THE NEC AT 50 | RED FLAGS FOR GREENWASHING | ARTISTS DISMANTLING CAPITALISM | ‘HOW WE WIN’ SOCIAL CHANGE PLAYBOOK
NORTHERN SPOTTED OWL EXTINCTION VORTEX | KIN TO THE EARTH: SUSAN MASTEN | RAINBOW RIDGE PROTECTORS
We want to share your story! Do you have memories of the early NEC that you’d like to share? Photos, recollections, poems or lessons learned from campaigns? Did the NEC launch you into a life of environmental activism? We want to know what the Northcoast Environmental Center has meant to you over the years, whether you were involved right at the beginning or anywhere else within this last half-century. Please send your submissions or article ideas to caroline@yournec.org.

**LETTERS TO ECONNEWS**

We want to hear from you! Write us a letter 300 words or less that’s relevant to EcoNews and we’ll consider publishing it! The NEC reserves the right to reject any submitted material for any reason.

Email Caroline@yournec.org

A Response to December Eye On Washington

LWCF was a bad idea that will come back to haunt us all. Tied to offshore oil and gas instead of annual discretionary funding it is a stopgap that may soon find it short as movement to renewables continues.

Meanwhile, how are your salmon and steelhead runs doing? Heard very few returning to spawn. Low water in Eel, Mattole and Russian Rivers.

- Stephen Verchinski, Green Party US

“Unfortunately, the federal offshore oil and gas program and associated lease fees and taxes are collected regardless of whether the funds are used for conservation under the Land and Water Conservation funds (LWFC) or for non-conservation programs. For example, according to an E&E News article in 2014 when the LWCF expired, “Money from offshore drilling is now going directly into the general Treasury rather than LWCF. ” That means the $19.8 billion taxpayer funds sitting in the LWCF at that time, instead of going to conservation, wilderness and endangered species, could be used for everything else such as the military and uranium mining on public lands.” - Dan Sealy, Eye on Washington Dec. 2020
News From the Center

Larry Glass, Executive Director
Carrie Tully, Admin. Director

As we begin to celebrate our 50th anniversary here at the Northcoast Environmental Center, I am remembering my own initial contact with the NEC. I had a small new business in NorthTown Arcata in 1971 and was working very hard to keep it going when CalTrans announced it was planning to plow a freeway through Arcata, essentially cutting the town in half and specifically cutting North Town off from HSU. This was of great concern to me as I had just fled from the land of freeways (SoCal) and had seen first-hand the damage they cause to communities and the environment. So, I went to the NEC to ask for help and meet others who opposed the freeway. That’s where I met Wesley Chesbro and others who put me in contact with the opposition. That was the very beginning of my long involvement with the NEC, which has mainly been focused on forestry issues such as: the creation of more wild and scenic rivers and increased wildlife protections, and working hard to stop clear-cutting, herbicide spraying, and unnecessary road building.

National Politics

Big changes will result from the Election of President Joe Biden and our friend and ally, Vice President Kamala Harris. We are particularly pleased with the de-throning of the anti-environment, climate change denying, leader of the Senate, “Moscow” Mitch. At a minimum this means direct assaults on our wildlands will no longer be promoted and hopefully many of the terrible executive orders can be reversed. We hope the EPA and other important federal agencies can be repopulated with people who want to protect our resources and the public, instead of lining their own pockets. We can hope that the bully pulpit of the White House can educate the citizens of this country with scientific facts so we can overcome this pandemic and start seriously dealing with climate change. We are excited and pleased that the liaison/advisor that we have been working with closely in Kamala Harris’s office as senator has been named as a key advisor to Harris in her role as the Vice President.

Local Issues

August Complex Fire - The largest fire in recorded California History - has got the Forest Service dreaming big about conducting large-scale, widespread salvage sales over the three forests involved: Shasta-Trinity, Six Rivers and Mendicino. Environmental groups, including the NEC, are organizing a response to try and keep the impacts to a minimum. While the impact of the fire itself was damaging in some cases, the fire suppression damage has been significant over the entire August Complex. It’s the hope of the NEC that some of our focus will be on the suppression response as well.

Water Pipeline

The Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District’s (HBMWD) exploration of the idea of bringing water to the Trinidad Hotel Project is raising considerable alarm to all of us concerned about the potential development explosion that could follow in north McKinleyville, Westhaven, and Trinidad. This unfortunately comes at a time when HBMWD is looking for ways to expand its water use out of fear of losing some of its rights to withdraw water from the Mad River because of the State Water Board’s “use it or lose it” position. The Trinidad Hotel Project is one that the NEC has expressed serious concerns over, due to its scale and impacts. This attempt to get water for their project just adds to the list of concerns with this effort.

At the Office

With the restful holiday season officially behind us and a bright new year ahead, staff is looking forward to bringing you more fresh ideas and projects for the 50th anniversary of the NEC. We kicked the year off with our first ever virtual Winter Open House Mixer on January 21st, at which we reminisced on the last half-decade, celebrated our victories, and shared excitement for our up-and-coming plans. Thanks to all who attended the event!

In other great news, we are officially back to printing eleven issues of EcoNews this year! It couldn’t be better timing, as our content submissions are continuously expanding. Be sure to keep an eye out for the special 50th anniversary article in each issue. Our editor, Caroline Griffith, will be taking the time to speak with some of the people who have been crucial to the NEC over the last fifty years, which will surely provide wonderful stories and memories for us all.

Thanks to Casey Cruikshank, our Coastal Program Coordinator, the NEC team is taking to the beach to start a new project called the Marine Debris Monitoring and Assessment Project (MDMAP). This project was born out of Casey’s passion for cleanups, and for tracking marine debris. Each month, the staff will head out to Agate Beach to monitor a specific section of the beach. The goal is to record the amount and type of debris that is found in order to seek answers to questions such as: Where is the debris coming from? How big is the marine debris issue? How can we help change human behavior by bringing attention to this issue? Stay tuned for updates on our results!
MY START IN CONSERVATION ON THE NORTH COAST

Dave Van de Mark

The circumstances leading to 2-plus decades of activism had certainly begun even before I drove north from southern California in June of 1963. But I was still just a "pup" and conservation ideas brewing within me amounted to wishful thinking, because I had no clue how to implement any of those feelings. However, my future efforts were aided by fortunate encounters with the most influential people living then. Obviously, the most significant event was meeting Lucille Vinyard and her husband Bill.

I first met Lucille and Bill at a Sierra Club meeting, and was invited to their home. Minute rice takes longer to make than it took to create a lasting friendship! She was so warm, gracious, super friendly, totally disarming and a delightful storyteller with a curiosity about everything around her. She set the tone for my early involvement and things just escalated from there. I decided that environmental photography would be an important part of my life.

I felt fortunate to be part of the early local efforts working to establish the park and also expand it. While I did write a great deal under the auspices of the NEC and have spent a lifetime working to conserve the natural environment, an awareness that remains strong and growing today, locally and across the planet.

Out of that awakening, the following year, local and regional advocacy and outdoor groups, including the local chapters of Audubon, Sierra Club and the Native Plant Society came together with student groups like the Boot n’ Blister and Friends of the Earth to form the Northcoast Environmental Center as a clearing house for environmental action.

A local outdoor equipment retailer, then known as the Arcata Transit Authority, donated space on Tenth Street to house the NEC, and the fenced yard next door as the home of one of California’s first recycling centers.

As we face a future of climate change and declining biodiversity, let’s celebrate the Northcoast Environmental Center on it’s fiftieth birthday as our regional beacon of hope for the restoration and renewal of our beloved Northcoast as well as for the planet as a whole.

(Wesley Chesbro served as the NEC’s first Executive Director and went on to forty year career in City, County and State elected offices, culminating in serving as the Northcoast’s Assemblymember and State Senator.)

THE NEC AT 50: A HALF CENTURY OF DEFENDING THE PLANET

Wesley Chesbro

On April 22, 1970, the first Earth Day was celebrated in Humboldt County with an Earth Fair held in Eureka. Concerned citizens of all ages and backgrounds came together as the local manifestation of an awakening across the country and the planet.

That awakening was to humankind’s interdependence with the natural environment, an awareness that remains strong and growing today, locally and across the planet.

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Adopt-A-Beach and Adopt-A-Block are the intermediate programs where volunteers can attend to a specific location. The Marine Debris Monitoring and Assessment Project (MDMAP) is the advanced level program where volunteers will facilitate their own scientific research within transects at locations throughout the county.

Caroline Griffith, EcoNews Coordinator and Journalist, has successfully transitioned EcoNews to a monthly publication, and is working to bring new voices to the paper by building relationships and providing a platform for a diversity of contributors. Highlighting the voices of Indigenous, Black, Latinx and other People of Color and Queer environmentalists is a priority for EcoNews. To increase accessibility, Caroline is working to incorporate audio recordings of articles on the website and get funding for Spanish translation. In addition to writing for EcoNews, Caroline attends public meetings to stay up to date on local policy and advocate for the NEC.

Brittany Kleinschnitz, the NEC’s Office and Event Support Staff is the mind behind our weekly “Mindful Mondays” social media posts: nature based wellness tips for staying well during these tough times. Brittany has also supported the new Reduce Single Use Pledge outreach, contacting local restaurants to encourage them to sign on. Brittany has also been helping with the NEC office renovation by designing an infographic for our educational watershed model diagram, and will be helping to create upcycled journals that will eventually be available for sale in our Eco Boutique!

Carrie Tully, the NEC’s Administrative & Development Director, has been navigating her new position while sheltering-in-place. This transition would not have been possible without the support of her incredible team. Because of the strong foundation of communication that the group has built, they have been able to successfully navigate working from home, recreating long standing projects, and creating brand new ones. She has been enjoying watching the staff work together to bring ideas to life despite being in such uncharted territory. Her goals are to continue building awareness around the important work that the NEC has always contributed to, while building bridges within the community to work towards further socio-environmental healing. She looks forward to connecting with more people when the office reopens.
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Many thanks to all our supporters in 2020. As we enter our 50th year, we are grateful for so many friends and allies. From all of us at the NEC, thank you so much for your support in protecting our wondrous north coast and all of its inhabitants!

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Thank You!
Will Site of Arkley's Ill-Fated Marina Center Finally be Cleaned Up?

Caroline Griffith, EcoNews Journalist

The City of Eureka has received a $300,000 grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to assess Brownfield properties around the city, with a focus on the Balloon Track and Waterfront area, for potential cleanup. According to the City, Brownfields can be properties that have potentially been "impacted" by hazardous substances, and where "expansion, redevelopment or reuse efforts are complicated by the presence or perceived presencees of petroleum, hazardous substances, or other contaminants." Examples of Brownfields include old gas stations, auto repair facilities and manufacturing sites.

The grant will be used for two phases of assessment. The first phase will inventory and assess properties for potential contamination, including through researching historical uses of the property. If the historical uses indicate that contamination may be present, the property will undergo more rigorous on-the-ground testing for contamination, including drilling and testing soil samples. The city is currently in talks with property owners in the Old Town and Waterfront areas, working to get permission to start the assessment process.

One of the main targets of this program is the Balloon Track, a 42-acre former rail-yard south of Old Town contaminated by underground fuel tanks and years of rail-maintenance activities. This property has been the subject of controversy for decades. In 1999, Wal-Mart tried to build a superstore on the site and in 2006 it was purchased by Clean Up Eureka (CUE) VI, a subsidiary of Security National with plans to build a mixed-use development called Marina Center, which included a Home Depot, office spaces, and residential development. At the request of Security National, the City of Eureka put a measure on the ballot in 2010 asking voters whether to amend the city's local coastal program and general plan to change the zoning of the property to make way for the proposed project.

