



THE

Highlander

May/June 2023

The Rural Bonny Doon Association Newsletter

What's Next for Cotoni-Coast Dairies and the North Coast Facilities Management Plan?

Wednesday, May 24, 7:30 p.m.

In Person at the Bonny Doon Elementary School Multi-Purpose Room

And

Virtually via the Internet (Zoom)

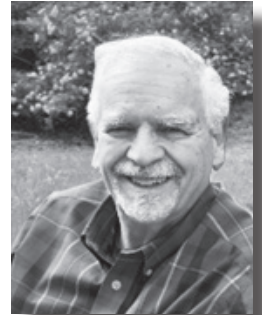
The RBDA is pleased to host a presentation by Jonathan Wittwer and Mike Eaton, who will provide a recap and an in-depth look at what's next for both the Cotoni-Coast Dairies National Monument and Santa Cruz County's North Coast Facilities Management Plan (NCMFP). The NCMFP is a planning effort among agencies, organizations, and the community to identify a shared vision, goals, and high priority projects for enhancing the North Coast visitor experience, manage visitor impacts, and preserve natural resources. The management of Cotoni-Coast Dairies and the greater North Coast region will have a major impact on Bonny Doon, Davenport and all neighboring areas, and is certain to affect generations to come.

Virtual Meeting Login Instructions can be found on Page 4



Mike Eaton

Jonathan Wittwer is currently President of Friends of the North Coast, an organization dedicated to honoring and preserving the natural and cultural legacy of Santa Cruz County's North Coast, including preservation of coastal resources, wildlife, plant communities, streams and more. Mr. Wittwer had a 45-year career as an attorney, including 21 years in the office of Santa Cruz County Counsel, retiring as Chief Deputy County Counsel. He then spent 20 years as a founding partner in the Wittwer Parkin Law Firm, serving primarily environmental and governmental clients.



Jonathan Whittwer

Mike Eaton graduated from UCSC and then pursued a career in conservation and environmental policy in the Sacramento Delta region before moving back to Davenport in 2000. Mike has worked for the Sierra Club, the State of California Natural Resources Agency, The Nature Conservancy, and Resources Legacy Fund. He currently serves on the board of the Davenport North Coast Association as well as the Resource Conservation District.

An Update from Supervisor Justin Cummings

Supervisor Cummings will also be appearing in person at this public meeting to provide the latest information about his work on our behalf. A very big piece of good news: Justin has been appointed to the Board of the powerful California Coastal Commission.



Justin Cummings

Understanding and Improving Fire Response Policies: Part 2

Editor's Note: The following article is an invited contribution from Bonny Doon resident Eric Hoffmann. The opinions stated below are not necessarily those of the RBDA Executive Board.

California's unprecedented weather disasters have proven that communities must establish a united response to prevent repeating the kind of destruction seen in the 2020 CZU Lightning Complex Fire.

Currently, there are 58 counties in California, each working on community safety under different budgets, and, occasionally, through grants for fire protection, disaster clean-up, and road repair. CAL FIRE is a state agency that, in some areas, contracts with regional governments, cities, counties, and fire protection districts, and in others, acts as the sole fire protection resource, as is the case in unincorporated areas like Bonny Doon. Fire protection districts require funding from tax revenue, and Santa Cruz ranks as the second-smallest county in the state.

A lack of funding and enforcement of state fire laws cost us dearly in 2020. Our own CAL FIRE Chief Ian Larkin said in a public meeting that the state fire laws are simply not being enforced in this county. "We did not achieve our goals for fuel reduction [...] It is a difficult issue in Santa Cruz County. [...] We need to increase it with a greater emphasis on greater compliance from the property owner."

