



THE

Highlander

Oct. - Dec. 2026

The Rural Bonny Doon Association Newsletter

Public Meeting

Road Safety Project Proposal

and

Bonny Doon's Artistic Community

Wednesday, October 28, 7:00 p.m.

In person at the Bonny Doon Elementary School Multi-Purpose Room and Virtually via Zoom

Please join us for two very different, but equally important and informative presentations.

First, Jeff de los Santos, Senior Civil Engineer from Santa Cruz County's Public Works Department, will be presenting an important **road safety project proposed for the Pine Flat/Ice Cream Grade intersection by the school**. This is in response to the safety concerns raised by several residents. The proposed solution is to remove trees to improve site distance. Alternatives, findings, and engineering recommendations will be provided. So **don't miss your opportunity to comment on this project as well as raise other safety concerns you might have**.

The second part of the evening, **led by environmental artist Christy Carico**, will be a **presentation and discussion that shines a light on the Bonny Doon artistic community**. We're all familiar with Doon Art and Open Studios, but here's a chance to learn more about the artists and programs that make it happen. **Several artists will be sharing both their art and their creative processes**. Christy and others will also discuss the programs key to developing and promoting art in our community.

Zoom Meeting Login Instructions can be found on page 2

Speaker Bios



Jeff de los Santos

Jeff de los Santos is a Senior Civil Engineer with the County of Santa Cruz, where he oversees the Traffic Engineering and Development Review Section in CDI-Public Works. With more than two decades of experience with the County, Jeff brings extensive technical expertise, institutional knowledge, and a collaborative approach to delivering safe, effective public infrastructure for the community.

Christy Carico is an environmental artist whose work explores the connection between creative expression and ecological stewardship. Her practice, rooted in California's vibrant ecosystems, spans acrylic painting, digital design, multi-medium installations and "waste fashion" crafted from reclaimed plastics and found objects. Christy's work, drawing from

a professional background in agribusiness, environmental management and visual design, has been exhibited at venues like the Crocker Art Museum and Big Sur's Coast Gallery.



Christy Carico

Christopher Reynolds is a multidisciplinary artist, educator, and curator. His practice spans digital media, collage, sculpture, installation and socially engaged practices. For more than a decade he has been teaching courses ranging from photography and digital media to art history, professional practices and interdisciplinary studio art. Through community projects, sculptures, installations, video and performance art he explores food as a social catalyst. Christopher received an MFA from the California Institute of the Arts and a BA in Fine Arts from The University of Southern California.



Christopher Reynolds

Full-time potter **Mattie Leeds** has spent over four decades crafting large-scale, brightly colored ceramic art. Studying under Chinese arts master

Y.C. Chiang and ceramicist Michael Frimkess, Leeds pairs classical brush technique with expressive figurative study. Renowned for his immense pot sculptures, Leeds' continued work is truly inspiring.



Mattie Leeds

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Speaker Bios

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Sarah Sanford

Sarah Sanford is a California-based artist and art educator whose multidisciplinary practice integrates printmaking, photography, drawing and installation. Her work explores themes of light, impermanence and perception, and blurs the boundaries between science and the natural world. Sarah has more than 20 years of national and international exhibitions and residencies, holds an MFA in Printmaking from the Edinburgh College of Art, Scotland, and a BS in Art Education from the joint program of Case Western Reserve University and the Cleveland Institute of Art.

Raised in Santa Cruz, watercolor artist **Alison Wallace Parham** creates vibrant works across diverse genres, driven by the belief that “every picture tells a story.” Having studied under notable watercolorists since 1999, like Linda Lord, Elizabeth Kinkade, and Maryjo Koch, she continually practices and grows within her word. Her artistic path faced a major pause after losing her home and studio in the 2020 CZU fire. Rebuilt and rooted back home in 2026, Alison is thrilled to return to creating and exhibiting across the Central Coast.



Alison Parham

Update on Housing Sexually Violent Predator Michael Cheek in Santa Cruz County

The ongoing effort by California state prison officials to find a suitable place in Santa Cruz county continues.

The latest proposal has Mr. Cheek being placed at 25237 Terrace Grove Road, which is off Soquel-San Jose Road in the Santa Cruz mountains. This location has all the same problems that the one in Bonny Doon had, and has local residents and the County Sheriff’s office expressing great concern about placing him here. This location is surrounded by dense forest and steep terrain and has limited road access. Additionally, there are schools, a Girl

Scout camp, a church, a public park and neighborhoods in the immediate vicinity.

The proposed placement is scheduled to face court approval before Santa Cruz County Judge Nancy De La Peña Oct. 30 at 1:30 p.m. in Department 6. Out of solidarity with other residents of the Santa Cruz Mountains we encourage Dooners to attend or provide written input prior to the Oct. 30 court date to SVP@scdao.us, or by mail to SVP Unit, c/o Santa Cruz District Attorney’s Office, 701 Ocean St., Room 200, Santa Cruz CA 95060.

