ZERO WASTE HOLIDAYS

PLEASURE ACTIVISM | WINTER SOLSTICE | LOCAL CHRISTMAS TREES | U.N. CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE
HERBICIDE WAR LESSONS | LOGGING IN JDSF | SHELLFISH POISONING | SEABED MINING BANNED | REDUCE SINGLE-USE
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The mission of EcoNews is to inform and educate the public on environmental issues around the world, state and bioregion. Many of these issues are complex and have varying levels of support. Our goal is to provide a platform to explore, discuss, and debate these topics to better understand their nuances. The ideas expressed in EcoNews do not necessarily reflect the positions of the NEC or its member groups. We appreciate and welcome alternative points of view.

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News From the Center

Larry Glass, NEC Board President
Caroline Griffith, NEC Executive Director

The Scourge of Plastic
With the fossil fuel industry currently raking in massive profits with its continued price-fixing and profiteering, one of the more unnoticed tactics of the greedy industry is to keep churning out more and more virgin plastic (virgin meaning it doesn’t include any recycled plastic). In fact, recycling of plastic actually peaked in 2014 with about 10 percent of plastic production being recycled plastic. It started decreasing right after that, and made a huge decline about the time that China decided to stop accepting plastic from western countries.

At the same time petro-chemical industrial groups and the large corporations in the field have all been trying to sell recycling as a solution while doing nothing to actually facilitate recycling to work. The usual suspects, Unilever, Nestlé, PepsiCo, and Coca-Cola are reportedly the main offenders.

There are countries that have banned some single use plastics like India, others, like Austria and Portugal, have increased reuse targets while Chile is moving to phase out single use cutlery and mandating refillable bottles. This action is way overdue in the United States, and particularly California. Although the recently-passed SB 54 is the strongest single-use plastics regulation in the country, one criticism is that there is still a heavy reliance on recycling as opposed to reduction. The bill mandates that by 2032 all plastic packaging be reduced by 25 percent and be 100 percent recyclable or compostable (as reported frequently in EcoNews, just because packaging has the recycling symbol on it, doesn’t mean it is actually recyclable). It also mandates that producers of goods packaged in plastic (like Nestle, Coca-Cola and their ilk) must help foot the bill for the infrastructure necessary to meet the plastic-reduction goals. As reported on page 17, the City of Arcata enacted a single-use disposable foodware ordinance in 2020, but the rollout of the ordinance was impacted by the pandemic and the shift to take-out dining. While the ordinance seeks to shift from single-use plastics to compostable disposables, it also allows for customers to bring reusable containers for take-out use. Our EcoNews intern, Steffi Puerto, reports on page 18 about the reusable take-out containers used by Cal Poly Humboldt. Imagine how much less plastic would end up in landfills if we could implement systems like this throughout our community?

Cannabis Reform?
The contentious “Humboldt Cannabis Reform Initiative,” in a surprise to many observers, has collected enough signatures to be placed on the ballot in 2024. This news has sent shockwaves through the already struggling Cannabis industry in Humboldt County.

While there’s lots of finger-pointing taking place about who is responsible for the current state of the cannabis industry, those of us working for the environment tend to lay good portion of the blame for this turn of events on the State and the County of Humboldt for failing to truly protect the environment and to live up to the promises made during the formation of the County’s ordinances. Uneven and at times unfair enforcement by the County has made the situation even worse. This is one of the main reasons why your Environmental Center joined with others to go to court to try and stop the many abuses of the process and law by the County.

Both sides (the Initiative petitioners and growers) seem to agree that there are serious issues with the current cannabis ordinance and we see some opportunity with a new board of supervisors sworn-in during January that some sort of compromise ordinance can be drawn up that would satisfy both sides in this argument before it’s time for this to actually be put to a vote. The Northcoast Environmental Center stands ready to work with all parties to achieve an outcome that protects small farmers and the environment.

Offshore Wind Development
On October 27 the Humboldt Bay Harbor District and Crowley Wind Services Group announced what they billed as an historic partnership to establish a “world-class marine terminal to service the offshore wind industry at a 180-acre site on the Samoa Peninsula.” The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) will be holding its lease sale for the Humboldt Wind Energy Area on December 6, meaning that this future prospect is about to become a reality. The turbines themselves will be 20 miles offshore, so the most visible aspect of this development will be the changes to the port at Humboldt Bay. The “ceremony” on October 27 was focused primarily on the economic impacts of the offshore wind industry with only one speaker, Congressmember Jared Huffman, mentioning climate change and the need to shift from reliance on fossil fuels. Jobs were the main topic of the day – 4,257 of them, according to the Harbor District.

While economic development and environmental protection need not be in opposition, the next few years of development on Humboldt Bay will be an exercise in balancing all of the local community’s needs with our obligations to the global community to contribute to solutions to the climate crisis. One aspect of the BOEM lease process involves Community Benefits Agreements, meaning developers must look at more than just the direct impact of the project (such as wildlife/turbine blade collisions) and look at larger impacts (such as how the project could affect the local housing shortage). We will be reporting on the process as it unfolds and, as always, keeping the big picture in mind.
Columnist Jamie Blatter of 350 Humboldt, describes demands for the “older generation” to face “intergenerational justice” as, “...natural responses when bearing witness to apocalyptic occurrences”, (EcoNews, November 2022).

Indeed, whether it’s the multigenerational greed dominating human history, or its victims blaming one another, both are “natural” retreats from the necessary and difficult decisions among the chilling breeze of numerous alternatives to wasteful lifestyles and community complicity in society’s increasingly corrupt, predatory and self-destructive status-quo.

Since the beginning, humanity has needlessly suffered from allowing individual's accumulation of wealth to dominate public policy and public treasure, inevitably used to maintain national and local dependence upon their outdated industries and technologies until it’s too late; a process collapsing civilizations for millennia, (Tragedy and Hope by Carroll Quigley), culminating today in oligarchs’ unprecedented centralization of capital undermining alternatives while climates, biodiversity and economies collapse worldwide and regardless of decades-long oil wars advancing to nuclear brinkmanship.

Like all corrupt systems, institutionalized apocalyptic greed relies entirely upon the cooperation of every hamlet’s public and private bureaucracies, where the real madness resides, resisting common-sense responses that address multiple crises in climate, poverty, housing and transportation. For example, assessing fines per square-foot upon vacant lots, houses, buildings and storefronts, (aka tax write-offs), commensurate with the lost productivity, crime, vandalism, fires and blight they cause, in addition to requiring business licenses for landlords, together generating revenue needed to leverage state and federal funds for building affordable housing downtown. The continued financing of sprawl, destructive projects and predatory businesses could be mitigated through a publicly owned Bank of Humboldt or California.

Why hasn’t Arcata’s successful moratorium on poverty-wage national retailers been adopted countywide and expanded to include predatory businesses turning working-poor families into the destitute: dollar stores, check cashing, storage units, job scalpers, payday loans, reverse mortgages, pawn shops and rent-to-own?

Finally, worldwide habitat loss, the collapse of fresh, clean water and the biodiversity dependent upon it can be mitigated locally by requiring professional independent water carrying-capacity certification for all developments in our headwaters.

These policies expand a fundamental family value to our community, “To each according to their ability, to each according to their need”, condemned and repressed by generations of propaganda and centuries of violence as “communistic”, however, a family value that’s jealously guarded within oligarchs’ closed culture of elite boarding schools and universities where they cull our nation’s top leadership in government, industry, legal teams and lobbying firms.

Isn’t it time we demand the same emphasis in leadership skills in our public schools: rhetoric, argumentation, public speaking, negotiation and wide access to apprenticeships in local industries and public institutions?

“If you want to live in paradise, go downtown and change it.” (Thoreau).

- George Clark, Eureka
COP27: Tiptoeing Towards Climate Justice

Caroline Griffith, NEC Executive Director

“The world’s elite have arrived at #COP27 on hundreds of private jets to lecture you about climate change. Sponsored by Coca-Cola.” Twitter post from the Democracy in Europe Movement 2025

On November 6 to 18, global leaders, dignitaries and climate activists met in the Egyptian city of Sharm el-Sheikh for COP27. COP, which stands for “Conference of Parties,” is a yearly conference which brings together signatories to the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to discuss actions to lower emissions and lessen climate-change impacts. According to a statement put out by the UNFCCC, attendees came up with a package of agreements that reaffirmed their commitment to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius (C) above pre-industrial levels, strengthened action by countries to cut greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change, and establish a Loss and Damage Fund to compensate poor countries who are hardest hit by the impacts of climate change. Skeptics, however, point out that COP27 also resulted in a massive expansion of carbon markets which may see as a license for rich countries to keep polluting while giving the appearance of taking action on climate change.

The agreement from the last climate conference (COP 26 in Glasgow) pledged that signatories would come back this year to develop concrete ways to meet the needs of the planet. Theoretically, that’s why they gathered in Sharm el-Sheikh.

Like the COP26 conference, this year there was much talk of net-zero and green technologies, but no discussion or agreement on phasing out fossil fuels, the primary driver of climate change. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said in a statement, “Our planet is still in the emergency room. We need to drastically reduce emissions now. And this is an issue this COP did not address. A fund for loss and damage is essential, but it’s not an answer if the climate crisis washes a small island state off the map or turns an entire African country to desert.” In a report released over a year ago, the International Energy Agency called for an end to new fossil fuel development. Unfortunately, the war in Ukraine and shut-off of the Russian-controlled gas pipeline has led some European countries to return to burning coal for energy and many countries, including the US, continue to invest in and approve new fossil fuels extraction projects, despite pledges to reduce emissions.

One topic that was a focus of the conference was “Loss and Damage”. This idea has been brought up for decades by developing nations who contribute significantly fewer greenhouse gas emissions to the climate crisis than wealthy nations, but are harder hit by the impacts of climate change and lack the resources to adapt to or retreat from harm. According to research by Oxfam, the richest 10 percent of the globe is responsible for 50 percent of emissions. However, those countries at the lower end of the economic spectrum are experiencing flooding, drought, and fires driven by emissions from wealthy nations and are demanding compensation. This demand for payment seems to have finally been heard; this was the first time the topic appeared on the agenda of a climate conference. One of the concrete outcomes of the conference is the establishment of a Loss and Damage Fund, which will be paid into by wealthy nations. According to a statement by the UNFCCC, a “transitional committee” was formed to make recommendations on “how to operationalize both the new funding arrangements and the fund at COP28 next year”. So although they agreed to establish the fund, the specifics won’t be decided until next year. The statement goes on to say, “COP27 saw significant progress on adaptation, with governments agreeing on the way to move forward on the Global Goal on Adaptation... New pledges, totaling more than USD 230 million, were made to the Adaptation Fund at COP27.” To put that into perspective, according to the War Resisters League, the 2023 US military budget for active military is $978 billion.

Many see these conferences as a way for wealthy countries to greenwash their actions and promote false climate-change solutions that allow companies to keep polluting and wealthy nations to keep consuming, rather than as opportunities to come together and work on real global solutions to the climate crisis and the inequalities that are exacerbated by it. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, during remarks on a presentation on Net-Zero Commitments, said, “A growing number of governments and non-state actors are pledging to be carbon-free – and obviously that’s good news. The problem is that the criteria and benchmarks for these net-zero commitments have varying levels of rigor and loopholes wide enough to drive a diesel truck through. We must have zero tolerance for net-zero greenwashing.”

Speaking on a panel of Indigenous people from across the globe entitled “Colonialism, Indigenous Peoples and Climate Change”, Julia Bernal of Pueblo Action Alliance said, “Pueblo people have gone through many waves of colonialism. The Southwest region, historically and present-day, has been deemed a national energy sacrifice zone, meaning that our natural resources – oil, gas, uranium, hard rock mining, logging – anything you can really think of as a natural resource, is cultivated in our region. Part of this ongoing colonialism is now embedded in what the dominant paradigm is deeming as a “just transition.” But what we’re seeing now is a continuation of fossil fuels guised as ‘green climate solutions’ when ultimately they’re not.”

COP27 was held against the backdrop of human rights abuses by the Egyptian government best exemplified by the case of democracy activist Alaa Abd El-Fattah who has been held in an Egyptian prison since 2011. It is estimated that as many as 65,000 political prisoners are currently held in Egypt.
Pleasure Activism: Finding Joy in Doing the Work

Elena Bilheimer, EcoNews Journalist

At a time when the news is filled with doom and gloom headlines, it can be difficult to prioritize joy as a fundamental part of activism. Concentrating on individual pleasure can seem trivial amidst the urgent work that needs doing. However, finding ways to incorporate joy into justice work can have profound effects for envisioning and creating a future worth having. As the importance of incorporating emotions into the environmental movement becomes more popular, emphasizing positive experiences and feelings serves as a reminder of all that is worth saving and fighting for.

