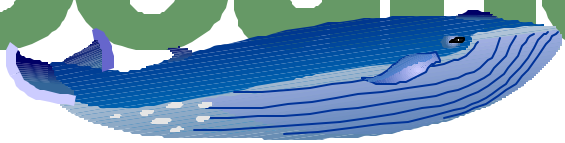


# THE SEA RANCH Soundings



A Quarterly Newspaper for The Sea Ranch Association Members

No. 75

Winter, 2002

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## Insurance Scuttles Dog Park

Down, Fido! No Dog Park for you! ... at least not in the near future.

After going through all the hoops required by the new “Procedure for Development of Recreation Facilities on ‘starred sites,’” after favorable reports by the Planning Committee and the Finance Committee, after favorable votes by the TSRA Board of Directors and Design Committee (SOUNDINGS, Fall 2002), proponents of the Dog Park had their hopes dashed by the insurance carrier. Kemper Insurance, it appears, won’t go near a Dog Park for less than \$25,000 per year, and even then the dogs have to stay on-leash!

### **INSURANCE AND LIABILITY**

A lengthy discussion of the proposed Dog Park at the October 26 Board Meeting centered on liability and

insurance costs. Said Community Manager Jim Carruthers in his memo to the Board:

What has changed since our last formal visit to the subject of the Dog Park is the general liability climate for common interest developments (aka The Sea Ranch Association). Not only has the insurance market changed for us to reinsure our existing conditions, the addition of a Dog Park to those existing conditions would layer an additional exposure and cost. Our broker has advised that we should expect our existing conditions liability insurance cost to increase 50 percent over our existing policy, which will expire in May 2003. Our existing premium for the Association is \$73,000; a 25 percent increase would project this number to \$95,000. The addition of a Dog Park in our existing coverage, we have been advised, could add an additional \$25,000, and require that dogs be leashed. The 50 percent increase is a malady of the market we find ourselves in; the \$25,000 on top of this to insure a Dog Park, in my view, is financially untenable.

Bob Day, local insurance broker was adamant that Kemper, Sea Ranch insurance underwriter, would not insure dog parks ... or if they did, it would require an additional \$25,000 and the dogs would have to stay on-leash. Since TSRA’s insurance policy runs until May 2002, there seemed to be no

way the Dog Park at Sea Ranch could proceed. Day said The Sea Ranch has enjoyed a very favorable insurance package and rates have not changed in the last three years while the coverage has stayed the same. However, the insurance marketplace is very difficult for anything that has to do with habitation — apartments, condominiums and homeowner associations. That has not affected TSRA because their insurance was under the California Water Providers Association. Water districts have been very profitable for insurance carriers in California, but water districts with homeowners associations attached to them have not. Insurers have had to take a hard look at the homeowners’ side of the package because of the increase in litigation; for example, cases of mold in homes in Texas. One thing Kemper does not want to look at is dog parks. Day added, “Kemper can pick and choose what they want to cover. They just in general don’t want that exposure.”

An option is to wait until May and look for an insurance carrier who will include a dog park. However, Day said The Sea Ranch can anticipate a minimum of a 50 percent increase in premiums when they renew their coverage in May because they’ve had such a low rate in the past three years. On top of that, an additional premium could be added for a Dog Park, but it would cost \$25,000 and the dogs would have to be leashed. TSRA could stay within the Water District group at an

advantageous rate premium, or the Association can look for a carrier that would provide coverage that includes the Dog Park at whatever the market would cost. "It's a matter of how much coverage we can get at how much cost," said Day.

Director Jim Flessner questioned Bob Day about any actuarial information assessing the risk of dog parks. Flessner said Sonoma County's dog parks have not had any claims. Eugene, Oregon has four dog parks and has had no claims. An article from the Massachusetts SPCA states that nationwide there have been few complaints from dog parks. The risk from Dog Parks, they say, is lower than the risk for a children's playground. Day said, "I'm sure your information is correct, but the company has the option to say what they don't want to cover. They said they don't like dog parks."

Director Marti Campbell asked that the Association start developing information on insurance coverage soon rather than waiting until May. "I don't really want to wait until next May to find out if there is an insurer that would include a Dog Park at a rate that we could live with." Day said, rate-wise, insurance companies don't like to deal with hypotheticals, but he could give TSRA a list of carriers who would insure the Association for all the liabilities including a Dog Park.

Campbell wanted as much information as possible by the Board's December meeting. Community Manager Carruthers said, "We need professionals to help us with this. We're going to shop our policy, period, because it's in a three-year cycle and it's just good business practice. We can certainly start that shopping process earlier. We can start next week. I don't know how quickly we could get a

response." Campbell said, "I am trying to create a situation of expediting — not a situation of delaying."

**PUBLIC DOG PARK AT GUALALA POINT PARK**

Directors Kate MacIntyre and Pete Mattson placed a memo in the Board packet asking investigation of a Dog Park in the day use area of Gualala Point Park. The Board had a meeting with County Supervisor Mike Reilly in September and he indicated, "A user-supported proposal (meaning financial support) would likely be approved." MacIntyre and Mattson asked for postponement of final approval of the Dog Park until "additional information on insurance and cost/availability" can be reviewed." They asked the Board to "Pursue other options in the meantime."

Also in the memo were requests to:

- Use the *Bulletin* to ask for members willing to form a Dog Park Users Group to support the Dog Park at Gualala Point Park.
- Determine if members who pledged donations to the Sea Ranch proposal would support a County Park with contributions or labor.
- Ask the Community Manager to work with a members group to submit proposal to the Regional Parks Commission by December 31, 2002, (using outside consultants if necessary to accelerate the work).
- Authorize a limited budget for the CM so that he might resolve the question of support needed to gain county approval and negotiate advantageous parking privileges for TSR members.

Director Flessner had spoken with Jim Angelo, Director of Sonoma County Regional Parks, who said the process for approval of a park could take a year or more. Angelo is not very confident of getting a Dog Park at Gualala Point Park because of his experience at another park where environmentalists opposed it. The park was shelved because there was no money in the budget for an environmental study. "Even if there were a lot of support for the Gualala Dog Park, it would not take much environmental opposition to just stall it completely, dead in the water." He also said it was not possible to give Sea Ranchers free parking for use of the Park. Flessner said he had a problem justifying the Association's spending money for a public facility off Sea Ranch. Nick Makris declared a day use fee required for the use of the Dog Park at Gualala Point Park would "defeat the whole notion of the Dog Park." He had talked with the Park Ranger about the meadows where a Dog Park could be built, and they "are the same meadows where they count birds every year."

Director Scott Nevin moved to: "Postpone final approval of the Dog Park until insurance cost implications can be obtained and reviewed. In addition, the Board would instruct the Community Manager to follow up with County Supervisor Mike Reilly to seek approval of a Dog Park in the day use area of Gualala Point Park where the Association and the Board would be the sponsors." He initially proposed funding, but at the urging of Chair Ann Harriman separated it from the motion. The motion was approved.

Director MacIntyre objected to separating the finance out of the motion, saying, "We know from conversations with Mike Reilly how

that could happen, so asking the Community Manager to get more information is a ‘Chinese fire drill’ ... We know the proposal needs to go to Regional Parks and we know there is a plan that has to be prepared. If the staff can do it, that’s fine, but with additional budget it might be a little easier. Secondly, we know the county is not going to approve a proposal unless its, quote, ‘user supported and has funds behind it’ ... We’ll come back with the same thing as when Jerry Gonce talked to Mike Reilly who said, and I quote, ‘Make me an offer.’ So we’re asking the Community Manager to go talk to the county without any budget to work with. I think we’re giving him a gun with blanks and it’s a stupid waste of his time.”

Director Nevin made a separate motion: “The Association would allocate a budget of \$5,000 so that the Community Manager can work toward a solution at the Gualala Point Park location. Adequacy of this budget would be reviewed as the project progresses through the county.” The motion was approved by a vote of four to three.

