaining shortcomings in the approved foothills zoning

means that CGF must continue to carefully monitor development proposals in the foothills in the years to come. **CGF**

Jeff Segall is a member of the Committee's Board of Directors, as well as a member of the Stanford Open Space Alliance (SOSA), and has been active in Stanford land use issues for several years.



The viewshed analysis included in the final zoning for the Stanford foothills does not protect this view from Page Mill Road and Junipero Serra/ Foothill Expressway, where thousands of people experience the foothills on a daily basis. Committee for Green Foothills and others asked the Supervisors to protect this gateway area and its rural views.

Cait Hunk

Efforts to protect coastal jewel near completion

Final push to fund acquisition of Mirada Surf

by Julia Bott

For nearly three decades, the popular coastal bluff, wetlands, and forested slope known as Mirada Surf has been identified as open space on the Local Coastal Plan. Thanks to the Committee for Green Foothills' continued defense of the 49-acre parcel from repeated development proposals, and subsequent fundraising by the San Mateo County Parks and Recreation Foundation, this jewel — reaching from the coastal bluffs just south of Surfer's Beach to a forested slope behind El Granada and Miramar — may soon become a County park.

Park status would preserve coastal views and allow access improvements and completion of the Coastal Trail. Potential trail connections to adjacent open space have also been identified.

In 2002, San Mateo County purchased the eastern of the two parcels that comprise Mirada Surf. Efforts to purchase the coastal portion of Mirada Surf received a big boost in February with the approval of grants from the California Coastal Conservancy and the Land and Water Conservation Fund. These grants couple with Proposition 12 funds the County had earmarked for the purchase.

A number of generous individuals have contributed to the purchase of this parcel. The San Mateo County Parks and Recreation Foundation is working with community leaders to raise the remaining \$400,000 by the July 30 close date. If fundraising efforts are successful in these last weeks of the cam-



Barbara Kossy

This gorgeous bluff and the beach below are likely to become San Mateo County's newest park, Mirada Surf.

paign, Coastal residents will enjoy this park for generations to come. **CGF**

Julia Bott is the Executive Director of the San Mateo County Parks and Recreation Foundation, a nonprofit formed in 1998 to raise gifts from the community for County parks. Since its inception, the Foundation has raised approximately \$3.2 million for San Mateo County Parks acquisition, improvements, education, and restoration. For more information, or to help purchase Mirada Surf as a County Park, contact the Foundation at (650) 321-5812 or Julia@SupportParks.org.



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These generous major donors of \$1000 or more in the past fiscal year have made an extraordinary commitment to local open space protection. We are pleased to recognize them as members of the Foothills Millennium Fund.

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Nudging the Legislature toward a grander vision for California

by Ted Lempert

Two of the biggest threats to California's unique natural beauty and its fish and wildlife are the State's growth and the environmental policies of the Bush Administration. The Legislature can — and should — forge an alliance with state agencies to create visionary, long-term planning goals to ensure that California's extraordinary natural resources are not allowed to decline any further.



Ted Lempert

Traditionally, the Legislature is reactive — it creates legislation in response to an immediate problem that calls out for a solution. When it tries to be proactive, the opposition (whoever it may be) will seek to downplay the problem, and question why the legislation is needed. For better or worse, the Legislature tends to plan for the future one small step at a time. However, on occasion over the past several years, creative and forward-thinking legislators, including, of course, our own Senator Byron Sher, have attempted to shake up the process. This year is no exception.

As you likely know, California is losing much of its natural shoreline to coastal erosion. The Coastal Commission has been aware of the significance of the problem for years and has struggled with the issue permit by permit. Other agencies have also attempted to find solutions, but they have been limited by their statutory constraints. However, this year Assemblywoman Hannah-Beth Jackson (D-Santa Barbara) bravely introduced Assembly Bill 947, which would require the State to adopt in statute five general principles of coastal erosion planning and response that would be used by state agencies in the planning and constructing of coastal projects.

These principles include: 1) avoid development in coastal areas of high geologic hazard; 2) reduce or eliminate barriers to natural sources of sand from coastal watersheds to beaches; 3) where feasible, create a regional program of sand nourishment to protect existing shoreline development or recreational uses; 4) move development to safer ground where feasible when it is threatened by coastal erosion; and 5) consider hard protection devices such as seawalls or revetments only after all of the other preceding options have been determined to be infeasible. The bill would also require that all relevant state agencies complete a comprehensive Coastal Sediment Management Master Plan within two years that would provide information on understanding the erosion problems California faces and identify strategies to deal with them.