Humboldt Baykeeper and EPIC sued the city, challenging the validity of the environmental impact reports for the project and the ballot measure. Although the measure, Measure N, passed by 68%, the development never happened (in no small part due to public pressure from grassroots groups like Citizens for Real Economic Growth (CREG) and especially the work of Humboldt Baykeeper, who successfully appealed the rezoning to the Coastal Commission) and the zoning changes approved by voters only lasted for 10 years, as per the ballot measure language. The former rail yard continues to be zoned "Public," which allows such uses as schools, parks, police and fire stations, and other public facilities.

Engineering), though Security National has expressed interest in participating in the process, there is no official agreement yet. In general, Caise says, property owners in the Old Town and Waterfront areas have shown a lot of interest in the program, but he says the City will not be releasing a list of participating properties until later in the year when buy-in is finalized. Though this particular grant is only for the two phases of assessment, according to Caise, participation is the first step in getting funding for cleanup. Brownfield cleanup grants are available to local governments, tribes, states and NGOs, but not privately-owned sites. There are, however, other Brownfield resources available for helping private landowners clean up eligible sites. For example, the Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Program can be used to provide very low interest loans to privately-owned eligible sites.

Though there are obvious environmental reasons to clean up contaminated properties, especially near Humboldt Bay, the City of Eureka is focusing on the economic advantages of the project as a way to entice property owners to participate. Redevelopment potential was part of the criteria used to evaluate which entities received the EPA grant. As Caise says, participating in this assessment will let property owners know what sort of development could potentially take place on the property. For example, if contamination is deep and can safely be "capped" with concrete, that changes the type of development that can happen; perhaps they can then build a parking lot without disturbing the contamination. However, the Balloon Track supports coastal wetlands and the property is entirely within the Coastal Zone. According to Jen Kalt at Humboldt Baykeeper, "There are lots of wetlands on the Balloon Track, including Clark Slough, which is important for juvenile Dungeness crabs and other estuarine species. And coastal wetlands can only be filled for coastal-dependent uses, like docks, ports, and trails." The City’s recent General Plan Update calls for developing the Balloon Track in the style of Old Town rather than in the style of South Broadway.

The City anticipates there will be a public meeting held in Summer of 2021 with more details about which properties will be undergoing a Phase I assessment. In the meantime, if members of the public have input on the project, potential properties for participation, or historical information about properties within the Old Town and Waterfront areas, they are encouraged to contact David Caise at dcaiser@ci.eureka.ca.gov. To be added to the email notification list about the project, contact emcdnold@ci.eureka.ca.gov.
Explore the Bay with Canvas + Clay

Jasmin Segura, Bay Tours Coordinator

For several years, we have partnered with various groups to provide safe and educational tours of Humboldt Bay via kayak or on the historic Madaket through an Explore the Coast grant from the California Coastal Conservancy. One such partnership is with Canvas and Clay, an inclusive studio and gallery for artists of varying abilities to foster authentic art practice and professional growth within an inviting art community.

In 2019, full-time Canvas and Clay artist Chris Johnson joined Humboldt Baykeeper for Coastal Cleanup Day to document the event and gather inspiration. In his artist statement from a show in 2017 he states, “Well Humboldt, it’s just fresh and doesn’t have a lot of pollution. It’s very good for privacy - you can’t see the outside cities because we have all the parks and trees. I like living here as an artist because we have a lot of the art world. I like it ’cause you can see new stuff. There’s a lot of stuff and there’s a lot of information if you want to find it.” I had the pleasure of sitting down and talking with Chris about his process and his love for Humboldt Bay.

How long have you been an artist at Canvas and Clay?

Since 2013. I moved from San Jose and was looking for employment. This was the closest I could find. It keeps me busy.

What kind of art do you do?

I paint with acrylic, pastels and watercolor. I also dabble with ink and want to work with stained glass, ceramics and mosaics.

What subjects are you drawn to?

I’m kind of picky. I do some abstract. Right now, I’m working on the caterpillar from Alice in Wonderland that’s from Lewis Carroll. I also did a Humboldt show. I’m interested in doing the Bay. I really like the museums, buildings and train tracks. Some of the boats are pretty darn nice. This is the first time I’ve taken pictures out on the Bay. I wasn’t sure it would work, but I’m glad it did. When I bought the camera, I thought it might be defective, but I’m glad it worked.

Why did you want to go out on Humboldt Bay for Coastal Cleanup Day?

I was interested in the Island. All the nesting birds and little crabs, it was different. I wanted to see the Wiyot Island, maybe see some artifacts.

Why is a healthy bay important to you?

Because of the wildlife living in it. The fish and birds. For clean water to swim in and maybe to drink.

Is there anything else you’d like to say?

I just want to say that being on the boat and the island was really neat. I had a lot of fun. Thank you for providing the opportunity.

For further information on Chris’s work and other artists at Canvas and Clay check out canvasandclaystudio.org and follow them on Instagram@canvas.and.clay.

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8
The truth is: most plastic isn’t.

2. Unsubstantiated Environmental Claims

These days, DNA studies are revealing new relationships that products are good for the environment. We must become more alert and willing to communicate with the manufacturers responsible for greenwashing, and the local stores where we buy these products. The main problem caused by greenwashing is that it convinces people to behave in unsustainable and environmentally-detrimental ways.

Greenwashing, also referred to as “Green Sheen” marketing, is the process of conveying a false impression or providing misleading information about how a company’s products are more environmentally sound. Greenwashing is a play on the term “whitewashing,” which means using misleading information to gloss over bad behavior.

Consumer research conducted for manufacturers – of especially single-use packaging and products – has been used to adopt key words used by the growing numbers of their customers who are increasingly concerned about environmental impacts of what they buy. They capitalize on this demand for environmentally beneficial or sustainable products by pitching them as less wasteful, more natural, healthier, chemical free, using even over-simplified and meaningless terms.

In 2007, marketing firm, TerraChoice, reported the Six Sins of Greenwashing. If you are tired of marketers playing on your environmental concerns to convince you to buy, here are six red flags for when you shop:

1. Trading Off Benefits

   For example, a company may say its packaging is recyclable, without mentioning their horrendous practices in resource extraction.

2. Unsubstantiated Environmental Claims

   May be the most appalling and common greenwash practices. Companies may claim “made with recycled materials” or “eco-friendly ingredients” without any verification from reliable sources about these claims. Most companies that are dedicated to the values of environmental sustainability are transparent with details on their websites about how their product has been made.

3. Irrelevant Call-Outs on Packaging

   To catch your eye on the competitive store shelf space. Packages will have labels that mean nothing but sound good. For example, even though CFC has been banned for 30+ years, a company may label packaging as CFC-free.

4. Vague Language and Wording

   Is common in greenwash marketing to manipulate environmentally-oriented shoppers. “Non-toxic,” “green,” “plant-based,” “eco,” “environmentally-friendly,” “bio,” and “sustainable practices” are all examples of vagueness intended to win your purchase. You have to check the company packages and websites for reputable certifications and proof of authenticity.

5. The Lesser of Two Evils

   Promotes a harmful product as a “better” alternative. These are eco-friendly claims on products that are environmentally destructive, like organic tobacco or green pesticides! The petrochemical industry has gotten even richer this year by claiming that single-use plastic food and beverage packaging, take home containers, and tableware are cleaner and safer against COVID19. Research has not supported their claims.

6. Boldfaced Lies

   Are outright false claims. TerraChoice reports that this can be the most difficult to identify. Often it involves the misuse of third party certifications. In 2013, several state attorney generals found the plastics industry use of the recycling logo with the three chasing arrows to be misleading because the logo alone does not indicate nor assure that the package is recyclable.

The resulting name changes are a pet peeve of botanizers. It’s hard to unlearn one name and replace it with another. These days, DNA studies are revealing new relationships in plants’ evolutionary histories, which the scientific names need to reflect. The resulting name changes are less frustrating when we know the reason and the people involved. Nancy Morin, president of a neighboring CNPS chapter and a Fellow of CNPS. Now whenever I see this distinctive flower in our mountains, I’ll think of Jim! Nancy is telling us about this name change before it has gone through the full taxonomic approval process, including publishing, so it is not yet on Calflora or the eJepson. You are among the first to know!

Native Plants for Sale

Our native plants are available every day, 12 noon-6 p.m., at the Kneeland Glen Farm Stand at Freshwater Farms Reserve, 5851 Myrtle Ave. If you don’t see what you want, contact us at northcoastcnps@gmail.com.

Stay Updated:

www.northcoastcnps.org
facebook.com/NorthCoastCNPS
CNPS welcomes anyone interested in native plants to join our events. No expertise required.
A Bittersweet Farewell

Casey Cruikshank, Coastal Programs Coordinator

After nearly three years at the Northcoast Environmental Center, I am making a very bittersweet farewell. The NEC provided an incredible space to learn, grow, and create an impact in my local community. It fostered my new ideas and gave me the space to channel my passions into Coastal Programs and turn my visions into reality.

With such a supportive, passionate, and proactive team, my job was fun and impactful. I started off at the NEC as the administrative assistant and a few months later found myself in the position of Coastal Programs Coordinator. In the following two years, I brought a lot of new elements into Coastal Programs. I transitioned into year-round data collection on an entirely new database that allowed us to create our own locally specific list. I helped create an entry-level volunteer program called Trash Trackers that allows anyone and everyone to easily join our citizen science cleanup efforts. I also introduced an advanced-level Coastal Program called the Marine Debris Monitoring and Assessment Project (MDMAP) where we scientifically monitor a specific location over time to gain a better understanding of Humboldt County as a whole. Last, but not least, I transitioned Coastal Cleanup Day into a zero waste, month-long event. Thanks to shelter-in-place policies, the event now takes place over the entire month of September to keep cleanup volunteers socially distanced.

I feel so proud of how far Coastal Programs have come and thrilled by the work that the NEC team has accomplished over the last few years. I feel honored to have been part of such an awesome and passionate team and I am so thankful for the lifelong friends that I have made thanks to the Northcoast Environmental Center, the member groups and the loyal NEC supporters. Though I am stepping down from my position at the NEC, I am not going far. I will be transitioning into work at the local Pacific Flake Sea Salt Harvesery and focusing on growing food on a larger scale in my backyard. I plan to stay on as a volunteer and I look forward to seeing the new energy that is brought into Coastal Programs by whoever comes after me. Cheers to a bright and hopeful future!

Del Norte 2020 Cleanup Report

Smith River Alliance

Fall Coastal Cleanup recovers over 2 tons of trash. December Smith River NRA Cleanup recovers 900 lbs.

The Smith River Alliance (SRA) reported that the Del Norte Coastal Cleanup team overcame multiple challenges to organize a successful effort October 17 -- with nearly fifty volunteers participating and over two tons of trash recovered.

With coronavirus concerns and nearby wildfires causing evacuations and hazardous breathing conditions, organizers and project partners chose to reschedule what is normally a September event. Dates were pushed back, air quality monitored and a series of precautions adopted to assure participant safety. The outcome was another successful Coastal Cleanup.

