

Willits Environmental Center Newsletter 2017

PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP. More than ever, Willits and Mendocino County need an outspoken advocate for trees, fish, wildlife, water, air, farmland and a human economy compatible with all the above. WEC, unlike many non-profits, can engage fully in the political and legislative arenas. We will continue to do so, despite the daunting times...WITH YOUR SUPPORT! A membership renewal form (and ballot), and return envelope are enclosed. Thank you!!

YOU ARE INVITED to the Willits Environmental Center's 27th Annual Meeting and Board of Directors election. Please use the enclosed ballot (reverse of the membership renewal form) to cast your vote for Board members. The Board is presenting a slate of five nominees willing to serve another two-year term. If you cannot attend the Annual Meeting, please mail the ballot to the WEC (630 South Main St., Willits) or drop it in our mailbox (on the porch) by Wed. Oct 18th. If you would like to nominate someone to serve on the Board of Di-

**WEC Annual Meeting
& Board Member Election
Wednesday, October 18th
at the WEC office, 630 S. Main St.**

Meet and Greet: 5:30pm to 6:00pm

Potluck Dinner: 6-7pm

Meeting and election of Board of Directors:
7-7:30pm

Open Mic Poetry, led off by Kirk Lumpkin
7:30- 8:00

rectors, please do so in the space allotted. Be sure your nominee has agreed to serve. Thank you.

Two New Board Members

WEC Board member Craig Whitaker resigned from the Board during this last year due to having WAY too much to do, and feeling that he couldn't give the Board what it needed. However, we have been extremely lucky to recruit two new Board members - one to fill Craig's seat and one to fill a long empty ninth seat on the Board. We are thrilled to have "on board" Traci Pellar and Kirk Lumpkin. Each brings experience, ideas, can-do enthusiasm, good humor and sparkle to the Board.

Traci has been involved in habitat protection for many years and in many forms. Most recently Traci

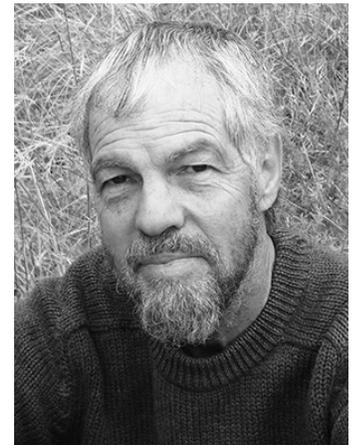


Traci Pellar

helped to birth the Mendocino Wildlife Association and currently serves as its President. When asked about her appointment to the WEC Board, Traci responded: "What an honor to stand with fellow gatekeepers to protect our lands and watershed. It's a tough alchemy; a resource-based County and habitat protection. With

vigilance and patience we can support both. Symbiotic Relationships!! Protect and produce in a balanced, collaborative way. Here's to our future for the good of all, for generations."

The following is a very brief history of Kirk's commitment to protection of the natural world. "Three and a half years ago I retired from the Ecology



Kirk Lumpkin

Center in Berkeley after working there for twenty years. Most of my work there was on the Berkeley Farmers' Markets, but I learned a great deal about a wide spectrum of environmental issues, including recycling, how non-profits work and educating the public. My environmental activism in Mendocino County began in March 2015 when my wife Lynn and I joined the Steering Committee of Friends of Outlet Creek and entered the fight to stop the establishment of an asphalt plant on the banks of Outlet Creek. WEC was the group's first fiscal sponsor. Though I haven't lived here long, I feel well grounded in at least some of the local issues, and am pleased to join the Board of the WEC."

WEC'S WORK 2017



We admit it. WEC did not reverse climate change; succeed in decommissioning the dams on the Eel River; or end the practice of hack and squirt—the poisoning of tan oak trees throughout Mendocino County. There is work to do! However, we have continued to weigh-in on several issues which have bearing on the environmental health of our region.

WEC is collaborating with other individuals in the County to craft an Oak Woodland Protection Ordinance. The effort grew out of our advocating for oak woodland protection as part of the County's Medical Cannabis Cultivation Ordinance. The Ordinance itself fell short of including a specific oak woodland protection ordinance, but it does prohibit the clearing of oak trees to create new or expanded cultivation sites. In addition, the Board of Supervisors has asked the Planning and Building Department to have an Oak Woodland Protection Ordinance in place by 2020 when the County will be reviewing permit applications for new cultivation sites. The process of crafting an oak woodland protection ordinance is scientifically and politically complex. Fortunately, we can learn from Napa County's process, which is about two years ahead of ours.

WEC is continuing to participate in the County Board of Supervisors' on-going cannabis cultivation meetings. We want to be sure that the hard-won environmental protections that are in the Ordinance stay there. The Board is continuing to clarify, streamline, and in some cases revise the Ordinance in a justifiable effort to encourage more growers to apply for and obtain permits to legally cultivate cannabis. WEC also attends these meetings to support small "cottage" cultivators seeking reduced fees, exceptions to onerous Planning and Building codes and agricultural regulations, and general streamlining of the permit process. WEC recognizes that small growers who are seeking permits are often our allies in caring for the natural environment of the County. We want them to survive and succeed. A note to cynics...It's a fascinating process. We're actually seeing democracy at work...stumbling along with its failings, human myopia on all sides, confusion, and frustration, but for the most part, with good intentions.