In her book Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good, author adrienne maree brown introduces a politics of joy and healing that centers pleasure as a necessary component for changing oppressive social structures. These ideas are based on the belief that tapping into pleasure can help challenge the narrative of scarcity as promoted by the current systems in place, as well as generate justice and liberation for those who have been most adversely affected. Brown writes, “Pleasure activism asserts that we all need and deserve pleasure and that our social structures must reflect this. In this moment, we must prioritize the pleasure of those most impacted by oppression.”

Brown's work was influential for Sarah Ray, author of A Field Guide to Climate Anxiety, which also examines the role of emotions in activism and the importance of creating a movement of desire instead of sacrifice. By exploring the negative impacts that can result from using guilt and fear as strategies in many past and present environmental messages, Ray demonstrates that prioritizing a movement guided by pleasure is not superfluous but necessary. While the intention of negative messaging is to make those with privilege wake up and recognize their role in the current crisis so they may take action, this messaging often has the opposite effect on its intended audience, leading many to feel powerless and hopeless. In her introduction to the book, Ray writes “...guilt, one of the dominant environmentalist emotions [is] destructive and pointless. Rather, as the traditions of “misery resistance” tell us, pleasure, humor, desire, and a critical view of hope are better motivators of long-term commitment. We can find joy in manifesting the world we desire, not just outrage in opposing what we fear.”

This kind of activism doesn’t mean denying hard feelings or difficult truths, instead, it redirects focus toward creating the world that is desired, rather than wasting precious energy continuously concentrating on the one that isn’t. Pleasure activism is not toxic positivity, but a tool for resilience in the midst of various crises. Importantly, pleasure doesn’t equate with wealth or money. When perceived through the lens of material excess, it can become easy to demonize and classify pleasure as justification for overconsumption. However, brown is quick to point out that pleasure activism is not about overgenerating or overindulging, but instead about cultivating moderation and shifting into a mindset of abundance. “Pleasure activism is about learning what it means to be satisfiable, to generate, from within and from between us, an abundance through which we can all have enough. Part of the reason so few of us have a healthy relationship with pleasure is because a small minority of our species hoards the excess of resources, creating a false scarcity and then trying to sell us joy, sell us back to ourselves.” Ray echoes this sentiment in her book when she writes, “...reframing environmentalism as a movement of abundance, connection, and well-being may help us rethink it as a politics of desire rather than a politics of individual sacrifice and consumer denial.”

Reframing pleasure outside of consumerism can be difficult for many, but both books offer some tangible actions that can help reclaim a narrative of joy and healing. Through Ray’s experience as a professor in the Environmental Studies department at Cal Poly Humboldt, she began to see patterns in students’ emotional responses to the subject matter, resulting in her creating a visual diagram of “the affective arc of environmental studies curricula.” In this diagram, before a student can move from nihilism to hope, they move through the phase of self care, also labeled “rediscovering pleasure and baking cookies”. This step is essential, as it allows space for metabolizing difficult feelings while also creating incentive to move beyond apathy. This changing of the story is important both individually and collectively, and could prove immensely beneficial when integrated into the environmental movement.

As a source for information about the environment, EcoNews is striving to focus on “solutions journalism” in order to highlight stories of problems actively being solved through the immense effort of local and global activists, organizations, and community members. Ray points out that the lack of positive stories makes the apocalypse all the more likely, as that is the only end scenario that is given any credence by many people. One of brown’s core pleasure principles is that “what you pay attention to grows”, meaning that tuning into the goodness of what is and what could be amplifies its potential. Check out the regular “Solutions Summit” section of the paper to get a monthly dose of active hope.

Brown summed it up concisely when she wrote, “Ultimately, pleasure activism is us learning to make justice and liberation the most pleasurable experiences we can have on this planet.”

*brown chooses to not capitalize her name because she enjoys how the design appears visually and considers automatically capitalizing the self as part of how capitalism stratifies and commodifies us.
The days are growing shorter and darker as we move closer to the Winter Solstice, the meeting place between day and night when the light begins to slowly creep back in. This time of year has, for millennia, been a time of going inward, celebrating the darkness, and coming close together by firelight as we wait for the Sun to return. Cultures around the world have recognized this time as pivotal for prayer, ceremony and ritual, social gathering, and agricultural planning. There was dancing, storytelling, feasting, and burning of fires in honor of the Solstice.

So many of us have forgotten the ways of our Earth-based ancestors, and now we resist the cold dark of the season. We feel fear, anxiety, loneliness, and depression surge as we are made to be indoors in the dark for much of the day, and we too resist feeling the depth of these emotions. The social systems we live within do not foster connectivity and celebration with our communities, and what does exist at this time of year revolves around consumerism. Yet, if we become open and receptive to the living world around us and the ways of our ancestors, we can remember some of our instinctual patterns of being with the Winter and reengage with the importance and symbolism of this time of year.

As Winter builds we watch the trees shed their leaves in an effort to conserve energy and vital nutrients, becoming dormant and drawing inward. Their mycelium friends perform the same dance of dormancy if temperatures drop low enough. Foliage and fronds curl, crisp, and brown, and fall to the ground. Once dead and down, passers-by trample them or insects digest them into rich mulch for next season’s leafing out. Even our houseplants take a break from their daily draw toward the Sun, halting new growth and laying low, dreaming of temperate days and their next repotting.

Black bears in the colder reaches are full of berries, grubs, and vegetation from their fall time gorging; they move into hibernation and rest in their cozy subterranean dens, nurturing the next generation into existence. Bulbs and seeds remain still and cold in the soil as they await warming sunlight and the chance to emerge into Spring, bright and green and new. California myotis and silver-haired bats, two species known to overwinter in the Pacific Northwest, hang side by side with their families in lazy torpor as their breath slows and metabolism rests.

The greatest lessons we can learn from our more-than-human kin in Winter are Introspection and Deep Rest. This type of rest requires moving slowly, peering inward, and cozying up to our families and communities. For some of us, it means rest as a form of sitting with heavy emotions and intensity. These emotions can be related to personal pain and shadows, depression, and grief and anxiety regarding climate collapse and social injustice. Living in a capitalist system makes it difficult, if not impossible, to move intuitively with what the season asks of us. Many of us cannot fully “rest” when we are constantly working to pay bills, feed our families, and stay healthy. Because of this, we must reconsider what rest looks like. Rest might look like taking a deep breath within the chaos of it all. Rest might look like allowing yourself to take a sick day. Rest might look like laying in your child’s bed at night and letting them read you a story instead.

How can we be with Winter in a way that creates space for resting, digesting, and processing? How can we sit with one another in the cold dark and make plans for what we are bringing to fruition in the Spring? What are you plotting in the dark corners, what art are you making, what forms of resistance are you dreaming up?

"Out of this darkness a new world can arise, not to be constructed by our minds so much as to emerge from our dreams. Even though we cannot see clearly how it’s going to turn out, we are still called to let the future into our imagination. We will never be able to build what we have not first cherished in our hearts.”
- Joanna Macy
Christmas Tree Sale

Erin Kelly, a professor in the Forestry Department at Cal Poly Humboldt, said that the Forestry Department is a point of pride for the students who are specially focused on forest management, including the Forestry and Logging Sports Club. The club has around 200 students who are specialized in forest-related fields and work closely with the Forestry Department.

Every year according to the National Christmas Tree Association, there are around 200 trees that are harvested from national forests in the United States. These trees are then transported to the East Coast for public sale. However, the process of selecting and cutting down a Christmas tree is a complex one that involves many factors.

In addition to the cost of cutting and transporting the trees, there are also environmental concerns. The Forestry Department at Cal Poly Humboldt has been involved in efforts to reduce the environmental impact of cutting Christmas trees. They use sustainable harvesting practices and ensure that all the trees are harvested from areas that are actively managed for forest production.

The Forestry Department also promotes the use of artificial Christmas trees. According to the National Christmas Tree Association, artificial trees have a lower environmental impact than real trees. They require less water, energy, and fertilizer, and are easier to transport and store.

The Forestry Department also encourages people to consider the environmental impact of their Christmas tree. They recommend using a real tree that is grown on a farm, and to recycle the tree after the holidays.

For those who want to remain committed to the environment, the Forestry Department also offers advice on how to reduce the environmental impact of their Christmas tree. They recommend using a tree that is grown on a farm, and to recycle the tree after the holidays.

Elena Bilheimer, EcoNews Journalist

December 2022

The Forestry and Logging Sports Club at Cal Poly Humboldt is a point of pride for the students who are specially focused on forest management, including the Forestry and Logging Sports Club. The club has around 200 students who are specialized in forest-related fields and work closely with the Forestry Department. The students are involved in efforts to reduce the environmental impact of cutting Christmas trees. They use sustainable harvesting practices and ensure that all the trees are harvested from areas that are actively managed for forest production. The Forestry Department also promotes the use of artificial Christmas trees. According to the National Christmas Tree Association, artificial trees have a lower environmental impact than real trees. They require less water, energy, and fertilizer, and are easier to transport and store. The Forestry Department also encourages people to consider the environmental impact of their Christmas tree. They recommend using a real tree that is grown on a farm, and to recycle the tree after the holidays. For those who want to remain committed to the environment, the Forestry Department also offers advice on how to reduce the environmental impact of their Christmas tree. They recommend using a tree that is grown on a farm, and to recycle the tree after the holidays.
The Interstate Highway System and the Spread of Car Dominance Across the Country

Colin Fiske, Coalition for Responsible Transportation Priorities Executive Director

This is the fourth in a series of articles in the EcoNews about the history of how American communities were designed for cars. The first three articles described the origins of traffic laws, the criminalization of walking in the street, and the rise of zoning laws that led to segregated, car-dominated communities.

By the 1950s, the fight for legal and cultural dominance of the public street had largely been won by car companies and drivers, and zoning laws which enforced low-density development had been implemented in cities and towns across the country. The federal government had been subsidizing road construction for decades by then, but the 1956 Federal-Aid Highway Act signed by President Eisenhower marked a major escalation in the nation’s commitment to infrastructure for cars and trucks. It wrote into law what had previously been just a fantasy of car-boosters in industry and politics: a nationwide network of “superhighways.” And it committed $25 billion (equal to about $250 billion in today’s dollars) to do it.

Contrary to popular belief, however, the Interstate Highway System (and US roads more generally) have never been funded entirely by gas taxes and other “user fees.” It soon became clear that even the billions of dollars allocated by the 1956 law would not be enough to build the Interstate system, and in the early years of construction many considered it a boondoggle. But John F. Kennedy, Eisenhower’s successor, doubled down on the Interstate program, and the federal government responded to the public skepticism with even more billions in funding along with an all-out public relations effort. By the mid-1960s, it was pretty clear that the Interstate Highway building program was here to stay.

Over the following decades, the federal government pumped an ever-increasing amount of money into the Interstate Highway System.

Although the Interstate Highway System is generally thought of as a long-distance rural network, urban transportation and transformation were key justifications for it from the very beginning. Interstates were conceived and designed as quick and efficient ways to get massive numbers of drivers into and out of city centers. They were also intended and widely used to destroy neighborhoods populated by people of color—designated as “slums” or “blight”—and create physical barriers to segregate people by race. Instead of the intended “urban renewal,” however, the mass urban displacement exacerbated poverty and poor living conditions. These impacts, combined with superhighway access for cars directly in and out of downtowns, supercharged the suburban building boom and “white flight” that had already begun under the influence of new zoning rules and changing transportation norms.

In fact, studies estimate that urban Interstate highways reduced urban housing stock by 15 percent and urban populations by as much as 18 percent, all while suburban populations exploded. In other words, a lot of the blame for the hollowing out of city centers and today’s urban housing shortages, along with the sprawling car-dependent suburbs that characterize most modern American metropolitan areas, can be attributed to the Interstate Highway System.

It may seem like all this has little to do with the North Coast. After all, there is no Interstate highway here—the nearest point on the Interstate Highway System is I-5 in Redding. But the impact of the Interstate system can be felt even here.

For one thing, the Interstate system introduced the nation’s first highways purpose-built exclusively for cars and trucks, which became the model for highways throughout the country, including those on the North Coast. Later iterations of federal transportation legislation formalized these design standards and extended them to other highways. Notably, the Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1982 designated a “National Network” of highways, largely overlapping the Interstate Highway System, which were required to accommodate the largest tractor-trailers (now called “STAA trucks”). The Act also basically required that all other highways have to be built to accommodate these trucks whenever feasible—which is a large part of the reason that highways in our region are so big and wide even when they go directly through downtowns.

Without the Interstate Highway System, then, we would not have massive limited-access highways connecting most of the North Coast’s major communities—and cutting vast swaths of asphalt and concrete through those same communities. It is interesting to imagine, for example, what Arcata would look like today had local environmentalists prevailed in stopping Caltrans from cutting the Highway 101 canyon through the middle of town—how much more walkable and bikeable the town might be, and how much more desperately needed housing might be standing in the center of town. And bedroom communities like McKinleyville likely wouldn’t exist in their current form without direct freeway access to the job centers of Arcata and Eureka.