The Insurance Crisis Hits Bonny Doon: RBDA Board Member Testimonials

The insurance crisis has been rolling on and has had large impacts on Bonny Doon residents. RBDA board members have been no less impacted. We offer you here some of their experiences and frustrations.

FAIR Plan Rate Hikes

Here is a heads-up: effective October 15, 2026, the California Department of Insurance approved a 29.1% average rate increase for the California FAIR Plan. If you live in a high wildfire-risk area, like much of Bonny Doon, your rate increase could be even higher. For example, one of our board members, who lives in Pine Ridge, received a 59% rate hike for her October FAIR Plan renewal. This occurred despite meeting the criteria for all ten of the individual property and structure mitigation discounts, as well as the Firewise and Fire Risk Reduction Community discounts. The FAIR Plan was forced to request \$1 billion in additional funds from its member insurance companies to cover an estimated \$4 billion in losses from the 2025 Los Angeles fires alone. And unfortunately, their financial reality is now our financial reality.

Insurance Premium Rate Setting: Arbitrary and Haphazard

Despite recent assurances by the Insurance Commissioner’s Office that the top ten insurance carriers in California are again writing policies in high fire risk areas, very few homeowners in Bonny Doon seem able to have new policies written by admitted carriers. Only one carrier that we are aware of — Farmers Insurance — has written new policies in Bonny Doon in recent months. After hearing that two neighbors had received new policies from Farmers Insurance, a RBDA member requested a quote from the same Farmers agent. Farmers uses Verisk Analytic’s wildfire risk scoring metrics to determine eligibility for underwriting — the property-specific FireLine score and the community-level (regional area) Protection Class score. Despite having a better FireLine score than the neighbors that were underwritten, the member was denied being underwritten due to a Protection Class score that was significantly higher than his next-door neighbor. And not

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October Public Meeting Zoom Login Instructions

To join by internet:

- 1) go to <http://zoom.us/join>
- 2) Enter the Meeting ID. **865 9780 4935** and Click join
- 3) Enter passcode: **775342**

To join by phone:

- 1) Call +1-646-931-3860
- 2) When prompted enter the Meeting ID. **865 9780 4935**
- 3) When prompted enter passcode: **775342**

Serve on the RBDA Executive Board - Help Protect and Advocate for Bonny Doon

At the RBDA's fall public meeting, nominations will be made for service on the RBDA's Executive Board, with the election taking place at the January 2027 meeting.

The terms of four of the board members, Evelyn Haynes, Laura Lancaster, Jennifer Joslin and Martin Burmeister, are up, and all are running for 2-year terms.

The primary reason Bonny Doon remains overwhelmingly the natural, peaceful, beautiful place we call home is the work of the dozens of people who have stepped up over the years to fight for preservation of its glorious open spaces, like the Ecological Reserve, Wilder Ranch, Cotoni-Coast Dairies and San Vicente Redwoods, to prevent Bonny Doon being cut up into small, suburban

size parcels, and to stave off crowd attracting commercial enterprises.

Informing the Bonny Doon community about issues and advocating with government authorities for laws, regulations and needed services has been the mission and work of the RBDA Board members, backed up by the community's support with membership and funding.

While we do have enough candidates to fill the open board positions coming up, we encourage any of you who want to get involved in protecting and preserving our wonderful Bonny Doon community contact the board by email at board@rbda.us.

The Insurance Crisis Hits Bonny Doon: RBDA Board Member Testimonials

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all carriers use the same risk-assessment metrics either, which makes understanding a homeowner's likelihood of being underwritten seem haphazard and arbitrary.

Emeritus Board Member Testimonial

We received our Fair Plan renewal offer yesterday. It went from \$12,487 to \$15,037, an increase of \$2,550, or 20.5%. We have a bunch of buildings including an expansion of one of them that we built last year. I have not yet contacted our insurance agent but I am not expecting to find any private insurer that will cover us. We have done some minor work on meeting the fire safe requirements and will be doing a great deal more in the coming weeks, but we will still be far removed from the 100 foot offset to trees and other woody vegetation. Also, we have some plywood siding, a wooden deck (Ipe wood plank that is very fireproof, but insurers do not seem to distinguish among wood types), a small wooden fence and redwood and porch trellis posts and beams.

We've trimmed nearby trees so no branches below 10 ft., and we have a neighbor's large vineyard on one side,

which is pretty open. I feel we have a pretty good chance of surviving a wildfire unscathed, as in 2020, but those are not things insurers consider. The price of paradise. Luckily we can still afford it. I hope that no-one in Bonny Doon or other rural areas is forced to leave but some undoubtedly will.

We live in a much more dangerous world today, for this and so many other reasons. Trying to not let it affect us too much on a day to day basis and enjoy the wonderful environment and people that we have around us.

