

THE MCKINLEYVILLE LAND TRUST

NEWSLETTER WINTER 2009 NUMBER 26



Courtesy HSU News & Information

Speaker: Stephen Sillett

Stephen C. Sillett is the speaker for our Annual Dinner. He's known as the tree-climbing scientist, who initiated the study of the ecology of tall trees and the forests they create. Exploring the canopy of redwoods, doug fir and eucalyptus trees, he has given a quantum leap to the scientific understanding of the complexity of tall tree ecology.

He currently holds the Kenneth L. Fisher Chair in Redwood Forest Ecology and is a Professor in the Department of Forestry and Wildland Resources at Humboldt State University (HSU), where he has taught botany and forestry since 1996. Sillett attended Reed College, where he studied lichens in the canopy of an old-growth Douglas-fir forest. At the University of Florida, he studied bryophytes inhabiting crowns of emergent strangler figs in a Costa Rican cloud forest. His Ph.D. is in Botany and Plant Pathology at Oregon State University, 1995. Sillett's work has been featured in books, magazines (including National Geographic), film, television, radio, and on the Internet.

The dinner and Sillett's talk will be at Azalea Hall, McKinleyville, 6-8 pm, Saturday March 20, 2010.

Progress at the Wetland

By Gina Rimson

The Dow's Prairie Educational Wetland has seen a lot of activity this past year. The MLT took title to the 2.5 acre site in December last year and is formulating plans to make the seasonal pond area an outdoor classroom for local students of all ages. The site was purchased using a \$15,000 grant from the Simpson Timber Foundation received in 2002.

Students from Humboldt State University have prepared reports identifying the soils, plants and some animals that can be found at the site. An action plan, along with a helpful herbarium collection, were completed and given to the MLT at the end of the semester. Students last Spring led workgroups in removing some of the invasive plants at the site.



Last summer the California Conservation Corps partnered with the Step Up for Youth program to hire young workers to remove-large amounts of Scotch broom and non-native blackberry bushes from the area. Early next year, the MLT hopes to chip the remaining waste to help reduce the debris piles.

This semester, HSU has returned to the site through Professor Alison Purcell's environmental science students. They are

surveying the site, removing invasives, and will make suggestions for the MLT at the end of the semester. MLT looks forward to engaging HSU students in all aspects of the pond's restoration.

The MLT and Dow's Prairie Elementary School will team up in the near future to have this seasonal wetland site considered for participation in the Schoolyard Habitat Program implemented by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The MLT sent representatives to a USFWS informational meeting to learn about the SHP. The local USFWS has selected a local staff member to help local groups apply for the program and to help select the first two sites in our county. The program will offer expertise and some funding to help maximize the educational benefit the pond offers.

The Dow's Prairie Educational Wetland is located on Grange Road between Central Avenue and Dow's Prairie Road. For more information about the site, contact the MLT at 839-LAND or MLT pond coordinator, Gina Rimson at 839-1900.

Chah-GAH-Cho

by Nancy Correll

A long-awaited November mowing has opened up CGC to hiking. Now, a person can walk a loop from the entrance behind Kmart out to the western fenceline with its view of the ocean, back past the knoll of spruce trees all the way to Healthsport, and then back again to the trail entrance.

Thanks to a generous donation from Healthsport, we were able to hire Keith Barnhart, who mowed right through 8-foot high, ferocious berry bushes to create walkable paths. So far, they are only unimproved mown areas, roughly mulched with the chopped berry stems, but we hope that they will open the area to more frequent use patterns.

We do need to build more permanent and safer trails. We also need to have regular mowings to keep the berry bushes from reclaiming the trails.

One way to develop trails is to work with the

CCCs, who are expert at building simple, but durable crushed rock trails. However, we will definitely need funds



Keith Barnhart, undeterred by the berry bushes for materials; and if we could raise funds to hire the Cs, we could have permanent trails in by next summer.

Over the past 6 months, visitation of CGC has increased, with more people walking their dogs, and visiting especially the open western area. More people, para-

doxically, seems to result in less trash. An October cleanup found only about 1 cubic yard of trash, dispatched with the help of volunteers and donations of drink and dumpster space from Rite Aide, McDonald's and K-Mart.