This bill is a wonderful example of how the Legislature could work with state agencies to plan for the future and, at the same

time, tackle an existing problem where we have already made many poor decisions. Environmentalists were thrilled; if this bill were actually implemented, it would be the first time the State attempted such a comprehensive approach to natural shoreline erosion. Coastal developers and property owners were far less enamored. Unfortunately, due to the State's fiscal crisis, AB 947 is being held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee and is considered "dead" for this year.

I know first-hand the difficulties of trying to plan for the future in a creative manner. I tried — unsuccessfully — to require local agencies to submit environmental impact reports to the Office of Planning Research for projects that have regional impacts to help address cumulative impacts and mitigate growth problems. I also tried to require that the Coastal Commission review local coastal plans every five years for the cumulative impacts of population growth and its effects on public access and gave the Coastal Commission "sticks" to ensure that local governments accepted the Commission's recommendations. So, I know how difficult and frustrating the Legislative process can be when it comes to planning for the future.

For years, one of my primary concerns has been the protection of California's remaining wetlands. Several years ago, I carried a resolution urging the President and Congress to maintain the 1989 level of federal wetland protection. Much has changed since then. Natural wetlands continue to decline while the use of wetland mitigation banks is on the rise. A recent U.S. Supreme Court decision has eliminated protection for isolated wetlands under the federal Clean Water Act. The Bush Administration has wasted no time creating regulations that carry out that decision in the broadest possible terms, and the State has done nothing (although one legislator tried to increase protection for wetlands under the California Environmental Quality Act, but that measure died). Although the State Water Resources Control Board claims it has the authority under the Porter-Cologne Act (the State's water quality law) to regulate wetlands, there is no comprehensive permitting program in place, particularly with regard to wetlands no longer covered by the federal Clean Water Act. The result is that for all practical purposes, isolated wetlands in California now have no protection.

Hundreds of millions of dollars have been allocated over the years for wetlands and coastal protection, but the State has not had a mechanism for assessing the status of wetlands in California and determining priorities in a comprehensive manner. A few years ago, I authored a successful measure with former Assemblywoman (now Congressmember) Susan Davis that requires the Resources Agency to update all of the State's existing wetland inventory resources in order to prepare a restoration, management, and acquisition study. The Agency is now identifying: 1) opportunities for wetland restoration, enhancement, and acquisition; 2) opportunities for public-private partnerships on

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Book review: “Saving Open Space in California” offers broad perspective on what works

by Pete Holloran

Local governments and land trusts have protected more than 570,000 acres of California open space since the 1920s. Given the relentless development forces arrayed against them, why have some communities been successful in protecting open space while others have struggled? Why, for example, did Alameda and Contra Costa voters approve an increase in their property taxes at the height of the Great Depression to purchase expensive ridge-top lands? These are not idle questions — especially when we may now be teetering on the edge of an extended recession.

In *Saving Open Space*, a book published late last year by University of California Press, Daniel Press addresses such questions in a revealing work that helps situate local open space battles in a statewide context. We learn, for example that Santa Clara County is among the most effective in the state at preserving local open space — and that organizations like Committee for Green Foothills have played a key role in that effort.

These findings, while hardly surprising to *Green Footnotes* readers, are just the beginning. What really interests Press is the matter of causation. “What are the conditions,” he asks, “for creating innovative, effective land preservation institutions at the local level?” Think of California as a great natural experiment in which counties, operating under similar constraints imposed by the state and federal government, achieve quite different levels of open space protection. To explain this variability in outcome, Press proposes what he calls the policy capacity model. He defines a community’s policy capacity as “its ability and willingness to respond to public problems and opportunities.” Some counties develop such capacities, while others are less successful in doing so.

Three factors contribute to a community’s environmental policy capacity: political resources (e.g. local revenues and administrative expertise), civic resources (voluntarism and political engagement), and external constraints (landscape features and development pressure). Press tests this policy capacity model using a wide range of evidence. He interviewed dozens of local elected officials and activists, examined county voting records for 70 statewide environmental measures, and even conducted telephone surveys with 4,100 California residents.

Some of his findings aren’t too surprising: that high levels of open space protection are correlated with highly visible hill-sides threatened with development (Marin, the East Bay, the Peninsula), rivers running through urban areas (Napa River, for example), and community wealth (Los Angeles). (Believe it or not, Los Angeles has protected more land at the local level than any other county. Of course, much of it is in the Owens Valley, in another county.)

