

THE SEA RANCH Soundings

A QUARTERLY NEWSPAPER FOR THE SEA RANCH ASSOCIATION MEMBERS

NUMBER 93

SUMMER 2007

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COMMUNICATION

MOUNTAIN LIONS

SUMMER EVENTS

GALLAGHER AND JORDAN ELECTED



2007-2008 Board of Directors: Front row: Jim Jordan, Tim Gallagher, Marti Campbell. Back row: Derek Bray, Rosemarie Hocker, Sandy Bush and Lee Mueller.

Homeowner Cooperation Key to Fire Mitigation

At the March 10 Workshop on Wildfire Protection at Sea Ranch TSRA Board of Directors Chair Jim Jordan began with a detailed review of "Where we are and where we're going." He said, "The overriding goal of any Association activity is to maintain, even strengthen, our shared Sea Ranch values manifest in our landscape, structures and community while maintaining public safety." The two challenges of public safety are to reduce the risk of disasters and to respond to disasters should they occur.

Programs to reduce the risk of fire began decades ago, but the 2002 Fuels Management Plan (FMP) focused on fire safety and guides specific fire mitigation efforts. (See *SOUNDINGS*, Spring 2007, p. 3) The 2004 Public Safety Element of the Comprehensive Environmental Plan called for a continuing commitment to the maintenance of areas treated by the FMP. The 2006 Commons Management Plan defined the tasks needed to maintain the commons for the next 26 years but did not include new fire mitigation programs. Said Director Jordan, "The Board of Directors was not comfortable with just maintaining the commons as they presently exist and sought additional fire risk mitigation efforts." They asked the Community Manager to put together a group of experts to evaluate fire risks at The Sea Ranch and to recommend programs to respond to those risks.

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Tension grew in the 45 minutes before members would hear the final outcome of the election at end of the TSRA Annual Meeting. Finally, a loud cheer went up at the announcement: Jim Jordan and Tim Gallagher were elected! Robbin Johnson of Pacific Election Services said the delay was due to the near-record turnout of 57.5 per cent of members voting, representing 1316 properties. (1994 set the record with 66 per cent, representing 1533 lots) Also, for the first time this year, owners of 55 ballots with unsigned proxies were given the chance to sign them and be counted. Gallagher garnered 1032 votes; Jordan, 1025 and C.E. Brown received 495 votes. Director Jordan will continue to chair the Board of Directors,

with Lee Mueller as Vice-Chair, Marti Campbell, Treasurer and Sandra Bush, Secretary.

STATE OF THE SEA RANCH

Jim Jordan, Chair of the Board of Directors, reported on the State of The Sea Ranch, saying, "This is a good time to be a Sea Rancher." Community Manager John Fox gave what he described as his "Half-term Report" and Treasurer Marti Campbell reported on the state of Sea Ranch finances. See the June Bulletin for details.

LIFETIME SERVICE AWARD

Duane and Kathi Gordon received the award for their service as Art Director and Editor of SOUND-

INGS for more than 20 years. Outgoing Director Kay Dryden presented the award and summarized some of their activities. In the early days, Kathi used her experience with public agencies to assist the Association in resolving legal issues with the developer leading to the acquisition of remnant lands and the construction of the reservoir. She acted as observer of the creation of the Gualala Community Services District to determine its effects, if any, on Sea Ranch. She served as Chair of the Utilities Committee during the creation of the Wastewater Management Zone, is an ad hoc member of the Communication Committee and is a member of the Archives Committee. Duane was a long-time firefighter with the Sea Ranch Volunteer Fire Department and is an "on-call" volunteer for many projects at Gualala Arts.

Duane said, "As we phase out our service with this publication, we hope that among so many capable people is someone who will take it over and keep it going. Please remember that *SOUNDINGS* is your paper, the members' paper – it was set up to be independent of the Board. We find wonderful people on the Ranch and we love to tell their stories and what's going on. It's yours to use, as you want to. I hope it keeps going."

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It must be assumed that all owners of property within The Sea Ranch by virtue of their purchase of such property are motivated by the character of the natural environment in which their property is located, and accept, for and among themselves, the principal that the development and use of The Sea Ranch must preserve that character for its present and future enjoyment by other owners.