### **County Proposes 7-1/2 Mile Sewer**

A 1998 rainstorm triggered the Sonoma County Water Agency’s 2002 proposal for a seven-and-a-half-mile sewer the length of The Sea Ranch. At that time, rainwater and runoff were leaking into the sewer system at The Sea Ranch Central Wastewater Treatment Plant (CTP) causing flows that were six times normal. To prevent overtopping of the holding pond, the irrigation system was activated. However, the saturated ground could not absorb any additional effluent, and about a million gallons of treated wastewater was

discharged into an adjacent stream and from there into the ocean.

### **AGENCY SEEKS SOLUTION**

The State Regional Water Quality Control Board issued a Cease and Desist order against the Agency for this spill. While the Agency corrected the problem, it determined that plant upgrades would be necessary to accommodate the additional inflow. Clearly, it could either repair the leaky sewer mains from Unit 36 and the condos on the hill or it could expand existing effluent storage and spray fields at the CTP.

### **INITIAL PROPOSAL**

In 2001, the Agency proposed adding another pond at the CTP and expanding the irrigation area. Cost of the project was estimated to be \$1.2 million. At a Public Scoping Meeting on February 22, 2001, horse owners and residents of homes on the hill overlooking the plant opposed the project. Robert Juengling, of the Gualala Community Services District (GCSD) asked the Agency to look at piping the sewage up to the North Treatment Plant where it could be treated to a secondary level, then piped to the Gualala Sewage Treatment Plant so that it could be used for irrigation of the Golf Links.

### **EXPANSION QUESTIONED**

In March 2001, Iris Borg, member of The Sea Ranch Utilities Committee, prepared a study of the correlation between rainfall and the flows at the CTP. She graphed the flows in both the CTP and the North Treatment Plant and reached the opinion that rainwater was being processed in both plants during the rainy season. “In fact, the flow in both plants during the winter months exceeds the flow during July and August, when the occupancy is the

highest at TSR.” She concluded, “The profile of flow at the North Treatment Plant appears to be normal; however, the flow at the Central Treatment Plant has been inexplicably low since the summer of 2000. Whether this reflects lower usage, faulty flow gauges, or loss of effluent or wastewater somewhere along the line is not known. In any event, it deserves further investigation prior to enlarging the Central Treatment Plant facilities.”

Mel Mirsky, Chair of the Utilities Committee, sent Borg’s study with a memo to the Community Manager stating: “All of the above raises the question of whether CTP expansion is really necessary. We strongly urge you to forward this memo and its attachments to Sonoma County Water Agency as quickly as possible. They need to address the findings and furnish TSR with answers before embarking on an expensive capital program. Resolution may result in the expansion becoming unnecessary.” There was no response from the Water Agency.

Agency Project Engineer, Dale Roberts, said at the October 11 Scoping meeting, “Part of the cause of that problem was some damaged piping in the collection system and some open sewer clean-outs, which are laterals off the main sewage pipes. That satisfied what the Regional Water Quality Control Board wanted us to do.” However, the Agency felt it should research options to increase storage and disposal capacities in order to avoid further discharge violations.

### **LODGE NEEDS SEWAGE DISPOSAL**

About that time, private discussions commenced between representatives of the Agency, The Sea Ranch Lodge, The Sea Ranch Golf Links, and the Gualala Community Services District.

The Lodge was stymied in its expansion plans to add 92 new lodging units, additional retail and office space, an art gallery, health club, conference center, and other commercial and associated structures. The expansion would quadruple the amount of sewage generated at that site and there was no place to put it.

**GOLF LINKS NEEDS WASTEWATER**

The Golf Links needs more treated wastewater to irrigate the links when the weather is dry and their holding ponds dry up. In 1991, the Links entered into an agreement with the GCSO and County Service Area 6 (CSA #6), to accept up to 100 million gallons of treated wastewater per year for irrigation of the Links. Sea Ranch Villages, Inc., at that time owners of the Links, agreed to pay GCSO to deliver a maximum of 75 million gallons per year. CSA #6 agreed to deliver its total flow to GCSO up to a maximum of 50 million gallons per year. TSRA operates The Sea Ranch sewage treatment plants under contract with CSA #6. At present, the North Plant does not generate enough wastewater to irrigate the Links when the storage ponds go dry. Then the Links must buy potable water from The Sea Ranch Water Company.

**CURRENT PROPOSAL**

September 12, 2002, the Agency issued a Notice Of Preparation of an Initial Study soliciting public comment on new project options. A Scoping Meeting was held at the Del Mar Center on October 11. Water Agency Project Engineer Dale Roberts and Environmental Specialist Marc Bautista presented the Alternatives and asked for public comment. "Scoping" is an attempt by agencies to identify "the range of actions, alternatives, mitigation

measures and significant effects to be analyzed in depth in an EIR [Environmental Impact Report]" (California Environmental Quality Act, §15083 (a)).

**ALTERNATIVES**

Three options were presented: **Option One:** Pipe raw sewage from the Lodge four miles to the Central Plant. Treat sewage to secondary quality at the Central Treatment Plant. Pump secondary treated wastewater another 3.5 miles to the North Treatment Plant. Close the irrigation site at the Central Plant. Pump secondary effluent from the North Plant to the GCSO plant where it would be treated to tertiary quality. Convert existing wastewater storage pond at the North Plant to store the tertiary treated wastewater from the GCSO before eventual disposal on the Golf Links. Engineer's cost estimate is \$3,216,000. **Option Two:** Pipe raw sewage from the Lodge four miles to the Central Plant. Decommission the Central Treatment Plant from treatment of sewage to a pumping station and ship all raw sewage 3.5 miles to the North Treatment Plant. Close the irrigation site at the Central Plant. Treat the combined flows to a secondary quality, and then pump to the GCSO Plant for tertiary treatment. Convert the existing storage pond at the North Plant to hold tertiary treated wastewater from GCSO for eventual disposal on the Golf Links. Cost is estimated to be \$3,125,600 plus another \$64,400 to convert the storage pond. **Option Three:** Expand the Central Treatment Plant similar to the 2001 proposal. Add a 1.74-million-gallon storage pond and 8 acres of additional spray fields. Cost estimated by engineers at \$1,200,000 in 2001.

**FUNDING**

Funding would come from an existing construction fund that has accumulated over the years, said Roberts. "That fund was intended to be used for the Central Plant storage and irrigation expansion project, but that would go to one of the other options if it were to be implemented. We would have to take out a loan to cover the additional costs. The Lodge would contribute its portion of the project, which would be the pipeline from their property line to the central plant. In addition, it would have to pay a connection fee, which would be proportional to the amount of wastewater they would contribute. It would be equivalent to the number of single-family dwellings, somewhere around 80 single family dwellings." Sonoma County Water Agency paid the \$25,000 for the initial Feasibility Study and recommendations by Winzler and Kelly, consulting engineers.

**TIMELINE**

The Public Scoping meeting is part of the environmental compliance component of the project, said Roberts, and the Agency will be looking at the impacts through spring of 2003. In summer of 2003, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors will select a project based on what the Agency has determined in its initial studies. In fall of 2003 through spring of 2004, the Agency will develop a detailed design. "We've already done our conceptual design to throw some things on the table," Roberts revealed. Construction would start in the spring of 2004 and would last about a year.

**PROJECT EXPEDITED**

A full month prior to the public meeting, an August 8, 2002 letter from Dale Roberts to TSRA Community Manager Jim Carruthers indicated the Agency had already decided on an alternative. "The Sonoma County Water Agency

concur with Winzler and Kelly's recommendation to implement Alternative 6 ... of the study report." (Alternative 6 is Option 2 of the public Notice of Intent.)

"Alternative 6 would implement the transfer of all the raw wastewater from the Central Plant to the North Plant, rather than treating wastewater at the Central Plant. This alternative would also include receiving all raw wastewater flows from the Sea Ranch Lodge at the Central Plant pumping station. The North Plant would treat raw wastewater from all connected Sea Ranch Sanitation Zone (SRSZ) parcels and The Sea Ranch Lodge to secondary treatment level. The secondary treated effluent would then be transferred to the Gualala County Sanitation District (GCSD) for tertiary treatment and ultimate disposal at The Sea Ranch Golf Links (SRGL)."

Roberts also told Carruthers, "I will be contacting you to arrange a separate meeting, after the Scoping meeting, with all parties to begin development of formal agreements between respective parties to ensure success of the project." County Supervisor Mike Reilly declared in the October 5 Sea Ranch Forum, "There is energy to move this project forward."

