

Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods

Preservation through Education and Stewardship

Russian River District State Parks

Volume XXVII, Number 2, Summer 2012



Park Closure Solutions Underway

Michele Luna, Executive Director

Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods (Stewards) is taking a multi-prong solution-based approach to keeping our parks open in western Sonoma County. With Austin Creek State Recreation Area on the closure list and numerous service reductions at Sonoma Coast State Park, Stewards convened two meetings with State Park staff in early June to engage the public in a discussion of how we can work together to keep our State Parks open and accessible.

There has been public outcry regarding new parking fees at Sonoma Coast State Park locations. To set the record straight, Stewards is not taking a position on the new fees. Stewards' constituents are split on this issue. We have supporters who are vehemently opposed, and others who think it's time Sonoma County implements fees that have been in place for years in other coastal areas of the state including our own Regional Parks. Those in opposition are concerned about limiting access for those in need, traffic issues and paying \$8 for a short visit. Others see that fees paid by over 2 million out-of-town visitors could increase support and prevent further decline.

Stewards is focusing on giving the public an opportunity to receive factual information, have a voice and work on solutions for keeping our parks open, which we believe will require attacking the issue from many angles.

Stewards is very close to signing an operating agreement with State Parks to keep Austin Creek open, an option made possible by AB42 (Huffman). With the support of a \$56,000 grant awarded by the California State Parks Foundation, Stewards will have the start-up funds needed to reopen Bull Frog Campground and manage volunteer programs to provide public assistance and trail maintenance. Stewards will utilize camping and day-use fees, donations, new partnerships and programs to keep Austin Creek open and moving towards becoming a new model for the future.

The solutions for reopening closed areas on Sonoma Coast are much more complex and the actions being implemented by State Parks in the Russian River District started some years ago. State Parks was directed to charge new fees and Sonoma Coast was even used as an example by the Schwarzenegger administration. In 2009, the District started implementing service reductions. We were

all hopeful that Proposition 21, the \$18 vehicle license fee, would pass in 2010. When the measure failed, State Parks was faced with further budget reductions. In 2011, the state legislature approved another \$11 million cut for State Parks and now in 2012 the budget includes a \$22 million permanent general fund cut.

Since 1979, the State Park budget has decreased by 67%, with 37% of that reduction in the past six years. These cuts have come during a time when park visitation is at an all-time high. Parks are one of the affordable places that people can go during tough economic times.

An issue that some people seem to be confused about is the Governor's tax measure, which will appear on the November 2012 ballot. **The tax measure will NOT** restore any funding for State Parks. In fact, if it does not pass, there will be further budget reduction triggers for State Parks. Those reductions include funding cuts for lifeguards and a 20% reduction in rangers.

Few would disagree that State Parks needs a dedicated sustainable funding source in order to keep all 279 parks open and address the \$1.3 billion deferred maintenance backlog.

Mission

Stewards Promotes, Restores, and Protects Your State Parks.

Vision

Stewards is the link between people and their parks.

State Parks

Armstrong Redwoods State Nat. Reserve
Austin Creek State Recreation Area
Sonoma Coast State Park

Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods
P.O. Box 2, Duncans Mills, CA 95430
707.869.9177, 707.869.8252 Fax

stewards@mcn.org

www.stewardsofthecoastandredwoods.org

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E-News

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Michele Luna, Stewards Executive Director

- 1. What are the solutions?** Some of our legislators are proposing new budget amendments (Evans/Simitian). Legislation is being proposed to help State Parks and their partners, like Stewards, who are stepping up to keep our local parks open (Evans and Huffman). Their help is very much appreciated but it's not enough.
- The California State Parks Foundation has also submitted protections for nonprofit organizations in the current budget and continues to provide ways for Californians to advocate for their parks. Communities and business leaders around the State are coming together to keep their parks open. In Sonoma County, the Parks Alliance for Sonoma County convened a group of over 20 agencies and organizations, who are working hard to keep their five local State Parks on the closure list open for at least another year. The local community of Jenner has been donating to keep the Jenner Visitor Center and restrooms open since 2009.
- If new fees are implemented, Stewards feels strongly that those fees need to stay local. Stewards also wants to be sure people are aware that they can earn free day-use passes for Russian River area State Parks by volunteering a minimum of 16 hours a year in one of the Volunteers in Parks programs supported by Stewards. 200 hours provides a statewide pass. There are also affordable State Park passes for Californians who are low-income, disabled, seniors and veterans of war. For instance, any person 62 years of age or older with income limitations specified on the application form; or any person receiving aid under the applicable aid codes in the CalWORKS Program is eligible to receive the Golden Bear Pass for only \$5.00 a year. Stewards will be working with State Parks to implement an affordable pass for State Parks within Sonoma County.
- If Sonoma County residents want to prevent new parking fees on Sonoma Coast we need to work together on many fronts to come up with solutions. Funding is needed, new partnerships are needed, volunteers are needed and advocacy is needed.