My favorite part of the book focuses on the role of civic engagement and voluntarism — what Press calls civic environmentalism — in enabling communities to preserve open space. Non-profit organizations like Committee for Green Foothills and Peninsula Open Space Trust play a central role in developing and channeling local environmental policy capacity.

If you want an inspiring story of local communities acting to protect the public good against overwhelming odds, check out *Saving Open Space*. Daniel Press reminds us of just how far we’ve come, how we got here, and how far we have to go. **CGF**

Pete Holloran is a civic environmentalist working on his Ph.D. in environmental studies at UC Santa Cruz. Daniel Press, a professor in that department, just happens to be his advisor.



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private land; 3) wetlands not currently in public ownership; and 4) instances where lead agencies have adopted mitigation measures under CEQA or a habitat conservation plan. This inventory will represent a significant step forward in the State’s ability to work with local planners in determining where development should be sited and where wetlands should be

protected before it is too late.

It can be done. With the help of — and a serious nudge from — progressive-thinking legislators, we can move the Legislature from thinking in terms of small steps to a grander vision of environmental protection that will protect California’s natural treasures for future generations. **CGF**

Ted Lempert represented San Mateo and

Santa Clara Counties in the State Assembly from 1996-2000 and 1988-1992. He authored the Lempert-Keene Oil Spill Prevention and Response Act, the California Coastal Sanctuary Act and the Ballast Water Management Program. He also served on the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors from 1993-1996, where he led opposition to the Devil’s Slide bypass proposal and convened the panel of experts that led to Measure T and the tunnel alternative.

...the **City of San Jose** and its handling of a recent application to extend the Greenline (adopted by voters in November 1996) by two acres, to ensure that Greenline protections are not "nickel and dimed" away.

... the revision of the **San Mateo County Local Coastal Program (LCP)**, the planning document for the coastal zone; two years of public review and revision have produced amendments now headed to the San Mateo County Planning Commission, then to the County Board of Supervisors and the California Coastal Commission.

The Committee is watching...

... the **Santa Clara County Supervisors** and their action (or lack of action) regarding two public trails Stanford University was scheduled to have completed and dedicated two years ago as part of its 2000 General Use Permit and Community Plan.

...**Vote the Coast**, an emerging state-wide organization that endorses pro-coast candidates for election to public office, and works to educate and network coastal activists.

...Woodside's 270-acre **Horse Park** on Sand Hill Road, where complaints by neighbors and CGF led San Mateo County to stop the facility from operating without permits and threatening nearby Bear Creek with environmentally damaging practices such as grading, erosion, and improper manure storage; park managers have since applied to the County for the first permits in the park's 22-year history and have been granted a temporary permit allowing regulated operations until the final permits are issued.

... the **Santa Clara Valley Water District Environmental Advisory Committee**, for which CGF's Brian Schmidt has been nominated, to support the District's efforts to restore and protect County waterways.

... **San Mateo County's Planning Department and Board of Supervisors**, which — under pressure from the Board of Realtors — continue to delay implementation of a cap on home sizes in rural areas by undertaking an economic study of the effects of such regulation.

... CGF Legislative Advocate extraordinaire **Lennie Roberts**, who received the prestigious Carla Bard award from the Planning and Conservation League at their annual symposium in April.

... stunning wildflower displays at **Coyote Ridge**, where California Native Plant Society activists created a coalition of environmental groups to lead hikes for decision-makers this spring, anticipating a regional planning process to develop a Habitat Conservation Plan encompassing this area (home to a number of endangered plant and animal species) and possibly many other parts of the County that provide critical habitat for rare species.



Peter LaTourrette

... the **INNWFund**, whose generous support of the Green Foothills Foundation allows us to continue to strengthen our organization.

...the **Peninsula Watershed**, where CGF is asking PG&E to underground large transmission towers to restore views and protect sensitive habitat; a draft Environmental Impact Report on the project is due this summer.

... CGF's own **April Vargas and Zoe Kersteen-Tucker**, who were recognized in the "Best of the Coast 2003" issue of the Half Moon Bay Review Magazine as being two of the Coastside's top three favorite Crusaders/Activists on the Coast.

...the **Conservation Council**, a group of organizations (including CGF) dedicated to local open space, which holds regular meetings with decision-makers to discuss issues including Moffett field cleanup and restoration, balancing jobs and housing, and managing growth in Morgan Hill.

