



THE

Highlander

May/June 2020

The Rural Bonny Doon Association Newsletter

RBDA Virtual Public Meeting **Bonny Doon Scientists Engaged in COVID-19 Testing and Developing Novel Therapies** **Drs. Jeremy Sanford & William Scott**

Wednesday, May 27, 7:30 p.m.
Zoom Video Conference Meeting

The RBDA will be hosting a virtual public meeting featuring two local scientists, Dr. Jeremy Sanford and Dr. William Scott, who are both leveraging their research labs to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr. Jeremy Sanford is a Professor of Molecular, Cellular and Developmental Biology and a member of the UC Santa Cruz Center for Molecular Biology of RNA, as well as the UC Santa Cruz Genomics Institute. His lab studies the flow of information, carried by ribonucleic acid (RNA) from our genes to proteins and how this process fails in human inherited diseases. Currently, Dr. Sanford is working on COVID-19 testing with a collaborative group of scientists and engineers from the campus and the broader community. He also coaches rugby at UCSC.



Dr. William Scott is a Professor of Chemistry and Biochemistry and a member of the UC Santa Cruz Center for Molecular Biology of RNA. His lab studies the relationship between three-dimensional structure and function of ribonucleic acid (RNA). In collaboration with fellow Bonny Doon residents Sara O'Rourke, Harry Noller and Laura Lancaster, Dr. Scott is developing ribozymes designed to specifically target SARS-CoV-2 RNA to kill the virus, a potential therapy for the treatment of COVID-19.

Please join us for this interesting discussion about COVID-19 and research being conducted locally to fight the pandemic.

Details on How to Participate in the Virtual Public Meeting

Zoom (zoom.us) is a video conferencing 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. We selected this platform based on its widespread use and ease of accessibility. For this meeting, we will be utilizing all the available security features, including password-protection and waiting rooms managed by the host.

Here are details for accessing and participating in this meeting (these can also be viewed at our website www.rbda.us):

- Send your e-mail address to board@rbda.us to receive the meeting credentials and password. Your email will not be used for any other communication and will not be shared.

- Alternatively, you can call Kendra Turk-Kubo (626.379.7232) to get on a list of participants who will receive the meeting credentials and password via phone the day of the meeting.

- If you would like to set up a private meeting with one of the board members prior to the public meeting to give the zoom platform a trial run, please contact us. We will be available to schedule these pre-meetings during the week prior to the public meeting. This will help ensure a smoother meeting for the presenters and all participants.

- Please call into the meeting between 7:10 and 7:20, so that we can begin at 7:30.

We appreciate your patience as we host our first virtual public meeting, and we look forward to "zooming" with you soon!

Permit Sought to Increase Felton Quarry Nighttime Hours

Granite Construction Co. has applied to increase the nighttime operation of its Felton Quarry at 5100 Empire Grade by an additional 80 hours per year. As congestion in Santa Cruz County has increased, local road work is increasingly scheduled at night, and the mining operation at Felton Quarry includes an asphalt plant. Granite Construction and the County of Santa Cruz Planning Department consider nighttime hauling from Felton Quarry necessary for safe and effective road repair. The State Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017 generated significant new funding for such projects.

Currently, Granite Construction operates the quarry from 6 am to 8 pm Monday-Friday. The quarry was granted an additional 20 annual hours of exception for nighttime paving projects and then 20 more annual off-hours trucking for projects approved by the County. This new permit would allow 80 off-hours of trucking in addition to those current 40 hours of exception, allowing 120 hours per year of nighttime hauling privileges. There is no limit on the number of trucks that can haul in an hour of operation.

The County of Santa Cruz has filed a Notice of Intent to Adopt a Negative Declaration for this nighttime trucking plan. A Negative Declaration means that no Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is deemed necessary. The last EIR prepared for Felton Quarry was in 1979. In 2000, another Negative Declaration was generated, and to support the Negative Declaration, an acoustic engineering consultant measured noise generated by the quarry's nighttime operations. Nighttime noise was measured at two locations: at a private residence near the quarry and at the corner of Escalona and Bay streets in Santa Cruz. No significant increase in noise pollution was found at those two locations at that time.

The approved route for Felton Quarry trucking traffic is east (downhill) on Empire Grade and then either north or south on Mission Street. When asked about this winter's noticeable increase in traffic going northwest (uphill) on Empire Grade, the County planner said that quarry traffic will vary based on fluctuations in demand. The County is responsible for monitoring quarry noise, hours, truck routes and speed.