ACTION: Join Stewards' new advisory committee, Friends of Sonoma Coast so we can together represent the concerns of the environmental, fishing, surfing and hiking communities; business owners and residents in fighting to keep our parks open, thriving and moving towards excellence. Contact stewards@mcn.org or call (707) 869-9177 to be added to the list. A meeting will be set within the next month to get to work on solutions for keeping your state parks open and accessible.

STEWARDS ENTERS THREE PARADES THIS YEAR

During May and June, Stewards participated in the Healdsburg FFA Parade, the Pride Parade in Guerneville and the Stumptown Parade, also in Guerneville. Talk about three diverse opportunities to showcase Stewards and our partnership with California State Parks. The following is a report by Board Member Elizabeth Vega (aka Mother Nature) who coordinated the Healdsburg FFA parade with the Progressive Club.

The parade today was great! Our float looked lovely. Amy Racina and I, mostly Amy... did a bang up job of decorating a float on a trailer put together by Amy's boyfriend Mickey Hannigan. Lollie Mercer of Russian River Kayak and Canoes, graciously allowed us to use her parking lot to decorate and construct our eclectic masterpiece. Rebel Fegan, instructor from the High School & Progressive Club wore the Redwood Tree costume with great panache, and interacted with the interested on lookers, including a very small person who accepted the literature stating that she could have some because she had brought her adult with her. Two young high school lads, Hade Shoup and Aaron Miller, carried their very cool Progressive Club Banner, wearing "May the Forest be with you" T shirts and sporting a raven and a condor on their free arms. Amy and Nell Kneibler, fashionably attired in Steward T shirts with matching racoon and owl, distributed Stewards info, and walked through the streets of Healdsburg parade goers; The van was driven by Mickey and the large State Parks posters were magnetically attached to the side. The float had lots of natural foliage and the two Stewards banners on the sides. Mother Nature in all her glorious regalia sat atop a stool on an old tin bath tub, lovingly secured

CAL REPORT

Greg Probst, Sonoma Coast Ranger, CAL

Recent Budget Challenges Equal New Opportunities to Improve the Park Visitor's Experience

This is my first article as the state park's Cooperating Association Liaison with Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods. I first want to thank the previous CAL, Supervising Ranger Andrea Mapes, for setting me up to succeed in this assignment and also want to wish her well as she begins her new job as the Supervising Ranger for Fort Ross SHP and Salt Point SP.

I did not hesitate to fill the void in Andrea's absence due to the stellar reputation that Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods has among the local community and the entire state park system. I look forward to meeting many of you in coming months at one of the training programs or special events.

With a reported deferred maintenance backlog of over \$1,300,000,000.00 in our state parks, it should be obvious that the current funding system is not a sustainable working model for the many parks we all love. Some of our state representatives are currently working on finding new, long-term funding sources for our parks. In the meantime, the near future holds many challenges for us until those funding sources are securely in place.

I am proud to recognize that the Steward's staff, volunteers, and board members have risen to meet these new challenges head on. Everyone at Stewards views these challenges, not as roadblocks to success, but instead as opportunities to improve and enhance the park visitor's experience. Stewards has stepped up to the plate and met these challenges with courage and leadership and has consistently chosen to focus on solution-based ideas.

One of these solution-based ideas is to enter into an operating agreement to help keep Austin Creek State Recreation Area open. Steward's staff, board members and, volunteers have dedicated thousands of hours of their time to see that our park visitor's experience remains a positive one. The state parks of the Russian River area would not be able to meet our mission and goals without Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods.

How could I not want to be a small part of this highly successful partnership?

PARADES THIS YEAR

Continued from page 2

by the craftsmanship of Mickey's fine hand. Waving her flowery staff and holding a squirmy little river otter, she received many delighted oos and ahhs from young and old alike, along with a few enthusiastic shouts of "Go Stewards!" & "Right on for the Parks", and I am sure I even heard a little voice say, "I love you Mrs. Vega". Mother Nature dedicated (in her heart) her participation in this event, to her own mother, Marion Elizabeth Hayes or Betty to those who knew her. Betty passed away peacefully, Tuesday, May 22nd and who instilled in her daughter a love a nature and beauty, a good celebration, and a flair for the theatrical.... among other things.