A study of fire prevention policies in various California counties provides details that would greatly benefit Santa Cruz County. Many counties clearly communicate and enforce California state laws, and their own abatement laws, with deadlines for completion of debris removal publicly posted. Fire officials often conduct on-site inspections to ensure compliance, with scofflaws either fined

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Understanding and Improving Fire Response Policies: Part 2

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through tax liens or billed for clean-up. Pilot programs and grants can help those who are either physically or financially unable to comply with the law.

This is not to suggest that nothing is being done in Bonny Doon. We are fortunate to have many residents who have put in endless hours to improve our ability to respond to wildfires:

Multi-Use Radio Service (MURS) Neighborhood Networks: Coordinator Dawn Mackey explains: “To be more self-sufficient with emergency communication, Bonny Doon neighbors have purchased their own MURS radios which do not require a license, are inexpensive, and are easy to use. All you have to do is keep your battery charged. In an organized neighborhood, everyone uses the same channel. When there is an emergency, they turn on their radios and listen. If someone has a problem, they call the radio operator who will call out to the neighborhood, and someone will help them if they can. One or more neighbors in a group is also a ham radio operator. If the emergency requires first responders, public works, or assistance beyond the capabilities of the neighbors, the ham radio operator will call out to other ham operators in the other parts of the county. These radio operators can and will contact the appropriate agencies.

In a major disaster when there is no other communication, OR3 will activate ARES (Amateur Radio Emergency Service) and ham operators will be stationed in the Emergency Operations Center to relay information to Emergency Services. The radio room is already set up and ready, and ARES members practice communications every week.”

Dawn organizes countywide communication exercises to test and practice these procedures for the Day Valley, Rodeo Gulch, Happy Valley and all CERT teams. In Bonny Doon, Lisa Schallop, Roxy Lo, Joan Fry, and Alex Hayes have organized their neighborhoods to use their MURS radios. At last count, 21 neighborhoods have a self-sufficient communication system ready to help when it matters.

Bonny Doon Fire Safe Council: Fire Safety Councils were created by the legislature and are common throughout rural California. Nearly 150 communities across the state have created Fire Safe Councils to help protect their homes and neighborhoods. Joe Christy, President of the BD Council, has served for 13 years. Among the Council’s offerings are educational seminars, public lectures, creating fire breaks, improving exit roads in fire zones, and the protection of wildlife habitat. Joe praises the current board for its dedication and willingness to work on behalf of the community. Current board members are: Meggin Harmon, Tim Eagan, Paul Gabriel, Lori Seminiuk, Jared Childress, Susan Mason, Robyn Cooper, and Lisa Schallop.

Meggin Harmon has run the council’s “chipping program” for five years. The program started small and was funded entirely by donations. It now gets some financial support from the Resource Conservation District. Chipper owners have appreciated Meggin’s ability to successfully educate property owners about the necessity of proper stacking, and ensuring that dirt-covered roots not be chipped to prevent equipment breakage. She’s a great role model for taking initiative and getting a job done. This past season, CAL FIRE Captain Tom Shevenell sent recruits to work with the council’s chipping team. Meggin said, “It is a positive for both CAL FIRE’s new recruits, and a big help to Bonny Dooners to get their debris removed before the fire season.” Last year the program served 90 Bonny Dooners.

DIY Remote-Control External Sprinkler System: Long-time resident and chair of the RBDA, David Rubin designed a DIY Remote-Control External Sprinkler System to help protect his home when evacuation is mandated. The system allows him to utilize remote control and to see what is transpiring on site. He believes that “this system would work well in Bonny Doon where most homes have a single well for their property instead of water systems common to suburbs and cities.” He stresses, however, that this system is effective only if all recommended fire-hardening and vegetation changes are implemented. Additionally, he would not recommend its installation unless the homeowner has a good understanding of how much water their well can produce. Information on materials and installation was published in the November 2022 Highlander.

Fire Wise (National Fire Protection Association): is also an excellent program that Bonny Dooners have joined. If implemented correctly, Fire Wise participants may be able to achieve greater fire safety, and lower insurance premiums.