From The Sea Ranch Declaration of Restrictions, Covenants and Conditions



FIRE MITIGATION from page 1

FIRE SAFE COUNCIL

The group included representatives of CalFire, (formerly California Department of Forestry [CDF]), The Sea Ranch Volunteer Fire Department, the Association Board, membership and staff. It was called the Forest Fire Risk Reduction Group, but became the Fire Safe Council to correspond with Fire Safe Sonoma. The Council was to provide: 1) expert analysis of fire risks and definition of actions to mitigate the risks and 2) recommendation of programs for funding by the Association. However these two functions created an uncomfortable situation for those in public agencies by involving them in setting of Association policies.

FIRE SAFETY TASK FORCE

To resolve that potential conflict, at their April meeting the Board commissioned a Fire Safety Task Force made up of Association members with knowledge of fire safety issues. The Fire Safe Council is now limited to professional advice from subject area experts and operations managers. An additional advantage of separating the two groups is that the Fire Safe Council, affiliated with Fire Safe Sonoma, will have 501(c)(3) status and will be eligible to apply for State and Federal grants for which the Association cannot apply.

WILDFIRE PROTECTION WORK SHOP

Accompanying Jim Jordan on the work shop panel were Bill Weimeyer, TSRA Environmental Planner, Caerleon Safford of Fire Safe Sonoma, Dan Levin, Chief, The Sea Ranch Volunteer Fire Department and Deanna Baxman of CalFire. Safford screened a dramatic film about fire at the wildland/urban interface, showing what burned and what survived. While crown fires moving through the tree canopy are the most fearsome, surprisingly

most houses don't catch fire from them. Crown fires consume their fuel in about one minute, move on, and don't provide enough radiant heat to ignite a home. Vegetation itself doesn't hold heat long enough to ignite a wall; it's the little things between the house and the crown fires.

Fires spread from ignition to ignition where the requirements for combustion: oxygen, heat and fuel exist. Without those three basic ingredients the fire cannot survive. Flames directly transfer enough heat to ignite a home, either through thermal radiation when a fire conveys enough heat to nearby fuel and the fuel combusts, or by convection when fire comes into direct contact with the fuel. Twigs, needles and grasses and other fine fuel allow forest fires to burn but it doesn't take long for that fuel to be consumed. Firebrands, burning embers that fly through the air

and land on combustible materials cause spot ignitions. A tiny firebrand can be more devastating than a raging crown fire, but that doesn't mean owners are helpless.

Reducing fuel on or near structures and keeping landscaping separate from the rest of the forest can protect homes. The home ignition zone-- the area that includes the home and its immediate surroundings -- determines the vulnerability of a home to wildfire. Neighboring homes in close proximity within the home ignition zone can be heat sources and ignite other homes. Using flame resistant materials, thinning out trees and clearing the zone of dry vegetation and flammable objects can eliminate heat sources that might form a path to the home. The object is not to entirely eliminate fire within the zone but to ensure the fires that do start can't burn long enough or intensely enough to ignite other objects. Ev-



ery potential heat source must be evaluated. The goal is to reduce the fuel to minimize ignition and that is the responsibility of individual homeowners. They were warned not to depend on fire agencies to fight fires at individual homes because their job is to contain the fire. "Wildfire is inevitable, but preventing the destruction of property is up to us," said Safford.

Q&A

Q: Is it a good idea to have fences around propane tanks?

A: Enclosing propane tanks is a two-edged sword. Enclosures effectively screen the tank from the increase in heat until the enclosure catches fire. It is a design rule that propane tanks be screened from public view, but that doesn't mean they have to be enclosed on all sides.

Q: I have a video of the Yardarm Fire that show spot fires that are started on the west side of Highway One by firebrands.

A: In that fire, what ignited on the structures is exactly what we're talking about here when we talk about creating defensible space and fire safe construction. That fire extended to those houses when the winds became erratic and fire was blown into the crawl spaces and got trapped in the fuel beneath the building.

Q: As an engineer I assumed the forest was the primary source of the fuel load and counted the trees and figured out how much tonnage there was. The mathematics gets pretty dramatic. It would take at least \$2 million a year to hire five crews of three in a truck each constantly removing fuel in order to maintain the fuel load on Sea Ranch equal to its current level...That makes no assumption about reducing it. What approaches might we take over time to cause the fuel load to level off

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FIRE MITIGATION from page 2

and then decline?