Thanks to everyone who participated in each parade. Special thanks to Keith McLaughlin for providing his fabulous Jaquar for Lizzie Armstrong Jones (Doris Dickenson) to ride in for the Guerneville parades. Also thank you to Keary and Sally Sorenson for their wonderfully decorated Marine Debris Truck and Fish.



Photo from Stumptown Parade in Guerneville. Special thanks to Mother Nature, the Redwood Tree and all the children who joined us in making this a fun event in which to feature our partnership with California State Parks.

PROGRAM UPDATES

WHALE WATCH

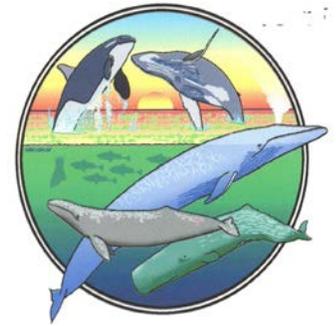
Bea Brunn, Whale Mother

Mother Nature has been playing with us this season with many days of strong wind and huge swells and then days when the ocean looked like glass. Consequently, the whale watch season has been up and down, but the last month we have had parades of mothers/calves swimming by. On Mothers Day, May 13 we had unusual flat calm water, high overcast and very cold air and we had at least 8 or 10 mothers/calves heading back to Alaska.

Our last day, Sunday May 20, started out nice and calm and we spotted our first mother/calf already at 0830. We then had some “juveniles” that played around, going south and seemingly heading into Bodega outer harbor inside Bodega Rock where residents of Bodega Harbour have seen them for several weeks. Our greatest show was 2 mothers/calves side by side, barely outside the rocks, heading north. The water was crystal clear so we were able to see them just under the surface so we could actually see the difference in color between the mothers and the calves.

A great ending to our season this year, but of course the wind was getting too strong on the Head so we retreated to Westside Park for our annual potluck.

Thanks to all our faithful volunteers, both new and old-timers, for coming out in spite of terrible weather conditions. We look forward to another great season in 2013.



TIDEPOL PROGRAM

Hollis Bewley, Tidepool Coordinator

The 2012 tidepool education season got off to a slow start due to rain-outs, but Program Manager Sukey Robb-Wilder did an amazing job finding enough low-tide days left in the spring calendar to reschedule those who had cancelled. This meant a packed calendar during May and June with 12 field trips and 2 classroom visits accommodating over 500 students with their teachers and parents. The volunteer docents came through even though we had tide pool visits scheduled for five straight days during one very full week in May. We didn't see as many of the larger colorful animals this spring due to the lingering effects of last year's red tide, so this year's theme was crabs, crabs and more crabs to the delight of the youngsters. We saw a variety of tiny flat porcelain crabs with shells of beautiful colors and patterns, kelp crabs with sharp needle-like pincers, the ever-popular hermit crabs some of which were way too big for their borrowed shells and the large red crabs with serious black-tipped claws which say “Handle with Care”. Though we got off to a slow wet start, we knew it was a successful season when hearing a number of young visitors exclaim “this is the BEST field trip ever!”



Tidepool Docent, Leslie Mills Risbrough with students from JX Wilson School.

SUBMIT YOUR VOLUNTEER HOURS NOW – HERE'S HOW!

Sukey Robb-Wilder, Programs Manager

It's June – the volunteer year is half over and it's time for all volunteers to collect and submit some of those volunteer hours. Your volunteer hours show solid community support for State Parks and help Stewards raise funds. Plus, there are direct benefits for you. Volunteering for 16 hours or more qualifies you for a free parking pass in day-use areas District-wide (Armstrong Redwoods, Austin Creek, Sonoma Coast, Salt Point, Fort Ross) for the coming year. Volunteering for 200 hours or more qualifies you for a free day-use parking pass in almost all State Parks in California. So, how about turning in the volunteer hours you've accumulated so far before you build up some more?

We'd like you to turn in your hours quarterly, or at least every half year. It makes it much easier on us in the office if you do. No need to wait until the December 1 deadline. And, we now have a couple of ways for you to do so. You can fill out the new Volunteer Hours Form and mail or bring it to the Stewards office, or you can submit your hours online. Here's how.