“It was really heartening to see our Del Norte community turnout to maintain the health and beauty of our coastal areas in spite of this year’s challenges” said Grant Werschkull, Co-Executive Director for SRA.

Participants included members of the Disaster Animal Response Team (DART), the Del Norte High School Interact Club, and even a few volunteers from nearby counties. Total recovered trash, metal and recycling was 4040 lbs.

“We especially appreciate our many business partners who support this work and the Whale Tail Grant Program. Our business partners are recognized as River Guardians on the SRA website” said Werschkull.

SRA volunteers closed out the year by cleaning up several sites and riverside areas along the Middle Fork and South Fork within the Smith River National Recreation Area (NRA). 900 pounds of trash was recovered in December -- not including recyclables. This is good news for both the NRA and the local beaches, because it’s believed that up to 80% of coastal trash originates inland.

For more information about SRA’s Stewardship Projects and Coastal and River Cleanups please visit the SRA website at www.smithriveralliance.org. To volunteer please send an email to volunteer@smithriveralliance.org with your contact information.

Smith River kayakers helped clean up multiple river access locations and also retrieved trash snagged in streamside vegetation following high flows. Credit: Grant Werschkul.
The Northern Spotted Owl is in an “Extinction Vortex”
And the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Doesn’t Care

Tom Wheeler,
EPIC Executive Director

The northern spotted owl, the most iconic species of the struggle to protect the West’s temperate forests, has entered what one researcher has called an “extinction vortex.” The forces driving it to extinction—habitat loss, competition from the non-native barred owl, toxicant exposure, and more—are resulting in the owl’s tailspin. Without immediate change and investment, the northern spotted owl will likely go extinct in the wild within the next fifty years. Already the loss is staggering. In 1993, researchers estimated that there were likely around 14,000 northern spotted owl territories. Today, the estimate is less than 3,000. Only one reproductive pair remains in British Columbia and the species has been declared to be “functionally extinct” in Canada.

EPIC has been at the forefront of pushing for more protections for our favorite forest raptor. In 2012, EPIC petitioned the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to take owl conservation more seriously by “uplisting” the owl from “threatened” to “endangered” under the Endangered Species Act. By law, the process to make a determination of a species status under the act is supposed to take no longer than a year and a half. But year after year, the Service failed to complete its job. In 2020, we could wait no longer. Together with friends from across the West Coast, EPIC sued the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to do their job: make a decision on our petition.

Suddenly, under threat of lawsuit, the Service acted quickly. In about a week’s time, the Service published formal notice that the northern spotted owl does warrant listing as “endangered,” but there was a big catch. Instead of actually completing the process to formalize this new designation, the Service claimed that they were too busy with other work to finish the job — that listing was “warranted but precluded by higher priority actions,” to use government-speak.

While the government was too busy to protect the species, it wasn’t too busy to go out of their way to harm them. On January 13, 2021, the Trump Administration announced that it would remove 3.4 million acres of critical habitat, or 42% of its former critical habitat, for the northern spotted owl. This final gift to the timber industry is a slap in the face to the hardworking biologists who staff the agency, who are reportedly in uproar over the decision. EPIC and our owl-loving allies are going to challenge this decision, although at time of press we cannot say how yet.

What’s next? With a new Biden Administration, we hope that the poor owl receives some additional attention and respect. First, it is imperative that the owl be uplisted to endangered. Second, the federal government needs to take necessary steps to stave off extinction and start the long, slow process of recovery. This will require stemming the loss of high-quality northern spotted owl habitat through logging, particularly on federal lands, and a coordinated effort between the two big federal land owners, the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service. Third, and perhaps most importantly, the Fish and Wildlife Service needs to begin to plan for dealing with competition from non-native barred owls. Experimental barred owl removal programs have begun to show success, with the greatest success at the southern edge of the barred owl’s range where they have not become fully established. Saving the northern spotted owl will require unpleasant and uncomfortable actions, including potentially shooting barred owls. Removing non-native species to save an endangered species is not new, but the charismatic barred owl will likely find sympathetic friends in the animal rights and environmental movement who question whether such a harsh response is necessary to save the northern spotted owl. It is.

We are at a critical juncture. Inaction means the extinction of the northern spotted owl. EPIC pledges to redouble our efforts to ensure that the northern spotted owl doesn’t go extinct.
In the Beginning…

By Elliott Dabill

You may already know that birds are descended from dinosaurs. What many people don’t realize is that birds are not just kinda related to dinosaurs or sorta suggestive of dinosaurs, but birds actually are dinosaurs. The idea is now widely accepted, even though a hundred years ago it was a non-starter, and people would smirk and ask for your credentials if you suggested it. It may be surprising to know, then, that the general idea came from Charles Darwin, who wrote The Origin of Species in 1859, and was strongly supported by his defender, Thomas Huxley, when a fossilized feather named Archaeopteryx was found in Germany just a year later.

Huxley was on to something – he compared a later fossil of Archaeopteryx feather impressions that became for him an exemplar of a transitional species, as Darwin predicted: animals slowly evolved into new groups of animals due to natural selection. Huxley listed the dissimilarities between this fossil sort-of-bird and birds we know today: it had teeth and a long tail, claws on the wings, and other eye-poppers. Yet it had feathers, the defining character for birds, and there had to be something to the connection. Huxley was correct, of course, and prescient, but all his insight was quickly forgotten for some decades while the science world looked in other directions for bird origins. In the 1970s, John Ostrom wrote that Huxley was, in fact, correct and talked about dinosaurs like Deinonychus as hot-blooded, running, and hunting animals, like birds.

Since the 1996 beginning of the early bird discovery wave, evidence – whether it was by the shared presence of a wishbone or other features – has come from all over the world, reinforcing the transition from dinosaurs to birds, as with the iconic T. rex. It has been suggested that another large group of dinosaurs called ornithischians, an extinct clade of mainly herbivorous dinosaurs characterized by a pelvic structure similar to that of birds, had some kind of primitive feathers, indicating that maybe all dinosaurs were involved in this conspiracy. Some scientists have suggested that non-dinosaur pterosaurs had feathers, but that is under dispute. If it was true, and feathers are older than the taxonomic group we call dinosaurs, then they and birds are all late comers to the party, since the common ancestor with pterosaurs would have feathers.

Now you can load up your binoculars and go dinosaur watching. If that idea makes you smile, it’s just one example of truth being stranger than fiction, or wonders of the natural world that link us back in time to something like 230 million years ago, or more, as Mother Earth was recovering from the greatest extinction ever and decided to mix things up a little. That means that dinosaurs are that old and that they dominated most of that period. We humans have been here 200-300 thousand years, and could stand a little humility about dominance.


In This Issue: • Guroush (Curlew): A Wiyot Story • The Oldest Snowy Plover on Record • The Finch Irruption!
Virtual Program: February 12 at 7 pm
Please join us for a Zoom presentation by
Dr. Peter Hodum on
Tufted Puffins and Rhinoceros Auklets
His research focuses primarily on the conservation and ecology of threatened seabirds and island ecosystems in Chile and Washington State. His work also has a strong focus on community-based conservation, including how communities can be more effectively and authentically involved in conservation. Moving between islands, seascapes, and species of the Outer Coast, Peter Hodum will share stories about a collaborative research program focused on improving our understanding of the ecology and the birds’ conservation status.

Christmas Bird Counts (CBC) 2020-21
Compiled by CJ Ralph
Our Christmas Bird Counts, conducted between December 19 and January 5, 2020-21, were successful! Here are brief summaries of the results presented by the compilers of each count:

Del Norte: The compiler came down sick just before the count and cancelled it. However, 15 awesome birders came anyway and shared their eBird checklists. On count day 131 species were found, 20 species lower than last year, as several significant areas were not covered and were not counted. Easiest species were missed because of that. Great birds were a Long-eared Owl and Loggerhead Shrike, both new to the count. — Lucas Brug.

Tall Trees: The 10th Tall Trees CBC was held on a dry day sandwiched between two very wet ones. The circle includes the Humboldt Lagoons, Orick, lots of Green Diamond land, and much of Redwood National Park. The 14 participants came up with around 118 species; about average. At times it seemed that if you looked at the cloud cover hard enough, it would prove to be flocks of siskins; one person had over 1700! Noteworthy species included Barred Owl, White-throated Sparrow, Lesser Goldfinch, Greater Yellowlegs, Palm Warbler, Brandt’s Cormorant, Band-tailed Pigeon, Northern Pintail, Say’s Phoebe, and three new species: Vaux’s Swift, Prairie Falcon, and Rock Wren. — Ken Burton.

Willow Creek: This year’s core group of enthusiasts, many of them from the Coast, had 82 species, up slightly from recent years. Even with the decent weather on count day, there was a bit of snow falling on Horse Mountain, just enough to show a beautiful, and disconcerting, set of grey Mountain Lion prints! Of note were the many siskins and also two unexpected summer residents (an Orange-crowned Warbler and two Black-headed Grosbeaks). We appreciate that the authorities in Hoopa issued a specific exemption for our party to go into Hoopa territory, which has been locked down due to Covid. — Birgitta Elbek.

Arcata: The count went very well — a big Thank You for all that helped out. We ended up with 168 species. Weather was wonderful, with only a small wave of light rain in the morning hours. Ocean conditions could have been better, but we had a couple of participants who managed to get some much-needed ocean species. The turnout was good, with 36 participants and good coverage of backyards and residential areas. It was interesting finding out that most of the Black Brant seem to be using North Humboldt Bay this winter, with 1,956 counted. Our highlights included 32 Snowy Plover, one Northern Mockingbird, one Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (still being observed), one Clay-Colored Sparrow, and the one continuing Sandhill Crane. — Tony Kurz.

Centerville to King Salmon: This was the 59th year and was graced with more than 50 volunteers. Although we were prepared for very wet and windy conditions, we enjoyed fair weather, with only a little rain in the afternoon. A total of 174 species were tallied. Highlights included six White-throated Swifts flying over Ferndale, a continuing Mountain Plover at Centerville Beach, Violet-green and Barn Swallows (rare in winter), Tropical Kingbird, Barrow’s Goldeneye, and a mystery bird near Loleta that turned out to be a Eurasian Skylark — a first for Humboldt County and one of very few California records! Tony Kurz recorded the call, Frank Fogarty analyzed the spectrum, and Russ Namitz photographed and identified the bird. — Sean McAllister.

(See last page for a photo of the Eurasian Skylark.)

Irruption
By Sarah Hobart
It started the day before Christmas, just after lunch: a soft tchee-tchee-tchee outside the kitchen window. I glanced up to see a slim, streaky finch at the feeder. Grabbing my binoculars, I noted the sharp, little bill and hint of yellow in the plumage. A Pine Siskin, the first of the season! I made a happy note in my feeder log.

Moments later, a dozen more suddenly crash-landed on the feeder, stabling at the trays with such voracious appetites that milklet showered the deck below. My dog and I stood at the window watching them. Already the seed level had dropped to the halfway mark and I wondered if I had enough reserves to feed everyone. A chickadee landed on the railing and a sortie of siskins chased it off.

I was standing by the feeder, trying to find some seed to throw to them. They were all lined up on the deck, watching me. They didn’t budge.

Moments later, a dozen more suddenly crash-landed on the feeder, stabling at the trays with such voracious appetites that milklet showered the deck below. My dog and I stood at the window watching them. Already the seed level had dropped to the halfway mark and I wondered if I had enough reserves to feed everyone. A chickadee landed on the railing and a sortie of siskins chased it off.