There is now a flyer for CGC, which includes a brief history of the land, several pictures and a map. (We will send you a flyer if you leave your name and address on our phone message machine, 839-LAND.)

Although we are gradually making progress, there is much to do. Anyone interested in donating, in helping construct signs and doggy pots, do vegetation management, and trailbuilding is welcome to contact us and discuss the ways you can help.

In the meantime, come out to CGC and walk the newly mowed trails. We hope that you enjoy the sea-view, and this lovely area that is permanent open space for McKinleyville.

A Challenging Predicament

By Dorothy Klein

It's wonderful that the MLT owns acres of land for public use and conservation of open space! The challenge is to find the funds and the volunteers to maintain these properties in a balanced and natural way. Invasive weeds have a habit of overcoming a diverse landscape and periodically must be cut back, pulled out, and hauled away. Trash accumulates, due to wind and human carelessness. The garbage is both unsightly and dangerous, and must be removed by hand, hauled out, and disposed of responsibly.

This summer we had some welcome help from the Step-Up for Youth Jobs program administered by the Humboldt County Workforce Investment Board. Using federal stimulus funds, they hired local youth and arranged to have the California Conservation Corps supervise the workers for local non-profit organizations. Four local high school youth used weed wrenches, pulaskis, strength and persistence to uproot invasive broom, cotoneaster, and holly from our Dow's Prairie Educational Wetland all without the use of power tools! Earlier in the year HSU Environmental Science seniors spearheaded the removal of nearly 40% of the broom and Himalayan blackberry. Our goal is to restore the wetland's native species. Within a few months, the berries had resprouted, reminding us that

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constant mowing is imperative to allow newly planted species to take hold, and to allow access for students to use the property as a vibrant laboratory.

The Step-Up For Youth crew tackled the problem of ivy creeping over the natural vegetation at the Ocean Avenue entrance to our Mad River Bluffs property. They spent several days pulling, digging out, and bagging up the ivy, which can resprout from small pieces left behind. We are grateful to Pacific Watershed Associates and volunteers for help hauling the bags to the dump.

Another volunteer effort removed an illegal structure that had appeared on one of our properties. Time was spent by board members cleaning up a particularly offensive dumping incident. Infrequently visited natural areas can attract undesirable usage, which leads to an increase in trash.

All of these basic maintenance chores require funds: for bags, dump fees, equipment rental, and personnel



Photo of Step Up crew at Dows Prairie Wetland: John Mager (CCC), Michael Bideaux, Manuel Munoz, Daniel Komins (CCC), Robert Adams

when the situation gets beyond the scope of a few volunteers. We appreciate volunteer physical help and equipment if you can offer it.

Our properties are for the community. We hope you go out and enjoy them, and join us in our community enhancing work by

contributing what you can. Being part of a project that will extend for generations is a challenge both provoking and absorbing.

Help Us Meet the Challenge

As you can see from the article above, the MLT continues to be active in caring for land we own. We also are required to monitor the easements that we hold, protecting privately owned land. This is a routine activity, but it takes time and energy from the Board, since we have no paid staff. As Dorothy explains so well, it does take funds to do this, even though we depend on the volunteer work of the Board and additional volunteers to help us with the work.

We still need funds to cover overhead expenses, such as insurance, membership fees, maintaining a phone, newsletter printing, and other office expenses. In addition, we would like to improve our property, for the benefit of the public, by putting up signs, doggy bags, building and maintaining trails, planting native plants, and mowing to maintain cleared areas.

As the MLT gets on a more solid financial footing, we will be able to be more active in conserving additional land in and around McKinleyville. It has been estimated that if more land is to be protected from sprawl, overdevelopment and loss of resources, it must be done in the next 20 years.

Your contribution will go a long way, in an organization with an annual budget of under \$10,000.00! Seldom does so little money make such a difference in a community. Please contribute what you can, and know that each donation is greatly appreciated.