## PUBLIC COMMENT

Bill McCarthy, who now lives in Gualala, noted that the Gualala Sewer District is planning a sizeable expansion. He asked how that expansion would affect the GCSD's storage capacity. "That will impact their capacities," said Roberts, "They have currently contracted with an engineering consulting firm to evaluate their entire treatment process and are in the process of getting their permit revised and expanding their capacity — but for now they would be able to take what we would send them." McCarthy

persisted, "With their proposed expansion in Gualala, would they still have enough capacity to handle the add-ons from the Central Plant, The Sea Ranch Lodge and their own projected increase?" Roberts responded, "I guess I don't know the answer to that question ... They have given us a letter of support, saying, yes, we realize the flows you will be sending to us and yes, we can accommodate those flows and their expansion in Gualala."

Mel Mirsky was concerned about converting the North Plant's storage pond to handle GCSD tertiary effluent. "By doing that, we lose some flexibility to store secondary treated flows." In the past, Gualala had not always accepted secondary flows in the wintertime, even though an agreement exists. "If we go ahead with Option 2, I can see where that same situation could occur and flows are refused in Gualala, so there's no place for the Lodge to go, there's no place for The Sea Ranch to go with secondary treated wastewater. The whole system is down!" Roberts replied that the agreement says Gualala must take up to a maximum of 50 million gallons a year from the CSA #6 treatment plant. "We have not been enforcing that, so we need to take some responsibility for that." Part of Gualala's reason was that they had no place to store it if they were to treat it. "By turning over our secondary storage pond, it increases their options. This would add 8.4 million gallons of storage to their plant."

Mirsky asked Roberts to address the issue of odors at the North Treatment Plant. "There will be additional flow to the North Treatment Plant. What we will primarily do to control odors is minimize the potential for their formation. "Odors are primarily generated by solids sitting still." He

described self-cleaning wet wells at the pump station that will allow the solids to keep moving. In addition, chemicals could be injected to bind with the sulfur in the hydrogen sulfide. "If those don't work well, you could retrofit, kind of a last resort, the head works with a duct work that draws the air out through a scrubber that reacts with the hydrogen sulfide as well."

Mirsky's last question was about the Lodge sharing costs from the Central Plant to the North Plant. "We would put in a four-inch line between the Central and the North, no matter what. Because the Lodge is coming on board is not why it is the size it is. Any other person hooking up would have to pay a connection fee, which would be designed to recover the costs of the capital improvements."

Sue Pollard is in the process of developing a septic system on the Commons "at an extraordinary cost." She asked whether she and eight of her neighbors could hook up to the sewer line and what would the connection fee be? Roberts said if there are areas to be developed, just like The Sea Ranch Lodge, and if they could install a pump station and pipes to the Agency's pipeline, "Yes, we would be able to accommodate that and would be required to because we have the capacity." The cost, he said, could be on the order of the cost of the most expensive leachfields.

Rich Hughes, a partner in the Golf Links, observed that the Golf Links must provide 10 million gallons of storage. "The Sea Ranch Golf Links has a plan for providing storage for more than 10 million gallons. The first part of the plan is being implemented right now." He hopes that the Links can hook up to the GCSD by winter of this year.

Pete Mattson asked how much more could the four-inch line handle? “There are 2,000 parcels,” Roberts replied, “there’s plenty of capacity in the four-inch line.” John McChesney asked about putting the southern part of the Ranch on sewers. Roberts said they would have to pay the costs of establishing the infrastructure and the pumping to get it to the main line. Also, each lot would pay a \$3,000 hookup fee. McChesney said if one person were willing to pay the costs to do that, would they be accepted. Roberts said, “Absolutely. We’re required to do that.”

The proximity of the North Plant to homes and the effect of the increased capacity on property values were the concern of Kathi Gordon. She also listed a number of significant environmental effects, and asked for a full Environmental Impact Report so that the public could be informed as required by the California Environmental Quality Act.

### **ACTION BY TSRA BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

At its October 26 meeting, the Board of Directors discussed a resolution by Director Mattson for the Association to:

1. Ask the Utilities and Finance Committees to thoroughly study the matter and recommend whether or not such a pipeline is as advantageous as envisaged.
2. Advocate such a Pipeline Plan (Option #2) if so confirmed by the Utilities committee.
3. Hire a qualified consulting engineering firm to review county plans, make potential recommendations for improvements, and monitor construction.

Director MacIntyre did not support the resolution: “It is the job of the Association to advocate on behalf of its members. One of the ways we can do that is by insisting that the county go through a proper environmental review. ... We need to know what are the things in the process that protect our members.” Kathi Gordon asked the Board not to select an alternative until it knew all of the environmental impacts. Utilities Committee Chair Mel Mirsky recommended the Board transmit the year-old memo questioning the whole reason for the project to the Agency and ask for an official response. “I don’t think there’s a benefit to Sea Ranch in any of these schemes. My reading is they’re going to build something.” Because of that, the Committee placed seven conditions on their approval of Option 2. “We need to question them on this. If there is no benefit to Sea Ranch, I’m not sure what our options are.”

Director Long observed, “There have been different opinions on what the benefits are ... I have some concerns. I think this is being driven by the Lodge. I think there is a lot of funding from the ratepayers’ past payments to make this happen. I think this is somehow going to inevitably lead to the south end of Sea Ranch being required to go on sewers.”

The Board requested Community Manager Carruthers to draft a letter to the Agency asking for a full Environmental Impact Report and asking for an official response to the year-old memo from the Utilities Committee.

The Public Comment period on the Scoping was closed November 8, but if members wish to express their concerns, write to: Sonoma County Water Agency, c/o Marc Bautista, Environmental Specialist, P.O. Box

11628, Santa Rosa, CA 95406 –1628.

### **Dick Whitaker to Direct Design**

Dick Whitaker’s office is a good place to be on a stormy day. His warmth and good humor light up his somewhat drab temporary quarters. Whitaker was serving on The Sea Ranch Design Committee and working with former Community Manager Jerry Gonce on a job description for the new position of Director of Design Review when Gonce said, “We’d like to have you do this.”

Accepting the job is the second time he’s “failed retirement,” said Whitaker. The first was when he retired as Dean of the College of Architecture and Art at the University of Illinois at Chicago and, after 20 years, became Emeritus Dean. He returned to California, then accepted an invitation to teach Architectural Design at the University of California at Berkeley. He also gave a lecture class on Architecture and the Environment. Whitaker is the “W” in the legendary MLTW, Charles Moore, Donlyn Lyndon, Bill Turnbull and Dick Whitaker, the architects who helped create the image that is Sea Ranch.

“One of the great advantages of being involved with TSRA has been getting to know and work with the staff here. But given the nature of this place, you wouldn’t expect anything different,” said Whitaker. In addition to design review, Whitaker is a staff person for the Design Committee, but not a voting member. “Bill Weimeyer and I work jointly with the Design Committee; Bill handles the landscape and land planning and I deal with the built environment.” One thing Whitaker insisted on when he said he would take the job is “that Bill and I would work as partners to deal with the design process. Because I’m convinced the

major issue here on The Sea Ranch is not so much the shape or the form of buildings — although that’s important; it really has to do with the relationship of the building to the site and how the building fits into the larger landscape of the neighborhood, the community and ultimately how that fits into the larger landscape of The Sea Ranch as a whole ... Don Lyndon mentioned in an article that people worry more about the siding than they do about the site.”

“I’ve never understood big houses anyway. Buildings at The Sea Ranch shouldn’t be ‘look-at-me’ buildings. I don’t think Sea Ranch is the appropriate place for trophy houses or buildings that demand special attention. We’re talking context here. This doesn’t mean it can’t be exciting. There’s no reason a very simple building on the outside can’t be something that’s very exciting on the inside ... I remember when we were designing the condominium, we talked about architecture in a place like this being like a geode — very plain on the outside but inside there were all kinds of wonderful things going on. Charles Moore called it an act of ‘aggressive unostentatiousness.’