The Felton Quarry also has an entrance in Felton at San Lorenzo Avenue, the original access route for the quarry and still one of the allowed routes under the quarry's permit, but only the Empire Grade route can be used during nighttime trucking operations. Daytime trucking routes are determined by quarry customers and the trucking company

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Public Safety Issues Facing Bonny Doon

This is an invited contribution to The Highlander by Ryan Coonerty, our Third District Supervisor. The opinions stated below are his and may not be those of the RBDA Executive Board. We hope to have Supervisor Connerty's participation when we are able to reschedule our panel discussion on the future of communications infrastructure in Bonny Doon, which was postponed due to the County's shelter in place order in March.

I was invited to provide an overview of public safety issues affecting Bonny Doon residents and what I have been doing to address those issues. You, as rural residents, are keenly aware of the growing danger of catastrophic fire and what we as a community can do to prepare. This past year I had many residents contact me for help to understand the County and State vegetation clearing policies. In response to these queries, I brought an item to the Board of Supervisors directing County Fire staff to update our County Fire code to be consistent with State fire code with regard to clearances and to provide more clarity on our rules and enforcement procedures. I will continue to work with our Cal Fire partners to encourage compliance with the code and engage in enforcement efforts where necessary in order to protect rural homes and residents.

I also heard from many residents who shared troubling accounts of their fire insurance rates doubling or tripling. Rising fire insurance rates for rural residents is a serious issue occurring statewide and many rural homeowners in other counties have completely lost their insurance. As you are most likely aware, the Board of Supervisors does not have regulatory authority over the insurance market but regardless, I wrote a letter to State Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara and asked him to do everything in his power to assist and protect Santa Cruz County residents who are at risk of losing insurance coverage, and further, I requested that he expand the moratorium on insurance non-renewals to the County of Santa Cruz to protect residents from losing their insurance. I will continue to strongly advocate to the Insurance Commissioner and our state representatives to stop the exorbitant rate increases and non-renewals for rural homeowners.

This past Fall, as you in Bonny Doon are well aware, our County was included in PG&E's Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) events. In addition to the general inconvenience of a power shutoff, the PSPS events wreaked havoc on public safety for rural residents and local communications infrastructure. In many cases the PSPS events inhibited the notification process and precluded individuals from being able to reach out for help in the event of an emergency. It is unacceptable to have a

communications blackout in the rural areas, especially during fire season. Although the Board of Supervisors has no regulatory or statutory authority over PG&E or the telecom companies, my office was in constant communication with cell providers, PG&E and our state and federal representatives advocating for the restoration of cell coverage and communication for Bonny Doon and Davenport residents. I was also in contact with the Rural Counties Representatives of California (RCRC), which is a public interest group that advocates on behalf of rural counties. I shared specific information with the RCRC received by constituents from Bonny Doon who were without communication during the PSPS events. The RCRC used these specific stories when they testified at the CPUC in November 2019 to demonstrate the danger and hardships Bonny Dooners endured during the PSPS events. I was told that your experiences had an effect on the CPUC members. It is still important for the community to weigh in with the CPUC on these issues. Please contact my office for links where you can make public comments.

Clearly, significant long-term changes are needed to improve the electrical transmission and distribution systems and communications infrastructure. I, along with San Jose Mayor Sam Liccardo and many other local elected officials in California, are pushing for a customer-owned public utility to replace PG&E. I brought a letter to the Board of Supervisors on January 14th asking that the Board endorse this proposal and it passed unanimously. Ideally, I believe a customer-owned utility that is accountable to the public along with electrical system improvements will reduce fire risk, create linkages that decrease the scope of future PSPS events, and promote local resiliency. In addition, distributed energy generation, energy storage, and microgrids may also play a complementary role in ensuring the future resiliency of rural communities.

Finally, and importantly, the telecommunications industry must invest in backup power to avoid future, widespread systems outages like those experienced in late October's PSPS events. To support this effort, under my direction, the Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to write a letter to Senator McGuire and our legislative delegations in support of SB 431 on Feb. 11. SB 431 is a bill that would require telecom companies to provide backup power to their cellular infrastructure.

I look forward to discussing these topics and the many other efforts I am working on at the County when we are able to reschedule the communication infrastructure RBDA public meeting. As always, if there is ever anything my office can assist with, please do not hesitate to call me, 454-2200.

The Homeowners Insurance Crisis

One day before insurance was due to expire this past January, RBDA Board member Martin Burmeister and his wife were shocked to learn that after 30+ years with AAA they would not be renewing the coverage on their Bonny Doon home. As some of you may know all too well, it turns out that AAA and other insurers, after years of extreme wildfires and \$24+ billion in losses, have been actively dropping clients living in high wildfire risk areas all over California. These relatively small insurance companies have a base of customers that are concentrated in California and other western states affected by wildfire and have had difficulty absorbing the losses.