Speaking of “freeways,” the Interstate system is also associated with the invention of that term. By associating the term “free” with an enormously expensive type of transportation infrastructure, and one which comes with huge societal costs, became one of the most effective and insidious branding efforts in American history. Far from being free, the Interstate Highway System—along with the vast network of connecting highways which extend its reach to the North Coast and the rest of the nation—constitute a massively expensive multi-decade public works project that prioritized cars and trucks, enabled suburban sprawl, and destroyed some of the most vibrant walkable, bikeable, and transit-friendly urban communities in the country.

3U.S. Public Interest Research Group and Frontier Group. 2015. Who Pays for Roads?
5Weingroff 2006.
7Nall, Clayton and Zachary O’Keefe. 2018. What Did Interstate Highways Do to Urban Neighborhoods?
9Stromberg 2016.
Lessons from the Herbicide Wars

Caroline Griffith, NEC Executive Director

On October 25, in response to massive public outcry due to PG&E’s proposal to spray herbicides along its rights-of-way, the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution in opposition to spraying herbicides at any time on County property or on private lands without the express permission of the landowner. After PG&E announced the plan to spray, we received numerous phone calls and emails at the NEC asking when the County would outright ban the use of herbicides and why it hadn’t done so already. To answer that question we have to look to the herbicide wars of the 70s and past efforts to regulate what the State calls “economic poisons.”

Pesticide is a blanket term to describe numerous chemicals, the compounds used to kill various targets: herbicides, fungicides, rodenticides, and insecticides all fall under the category of “pesticide.” The EPA defines it as “any substance or mixture of substances intended for preventing, destroying, repelling, or mitigating any pest.” The Humboldt County resolution is specific to herbicides, which PG&E planned to use for what it calls “vegetation management,” jargon that means eliminating plants along its power lines.

The resolution states the County’s opposition to the use of herbicides on private property without the express written consent of landowners; opposition to the use of herbicides on county-owned land and right-of-ways unless no other feasible alternative exists, but most importantly directs staff to develop an ordinance that states this. This last point is important because a resolution is not a binding law; it is a statement of the opinion of a governing body which might change when a new board is sworn in. An ordinance, however, creates a binding law, which is what the public and local environmental groups are demanding to codify a policy that Humboldt County has informally been following since 1987, when it stopped using herbicides on County right-of-ways. While the Board of Supervisors is able to regulate pesticide use on County property, its ability to regulate it on private property is restricted by state law.

The fight against herbicides has been ongoing in Northern California since the 70s. Anti-herbicide group Safe Alternative for Our Forest Environment (SAFE) was formed in 1979 in response to massive helicopter spraying of herbicides on public and private timberlands in Trinity County. One motivating factor in the formation of SAFE was an incident in which a group of pregnant women from the small town of Denny suffered miscarriages—including one molar pregnancy—and a pesticide related cancer, as well as some livestock deaths after being exposed to phenoxy herbicides sprayed by the U.S. Forest Service. Both public agencies, like the Forest Service, and private companies would aerially spray herbicides after clearcutting to keep the non-commercial plants and trees from growing back. This practice, which is the subject of the recent novel Damnation Spring by Ash Davidson, was particularly devastating to Indigenous communities which were surrounded by timberland.

In response to the aerial spraying of herbicides, both Trinity and Mendocino Counties enacted pesticide regulations; Trinity County’s came through the Board of Supervisors in the form of an ordinance while the Mendocino County regulations were passed through the citizen initiative process. The Mendocino regulation was challenged in court by the then CA State Attorney General (Deukmejian v. County of Mendocino, 1984), though it was upheld by the state Supreme Court on appeal. After the appeal, the California legislature quickly met and, under pressure from agribusiness near the end of that legislative session, took a bill ready for passage, gutted it, and inserted a bill which amended the California Food and Agricultural Code to state, “no ordinance or regulation of local government, including, but not limited to, an action by a local governmental agency or department, a county board of supervisors or a city council, or a local regulation adopted by the use of an initiative measure, may prohibit or in any way attempt to regulate any matter relating to the registration, sale, transportation, or use of pesticides, and any of these ordinances, laws, or regulations are void and of no force or effect.” This nullified the ordinances from Trinity and Mendocino Counties and made it so no other county or municipality could directly regulate pesticides.

Although the State of California had been regulating pesticides since 1901, the main goal of the Economic Poisons Act of 1921 and subsequent amendments to it was to discourage fraud and the sale of ineffective pesticides; protecting people and the environment from harm was secondary. Then, as today, the companies manufacturing pesticides claimed that they were perfectly harmless, as long as “used as directed,” and it seemed there was little recourse for those who were harmed by them, particularly workers and people of color. In the May 1988 issue of EcoNews there is a short article entitled “Who Killed the Migrants” which states, “Congressional oversight hearings on OSHA last month revealed that failure of the government to enforce its own regulations has caused hundreds of migrant farmworkers to suffer death, disease and toxic contamination.” Big Ag had helped to craft a law that allowed it to keep using “economic poisons” and the laws meant to protect workers from harm were not enforced.

Luckily, the course that Trinity County took after the State preempted its attempt to regulate pesticides could give some insight into how Humboldt County, and others, could do the same.

In 1985 the Trinity County Board of Supervisors passed an ordinance which established a “no detectable discharge” policy and made it a misdemeanor to put any detectable level of any polluting substance into Trinity County waters, except native soil, because the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act – also known as the California Water Code – allows counties to pass more restrictive laws than those that exist at the state level to protect local waters. Then, in 1987, the Trinity County Supervisors passed a resolution declaring herbicides a public nuisance. This allows agencies or entities to be sued for violating a legally established public nuisance, which herbicide spraying was officially declared to be. It also showed that Trinity County and its citizens were serious about pesticides and led to voluntary agreements with other government agencies to stop using pesticides in the county. Many of those agreements and the nuisance ordinance remain to this day.

The resolution passed by the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors did not put a timeline on when it needed to come back with an ordinance, but many groups and activists throughout the County will be watching and waiting, so stay tuned, and let your Supervisor know that this is important to you.
Lecciones de las Guerras de Herbicidas

Caroline Griffith, NEC Executive Director
Traducción por Carley Arroyo

El 25 de octubre, en respuesta a la protesta pública masiva debido a la propuesta de PG&E de rociar herbicidas a lo largo de sus derechos de vía, la Junta de Supervisores del Condado de Humboldt aprobó una resolución en contra de rociar herbicidas en cualquier momento en propiedades del Condado o en terrenos privados sin autorización expresa del propietario. Después de que PG&E anunciara el plan de fumigación, recibimos numerosas llamadas telefónicas y correos electrónicos del NEC preguntando cuándo prohibiría el condado el uso de herbicidas y por qué no lo había hecho ya. Para responder a esa pregunta tenemos que mirar a las guerras de herbicidas de los años 70 y los esfuerzos anteriores para regular lo que el estado llama “venenos económicos”.

Pesticida es un término general para describir numerosos -cidas; los compuestos utilizados para matar varios objetivos; los herbicidas, fungicidas, rodenticidas e insecticidas se incluyen en la categoría de “pesticides”. La EPA lo define como “cualquier sustancia o mezcla de sustancias destinadas a prevenir, destruir, repeler o mitigar cualquier plaga”. La resolución del condado de Humboldt es específica para los herbicidas, que PG&E planeó usar para lo que llama “manejo de la vegetación”, jerga que significa eliminar plantas a lo largo de sus líneas eléctricas.

La resolución establece la oposición del Condado al uso de herbicidas en propiedad privada sin el consentimiento expreso por escrito de los propietarios; oposición al uso de herbicidas en terrenos y derechos de paso propiedad del condado, a menos que no exista otra alternativa factible, pero lo más importante es que instruya al personal para que elabore una ordenanza que establezca esto. Este último punto es importante porque una resolución no es una ley vinculante; es una declaración de la disposición de un grupo de gobierno que podría cambiar cuando una nueva junta preste juramento. Sin embargo, una ordenanza crea una ley vinculante, que es lo que el público y los grupos ambientalistas locales exigen para codificar una política que el condado de Humboldt ha estado siguiendo de manera informal desde 1987, cuando dejó de usar herbicidas en los derechos de paso del condado. Si bien la Junta de Supervisores puede regular el uso de pesticidas en la propiedad del Condado, su capacidad para regular en la propiedad privada está restringida por la ley estatal.

La lucha contra los pesticidas ha estado en curso en el norte de California desde los años 70. El grupo anti-herbicida Safe Alternative for Our Forest Environment (SAFE) se formó en 1979 en respuesta a la fumigación masiva con helicópteros de herbicidas en terrenos madereros públicos y privados en el condado de Trinity. Un factor motivador en la formación de SAFE fue un incidente en el que un grupo de mujeres embarazadas del pequeño pueblo de Denny sufrieron abortos espontáneos, incluido un embarazo molar, y un cáncer relacionado con pesticidas, así como algunas muertes de ganado después de estar expuestos a fenoxi. herbicidas rociados por el Servicio Forestal de los Estados Unidos. Tanto las agencias públicas, como el Servicio Forestal, como las empresas privadas rociarían herbicidas desde el aire después de la tala para evitar que las plantas y los árboles no comerciales vuelvan a crecer. Esta práctica, que es el tema de la novela Damnation Spring de Ash Davidson, fue particularmente devastadora para las comunidades indígenas que estaban rodeadas de bosques.

En respuesta a la fumigación aérea de herbicidas, tanto el condado de Trinity como el condado de Mendocino promulgaron regulaciones sobre pesticidas; El condado de Trinity pasó por la Junta de Supervisores en forma de ordenanza, mientras que las regulaciones del condado de Mendocino se aprobaron a través del proceso de iniciativa ciudadana. La regulación de Mendocino fue impugnada en los tribunales por el entonces Fiscal General del Estado de CA (Deukmejian v. County of Mendocino, 1984), aunque fue confirmada por la Corte Suprema del estado en apelación. Después de la apelación, la legislatura de California se reunió rápidamente y, bajo la presión de la agroindustria, y cerca del final de esa sesión legislativa, tomó un proyecto de ley listo para su aprobación, lo desistió e insertó un proyecto de ley que enmendaba el Código de Alimentos y Agricultura de California para declarar, “Ninguna ordenanza o regulación del gobierno local, incluyendo, pero no limitado a, una acción por parte de una agencia o departamento gubernamental local, una junta de supervisores del condado o un consejo de la ciudad, o una regulación local adoptada mediante el uso de una medida de iniciativa, puede prohibir o de alguna manera intentar regular cualquier asunto relacionado con el registro, venta, transporte o uso de pesticidas, y cualquiera de estas ordenanzas, leyes o reglamentos son nulos y sin fuerza o efecto.” Esto anuló las ordenanzas de los condados de Trinity y Mendocino e hizo que ningún otro condado o municipio pudiera regular directamente los pesticidas.

Aunque el Estado de California había estado regulando los pesticidas desde 1901, el objetivo principal de la Ley de Venenos Económicos de 1921 y las enmiendas posteriores a la misma era desalentar el fraude y la venta de pesticidas ineficaces; proteger a las personas y al medio ambiente del daño que era secundario. Entonces, como hoy, las empresas que fabricaban pesticidas afirmaban que eran perfectamente inofensivos, siempre y cuando “se usaran según las instrucciones”, y parecía que había pocos recursos para quienes resultaban perjudicados por ellos, en particular los trabajadores y las personas de color. En la edición de mayo de 1988 de EcoNews hay un breve artículo titulado “Quién mató a los migrantes” que dice: “Las audiencias de supervisión del Congreso sobre OSHA el mes pasado revelaron que el fracaso del gobierno para hacer cumplir sus propias regulaciones ha causado que cientos de trabajadores agrícolas migrantes sufran la muerte, enfermedad y contaminación tóxica.” La gran agricultura ayudado a elaborar una ley que le permitía seguir usando “venenos económicos” y las leyes destinadas a proteger a los trabajadores de daños no se hicieron cumplir.

Luckily, the course that Trinity County took after the State preempted its attempt to regulate pesticides could give some insight into how Humboldt County, and others, could do the same.

In 1985 the Trinity County Board of Supervisors passed an ordinance which established a “no detectable discharge” policy and made it a misdemeanor to put any detectable level of any polluting substance into Trinity County waters, except native soil, because the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act – also known as the California Water Code – allows counties to pass more restrictive laws than those that exist at the state level to protect local waters. Then, in 1987, the Trinity County Supervisors passed a resolution declaring herbicides a public nuisance. This allows agencies or entities to be sued for violating a legally established public nuisance, while the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act makes it a crime for anyone to apply herbicides that are detectable in the water.

It also showed that Trinity County and its citizens were serious about pesticides and helped to bring together agreements with the local government agencies to stop the use of pesticides in the community. Many of those agreements and the nuisance ordinance remain to this day.