... the **Wavecrest area** in Half Moon Bay, where a proposed new middle school and other development would threaten environmentally sensitive habitat and exemplify urban sprawl; CGF and other activists continue to work to keep the middle school at its existing site in downtown.

... the **Gilroy 660** acres of agricultural farmland, which has been inappropriately designated for development and sprawl, to make sure the farmland is saved.

...the **Carnegie Foundation** development in the Stanford foothills, to ensure that the green building and visibility mitigation promises made for the facility are actually carried out.

... the **Town of Woodside**, where planners are looking to hold an even larger annual Environment Fest on Saturday, October 4 to celebrate that community's environment and environmental projects.

Thank you, volunteers!

Committee for Green Foothills and Green Foothills Foundation volunteers are an amazing group of individuals committed to the open space of the Peninsula and Coast. Their energy and dedication greatly increase our effectiveness and ability to make a positive change.

A huge thanks to these people who have volunteered in the office or at events between January 1, 2002 and March 31, 2003.

Jessica Agramonte
Nelda Ashbaker
Dorothy Bender
Mary Bernstein
Mary Jo Borak
Mark Bult
Diane Cassam
Paige and Chuck Cattano
Saul Chaikin
Helen Cho and Christopher Waters
John Ciccarelli
Bertina Clare
Paul Collacchi
Toni Corelli
Harry Cornbleet
Nancy and Jitze Couperus
Bob Cronin
Lois Crozier-Hogle
Mary and Jack Davey
Gary Deghi
Paul and Maureen Draper
Peter Drekeimer
Len and Gael Erickson
Carol Espinosa
Ellen Fletcher
John Fox
Jane Gallagher
Betty W. Gerard
Tom Gibboney
Paul Goldstein
Susan Gortner
Sylvia M. Gregory
Norma Griffith
Nonette Hanko
Hertha and Walter Harrington
Eric Hjertberg
Pete Holloran
Mahlon Hubenthal
Carrie Hudiburgh
Cait Hutnik
Carol Jacobs
Brielle Johnck and Steve Schmidt
Tom Jordan

Mike Kahn
Suzanne Keith
Mary Kenney
Karen Kidwell and Rodney Farrow
Yoriko Kishimoto
Sue and Peter LaTourrette
Charles Lintell
Rao Loka
Rene Lynch
Rachel Macias
Don Mayall
Olive Mayer
John and Lara McDonald
Sally Mentzer
Matt Messinger
Corey Mikami
Holly Mitten
Maureen Muckle
Steve Muther
Debbie Mytels
Jamie Newby
Dayna Nordine
Bryan Pendleton
Elena Pernas-Giz
David and Jocelyn Perrone
Shireen Piramoon
Lyresa Pleskovitch
Christine Powell and Bern Smith
Lennie Roberts
David Roise
Cindy Rubin
Jeff Segall
Patrick Siegman
Tanya Slesnick and Ted Mitchell
Ruth Beahrs Spangenberg
Joyce Todd
April Vargas
Sharon Vazquez
Mark Vernon
K. Christie Vogel
Steve Wakeman
Stu Weiss
Rainer Zachelein

We'd also like to acknowledge the many, many volunteer activists whose letters, emails, phone calls and support make a real difference in our work. **Thanks to each of you!**

Open Space District poised to expand to the Coast

by April Vargas

Strengthened by the efforts of CGF members and other open space supporters, the proposed expansion of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MROSD) to the San Mateo County Coast has now moved a major step closer to completion. On June 5, the MROSD Board of Directors held a special meeting to consider whether to apply to the San Mateo County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) for annexation of the Coast.

After over five hours of hearings and testimony from over 60 citizens, the MROSD Board voted unanimously to certify the Environmental Impact Report for the project. Additionally, MROSD adopted a resolution of application for annexation and approved several other project-related documents, key among them a Willing Sellers Ordinance that precludes the District from using the power of eminent domain within the newly annexed area. This vote sets the stage for a new round of hearings before the LAFCo board, a process expected to take at least a year.

District continues 31-year history of protecting open space

Formed in 1972 through a vote of the citizens (and thanks to the vision of a group of Peninsula residents that included several CGF members), the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District was created as an independent single-purpose special district operating exclusively in Santa Clara County. In 1976 MROSD's boundaries expanded through election to include southern San Mateo County.

