A primary mission of the Northcoast Environmental Center (NEC) is to educate citizens of the North Coast regarding environmental issues. This year, five candidates have declared their candidacies for the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors. The NEC believes it is important for the electorate to be informed regarding the position of candidates on important environmental issues. We hope you will find the questionnaire and responses helpful in your personal choices when voting in the election on June 5, 2018.

The questionnaire was sent by email to each candidate for Humboldt County Board of Supervisors who had filed by the March 9 deadline: 4th District Candidates Virginia Bass, Dani Burkhart, and Mary Ann Lyons, and 5th District Candidates Steve Madrone and Ryan Sundberg.

In addition, a mailed letter was sent to all candidates reminding them of the emailed questionnaire. Due to the print deadline for this issue of EcoNews, the candidates were given ten days to complete the questionnaire, and responses were requested to be limited to 100 words for each question. We offer appreciation on behalf of our members and the public to the candidates who took the time to respond.

Each of the candidates received identical questions. Full responses were received from Virginia Bass, Dani Burkhart and Steve Madrone. The responses to each of the questions are presented in alphabetical order based upon the candidate’s district and last name. Responses were edited only for misspellings and are, otherwise, identical to the original answers received from the candidates.

The NEC made several attempts to contact and even extended the deadline for Ryan Sundberg and Mary Ann Lyons. Unfortunately, we received no response from Lyons. Ryan Sundberg eventually responded, stating, “I have been extremely busy this last week (at the CALCOG conference and two large packets to read for our Monday and Tuesday meetings), I apologize that I will not be able to fill it out. Thank you for thinking of me.” If we receive responses from either Sundberg or Lyons, it will be too late for the printed EcoNews, but we will post the responses on our website.

Citizens can find information regarding voter registration and voting procedures here: https://humboldtgov.org/890/Elections-Voter-Registration.

If you’re not registered to vote, you can qualify as a conditional voter. Conditional voters are Humboldt County residents who are eligible to register to vote, but have not yet registered, or are registering with new information in the district where an election is being held. During the period of 14 days prior to Election Day through and including Election Day, an individual can visit the Humboldt County Office of Elections to conditionally register to vote and vote a subsequent conditional provisional ballot. The elections office is located at 2426 6th Street, Eureka.

Again, thank you to the candidates who took the time to answer the questionnaire. We hope you find the answers informative for your voting decisions on June 5.

Sincerely,
Larry Glass
Executive Director
**CANNABIS:**

What are all of the environmental impacts of the cannabis industry in Humboldt County, and what are the best ways to minimize those impacts from an enforcement and planning perspective?

**4TH DISTRICT:**

**Virginia Bass:** Quite frankly I think we really don’t really know ALL of the environmental impacts of the cannabis industry...over time more will be discovered. We need to work closely with DFW to closely monitor the applications that come in and be sure that they are accurate as to on the ground operations and focus enforcement on those who have not yet tried to come into the system. We should continue to forbid grows in TPZ areas and encourage growers to move out of the hills and take advantage of the RRR program which is meant to help minimize impacts.

**Dani Burkhart:** Illegal water diversions, sediment discharge from poorly maintained and improperly developed infrastructure, runoff from pesticide and herbicide, light pollution are some of the impacts of irresponsible cannabis cultivation within the County. Implementation of a properly regulated industry that can be taxed to generate the revenue for enforcement throughout the County is critical to protecting our wildlife and watersheds. Regulated farms must be inspected on a regular basis. The County should consider partnering with local community groups for farm inspections to maintain transparency and to utilize resources available due to limited county staffing compared to the size of the industry.

**5TH DISTRICT:**

**Steve Madrone:** There is dewatering of streams, soil disturbance and erosion and sedimentation of our streams and rivers, and pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers affecting water and wildlife. It is important to note that not all cannabis farms cause these problems. Many small farmers with organic grow it in the sun techniques have a very small to no impact on the land, water, or wildlife. What is important is how we grow. You can learn more about my ideas to incentivize good land stewardship and sustainable agriculture on my website www.votemadrone.com. The news article is titled It’s How You Grow Not What You Grow.

