



THE MCKINLEYVILLE LAND TRUST NEWSLETTER

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Changes at Chah-GAH-Cho - By Nancy Correll

Chah-GAH-Cho (CGC) is looking different these days. There's a lightness, a more relaxed feel to the place. People are walking the trails, pausing to sit on benches, and enjoying the view of the Arcata Bottoms, often in the company of their dogs. According to John Shelter, it's because of a partnership between his crew of ex-homeless workers and the Board of the McKinleyville Land Trust (MLT).

John's company, New Directions, contracted with the Board to pick up trash and clear out illegal encampments. After doing regular patrols for a few months, a work flow routine has become established. MLT members walk the property, cleaning up graffiti, and notifying John of any trash and camping problems. After about 6 months, the illegal encampments have decreased, and trash has dramatically declined.

Of course, this doesn't mean that the problem of illegal camping is solved in our community; rather it has moved to different areas in town. McKinleyville still needs a safe, legal, supervised place for the unhoused to live until they can put their lives back together.

John Shelter has endured this process. After working as a metallurgist in Los Angeles and owning a restaurant in Arcata, he was put on Workman's Compensation following an accident – eventually making him and his two young daughters houseless. John was then hired and trained as a caseworker by Redwood Community Action Agency. In time he also worked for the Public Health Department and then for Arcata Endeavor – an early response to the problem of people without housing. John began hiring the homeless to help with cleaning up areas such as the Arcata Plaza, particularly after events such as the Oyster Festival. When John and Arcata Endeavor parted ways, John began his own business, New Directions. He hired some of the houseless people he knew to help eradicate Spartina (an invasive weed) for the Harbor District and California Coastal Commission, to help clean up around the Bayshore Mall for the City of Eureka, and to clean up and move a settled camp near Giuntoli Lane for the City of Arcata, as well as many other projects.

Since then, it is estimated that New Directions has removed close to 650 tons of trash, including 13,327 syringes, in various locations around Humboldt Bay. His workers are paid above the California minimum wage (\$12/hour) and are trained in air- and blood-borne diseases and disposal. The safety record of New Directions is very good; his workers have only used Workman's Comp twice – for bee stings.

John has strong opinions about the current houseless problem, and while his business approach is not for everyone or every situation, his model could provide help to the "single homeless" population. John says that, to expand his work, he needs only a place for single homeless men to legally camp, with supervision, and begin their transition to permanent housing.

Meanwhile, John and his crew have given CGC what it needs: the chance to be a welcoming natural area, open to all during the day, left for the critters at night. If you wish to know more about John Shelter and his New Directions group, you can visit his Facebook site at <https://www.facebook.com/thepeopleofnewdirections>.

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What's Happening at MRB— Vicki Ozaki

During the pandemic, natural areas like Mad River Bluffs have provided an important outdoor space for our community. Trails along the coastal bluff wind through huckleberry tunnels beneath a beautiful coastal Spruce and pine forest. If you are observant there are hidden treasures in the forest like hummingbird nests, owl pellets, and rattlesnake orchids. Overlooks perched above the Mad River provide opportunities to observe the dynamic interplay between the river and ocean with ever-changing tides. These vantage points are great places to watch approaching winter storms over the ocean, and beautiful sunsets.

The network of trails that traverse Mad River Bluffs connect with the adjacent Hiller Park trails and the nearby Hammond Trail. Prior to the acquisition of this property in 2001 by the McKinleyville Land Trust, local residents frequented the forested bluffs and created well established social trails. At that time, the pine forest was in its prime and had a tight forest canopy allowing very little light to penetrate to the ground. There were far less blackberry, cascara, salmonberry and other brush species than today. In 2011, The MLT received a grant to provide significant trail improvements as *“part of a greater project aimed at improving recreation, trail connectivity, and other types of access along the Hammond Trail and surrounding Hiller Park.”*



Since then, very little trail management has been needed except for removing downed trees. MRB has been lucky to have the Trail Stewards led by Steffen Allen, working on the trails and helping remove invasive plants every other month. Unfortunately, during the Pandemic, those volunteer efforts have not occurred.

Today, vegetation has overgrown and encroached on sections of the Bluffs trail especially where there is no tree canopy. It has reached a point where we need substantial vegetation management to reestablish the original trail width and close off unwanted access points such as unofficial social trails and trails to encampments. In the next year, we will be looking for grants to fund trail work to widen trails and allow easier passing with better lines of site and also rebuild portions of the South Stairs. In the future, look for opportunities to volunteer at Mad River Bluffs to help eradicate invasive ivy.

Farewells and Welcome to Board Members



The McKinleyville Land Trust is sad to lose two of our board members this past year, Monica Bueno and Steffen Allen. Monica was a thoughtful and passionate board member and led efforts at the Dows Prairie Educational Wetland. Steffen Allen is a tireless trails advocate and in that capacity we look forward to interacting with him. We will miss both of these board members and the MLT wishes them nothing but the best.