Afortunadamente, el curso que tomó el condado de Trinity después de que el estado se adelantara a su intento de regular los pesticidas podría dar una idea de cómo el condado de Humboldt y otros podrían hacer lo mismo. En 1985, la Junta de Supervisores del Condado de Trinity aprobó una ordenanza que estableció una política de “descarga no detectable” y convirtió en un delito menor poner cualquier nivel detectable de cualquier sustancia contaminante en las aguas del Condado de Trinity, excepto en el suelo nativo, porque el Curso del Agua de Porter-Cologne La Ley de Control, también conocida como el Código de Agua de California, permite que los condados aprueben leyes más restrictivas que las que existen a nivel estatal para proteger las aguas locales. Luego, en 1987, los supervisores del condado de Trinity aprobaron una resolución declarando que los herbicidas son una molestia pública. Esto permite que las agencias o entidades sean demandadas por violar un Código local. Hasta el día de hoy.

La resolución aprobada por la Junta de Supervisores del Condado de Humboldt no fijó un límite de tiempo sobre cuándo debían regresar con una ordenanza, pero muchos grupos y activistas en todo el condado estarán observando y esperando, así que manténgase atento e dégale a su Supervisor que esto es importante para usted.
Hey EcoNews readers. It feels like about the fifth time I’ve written an update on the campaign to conserve Jackson Demonstration State Forest (JDSF), but that just goes to show how committed local activists, environmentalists, and tribal members are to ensuring that this special place is protected.

To recap, JDSF is a state-owned commercial timberland located in Mendocino County between the cities of Fort Bragg and Willits. The land is the ancestral homeland of the Northern Pomo and Coast Yuki peoples and was stolen from them during the California genocide. The California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection (CALFIRE) currently manages the forest by writing timber harvest plans (THPs), approving those plans, and then selling them to private logging companies. Logging operations were paused in 2021 due to safety concerns related to forest defenders and ongoing tribal consultation.

JDSF is special for a number of reasons. The forest houses incredibly sacred Native American sites and is a cultural landscape for local Indigenous People. Thanks in part to decades of citizen advocacy, the forest has been managed more lightly than the surrounding private timberlands. For instance, from 2001 to 2009 all logging in the forest was paused due to a lawsuit brought by Vince Taylor and other activists. Because of this, the forest is also one of the only places in California where second growth redwood trees are beginning to reach 150+ years of age, meaning that it has the potential to become a “new” old growth forest in the future. The forest also serves as a refuge for northern spotted owl, coho salmon, and other species that depend on healthy forests. JDSF also offers numerous outdoor recreation opportunities including popular mountain biking trails and mushroom foraging. All of these benefits are threatened by proposed logging operations in JDSF, and the Save Jackson Coalition has been actively lobbying for a change in management away from commercial logging and towards a more holistic approach.

CALFIRE shocked everyone when it announced in August that logging would resume on four current THPs located in JDSF. CALFIRE made this announcement without coming to a resolution with the Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians, one of the tribes with ancestral ties to JDSF. Logging has already resumed on the Red Tail and Chamberlain Confluence THPs. Forest defenders have reported seeing large redwood logs, the largest measuring over 55 inches at the cut end, being cut in the Red Tail THP. This comes at the beginning of the wet season when logging is even more harmful to forest and river ecosystems. Forest defenders recently sent us images of muddy, rutted logging roads that are the direct result of CALFIRE’s decision to resume operations during the wet weather period. These roads will increase erosion and result in the delivery of heavy sediment into nearby waterways which threatens endangered coho salmon in the already polluted Noyo River. As of this writing, there are still plans where operations have not yet restarted. These plans included the Caspar 500 Plan, which contains mature second growth trees; and Soda Gulch, which houses a Native American sacred site.

In response to CALFIRE’s announcement, the Save Jackson Coalition has held numerous protests, rallies, and demonstrations in both Mendocino and Sacramento. Perhaps most dramatically, the Coalition conducted a rally at the joint California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) and CALFIRE headquarters located in Sacramento during CNRA’s 30x30 kick-off event. The purpose of the rally was to point out the hypocrisy of pledging to conserve 30 percent of the state while continuing to log mature redwoods on stolen public lands.

The Save Jackson Coalition isn’t going anywhere and will continue advocating for JDSF until concrete changes are made to management. To find out more, visit Savejackson.org and pomolandback.com.
Please join RRAS at 7:30 pm on Wednesday, December 7th for an orientation on the upcoming 123rd Christmas Bird Count!

Sean McAllister, Tony Kurz, and Ken Burton will discuss the counts they will be leading as well as the Del Norte and Willow Creek counts.

Hot drinks and goodies will be served at 7 p.m., so bring a mug to enjoy cider, cocoa, or shade-grown coffee. Please come fragrance-free. In-person at Masonic Lodge, 251 Bayside Road, Arcata, or attend virtually on Zoom. All welcome!

The Centerville count is on January 1, and is the oldest of our local counts. The origin of this CBC has been traced back to 1947, when Dr. Clarence Crane and his wife Ruth of Ferndale began The Humboldt County New Year’s Bird Count with their children and extended family. Ruth always made Boston Baked Beans and coleslaw for the participants after the count. A very homey affair. The event was eventually adopted as one of the Audubon Society’s annual CBCs, with formal record-keeping dating back to 1962. Local birder-biologist, Sean McAllister, has been organizing the event since 2015. Contact Sean at (707) 496-8790.

The Arcata count is on December 17, and was first organized by John Sterling in 1984 and has become one of the highest recording counts in our area. This circle is comprised of coastal habitat that includes: ocean, bay, saltmarsh, and freshwater estuary. It also covers a good deal of pastureland, coastal forest (conifer/riparian), and urban habitat. Tony Kurz is currently the compiler for the Arcata Christmas Bird Count and has been for the last six years. Contact Tony at (559) 333-0893.

The Del Norte count was begun in 1962 by Paul Rail, and Gary and Lauren Lester continued this very popular count. The count circle includes Point St. George, all of Crescent City and as far east as Gasquet. This circle allows for a generous amount of coastal habitat as well as a bit of offshore waters. The count this year is on December 18, compiled by Lucas Brug. Contact Lucas at (707) 954-1189.

The Willow Creek count was started by David Anderson and Roger Weiss in 1976. Lately, and this year, the count is led by Birgitte Elbek and is scheduled for Wednesday, December 21st. Contact Birgitte at (707) 267-4140.

The Tall Trees count was started in 2012 by Ken Burton who remains the compiler. The count circle is centered on the Tall Trees Grove in Redwood National Park. A few species that are regular on this count, such as Ruffed Grouse and White-breasted Nuthatch, are not typically found on any of the other counts in the region. Contact Ken at (707) 499-1146.

Right: Clockwise from top left: Coppersmith Barbet, Emerald Dove, Fork-Tailed Drongo, and Indian White-eye. All photos by Karthik Sai.

FIELD TRIPS IN DECEMBER & JANUARY!

Please watch our website for more information on the monthly Women and Girls’ Birding Walk, and more trips in January 2023.

Sat. Dec. 3rd – 8:30-11am. Birding at Arcata Marsh, led by Gary Friedrichsen. Bring binoculars and a scope if you have one and meet at the south end of I Street (Klopp Lake). Reservations not required.


Sun. Dec. 18th – 9-11am. Ralph Bucher will lead a walk on the Eureka Waterfront. This trail is paved and is wheelchair accessible.

"Vihangam" – Birds and Birdwatching in India – January 2023!

(Vihangam means birds flying, or birds-eye, in the Sanskrit language.)

Please join RRAS at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, January 18, for a program about birdwatching and the incredible birds of India. Presenter, Karthik Sai, will deliver the presentation via Zoom from India (see our website for link). Mr. Sai guided our RRAS president, Gail Kenny, and her family, on an amazing bird excursion while she was in Southern India this past August.

Mr. Sai is a wildlife researcher, photographer, guide, and conservationist. He goes by “Bird Man,” in Tirupati, India where he works as a wildlife consultant to Tirupati Wildlife Management Division and a wildlife biologist at Sri Venkateswara National Park. Mr. Sai has been passionate about wildlife photography since childhood. As a Tirupati native, he always had a dream to photograph birds and animals in Seshachalam forest which is home to 215 species of birds. Mr. Sai has photographed 179 of them, and 574 bird species in India. He has an MA in Wildlife Sciences and a diploma in Ornithology.

Hot drinks and goodies will be served at 7 p.m.


Sat. Dec. 24th – 9-11am. Wigi Wetlands Volunteer Workday. Contact Jeremy at jeremy.cashen@yahoo.com or (214) 605-7368 for more info.


Sat. Dec. 17th + Jan. 21st – 10-12. Beginning Birdwatching & Project Feederwatch at Jacoby Creek School garden on Bayside: Every third Saturday through April. Family-friendly, all ages welcome! Contact Denise Seeger at daseeger@gmail.com for more info.

Sat. January 7th – 7:30am-4pm. Join field trip leader Rob Fowler for a free birding trip focused on finding winter rarities. This trip will start in Arcata and end in the Ferndale area. Meet at the Arcata Marsh G Street parking lot, bring a lunch, dress warm, heavy rain cancels. Contact Rob at (707) 616-9841.

Sat. January 21st – 9-11am. Join a Cal Poly Humboldt waterfowl and wetlands lecturer for birding at the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge. The refuge frequently hosts large flocks of geese, and many other species. Dress warm and bring binoculars or a scope.

*Contact Ralph at thebook@reninet.com for any walks he leads and all Marsh walks.

*Contact Field Trip Chair, Janelle Chojnacki at janelle.choj@gmail.com for more information on all other walks, unless otherwise specified.
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President’s Column

In mid-October I found a pile of feather remains in my yard. They were mostly songbird-sized wing and tail, barred feathers; black, brown, and tan colors, with a bit of white in the tail feathers. I was curious about what bird it could have been. It was on a lawn at the side of my neighbor’s yard, which is a large grassy corner lot. My first guess was a Bewick’s Wren, but the white in the tail feathers didn’t fit, and Bewick’s Wren would be unusual in my yard in downtown Trinidad.

Then I remembered the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Feather Atlas at www.fws.gov/lab/featheratlas/. It choose feather pattern, colors, size, position, feather atlas it didn’t have this feature. I might be and compared the feathers. I entered my data, and it came I reviewed the pictures of the Western Meadowlark is not a only noticed it a few times around next question was what ate it? It body feathers, and its wing and quills were broken, like they ground because there weren’t any has been a new cat around the was a cat got it. Then I remembered living under a house nearby. Lots of It could have been predated by a fox but are the most likely predators.

If you’d like to become more active with RRAS, we are still looking for Field Trip committee members, and a Treasurer. Please email me at gailgkenny@gmail.com if you’d like to know more about these volunteer roles, and how you can help!

Center: The feathers Gail found in her yard.

Featured Local Artist: Maureen McGarry

By Gina Rogers

They’re back! The first Humboldt County eBird reports for Aleutian Cackling Geese (Branta hutchinsii) were filed in mid-September, over two weeks earlier than usual, and by the beginning of October you could hear the big flocks of geese coming in for a landing in their favorite spots around our area’s wetlands, marshes, and farmlands.

This sight brings to mind local artist and author Maureen McGarry’s children’s book, Louie Learns a Lesson. It features watercolor paintings of Aleutian Geese and tells the story of how they almost became extinct because of the foxes introduced to their Aleutian Island breeding grounds as part of developing a fur industry there. McGarry self-published the book in 2021. While the drawings came easily to her, the research and finding the right words was something new for someone who is primarily a visual artist.

McGarry’s work has always centered on interpreting the elegant beauty of nature. She came to Humboldt County in 1975 to study art at Cal Poly Humboldt and has been here ever since. She is currently living in Bayside, with her art studio in Arcata. In her painting, she notes, “I experimented with various mediums (and still do sometimes), but I always return to watercolors for their pure pigments, and the simplicity of water as their solvent. For me, painting with watercolors as my medium is what is closest to nature.”

McGarry enjoys painting birds. Their amazing ability to fly, something humans can’t do, gives them a totally different perspective on the world that she tries to capture. But she had a broader purpose in mind when she started writing Louie Learns a Lesson. The Aleutian Geese have proven to be so resilient. This species was one of the first animals designated as endangered in 1967, under the Endangered Species Preservation Act of 1966. Over time, conservation initiatives from the Aleutian Canada Goose Recovery Program helped them recover, and they were removed from the list of ESA-listed threatened and endangered species in 2001. Now over 60,000 can be found in the Humboldt Bay area at their peak in the spring. The book’s goal is to show children how something humans caused was then fixed, and in the preface, she encourages them to become guardians of the natural world.

You can view more of Maureen’s artwork at www.maureennmcgarry.com, and copies of Louie Learns a Lesson are available at the Trinidad Coastal Land Trust office and the Arcata Marsh Interpretive Center.