A Dark Day for Land Conservation Legislation

Information provided by Darla Guenzler, California Coalition of Land Trusts (CCLT)

This year the California legislature managed to pass several bills that were initiated or supported by land trusts and conservancy organizations. Though the Governor signed about 2/3 of the bills on his desk, conservation and environmental legislation fared much worse. This, in spite of the fact that, like never before, land trusts stood up this year for conservation funding, parks preservation, easement protections, and strategic solutions to a host of resource conservation challenges... we simply want to say thank you to all for your hard work and congratulations on those conservation measures that were signed into law.

The following list provides a brief summary on ten land trust priorities where the Legislature has taken definitive action for the year.

Signed:

Natural Heritage Preservation Tax Credit Reauthorization (AB 94 -- Evans)

TPL's sponsored bill seeks to reinstate the program that sunset in 2008. **Signed into law.**

Removing Sunset of the Finance Lender's Exemption Law (AB 401 -- Ruskin)

AB 401 ensures that tax-exempt organizations can continue to make investments and loans to groups such as land trusts and others that further charitable purposes, without the restrictions meant to apply to commercial and consumer loans. **Signed into law.**

Bond Freeze Bill (AB 1364 --Evans)

This addresses impacts to existing contracts (*including our Mad River Bluffs*) that are subject to the bond freeze initiated by the Department of Finance in 2008. The bill, sponsored by CCLT, Planning & Conservation League and State Parks Foundation, provides increased flexibility for agencies to amend or extend contracts that would expire or fall into breach of contract due to the significant time delays for re-starting projects. AB 1364 will also apply to future bond freezes, should they occur. **Signed into law.**

Vetoed:

Nonprofits Holding Endowments for Mitigation (AB 444 -- Caballero)

The bill would have permitted nonprofits to hold endowments when they are holding the land/easement; and allow public agencies the statutory authority to provide funds to a nonprofit *to acquire land or easements that satisfy the agency's mitigation obligations.* **Vetoed.**

Farmland Bill Redux (AB 929 -- Blakeslee)

This CCLT-sponsored bill would have, among other things, permitted the Department of Conservation to fund agricultural easements that allow some restrictions on agricultural activities so long as the primary purpose of the easement continued to be agricultural use. **Held in the Senate Appropriations suspense file and is dead for the year.**

State Parks Protection, Part I (SB 372 -- Kehoe)& II (SB679-Wolk)

These two bills provided for a uniform multi-step process that must be followed before state parks can be used for non-park purposes (SB 372 – Kehoe), and that parklands approved for non-park purposes are compensated for through land of equal or greater recreational, environmental, or fair market value (SB 679 – Wolk). **Both vetoed.**

Prompt Payment Act (SB 553 -- Wiggins)

This would have ensured that nonprofits are eligible under the State's Prompt Payment Act. **Held in Senate Appropriations Committee and is dead for the year.**

Condemnation of Protected Lands (SB 555 -- Kehoe)

CCLT sponsored bill that would have required the easement holder and public funder/regulator (if any) to have a variety of notice and objection rights if a property subject to an easement is proposed for condemnation. SB 555 also recognized conservation easements that are (1) funded by public agencies (whole or in part), (2) held by public agencies, or (3) have been required as mitigation by public agencies as "property appropriated to public use" which provides some protection against condemnation. It also clarified and provided guidance on compensation due to easement holders if easements are taken or damaged in whole or part. **Vetoed.**

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Hunting Revenue Expenditures (SB 589 -- Harman)

This Outdoor Heritage Alliance-sponsored bill ensured that revenues collected from the sale of certain hunting tags and stamps are utilized for their specified purposes, including land acquisitions that support these outdoor activities.

Vetoed.

Santa Cruz Open Space District (SB 211 – Simitian)

The Land Trust of Santa Cruz County is sponsoring this measure that would provide the County with statutory authority for placing an open space district measure on the 2010 ballot. This has become a two-year bill; it could set a new state precedent for local control over resource conservation acquisitions.

Note: CCLT, headed by Darla Guenzler, helps California land trusts in many ways, including the tracking of legislation. The MLT is proud to be a member of this organization.

Cleanup Can Be Fun!