What do you think of locating/zoning cannabis extraction, manufacturing facilities and other industrial activities near critical public drinking water sources and important fish and wildlife habitat?

**4TH DISTRICT:**

**Virginia Bass:** It’s important to listen to the concerns of the community and weigh the evidence carefully. In the case of the operation that was planned to be located near the source of the water for the HBMWD, the concerns of the public and the district were clear. Their board was united on this issue and if you look at their board you see they are cut from very different political cloths... that tells me that this goes beyond political boundaries. However, for me to take that instance and overlay it over any other issue that could come forward would be presumptive.

**Dani Burkhart:** I oppose irresponsible development near critical drinking water sources. I have publically opposed the re-zone and subsequent cannabis extraction facility proposed by Mercer Fraser on the banks of the Mad River which is the drinking water source for 88,000 residents of our community. I support the Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District’s appeal of the rezoning and cannabis permit.

**5TH DISTRICT:**

**Steve Madrone:** I oppose that type of planning and development. It is careless and not sustainable. The problem with this type of development was created by the weakened updated General Plan (GP). New GP designations encouraged these type of projects in the floodplain. When water districts and customers, and neighbors find out about the projects then there are protests and appeals. The county gets sued either way and we as taxpayers lose. I support and am experienced at sound land use planning and implementation. Developers and community win with sound land use planning because they avoid spending money on bad planning.
CHALLENGES:

What do you think the County’s biggest environmental challenges are, and how do you think the County should address them?

4TH DISTRICT:

**Virginia Bass:** One of our biggest environmental challenges is the potential abandonment of properties that have been used for grows. These orphaned properties will become the responsibility of someone and that someone is most likely the county and the cost of cleaning up these properties could be astronomical. I don’t believe we have really gotten a handle on what that could look like and that concerns me. I can’t say I have an answer other then we need to be prepared because we know that some of these will land in our lap and they will be ours to deal with.

**Dani Burkhart:** Irresponsible subdivision and development of our timberland is a problem. Improperly developed roadways continue to contribute sediment to our streams. County’s regulations continue to allow subdivision and construction in sensitive habitat with limited recourse for failing infrastructure. The County must implement a program to abate cannabis properties that are operating outside the regulatory system. The County must streamline the clean-up and restoration of cultivation properties operating within timberlands and allow them to relocate to agriculturally zoned properties. The window to enable this process is diminishing day by day as the statewide supply chain is being established in other counties.

5TH DISTRICT:

**Steve Madrone:** The biggest challenge is to create sustainable practices and agriculture. We keep moving from one extraction industry to another and when they collapse we all suffer. The Cannabis industry is reeling from ordinances that incentivize large commercial grows and penalize small low impact grows. County needs to do better at crafting rules that incentivize low impact agriculture, while fining and regulating large impact operations. Forestry is changing and with even more improvements coming we are heading in a good direction. Collapse of salmon populations is a huge problem, and dam removal coupled with implementation of river release agreements must be honored.

TRANSPORTATION:

As Supervisor, what would you do to improve and expand the County’s transportation infrastructure for pedestrians and non-motorized transportation?

4TH DISTRICT:

**Virginia Bass:** I am a proponent of the trail being completed between Eureka and Arcata. I would advocate for more opportunities for non vehicle modes of transportation when the projects make sense. I would be interested in hearing more from your group as to ideas in this area.

**Dani Burkhart:** I support the connection of the Humboldt Bay Trail from Arcata to Eureka. I will support further conversion of North Coast Railway Authority land into trails through the Great Redwood Trail Act. I also support the planned trail system throughout the 4th district. Walk and bike-ability are important in order to reduce our reliance on fossil fuel powered transportation. Having safe trails for pedestrians and bikes away from car traffic are a great way to incentivize folks to take advantage of alternate transportation.

5TH DISTRICT:

**Steve Madrone:** I would work with community groups and county departments to continue current projects like the Bay Trail, and complete the Annie and Mary Trail, the Little River Trail, and the Eel River Canyon Trail. I have 40 years experience in this area having been a key player in the construction of the Hammond Trail and county trail planning. Public-private partnerships can get these resources leveraged and projects built. There are also many other community trail projects needed like a safe path on Murray Road from McKinleyville to Fieldbrook, along Jacoby Creek Road, in the Willow Creek community and elsewhere.
ENERGY:

What would you do to improve the County’s energy infrastructure?