Top left: Cover of Maureen McGarry’s book.
Above: “In Flight,” a watercolor illustration in Louie Learns a Lesson, showing two Aleutian Cackling Geese flying over Bayside near Gannon Slough (Sunny Brae Middle School is the large gray area right above the goose on the right’s nose).
In Part I of the interview with Monte Merrick, Director of Humboldt Wildlife Care Center (HWCC) and Bird Ally X (see the September 2022 Sandpiper), Monte talked about the history of HWCC, its mission, and what motivates him, the staff, and volunteers. Here, he describes some daily encounters with animals and how their work relates to the larger issues of species decline and human intervention.

**HH: How many animals do you treat annually?**

MM: Ten years ago, we treated around 1000 to 1200 animals annually, but each year that number has increased – in 2020, we treated 1568, and in 2021 we treated 1612 patients.

**HH: What is the most common injury?**

MM: The single most common injury we see is cat attacks, followed quickly by window strikes, being hit by vehicles, and nest or habitat destruction, such as tree or limb removal. But orphaned patients make up the single largest group, nearly half of all patients, and most of these have unknown causes. Again, it’s likely that tree-trimming, cars, windows, and cats would be the cause for most of the parental deaths.

**HH: What species of animal is most frequently brought in?**

MM: Virginia Opossum babies, almost always the result of a mother being hit by a car while her babies are in her pouch, are the number one mammal admitted over the last ten years, with Northern Raccoons coming second. Western Gulls are our most frequent avian patient, followed by Common Murres. Generally, birds make up nearly three-quarters of our caseload. Of course, birds are common neighbors in every human community, and such a part of everyone’s daily life, it’s no wonder why.

**HH: What is the most unusual bird you have had to treat?**

MM: Twice I was privileged to be the primary caregiver for a Magnificent Frigatebird. The first bird had been blown off course and was found in British Columbia during the winter of 2003–2004 and was sent to the facility where I worked in Los Angeles. Truly magnificent! The other bird was found in Healdsburg in 2008 and treated at the facility where I worked just outside of the Bay Area in Fairfield. Those were both patients who I will remember as long as I can remember anything.

**HH: Briefly describe your best and worst days at HWCC.**

MM: As the person responsible for ensuring we have the resources to meet our mission, the worst days at work definitely involve that aspect – the stress over money, in other words. But the part of providing care that hits me hardest is when a group of orphans for some reason stops thriving – dehydration, diarrhea, parasites, bacterial infections, and viruses can be difficult to diagnose, and many aren’t realistically treatable. When wild babies don’t make it, I can sometimes feel like the worst person in the world, the failures cut deep.

Conversely, the success of an orphan is the greatest joy. The very best day of work was releasing one of our Raccoon orphans after four months of care, into a remote tributary of a local river and seeing her immediately dash into the water and catch and eat a small fish. Having a close-knit staff, including my heavily relied upon assistant, Lucinda Adamson, helps turn bad days around in real, measurable ways.

**HH: How do you and your staff/volunteers handle the constant stress and grief of seeing animals in pain?**

MM: As you might imagine, gallows humor can sometimes be a balm on the grief we experience, but what really makes the stress and grief bearable is learning from every success and every failure. When I lead an orientation for new volunteers, or when I give a facility tour, I emphasize that every innovation in care that I’ve ever made or learned from another came from a patient’s death. One of the worst things you can do to a wild animal is hold them captive. Every effort has to be made to mitigate the stress and danger of captivity so that the patient can survive our care, thrive under it, and be released back to their wild freedom.

**HH: If animals are common human or native wildlife pests, such as Norway Rats and House Sparrows, do you still treat them?**

MM: Our policy and protocols regarding introduced species are aimed at recognizing that we live in a time of steep native species decline, while treating all animals with the respect that their sentence warrants. We do not offer long-term treatment for any introduced species which peer-reviewed scientific study has determined is deleterious to native species. We do not regard natural range expansion, even if accomplished because of human changes in the environment, such as Anna’s Hummingbird range expansion into the Northwest, as being introduced. We do not regard how the Wild responds to a human-modified world as ours to manage.

By that token, if we are brought a fledgling of an introduced species, such as a House Sparrow or Starling, and we know where the family is and the fledgling has no injuries or any other reason to be in care, we will return them to their family. But we do not provide long-term treatment for these species at this time. This is a serious issue within our profession, and there is not universal agreement on what is the most ethical position. Many rehabilitators treat all introduced species. We do provide care to one introduced species – Rock Pigeons, because regular searches of the literature have shown no deleterious impact on native songbirds. Personally, I have deep admiration for all Columbiformes!

**HH: Are you aware of changes in our tri-county region (Humboldt, Trinity, and Del Norte) that have affected wildlife since you started working here?**

MM: Yes, I have noticed a couple changes. The first thing is very positive, and that is the changes made to public boat launches and fish cleaning stations that have largely ended the problem of juvenile Brown Pelicans becoming contaminated by fish waste and dying unless rescued. Another however is kind of frightening, and that’s the increased frequency of wild animals killed, injured, and displaced by fire. Each year for the last four years we’ve treated or helped rescue wild animals, including fawns and mountain lion kittens, who were caught in the fires that have occurred at the periphery of our region, such as Russian Lake and Weaverville.

**HH: If you had one or two messages for the public in terms of reducing wildlife injuries, what would they be?**

MM: There is one message that can’t be expressed enough: free-roaming domestic cats are one of the greatest threats to wildlife – it’s an injustice. Wildlife has a right to the space that cats have invaded; a human-created problem. Moreover, their free-roaming status seriously threatens cats, as is easily seen in the average life span difference between free-roaming and contained cats. Indoor cats, catio cats, leashed cats, and supervised cats, are longer lived and healthier, and our wild neighbors get to live their natural lives unmolested by one more anthropogenic nightmare.

Above left: Monte and volunteers treat a juvenile Brown Pelican (with the head kept covered to reduce stress). Above: Freedom! Board member and HWCC intern, Nora Chatmon, releases a successfully treated Barn Owl. Photos by Laura Corsiglia.

**HH: What is your most pressing challenge right now?**

MM: Our current lease ends at the end of this year. It took us until this summer to locate a property that fits our needs and is affordable (the sale price is a very good deal and significantly less than any other property we have seen). But the costs of moving have to come from the community. The amount we need to raise by the end of this year in order to complete this transition – in essence a transformation – is more than any goal we’ve ever set. We need to raise a down payment and the cost of getting enough infrastructure up and running at our new facility so that our work continues without interruption while we dismantle and clear the facility we currently occupy. It will be donations and volunteer labor that will get us through. To donate to HWCC/BAX, go to their website at [https://birdallynx.net/rare-opportunity-and-the-only-option-we-have-to-continue-our-work/](https://birdallynx.net/rare-opportunity-and-the-only-option-we-have-to-continue-our-work/), or call (707) 822–8839.
“Bird Talk Around Town.” by Kathryn Wendel

Featuring interviews with locals, on all things bird!

Kathryn, an RRAS Board member, met Steven through a friend at St. Joseph’s Hospital and asked his opinion:

Kathryn: Hello Steven, thank you so much for your time in sharing the perspective of a non-birder community member about local bird conservation. Would you mind telling me a few details about yourself?

Steven: Sure, I’m 31 years old and I work as a security guard at Saint Joseph’s Hospital. I’ve never heard of the Audubon Society before talking with you, but I do like birds and I support bird conservation.

Kathryn: That’s great, yes, the Audubon Society actively works to promote awareness about local issues affecting bird conservation. In your opinion, as someone who is supportive of bird conservation, if you had to choose between voting to preserve bird populations or voting for urban development that could create jobs but threaten bird populations, how would you vote?

Steven: I would definitely vote to preserve bird populations; I think birds are better than people. And I think the bay should be left as it is for wildlife.

Kathryn: So how do you feel about the proposed Nordic Aquafarm that may be built here along the coast in Humboldt County?

Steven: I never heard of that until now, but I would be against it. I won’t be benefiting from it much because as just a regular citizen here, I won’t be making any money off of it, not a dime. But if it did get built, I’m worried about a tsunami washing GMO fish into the bay and ocean.

Kathryn: That’s right, tsunamis are certainly a threat along the coast line here, especially on the North Spit. Alright, let’s finish up and ask a fun question: what’s your favorite bird?

Steven: Great Horned Owls, I think they’re cool because not only are they big, brown birds, but they are also really hard to spot. And I like hearing them hoot at night too!

*If you’d like to send in an interview with locals on birds, contact the editor at; giseleandco@gmail.com.

Submarine or Pied-billed Grebe?

By Jeremy Cashen

Over the summer my wife, Breauna DeMatto and I, were hiking and birding in Lassen National Park. Walking around a beautiful, but disregarded pond we spotted a Pied-billed Grebe and its juvenile counterpart. Entranced by the youngling and parent, we watched in serene silence as they took turns diving down and fishing for what lay below. While watching these two grebes, we noticed an odd sight; the head of some small animal floating casually through the water. Using our handy-dandy binoculars we were able to discern that it was another adult Pied-billed Grebe moving slowly through the pond with just the top of its head sticking out of the water. We sat and watched curiously for fifteen or so minutes, questioning this strange behavior. “It looks like a little stealth ninja grebe trying to sneak-attack something,” I remarked to Breauna. We eventually left to continue our hike and said goodbye to the eyes, nostrils, and head of our undercover grebe friend.

After a minute of research back home I learned, fascinatingly, that Pied-billed Grebes can, like a submarine, control their own buoyancy, allowing them to float at any level in the water. They do this by controlling how much water gets trapped in their feathers. Many times, to avoid predation, they will float around like an alligator, keeping only the top of their head from being submerged.

Unlike an alligator and much like a submarine, Pied-billed Grebes have virtually no tail. But, where they lack in one feature, they have a definitive advantage in another. The placement of their legs, unlike many birds, is at the end of their body. In fact, the Pied-billed Grebe is the only surviving member of the genus Podilymbus, which literally translates to “feet at the buttocks.” This placement allows them to propel themselves through water in a very skilled manner. Additionally, they have lobed, not webbed, feet. These two features, as well as controlled buoyancy, help to make them very adept divers. And divers they sure are! Spotting a Pied-billed Grebe usually means seeing it float around for a quarter of the time and seeing it disappear under the murky depths for the other three quarters. It can be a frustrating and fun undertaking to try and capture a picture of these steadfast swimmers. You have to predict where they will surface and try to snap a good one in the mere seconds before they dive again. Their physiology makes them great in the water, but very clunky and awkward on land. You may never even spot a Pied-billed Grebe out of its aquatic habitat. I know I never have.

Possibly my two favorite features of the Pied-billed Grebe are their bills and their calls. They have chunky bills, compared to other grebe species, that are used to eat large crustaceans, a variety of fish, amphibians, insects, and other invertebrates. Their bills look pretty normal on juveniles and non-breeding individuals, but, when breeding, they get a beautiful silver color with a big vertical stripe of black right down the middle. It’s quite conspicuous and noticeable from a far distance away without binoculars. As beautiful as their bills are, their calls are even more striking. A hauntingly beautiful call emanates from them with an eeriness similar to loons. Loon calls are often used in Hollywood movies to convey a ghostly atmosphere, but I believe the Pied-billed Grebe can give any loon a run for its money. Equally impressive to the sound of their call is its amplification. It’s hard to believe that the intensity of the call is able to come from such a modest body size.

Although Pied-billed Grebes are common across much of North America, they are always an absolute pleasure to behold. Look for them in freshwater lakes and ponds with emergent vegetation, slow-moving rivers, and even brackish ponds. They’re small and frequently under water, but their shape is recognizable and their call is unique, so there’s a good chance you’ll be able to spot these diving dinosaurs. Look for them at the Arcata Marsh and Humboldt Wildlife Sanctuary. I see a few just about every time I go. Regardless of your reason, get outside and enjoy nature. The Pied-billed Grebe will be waiting for you!

DID YOU KNOW? From the RRAS Cat & Bird Safety Committee

Did you know that regularly-fed cats still prey on wildlife? Researchers at Columbia and Fordham Universities studied the diets of cats living in “colonies” in urban parks on Staten Island NYC. The cats were regularly fed by humans, yet 58.2% of scat samples contained DNA of natural prey (94.3% contained cat food, showing that the cats were eating food left for them by humans). Ten of the sixteen types of wild prey were birds. Please contain your cuddly killer in-doors, on a harness leash, or in a catio. Thank you!

Source: *Journal of Urban Ecology, October 2021*
Explore the Bay / Explora la Bahía 2022 Tour Season

Jen Kalt, Humboldt Baykeeper Director

From April to October, Humboldt Baykeeper offers motor boat, kayak, and walking tours of Humboldt Bay and nearby coastal areas to community groups. This year, we led eleven group tours with our partner organizations, including Centro del Pueblo; English Express, the non-profit English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) school; Black Humboldt; Betty Chinn’s Blue Angel Village; the Indian Natural Resources, Science and Engineering (INRSEP+) and Umoja Center for Pan African Student Excellence at Cal Poly Humboldt; The Studio & Canvas + Clay, an art program for adults with varying abilities; Humboldt Asian & Pacific Islanders in Solidarity; Community Access Program for Eureka; and the Humboldt County Transition-Aged Youth Collaboration.