(See picture, back page)

On a drizzly Saturday in late October, a large and long-used encampment hidden in the riverside willows on the Mad River Bluffs property was dismantled and removed. Dorothy Klein and Joyce King were assisted by canoeists Ken Miller and Greg Jaso, who took more than 1800 lbs of structural materials, furnishings, and trash across the river to Mad River Beach where it was picked up and disposed of by County Parks staff.

The ingenious plan was hatched by Ken Miller who claimed to be too old to carry all that stuff up the bluff. Part of his original plan was to get Dennis Mayo to put beach driving to use and pick up the trash which MLT would pay to dump. Dennis did him one better and got the county to do both.

Thanks, everyone!

A Weed workshop

Our own Mad River Bluffs was chosen as a productive site for a workshop on managing weeds, a doubtful compliment to conditions on site! The September workshop was organized by the Weed Management Area, a county group of experts who work to put together the best and latest management practices with areas in the county that need it.

About 10 people attended. Jennifer Wheeler (BLM), Tony LaBanca (Fish & Game) and Deborah Giraud (County Agriculture), among others, demonstrated control methods for invasive broom and ivy (and the dangers of letting them spread). This was followed by a “hands on” chance to use such exotic tools as weed wrenches, etc. It was a helpful workshop, and inspired those who attended to keep on removing invasive weeds, one by one.



McKinleyville Land Trust

Board of Directors 2009

- Allen Bird - President
- Nancy Correll - Vice-President
- Dorothy Klein - Secretary
- Wayne Sutherland - Treasurer
- Darci Short
- Joyce King
- Tom Lisle
- Judy Haggard
- Lisa Eldridge

Thanks to all volunteers!

Site cleanups:

Dorothy Klein, Allen Bird, Darci Short, Frank Bickner, Laura Bridy, Rhonda Farro, Randy Lew, Adele Nipkau, Jeff Dunk, Tom LeRoy, Tom Lisle, Ken Miller, Joyce King, Greg Jaso, Alan Compher

HSU students from Joe Seney’s soils class and Dr. Alison Purcell’s class. including Clark Steele, Lisa Rodgers, Sean Gavelas, Eli March

Annual Dinner & North Country Fair:

Gina Rimson deserves special notice for organizing these two events, both of which were satisfying and successful. Gina, a past Board member, remains a pillar of this organization. Flora Barbash, Julie Neander, Sylvie Leppig, Maya Bickner, Haleigh Dunk, Allyson Hartley, Gordon Leppig, Kye Neander, Jeff Dunk, Katie Farro, Eva Brayfindley, Kelsy Vaughan, Richard Duning, Gayle Raymer, Frank Bickner, Darci Short, Mimi Morgan, Dan Bosler, Tamara Clohessy, Kate McClain, Julian Barbash, Dorothy Klein, Penny Brogden, Joyce King, Adele Nipkau, Linda Doerflinger, Joe Ceriani, Sandra Spalding, Laura Bridy, Jason Teraoka, Emily King, Linda Seymour, Courtney Blake, Marci O’Flanagan, Patrick Evans, Leonel Arguello, Lynne Bryan, Linda Evans, Natalie Lindley, Chris Hepe, Mike Rademaker, Nick Farro, Mark Wilcox, Rhonda Farro. Raffle items and donations in kind:

Conscious Home, Don Juan’s, HealthSport, Mill Creek Cinema, Miller Farms Nursery, North Coast Gallery & Picture Framing, Plaza Design, Singing Tree Gardens. Starbucks, North Coast Regional Land Trust, K-mart, McDonald’s, Rite Aid, the Bickner family, Allen and Shirley Bird, Penny Brogden, Nancy Correll, Peter and Judy Haggard, Dorothy Klein, Amy Stewart

The owner, manager and clients of Healthsport have all donated to the effort to create trails on Chah-GAH-Cho.

The McKinleyville Land Trust
P.O. Box 2723
McKinleyville, CA 95519

Don't miss the

McKinleyville Land Trust

ANNUAL DINNER!

Saturday, March 20, 6-8 pm

at Azalea Hall

with speaker Steve Sillett

(see front page article)

What's going on here?

See article, page 5.



Mugs for McKinleyville Land Trust can be purchased for \$8 at the Annual Dinner, March 20. (see front page), or at Blake's Books in McKinleyville.