WEC sent comments to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) regarding its upper Eel River Scott Dam and Van Arsdale Dam re-licensing project.

News from the WEC Office

The Wilits Environmental Hub has been the home of WEC and Willits Economic localization (WELL) since last September. It is now also home to the Eel River Recovery Project (ERRP) and the Mendocino Wildlife Association. Our vision of a shared space has become a reality, thanks to the enthusiasm, flexibility, compatible goals, and trust of the participating organizations. Each organization has staked out its respective corner and shares the community spaces (front and back rooms and kitchen). ERRP, through grant funds, pays over 50% of the monthly rent while the rest of us divide the remainder of the rent. WEC also covers the utilities. The Social Environmental and Indigenous Justice group (SEIJ, "sage", formerly SOLLV) continues to meet at the Hub every other week.) All the groups are planning a "Hub-bub" later in the year to celebrate this family of efforts. Stay tuned for details.

This is the very beginning of of the environmental review process that will assess the impact of various water release operating alternatives on downstream users of the human variety, fish, and electricity generation. WEC, along with Friends of the Eel River and others are recommending dam removal as an "operating alternative" worthy of study.

WEC is also in the process of weighing in on Congressman Jared Huffman's proposed public lands legislation. This draft Bill calls for some expansion of federally designated Wilderness areas along the South Fork Eel and in the Middle Fork Eel watersheds (as well as in other Counties in Huffman's District). WEC is cautiously supportive. We are concerned about possible backlash from the almost pathologically hostile Administration and Congress. To suggest Wilderness additions may not only fail, but worse, bring on an effort to tear up existing Wilderness, and be the equivalent of waving a red flag in front of a bull. We are also concerned that sections of the draft legislation having to do with forest job creation and forest health restoration pander to the misguided notion, in our opinion, that vast expanses of our National Forests can be made "fire-resilient" by judicious logging.

Climate Change by David Drell

As reports come in from around the world detailing the accelerating climate-change havoc occurring on every continent, I have been agonizing about how to respond to this crisis, despite the profound denial of many of our business and political leaders, and even of ourselves.

It seems to me that, in addition to acting at the state and local level to move toward a fossil-free energy future, we must do all we can to oppose fossil fuel projects like drilling in the now often ice-free arctic, or building new coal, oil and gas refining and export facilities. Not stopping such projects could doom any hope of preventing the kind of out-of-control climate chaos that threatens our survival as a species.

There are at least two of these doomsday projects bearing down on our bio-region. The first is a massive liquid natural gas export facility in Coos Bay, Oregon along with a pipeline that snakes its way across Oregon tunneling under a number of rivers including the Rogue, the Klamath and the Coquille. There are groups from Coos Bay and Tribes fighting this proposal as well as hundreds of farmers and ranchers along the route of the pipeline who have been threatened by the Canadian proponent of this project with eminent domain. Trump is planning to stack the deck at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in an effort to fast-track approval of this project.

In addition, there is a proposal to ship dirty, explosive-prone Alberta tar sands oil by train crossing the Klamath River near its headwaters and down into the Bay area for refining. This is the same kind of oil train that exploded in a small town in Quebec killing people and severely damaging the town.

Locally, the Pacific Alliance for Indigenous and Environmental Action, which began with a “log walk” from Comptche to Ukiah to protest wholesale poisoning of tan oaks in Mendocino County, is continuing to walk, bike and canoe the log north to Alaska. The growing purpose of the action is to raise awareness of the need for the whole Pacific Northwest - its people and its forests - to stand together as a bulwark against climate change.

In the next few months, I will be reaching out to organizations and to communities directly targeted by the fossil fuel industry in effort to support the work of these people, or to join them on the front lines. Let me know that you want to be part of this effort by calling me at 459-2643. Together we can find the courage to help, as best we can.

“I am faced with the fact that for me the moral failure of doing nothing in the face of this threat posed by run-away climate change is comparable to the failure of many aware but paralyzed Europeans to oppose the Nazi Holocaust.” —David Drell

I have followed climate change science since 1995. I am faced with the fact that for me the moral failure of doing nothing in the face of this threat posed by run-away climate change is comparable to the failure of many aware but paralyzed Europeans to oppose the Nazi Holocaust. I hope that you will join me in finding a way to confront this greatest of human-caused threats that we and our Mother Earth have ever faced.



PHOTO BY ANITA SISON

Public Lands Alert!

While the press spotlights Trump’s appalling posturing, his appointees and the Republican-controlled Congress are dismantling environmental regulations that have made it possible for the public to defend public lands from total exploitation for half a century. We have just learned about H.R. 2936, the “Resilient Federal Forest Act”, which passed out of the Natural Resources Committee on June 20, 2017. Here’s a taste of what it proposes to do on our public lands and to citizen’s ability to hold public land managers accountable.

1. The Bill exempts from National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review of the following:
 - up to 30,000-acre logging operations,
 - up to 10,000-acre post-fire salvage logging operations,
 - stream buffer setbacks on post-fire salvage logging operations, and
 - up to 10,000-acre clearcuts;
2. It prevents plaintiffs in lawsuits against federal forest management activities from recovering attorney’s fees, even if the plaintiffs are successful;

3. It broadly exempts forest management activities from compliance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

In a first response, WEC has signed on to a multi-group letter to members of Congress urging opposition.



PHOTO BY ANITA SISON



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