Perhaps program participants can share their knowledge in an upcoming edition of the Highlander. Bonny Doon, our collective home, is a beautiful fire-prone area. It will take all of us working together to protect it.

Eric Hoffman has lived in Bonny Doon 48 years and has written more than 300 articles for 35 magazines mostly, on wildlife issues. He authored “Adventuring in Australia” and “Adventuring in Belize” for Sierra Club Books/Random House as well as “The Complete Alpaca Book” that is sold in 15 countries.

Resources:

MURS Neighborhood Networks: Dawn Mackey, 831 234 4877, dawnmackey411@gmail.com

Bonny Doon Fire Safe Council: Joe Christy, 831 824 4155 (BDFSC voicemail), joe@bdfsc.org

Chipping Program: Meggin Harmon, 831 425 1934, meggin@bdfsc.org

DIY Remote-Control External Sprinkler System: Read the Article: <http://www.rbda.us/november2022highlander-diy-rc-externalsprinkler-pdf/> or contact David Rubin at drubin@ucsc.edu

Fire Wise (National Fire Protection Association): <https://www.nfpa.org/>

County Fire Prevention/Abatement Studies:

El Dorado: <https://www.edcgov.us/Government/CAO/vegetation-management-faq>

Kern: <https://kerncountyfire.org/fire-prevention/hazard-reduction/>

Monterey: https://files.monterey.org/News-Releases/2022/22_0518-MFD-Defensible-Space-Inspections-2022.pdf

Napa: https://opr.ca.gov/docs/20220817-Napa_County_Case_Study.pdf

Update - Status of Event Center Site on Empire Grade

In March, *The Highlander* reported on the situation at 5187 Empire Grade where last year the owners had been reported and investigated for multiple code violations including non-permitted structures, grading, multi-day musical events, and a trailer fire on their 80 acres. Neighboring residents had contacted the County and Cal Fire expressing their many concerns about the above issues and the ongoing fire danger. The County issued a Notice of Violation citing the violations listed above. At the request of the residents, the RBDA also contacted the County in support of the neighbors' complaints.

In November 2022, a representative of the property owner (an LLC) signed the County's "Stipulation and Order", agreeing to a remediation schedule. The owner agreed that by March 31, 2023, they would obtain permits to retain current use. If permits were not obtained, the owner would remove all trailers, RVs, tents, yurts, and saunas; cease use of the property as an event center with overnight parking; disconnect and remove all utility connections; and obtain all final inspections and approvals. Further, the County stipulated that if these conditions were not met, the owner would be fined \$10,000.

March 31st has come and gone, so what is the situation now? This week, Marcus Mendes, the County's assigned code compliance investigator, sent an update via the following message to Bonny Dooner Stephen Homan.

Hello Mr. Homan,

The termination of all commercial activity to include large scale gatherings was a major component of the stipulation the owners agreed to with the County. Happy to hear they remain in compliance in this area.

Based on a recent visit to the property, they are in partial compliance concerning the removal of certain items from the property. I have notified an authorized agent of the property regarding teepee style tents I found on a lower portion of the property. The tents are not necessarily a violation so long as they are not used for overnight stays. As proposals have been approved to construct a single family dwelling, they are allowed to retain a recreational vehicle but not reside in it until building permits are granted.

Best,

Marcus Mendes

Code Compliance Investigator

Mr. Homan posted this message on the *Slice* Facebook group page and received many comments and questions from fellow Dooners. Most are concerned with Investigator Mendes' statement that, based on his recent site visit, the owners of 5187 are currently complying with the ban on commercial activity, but are only in "partial compliance concerning removal of items from the property." These statements have raised more questions than supplied answers for many Dooners. Have the owners given up their commercial activities or simply paused them? What is being done to enforce full compliance with the County's building and zoning ordinances and environmental codes? Given that it is now five weeks past the deadline, are the fines in effect now?