This year’s tours were funded by the California Coastal Commission’s WHALE TAIL® Grants Program, which supports experiential education and stewardship of the California coast, and by the State Coastal Conservancy’s Explore the Coast grant program, which provides coastal experiences for people and communities who face challenges accessing or enjoying the coast.

If you know of a community organization interested in Humboldt Bay tours, please contact Jasmin Segura, Bay Tours Coordinator, at jasmin@humboldtbaykeeper.org.

In September, we sponsored a tour for Humboldt Asian & Pacific Islanders in Solidarity aboard the Madaket. The tour brought together students from Cal Poly Humboldt’s Asian, Desi, & Pacific Islander Collective and the College of the Redwoods’ Asian-Pacific Islander Club.

Cal Poly Humboldt’s Indian Natural Resources, Sciences, and Engineering students braved the wind and waves for a four-hour kayak tour across Humboldt Bay in early October. Along the route, Warren Moak of Hog Island Oyster Company showed us their new oyster farm in North Bay.

Students at English Express, the non-profit ESL school, and their families joined us for a docent-led tour of the Humboldt Botanical Garden in June. The gardens were in full glorious bloom, including native lilies and spicebush. Thanks to docent June Walsh for a wonderful tour!
Evening Program

December 14, 2022: From the Forefront of Botanical Science. Three Cal Poly Humboldt students who have research grants from our Chapter will describe their projects. Kale McNeil is studying the systematic and population genetics of endangered wetland violets in northern California. Caitlyn Allchin is investigating the relocation habitats and assisted migration of the Lassics lupine, an endangered, California serpentine-endemic. Ashley Dickinson is researching the genetic population structure and rate of clonality in the two-flowered pea, another rare serpentine-endemic. In-person at Six Rivers Masonic Lodge, 251 Bayside Rd., Arcata. Refreshments at 7:00 p.m.; program at 7:30 p.m. A Zoom option is available through our website www.northcoastcnps.org.

January 11, 2023: John McRae will give a presentation on botanical areas of the Six Rivers National Forest. John McRae is a Forest Botanist with Six Rivers National Forest. In-person at Six Rivers Masonic Lodge, 251 Bayside Rd., Arcata. Refreshments at 7:00 p.m.; program at 7:30 p.m. A Zoom option is available through our website www.northcoastcnps.org.

Field Trip

January 15, Sunday 1-3 p.m. Botanizing the Hammond Trail Widow White Creek Loop. Along this wonderful McKinleyville trail explore native plants and vegetation. Wildflower and grass enthusiast Gordon Leppig will lead this walk of about one mile along coastal bluffs and through streamside forest, where you will see many common plants. Meet at the west end of Murray Rd. For information: 707-714-4145 or GTL1@humboldt.edu.

Giving a boost to rare plant dispersal

The topic of assisted dispersal is often associated with climate change. As conditions change, some plants may no longer be competitive, rather they may be suited to conditions farther north where temperatures are cooler, or higher up a mountain slope. Getting to the new environment on their own may be prohibitively slow. Managers are struggling to find solutions to climate change, often without empirical evidence to back up proposed actions, which is why actions such as assisted dispersal can be controversial. However, assisted dispersal can also be used to increase populations of dispersal-limited rare plants. This is currently happening at the Lanphere Dunes. The endangered Menzies’ wallflower is flourishing in its habitat at the north end of the property, but only occupies a fraction of its overall suitable habitat. Although it sometimes uses tumbleweed style dispersal of entire plants, expansion of the population south has been extremely slow, so managers decided to give it an assist. Ten mature plants with their dried fruits intact were harvested from the population and “planted” in an unoccupied area this summer. Monitoring will determine the success of this action; however, it will take more than several years to determine the outcome. Stay posted.

Zero Waste Holidays

According to a Stanford study, the holiday season (November through December) produces an additional 25 million tons of waste on average. Between excessive gifts, wrapping paper, single-use dinnerware, and Christmas lights, December is the most waste-filled month of the year. However, many simple changes to the holiday routine can allow for a more sustainable season.

Gift Giving

Presents are a central part of the holidays. They are an excellent way to show friends and family appreciation and love; however, gifts are one of the largest waste producers of the month. Quality over quantity is a great phrase to guide shopping for holiday gifts. Over 90 million items are returned after Christmas every year. The energy used to transport items back and forth can be saved by simply shopping with intention. Gifting an experience, such as tickets to a concert or show, or buying gifts that are meaningful, is a wonderful way to value quality over quantity. Buying gifts with little to no packaging, or hand-making gifts to give to loved ones, are also sustainable options. A crucial part of gift-giving is the surprise factor, which involves wrapping paper or gift bags. Purchasing wrapping paper made from recycled materials, using reusable fabric or newspaper, or reusing last year’s gift wrap will also reduce waste. Stepping up sustainability in the gift-giving game creates a significantly more zero-waste holiday.

Holiday Feast

The holidays are when family and friends gather together and create many memories. A staple of the gathering is the holiday feast which generally includes many side dishes and main courses. It can seem easier to buy single-use cups, napkins, plates, and utensils for large gatherings. However, this results in a lot of waste. Turning the lights off during the day will also allow for waste reduction.

Christmas Trees

Purchasing a real tree from a sustainable vendor, or borrowing, renting or reusing a fake tree are both sustainable options. Many people reuse Christmas ornaments, which is preferable, though investing in wooden or glass ones instead of buying new plastic ones is best (unless they are thrifted, of course). One of the most significant energy uses during Christmas is the lights that decorate the house and the tree. Switching to LED lights is an excellent option because they use less energy and tend to last longer. Turning the lights off during the day will also allow for significantly less energy to be used.

The holiday season is a magical time for many. Keeping sustainability and zero-waste efforts in mind allows our planet to stay healthy. While some of these zero-waste suggestions may not be cost-friendly, many are easy to implement into the holiday routine.
Redwood National and State Parks & Tolowa Dee-ni’ Nation Press Release

Redwood National and State Parks (“Parks”) and the Tolowa Dee-ni’ Nation (“Nation”) have collaborated to rename Peacock Bar. In 2019, the Governor of California established the Truth and Healing Council in an effort to reexamine the historical relationship between the State and Indigenous People. As a result, on Sept. 25, 2020, California Natural Resources Secretary Wade Crowfoot, State Parks Director Armando Quintero, and Caltrans Director Toks Omishakin announced a series of actions to identify and redress discriminatory names of features attached to the state park and transportation systems. With the support of local organizations such as True North Organizing Network, the Nation and the Parks are installing new signage to acknowledge the original Tolowa name of Peacock bar, See-tr’ee-ghin-dvm-dvn. See-tr’ee-ghin-dvm-dvn translates to, at the stones where the trail descends downward.

See-tr’ee-ghin-dvm-dvn (formerly Peacock Bar) is a well-known day use area in Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park, located just off Highway 197 in Del Norte County. Tolowa people inhabited three villages: See-tr’ee-ghin-dvm, Mvn-sray-me’ and Datlh-t’uu-k’wvt, along this landscape. These villages were in an area known for some of where the largest redwoods in Del Norte County were later be fallen, those trees were also roosting places of the Pacific Northwest Condor.

In the 1850’s, a man by the name of George Peacock immigrated to the area and took over the village of See-tr’ee-ghin-dvm. Mr. Peacock gained control of the critical Smith River ferry crossing and attempted to evict the Tolowa families who inhabited See-tr’ee-ghin-dvm; when the Tolowa refused to leave they were executed and their orphaned children were kept as indentured servants. The acknowledgement and use of the original name for the site, See-tr’ee-ghin-dvm-dvn, reflects the first inhabitants, the Tolowa Dee-ni’, and a first step in correcting the historical narrative.

See-tr’ee-ghin-dvm-dvn is a beautiful place on the river with natural and cultural resources. We invite the community to see the newly installed sign and continue to recreate responsibly in this pristine landscape.

Redwood National and State Parks share in the perpetual stewardship of ancient coast redwood forests, streams, coastal ranges and coastline; for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of people forever; with a commitment to watershed-scale restoration of damaged landscapes.

The Tolowa Dee-ni’ Nation is a federally recognized Indian Nation of Tolowa Dee-ni’ People. The Nation is headquartered 3 miles south of the Oregon-California border in the Pacific Northwest of California. The Nation’s general membership consists of over 1,900 citizens.

EcoNews Report is a half-hour enviro news/chat program
Every Saturday
10:00am
KHUM 104.3FM

Links for later listening will be posted to www.yournec.org/econews-report

Have You Seen a River Otter?
River otters are important top predators in the North Coast aquatic food chain. You can help track ecosystem health by reporting sightings of river otters in Humboldt, Del Norte, and adjacent counties for an ongoing study. Record date, time, map location, # of otters, and submit your observations to: otters@humboldt.edu or 707-826-3439
NEW CALIFORNIA LAW BARS SEABED MINING IN STATE WATERS

Jos Hill & Robert Hayden, published 9/19/22 on the PEW Charitable Trusts blog

California’s marine waters are home to ecosystems that harbor as much biodiversity as tropical rainforests and provide food, shelter, and nursery habitat for a huge range of life, from forage fish to killer whales. And today the state’s ocean territory gained needed safeguards when Governor Gavin Newsom (D) signed the California Seabed Mining Prevention Act (AB 1832), which will protect roughly 2,500 square miles of ocean and nearshore waters from hard mineral extraction.

The bipartisan bill passed the Assembly and the Senate with a combined vote of 113-0.

California now joins Oregon and Washington as the only states prohibiting seabed mining. Together, the waters covered by these prohibitions form one of the largest marine areas in the world—more than 7,700 square miles—where seabed mining is explicitly and proactively banned through legislation. However, federal marine waters, which are found from 3 miles to 200 miles offshore, remain susceptible to harm given that mineral mining leases are available through the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Off California as in the rest of the world, the ocean faces a compounding array of stressors—from industrialization to climate change, ocean acidification, and other forces—that will increasingly challenge humankind’s ability to balance development and resource extraction with conservation and ensure thriving coastal and ocean-dependent communities. In this context, it is critical to identify and address emerging and future threats, including activities that might harm sensitive seafloor habitats that provide benefits to people and wildlife.

Although California state waters do not represent a marketable source for battery metals, which is the main justification that mining companies use for wanting to extract resources from the seafloor, industry interest may pivot to these waters for other minerals. Research on historical and possible future demand suggests that the most likely minerals of interest are phosphorites—used in industrial fertilizer and found in Southern California waters—as well as gold, titanium, and other precious and semi precious metals present along the north coast. For example, in 1961 the federal government leased 30,000 acres on Forty-Mile Bank off San Diego for a prospective phosphorite mining operation, which ultimately failed to launch. And in 1981, the Department of the Interior finalized an environmental impact statement for a proposed mineral lease offering in the Gorda Ridge area offshore of Oregon and Northern California.

As industry interest in seabed mining has grown, so too has its opposition, internationally and along the U.S. West Coast, including in California. In 2020 and 2021, more than 40 groups provided written or oral testimony to the California State Lands Commission supporting a seabed mining ban. And elsewhere around the globe, seabed mining proposals have been met with strong resistance, including from Tribal Nations and Indigenous peoples, marine scientists, and nongovernmental institutions, along with technology and car-manufacturing companies.

Scientists are warning that the ecological effects of seabed mining could be profound. That’s why today The Pew Charitable Trusts joins the Monterey Bay Aquarium, the Surfrider Foundation, and other California leaders and groups in applauding this bill. With this legislation, California is taking an important, science-based precautionary step to protect the health of our ocean and coast for this and future generations.

Jos Hill is a project director and Bobby Hayden is an associate manager with The Pew Charitable Trusts’ conserving marine life in the United States project.
Public Trust Values in Peril
Friends of the Eel River File Lawsuit Against Humboldt County

Elena Bilheimer, EcoNews Journalist

On Thursday, October 27, Friends of the Eel River (FOER) filed a lawsuit against Humboldt County seeking to protect public trust flows in the lower Eel River. In a recent press release from FOER, they explained their requests as well as their reasons behind bringing the issue to Court. They are asking the County to create a comprehensive plan to regulate groundwater pumping in the lower Eel River as well as to stop issuing permits for new and expanded wells until such a program is in place. This program would ideally protect the natural resources and beneficial uses of surface water flows as established under public trust values.