The twittering swelled to a deafening crescendo as at least a hundred more swooped in. They clung bottom-side-up to the deck and carpeted every inch of the deck; others settled in the pine trees, the bouughs sagging under their weight. In less than a minute the feeder was empty and every stray seed gobbled up.

A few birds hopped onto the windowsill and stared at us boldly through the glass, emitting soft, ominous tcheee. My faithful companion whined and backed away.

“I’m going out there,” I told her. “Are you with me?” She ran to her kennel and hidded in the far corner.

Whumph! A siskin was plastered against the window, its wings drumming a tattoo against the glass. One beady eye was fixed on me.

I grabbed the plastic bucket of spare birdseed, took a deep breath, and slipped out the kitchen door. The birds didn’t budge an inch as I unhooked the feeder. Prying the lid off the bucket, I rapidly began to shove seed into the plastic tube.

As if by unspoken signal a hundred feathered bodies launched into the air and enveloped me in a dense, chattering cloud. I threw down the scoop and emptied the bucket in the general area of the filling tube. After desperately trying to rehang the feeder, I fled inside. Siskins swarmed like locusts over the feeder, tossing sunflower seeds right and left. I grabbed the phone and dialed the hardware store.

“Seed!” I gasped when someone picked up. “I need birdseed!”

“No problem,” he said. “We have Fruit and Nuthatch, Sparrow Supreme, Crunchy Mealworm Delight —”

“What?” I said. “Surprise me.”

“Hold a moment.” While I waited, the seed level dropped three-quarters of an inch.

He came back on the line. “Well, it’s the darnedest thing, but this stuff must be flying off the shelves. Looks like there’s just one bag —”

“I’ll take it!” I rattled off my credit card number and hung up.

The clerk was waiting in the lot with my bag of seed and tossed it in the rear hatch. “Thanks!” I yelled. He leaped back as I peeled out of the lot, tires chirping as I sped home.

All was quiet as I pulled up to the house. Too quiet. The pine needles rustled in the breeze — but there was no breeze.

I hoisted the bag from the back. As I did, I heard the first soft tchee-tchee-tchee. A prickle of unease went down my spine. I stumbled up the stairs and took down the empty feeder. With trembling fingers, I ripped open the bag.

“Tchee-tchee-TCHEEE!” The trees erupted and the sky went dark. Flapping wings fanned my face and something spattered on my hair. The bag slipped from my hands. I ducked my head and ran.

From the safety of the kitchen, I peeked out the window. Siskins had taken over the deck, tearing at the spilled birdseed. One in particular caught my attention, perched like a sentry on the fallen bag. His eye, dark and bottomless, met mine.

Right about then I decided it was time to start using the back door. At least for the rest of the finch season.

In RRAS news, many thanks to those who made end-of-year donations! The pandemic has made it a challenging year for fundraising. Another way to support us is through buying a local membership at rras.org. Also, watch for opportunities to support us in spring through an online fundraiser.

President’s Column
By Gail Kenny
By December 2020 it was apparent that local Pine Siskin numbers were way up. I was seeing lots of them and other birders were reporting them. One day between rain showers I observed a cloud of them fluttering about some alder trees on the bluff overlooking Trinidad Bay.

This irruption of Pine Siskins is part of a larger phenomenon of finches moving south from the boreal forests of Canada in winter when food sources are scarce. The East Coast benefits most from the finch movements, with upwards of eight species including a large irruption of Evening Grosbeaks this year. The West Coast must make do with Pine Siskins, at least so far. Theories about what is driving this “superflight” of boreal finches include a large outbreak of spruce budworm in spring into summer and then a poor seed crop of conifers and other boreal trees in the fall. The birds benefited from plenty of food during the breeding season, which probably allowed greater survival of young birds. Many of the boreal forest trees produce seeds in cycles, with lots of seeds some years and very little in other years. This helps to limit the squirel populations that depend on the seeds and allows the trees to reproduce more successfully. But birds can fly to find food, so they head south in poor seed crop years. They come even further south during widespread crop failures like this year.

With large numbers of Pine Siskins around, be on the look out for sick birds at or around your feeders. Pine Siskins typically are among the first to get sick with salmonella at feeders. They will look larger with puffed-up feathers, will be sluggish, and may have panted vents or swollen eyelids. There are measures to help limit the disease. Feeders must be cleaned every day. This maintains the very positive effects of a bird feeder, especially in the winter, for both you and the birds. Hose down the feeder daily to remove old food and fecal material, clean with soapy water, rinse thoroughly, and dry. Some recommend taking down your feeders for 2-3 weeks. Before you put them back up, clean then disinfect with a 10% bleach solution, rinse thoroughly, and dry. This needs to be done frequently if sick birds are around. Also, it can help to set up different types of bird feeders that allow only a few birds to visit at a time.

Above: Pine Siskins galore! Photos by Sarah Hobart.
Guroush (Curlew): A Wiyot Story
Edited and summarized by Lynnika Butler, Linguist for the Wiyot Tribe; reprinted courtesy of the Wiyot Tribe’s Cultural Department.

The following is a Wiyot story told by Birdie James, published in Reichard, Gladys A. (1925), Wiyot Grammar and Texts. University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology 22(1):146-147. Spellings have been converted to the approved Wiyot writing system and English translations have been edited for clarity.

This story tells how, long ago, Wiyot people faced starvation because the tide never went out, leaving them unable to dig for houlhi' (clams, which are harvested in mudflats at low tide). According to the story, the wind controlled the tide, and because for a long time the wind only blew from one direction, the tide remained high. Guroush (Curlew) decided to go north to Dagachuwayawik (Trinidad) to buy rr'a'dughu'n (north wind; literally, ‘big wind’) from the people there, using dried and fresh seaweed as trade offerings. After negotiating the purchase and beginning his return trip, rr'a'dughu'n started to blow and became so strong that Guroush was blown against the rocks and killed; but rr'a'dughu'n pushed the tide out and the people were able to dig for houlhi' again. They only discovered later that Guroush was killed saving his people.

Please enjoy this story in the original Soulaluk with English translation:

Goujewih galu wutsuwetguk.
Long ago, the tide did not run out.

Sayuhurr lhugayughurr.
Wind blew from one direction, the southeast wind blew.

Gawu wulh da' louy.
They began to talk about it.

Daghurril dou wadagh vouduwuku lughilh.
Their bellies were starving, famine came.

Gitga rr'adugu'n va lu ve'lurr.
They decided to go buy wind.

Guroush hi lughilh gitga.
Curlew was going to go.

Guroush hi lughilh.
Curlew went.

Hi rralhetsuvou' wouda dou laluplhamu'n.
Along the way, he was given sea plants.

Jouwa wulh hi' rouluwowy'.
He took them all.

Dagachuwayawik da qhiyouwilh.
He arrived at Trinidad Cove.

Hi yilha'. “Wikut wulh hanou.”
He said, “The tide has come from the south.”

“Rra’dughu’n hu va wulhi la’t.”
“I came about the wind.”

“Galu vutsuwetguk jouwa wulhe lou’w.”
“The tide does not run out, that is what I came for.”

“Ya lu velu’u'gitga.”
“I’m going to buy it.”

“Wi yutsuvous pijoul.”
“I will give you dried kelp.”

“Ya luqhsous gutsofulhulhwait, pishoulhulhwait.”
“I’m going to give you seaweed and live kelp.”

Hi yituuwani'l. “Ka looluwu'gh gitga.”
He was told, “You will not take it [wind].”

Hi yilha'. “Rrawuulh loluwvu.”
He said, “I want to take it with me.”

“Wi wulh gou chge lughilh, gitga bi’k gou lughiyu’m, ya dou dawilhat wi wulh.”
They said, “You will see. You will go back first, when you get halfway look back and then you will see.”

Hiyu wulih.
He saw it.

Hiyu wudavi'milh.
He was glad.

Da’ dalilh.
He went on.

Gawu louhu'durryuq'u'l.
The wind began to get stronger.

Rrakut hi lalhulim.
The north wind went on.

Ga gou rra'hilh.
He did not get up again.

Hi lalhulim plhutquaq'axh.
He was blown against the rocks.

Hi dalou’dalilh.
It blew him through the air.

Hi lalhulim.
He was blown through it.

Da hinuqh.
He died.

Rra’dughu’n hi lughilh.
The north wind went on.

Hi da louwih shwouri lugaw’.
It came southeast.

Hiyu vutsuwetguk.
The tide went out.

Houlhi hi gawu jaqulu'wurr.
They began to dig clams.

Gawu gaqawou'm.
They did not know about him.

Chvuuwan gas gaqawurr da huwurruck.
Much later, they found out that he died.
The Oldest Snowy Plover on Record Lives on – in Humboldt County!
By Mark A Colwell, Wildlife Department, HSU

I began my professional career as an ornithologist steeped in the value of studying individually marked animals such as Spotted Sandpipers (Actitis macularius) and Wilson’s Phalarope (Phalaropus tricolor). Consequently, when I began work on Snowy Plovers in 2000, my first endeavor was to capture and band as many individuals as possible. One bird in particular stands out in the local plover population.

On June 26, 2001, I worked with Sean McAllister (North Coast Field Biologists) and Amber Transou (California State Parks) to band a newly hatched chick in a brood of three from a nest located on the oceanfront beach south of Table Bluff. A year later, we recaptured this male elsewhere in the county, gave him his full complement of leg bands (orange over red on the left leg, and a yellow over red on his right), and named him OR:YR.

OR:YR is unique among plovers breeding along the Pacific Coast of the US. Remarkably, he is still alive over 19 years later! The previous longevity record (15 years) came from a Snowy Plover breeding in Oregon. Given that the average plover survives for three years, this individual is truly special. Coupled with long life, OR:YR has successfully reared 21 chicks, adding two this past summer from his breeding location in northern Humboldt County. However, his long life can be split into two contrasting periods of approximately equal length. The first was as a largely unsuccessful breeder on Clam Beach, followed by a move to breed far more successfully at a new home further north. In fact, OR:YR has been 10 times more successful at rearing chicks as he aged and occupied other beaches in Humboldt County.

The Western Snowy Plover (Charadrius nivosus) was listed by the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) as Threatened in 1993. For 20 years, I have worked with Humboldt State University students, state and federal biologists, and local citizens to monitor the plover population in Del Norte, Humboldt, and Mendocino counties. One of the most interesting facets of that project entailed keeping track of the survival and reproduction of plovers marked with colored leg bands. For hundreds of individuals, we accumulated detailed data on their 1) origin (i.e., hatched locally or an immigrant from elsewhere along the Pacific Coast), 2) age (in years); and 3) reproductive output (i.e., number of nests, eggs, chicks, and surviving juveniles).

Collectively, this information is essential for evaluating whether or not the local population was growing, as required by the recovery plan for this species.

Conservation is founded in ecology. Ecologists seek to understand factors such as habitat, predation, and food that influence the distribution and abundance of a species; conservation biologists seek to apply this knowledge to maintain healthy wildlife populations. Nowhere is this more critical than with species that are at risk of extinction, especially those protected under the US Endangered Species Act, where federal law requires actions to increase population size.

