



THE

Highlander

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The Rural Bonny Doon Association Newsletter

RBDA Virtual Public Meeting **Tracking Post-Fire Blooms of Native Plants Using Citizen Science**

Amy Patten - California Native Plant Society

Wednesday, November 10, 7:30 p.m.

Zoom Video Conference Meeting

As our community looks forward to a season of rest and rain after struggling to recover from the CZU fire and defend our homes for the 2021 fire season, the RBDA invites you to a meeting celebrating the resilience and growth of our bioregion. The California Native Plant Society (CNPS) has been surveying the emergence of native plants from the post-fire seedbeds and started a citizen science program to help us all understand the history and current state of our local botanic diversity — and help celebrate and defend that diversity by joining the survey project. Using the app iNaturalist, you can take photos of plants you find but can't identify, and the hive mind of botanists on the app will help identify them. If you've found a rare native, join the CNPS Rare Plant Treasure Hunt Program and help botanists understand propagation and survival of our natural heritage.

Amy Patten is the Rare Plant Treasure Hunt Manager at the California Native Plant Society, where she works with volunteers to collect data on rare plant populations around the state. Patten graduated from UC Santa Cruz in 2009 with a B.S. in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology and she is passionate about the natural history of the Central Coast.

Please come to the virtual RBDA Public Meeting on Wednesday, November 10, at 7:30 p.m. to learn more about this program and hear what exciting native plants the CNPS survey has found in its study of Big Basin and Bonny Doon post-fire landscapes.

Virtual Meeting Participation

Zoom (zoom.us) is a video conference platform that is free to use through either a web browser or application, and audio participation is possible through a dial-up connection on your phone. For this meeting, we will be utilizing all the available security features, including password-protection and waiting rooms managed by the host. Please send your e-mail address to meetings@rbda.us to receive the meeting credentials and password. Your email will not be used for any other communication and will not be shared.



Why Bonny Doon Is the Wrong Place to House a Sexually Violent Predator

Over the last several months, many members of the Bonny Doon community have been intensely involved in organizing to oppose the placement by Liberty Healthcare of a sexually violent predator (SVP) on Wild Iris Lane. There have been several recent news articles in local newspapers, and synopses of this complex issue on social media.

Santa Cruz County Superior Court Judge Syda Cogliati will be deciding about this placement on November 15, 2021. **Please join your neighbors at the courthouse (701 Ocean Street, Santa Cruz, CA) beginning at 7:30 a.m. to show your opposition.** There are many critically important reasons why Bonny Doon is an unsuitable location to house a sexually violent predator (SVP). One of the most critical is deficits in communications and power infrastructure that will make it impossible for Liberty Healthcare to meet its contractual requirements for his support and the protection of the community in which he is placed.

One of the RBDA's main efforts over the last several years has been addressing these

MURS Radios: Grassroots Communication Systems Thrive in Post- Fire Bonny Doon

If you attended the RBDA public meeting in March 2021, you appreciate how many Dooners have organized themselves to prepare for the next disaster, and how many were willing to share their knowledge. Some Dooners are using FireWise and Map My Neighborhood to organize and plan for disaster. Others are getting HAM radio licenses or following the advice of Dawn Mackey from the Bonny Doon Community Emergency Response Team and investing in simple MURS Radios and organizing communication pods.

There are now 18 MURS Radio groups in Bonny Doon, Mackey says, each one organized by a Dooner willing to take initiative.

Doug Stallard started the Atherly group. The isolation after the CZU fire had him driving off the mountain to get cell coverage to bring back news to his family and neighbors. After the fire, he got a generator and satellite internet as a backup for Comcast.

"I had a great opportunity to test out my satellite system when the fires flared up this past January," Stallard said, "This time with a generator and satellite I was well informed, but then I learned there was a tree down. I was the only one who knew about it. I thought to myself there has to be a better way than

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Regents Rubberstamp UCSC Plan to Add 8,500 Students

The Board of Regents, which oversees the various University of California campuses, unanimously approved the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for UCSC's ambitious growth plan, a blueprint for an addition of 8,500 students and 6 million square feet of new buildings by 2040, much of it on the North Campus, in Bonny Doon. As has historically been the case, the Regents ignored local objections raised by the Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors, the Santa Cruz City Council, and community groups and individuals, that the impact of a 44% increase in student enrollment on the smallest UC host community would lead to even higher housing costs, worse traffic jams and increased water use.