The RBDA has reached out to Mr. Mendes to get clarification on these issues and to get an understanding of next steps in the enforcement process. We will work with the community to keep you posted.

RBDA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Yearly dues are \$20/pp or \$15/pp for multiple members at same address.

Memberships expire on Jan. 31 of the next year. *

Number of Members _____ Number of years you are joining or renewing for _____

Multiply years times number of memberships. Checks only, please, made out to RBDA.

Amount enclosed for dues: \$ _____

I also wish to support the RBDA with an additional contribution of \$ _____

Total amount of enclosed check \$ _____

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Phone _____ E-Mail Address(es) _____

I certify that I (we) live or own property in the Bonny Doon Planning District.

Clip out and mail to RBDA, P.O. Box 551, Felton, CA 95018.

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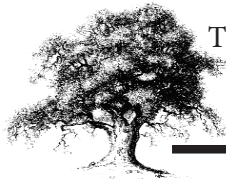
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Dues mostly go for printing and mailing *The Highlander*, your voice for keeping Bonny Doon rural and natural.

Additional contributions are gladly accepted and greatly appreciated!

*Dues paid after Nov. 30 count toward the next year.



THE Highlander

Keeping Bonny Doon Rural and Natural since 1957

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Bonny Doon's voice in preserving our special quality of life, The Highlander, is mailed free 6 times a year. RBDA Public Meetings are usually held the second Wednesdays of January, March, May, September and November. We encourage you to participate. Send correspondence to The Highlander at the above address.

Access the RBDA on the Internet at:
www.rbda.us

E-mail us at:
board@rbda.us

Facebook (RBDA Members Only):
RBDA, Rural Bonny Doon Association

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

May 24th RBDA Public Meeting: Cotoni-Coast Dairies Update

New Effort to Settle UCSC Growth Lawsuits

UCSC's constant expansion over the last few decades has been challenged legally over and over, at great cost to both the UC system (i.e., taxpayers), the City and the County of Santa Cruz (i.e., taxpayers), and community groups, (once again, taxpayers). Consequently, new efforts are underway to try to settle these disputes.

New Santa Cruz Mayor Fred Keeley, the first to be directly elected by the voters, is trying to negotiate a deal with the UC Regents that would limit where on the campus UCSC will grow and commit the university to housing all its additional students there. As part of this deal the City would provide the new student housing facilities with water, whether they end up inside the current water service boundaries or not. This would resolve a group of current lawsuits.

But just building enough units to house the ever-growing student body is not enough. The students must also be motivated or compelled to live in them. Up until now, the cost of renting rooms in the university's dormitories has far exceeded what students pay for housing in town, where they can shoehorn several students into a house or an apartment. The result has been that Santa Cruz has some of the highest housing costs in the nation. This also contributes in no small measure directly to the numbers of people here who are unhoused.

For its part, UCSC has fudged the true cost of living on campus, using questionable figures to lowball the projected cost of the new facilities it plans to build. Meanwhile, news stories proliferate of students jammed 9-strong into apartments or living in cars or worse.

Though the problems of UCSC growth are most impactful in Santa Cruz, the smallest of the UC host cities, most of the other campuses have been dealing with similar housing problems. The principal cause, other than that UC seems to pay a lot more for housing than other builders, is that UC policy requires the costs to be paid back by student rents. Until that policy changes, and building costs are either reduced or subsidized, students in great numbers will continue to seek housing off-campus. And as student enrollment constantly grows, our housing crisis only gets worse.

Virtual Meeting Participation

Zoom (zoom.us) is a video conference platform that is free to use through either a web browser or application, and audio participation is possible through a dial-up connection on your phone. Zoom Meeting Instructions:

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- 1) go to <http://zoom.us/join>
- 2) Enter the Meeting ID. **987 3871 7843**
- 3) Click join
- 4) Enter passcode: **418702**

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- 2) When prompted enter the Meeting ID. **987 3871 7843**
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