” He mentioned the compelling delight of Italian hill towns and said, “Their greatest charm is the fact that there is a shared image about the buildings that has been handed down over time. There’s no one building that stands out and says ‘hey, look at me,’ unless it has importance for everyone. It’s that holistic image that makes the place special, that makes people feel that they belong. Most of the people here really do understand this. I’ve been very impressed with the level of understanding that people have about The Sea Ranch.”

**DESIGN GUIDELINES**

A major current involvement of the Design Committee is the process of revising the Design Guidelines. “We’re not talking about a revolutionary change here, rather an evolutionary change. We’re trying to upgrade the guidelines to deal with a place that is three-quarters built out, and there are a lot of issues that people didn’t think about in the early years. Buildings were isolated then; now, the relationship between buildings and groups of buildings becomes equally as important as the relationship between buildings and the landscape. Time and conditions change. For example, the meadow used to be beautiful waving grassland — a sea of grass — now it’s full of coyote brush and all kinds of other stuff and it’s not the same place. It looks like it has some horrible disease. But change is a part of nature too.”

**DESIGN REVIEW**

“A major part of this job is the design review process and we’re trying to get the turnaround speeded up,” said Whitaker, who will be at the Ranch Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Another technical person will be added to the Design Review and Environmental Planning office to assist with expanding the scope of the design process, and to explore and research issues like color, materials and new building technologies. “There’s a lot of small jobs in terms of design review that still have to go through the review process, and we do a lot of that in-house. The principle of the design review process is to deal with each site as a unique entity, which means that what may be appropriate in one place, could be inappropriate in another. The basic agreement of the community is that there are rules that we have accepted — it’s not the Wild West!

“Once in a while the system breaks

down but I’ve found in the short time I’ve been here, we have been able to sit down and talk to people, go out to the site and look at problems, and come to a reasonable solution that can be agreed upon. That doesn’t mean everyone gets their way, but hopefully the community at large benefits. I think that when you drive around The Sea Ranch, any surprises ought to be good ones.”

**EDUCATION PROGRAM**

The Design Department is in the process of developing educational programs for new builders as well as for people who buy houses and want to remodel or re-landscape. “The idea is to reach people before they have invested a lot of time and money in the building process. The Interpretive Center Task Force is exploring the idea of an information system to reach all different levels of people, whether they are already owners or, even more important, someone who is interested in The Sea Ranch but has not yet bought a lot.

“The Task Force is exploring new formats, media and the possibility of a physical place to provide information and education for The Sea Ranch community, as well as evaluating existing programs. This program could have many formats: it could be a physical place, something on the Web site, part of a series of events like the Forum but relating to just the design process. It could be literature, handbooks, guidelines, all kinds of stuff as possible ways to disseminate more information on an ongoing basis.”

**SEA RANCH BEGINNINGS**

“My Dad came out of a family that believed in the land ... ” His grandfather set each of his six sons up with a farm when they came of age. Whitaker’s father got a chicken ranch

in Petaluma but in a couple of years he moved back to Oakland. “I remember his talking about coming up to the North Coast and early memories of the Gualala Hotel. My wife, Sue, and I spent many weekends exploring the back roads and coastal coves in this area. So we were very familiar with this part of the world.”

Later, in 1962, when three of the group were teaching at Berkeley and Bill Turnbull was working for another architectural firm, they formed the architectural firm, Moore, Lyndon, Turnbull and Whitaker: MLTW. “It was a wonderful, intense, exciting period in our lives. Joe Esherick was also teaching at Berkeley and we had done some work with Larry Halprin. So, when Al Boeke, of Oceanic Properties, and Larry put The Sea Ranch team together, he got Joe to do the Lodge and the cluster housing and us to do the condominium and the first swim club. This proved to be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity! Bill was always interested in the land and he worked very, very closely with Al, Larry and Dick Reynolds establishing the planning philosophy. They were out tramping over the landscape before there were roads or much of anything else.”

**EVOLUTION OF A CONCEPT**

“While the four of us had varied backgrounds, we also shared a common interest in indigenous buildings, barns and sheds that demonstrated a direct response to their site and context and were not buildings that were trying to be ostentatious. I think sometimes a building can rightly serve as a marker and certainly the condominium was a marker at that time, giving this place an identity. Now it has appropriately been absorbed into the natural landscape. As a concept it was an important point in time, establishing a presence here on the

coast and setting things in motion. The cluster houses were a model for the way individual buildings could be grouped and joined in a partnership with their site. Along with Condo I, they established a vocabulary in the way they engaged the landscape and responded to the sun, wind, and views as well as the use of materials.

“The condo conforms to the topography and the rock outcroppings of the site by curling itself around that little hill area at the top and stepping down the contours to the bluffs below. It’s doing it as grouping of units together while the clusters are doing it as a grouping of individual houses over a larger piece of landscape. I think we knew we were involved in something important, but I don’t think we knew how important at the time.”

There was a wonderful spirit of working together and collectivity on this project. It was really quite amazing! Bill [Turnbull] used to describe our design process as a group of four friends with one pencil, pushing it against the same piece of paper.

“The way that Sea Ranch evolved was definitely a group enterprise and this is what made it such a rich experience. Bringing these people together with their different backgrounds, different ideas and different points of view, yet there was still a sharing and an involvement with some basic ideas about the land and simple building forms and being aware of the aspects of the land, weather, topography, vegetation, the ocean, views, sun and wind. The driving force behind all this was something we developed over a year of planning — and it grew. Together, we developed a shared image that became The Sea Ranch image.”

**DISAPPOINTMENTS?**

Have there been disappointments? “Oh yes ... looking at the land layout, there were a few places that I think mistakes were made — how lots were organized on the land. There should have been more concern about views and siting that respected the total buildout and provided more relationship to existing landforms and hedgerows. Some of the problems on the north end resulted from the advent of sewers, since you could have smaller lots because there were no leachfields. This meant houses could be closer together. That, in itself, is not necessarily bad but the platting of the land was not as carefully considered as most of the south end. Personally, I would have liked to have broken up some of the larger areas with additional hedgerows and to have more cluster houses, which could have provided greater expanses of open meadow.

“There are some places where it’s really hard to understand how the height limits were established. In one place you’ll have a 16-foot height limit and immediately adjacent to it for no apparent reason, there’s a 24-foot house. Of course, if you could have taken that whole group and done them all at once, where you could have organized the places in a kind of planned unit development, as the cluster houses, you would have been able to mitigate that kind of thing, but that isn’t what happened. Individual lots were developed over a long period of time and there hasn’t been enough concern by people building in the denser areas, particularly early on, about what was going to happen when the next houses were built. However, for the most part — compared to other developments — this place is amazing! The way it’s been able to preserve the sense of the original landscape. There is little question that this is the result of having a strong Design Committee and

support from the Board!”

Whitaker left the Bay Area in 1965, so was only occasionally involved with the next phase of building individual houses; but he would return to visit and see the homes built by his friends, Moore, Turnbull and Lyndon. “The four of us had always been very close friends and we kept in touch over the years, even after we moved from the Bay area.” He and Donlyn Lyndon, the remaining pair of the partnership, have homes at Sea Ranch and visit often.

**CHALLENGES**

“We have a lot of challenges ahead of us right now. A quarter of the places are yet to be built. Many of the lots left are not the easiest sites to build on. It becomes important for new builders and remodelers to understand the image and the idea that was part of the first 10 years. I see that as my job here: trying to keep that shared image alive and to support and husband it in the future. It is a challenge!”

**RESPONSIBILITY**

What about people who simply ignore the rules? “I know there are buildings on The Sea Ranch that look like they don’t fit. The owners have managed to do things out of ignorance or a lack of understanding. They end up with buildings that are too large or don’t fit into their neighborhood or group of buildings. One thing, when you buy into The Sea Ranch, you really buy into a family. Suddenly you have a lot of in-laws. There’s a certain responsibility. Part of the richness of the place is of course the people that are here. At the same time, when you do buy into the Ranch, you have incredible opportunities, but you also have incredible responsibilities to the place and to everyone who’s come before you and to everyone that’s going to come after you.

“I know there are people who come up here to get away and they don’t want to be bothered. That’s fine and I think The Sea Ranch allows you to do that. But at the same time, you still have a responsibility to the larger organization and the Association, and you do have a responsibility to the landscape and to the idea that is Sea Ranch. That has nothing to do with privacy.”