In January, the Humboldt County Groundwater Sustainability Agency (made up of the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors) submitted its final sustainability plan to the Department of Water Resources (DWR) as required by the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) of 2014. As was reported by EcoNews in March, SGMA was designed to help protect groundwater resources and avoid undesirable results to beneficial users of interconnected surface waters. SGMA requires that local agencies create a Groundwater Sustainability Plan when a basin is considered a medium- or high-priority by the DWR, with the Eel River Basin having been classified as medium-priority. Despite concerns about the plan’s effectiveness from many agencies and local environmental organizations (including FOER), the Agency wasn’t able to incorporate much of the feedback before the plan’s due date as it spent the majority of the allotted time fighting the Basin’s classification in the hopes of not having to create a sustainability plan. The County ended up being required to submit a plan, and the DWR now has two years to determine if they’re going to accept the County’s plan or not.

While the information gathered in compliance with SGMA is considered in the lawsuit, Alicia Hamann, Executive Director of FOER, wants to make it clear that they are choosing to take legal action because of the County’s breach of public trust values. “This lawsuit is about public trust,” said Hamann. “It’s not about SGMA, but it does use data that was generated as part of the SGMA process. And that’s how we got more insight into what kind of impacts groundwater use is actually having in the lower river.” The idea of public trust comes from the Public Trust doctrine, a legal theory that serves to protect the public’s interest in shared natural resources. As explained in the press release, this doctrine “establishes that the waters and wildlife of the state belong to the people, and that the state and its subdivisions, including counties, serve as trustees of those resources for the people.” With the State and County working as trustees of these resources, they have a duty to avoid and minimize harm to public trust uses wherever possible and feasible.

Hamann insists that by allowing the river to have really low flow or go completely dry because of unlimited groundwater pumping even during extended dry periods, public trust values are being violated by the County. Surface flows in the lower Eel River are “interconnected” with the groundwater, meaning there is a strong relationship between the groundwater and surface water. In addition to negatively impacting the many groundwater dependent ecosystems and species that rely on a consistent flow of surface water (including Chinook salmon and steelhead), not protecting the river’s flows affects many other recreation and cultural values that are associated with the public trust. This includes the Tribe’s ability to go out fishing or a community member’s ability to go stand up paddleboarding. Hamann pointed out that when the river is depleted in the way that it often is during low flow times, those values no longer exist.

It is important to differentiate this lawsuit from the required sustainability plan because while the DWR’s requirements to protect groundwater are well-intentioned, FOER believes they don’t go far enough to adequately protect the values at stake. The timelines set by DWR to enact change are long, oftentimes allowing years of inaction, leaving many species and recreational activities vulnerable to the County’s decisions. “Even if the plan gets accepted, Humboldt County is still going to be managing groundwater in an unsustainable way,” said Hamann. “And that is to say that they don’t actually really manage groundwater use, despite having the authority to monitor groundwater use.” Giving the County potentially decades to create a more comprehensive management plan is insufficient for those interested in preserving adequate flows. “That’s plenty of time for species to go extinct and for people to stop using the river in the way they did,” said Hamann. “It’s not a process that is designed to bring about the rapid change that we really need.”

According to data collected for the County’s sustainability plan, extraction from the lower Eel groundwater basin results in a loss of about 14 cubic feet per second of surface flows during late summer. While this may not sound like much when the river is flowing between 100 and 120 cubic feet per second during wet times, it has a significant impact during critically dry times when the average flow ranges between 15 to 30 cubic feet per second. This means that the amount of groundwater extraction could be taking almost the entire flow of the river in those times. “The negative impacts that result from unregulated groundwater use in the Eel River are really only present during critically dry times,” said Hamann. “When there’s lots of water, there’s lots of water to share. But when there’s very little water, groundwater use can actually remove just about all of the surface flows.”

While the County acknowledges these facts, it stated in January that it did not find evidence that the dry conditions of the river were directly caused by groundwater use. This fundamental disagreement over what the evidence says makes bringing the litigation necessary for FOER. Hamann emphasized that on one side of this disagreement is FOER, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Union of Concerned Scientists, The Nature Conservancy, and the Department of Water Resources, and on the other side is Humboldt County. “Our hope is that the County sees this as a tool to provide them a path to do what they really should have done many years ago when the SGMA process started,” said Hamann.
City of Arcata Reduces Single-Use Disposables

Jerry Swider & Sandrine Thompson, City of Arcata

The City of Arcata is committed to reducing waste from single-use disposable foodware. The Arcata City Council adopted Ordinance No. 1527 in February of 2020 to establish regulations related to single-use disposable foodware items. It is meant to reduce the number of single-use plastic items that contribute to street litter, marine pollution, wildlife injuries, greenhouse gas emissions, and landfill waste. The ordinance is applicable to all food service establishments including, but not limited to restaurants, grocery stores, bars, cafes, food vendors, and cafeterias. The City has conducted outreach in the past and is currently partnering with Zero Waste Humboldt on outreach to food service establishments to assist in this transition.

The single-use disposable foodware ordinance requires that disposable foodware be composed of fiber-based compostable material and accessory foodware must only be provided upon request, or at a self-serve station. Examples of accessory foodware include, but are not limited to straws, stirrers, napkins, cup sleeves, spill plugs, and more. All single-use disposable foodware, including accessory foodware, must be fiber-based compostable and free of polyfluorinated chemicals (PFAS). Fiber-based materials that have no bioplastic (PLA) or wax lining are also compliant with the ordinance. Examples of this include materials such as paper, wood, sugarcane, bamboo, wheat and pasta.

Items that do not have suitable alternatives on the market are exempt from the requirement to be fiber-based compostable. These materials include: hot liquid containers, cold cups, cup lids, soufflé cups (small cups typically used for samples or sauces), cutlery, grocery store pack downs (kitchen prepared sides, sauces, and additions intended to have a longer shelf life than ready-to-eat take-out), and containers used for storing ready-to-eat hot food often found at hot bars within grocery stores. Any non-conforming disposable foodware item to be used in lieu of a conforming item – whether through exemption or waiver – must be recyclable through the City of Arcata Recyclable collection program. In addition, businesses can request a waiver for certain materials if the owner or operator demonstrates that application of this section would create undue hardship or practical difficulty for that establishment. Waiver requests can be submitted to Arcata’s Environmental Services Department.

The ordinance also allows for customer-owned containers, which are clean, dry, and constructed for reuse, to be filled by food services establishments.

The City of Arcata ordinance allows for customer-owned containers, which are clean, dry, and constructed for reuse, to be filled by food services establishments.

How To Help Reduce Single-Use Disposables:
- Support your local restaurants by communicating ahead of time about which containers are appropriate for your order.
- Carry appropriate reusables with you when you go out to eat or attend a festival. Always be prepared.
- Spread the word to your friends and family and encourage them to bring reusables with them too.

Although effective March 5, 2020, the ordinance provisions enforcement date was delayed from January 1, 2021, until July 1, 2021. The fee and discount portion of the ordinance remain under delayed enforcement until January 2023. All other aspects of the ordinance are fully enforceable.

For additional questions, please contact the Environmental Services Department at (707) 822–8184 or email services@cityofarcata.org. For a list of frequently asked questions please visit the City of Arcata website: Single-Use-Foodware-Facts (cityofarcata.org)
OZZI Boxes: Sustainable Food Containers

Steffi Puerto, EcoNews Intern

In 2013, Humboldt State University – now Cal Poly Humboldt – integrated OZZI boxes into its food dining system. This transition was made to reduce single-use plastic on campus and promote more sustainable options for students, residents and faculty who dine inside and take their food to go.

Planet OZZI is the company responsible for producing OZZI boxes. It is a third-party nationwide FDA-approved green sustainability program that essentially eliminates the traditional single-use-to-go box by offering reusable and recyclable containers. These containers are bright transparent green boxes with three compartments for food. They have a wax coating so they are easy to rinse, wash and reuse. Planet OZZI has roughly produced around 25 million reusable containers in the United States. They are also 100% recyclable products.

Auxilia Clint, the sustainability lead for dining at Cal Poly Humboldt, said that OZZI boxes are essential to the institution’s culture of sustainability. OZZI boxes help the university eliminate its carbon footprint in the surrounding environment. When asked how much single-use plastic waste was reduced by using OZZI boxes, Clint answered that they hadn’t collected data on waste reduction.

Before the transition to OZZI boxes, Cal Poly Humboldt was using paper and foam plates as to-go options for residents of the campus. Clint shares that although the paper products they used were recyclable they were not sustainable. There aren’t local equipment or resources available to process recyclable material.

“We are striving to be fully sustainable here on campus because we don’t have local commercial composting facilities, and because of that, we end up having to transport it. Which at the end of the day ends up in the landfill,” Clint said.

Although Humboldt dining is not collecting data on the reduction of single-use plastics on campus, research has shown that plastic waste is a growing concern to our planet. According to the Assembly of Natural Resources Committee, the California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery estimates 4.5 million tons of plastic waste entered landfills in 2018. Plastics are also a growing portion of overall waste disposal – increasing from 9.6 percent in 2008 to 11.5 percent in 2018.

There are approximately 2,500 residents on campus this year, and upon arriving on campus they are given one free OZZI coin for dining. This coin can be used at any dining facility on campus which include The J, The Depot, and The Campus Marketplace. Students can exchange the gold coin for a fresh new box. When residents are done with the OZZI box they can return it to any dining location and get their coin back.

If you don’t live on campus, you can purchase the coin for $8.00 at the housing cashier desk or at any dining service location. OZZI boxes are recyclable. If students break their boxes they can recycle them at any recycling center or bin, and then can use their coin to retrieve a new OZZI box container. If residents lose their coin, they must purchase a new one in order to continue to use OZZI services.

OZZI boxes are available to anyone who dines on campus, although there isn’t commercial use for restaurants outside of the area. Clint adds you can contact Planet OZZI to recommend that your institution adopt the OZZI box trend.

CAUTION: Humboldt Shellfish Poisoning

Caroline Griffith, NEC Executive Director

On November 3, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife closed the recreational razor clam fishery in Del Norte County due to findings by the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), in consultation with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), which determined that consumption of razor clams taken from Del Norte County poses a significant threat for domoic acid exposure.

Domoic acid, a potent neurotoxin, is produced under certain ocean conditions by the naturally-occurring marine algae Pseudo-nitzschia, which benefits from nitrogen loading in the environment. Domoic acid poisoning in humans may occur within minutes to hours after consumption of affected seafood. Symptoms range from vomiting and diarrhea to permanent loss of short-term memory (Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning or ASP), coma or death. There is no way to prepare clams for consumption that will remove the toxin – cooking and freezing have no effect.

This closure comes on the heels of the notification released by CDPH on October 27 warning of dangerous levels of Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning (PSP) toxins that were detected in mussels from Humboldt and San Luis Obispo counties. CDPH is advising consumers not to eat sport-harvested mussels, clams, or scallops from these counties. PSP toxins are caused by the algae Alexandrium catenella. Much like with domoic acid, PSP toxins are not affected by cooking or freezing. Also like domoic acid poisoning, symptoms of paralytic shellfish poisoning can occur within minutes to hours after consuming affected shellfish. Symptoms include tingling and numbness of the lips, tongue, and extremities; nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea; loss of coordination, difficulty speaking, difficulty swallowing, and, in severe cases, total muscular paralysis with respiratory arrest.

Both PSP toxins and domoic acid are naturally occurring marine toxins, but certain conditions can increase their growth and cause Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs). One cause is an increase in levels of nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus in the water. This can come from fertilizers, sewage or run-off from city streets. Increases in water temperature can also contribute to blooms. The State of California imposes an annual quarantine on sport harvesting of mussels for food from May 1 through October 31, the period when they are most likely to accumulate PSP toxins. On October 31 it ended the quarantine for all counties except Humboldt, Monterrey, San Mateo and San Luis Obispo.

The State of California has one of the oldest marine biotoxin monitoring programs in the country, started after an outbreak of PSP in 1927 that affected over 100 people. The Department of Public Health collects and tests shellfish and also utilizes volunteers to monitor algae conditions to detect HABs.

Animals can also be affected by ASP and PSP. If you see seals, birds or other marine animals acting “drunkenly” or strangely it may be because they have ingested shellfish containing the toxins. If you are in Humboldt County and suspect an animal has been affected by ASP or PSP you can call the Marine Mammal Center at 707-465-6265 or Bird Ally X at 707-822-8839.

To get the latest information on current fishing season closures related to domoic acid, call CDFW’s Domoic Acid Fishery Closure Information Line at (831) 649-2883. For shellfish advisories call (800) 553-4133. Shellfish advisories and a link to the Recreational Shellfish Advisory Map can be found at cdph.ca.gov/Programs/OPA/Pages/Shellfish-Advisories.aspx.
Food Sustainability Minor

Steffi Puerto, EcoNews Intern

This fall Cal Poly Humboldt has introduced a new sustainable food system minor. This minor is aimed to create an understanding of how our local and global food is produced, prepared, and distributed while at the same time honoring the connections we share with food.