On the bright side, the MLT recently added a new member, Garry Rees, to the Board. Garry is a recent arrival to McKinleyville and has an interest in conservation of land for public use. Garry brings skills as a planning consultant and in environmental restoration. As a Board member he plans to focus on helping the Board raise funds, navigate permitting and environmental review of MLT activities, and help to keep our properties in working order. The MLT is thrilled to have Garry on the Board!

A Fundraising Plea in the Era of Covid - Tom Lisle

During this time of the pandemic, public outdoor spaces where people can safely exercise and be out in the world are more valuable than ever. With more people taking advantage of the McKinleyville Land Trust's properties, our board is managing our land and keeping us solvent. This may not be evident in our more isolated existence, so the MLT Board is reaching out to you with this letter to thank you for your support and update you on our activities.

Chah-GAH-Cho is now being visited and cleaned up by New Directions, a local organization that hires the unhoused to clean up trash and discourage camping. This much needed aid was made possible by a generous grant from the McKinleyville Area Fund. As a result, conditions are much improved over last winter's (see page 1).

Our super summer intern, Gus Nordmeyer, was a big help keeping us organized and current with our outreach. With his help we have digitized some of our files and developed a new brochure for Mad River Bluffs. Our Board has changed members with Monica Bueno and Steffen Allen stepping down, and Gary Rees stepping in.

We continue to watch for other natural areas in McKinleyville that could be better protected as parks, forests, or easements that are open to the public where appropriate. We welcome a trail along the Mad River that has been proposed by the McKinleyville Community Services District, and we support efforts toward developing a community forest.

Since in-person fundraising events are off the table, we are more than ever dependent on donations. Cancellation of the North Country Fair in September meant that we didn't get to serve you our famous Gyros from our food booth. But more importantly we weren't able to raise a significant amount of funds necessary to support our expenditures, such as doggi-pot bags for our wonderful four-legged, furry friends. So if you are able, we would very much appreciate any support you can send. Our mailing address is P.O. Box 2723, McKinleyville; donations can also be made online at mlandtrust.org or on our Facebook page. Regardless of your ability to donate or not, we at the MLT Board extend our gratitude and wish the best for you and yours in 2021.

What's Happening at Cha-GAH-Cho - Nancy Correll

Cha-GAH-Cho (CGC) continues to be a tranquil place for walking dogs, bird-watching, and generally finding a peaceful place to be in the heart of McKinleyville.

Again this year, trees and brush were carefully thinned in an ongoing effort to keep the grassy area on the western side open, while maintaining ecological values. CGC is becoming an urban park, with open areas and sight-lines between larger trees, making the area feel safer and offering wider vistas.

This year, MLT employed John Shelter's company, New Directions, to discourage camping and control trash accumulation. The result has been far fewer illegal camps, and much less trash. This would have put a necessary but sizable dent in our expense account if not for a generous grant of \$5000 from the McKinleyville Area Fund for this purpose. We are grateful for this support from our community.

Removal of the trashcan near the kiosk seems to have reduced the temptation to dump household waste and other garbage. Doggi-pot trashcans have been installed for doggi-pot bags only! There are three things you can do to enhance CGC: visit and walk the trails, provide photographs or other artwork that MLT can display in our kiosk window, and as always provide donations to help us keep maintaining CGC as a safe, scenic place to visit.

Natural History Moment

Long-tailed Weasel - Judy Haggard

Be on the lookout on our MLT properties, particularly Mad River Bluffs for one of the largest weasels in North America, the long-tailed weasel (*Mustela frenata*). These weasels have a small head with long whiskers, a long, slender body (~ 1 foot long), short legs, and a long black-tipped tail (hence the name!). Their fur is brown on the upper part of its body and white to yellow on the underside. The range of this species covers the southern part of Canada, most of the U.S., Mexico, and Central America, and parts of South America. Their variety of habitats include woodlands, thickets, and open areas but they are not readily observed because they are solitary, except during mating season in the summer, are most active at night. They den in burrows (commonly those abandoned by other animals), under stumps, or beneath rock piles. They are aggressive hunters, preferring to catch small mammals such as rats, squirrels, chipmunks, shrews, and moles, but they may take birds, frogs, fish, and insects. They release a strong-smelling musk odor when they are frightened and during mating season. Thankfully they are listed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature as 'Least Concern'.



WHAT'S FLOWERING? - Elaine Allison

One of the first flowers you might see in wooded portion of our properties this spring is the Siberian Candy Flower (*Claytonia sibirica*). It is found along the Pacific coast from Santa Cruz to Alaska, and of course, Siberia. The scientific name honors John Clayton, an 18th century botanist and physician from Virginia. Its common name is derived from the pink stripes on the five notched white petals, resembling the popular peppermint candy cane. The wide, pointed oval leaves have long stalks at the base, but are opposite and stalkless along the stem. It is found in moist, shady places everywhere along the coast. The above-ground portion is edible, but please remember to taste not remove Candy Flowers from our properties. They have a role to play as well.