The question remains: did OR:YR’s ability to rear young correlate with learning (i.e., experience as he aged), was it that the specific habitats were better for rearing young, or both? We may have to do more research to answer that question, but based on our 20-year study, we discovered some interesting features of Snowy Plover demography in coastal Northern California. First, annual breeding population size varied between 19 and 74 adults, which was well below the 150 set by the USFWS recovery plan. Each year, immigrants, especially from Oregon, comprised roughly 2/3 of the breeding population. Second, the typical adult plover lived about 3 years, with males surviving slightly longer than females. Annually, most adults (60-100%) survived from one year to the next, although in one year, a majority of plovers died for unknown reasons. Finally, breeding success of individuals was often low and insufficient to replace adults that died each year, which gives further evidence to the importance of immigration.

The value of long-term studies of individually marked animals is apparent in these demographic data. It allows evaluation of the effectiveness of management practices such as habitat restoration and predator control, to be undertaken to effect conservation goals. In this case growing the number of plovers by increasing reproductive success and enhancing survival.

People often ask me “What is your favorite bird?” My answer depends on whether one asks about species or individuals. If it’s the latter, then “OR:YR” is an easy call!

Wildlife photographer Ann Constantino keeps track of seasonal birds in Southern Humboldt

Ruby-crowned Kinglets spend their winters with us after breeding in the Far North. They are especially abundant along the South Fork of the Eel River this winter. The tiny, yellow-green-gray birds might be heard first by their chitter, kind of like an old electric typewriter. They flit about constantly in brush or trees foraging for insect food. Only the male sports the ruby crown, which he can raise like spikes when he is agitated.

Below: Ruby-crowned Kinglets by Ann Constantino.

More Rare Sightings in Humboldt County!

A Eurasian Skylark (below left), found by Tony Kurtz at Cock Robin Island and photographed by Russ Namitz at the recent Centerville Christmas Bird Count (CBC); a juvenile Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (not shown), spotted during the Arcata CBC, as well as an adult (below center) in Blue Lake on December 30, were both found and photographed by Tom Leskiw; and a Black-and-White Warbler (below right), taken at Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge by Ralph Bucher.
A Second Chance for Eel River Salmon and Steelhead?

Victoria Brandon, Sierra Club Redwood Chapter Chair

For many years Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) has operated the “Potter Valley Project,” a hydroelectric facility on the main stem of the Eel River consisting of Scott and Cape Horn dams and a tunnel diverting water into the Russian River watershed, where it is used to generate a small amount of electricity and for irrigation by farmers in Potter Valley and farther south in Sonoma County. The construction of Scott Dam in 1922 completely blocked passage of critically imperiled anadromous fish including salmon, steelhead, and lamprey while simultaneously forming Lake Pillsbury, a 2000-acre reservoir in remote northwestern Lake County used for boating, fishing and camping. Consisting of several hundred dwellings, primarily on Mendocino National Forest leaseholds but also including a scattering in private ownership, this community has very few permanent residents.

As with all other substantial hydroelectric generating systems, the Potter Valley Project requires periodic relicensing from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). PG&E initiated the relicensing process in 2017, but withdrew its application early in 2019, stating that this operation has been a consistent money-losing for years and its fiscal prospects could only get worse, given declining energy markets. Current law requiring relicensing to include provisions for fish passage, costing nearly $100 million dollars, made the financial picture even less tenable. PG&E’s current license will expire on April 14, 2022, presenting significant risks, liabilities, and uncertainty to local communities and the environment.

In response, Congressman Jared Huffman called together a diverse group of environmental organizations, water agencies, local governments and tribes and formed an “Ad Hoc Committee” to explore options for the future operation of the project.

From the Ad Hoc Committee, a working group composed of California Trout, Humboldt County, the Mendocino County Inland Water and Power Commission, the Sonoma County Water Agency and the Round Valley Indian Tribes developed a plan they called the Two-Basin Solution Partnership. This proposal would re-open the main stem of the Eel River to spawning runs of salmon and steelhead by removing Scott Dam, while maintaining electric generation and water deliveries to Mendocino and Sonoma counties. Lake Pillsbury would disappear.

In 2019 the Two-Basin Solution Partnership filed a Notice of Intent to apply for relicensing and ownership of the project, followed in the spring of 2020 by a feasibility study and project plan that includes removal of Scott Dam, and a commitment to provide water to Potter Valley and the Russian River. Water exports would take place during high winter flows rather than in the summer, as they do presently, and would be stored in Lake Mendocino. Project objectives include improved conditions for native fish, maintenance of reliable water supply, respect for tribal rights, and minimization of impacts to Lake County, which is the location of Scott Dam, Lake Pillsbury, and many miles of prime spawning habitat on the upper reaches of the Eel River.

Many questions remain, starting with impacts on local recreational users and cabin owners. What would replace the lake’s function as a fire-fighting resource? What would be the effects on surrounding wildlife such as the resident herd of Tule Elk? Are mitigations to Lake County sufficient and reasonable? Can alternative recreational uses such as fishing and mountain biking be developed? Are downstream flows sufficient to support spawning migrations this far upstream? Will disposal of mercury-laden sediments in the reservoir be a problem? All these and many more questions will be addressed in detailed studies required to support a final relicensing application. Besides addressing complex environmental issues, these studies would include an economic analysis designed to narrow down cost estimates, which vary wildly from little more than $100 million to more than $500 million.

Beneficiaries of the Two-Basin Solution obviously include the fish: according to esteemed ichthyologist Peter Moyle, more than 99 percent of available spawning habitat upstream of Soda Creek in the upper mainstem Eel River is blocked by Scott Dam, including Gravelly Valley, “some of the best historical spawning habitat in the drainage.” Beneficiaries also include the water users. Without relicensing, FERC would have to initiate a “decommissioning” process that probably would result in the removal of both Scott and Cape Horn dams, restoration of historic flows to the Eel, and cessation of water exports to the Russian River watershed.

Seeing themselves on the losing end in either scenario are the Lake Pillsbury cabin owners and lessees, who would lose the reservoir-oriented recreation that presumably drew them to the area in the first place. Dam removal would likely entail a number of years of disruptive construction and restoration work in the reservoir footprint and the probable (though perhaps temporary) diminution of their property values. In response, they have formed a “Lake Pillsbury Alliance” which advocates for retention of the reservoir and development of alternative ways to provide fish passage.

Apparently at the request of the Alliance, Congressman John Garamendi, whose district includes northern Lake County, has submitted formal comments to FERC announcing his categorical opposition to the removal of Scott Dam and demanding that Lake County be given a “full and equal seat at the table” by inclusion in the Two Basin Working Group, not just the Ad Hoc Committee which has had representation from the Lake County Board of Supervisors all along.

Although Congressman Garamendi is to be commended for defending the interests of Lake Pillsbury property owners even though very few are Lake County residents or his constituents, it is most unlikely that anything – including his involvement – will ultimately lead to the retention of the reservoir given the high costs of maintaining the Project in its current form. Since the deadline for any relicensing application has passed, the only options FERC has are relicensing to the Two-Basin Solution Partnership or decommissioning the facility altogether. FERC can’t compel the Partnership to pivot to a dam-retention-plus-fish-ladders outcome, or consider that outcome at all without a willing and well-funded entity to assume responsibility for massive construction costs and liabilities including ongoing dam maintenance. Since no such willing entity exists, for the Congressman to use his influence to help the county negotiate meaningful mitigations would probably be a more fruitful approach than categorical opposition.

In the meantime, the clock is ticking for the salmon and steelhead. Every year that a solution is postponed increases the likelihood of extinction.

That said, despite everything I remain cautiously optimistic that benefits to the watershed and its endangered fish species can be realized, benefits similar to those already seen on the Elwha River in Washington state and anticipated on the Klamath in far northern California.
Kin to the Earth

-Susan Masten-

Geneva Wiki

Susan Masten is known to many people by many titles: Former Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of the Yurok Tribe; Past-President of the National Congress of American Indians; Founding Board Member and President of Women Empowering Women for Indian Nations; Board Member of the Federal Indian Law Center; Humboldt Planning Commission member. Of all these, my fondest title -- and probably the most powerful -- is simply Auntie Sue.

Through the years I have watched, and often had the privilege to walk alongside, Auntie Sue’s fight for the sovereignty and empowerment of her own people, the health of the Klamath River and for one of our most important cultural icons as Yurok people: Nepuy -- Salmon.

Fighting for the rights of her people was not an epiphany out of the blue for Susan Masten. It was the continuation of her family’s legacy that is as old as the dirt at Rekwoi. Her family -- my family -- come from the Yurok village of Rekwoi (Requa) at the mouth of the Klamath River where we have lived since time immemorial. Generations of the family have fought for Yurok rights. Susan’s grandmother and my namesake, Geneva, descend from our family’s redwood plank house, the House of Ley’uk, born into a dance family -- holders of regalia, knowledge, and medicine for Requa. Her grandfather, Emery, was born on a rock near the mouth of the Smith River, after his Tolowa Dee-ni family had been forcibly moved there by citizen militias following massacres of Tolowa people.

When I was a young(er) professional and worked as Auntie Sue’s aide in Washington D.C., I was always amazed at how she knew everyone, and was able to navigate the most difficult of negotiations or politics with poise, ease, and intelligence. She never seemed to notice that she was one of the only women at the table, or that she instantly controlled the discussion despite the presence of mostly older white men with bigger salaries and fancier titles than her. At the end of the day, I would sit exhausted in our hotel room, feet sore from the endless walking and handshaking with who knows how many congressional leaders and politicos. I would marvel as her whirlwind of energy would continue unabated into the night, planning and preparing for the next day. Her drive to do more, to plan more, to fight harder was inexhaustible. Frustrated at my own need for sleep, I would ask, “Auntie, how do you keep going?” She was always clear: Geneva, our matriarch, taught us “we are a dance family of Rekwoi and we have an obligation as people of the river to maintain harmony and balance in this world. This is the duty Creator gave us.”

This duty Susan has always prioritized and sacrificed to fulfill. In the summer of 1978, Susan was called home to Requa from a job in the City to protect the family in the “fish wars.” Armed federal marshals occupied the Klamath River, violently enforcing a moratorium that banned all Yurok fishing on the Klamath River. We were under attack. Billy clubs, assault rifles and armed conflict had replaced songs, prayer and a sense of community on the river. Tensions were high with commercial fisherman, and the goal of the State and Federal authorities wasn’t just to prevent Yurok people from fishing: it was to cease the existence of the Yurok people, an indigenous culture that lived around and fished these waters since before the construction of the pyramids of Giza. It was a continuation of the federal government’s genocide and assimilationist policies of the 1800s. The Country was at the end of the civil rights era, and the civil unrest moving through poor minority communities made it all the way to Requa, and into Susan’s heart. We fought back. She fought back.

Auntie Sue returned to the river and fought alongside her mother and grandmother and relatives to protect a way of life. At 26, she didn’t know exactly how she would accomplish any of this but she knew she had a duty to do so and her college education was now a tool to serve her people. It was a contrast she recognized with her grandmother Geneva, who had been sent away to Indian Boarding School to unlearn her Indian ways. Susan’s education was now being used to protect her Yurok culture and values. This, coupled with her tenacity, work ethic, good humor and commitment to upholding her duty as a dance family member, has made her a critical leader in the Indigenous communities of the north coast and the nation.