The sustainable food systems minor is specifically directed toward Latinx students. The intention of the grant is to connect students with an understanding of where their food is sourced from and honor the local connections they have with their local food systems. The minor was created and funded by The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The USDA Hispanic Serving Institutions Education Grant funded $250,000 for the approximate five-year span. The grant is directed to “aspire to improve degree completion and graduation rates to close equity gaps between Hispanic and other students,” according to the USDA website. The grant will also focus on providing internship opportunities, course enhancements and faculty-based learning communities.

Susan Ediger Marshall is the advisor for the minor and the director of the USDA grant proposal. It’s important to Marshall that the grant represents and integrates Latinx students into the local food systems in the community.

“From the perspective of the grant that we wrote there’s a challenge at this Hispanic Serving Institution to be genuine about welcoming Latinx students,” Marshall added. “Food is common ground, we all eat, and it’s something we can share and relate to in a friendly way. There’s no controversy when we share food with a person,” Marshall said.

The minor is helping bridge a diverse cultural understanding of the power that local food systems have by examining food through an interdisciplinary lens. It will also provide students with leadership and community-building skills so they feel comfortable obtaining careers in Food, Agriculture, Nutrition, and Human Science (FANH).

“There’s going to be many opportunities for you in what is called FANH. The USDA is trying to diversify its workforce and get people to think about careers in this case in food science. There are manager jobs, there are technology jobs, and there’s so much beyond working in the fields and basic labor,” Marshall said.

The sustainable food systems minor is the first interdisciplinary study that combines three colleges. These colleges include Natural Resources and Sciences, Professional Studies, and Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. These colleges are connected through the theme of sustainable food systems and allow students to use their various disciplines in the sciences and liberal arts to explore how food relates to their health, society, culture, and the sustainability of their local ecosystems.

There are four core classes and 18 units to fulfill the minor requirement. According to the program website, this includes:

- Indigenous Natural Resource Management Practices (3 units)
- Basic Human Nutrition (3 units)
- Sustainable Food Systems (3 units)
- Wildland Resource Principles or Case Studies in Environmental Ethics (3 units)

ANTH 308: Sustainable Food Systems, is one out of the three core curriculum classes that was specifically designed for the minor. The class will be offered this Spring semester. The course “examines historical, ethical and cultural considerations in food and agriculture industries and paths to food system equity; and emphasizes critical thinking and writing skills to develop solutions for local and national food system sustainability issues,” according to Comida Nos Une website. Although internships are still under development, Marshall shares that their goal within the internship programs is to get Cal Poly Humboldt students out in the community and have the community welcome programs is to get Cal Poly Humboldt students out in the community and have the community welcome students.

The plan of the grant is to have successfully integrated a Food Systems Science bachelor’s degree at Cal Poly Humboldt within the next five years as a part of the Polytechnic roll out.

A big emphasis with the USDA is teaching students about the different types of careers that they can go into including nutrition, farming, manufacturing, being an entrepreneur who wants to create new food science, or an activist who wants to fight for food banking or ensuring students have healthy options at their schools. There are many different careers that can branch out from this field of study.
Get on Board for the Climate

Strike a Blow for Energy Efficiency

Martha Walden

Commercial and residential buildings account for about 13 percent of greenhouse gas emissions. That might not sound like much, but it’s something that many of us can feasibly reduce by making our homes and businesses more energy efficient. President Biden’s monster bill, The Inflation Reduction Act, helps us to do just that. Tax credits and rebates financially empower us to make improvements we’ve probably been wanting to make.

The tax credits will apply to purchases made on January 1 of 2023 and thereon until the end of 2032, but you won’t actually receive any credit until you file for your taxes in 2024. The rebate program will become operative sometime in 2023, depending on how quickly your state government implements it. So if you hear anyone complaining about how the IRA hasn’t reduced inflation yet (and amazingly enough I have heard some Republican pundits doing just that), feel free to remind them that it hasn’t gone into effect yet. Not that it will have an instantaneous effect.

The difference between tax credits and rebates are pretty much what you’d think. Credits are deducted from the taxes you owe. People who owe little or no taxes are better off participating in the rebate program. Rebates are everyone’s favorite, of course. At the point of sale, you should be able to apply the rebate to the purchase. No delayed gratification!

The Energy Efficient Home Improvement Tax Credit program has been around for a long time, but the IRA increased its cap from a one-time $500 to $1,200 that you can potentially claim every year until the end of 2032. This covers new doors and windows, home energy audits, electric panels and other measures that increase energy efficiency. If you want heat pumps or hot water heat pumps and your income is high enough that you don’t qualify for the rebate program, you can get a tax credit of $2,000 for those appliances.

When you’re claiming a tax credit on your tax return, you don’t have to provide documentation of your purchase, but you better keep receipts where you can find them in case you’re audited.

Now for the rebates. There is $1,600 available for insulating and sealing your building. You get up to $8,000 towards the purchase and installation of heat pumps. (Our heat pump system at home cost a total of $7,600, but that was about ten years ago.) There’s also $1,750 for a heat pump water heater—that should cover the purchase of the water heater but not the installation. $840 is available for people who buy a heat-pump clothes dryer; same for purchasing an electric stove, including induction ranges.

All this electric stuff might require an electrical panel upgrade, so there’s up to $4,000 available to help with that. All these rebates add up. Homeowners can collect up to $14,000 between whenever the program gets up and running in your state and September 30, 2031.

California will probably be one of the first states to implement the rebate program. I imagine there will be a lot of publicity when that happens. Start thinking and planning now. Making our residential and commercial buildings as energy-efficient as possible reduces our footprint and also makes energy-efficient appliances more popular and competitive. A future column will investigate recycling and repurposing our old stuff.
TOXIC MINE RESTORATION IN ALABAMA

The State of Alabama has revitalized the site of an abandoned coal mine, increasing ecological stability, protecting the Cahaba River from pollution, and creating a draw for tourists.

The Cahaba River National Wildlife Refuge, south of Birmingham, Alabama, was established in 2002. When the state acquired the land they also received a significant coal mining pollution problem. Steven Trull, head of the Wildlife Refuge, has overseen a remarkable transformation of the area. "Being able to clean it up and stop the chemicals from going into the Cahaba River is a wonderful thing on so many levels," Trull says.

Many rivers in Alabama have been subject to damming and dumping over the years. The Cahaba River measures roughly 190 miles from its springs to where it joins the Alabama River. The Cahaba has the longest stretch of uninhibited flow in the whole state and represents greater species diversity than any comparable stream in North America: it is home to 300 types of mussels, roughly 10 percent of North America’s gill-breathing freshwater snail species, and especially a rare flower known as the white Cahaba lily (Hymenocallis coronaria).

These lilies are a major attraction for tourists, who travel from places as far as New York and Canada every year to see them. The flowers require special conditions to grow, including swift waters, rocky shoals, and a lot of sunlight. They bloom for 6-8 weeks leading up to mid June, but each individual blossom opens overnight and lives only one day. The 18th century naturalist William Bartram wrote that “nothing in vegetable nature was more pleasing” than the Cahaba lily.

As of 2022, the Cahaba National Wildlife Refuge covers 5,000 acres. The refuge’s recent growth was made possible by $3.2 million from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which parleys revenue from offshore gas and oil into conservation and recreation projects. The refuge has also secured $5 million in mine-restoration funds, with another $735,000 dedicated to wildfire control and native plant restoration.

Trull, a former miner himself, says, “[The refuge has] hunting access, new trails, canoeing, kayaking, fishing, wildlife observation — all sorts of recreation opportunities for the community.” And that’s on top of the illustrious Cahaba Lily Festival that celebrates the rare flower and the work that has helped maintain its special habitat.

Alabama’s Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation program began in 1977 and is going strong today.

Sources: Good News Network, Federal Register
**STAFF PICKS FOR WINTER**

**CHELSEA’S PICKS**

- *Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We’re in with Unexpected Resilience and Creative Power* by Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone (New World Library, 2022)

“The challenges we face can be difficult even to think about. Climate change, the depletion of oil, economic upheaval, and mass extinction together create a planetary emergency of overwhelming proportions. *Active Hope* shows us how to strengthen our capacity to face this crisis so that we can respond with unexpected resilience and creative power. Drawing on decades of teaching an empowerment approach known as the Work That Reconnects, the authors guide us through a transformational process informed by mythic journeys, modern psychology, spirituality, and holistic science. This process equips us with tools to face the mess we’re in and play our role in the collective transition, or Great Turning, to a life-sustaining society.”


“Although the environmental and physical effects of climate change have long been recognised, little attention has been given to the profound negative impact on mental health. Leslie Davenport presents comprehensive theory, strategies and resources for addressing key clinical themes specific to the psychological impact of climate change. She explores the psychological underpinnings that have contributed to the current global crisis, and offers robust therapeutic interventions for dealing with anxiety, stress, depression, trauma and other clinical mental health conditions resulting from environmental damage and disaster. She emphasizes the importance of developing resilience and shows how to utilize the many benefits of guided imagery and mindful presence techniques, and carry out interventions that draw on expert research into ecotherapy, wisdom traditions, earth-based indigenous practices and positive psychology. The strategies in this book will cultivate transformative, person-centered ways of being, resulting in regenerative lifestyles that benefit both the individual and the planet.”

**CARLREY’S PICKS**


“Raj Patel, the New York Times bestselling author of *The Value of Nothing*, teams up with physician, activist, and co-founder of the Do No Harm Coalition Rupa Marya to reveal the links between health and structural injustices — and to offer a new deep medicine that can heal our bodies and our world. Boldly original, *Inflamed* takes us on a medical tour through the human body: our digestive, endocrine, circulatory, respiratory, reproductive, immune, and nervous systems. Unlike a traditional anatomy book, this groundbreaking work illuminates the hidden relationships between our biological systems and the profound injustices of our political and economic systems. Inflammation is connected to the food we eat, the air we breathe, and the diversity of the microbes living inside us, which regulate everything from our brain's development to our immune system's functioning. It's connected to the number of traumatic events we experienced as children and to the traumas endured by our ancestors. It’s connected not only to access to health care but to the very models of health that physicians practice.”

- *The Nation on No Map: Black Anarchism and Abolition* by William C. Anderson (AK Press, 2021)

“*The Nation on No Map* examines state power, abolition, and ideological tensions within the struggle for Black liberation while centering the politics of Black autonomy and self-determination. Amid renewed interest in Black anarchism among the left, Anderson offers a principled rejection of reformism, nation building, and citizenship in the ongoing fight against capitalism and white supremacism. As a viable alternative amidst worsening social conditions, he calls for the urgent prioritization of community-based growth, arguing that in order to overcome oppression, people must build capacity beyond the state. It interrogates how history and myth and leadership are used to rehabilitate governance instead of achieving a revolutionary abolition. By complicating our understanding of the predicaments we face, *The Nation on No Map* hopes to encourage readers to utilize a Black anarchic lens in favor of total transformation, no matter what it’s called.”

**CAROLINE’S PICKS:**

- *Oak Flat: A Fight for Sacred Land in the American West* by Lauren Redniss (Random House, 2021)

“Oak Flat is a serene high-elevation mesa that sits above the southeastern Arizona desert, fifteen miles to the west of the San Carlos Apache Indian Reservation. For the San Carlos tribe, Oak Flat is a holy place, an ancient burial ground and religious site where Apache girls celebrate the coming-of-age ritual known as the Sunrise Ceremony. In 1995, a massive unexplored copper reserve was discovered nearby. A decade later, a law was passed transferring the area to a private company, whose planned copper mine will wipe Oak Flat off the map. *Oak Flat* tells the story of a race-against-time struggle for a swath of American land, which pits one of the poorest communities in the United States against the federal government and two of the world’s largest mining conglomerates. The still-unresolved Oak Flat conflict is ripped from today’s headlines, but its story resonates with foundational American themes: the saga of westward expansion, the resistance and resilience of Native peoples, and the efforts of profit-seekers to control the land and unearth treasure beneath it while the lives of individuals hang in the balance.”

- *Paying the Land* by Joe Sacco (Metropolitan Book, 2020)

“The Dene have lived in the vast Mackenzie River Valley since-time immemorial, by their account. To the Dene, the land owns them, not the other way around, and it is central to their livelihood and very way of being. But the subarctic Canadian Northwest Territories are home to valuable resources, including oil, gas, and diamonds. With mining came jobs and investment, but also road-building, pipelines, and toxic waste, which scarred the landscape, and alcohol, drugs, and debt, which deformed a way of life. In *Paying the Land*, Joe Sacco travels the frozen North to reveal a people in conflict over the costs and benefits of development. The mining boom is only the latest assault on indigenous culture: Sacco recounts the shattering impact of a residential school system that aimed to “remove the Indian from the child”; the destructive process that drove the Dene from the bush into settlements and turned them into wage laborers...Against a vast and gorgeous landscape that dwarfs all human scale, *Paying the Land* lends an ear to trappers and chiefs, activists and priests, to tell a sweeping story about money, dependency, loss, and culture recounted in stunning visual detail by one of the greatest cartoonists alive.”
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