What's Happening at the Dows Prairie Education Wetland - Leonel Arguello

Of the 3 properties owned by the McKinleyville Land Trust, the Dows Prairie Educational Wetland is the property that has been hardest hit by the pandemic. School closures have meant that this educational wetland did not get visited by students and educators as normally would occur during the school year. Nevertheless, some work still occurred there including: ongoing scotch broom removal, maintenance of native plants, and completion of an HSU Capstone Project titled: Successful Metamorphosis of the Pacific Tree Frog in an Ephemeral Pond Habitat. The MLT continues to plan invasive plant management projects there so if you're interested please reach out and feel encouraged to volunteer your time.



TREASURER'S UPDATE - CINDY WILCOX

All of us on the McKinleyville Land Trust Board would like to thank our donors for your generous contributions. With the COVID-19 restrictions, these donations have become even more important now that our traditional methods of raising money have been cancelled: our world-famous gyros stand at the North Country Fair and our annual dinner with highly entertaining speakers every year. Why are these contributions important? Our board is staffed with all volunteers, so your donations go directly to keeping our lands open to the public. Expenses are for doggi-pot bags, insurance, benches, repair work, and mowing on our properties. We have also employed John Shelter and his New Directions crew to help with the garbage pickup and discouraging illegal camping.

These activities all need financial support. We were fortunate this year to be awarded a grant from the McKinleyville Area Fund, through the Humboldt Area Foundation, to defray some of our costs. We would like to increase the mowing to open up more of this property for dog walking and play activities, with we are considering increased benches and doggi-pot bag stands. Increasing the mowing would also open up an area that we can have an open-air picnic venue for one of our fundraising alternatives.

How can you help with much needed donations? You can donate via the PayPal button on our website, www.mlandtrust.org, or you can send checks to: MLT, P.O. Box 2723, McKinleyville, CA 95519. Follow us on Facebook to get notices about upcoming MLT fundraisers and events and view our Instagram page at www.instagram.com/mckinleyvillelandtrust.

THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS & DONORS

Steffen Allan, Leonel Arguello/Laura Bridy, Julian Barbash, Jamie Bellerman, Rick & Sally Botzler, Lynne Bryan, Monica and Aiden Winkle-Bueno, Greg & Teri Bundros, Bruce Campbell, John Caulkins, Ron Coffman, Nancy Correll, Neal and Suzanne Crothers, Lori Dengler, Linda Doerflinger, Sabra and Jeff Dunk, Richard Duning, Linda Evans, Bob and Ginny Felter, Sylvia-Don-Ben-Jason Garlick, Judy & Pete Haggard, Healthsport, Irene Holt, Lee and Chris House, Humboldt Sanitation, Pete and Judy Haggard, Jill and Kenny Haworth, Linda and Bailey Ives, Greg Jaso, John Jaso, Jennifer Kalt, Nannette-Tavish-David Kelley, Jeff Kelly, Paul and Barbara Kelly, Joyce King, Dorothy Klein, John Kulstad, KMART, Tony LaBanca, Katherine Layton, Debbie Marshall, Julie Neander and Gordon Leppig, Tom Lisle, Randal Lundberg, Debbie Marshall, Kate McClain, David McMurray, McKinleyville Ace Hardware, McKinleyville Area Fund, McKinleyville Sheriffs Office, Ken Miller, Duncan McNeil, Ben and Amanda Moorehead, Madeline Myers, Meighan O'Brien, Katherine O'Connell, Vicki Ozaki, Brenda & George Pease, Bruce Moore & Laura Petersen, Ramone's, Javan Reid, Richard Ridenhour, Gina Rimson, Diane Ryerson, Samara Nursery, Morguine & Chad Sefcik, Emily Sinkhorn, Mark & Martha Sinkhorn, Darci Short, Emily, Amaya & Jason Teraoka, Ed & Aiko Uyeki, Jennifer & George Wheeler, Cindy Wilcox, Ashley Woodford, Melissa and Bill Zielinski, and more!

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MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of the McKinleyville Land Trust is to conserve local open spaces for ecological, historical, agricultural, educational, recreational and scenic values.
 For Everyone—Forever.

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MCKINLEYVILLE
LAND TRUST

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ANNUAL DINNER - SAVE THE DATE?

We typically announce our annual dinner here but sadly there is no date to save this time around. Covid-19 continues to wreak havoc on our society, disrupting the rhythm and cadence of our lives, and dictating a new normal set of rules for us to safely follow. For the McKinleyville Land Trust, as with all organizations, work still needs to be done, i.e., keeping our properties open, making repairs where needed, and fundraising to pay for it all. With in-person events cancelled, our annual dinner of course is postponed until such a time as we can safely gather, to laugh, eat well, and enjoy an evening together. While we will not be following our traditional gatherings, we have other options to consider.

The Board will weigh options for non-traditional fundraising events, and we will announce these to you via our normal outreach methods, i.e., Facebook, Instagram, our website (mlandtrust.org), and snail-mail. We hope that whatever we “cook” up you’ll be able to join us. We miss our friends and we miss interacting with all of you, the lifeblood of the MLT. We hope you enjoy reading the articles in this year’s newsletter. If you have questions about anything you’ve read, please don’t hesitate to reach out to us. I do hope to see you at our properties or around town in lieu of our dinner, but until then and on behalf of the Board, I wish you all health, safety, and the very best in 2021.

Leonel Arguello—Board President
November 2020