In the crucible of the Fish Wars, Susan refined her political strategy, driven by the sense of purpose passed down by her family, and carried it forward into every endeavour she’s pursued in the last 30 years. Her constant battle for the river led to her appointment to the transition team formally organizing the Yurok Tribal government; and then elected to leadership positions within the Tribe. She negotiated the Yurok tribal fishery allocation, the Klamath Hydroelectric Settlement Agreement and many more important agreements. She held court with President Clinton, discussing salmon and fishing rights, and became well known in Congress as a savvy leader. Eventually, Auntie Sue was recognized as a leader among tribal leaders when she was elected as the President of the National Congress of the American Indian, the first Californian and only the second woman to hold the office, the highest elected position in Indian Country.

But no matter whether she’s in the oval office of the White House advocating for Indian Country, giving testimony before Congress, or hosting our annual family cookie decorating and caroling party, Susan has remained steadfast in her values: an overwhelming duty to her people and to the restoration of the natural harmony and ecosystem of the Klamath River. And not that it has been easy -- she has come across as much conflict within her own Tribe and she has faced externally from fisherman to County supervisors to cousins.

I was recently on a video call with Congresswoman Deb Haaland, now nominated as the first Native American Secretary of the Interior. Deb Haaland shared what an inspiration, mentor, and Auntie, Susan Masten has been to her as a Native woman leader. Auntie Sue blazed a trail for women and Indigenous peoples in politics. She leads by example, showing us all how to be true to ourselves, by embracing our differences and honoring our gender and culture. She was empowered by her unique family background and her own gifts, which in turn taught us to be the same. Everywhere and every time, Susan is a storyteller and an advocate -- always on behalf of the people of the Klamath River Basin. She is, in fact, an Auntie to us all.

To view Susan’s presentation at Save California Salmon & HSU’s Native American Studies Department’s Advocacy & Water Protection in Native California Summer Speaker Series, please visit www.californiasalmon.org/module-3.
Humboldt Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo)
Charged with Regional Preservation of Open Space & Agricultural Lands

Ali Ong Lee

International news has been featuring Brexit, the United Kingdom’s exit from the European Union that draws more distinct lines at its borders. National news has been featuring controversial politics, policies, and practices at the Mexican border. Local news has featured Humboldt County Planning Commission decisions, and recently mentioned the Humboldt Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo), responsible for drawing borders for cities and special districts.

What is LAFCo?
LAFCo, in Humboldt (https://humboldtlafco.org/) as in other California counties, is an obscure independent planning and regulatory agency established to oversee the boundaries for municipal services and the agencies providing those services.

In 2003, Chair Tom Torlakson of the Senate Committee on Local Government, summed-up well the purpose of LAFCo as part of a guide for citizens:

“City limits and district boundaries shape California’s future. Drawing these lines controls who gets to develop land, who pays which taxes, and who receives public services.”

LAFCo’s History
Established in 1963, the California State Legislature created LAFCos in each county to be watchdogs with quasi-legislative powers for planning and regulation:
1. To discourage urban sprawl;
2. To encourage orderly growth and government;
3. To preserve open space and agricultural lands.

Expanded powers in 1971 charged LAFCOs with determining future growth boundaries, also known as Spheres of Influence (SOIs), for cities and special districts providing a range of common municipal services: parks, water, sewer, lighting, recreation, and fire protection services.

Less common services provided by special districts overseen by Humboldt LAFCo are, for example:
- Petrolia Cemetery District and the Fortuna Cemetery District;
- Reclamation District 768 (Land Reclamation and Levee Maintenance);
- Resort Improvement, District No. 1 (Shelter Cove);
- Southern Humboldt Community Healthcare District;
- Not all Special Districts, like school districts, fall under LAFCo’s purview.

In 2000, the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act expanded LAFCo powers further to update Municipal Service Reviews (MSRs) every five years (https://humboldtlafco.org/msr-soi-reports/).

Humboldt LAFCo
Humboldt LAFCo’s website states: “Each LAFCo operates independently of the state and local government agencies. However, LAFCOs are tasked with administering a section of Government Code (Section 5600, et. Seq.) by a commission comprised of mostly elected government representatives. Humboldt LAFCo has a commission of seven members (with alternates):
- Two county board of supervisors;
- Two city members;
- Two district members;
- One public member.
Commissioners are paid a $20 honorarium per meeting in which they participate.

2021
- In early 2021, LAFCo will likely address the following MSR & SOI Updates:
  - City of Fortuna (January 20th LAFCo meeting);
  - City of Trinidad (January 20th LAFCo meeting);
- City of Arcata’s application for the Creekside annexation: https://humboldtlafco.org/arcata-creekside-annexation/

Also upcoming in 2021 for Humboldt LAFCo:
- City of Arcata’s application for the Creekside annexation: https://humboldtlafco.org/arcata-creekside-annexation/

Humboldt LAFCo Contact Information:
1125-16th Street, Suite 202
Arcata, CA 95521
(707)445-7508
Executive Officer Colette Metz colettem@humboldtlafco.org
Senior Advisor George Williamson georgew@humboldtlafco.org

Humboldt LAFCo meetings:
Currently on Zoom, 9:00 a.m., the third Wednesday of every odd month.
https://humboldtlafco.org/meeting-schedule/

California Association of Local Agency Formation Commissions (CALAFCo)’s Citizens Guide to LAFCos:
https://calafco.org/resources/introduction-lafco/citizens-guide-lafcos
**From Protest to Citizen Science, Rainbow Ridge Conservation Takes Many Forms**

*Caroline Griffith, EcoNews Journalist*

On December 15, Humboldt Superior Court dismissed charges against four elderly Mattole residents, Jane Lapiner, David Simpson, Ellen Taylor and Michael Evenson of the Lost Coast League, who had been arrested in June of 2019 for allegedly trespassing on Humboldt Redwood Company’s (HRC) land on Rainbow Ridge. If convicted, they could have been charged for costs incurred during logging protests, potentially hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The four were protecting “the last, most ecologically significant, intact forest in the north Mattole headwaters.” Rainbow Ridge -- 18,000 acres including 1,500 acres of primary, or ancient, forest consisting of Douglas-fir and diverse hardwoods, as well as natural coastal prairies -- largely escaped the post-WWII logging boom because of the remote and rugged terrain and its mix of hardwoods and conifers, which made it less profitable to log. Not only is the ridge sacred to local Indigenous people, it is also vital habitat for numerous species listed as endangered or threatened. The Pacific fisher, pine marten, Northern spotted owl, Northern Goshawk, Golden Eagle, coho salmon, Sonoma tree vole, and the rare fungus agarikon (Fomitopsis officinalis) can all be found on the ridge, which is owned by Humboldt Redwoods Company (HRC). HRC is run by San Francisco’s Sansome Partners, of which the Fisher family (best known for its GAP retail clothing chain) are major investors. According to Dun and Bradstreet, HRC’s annual revenue is $73.7 million.

Michael Evenson, one of the recently acquitted protestors, says the protests arose not only due to plans to log virgin forests, but also because of HRC’s use of the controversial “hack and squirt” method in which hardwood trees (which are not logged for profit) are injected with poison. If this doesn’t kill them, they are then sprayed with glyphosate. According to Penn State Extension Office, “Hack-and-squirt, also known as frill and spray, herbicide applications offer one of the most target-specific, efficient, and economical means for controlling unwanted trees. Applications made to undesirable trees facilitate the regeneration or growth of desirable trees in mixed-species stands.” “Desirable” in this case means profitable. HRC manages its forests under a certificate of sustainability from the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). Logging in virgin forests and using herbicide should disqualify any timber company from FSC certification, critics say. As Evenson says, “They are sustaining sawmills, not the life of the forest.” According to the Lost Coast League, “We challenged HRC’s process of designating High Conservation Value Forests (therefore warranting protection under FSC Guidelines and Principles) citing the Northern Spotted Owl as an indicator species of such designation. HRC ignored that fact.” An appeal with FSC is pending.

The Lost Coast League has been working to save Rainbow Ridge and the Mattole watershed since the 1990s, and is part of a coalition with the Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria and the Wiyot Tribe. According to Hank Brenard, Director of Environmental and Natural Resources at the Bear River Band of Rohnerville Rancheria, one of the ways they are working to save the ridge is through a “Focal Species” study, documenting the plant and animal species of the surrounding area to show that the ridge, which is privately held but adjacent to publicly held land, is vital to biodiversity and dependent on an intact landscape. “When we talk about the environment, we have a really solid belief that everything is connected in the ecological circle,” says Brenard. “If you are damaging the stream, you are damaging everything. Even the community around it. One of the things that is lost in timber harvest plans is the significance of the land itself.”

The northwest ridge of Rainbow Ridge is a place where medicine people were trained and the ridgeline holds traditional and religious value for tribal members. The Humboldt Interfaith Fellowship has written to the Fisher family asking them to donate the ridge to the tribe as a Cultural Conservation Forest to be held forever. Brenard says that HRC has actually started giving the tribe access to the land, which they see as a victory. “It’s no longer adversarial,” he says. “It’s really about conserving the community.”

Starting this summer, community members can participate in the conservation process by being citizen scientists and helping the tribe to document species in the Rainbow Ridge area. The Bear River Rancheria website (http://www.brb-nsn.gov/) will have a link where people can submit photos of wildlife and plants. Photos can also be submitted to Brenard at hankbrenard@brb-nsn.gov. “If people see a fisher, we want to know when that was, where that was, to show where they are and what we can do to preserve that species,” says Brenard. People are also encouraged to submit photos of plants, even if they can’t identify them (botanists with the tribe can do that). The tribe collaborates with Lost Foods, a native plant nursery in Eureka, to propagate rare native plants from seeds that have been found in the area. As Evenson, from the Lost Coast League, points out, the added benefit of projects like these is that, “by having people involved in the process, they start spending more time in the hills and streams,” which gets them more invested in the land itself.

The tribe is also working to document the effects of the cannabis boom and would like people to take photos and report any illegal dumping in the area, especially related to cannabis growing. This way, they can document the problem and also get it cleaned up; the tribe has a program to hire members for day labor and can send out a team to address reported problems. The Bear River Rancheria is in the process of securing an MOU with the State of California and the Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to manage all of its ancestral lands, almost 1,800 square miles which comprise nearly one-third of Trinity County, the bottom two-thirds of Humboldt County and which stretches three miles out to sea. They will be starting in the Mattole Valley and Eel River with a fish conservation plan and hope to “take up the slack so CDFW can do other things,” says Brenard. There will be special tribal fishing and hunting licenses for all of the ancestral land. This is the broadest and biggest agreement of its kind, and will happen gradually over then next few years. Also, this past November, the Tribe performed a Salmon Welcoming ceremony at the mouth of the Mattole River, the first time this ceremony has been performed in over 100 years. As Evenson, quoting Yurok Ancestral Guard’s Sammy Gensaw, put it, “The Industrial Revolution is over. The Restoration Revolution has begun.”
The Intersection of Capitalism, Ecological Destruction, and Art: An Invitation to Artists Dismantling Capitalism

Hayley Connors-Keith, Guest Author

Think of a box with unrecyclable materials that won’t decompose effectively in the environment. Let’s say capitalism is that box and art is the space outside of it. With art being an unlimited potential space, does it open up any possibilities for you? As a society, we must think beyond the box of capitalism to create the environmental economic reality we want.