In California, some 350,000 homeowners have been dropped by their insurance carriers over the last 4 years. This is irrespective of how much fireproofing people have done to their homes or how close their homes are to fire stations. The deciding factor has been whether or not the home is located in a designated high wildfire risk area, such as Bonny Doon.

To date, Burmeister has found no insurance providers willing to insure their home. Insurers are not writing new policies for homes in wildfire risk areas. However, homeowners in these areas who do have existing policies with some larger insurance carriers, such as Amica and State Farm, can expect their coverage to continue.

For Dooners who have been dropped, there appears to be only one choice for homeowner's fire insurance: the California FAIR plan. It is offered by a private insurance association that all insurers operating in the state of California must pay into. All profits and losses are shared by the association members in proportion to their market share. However, this insurance only covers a limited number of "named perils": fire, lightning,

internal explosion, smoke, and a number of other natural or manmade causes. Consequently, one needs to purchase an additional "wraparound" policy to attain full coverage. This insurance does not come cheap: the combined FAIR plan and wraparound coverage is more than double what Burmeister paid in 2019, with the FAIR plan accounting for three-quarters of the cost. To make matters worse, the FAIR plan will only accept cash payments and does not allow more than 3 payment installments. This amounts to thousands of dollars to be paid up front, a serious challenge for people with low or fixed incomes.

To resolve the fire insurance problem, State Legislators and the State Insurance Commissioner, Ricardo Lara, have been working on proposals to address this crisis. These include providing state subsidies to low-income homeowners to purchase insurance and to require insurers to renew policies within communities that have taken steps to reduce fire risks. More measures will undoubtedly be needed as extreme wildfires become the norm and insurance losses spiral.

Felton Quarry Traffic

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they employ

Due to COVID-19, there is currently no public hearing date set for this application. On January 31 the Planning Department sent notice of the initial study to all owners and occupants of property within one half-mile of the quarry and properties along the approved trucking route. Because of the delay in the hearing, comments will still be accepted. If you have questions or concerns about this notice of intent, please contact Matt Johnston at the Environmental Review staff at 831-454-5357. Documents related to this project can be found at the Santa Cruz County Planning Dept. website, sccoplanning.com.

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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 _____

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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.

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.



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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 (new web address)

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 27 Virtual Public Meeting: Local Scientists Join the Fight Against COVID-19

Bureau of Land Management Advances Coast Dairies Access Planning

Taking the next step in the process to provide access to the Cotoni-Coast Dairies (C-CD) National Monument, the federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM) recently generated a Draft Resource Management Plan Amendment with an Environmental Assessment (EA), which we detailed in the March/April Highlander. The plan as presented has raised much concern that visitation to the monument at the levels proposed by some alternatives in the EA, if not phased in, monitored, limited and carefully managed, may significantly degrade the largely unscathed ecosystem, cultural resources, and historic vistas currently preserved within C-CD.

Although public access to C-CD is called for in both the Presidential Proclamation establishing the monument as part of the National Conservation Lands System, and the deed restrictions the BLM accepted when it was given the property, such access is subordinate to the BLM's primary duty to protect the objects (animal and plant species, habitats, cultural and archeological resources) identified in Presidential Proclamation 9563. As currently written, the plan lacks the kind of studies and

baseline information essential to inform appropriately protective management decisions and enable an incremental, phased access approach like the one promised for the adjacent San Vicente Redwoods. Reflecting directives from the Trump administration, the plan proposed hunting and game enhancement on a large portion of the property, including areas close to Bonny Doon neighborhoods.

The Proclamation specifies that



Cotoni-Coast Dairies - Photo by Ted Benhari

the objects to be protected within the Monument are limited to the ecosystem and wonderful array of habitats, the numerous species that depend on those habitats, and the Native American cultural values that are present throughout the Monument (*Id.*, pp. 3-4). The only recreational objectives mentioned in the Proclamation are that visitors be enabled to experience the Monument's stands of coast redwoods and be given an enhanced opportunity for birdwatching in the area. Indeed, the EA emphasizes that "The central purpose [of the Proclamation] is clearly stated as protection of the natural, cultural, and biological resources that the C-CD lands represent."

The BLM will consider and respond to the many comments provided by local experts and in letters from the RBDA Board, the Davenport/North Coast Association and Friends of the North Coast. We expect that BLM will announce its Preferred Alternative sometime this summer, which will then be followed by a 30-day protest period.

Please see the website for Friends of the North Coast for much more information on this important local issue: friendsofthenorthcoast.org.