A letter to the Regents from the Santa Cruz City-County Task Force on UCSC Growth protested the inadequacies of the FEIR, saying that it didn't "adequately disclose, evaluate, and mitigate several critical impacts," especially regarding UCSC's failure to commit to meeting its goal of housing all the new students on campus. If, as has happened every time over the years that

UCSC has added students, it fails to build enough housing for all (or even a significant portion) of them on campus, there is nothing in the FEIR that legally binds UCSC to take any steps to alleviate the pressure on the local housing market. In other words, UCSC allows itself to keep growing enrollment whether or not it builds housing for the additional students. Earlier this year a court threw out the EIR for a plan by UC Berkeley to add enrollment without mitigating its impacts on the local housing market.

The university, the Supervisors, and the City Council all would like to avoid another round of lawsuits over UCSC growth. But the only leverage granted by State law to local communities over UC growth is taking the Regents to court over inadequacies in the FEIR, citing violations of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). In Santa Cruz, the campus falls under two government jurisdictions, the City and the County, which local leaders and citizen activists contend requires UCSC to get the approval of the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) to extend water and sewer services

to the North Campus. UCSC claims LAFCO has no jurisdiction over it, although it agreed to apply to LAFCO in 2009 for permission to extend those services.

Last year, UC claimed in a lawsuit that the City Council legally bound itself in the mid-1960s, as an inducement to build a UC here, to supply the campus with water and sewer services, without stipulating that only applied to the portion of the campus within city limits. That suit hasn't yet had its day in court.

If UCSC growth proceeds as outlined in the FEIR, Bonny Doon will feel the effects. The Cave Gulch neighborhood will be only a short distance away from hundreds of new neighbors across the creek; wildlife will be impacted by the new human invasion; the wildfire danger will greatly increase, while Dooners evacuating from future fires will have to share Empire Grade with all the students and faculty fleeing the campus via a new road onto Empire; and people looking to rent a house in Bonny Doon will have to compete with the increased number of students, staff and faculty.

Resource Management Plan Approved for Public Access to Cotoni-Coast Dairies

After a pause in the process while the Biden administration appointed new leadership to replace Trump's appointees, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) got the stamp of approval on its Resource Management Plan Amendment (RMPA) that will guide the opening of Cotoni-Coast Dairies National Monument to public access. The plan as approved did not incorporate many of the suggestions submitted during the public protest period, nor did it embrace a "joint proposal" signed by the RBDA and 7 other organizations who united to suggest modifications that would reduce impacts on wildlife, neighboring residents and public safety, and improve parking and access facilities. The RBDA Board then joined Friends of the North Coast (FONC) and the Davenport North Coast Association in filing an appeal with the federal Interior Dept. Board of Land Appeals, submitting a "Statement of Reasons" for the appeal on August 20, 2021.

The RMPA was approved without including access to the southern portion of the Coast Dairies property because the BLM had planned a trail head location with parking lot and rest room facilities up on the scenic second coastal terrace without obtaining the easement it would need to build a road inland from Highway 1 across farmland owned by the Trust for Public Land (TPL). TPL is required

to maintain the agricultural viability of the land, but the raised road would have divided the parcel in half, diminishing its agricultural usability. To help the BLM create a trail head, TPL has offered to donate a few acres on the northern end of the property for a parking lot. This would keep the parking, rest rooms, and related roads and fences off the second terrace, preserving the dramatic sweeping views and reduce habitat impacts, and instead cluster the facilities along the highway across from the Regional Transportation Commission's (RTC) planned trail-with-rail facilities at Panther Beach. To expedite implementation of this highly preferable access option, TPL has retained a facilities design firm, and FONC President Jonathan Wittwer provided BLM and government officials with invaluable process advice.