First of all, we've aligned how we're asking you to report your hours with how State Parks tracks volunteer time. Now we're asking you to report time using three criteria - by Program (for example, Whale Watch, Tidepool Education, Trail Guide), by State Park Unit (Armstrong Redwoods, Austin Creek, Sonoma Coast), and by Category (for example, Administration, Interpretation, Public Contact). You'll need to use these three criteria whether you turn in the paper Volunteer Hours form or turn them in via the Submit Your Volunteers in Parks Hours Online webpage.

This is all outlined on the new volunteer hours form for you to use this year. It has one line per Date of Volunteer Activity, then the three criteria. Fill in the date and codes for the first two criteria, then enter the number of hours in the column of the appropriate category. Before you turn in the form to the Stewards office, sum the hours in each category for Hours Total, then total the Hours Total to arrive at the Grand Total Hours. (If you find the math challenging, I can send you an Excel spreadsheet that does the totaling automatically.)

Program coordinators have sent out copies of the new form, but if you haven't received one yet, you can download it from <http://www.stewardsofthecoastandredwoods.org/pdf/volhoursform.pdf>. If you forget this link, from the home page click on the Volunteer tab, click on Volunteer Forms, scroll down, and under Volunteer Forms click on Volunteer Hours Form to open the PDF file.

There's another major change this year that should make submitting your hours much easier. For the first time you can now enter your hours online. Online, you'll fill in the Date Range you're reporting, then report the total number of hours for each combination of Program Code, State Park Unit, and Category. To submit your Volunteers in Parks hours online, go to <http://www.stewardsofthecoastandredwoods.org/volunteerhours.htm>. If you forget this link, from the home page click on the Volunteer tab, and click on Submit Your Volunteers in Parks Hours Online to open the form. Fill out the required information and click on Submit. It's that simple!

Job Announcement - Field Operations Manager

Deadline to apply 5 PM, Friday, June 29, 2012

The Field Operations Manager is responsible for the management and direction of Stewards' Field Operations including campground operations, firewood contract, stewardship and monitoring projects. The Field Operations Manager will also help with the development of new fee-based programs to support field operations at Austin Creek State Recreation Area and Sonoma Coast State Park.

Download Job Announcement at www.stewardsofthecoastandredwoods.org.

Volunteer Opportunities

Call the Stewards office:
869-9177 x1# or email
volparks@mcn.org

Program Activities

Armstrong Redwoods

Visitor Center Staffing
Friends of Armstrong
Redwoods
Docent Tour Guides
Trail Maintenance
Habitat Restoration Project
Pond Farm Interest Group

Sonoma Coast State Park

Visitor Center Staffing
Seal Watch
Whale Watch
Tidepool Programs
Watershed Program
Environmental Living Prog.
Sonoma Coast Stewardship

Other Projects

Recycling & Firewood
Office Help & Special
Events

Volunteer Program Coordinators

Joyce Bacci, ARVC
Lanny Keyston, AR Trails,
FAR
Laura Parent, Pond Farm
Linda Fisher, Jenner VC
Bob Caricato, Seal Watch
Bea Brun, Whale Watch
Suzanne Abrams, ELP
Miki Takata Recycling
Vacant, Willow Creek Ed.
Bill Bambrick, Sonoma Coast
Water Quality Monitoring
and Trail Crew
The Sorensons, Marine
Debris & Beach Cleanups
Hollis & Jerry Bewley,
Tidepool Programs
Louise Patterson, MAU

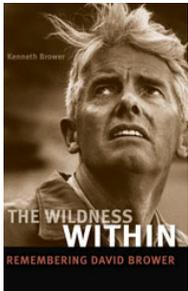
SUKEY ROBB WILDER - NEW PROGRAMS MANAGER

Sukey Robb-Wilder, Programs Manager

A few years ago on my birthday, I learned the hard way why Armstrong Redwoods closes at nightfall, and why Rangers encourage you to leave the picnic area before dark. It was a warm summer evening and my friends threw a surprise party for me at our favorite picnic spot, the tables near the tree with the big goose pen at the west end of the picnic area. We had a wonderful time, barbecuing, eating, roasting s'mores and talking as the shadows lengthened and dusk came on. Finally, when it was just about dark, and when the Ranger had made one, more, slow, meaningful circle near our group, we decided to clean up and clear out. I helped too, carrying a large box to the car. I saw nothing but the vague outline of the vehicle parked in front of me, when Whump! I tripped over one of the large boulders rimming the parking area. The redwood duff I landed in was soft enough, but that boulder was rock-hard against my shin, and I felt pretty foolish that I'd forgotten about the rocks.