Is it difficult to deal with owner-designers? “Probably no more than anyone else. The thing that is most difficult is dealing with houses that are designed very quickly without much thought. Mainly the lack of thought relates to the building not fitting comfortably with its site and/or the building not fitting comfortably into its neighborhood of buildings, and everyone suffers from that. It has nothing to do with whether the people are architects or not. Some of the houses I think are examples of good architecture at Sea Ranch have been designed by designers, not by architects. It has to do with understanding this idea of the shared image and assuming some responsibility towards the larger entity. It also helps to have a little bit of understanding of how you accomplish that in terms of physical form and materials and the shape of things. There are some houses, some of them built as spec houses, that almost take the idea of making things ordinary to a point of no return. On the other extreme is someone who wants to build a monument and sometimes these may be very good buildings but they don’t fit the image of The Sea Ranch. We have a few of those that have managed to get built that have little to do with the idea of Sea Ranch, but fortunately vegetation grows and buildings weather.”

**THE SEA RANCH IDEA**

“The idea was never to have a cookie-cutter mold that was going to stamp out individuality. The idea is to help people understand the nature of this place and to approach the design process with respect for the existing environment. The Sea Ranch idea was meant to be a process that allowed you to deal with architecture along the coast. It had to do with simple forms responding to the site. It was not meant to be a style. If one approaches the design process in a way that starts with the site, there is more likelihood you’re going to get something that is going to be compatible. There isn’t a formula — there isn’t a style — and there shouldn’t be.

“People often come in to just run an idea by us about how they want to lay out their building or how they’ve oriented it in relationship to the trees or their neighbors and we are happy to share ideas and concerns. I encourage people to come in and talk to Bill Weimeyer and myself about their building projects. I think this is a major thing, a part of what I see as my job: working with people to make their experience of The Sea Ranch better both in terms of the design process as well having a better understanding of the place. I’m here to help.”

**FAMILY**

Whitaker is a third-generation native of Oakland. He and his wife, Sue, have a {small} Sea Ranch home, which was designed by the late Dmitri Vedensky. They have two sons: one in Oakland who recently presented them with their first grandchild, and the other in Chicago in the theater business, designing sets and producing plays.

**Randy Burke New F&R Director**

Around the time he decided to move to

the North Coast, a friend told Randy Burke that he'd get used to the sunsets and pretty soon they'd all start to look the same. After he'd been here a couple of months, though, he'd photographed about 60 of those sunsets, and you know what?" he says, "None of them look anything alike!"

You get the idea talking to The Sea Ranch Association's new Director of Facilities and Resources that he's always going to feel that way. His eyes light up when he talks about his new community, and his passion for the North Coast with its natural beauty is obvious. In fact, even before he had a place to live and a firm job offer here, he had put his Martinez house on the market and quit his Bay Area job. He was committed.

He'd been working as a project manager and assistant to the V.P. of Construction for Davidson Homes in Walnut Creek, a property development company specializing in land acquisition and the construction of tract homes. After five years there, he was tired of the traffic and congestion, and the job "just wasn't fun anymore," he says. Memories of the many vacations he'd spent on the coast, coupled with the impact of a recent personal experience — he'd just spent weeks in the hospital with a close friend who was dying of cancer — prompted his resolution to "make life better."

His job search yielded two possibilities consistent with his background and experience: a position in Public Health with Mendocino County in Ukiah, and another as assistant to the TSRA Facilities and Resources Director, Bill Chapman, at The Sea Ranch. The commute to Ukiah was a big drawback, but The Sea Ranch job seemed a perfect fit. Later, when Bill decided to leave TSR to become the Community Manager at Sunriver in

Oregon, Randy was promoted to fill his position.

Girlfriend Jane Head loves it here; since she is a native of the Cotswolds in England, the atmosphere, climate and topography of the North Coast remind her of home. As Randy puts it, "We both get what we want." They're so happy to be out of the city and here in the country that they do their shopping in Ft. Bragg — "too much asphalt and concrete in Santa Rosa!" he says.

Randy feels very much in tune with The Sea Ranch concept. "We don't just go out and cut," he says, "we approach it with almost a Zen-like philosophy." Having had experience in virtually reshaping the land while working on projects like tract neighborhoods and golf courses (sometimes involving landfills of up to 80 or 100 feet), he finds it refreshing to feel he is now working with the land rather than against it.

"I've had experience changing the contours of the land into something it never was," he says. "Here, what we do fits with the land. We follow the existing contours and there is very little earth movement, maybe a variation of only about six inches." He describes his crew as "talented and bighearted," and says it is "the best crew I've ever worked with."

He is equally enthusiastic about the rest of the TSRA staff. "All of these people are so highly qualified and knowledgeable," he says. "And there's not a lot of turnover here." He is impressed with their depth of experience and sincere approach, their awareness that "everything we do has an impact and should make holistic environmental sense."

Born and raised in Pomona, California, Randy says that he has always loved the outdoors, particularly fishing and

participating in soapbox derbies. He received a B.S. in Biology from St. Mary's in Moraga in 1974, then went on to earn a Masters degree in Public Health from Loma Linda University in 1976. He worked his way through school in underground pipeline construction. After trying out a stint "indoors" with the Contra Costa Health Department, he returned to pipeline construction in 1978, and has managed to find work outdoors ever since. He has two children, a son who recently graduated from Chico State in Construction Management, and a daughter who is a photojournalist.

What does he see as major areas of Resource Management concern in the years ahead? He mentions the implementation of the four-year Forest Management Plan, and the water reservoir repair project. Then there's the seven-mile sewer extension for The Sea Ranch Lodge; this will involve close monitoring with regard to its proximity to Commons and its possible impact on Native American artifacts and burial sites.

Since his approach to the job is so thoughtful, it inspires confidence that he'll successfully meet whatever challenges he encounters along the way. "It's not just a job, it's a philosophy," he says, citing two books that have had a formative influence on his thinking about work: *Up the Organization* by Robert Townsend, and *The Peter Principle* by Lawrence Peter. Both of those books, he says, helped him to see the importance of being in a position where he really enjoys what he's doing.

### **Services Aid "Aging In Place"**

Loss of independence is the reason many older Sea Ranchers have to move. The September 7 Forum panel

reviewed the services that try to help seniors deal with the practicalities of living here on the coast. Bruce Johnson, moderator of the Forum, told of his own experiences trying to get the right assistance for his wife after her incapacitating illness. While he praised Redwood Coast Medical Services (RCMS), the Coast Life Support District (CLSD) and Hospice, it was difficult to find specific rehabilitation therapies. Subsequently and sadly, Johnson found it necessary to move from Sea Ranch.

**SONOMA COUNTY AREA AGENCY ON AGING**

Bob Marshall, a two-and-a-half-year member of the Advisory Board of the Sonoma County Area Agency on Aging, said, “In Sonoma County, one in every six persons is 60 or older; in the whole of California, it’s one in seven. From the years 2000 to 2040, the 85 and older population in the county is projected to increase 254 percent, from 8,468 to 29,974. The growth rate will exceed the growth of all other age groups. Marshall observed, “That’s the tip of the iceberg. We’re just beginning to see what the effects of the needs of the aging are going to be on the community.”

In the early 1960s, the government passed the “Older Americans Act” and created area agencies on aging at the county level, most under county social services. Sonoma County distributes \$2.8 million and the advisory board makes recommendations on how to pass those funds on. Both Marshall and Sea Rancher Alice Diefenbach sit on the advisory board. The Agency’s goal: “To promote the dignity, independence and quality of life of seniors and adults with disabilities.”

The Agency funds adult day-care programs, care management services,

health insurance counseling and advocacy, home-delivered meals, senior centers, elder-abuse prevention counseling and linkages with in-home care services. Most of the programs are means-tested according to income. It also publishes a Senior Resource Guide, which was available to Forum attendees.

**REDWOOD COAST MEDICAL SERVICES (RCMS)**

Diane Agee described RCMS as a nonprofit community health center serving a population of 12,000 residents from Timber Cove to Irish Beach, an area covering 60 to 70 miles of coastline and crossing county lines at the river. About 1,800 are children and about 50 percent are over 55. Agee said nationally the Medicare population is expected to double.