The District's purpose is to acquire, permanently protect, and restore lands forming a regional open space greenbelt. Today MROSD manages nearly 50,000 acres in 26 public open space preserves.

Coastal residents requested expansion

In 1997, three Coastal area elected bodies — the Half Moon Bay City Council, the MidCoast Community Council, and the Pescadero Municipal Advisory Council, wrote letters to MROSD, asking the District to consider a Coastal expansion. The following year, an advisory election held within the pro-

posed annexation area saw a 55% majority vote for Measure F — favoring the District's expansion to the Coast. The annexation area extends from the southern border of the City of Pacifica to the Santa Cruz County line and west from Skyline to the shore.

Properties in annexation area exempt from tax, eminent domain

MROSD is funded through a small portion of property tax also approved by the voters within its jurisdiction. The current assessment for those within the District is 1.7 cents per one hundred dollars of assessed value. However, the current proposal does not include any provision for a tax or assessment within the Coastal area, and a tax could be imposed only with a 2/3 majority of voters approving a ballot measure.

The District has also adopted language that requires it to purchase land only from willing sellers, eliminating the specter of eminent domain that has apparently frightened some Coastal residents. The provisions would also allow

See MROSD, next page





Kathy Switky



Kathy Switky

CGF's annual picnic!

Some 100 Committee for Green Foothills members and friends gathered on a sunny Sunday in June for CGF's annual meeting and picnic, which included a tour of Westwind Community Barn, a hike through nearby Byrne Preserve, and awards for citizen activists **Joan Baez** (shown above with CGF Legislative Advocate Lennie Roberts) and **Nancy Couperus** (right).



Kathy Switky

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the District to receive land from private land trusts and individuals, and to manage lands within its boundaries.

District brings decades of land management experience; will promote local agriculture

The District's management experience and maintenance capabilities are welcomed as valuable assets for the Coastal area. Existing agencies and private nonprofits have limited capacity to provide agricultural and conservation easements or management services. The preservation of Coastal agriculture continues to be a priority within the region and the District has pledged to convene an agricultural advisory committee to assist it in drafting specific policies to promote sustainable agriculture. Only after these policies are in place will the District acquire or accept gifts of agricultural land.

South Coast opponents fearful of agency

Although MROSD's presence on the Coast will provide unique possibilities for

open space and viewshed protection, habitat and species preservation, agricultural sustainability and low impact public access, a small but vocal group is opposed to the proposed expansion. Centered mainly in the South Coast, these residents view any attempts at regional conservation and innovative stewardship with suspicion and fear.

In an area where changes occur slowly and land has been held within the same families for generations, there is an inherent mistrust of the new, the unfamiliar, and the authority of any governmental agency. In time, the District can succeed in winning the confidence of South Coast residents, but until then, the annexation will be challenged by a highly energized minority that turns out at meetings and makes their views known to one and all. Six years after the District first contemplated annexing the Coast in 1997, eminent domain remains the single most contentious aspect of MROSD's proposed expansion — long after the District adopted a "willing sellers only" policy.

Final phase of process

Although the recent decision was a

huge step forward in this long process, we still have far to go. We must maintain our focus, retain our intensity and unite in our support for the Coastal expansion as the process moves into its final phase. In an area that is so highly prized and financially lucrative for development interests, it is rare to be given such an exceptional opportunity to protect the natural treasures that still remain.

We must make the most of this opportunity, and bring the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District to the Coast to protect these treasures for the future.

Applying to LAFCo is the next step in the process of the District's expansion. Hearings on this application are scheduled to begin in September 2003, and will offer a number of ways for CGF activists to speak up for Coastal open space. The Committee will need your continued dedication to providing public support for the expansion.

For up-to-date information on how to get involved, visit www.GreenFoothills.org, or contact CGF Legislative Advocate April Vargas at (650) 728-5215 or April@GreenFoothills.org. **CGF**

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ideas. That strategy will only leave us overwhelmed, however, when the economy recovers and starts pushing still more development into farmlands and open space.

The current state of Santa Clara County gives us a choice about how to move forward. We can and must spend a great deal of time reacting to proposals for bad development — stopping them outright when possible, and minimizing their impact whenever that is not possible. As just one example, we have opposed and will continue to oppose efforts to add new dams and reservoirs in southern Santa Clara County.