I love parks and I love being in them. I love that in my job now I can help others explore parks and appreciate the natural world. Being Programs Manager for Stewards pulls together many skills I developed earlier, and in some ways my work has come full circle. Some programs I work with are for school groups, and I started out as a teacher. That was really my first career, teaching English and journalism in Connecticut, California, and Bogota, Columbia. Next I moved into video production and then worked for a publishing company in San Francisco. Most recently I've been a technical project manager on computer infrastructure projects as an independent consultant and as an employee for major financial services companies in the Bay Area.

I always said I would move back into education, and now I'm back. As Stewards Program Manager, I'm responsible for volunteer recruitment, training and retention. That's a big responsibility. Fortunately, Stewards has wonderful volunteers and good solid programs. Before I was hired, I volunteered in three of them, Armstrong Tour Guides, Watershed Education, and Environmental Living Program. My first priority is to learn the ropes, to understand volunteers and the programs, how they work and how they differ. Then I need to understand how to support them and how to help grow them. I've been at Stewards for six months now and I'm still learning.



LITERARY LUNCHEON

June 23, 2012 - at noon at Art in the Park

Kenneth Brower, son of David Brower will provide a reading from his book, *The Wildness Within, Remembering David Brower* during a special luncheon in the group picnic area at Armstrong Redwoods SNR. \$40 per person or two for \$60 includes a signed copy of *The Wildness Within*.

Lunch: a glass of wine or beer, commemorative glass, BBQ Tri Tip or Portobello sandwich with potato salad, green salad and dessert. Reservations available at **River Reader** in Guerneville or on Stewards' website (choose **Purchase Tickets** at the top of the page).

GOURMET HIKE

July 21, 2012 - 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm

"From Sea to Table" - Stroll through the redwoods tasting delectable seafood treats paired with local Sonoma County wines.

Reservations available on Stewards' website for \$35 pp, \$65 for two.

ANNUAL OLD GROVE FESTIVAL

September 15, 2012 - Gates open at 4:00 pm

"Swinging in the Redwoods with Dan Hicks"

Opener - Solid Air and Pre-show - Sticky Notes

\$40 for Redwood Circle, \$25 general, Child (5-12) \$10,

One child (up to 12 years) free with one paying adult



Art in the Park
A Benefit for
Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods
Armstrong Redwoods State Natural Reserve
Guerneville, Sonoma County
Saturday, June 23, 2012
Noon to 5:00 pm

FREE admission, parking fees apply
Art Exhibit & Sale, Wine/Beer Tasting, Food
Entertainment (Gordon & D'orazi • Sticky Notes)

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Call if special accommodation is needed.

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Stewards members receive this quarterly newsletter by email or mail .

Members are also entitled to 20% discount on purchases at Stewards-run visitor centers and at our special events. In addition, Members can attend our educational seminars for a \$5 donation.

Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods

Membership Form

Renewal

YES, I'd like to become a member.

- Senior/Student \$25.00
- Individual \$30.00
- Family \$45.00
- Contributing \$100.00
- Sustaining \$150.00
- Business \$150.00
- Patron \$250.00 plus
- Osprey Circle \$500.00 plus

Name(s) _____

Address _____

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I'd like to help with an additional donation of \$_____

Payment type: Check Charge Card Visa MC Total tax deductible donation \$_____

Make check payable to Stewards. Account # _____ Exp. Date _____

Annual Renewal Date: February 1 Signature: _____

Bequests

Your Gift to the Future of State Park Preservation

With your help, future generations will enjoy the State Parks in the Russian River District, including education and stewardship programs supported by Stewards. A gift to Stewards is a rewarding form of giving from your estate. There are several types of charitable bequests by will (or beneficiary designation). Sample:

I hereby give and bequeath to Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods, a nonprofit organization incorporated under the laws of the State of California, with a principal address at P.O. Box 2, Duncans Mills, CA 95430, _____ percent of my estate, (or) the sum of _____ dollars, (or) the following assets _____ . Tax ID # provided upon request.

For Information on contributing to Stewards' Endowment in support of Armstrong Redwoods please contact Michele Luna at the Stewards office (707) 869-9177 X4#.

**CALL 800-320-0476 TO MAKE A VEHICLE DONATION IN THE NAME OF
STEWARDS OF THE COAST AND REDWOODS**

Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods

PO Box 2, Duncans Mills, CA 95430

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