RCMS provides medical services, minor surgery, and 24-hour emergency services. There are no dieticians, speech therapists, or occupational therapists that could help with self-management of health. It is an interim stabilization and triage center so that the ambulance may bring a patient to RCMS prior to making the two-hour trip to a medical center in Santa Rosa.

The area needs more in-home nursing, but the state has yet to approve nurses crossing the county line. There are very stringent requirements for in-home nursing care, so, for every hour the nurses work, 40 minutes is spent on paperwork. In-home services include housekeeping and food preparation. Agee was not optimistic about an assisted living facility in the area because of the political problems involved in building such a facility. She also questioned whether there is the volume of population necessary to sustain an assisted living facility.

RCMS gets about two-thirds of its

funding from fees and regular sources and it has to be creative for the other third. It depends on volunteers, fundraisers, grants, etc. If coastal residents want to retain and enhance their medical services, Agee asked them to get involved and stay involved in advocacy for RCMS. “The government won’t do it for us.”

**COAST LIFE SUPPORT DISTRICT (CLSD)**

The Coast Life Support District was formed in 1986 when bankruptcy of the local private ambulance provider threatened to cut off the only ambulance service on the coast at that time. A dedicated group of volunteers persuaded the state legislature to put formation of an inter-county ambulance district on the ballot and the coastal community passed it. Nick Scanlon-Hill reported on the services available by the CLSD today. A paramedic is available to staff the ambulance 24-hours a day, seven days a week. An Emergency Technician (EMT) is also on call. There are at least two ambulance calls per day.

Scanlon-Hill spoke proudly of the expanded scope of the training for the ambulance staff, which, he said, is far better than some urban areas. Having a 12-lead heart monitor for EKGs in the ambulance makes the CLSD “one of the two or three ambulance groups in the Western U.S. that have that capability.” Also, the paramedics are able to assess cardiac enzymes, which is “the ultimate way of determining whether somebody is having a heart attack or not.” That’s important because of the distance. “If you are having a heart attack, it’s important to get to the hospital quickly so that we can save heart muscle. If you’re not having a heart attack, it’s a misuse of resources to send you over by a helicopter that costs about \$10,000.”

It takes two hours to drive to seven or eight different hospitals in Santa Rosa or Mendocino County: “Generally, we figure six hours for a call and so we’re out of the area a quarter of the day.” A volunteer Basic Life Support ambulance, which has EMTs but not paramedics, is part of a whole continuum of care on-call. The local volunteer Fire Department has trained EMTs on-call; also the Fire Department has an automatic defibrillator.

### SHAMLI HOSPICE

Cynthia Chilton said “We’re very fortunate in this community to have had Hospice for almost 20 years now. The idea was formulated in 1983 and the services started in 1984.” She first became involved in Hospice 20 years ago when her son died of AIDS at home. “In the United States we were not too willing to think about and talk about death until the AIDS crisis came in the early 80s, and we started paying attention to what we were going to do.”

“All of us share birth and death, we don’t have any choice about it,” she observed. “What most of us fear the most is that we will lose control of our circumstances.” Hospice services try to offer control. “Focus on what you would like to have in the last few months. We can help you with quality, and work on pain management. That’s really what Hospice is about.”

The local Shamli Hospice program is a volunteer program and does not charge for its services. A new program is Respite Care, because this community desperately needed relief, said Chilton. “If you’re caring for someone at home who has a serious illness that has incapacitated them and they need constant attention, it’s very hard to be there all the time. You need a break to

go shopping, to take a walk, to get away for a couple of hours. Shamli Respite can offer that.”

There are paid nurses on the staff but all the rest — about 30 right now — are volunteers and they could use more. Training programs are available for both Hospice and Respite care. Hospice takes place in the home. “The idea is not to have to go away from your familiar surroundings. That’s a unique circumstance for Sea Ranchers, especially. Many people in the greater community were born here on the coast and they wouldn’t dream of being anywhere else when they die. But Sea Ranchers are transplanted here and when we become very ill, it’s scary to us. We don’t know if we can stay here. We don’t know what the services are.”

Hospice provides resources with a library and Internet Web sites for people who are looking for Hospice services in another area. It also offers ongoing bereavement counseling.

### COMMUNITY RESOURCES CONNECTION (CRC)

John Marchant and Rich Kuehn are co-chairs of the CRC at the present time. CRC offers a confidential telephone referral service to help seniors, people with disabilities, troubled teens and “any others in need of assistance.” It covers three areas: the telephone, transportation and handyperson services.

When someone calls the CRC, the volunteer at the other end of the telephone calls volunteers scheduled to drive on a particular day or to provide a particular handyperson service. The phone person then calls the party back to make a date for the volunteer to provide the help. A CRC van takes people to Santa Rosa on Thursdays for scheduled doctors’ appointments and

treatments.

Last year, volunteers drove close to 27,000 miles; of that, 19,000 were in their own personal cars and 7,000 by van. Seventy-six percent of the trips were medical, five percent dental, three percent social services and 16 percent personal needs for groceries, banking, etc. In all, CRC logged 872 calls. Twelve or 15 handypersons from Manchester to Timber Cove were on call to change light bulbs, batteries, install railings in a bathtub, repair electric beds, etc. They also provide a list of paid service people to call if a volunteer is not available.

### AUDIENCE QUESTIONS

*Would it be possible to get David Colfax, Supervisor of Mendocino County, and Mike Reilly, Supervisor of Sonoma County, together to discuss the problems of cross-county line funding of medical services? Specifically, what Sonoma County is doing about the bed tax?”*

Diane Agee said, “There’s no doubt that getting them together in the same room would be a benefit.” Recently, Mike Reilly said the bed tax goes to fund parades and festivals and the like. She would like it to pay for tourists when they come in to RCMS with “on vacation, leave their brains at home” type of injuries. They usually have some ‘bizarre’ HMO that won’t pay RCMS. She also is concerned about the tobacco tax settlement money, which is used to balance the state budget at the same time that the legislature cuts health care programs.

*Most of the services seem to go to people in populated areas. What can we get here?* Cynthia Chilton said there is a program to provide meals on a short-term basis. The meals are provided by a group of volunteers from the RCMS Auxiliary. Also, there is a

volunteer Phone-a-Friend network for people who are alone or feel insecure in their homes. A volunteer will call each day to make sure that everything is okay. Both programs are grass-roots efforts and can be accessed by calling RCMS.

*What are the cross-county issues?*

As an example, Diane Agee described the problems of a young pregnant girl from Sonoma County when she sought abortion counseling at her school in Mendocino County. She was whipsawed between county agencies until she eventually had her baby. By that time, she was suicidal and finally referred to RCMS where she was able to get mental health counseling.

The funding stream gets very complicated. The Feds and state give money to the county and RCMS never has the population numbers in either one county for the supervisors to pay attention. The Action Network is trying to get the Feds and the state to see this area as a community instead of two separate areas.

*Is there a medical equipment exchange?* There was a liability for Hospice and RCMS to store the equipment and most of the items are not returnable to medical supplies companies. Requests on TSR listserv have been successful, or CRC could put them on a list so that a person could call the person offering the equipment. Johnson said he had great success on the listserv.

*Is there any hope of getting some of the Agency on Aging programs for the West County?* Almost all of the programs are within the 101 Corridor because that's where the population is. But it would be possible to get some of that funding here; it's just a question of getting the ear of our political representatives.

## *Circumambulation a TSR Tradition*

August 31st, 2002, a day like any other day at Sea Ranch — UNIQUE!

The fog drifts in from the ocean, but it is a dry fog; no moisture drips from the branches overhead, and it is dry underfoot. Overhead, lighter spots show that the fog promises to break later in the day. With the temperature about 60 degrees, this is a perfect day for a long, long walk.

At 7:45 a.m. Sea Ranchers cluster around a table set up at the Moonraker Recreation Center. Set to start promptly at 8 a.m., they are signing in for the Fifth Annual Circumambulation of The Sea Ranch, a walk of 21 miles, plus or minus a mile or so (depending on which authority is asked). There are 70 in the initial group this year; at the first refreshment stop another 14 will be added, with more planning to join at the County Park.