Testimonials from Dooners

We would like to collect the testimonials from Dooners on how they have been affected by the insurance crisis and publish these in the next issues of the Highlander. We hope that by sharing each other's experiences we as a community can learn from these. It also helps to know that we are not alone facing this crisis. If you have a story you would like to share, please email us at board@rbda.us. Stories will all be published anonymously.

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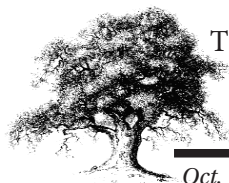
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Advocating for a natural, safe, and sustainable future since 1957

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Bonny Doon's voice in preserving our special quality of life, The Highlander, is mailed free 4 times a year. RBDA Public Meetings are usually held the second Wednesdays of January, April, July, and November. We encourage you to participate. Send correspondence to The Highlander at the above address.

Access the RBDA on the Internet at:

www.rbda.us

E-mail us at:

board@rbda.us

Facebook (RBDA Members Only):

RBDA, Rural Bonny Doon Association

RBDA EXECUTIVE BOARD

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

Oct. 28 Public Meeting: Road Safety Project & Bonny Doon's Artistic Community

Updates from Third District Supervisor Justin Cummings

Improving Safety on Empire Grade

I regularly hear from Bonny Doon residents concerned about driving on Empire Grade. Road conditions and unsafe driving are a real challenge for neighbors, especially on lower Empire Grade between the UCSC West Entrance at Heller Drive and Fuel Break Road.

My office has been working with County Community Development and Infrastructure (CDI) staff to put parts of the Santa Cruz County Safety Action Plan into action. The plan identifies improvements for Empire Grade, including :

- Centerline rumble strips to alert drivers who drift toward oncoming traffic
- Chevron signs to clearly mark curves

- Dynamic speed warning signs to alert drivers who are going too fast

These projects are estimated to cost about \$177,000. County staff are working to include these projects in state and/or federal grant proposals, which could cover most of the cost with a required local share of 20%, or roughly \$35,000. I intend to use District 3 dedicated funds from Measure K funds to cover the local share.

Thank you to everyone who has shared their concerns. Your input helps guide where we focus our efforts.

Next Steps for Martin Fire Station

On August 11, the Board of Supervisors approved my request directing staff to begin a feasibility study on rebuilding or refurbishing Martin Fire Station.

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November RBDA Members Only Zoom Meeting, Wednesday, November 4th at 7:00 — 7:30pm

RBDA members are invited to join this RBDA business meeting: The two topics to be discussed are:

- A call for nominations to the executive board
- An announcement of bylaws revision

This is an RBDA members-only meeting. Subsequent to this, we will hold a meeting for the general public in January. Details on the January public meeting will be available in the next issue of the Highlander and on the RBDA website.

November Meeting Zoom Login Instructions

To join by internet:

- 1) go to <http://zoom.us/join>
- 2) Enter the Meeting ID. **862 3303 6192** and Click join
- 3) Enter passcode: **998673**

To join by phone:

- 1) Call **+1-646-931-3860**
- 2) When prompted enter the Meeting ID. **862 3303 6192**
- 3) When prompted enter passcode: **998673**

Updates from Third District Supervisor Justin Cummings

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Upgrading the station is a key step toward wildfire resiliency in Bonny Doon. Newer, larger engines need to fit in the building as current ones age out, so volunteers can keep meeting critical response times. A modernized station could also serve as a coordination hub for wildfire mitigation work with utilities, local government, and state forestry partners.

Many of you have already shared valuable input: larger kitchen, bathroom, and event spaces, along with a closer look at water, septic, drainage, and parking.

County General Services staff are now exploring options, and we'll be meeting with the community in the coming months. Please join the conversation. We'll keep you updated as the process moves forward. You can also reach out to Trina Barton in my office if you have questions or input. She can be reached at Trina.Barton@santacruzcountyca.gov.

Election Day Is Tuesday, November 3

Mark your calendar: our next election is Tuesday, November 3, 2026. Santa Cruz County's Elections Office

has an outstanding record of running free, fair, and accessible elections, but it's always smart to double-check your registration. Verify your status or register here: voterstatus.sos.ca.gov

Two countywide measures will be on the ballot:

Measure D responds to federal plans for offshore drilling along our coast. It would expand County rules on onshore facilities that support offshore oil and gas development to include deep-sea mining, and strengthen the County's ability to protect our coastline, water, farmland, air quality, and quality of life.

Measure E would temporarily raise the countywide sales tax by one-half percent for five years (April 2027 to April 2032) to address federal funding cuts under HR 1. It's projected to raise about \$27 million annually for the General Fund, which could support local hospitals and emergency rooms, urgent healthcare, and food and housing assistance.



Support the RBDA with a Membership

Yearly dues are \$20 per person. Visit our website at RBDA.us or scan the QR code to join/renew by credit card. If you prefer, you can also send a check in the mail to *RBDA, P.O. Box 551, Felton, CA 95018*. If you are a multi-year member, please consider an additional donation to support the RBDA's good work.

Thank you for supporting us, we can't do it without you!