4TH DISTRICT:

VIRGINIA BASS: I think it’s important for the county to become as self reliant as possible. I am very interested in the opportunity to take part in the capture/creation of offshore wind energy. Currently there are at least three companies who are very interested in our community and believe we would be a good fit. The fact that these facilities will be far offshore should minimize impacts to local fisheries and environmental concerns. It is an opportunity for our community.

DANI BURKHART: I support evaluation and responsible development of alternative energy projects, including but not limited to on-shore wind, solar and other sustainable energy projects. I believe these projects are not only beneficial for sourcing clean energy, but also for creating jobs for the county.

5TH DISTRICT:

STEVE MADRONE: I would incentivize small scale energy system development and use, such as solar, hydro, and small scale (house size) bio-mass conversion, through zoning and other tax and permit incentives. The needed forest thinning from below and limbing would reduce fire, improve forest health, and provide fuel that can be burned for energy with emission controls and reuse of ash and more. These systems can be sustained and built at a scale that makes sense. A de-centralized energy approach will be most effective and controllable.

DAMS:

The County has supported removal of Klamath dams, but has no policy on the Eel River dams. What should the County’s position be?

4TH DISTRICT:

VIRGINIA BASS: I will be upfront with you and telling you that I really do not have my mind made up on this issue as I have not studied it in depth. While we have had public speakers offer opinions and we have anecdotal experience I have personally not seen information in regards to this issue brought to the board. So for me to state what I think the counties position to be would be presumptive and premature. However I would welcome the opportunity to have discussions on this issue which could lead to future actions.

DANI BURKHART: The ecological health of the Eel River has been negatively impacted by the Potter Valley Project and it affects our watershed. I believe the county should support further study on these impacts, including the alternative of decommissioning the dams and restoring the river channel.

5TH DISTRICT:

STEVE MADRONE: I support removal of Klamath dams. I support removal of the Eel dams. I recognize that none of this is easy as communities of use have grown up around these impoundments and diversions for a long time. It is also true that native peoples were here for thousands of years and due to many reasons the salmon have plummeted. Water flows are a part of this puzzle. I support major water conservation, incentivized water storage from winter rains, and forbearance approaches to low water diversions. Humboldt County needs to insist that all 4 counties in the water agreement conserve water use.
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:
How do you think the County can balance economic development while protecting Humboldt Bay for fisheries and recreation?

4TH DISTRICT:

VIRGINIA BASS: It is not an either/or proposition. Balance is key and I think in order to get balance there has to be conversations where people with differing ideas can really come forward and work things out. I am a proponent of bringing in qualified trained mediators to facilitate these conversations. I believe this has to be a community conversation and we need to learn how to leave politics out of it. In the interim, we can support our existing operations on the peninsula and encourage the interim use of coastal dependent industrial properties for economic development. As we will be reviewing/revising the Humboldt Bay Area Plan there is opportunity to take a closer look on what the economic/recreational mix could look like.

DANI BURKHART: Humboldt must escape the boom-bust cycle of mining our resources to depletion, whether it be water, fisheries, or timber. Development of a responsible and sustainable cannabis and timber industry regulated by professional stewards of the land will support our economy into the future. A focus on eco-tourism can also assist in developing our economy while protecting sensitive resources and educating visitors on the value the citizens of Humboldt place on our environment.

5TH DISTRICT:

STEVE MADRONE: If planned carefully, economic development and protection of the environment can be balanced. Natural features need to be seen as assets not problems. That is how many restoration projects were completed around the bay and in freshwater wetlands around the bay. Bracut Marsh was started as a wetlands mitigation bank, but early restoration efforts mostly failed. A public-private partnership was able to analyze what went wrong, how to fix it, and then implement improvements that have more than doubled the wetland mitigation values at the site. This successful mitigation assisted significant economic development in Eureka. The focus is on win-win solutions.