If we take a moment to think about what it means to live in a capitalist society, we can start to understand it as the root of the ecological crisis. Our capitalist economy is built on the idea that profit is more important than people, and profit is only accumulated in a capitalist society through exploitation of natural resources in our environment and/or exploitation of workers. We acquire resources, turn them into commodities, and distribute them around the world. One main resource we use to produce and distribute these goods is fossil fuels. Corporations and businesses produce a vast amount of things we don’t actually need and oftentimes products are purposely designed to have a limited life. This type of perpetual wasteful consumption cannot be sustained on a finite planet and is inherently destructive because it creates overproduction which leads to market failure, an environmental crisis, and inequality. How often do we look at our banks to see what they are investing in and giving to? Banks have been investing trillions of dollars in the fossil fuel industry for decades. Our investment money is inadvertently polluting our most basic needs. I could go down this path with a multitude of climate facts but that can often lead us to feeling overwhelmed and possibly cause inaction. Art, on the other hand, has the power to move people to feel, which can spark thinking, connection, innovation, and can be a guide to healing.

As an environmentalist, I am still being introduced to and understanding the implications of how capitalism is affecting the environment -- but why is this so? We are either not being asked or are still learning how capitalism is causing ecological destruction in the first place. As an artist, I am discovering ways to encourage art to manifest new solutions and realities.

An exciting opportunity to practice this is coming up later this month: the fourth Annual Artists Dismantling Capitalism (ADC) symposium. This free event is being held virtually February 26-28th by Cooperation Humboldt, Access Humboldt, and the Ink People. ADC will be available through the web platform Eventee, aired on television through Access Humboldt, and will also be in Cooperation Humboldt’s archives after the event.

This year’s virtual platform will provide a unique occasion to broaden the conversation with input and knowledge from organizers and artists from around the country who, just like us, are striving to transform their communities. ADC It is an opportunity to gather and network with our local community to better understand how folks are organizing to create a just, equitable, sustainable, and regenerative economy and society. ADC will open with a discussion about the role of an artist in social change and how we transition from an Extractive/Capitalist Economy to a Regenerative/Solidarity Economy. Following will be an opening performance of Only Skin Deep which is a show by dancers of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian and mixed heritage in Humboldt County. A few of the sessions being offered during ADC are: Educational Role-play and Participatory Drama for Social Change, Decolonizing The Body, A Field Guide to a Crisis, In the Absence of the Sacred, The Role of Art in Black Liberation, and Humboldt EcoVillage. ADC will also be adding an art exhibit to the symposium this year with hopes to create a collective to work towards re framing society through art during and after this event.

Art resembles time, which suggests movement and change, and can be a guide to healing solutions. The pandemic has changed the way we live and it has revealed to some that we must radically change our political economic system because it will never be sustainable. It's time for a just recovery - one can't simply fix capitalism with capitalism.

As creators of our life we have the power to create our own reality. To create an equitable and healthy future that works for all, we must imagine new systems and ways of being. Art has always been deeply ingrained into our culture -- it allows us to see through multiple lenses, and has the power to engage and change the world.

All the crises we face are interconnected whether they are environmental justice, social justice, or racial justice -- we can’t address one without the other. Colonialism and capitalism are why we are in a climate crisis today. We must acknowledge the harmful systems that have been fostered at the expense of marginalized people. Whether or not you consider yourself an environmentalist, every individual, organization, and business has a role to play in dismantling systems that no longer work for us and creating new ones to restructure our society where people come before profit.

I hope you can attend this symposium so we can continue to envision and reimagine what our society could look like collectively. I look forward to being in a virtual space together, creating solidarity, and connecting with you.

To learn more about ADC, visit www.cooperationhumboldt.com.
The newly elected Biden administration has not wasted much time in beginning its transition to the White House, despite unrelenting efforts by the Trump administration to reverse various election results. President-elect Biden has made promises to voters that his administration would treat climate change as a cornerstone issue of his presidency. He has released the names of some key people that will be vital to making sure this promise is kept. He has proposed appointing Gina McCarthy to serve as a senior advisor on climate change policy and to lead the administration’s new White House Office on Climate Policy. McCarthy previously served as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) administrator under President Obama and has been credited as the driving force behind many of the Obama administration’s policies to limit greenhouse gas emissions. After leaving the EPA, she served as president of the Natural Resources Defense Council, a non-governmental organization that promotes environmental rights and protections. If appointed, she will mostly serve to write domestic climate change policy and her appointment would be the first step in proving that the Biden administration is serious about taking strong action on climate change.

President-elect Biden has stated that he will appoint former Secretary of State, John Kerry, to serve as an international climate envoy for the United States. Kerry served as a Massachusetts senator, was a Democratic presidential nominee in 2004, and helped negotiate the Paris Climate Accord. He has the political clout to effectively serve in this position, but it remains to be seen whether or not he and his team will be successful in convincing countries like China to reduce their dependence on fossil fuels. Some other figures tapped to serve in high profile climate and environmental positions include Representative Deb Haaland (NM), Michael Regan, and Jennifer Granholm. Representative Haaland, a progressive Democrat who was a co-sponsor of the Green New Deal, will be appointed to serve as Secretary of the Interior. She will be the first Native American to hold a cabinet-level position. Having an Indigenous voice in such a high-profile position should ensure that environmental justice issues are taken just as seriously as other environmental and climate concerns. Regan, who serves as the head of North Carolina’s Department of Environmental Quality, will serve as Biden’s EPA administrator. He will be the first African American to hold that position. Granholm, a former Michigan governor, will be appointed to serve as Secretary of Energy. She will be the second woman to hold that position.

The fate of the U.S. senate was decided late on January 5 as Democrats Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff defeated their respective Republican opponents in the Georgia runoff elections. After these developments, the chamber is now split 50/50 between Democrats and Republicans. Prior to the runoff elections, senate Republicans re-elected Senator Mitch McConnell as the GOP chamber leader and senate Democrats re-elected Senator Chuck Schumer as the Democrat chamber leader. Now that the chamber is split, Schumer will become the Senate Majority Leader by virtue of the Vice President being a Democrat, and McConnell will become the Senate Minority Leader. With the Democrats in control of the chamber, the Biden administration is now able to pursue more liberal climate and environmental legislation. A wild card in this situation is Democratic senator Joe Manchin of West Virginia, who will become the chairman of the Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources. Manchin has gone on record saying that he will not support legislation that he views to be too progressive and will vote with the Republicans, if need be and which he has done in the past.

After the dust of the 2020 election settled, the Democrats retained control of the chamber, even after losing a few seats. The House GOP leadership is attempting to move away from the hardline conservative stance to show that Republicans can care about the environment, too. After Rob Bishop retired from the House, the GOP selected Representative Bruce Westerman (R-AK) to replace him as ranking member of the House Natural Resources Committee. Westerman supported the Great American Outdoors Act (which Bishop opposed), acknowledges climate science as real, and is the only member of the House who is formally trained as a forester. He will also be the first non-western Republican representative to serve as this committee’s Ranking Member since 1979. Westerman has stated that he wants to use free-market solutions to solve climate change, among other environmental issues, and he hopes to serve as the bridge between the GOP’s environmental platform and that of the Democrats. However, House GOP leaders like Representatives McCarthy and LaMalfa are still hardline conservatives.

It remains to be seen how much these leaders will allow Westerman to give the Democrats before pulling back. Though Westerman led the bi-partisan and benign effort to establish the global “Trillion Trees” project to encourage planting of trees to offset climate change, he also showed an unwillingness to take direct action to reduce fossil fuels use. In a committee hearing in July, Westerman asked, “How do you have renewable energy without coal, natural gas or nuclear power?” Westerman also opposed Congressman Huffman’s Northwest California Wilderness, Recreation and Working Forests Act.

Governor Newsom has opted to appoint California Secretary of State, Alex Padilla, to replace Kamala Harris in the Senate. Padilla is a son of Mexican immigrants and will be the first Latino senator to serve California. Padilla and Newsom have been longtime political allies, and senator Dianne Feinstein has supported the governor’s decision.

Continued on next page
President Trump baselessly claiming, since November, that the 2020 election was stolen from him and that he and his supporters need to do something about it. Former Attorney General William Barr, who was one of the president's closest political allies, came forward in December and informed the media that the Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and numerous other lawyers throughout the country could not find evidence of widespread voter fraud that would change the outcome of the 2020 election. Despite this, the president keeps insisting that the election was stolen from him and it seems his supporters decided to take matters into their own hands.

From my perspective, what happened at the capitol was an atrocity. We cannot have a mob of people breaking into the capitol building with guns and wicked intentions because their candidate did not win an election, no matter what political party they represent. Nobody wants anything like that to happen and most Republican congressmembers have already denounced the mob and the GOP leadership is slowly moving their party away from being associated with Trump. I am hoping that this event can create some form of unity between members of the two parties as the country moves on from Trump and finally begins its healing process.

**CAPITOL BREACH ON JANUARY 6, 2021**

Kenneth Mort, NEC Environmental Policy Intern

Watching the events unfold at the United States capital on January 6 was surreal to say the least. Never in my life did I think that I would witness something as crazy as what has transpired. For those that are unaware, on January 6, a large group of Trump supporters gathered outside the capitol building while congress was in session certifying the 2020 election results. The group broke through police lines and stormed into the capitol building, causing chaos and looting items from the building as they went through. All congressmembers who were present at the capital needed to be evacuated to secure locations while the capitol police and other agencies removed the intruders from the building and disbanded the crowd. What we know as of writing this (January 9) is that one police officer has died and one of the rioters has died. The riot at the capital seems to be the culmination of the direction it moves in can indicate the severity of the coming winter.

Human beings have always had an appreciation for these charming critters. Folklore in the US and Canada claims that the width of the Woolly Bear's brown band and the direction it moves in can indicate the severity of the coming winter.

There are at least 7 Woolly Bear festivals throughout North America, most of which involve a Woolly Bear race, costume contests, and a Groundhog Day-style winter weather prediction from one of the caterpillars. Sadly, the Woolly Bear has never achieved widespread fame in the field of animal meteorology. That honor goes to Punxsutawney Phil...for now!

Sources: Wikipedia – Isabella Tiger Moth

Photo Credit: Blucolt on Flickr.
"How We Win": THE SOCIAL CHANGE PLAYBOOK

Michael D. Pulliam, Guest Author

How We Win
A Guide to Nonviolent Direct Action Campaigning

Lakey's contributions to the social change movement have been wide-ranging. He co-founded the radical journal New Left Review in the 1970s. He was the first director of the Peace Exchange Program, through which peace activists in the United States were able to find jobs and training in the antiwar movement. After the Vietnam War, he co-founded the campaign to end U.S. support for South Vietnam, which led to the fall of the government in 1975. Today, he runs the Civilian Aid Program, which sends volunteers to countries around the world to assist with social change campaigns.

How We Win is a collection of Lakey's writings from different periods of his career. The book is divided into three parts: campaigning, organizing, and winning. Each part is divided into shorter essays and case studies that illustrate Lakey's approach to nonviolent direct action.

Campaigning

Campaigning is the first part of the book. Lakey begins by explaining the importance of nonviolent direct action as a tool for social change. He argues that nonviolent action is more effective than violence, and that it is a way to bring about change without creating more violence.

Lakey explains that nonviolent direct action is not just a tactic, but a way of thinking about and working towards social change. He argues that nonviolent action is a form of power that can be used to bring about change.

Organizing

Organizing is the second part of the book. Lakey explains how to build a movement that can effectively use nonviolent direct action. He explains the importance of building a broad coalition of allies, and the importance of having a clear vision of what the movement is fighting for.