A: Unless we do something, we're going to have an exponentially increasing fuel load. We have to do something completely different from what we done to date, but that requires careful thought on the part of the community. The Fire Task Force will be looking at what more we can do in terms of removing larger areas of fuel. As we speak sheep are eating seedling trees so over the long term the grazing program is going to have a lot to do with reducing the future fuel load on the Ranch. The Task Force will have to look at whether the grazing program is adequate to keep the balance between grasslands and coastal scrub or forest. Grazing is an environmentally sensitive way of controlling natural succession and it's very cost effective as well. We have to have a dialogue in this community about what we want The Sea Ranch to look like and feel like. If we do extensive fuel management, it's going to be totally different from what it is today, but what do we want that to be? We really haven't ever talked about that. That's what the Council wants to do and what the Association Task Force needs to do.

Q: I live in Unit 18 in the redwood forest and that is one of the main reasons we bought our house up there. What you said just speaks to my anxiety. We love the forest and I don't want it to be stripped of all the trees up there.

Q: Yes, we've got a lot of trees here and trees are part of the reason that I'm here. But it seems to me we don't have to eliminate all that. I understand that there is a lot of fuel that could burn and if it burned all at once it could be an explosion. But I've also read that it doesn't matter if it's 100 feet beyond that particular house. So, which is it we're worried about: the total fuel

load or just what's near the house?
A: It's the trees that are close to the house that are a threat to the house and a threat to your person. If there's a lot of fuel but not close to a house, then it's a regular forest fire but if there is fuel intermixed with the house, then that's a larger issue. Research on fuels reduction and structural ignitability show that its usually embers that ignite houses and very rarely raging crown fires. So it's far more important to worry about the 30 to 100 feet around your house and look at all the things you can do to reduce the ignitability of your structure. Fire reduction does not mean clear cutting. It means reducing the fuel so that the vegetation burns more slowly and doesn't allow fire to jump from tree-to-tree, bush-to-bush to spread to your house. You especially need to be concerned with the vegetation that's growing right up against your house.

Q: I challenge your answers about the high fuel load. Sea Ranch is not typical. It's loaded with houses that are 20 to 30 years old with shingles on them. Mine is one of them. When you have fires, you have slopes, you have winds and you have blowing embers. I don't think 100 feet is going to protect me in those circumstances. I don't want the high fuel load to be dismissed because those are ember generators.

A: We are always most concerned about defensible space but that's not to say we don't worry about the overall fuel load. Unless you eliminate all of the trees on The Sea Ranch you're going to have embers. But it seems like the issue is really more about the construction of your home.

Moderator Jim Platt concluded the work shop by inviting members to attend the April work shop on planting with fire retardant materials. (See article on Page 8.)



ANNUAL MEETING from page 1



Duane and Kathi Gordon receive award for service on SOUNDINGS

COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARDS

The award goes to Sea Ranchers who have made a significant contribution to The Sea Ranch, typically in terms of a single focus area over the past year or so. Director Sandy Bush presented the awards to four Sea Ranchers:

Nancy Carter chairs the Communication Committee as it oversees beneficial changes in Sea Ranch communications. She has organized and chaired Mid-winter and New Owners' meetings and has led some Vision Interpretive Program Committee meetings.

Laurie Mueller is Chair of the VIP Committee and a strong contributor to the Communication Committee. She organized the architects/ builders/real estate meetings, served on this year's Election Committee and the Forum Committee.

Nancy Powers has been Chair of the Trails Committee, headed up the Demonstration Garden Project, has been Chair of the Native Plant Committee, is a seal docent and was in the initial group working for Sea Ranch's part on the California

Coastal National Monument. **Rich Perry** has contributed his talents to The Sea Ranch over the years, and this year he used his professional skills to conduct the assessment meetings for hiring the new Emergency Preparedness Coordinator. He also organized and presented the "Beast in the Garden" meeting on mountain lions with author David Baron and has helped set up a reporting system for mountain lion sightings.

Will Randolph assisted Rich in organizing the mountain lion discussions and setting up the reporting and monitoring system.

The Sea Ranch Library Group, a loosely organized group of about 18 people, received a group Community Service Award for keeping the library functioning and convenient for members. They have only one meeting a year, sign up for one month a year and make the decisions for that month. One of the group, Jeri Taylor, observed, "The library is one of the greatest resources we have on Sea Ranch and, even when there is a lot of work to do, the joy of it is to know it's being used."

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