The Trails Committee, which is responsible for organizing this event, begins planning several months prior to the day. A small ad hoc committee is formed, and the route is selected based on prior experience. Any changes are basically refinements, as essentially the object is to walk north on the east (or hill) side to the County Park and return on the bluff, thus completing a circle of the Ranch.

Trails Committee members take on the myriad tasks involved in setting up a successful circumambulation. Posters announcing the event are put up at the recreation centers, a mention is made in the *Bulletin*, and a posting is made on the TSR listserv. Several members take on the task of pinning arrows to posts along the route to provide the necessary signage. The Committee recruits leaders to guide, and a

“sweep” whose mission is to always be last — not an easy job! There is also a “floater,” an amorphous position that mainly seems to consist of driving around in a car, eating up the cookies at each stop, and talking on the radio. Then bakers make the cookies, someone brings the soft drinks, and members of the Trails Committee staff the refreshment stops.

The idea of a walk around the entire Ranch came from the fertile mind of Bill Darling, an earlier Trails Committee Chair, who served in that position about 11 years ago. However, several obstacles had to be overcome, one of which was an absence of trails on the north end of the Ranch! The Chapel Trail, for example, was only completed in 1995, the Saloon Trail slightly earlier. Bill's idea lay fallow for several years until another Trails Committee member from the early '90s and an ardent hiker, Brian Regan, became an eager recipient of this concept. Finally, Brian and Bill were able to scout out a possible route and set out to test their vision during 1996-97, with the first Circumambulation taking place in 1998.

The route is divided into four segments, each one approximately five miles in length. The first segment is from Moonraker Rec Center to the North Fire Station, which is situated exactly at the midpoint of the Ranch on the east side of the highway and has restrooms. The station's presence is an essential ingredient for a successful Circumambulation. Here, also waiting for the hikers, are homemade cookies, soft drinks, and water — all eagerly consumed. A side note: While granting use of the restroom facilities, a volunteer from the Volunteer Fire Department ensures that the hikers congregate only in the parking area outside so that nothing will jeopardize

the Station's primary function of a swift response to any emergency that might arise. An example of the symbiotic relationships that exist at The Sea Ranch, many of the walkers are the same ones who will show up at One-Eyed Jack's the next day to work at the Firemen's annual barbecue and picnic, raising money for the VFD.

The second portion, which is also about five miles long, ends at the County Park. The arrival time of the majority of hikers between 11:15 and 11:45 happily coincides with lunchtime. Consequently, many of the hikers bring their lunches with them, or have them taken up to the Park in the floater's car. Others meet their friends or spouses who bring their lunches, arriving independently by car or on foot from nearby homes. Tables are scattered around the parking lot and there, in the shade under the trees, groups gather to eat and converse.

Lunch seems to end by common consent about 12:30, and by 12:45 the last of the ambulators has hit the trail again for the journey back to Moonraker.

The Bluff Trail would appear to be level, just by its designation. It is in fact marked by a series of swales of varying depths, at least two descending to sea level, and with each slope downward there is a corresponding rise at the other side that has to be faced. With 10 miles of hilly terrain already behind them, hikers by this time are acutely conscious of every step that slopes upward. This return journey is the portion that tests everyone's resolve.

After approximately five miles of this homeward trek, a very welcome refreshment stop appears at One-Eyed- Jack's, where a restroom is also available. By the time the last of the

hikers have gone by, most of the liquid refreshment and all of the cookies have disappeared. This is possibly the most essential wayside stand of all, as the final five miles are the real test of the hikers' endurance.

Any concept that the group of circumambulators is composed only of young, vigorous athletes would be entirely false. They are, in fact, a cross section of Sea Ranchers, young and old, and the older hikers make some of the fastest completion times. In 2001, for instance, two of them ran most of the way, arriving back at Moonraker at 1:00 p.m.! This year, a most determined person of mature years finished the journey at 1:45 p.m., solely by walking at a fast pace.

On the other hand, some of the younger folk have problems. Last year, two young ladies, equipped with brand new walking shoes, developed severe blisters while three miles short of their goal. From their knapsack they each produced a pair of thong sandals and shuffled the balance of the way. They arrived at Moonraker at 5:30 p.m.! Truly the last to finish by a wide margin, but what perseverance! This year, with shoes broken in, they made the whole hike again, finishing in good time.

A popular peripheral attraction to the Circumambulation is the T-shirt emblazoned with a wild-looking ram and the words "Circumambulation 2002" (or whatever the current year is) printed on it. When you see a fellow Sea Rancher wearing one of these, greet him or her with a big high five and a "Well done!"

Now it's time to get your legs moving, and we'll see you next year on the Annual Circumambulation of Sea Ranch!

### **Foundation Honors Bill**

### **Platt**

The painting pictured above that The Sea Ranch Foundation has presented to the Association bears a plaque that honors Bill Platt for his "many services to the community." These services are not listed because, if they were, the plaque would be larger than the picture.

When William J. Platt retired from his position as head of the Department of Planning and Financing Education for UNESCO in 1977, he returned to the U.S. and built a home on a lot he had bought 12 years earlier at The Sea Ranch, a place that would not leave him homesick for his previous residence — Paris. He first came to the attention of locals when he undertook to improve communication between Sonoma and Mendocino County Supervisors and their constituents. The Supervisors in Ukiah and Santa Rosa tended to consider places like Point Arena, Gualala, and The Sea Ranch as too remote and sparsely populated to warrant their attention. After Platt conducted a public meeting in Gualala to discuss the formulation of a new county (permitted by the state constitution), supervisors began scheduling regular trips to the "remote" areas.

Once his talent for getting things done was recognized, Platt was taking part in just about every local group concerned with government, transportation, education, medical services, and the arts. He was a founding trustee of The Sea Ranch Foundation; the driving force behind the North Coast Institute; an active member of the Redwood Coast Education Foundation, Point Arena Pier, Gualala Municipal Advisory Council, Redwood Coast Medical Services, Mendocino Transit Authority, and Gualala Arts. In addition, he served

four months as acting Community Manager for The Sea Ranch Association, and in 1986 he was honored with the Sea Rancher of the Year Award. When he wasn't attending meetings, he played and sang with a coastal string quartet, the Highway One Jazz Choir, and the Recorder Consort. But his most outstanding legacy is getting the California Assembly to form the Coast Life Support District (CLSD), which provides ambulance and emergency medical services to our area. The recent addition of a training center to the CLSD is named for him in recognition of his leading the drive to establish this service.

The painting is a watercolor by former Sea Rancher, Don Buck, showing the Del Mar Schoolhouse before the extensive restoration work that has been under way on the old structure. It hangs next to the fireplace in the foyer of the Del Mar Center to greet you as you enter.

### **"Life on the Rez" by Local Youth**

The Point Arena High School Peer Helping Class is a class for "at-risk youth." Available to students for over a decade, it is meant to be a safe place for students to open up and explore their emotions and receive adult attention in a non-threatening, live-by-example sort of way. Composed primarily of Native Americans, the class has group check-ins, sharing circles, and self-management forums. Over the years, the students have attended countywide youth conferences and other group activities designed to help them find positive outlets in life.

In the last three years, at the request of students and with the assistance of visiting artist/teachers Blake More and

Christian Birk, the PAHS Peer Helping Class has shifted its focus toward videography and storytelling. This has opened up the classroom considerably and students are more engaged and present than they have ever been, both scholastically and socially. School administrators are delighted at the blossoming group dynamic and believe that the students' video work is leading to improved academic achievement and a more positive school spirit among the Native American youth at Point Arena High School.

Last year, the youth led in the creation of a high school video project called "Life on The Rez: Coast Pomo Youth Speak Out." Made during the winter and spring semester of 2002, the goal of the Point Arena High School (PAHS) Peer Helping Class video project has been to empower Pomo youth, both creatively and culturally, while also encouraging and inspiring students to learn more about the challenging and diverse world they live in. Using the creative mediums of writing, video and music, the project has given students a safe and structured forum for asking tough questions and speaking out about the cultural, social, and political issues that excite and concern them most.