Lakey also explains how to build a strong leadership team, and how to develop a strategy for a campaign. He explains the importance of having a clear understanding of the power dynamics at play in a given situation, and how to use that understanding to develop a strategy for a campaign.

Winning

Winning is the third part of the book. Lakey explains how to evaluate the success of a campaign, and how to use that evaluation to improve future campaigns.

Lakey also explains the importance of celebrating the successes of a campaign, and the importance of learning from mistakes and failures.

Overall, How We Win is a comprehensive guide to nonviolent direct action. It is a valuable resource for anyone who is interested in using nonviolent direct action as a tool for social change.
Get on Board for the Climate: Can We Stop Worrying Yet?

Martha Walden, 350 Humboldt

The huge federal spending bill that was passed during the hectic last days of 2020 included an unexpected breakthrough for the environment. The American Innovation and Manufacturing (AIM) Act was introduced a little over a year ago, but languished until getting smuggled into the spending bill. It mandates eliminating 85% of the potent global-warming refrigerant chemicals called hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs).

HFCs are primarily used in air conditioners, refrigerators and heat pumps. That first application is particularly worrisome as the world heats up, and more and more AC emits more and more greenhouse gases (GHGs). If continuing to rely on HFCs, AC would still cause global warming even if powered by clean energy.

HFCs pack such a huge global-warming punch that I hate to tell you how much. Okay, brace yourself. Those substances cost much less than HFCs. All things considered, are they the best alternative for new equipment?

Japan have been turning to “natural” refrigerants, which is but hasn’t been deployed because HFCs are much cheaper. They’re junked without expert protocols to safely recover their refrigerant charge. Unfortunately, that is a common fate.

That’s why the AIM Act is so important. The US promised in 2016, along with 170 other countries, to reduce the production of HFCs by at least 80% by 2036. Unfortunately, the EPA’s attempt to do just that was legally challenged and bounced around in court for several years. Finally, Congress has put an end to this sorry waffling.

There is no doubt that the AIM Act is a big step in the right direction. However, there are a few loopholes. In addition to the 15% of HFC baseline production that will continue indefinitely, recycled HFCs will not be regulated. HFCs that are blended with the newest generation of refrigerants will also get a free pass. This newest generation is hydrofluoro-olefins [HFOs]. On the whole they have significantly lower Global Warming Potential (GWP) than HFCs, but some of the blends range as high as 1288.

Some HFOs can be used in existing appliances -- a big advantage to owners. Refrigerators and some heat pumps can use R1234ze with the rock bottom GWP of zero after minor modifications. It was developed several years ago but hasn’t been deployed because HFCs are much cheaper.

Meanwhile, many cooling systems in Europe and Japan have been turning to “natural” refrigerants, which is a somewhat funny name for isobutane (propane), carbon dioxide and ammonia. Those GWP scores are 3, 1, and 0. These substances cost much less than HFCs. All things considered, are they the best alternative for new equipment?

As the sixth largest economy in the world and a climate change leader, California could make a difference through its own legislation by addressing AIM’s loopholes, providing incentives for natural refrigerants, or moving up the deadline. Members of 350 Humboldt plan to meet soon with Senator McGuire’s staff to discuss these possibilities. It would be nice to cross refrigerants off of the worry list once and for all.

The AIM Act

S.2754 – The American Innovation and Manufacturing Act of 2019

Background

The AIM Act authorizes the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to regulate a group of about 20 substances known as HFCs.

HFCs were developed and commercialized as substitutes for chemicals that deplete the stratospheric ozone layer. Those ozone-depleting substances were phased out under Title VI of the Clean Air Act.

The AIM Act is based on the Title VI standards, which allowed the market to transition to next generation technologies in a way that protected the environment while supporting U.S. industry’s commercial objectives and the needs of consumers – a “win-win-win” approach.

Shorts
Short bits of interest and positivity

Outside News Source

Historic Representation in Washington

In the December issue of EcoNews, we noted that progressives were calling upon the incoming Biden administration to name Representative Deb Haaland (D-New Mexico) as Secretary of the Interior. A few weeks later, President-Elect Biden announced that historic choice: he will nominate Haaland as the USA’s first Native American Cabinet secretary. Haaland’s prospective nomination prompted numerous statements, endorsements, and congratulations from Indigenous leaders around the country, notably Gussie Lord, managing attorney of the Tribal Partnerships Program at Earthjustice, and Jonathan Nez, President of the Navajo Nation.

The Biden team additionally plans to nominate Michael S. Regan (currently heading North Carolina’s Dept. of Environmental Quality) as administrator of the EPA, and Brenda Mallory (with decades of experience in state and national climate policy positions, including President Obama’s administration) as chair of the Center for Environmental Quality. Both Regan and Mallory would be the first Black Americans to hold those offices.

Sources: Yes! Magazine, Washington Post

Renewable Energy Company Outperforms Exxon

Once enjoying the title of “largest public company on earth,” oil giant Exxon Mobil Corp. may have its best days behind it—along with the rest of the oil industry. For most of October 2020, NextEra Energy Inc., the world’s biggest supplier of wind and solar energy, overtook Exxon’s market value by around $3 billion (sometimes more). With demand for oil and gas declining sharply nationwide, partly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, major oil companies have seen significant drops in their economic standing.

Renewable energy production is gaining market ground over fossil fuels across the board, especially in terms of cost effectiveness. Onshore wind technology is already cheaper than some gas-powered turbines for generating electricity, and solar infrastructure is on track to become the least expensive form of bulk power options in the very near future. The long-term energy market outlook published by BP (British Petroleum) in September 2020 offered little hope for the oil industry to regain its former prominence in the years to come.

Sources: Bloomberg, Motley Fool

Nez Perce Tribe Reclaims 148 Acres of Ancestral Land

The Nez Perce Tribe has reclaimed part of its ancestral lands in Eastern Oregon with a purchase of 148 acres. Shannon Wheeler, Chairman of the Tribal Executive Committee, shared “a lot of excitement buzzing around,” saying, “We feel fortunate… that we are on our way home. We feel the landscape misses us, and we miss the landscape.” Historically, the Nez Perce occupied an area of what is now the junction of Idaho, Oregon, and Washington, sometimes ranging into parts of what are now Montana and Wyoming to hunt and fish. Chief Joseph (1840-1904), whose widely-known speeches and writings have long kept him in the American consciousness, led a band of the Nez Perce through what may have been the most tumultuous time in that people’s history: several U.S. treaties and forced renegotiations culminating in the 1877 Nez Perce War, when U.S. forces drove Native people off the land and pursued them into Canada. Chief Joseph used to hold council on the ridgetop in the area the Nez Perce are reclaiming.

Nokia Williamson-Cloud, director of the Cultural Resources Program for the Nez Perce, points out that history books often stray from the truth: “The narrative is that the Nez Perce never went back there. That is not the case…. Our people would continue to go back there to hunt and fish under persecution. It was privatized by non-Indian homesteaders…. It’s been a long struggle for our people to maintain that connection, but they did.”

Sources: Oregon Public Broadcasting, NezPerce.org

AFTER 80 YEARS, SALMON SPawning IN COLUMBIA RIVER

After more than a generation, Chinook salmon have been seen spawning in the upper Columbia River system. “I was shocked at first,” said Crystal Conant, a member of the Colville Tribal group connected with studying and rehabilitating the salmon run. “Then I was just overcame with complete joy. I don’t know that I have the right words to even explain the happiness and the healing.”

Since 2019, the team has released around 160 salmon into the Columbia River above the Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee dams, as well as along the Sanpoil River, a tributary of the Columbia. “It’s an exciting project,” said Casey Baldwin, a research scientist for the Colville Tribe. “It’s been rewarding to work on.” After tracking how the salmon not only survived the unfamiliar river, but spread out and began spawning, Baldwin said, “We were pleasantly surprised…. You never know if the fish are just going to turn around and swim away.” The team counted 36 reds (underwater nests) and reported healthy conditions for continued salmon reproduction.

Sources: Oregonian, Spokesman-Review

More Than Fifty Cities on Track to Meet Climate Goals

Fifty-four metropolitan cities around the globe are projected to reach their goals in tackling the impacts of global warming. ‘C40 Cities’ is a network of nearly 100 of the world’s megacities whose mayors and other leadership are collaborating to share ideas, resources, and accountability on climate change action. C40’s latest report shows that current programs in Buenos Aires, Milan, Mexico City, Paris, and Rio de Janeiro, among dozens of other metro areas, will cut global greenhouse gas emissions by 1.9 billion metric tons over the next decade—that’s roughly five times the annual emissions of the United Kingdom.

The report was released in December 2020, coinciding with the five year anniversary of the adoption of the Paris Climate Agreement. The mayor of Paris praised the “important milestone” in climate change action.

Source: The Guardian, C40.org

University of Kentucky Students Hunger Strike for Basic Needs

In March and April 2019, a coalition of student groups at the University of Kentucky organized a direct action campaign to benefit the many thousands of their fellow students who could not pay for food and housing. According to the campaign’s public statements, roughly 43% of University students were unable to afford meals, and around 2,500 students were unable to pay for a place to live. The campaigners made eight clear demands of their university administration, including the establishment of a physical Basic Needs Center and student access to a Basic Needs Fund, as well as a series of policy reforms to increase equitable benefits for and representation of Black students.

After rallies, student assemblies, and floods of phone calls were unsuccessful at getting the administration’s attention, the campaign announced that 21 students would begin an indefinite hunger strike until the University would “acknowledge the magnitude of the problem we face and act in proportion.” More students joined the hunger strike that night and the next day, and by the third day over 200 people had publicly committed to varying degrees of the strike.

Within a week of beginning their fast, the students announced a win: the University President agreed to seven of their eight demands, and made concessions on the eighth.

Source: Global Nonviolent Action Database
# Soil Science Crossword

**ACROSS**

1. Cropland left idle in order to restore productivity through accumulation of moisture
2. The rapid downhill movement of a mass of soil and loose rock, generally when wet or saturated.
3. The solid rock that underlies the soil.
4. The upper part of the soil which is the most favorable material for plant growth.
5. Rock made up of particles deposited from suspension in water.
6. A shallow depression from which all or most of the soil material has been removed by wind.
7. Waterlogged, spongy ground, consisting primarily of mosses and decaying vegetation.
8. The downward movement of water through the soil.
9. The wearing away of the land surface by water, wind, ice, or other geologic agents.
10. The exchange of air in soil with air from the atmosphere.
11. Many fine soil particles held in a single mass or cluster.
12. Layers of soil occurring in arctic regions in which a temperature below freezing has existed continuously for a long time.
13. Application of water to soils to assist in production of crops.
14. Runoff, or surface flow of water, from an area.
15. Rock of any origin altered in mineralogical composition, chemical composition, or structure by heat, pressure, and movement.
16. A miniature valley with steep sides cut by running water and through which water ordinarily runs only after rainfall.
17. A soil through which water, air, or roots penetrate slowly or not at all.
18. A natural, three-dimensional body at the earth’s surface which supports life (plant, animal or microbial).
19. A rock fragment larger than 2 feet in diameter.

**DOWN**

2. The rapid downhill movement of a mass of soil and loose rock, generally when wet or saturated.
3. The solid rock that underlies the soil.
4. The upper part of the soil which is the most favorable material for plant growth.
5. Rock made up of particles deposited from suspension in water.
6. A shallow depression from which all or most of the soil material has been removed by wind.
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