The RTC and the Federal Highway Administration have applied for a second grant from the Federal Land Access Program (FLAP) with the goal of funding a parking lot, rest rooms, and amenities, including a pedestrian bridge to enable visitors to cross Highway 1 safely going to and from Panther Beach, the Rail Trail, and Cotoni-Coast Dairies. The funds, if granted, would also extend the trail to Davenport, pay for a parking lot and rest room facilities in Davenport, and add a crosswalk, though there is no connection

to the BLM's other proposed access point, just past Davenport New Town. That site was also a poor choice, and a better one is proposed farther north on Cement Plant Road near the old Mocetini "cheese barn". That location would eliminate visual impacts for New Town residents and reduce grading and habitat impacts, and a restored building could be an interpretative facility describing the history of North Coast dairying.

As the RTC prepares to take its Rail Trail proposal to the Coastal Commission for final approval in the coming months, and the BLM advances its plan through the appeal process, Davenport activists recognized that the North Coast is overdue for a more broadly focused regional plan to manage the existing and expanding visitation that new public serving facilities will bring. A meeting with County and Coastal Conservancy staff finally resulted in submission of a grant application to fund a North Coast Facilities and Management Plan to be administered by the County Parks. The grant was approved by the Conservancy at their September meeting and County Parks will retain a consultant to generate a plan along the lines of the Big Sur Sustainable Tourism Destination Stewardship Plan, to manage over-visitation problems that are anticipated to greatly impact the North Coast.

Opposition to SVP in Bonny Doon

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infrastructure deficits. The lack of cell service and unreliable wireless internet service leaves our community isolated during dangerous emergency situations. Improving this has been one of our highest organizational priorities, but our lobbying of utility companies and political leaders has not yet been successful.

The RBDA has provided information to support the effort of Assistant District Attorney Alex Byers to oppose this placement, by pointing out serious issues that need to be considered by Judge Cogliati. In summary, we emphasized that most locations in Bonny Doon have little or no cell phone access, including Wild Iris Lane. Should a person be confronted, attacked, or witness such activities, they would not be able to call 911 from almost anywhere in Bonny Doon other than their own home. Furthermore, many homes no longer have AT&T land lines and rely on Comcast cable or even wireless internet for phone service.

When we lose power, we lose internet, because both Comcast cable internet and AT&T DSL internet require electrical power. During power outages, battery backup power for Comcast internet is woefully insufficient; it typically lasts for about an hour. Multiple conversations between the RBDA and Comcast, AT&T and the California Public Utility Commission about this inadequacy have not resolved this issue.

In our rural community we routinely lose internet access for multiple reasons including: PG&E's Public Safety Power Shutoff program; recent installations of PG&E's highly sensitive "fast trip" system in several locations; and trees falling on electric wires during winter storms.

We also emphasized that the frequency of complete service interruptions in the Santa Cruz Mountains is predicted to continue to rise due to increasingly extreme weather and year-round fire conditions, which will exacerbate the power and communication infrastructure challenges.

In summary, we strongly support the community's objection to this placement, and feel that any SVP should be housed where communication services are suitable for the electronic monitoring of an SVP, and where residents are not routinely in secluded public places with no way to call for help.

Please consider showing up at the courthouse on November 15 to show your opposition!

MURS

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knocking on doors. Not long after I saw *The Highlander* article on Dawn Mackey and MURS radios. To me it just seemed like a no-brainer. Whatever sort of emergency we face is going to require communication."

These neighborhood groups are growing through word of mouth. Some organizers are HAM radio operators, and some like Stallard have satellite internet. Either way, there is somebody at the center of the hub who can transmit and receive information off the mountain, then pass it over the smaller radios neighbor to neighbor.

If you want to get involved in a local group or start your own, the radio that Mackey recommends is the BTEch V1 MURS by Baofeng. It requires no license and is easy to use—although it does need to be programmed after purchase so that it works with our local system. Mackey or your community leader can help. If you don't know of a group in your neck of the woods, contact Mackey (dawnmackey411@gmail.com) and she can let you know if a group exists in your area already. There is also information on all these aspects of grassroots communication solutions in Bonny Doon on the RBDA website, rbda.us.

The RBDA continues to lobby for standard communication solutions (contact us at board@rbda.us if you would like to join our communications working group) but until we have reliable cell coverage and power we are on our own.

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Yearly dues are \$20/pp or \$15/pp for multiple members at same address.

Memberships expire on Jan. 31 of the next year. *

Number of Members _____ Number of years you are joining or renewing for _____

Multiply years times number of memberships. Checks only, please, made out to RBDA.