The result was a very real, 45-minute video that includes interviews with elders, and covers sensitive topics such as the plight of disenfranchised, sometimes angry youth, racism, stereotypes, drugs, and gender issues. The students also composed two original songs and a poem. The students have also developed a Web site with bios, newspaper reviews, and a QuickTime movie preview. The address is <http://www.snakelyone.com/pomo2002/lifeONtheREZ.htm>.

The class has been invited to attend the Reel Studio 2003, a youth component

of the Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah in January 2003; however, the students need to raise funds to cover transportation and lodging. Any donations would be greatly appreciated. Please send any info to Linda Heinsohn, Mendocino Youth Project, 255 Main Street, Point Arena, CA, 95468 or call 707-882-1945.

*Ed Note: Last week we rented "Life on the Rez" at the local video store. We were blown away by the content: the poems, songs and interviews. While very much a "student production," it was a revealing glimpse into the lives of these alienated youth, the conflicts between them and their elders, the contrasting lives of the females as compared to the males. It is disturbing and sometimes profane, but we need to know about our Pomo neighbors and what they think. This film brings them to the center stage and they have some very important things to say.*

### **Library Notes**

A recent citified visitor to The Sea Ranch stood in the library looking at its shelves full of neatly arranged books and said, "You must have a generous acquisition budget." This drew a momentary blank from her host, who then said, "We have no budget. All these books were donated." Donated! It's impressive to realize the truth of that. This community has donated an entire library full of many kinds of books. We should be proud.

But the subject of donations has become problematic. To put it in the proverbial nutshell, the library is receiving many more books as donations than it has room for. There is little more room on the shelves, and there is, at this time, no more room to add more shelves. So there it is. The

library is out of room.

One way to deal with that situation is to cull the collection, remove books that have not been taken out, and arrange for their disposal to Pay 'N' Take, the Coast Library, or, as a last resort, the dump. A recent culling session has left space for qualified acquisitions.

Another way is to try to control the numbers of books donated, and to plead yet again with donors not to bring in certain types of items.

The library does need good quality fiction in all genres and audio or videotapes. Some 90 percent of all items borrowed are in those categories. The library could also use donations of old bookends.

The library absolutely cannot use the following: textbooks or other didactic materials, magazines, philosophy, art, obscure poetry by unknown authors, religious texts, books in foreign languages, volumes containing several abridged or short novels, pornography, or outdated books on finance or politics.

Curiously, donors will leave textbooks and magazines on the desk beside a notice stipulating that the library cannot use textbooks or magazines.

Unwanted materials present a problem to the volunteers. Local outlets can absorb only so much, and the "Free Books" area cannot keep up with the pressure. The volunteers are left with a disposal problem. Surely the people of The Sea Ranch do not expect the library volunteers to act as their trash haulers — but that is what they have become.

So this is a plea to would-be donors: Please do not think of the library as a place to dump all the old books you don't want. Use some judgment; evaluate the likelihood of the book ever

being borrowed. Bring in your donations, not by the bag, box or bundle — but in ones and twos.

### Restaurants

The Gualala Hotel Restaurant  
Gualala, CA 884-3441  
Daily 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.  
Weekend Brunch 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The latest renaissance of the Gualala Hotel began June 4, 2002, when Lisa Berlin-Solberg and her husband Jeff Solberg became the new owners of the 99-year-old landmark. They are meeting the challenge of transforming the tired, woebegone, old lady with an outpouring of enthusiasm and creative energy. After only a few months, stateliness appears to be emerging and the atmosphere inside seems charged with new vigor.

Our most recent visit was for Sunday Brunch. Fresh avocado green paint with crisp white trim greets diners in the entry and invites them to relax amid potted plants and rattan chairs. But lingering wasn't necessary for us as a table was available and we were seated immediately. The dining room tables were covered with white cloths and decorated with little candles. The avocado-colored paint gave way to ochre gold in the dining room and we were taken with a number of vibrant oil paintings of local scenes hanging on every wall. It wasn't clear whether these were for sale or part of the hotel's own collection but they lent a refreshing lively look to a room I remembered very differently from days gone by.

Brunch is served every Saturday and Sunday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The menu is extensive, with dishes from simple eggs and home-fried potatoes to an exhaustive list of omelets and salads, fish and chips, and innovative sandwiches. Since we had skipped

breakfast and it was afternoon, we read every word of the menu and had a hard time choosing which of the tempting items we would order. Joe settled on the bay shrimp and avocado omelet (was it the suggestion of the paint in the entry that prompted his choice?) (\$7.00), and I had the "Hangtown Fry" omelet (\$9.00). Both came with tasty red potato home fries: great chunks of potatoes with slivers of onions, browned and tender and piping hot. Tucked into Joe's omelet were lots of little bay shrimp and avocado pieces and just the right amount of melted jack cheese so as not to smother the eggs. It was mildly seasoned and the eggs were cooked just right. My "hangtown" was bursting with small softly poached oysters, crisply cooked bacon pieces and bits of green onion and again, just the right amount of jack cheese. The mild flavors and different textures blended well. While I was tempted to ask for some salsa, in the end I just enjoyed every bite as it was. Both dishes came with toasted English muffins and a delicious chunky fruit preserve.

Looking around at the other tables I was able to scope out the brunch salads — they looked great, abundant and fresh — as well as a good-looking hamburger sandwich served on focaccia bread with barbecue sauce and French fried potatoes (\$9.00). Children with their families were also being served such items as macaroni and cheese and corn dogs (\$5.00) from the children's menu. The children's menu makes this a good family choice.

Our waitress was competent and friendly — which more than made up for her inept but determined helper who was apparently in training. Generally, however, the service was good. We were seated quickly, offered menus and water immediately, and our orders

were taken promptly. The atmosphere in the dining room is bright and casual but, while the paint is a great improvement, the old traces of dowdy still persist. The owners had a huge job in bringing the kitchen up to new rigorous standards (not to mention other parts of the hotel), so it is not surprising that the cosmetic resurfacing of the floors and replacing of stained ceilings has had to wait.

The Solbergs continue to tweak the menus to reflect new ideas and suggestions. Dinner items include pastas, salads, and specialties of roasted chicken (\$17.00), seared tuna (\$18.00), rib eye steak (\$27.00) and codfish and chips (\$10.00). On a previous visit we tried the linguini with mushrooms, sun-dried tomatoes, basil, pine nuts and pecorino Romano cheese (\$14.00) and found it a well-prepared and delicious combination. Combined with the baby spinach, apples, candied walnuts and blue-cheese salad (\$5.00), we were happy diners.

Chef Jaime Soriano brings 25 years of experience with him to The Gualala Hotel. Working in many Bay Area locales, including the well-known Rose Pistola Restaurant in San Francisco, gives him all the tools he needs to please customer's palates. Locally owned Trink's Desserts are responsible for outstanding desserts such as ricotta cheesecake and a chocolate mousse cake (\$6.50 each). Choices vary daily.

I was happy to hear from the owner that the wine list is being expanded to include some affordable good California wines. Wine is offered by the glass or by the bottle. If you bring your own wine, the corkage fee is \$15.00. The choice of beer brands is long and varied. Domestic beer is \$2.50, with microbrewery brands at \$4.00.

We applaud the owner's efforts to bring in entertainment. Music played on the hotel's 100-year-old piano can be enjoyed Sunday mornings from 10 a.m. to 12 noon. Events such as winemaker's dinners and a mystery dinner theater are scheduled for fall and winter months.

In general, our dining experiences have been positive. The food is fresh, well prepared and well presented. They seem to have the big things right. The kitchen is spotless and they have a talented chef. A bit deficient are the details: better supervision and training of the inexperienced waitpersons is called for; the food-stained beverage menus that stand at the pristine table settings need replacing; the thirsty drying-up-fast ficus plant fighting for its last gasp that stood next to our table needs to be rescued; the pesky squadrons of flies on combat missions to our table as well as our neighbor's need swatting; the smudgy dark wooden chairs need wiping down. These little things are easily remedied.

We welcome this new addition to our local dining scene. We applaud the efforts to appeal to tourists and local residents alike. We look forward to experiencing the makeover under way from the tired, dowdy old lady The Gualala Hotel has been to a vibrant and stylish old beauty.