However, we must at least match the time spent on these kinds of efforts with proactive efforts to push land use policies in the right direction, and to seek permanent protection of the most important places in the county. One example is a proposal to create a riparian protection ordinance in the county, which would protect rivers, streams, and creeks and their associated habitats. Time spent on improving this single proposed ordinance could prevent dozens of projects (or more) from encroaching on riparian habitat. The Committee has been carefully monitoring this proposal and researching ways to strengthen it. Strong environmental protections like this can redirect developers away from sensitive areas and point them towards more appropriate urban infill projects.

We can seize other opportunities to be proactive, moving beyond fighting individual development battles to change land use rules that may not provide sufficient environmental protection. The Santa Clara Valley Water District is increasingly interested in environmental protection — and rare for these cash-strapped times, it has money to spend on environmental protection. Committee for Green Foothills is helping encourage and direct these efforts, and I expect to represent CGF on the Water District's Environmental Advisory Committee.

Santa Clara County and the City of San Jose are considering Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs) to manage effects of development on endangered species. Depending on the outcome, these HCPs could significantly benefit the environment, or they could trade away the strong protections of the federal and state Endangered Species Acts for minimal mitigation that does little



Hikers work their way through the oak woodlands of Calero County Park, up to breathtaking views of southern Santa Clara County.

Cait Humik

to help the species or the environment. CGF and other environmental groups have been tracking this possibility, and by working with the best scientific experts available, we expect to ensure that if the HCP is passed, it actually accomplishes the goal of helping rare species.

Finally, we cannot forget the role of the County General Plan and the protections it does or does not provide. Now could be an excellent time for everyone, including CGF, to review the General Plan policies and consider whether they could be improved.

Opportunities from diversity

In choosing our future priorities, we also have to keep in mind the changing social perspective in this county — a highly diverse county in a highly diverse state. Fifty-six percent of the people in Santa Clara County are from communities of color. The opportunity that this diversity presents is immense. Poll numbers have consistently showed minority support for initiatives to protect water, parks, and open space is generally stronger than that from white voters, and this support could be increased still further by developing ties within communities of color.

Minority communities often tend to be younger and have upward economic mobility, which has important implications in the short- and long-term. Today's working class Hispanic families can easily recognize the

need for clean air and adequate government services for their children, needs that can be helped by good land use planning. Those families will also be a source for the next generation of Silicon Valley millionaires. Increasing connections with the environmental community can make them future champions for open space, while decreasing connections could result in more golf courses and giant homes overrunning county foothills.

Obviously, the physical, political, and societal state of the county are interrelated and constantly changing, and that change brings opportunity for new involvement in environmental issues.

Future views of the county

I hope to make repeat trips to that backpack camp every year, where night-time views will give a kind of report card of the county's state. More lights may appear in the urban areas, but good development that preserves the environment is to be applauded. I hope to see few additional lights in the current dark areas, but not because we want to exclude people's interests in the land. The places where farm plants grow, cattle graze, and nature thrives are all part of the coexistence between development and open space that benefits us all, and Committee for Green Foothills will continue to make sure that this coexistence stays balanced. I am very glad to do my part in that work. **CGF**



Upcoming Events

CGF Hike: The History of Purisima Creek Canyon *Sunday, September 21, 10am*

Join us for a five-mile, moderately challenging hike back to the pre-1920 steam mill lumbering era. History buff and CGF member Ken Fisher will lead a tour of 19th century Purisima Creek Canyon, part of the MROSD Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve, where eight lumber mills once operated. He'll discuss two of the historic sites in detail, including the mill layout and technology, workers' quarters, and use of the milled lumber.

Watch for the continuation of our popular Environmental Forum series this fall!

For details about these and other upcoming events, check our website at www.GreenFoothills.org/calendar.

Details about the hike and our forums will be mailed to members and emailed to action alert subscribers later this summer.

To join the CGF email list, email info@GreenFoothills.org and ask to be added. We send about 4-5 action alerts and news emails each month, and promise never to share your email address.

On the web at

WWW.GREENFOOTHILLS.ORG

Our online Activist's Toolbox (www.GreenFoothills.org/toolbox)

has loads of easy-to-use resources for anyone looking to make a difference, whether you're a first-time activist or an old pro looking to brush up your skills:

- Find your elected officials
- Tips for reviewing environmental documents
- Voter registration links
- Elected officials' track records and contribution lists
- Candidate endorsements
- Guidelines for writing letters and speaking up
- Links to CGF's current action alerts



...and much more. Speak up – your voice does make a difference!



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