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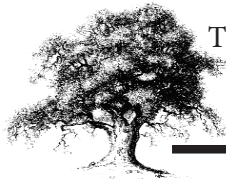
I certify that I (we) live or own property in the Bonny Doon Planning District.

Clip out and mail to RBDA, P.O. Box 551, Felton, CA 95018.

Dues mostly go for printing and mailing *The Highlander*, your voice for keeping Bonny Doon rural and natural.

Additional contributions are gladly accepted and greatly appreciated!

*Dues paid after Nov. 30 count toward the next year.



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Bonny Doon's voice in preserving our special quality of life, The Highlander, is mailed free 6 times a year. RBDA Public Meetings are usually held the second Wednesdays of January, March, May, September and November. We encourage you to participate. Send correspondence to The Highlander at the above address.

Access the RBDA on the Internet at:

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E-mail us at:

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**Bonny Doon Resident
Santa Cruz, CA 95060**

Nov. 10 RBDA Public Meeting: Native Plants Blooming from Post-Fire Seedbanks

Water on the Mountain - A Conversation with Justin Robinson

Drought, climate change and the 2020 CZU Complex Fire — Second generation Bonny Doon waterman Justin Robinson of Tom's Well Service has never seen anything like it. "And, probably, it's going to get worse," he says. He's talking about our wells and aquifers in Bonny Doon.

Low rainfall is bad for all waterways, and the effects of dry winters are in some ways predictable, Robinson says. "The places in Bonny Doon where there have historically been good, those places are holding out, but places that have had less water, those wells are worse than ever." And as Bonny Doon grows, "there are more people sucking from the same straw."

"Water is a finite resource," says Robinson, "and there's no precedent or documented measurements that I know of water this low."

In addition to predictable changes, Robinson is seeing new lows in our wells. "I'm not a climatologist or geologist," he says, "but in my work I haven't seen anything like this." Some of the changes he can document. The water level at Country Estates is down 15 feet from last year.

One strange thing Robinson has noticed since the fire is that the "static level", defined as the measurable level of water, can seem normal or even high but when the well is pumped, it draws down faster than it did in the past. Justin posits this may be because

there are fewer trees on the ridges after the CZU fire, so there are fewer big trees to drink the water before it gets to our wells, making some aquifers seem full even with less water flowing through them. As the water table drops, water quality drops as well because the ratio of particulates and minerals increases, and he says some Bonny Doon wells appear thicker with minerals.

However, there is some comforting news about VOC's (volatile organic compounds) in our post-fire wells. VOC's are left in the ground when plastics, appliances and other home building materials burn. Robinson says Tom's Well Service tested close to 100 wells for VOC's this last year and did not find any. He suggests this is one benefit of a dry winter post-fire providing less opportunity for pollutants to wash into the ground water.

The most important thing Dooners can do? "Pay attention," says Justin. Because we're not on city water, there's no entity that is going to inform and fine us when we have a leak. We must monitor our own consumption and storage capacity. If your tank is in an out-of-the-way place, consider investing in a smart water monitor that you can look at on your phone or on a monitor in your kitchen.

Want to learn more about water and wells in Bonny Doon? So do we. Look to *The Highlander* for a series of upcoming articles on water in Bonny Doon.

The RBDA Needs You!

Board Nominations Open at November Public Meeting

The RBDA is a vital organization for Bonny Doon, serving as a pipeline to the Santa Cruz County government and other agencies that advocates for public services like adequate road maintenance and law enforcement, and for strong land use regulations that protect Bonny Doon from negatively impactful development. To continue to effectively serve in this role, we need your participation, both as members and as board officers.

At our November 10 meeting (via Zoom) we will open nominations for positions on the RBDA Executive Board, and the election will be held at the January Annual RBDA meeting. You can nominate yourself, or somebody not present. The terms of four officers, Dave Rubin, Kendra Turk-Kubo, Russell Kliegel, and Laurie Taylor, expire in January. Many of our currently serving board members became involved through a desire to advocate for a particular issue facing their neighborhood.

If you are interested and able to help Bonny Doon and the RBDA by serving as a Board officer, please contact the Board by email at board@rbda.us. To be nominated or to vote you must be a member in good standing. You can join or renew your membership by using the form in this *Highlander*.