SEA LEVEL RISE:
What do you think the impacts of sea level rise (SLR) will be, and what do you think should be done about it with regard to local planning and development?

4TH DISTRICT:

VIRGINIA BASS: The county and the state need to seriously look at what infrastructure can be adjusted and what infrastructure needs to be completely reconsidered and potentially moved. While some people scoff at the concern, I believe that it's best to be prepared long before we need to react. Exactly how that looks, I am not an expert to say. We are lucky to have some amazing individuals in this community who have been working on this issue for some time and in many parts of the state we are considered to be one of the leaders on this issue.

DANI BURKHART: As a resident of Eureka, I am deeply concerned about projected sea level rise and its impact on my community. Local planning must account for these projections when evaluating the feasibility of development. We must look towards future conditions when making decisions today. We must also evaluate alternative solutions, such as coastal armoring, for their environmental impacts and effectiveness, to build a strategy that works for our community.

5TH DISTRICT:

STEVE MADRONE: Humboldt Bay is projected to have greater SLR impacts than just about anywhere else in California. This is due to the combination of SLR and subsidence. Given the scientific evidence we should no longer be planning, permitting, or constructing in this footprint. What does exist there needs to be raised and or adapted or protected from SLR. We need to be smart about this and plan accordingly. By having an educated and responsible Board of Supervisors and Planning Commissioners who understand the reality of SLR and the extreme costs to society for not acting, we can be sure to plan sustainably.
Affordable Housing:

How can the County most effectively address the need for affordable housing while protecting forests, farmland, open space, and already existing communities?

4th District:

Virginia Bass: We can adjust our regulations to allow for more infill, second units and smaller dwellings. I worked with our local housing authority to revamp our section 8 voucher system. Instead of offering only person based vouchers there will also be access to project-based vouchers which can be used as matching funds for projects. We must continue advocating at the state level for funding to move affordable housing forward. The California State Association of Counties is joining ranks with Senator Beall and have asked for $1.3 billion of “up front” money to jumpstart affordable housing in California. Is it likely that bills going to pass as it’s been presented? Most likely not...should we fight like hell for it, yes we should!

Dani Burkhart: The County must strongly consider reviewing and modifying its planning code to support denser housing development and mixed use development close to urban areas that have developed infrastructure, and streamlining the planning/approval process for infill projects to protect and preserve timberland, farmland and open space.

5th District:

Steve Madrone: It will take private-public partnerships to solve the affordable housing crisis. Public resources to build and manage housing, and private partners willing to create housing alternatives as well as building tiny house villages and sanctuary camps. Some of these solutions can happen at the individual parcel scale with a few tiny houses here and there. Mother in law units and other creative housing solutions need to be encouraged and incentivized.

Planning Commission:

As Supervisor, you will be appointing a representative to the County Planning Commission. What are the most important qualifications for that appointee and will you vet them for conflicts of interest?

4th District:

Virginia Bass: My ideal planning commissioner would be pragmatic in their views, reasonable and willing to find compromise and solutions. They should have experience in moving projects through the system and an understanding of principles of LAFCo when looking at future development. True conflict of interest is when someone makes a decision that they will financially profit from. However there could also be perceptual conflicts of interest. What is important is that the person serving on the commission recognizes the potential and recuses themselves from the conversation.

Dani Burkhart: My appointee would be someone familiar with CEQA, who understands the impacts of development to our natural resources, and balances that with the economic and social wellbeing of our community as a whole. I would vet them for conflicts of interest and I will work to introduce an ordinance to require that appointees to public office disclose their potential conflicts of interest, similar to the Form 700 disclosure required of those running for elected office.

5th District:

Steve Madrone: They need to have experience in land use planning and community development. They should have training in economic development and know how to craft rules to incentivize good land stewardship, while penalizing damaging activities. Many folks have conflicts of interest and yes I will vet folks for those elements. It is critical that a Planning Commissioner recuse themself if a conflict exists. I will not appoint someone with the kinds of conflicts that would make it difficult for them to be unbiased on the kinds of issues that will be before them.
Humboldt County
Board of Supervisors
4th and 5th Districts

The Candidates

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Redwood forest photos: Rob DiPerna.