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GOOD DIRT

The Newsletter of the Anderson Valley Land Trust
Fall - Winter 2002

ROAD RECONSTRUCTION PROJECTS HELP NAVARRO WATERSHED, FISH HABITAT

By Pete Bates

In the 1970's, when Redwood National Park was being assembled from timber company lands, the reduction of erosion and stream siltation from former logging roads was a high priority. The Park Service and its contractor, Pacific Watershed Associates of Arcata, developed a set of techniques and standards for road construction in woodland and rural areas. These were documented in a manual now published and used by California state agencies concerned with such resource issues as watersheds, fish habitat, and timberland restoration.

The Navarro Watershed Restoration Plan, completed in 1998, identified a number of restoration projects aimed at restoring the health of the watershed and specifically improving habitat for steelhead and coho salmon. The Mendocino County Resource Conservation District applied for and received funding from the 1997 salmon and steelhead habitat restoration bill sponsored by then-State

Senator, now U.S. Congressman Mike Thompson. The initial projects include restoration and upgrading of roads in the Mill Creek basin, primarily on the Nash Ranch and Holmes Ranch subdivisions. Danny Hagan of Pacific Watershed Associates is directing the work.

The basic principle behind the new road standards is that the road should be "disconnected" from the stream channel—in other words, make the road "invisible" to the stream, by allowing the rain falling on a hillside to proceed down the slope in a manner as close as possible to the way it moved before the road was built. A supporting principle is to prevent both the

cost and the environmental damage caused by catastrophic road failures:

- Instead of sloping roads into the hillside, collecting water in a ditch and moving it under the road in culverts, gently outslope the road, so the water can flow down the hill in a sheet instead of a stream, reducing erosion.
- Provide culverts at all natural watercourses, even those that are normally dry. Size all culverts for a 100 year flood. Install culverts along the original slope of the hill to allow the water to flow as naturally as possible. At stream crossings, be sure that culverts allow upstream fish movement.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear Friends of the Anderson Valley,

The scent of fall is in the air and at the Anderson Land Trust we are planning to take advantage of the rainy and cold days ahead to complete the year's tasks. Conservation easements are the central core of our efforts to preserve the land and its resources for future generations in the Valley and most of our work centers around the development and stewardship of these easements. We have monitored our easements during the balmy days of spring and warmth of summer and now we must complete the reports and file the photos we have taken. We will also use this as an opportunity to continue to develop the conservation easements in process and plan for new ones in the coming months.

We currently have twelve easements that committed landowners have placed on their properties. They believe this is the best way for them to assure the continued health of their land and the wildlife that depend on it. We have worked carefully with each landowner to be sure that the easement meets their long-term goals of conservation while allowing them to continue to enjoy the benefits of living on their property. This is a time consuming process that doesn't stop with the signing of an easement. Every year we must visit and monitor each easement to record that the terms of the easement are being met.

While our work is largely done with landowners here in Anderson Valley, we believe that our easements benefit everyone who loves this beautiful Valley. Important watersheds, abundant wildlife habitat, timber and open space are all protected from damaging change, thus providing all of us, as well as generations to come, with the vital and healthy environment that we all cherish.

In late August we mailed an appeal letter to many of our supporters and have been most gratified by the generous response to our request for funds to help us to continue our work. If you too would like to help preserve the land for future generations here in the Valley, please use the form on the back of this newsletter to join us in our work.

Susan Addison, President

AFTER CAREER BEHIND CAMERA, NEW AVL BOARD MEMBER FOCUSES ON CONSERVATION

by Bruce Longstreet

On our front page, sharp-eyed readers of Good Dirt will notice a new name in our list of AVL Board members. Philo resident Lee Serrie, who lives with her husband Rob Guiliani on Signal Ridge, was added to AVL's now eight member Board of Directors at the August meeting. Lee has been a property owner in Anderson Valley since 1988 and a fulltime resident since 2000 after concluding a busy and productive career as a cinematographer for NBC news.

"After a very mobile career, I'm definitely interested in putting down roots", enthused AVL's newest Director. "I first saw Anderson Valley in 1967. It was beautiful then, it was beautiful in '97 and hopefully through the good efforts of the AVL and the community, we can see that it will be beautiful in 2067."

Lee's first sighting of Anderson Valley came when she was a student at Antioch College in Ohio and serving as a counselor for emotionally disturbed children at a camp at Clearwater Ranch, behind the sawmill in Philo. While actually based in Cloverdale, Lee visited the camp many times that summer and then "forgot all about the place". That is, until 1988 when, on assignment for NBC, she came to Mendocino to cover the offshore drilling controversy. "I drove past Lemons' Market, and it all came back to me," she recalls. "We bought a place here that year, and came up every weekend. In 1997 we finally began building. Rob moved here then to oversee the construction and I moved here full time in 2000."



Her career began while a student at Antioch, although it was not a part of her formal academic training which was in Chinese language and art. Lee admits to having always been "media oriented" and she was able to take part in some experimental independent filmmaking, including some work in front of the camera. She did not relish performing before the camera at all, and earned her first dollars in film work as a sound technician. At that time, career opportunities for women were fairly narrow in film and Lee did not see her avocation as a career move, "although

things were starting to change in that regard by the late 60's and early 70's. There was the beginning of the realization that 'you can do this too'." After a year in New York City she got into the IATSE, the sound engineers' union, and was then able to be hired by the networks. She took a job at NBC as a sound engineer for news stories and documentaries. She continued doing that for the next fifteen years, and became a fulltime cinematographer, a cameraperson, in 1989. "Making images has always been my interest," Serrie notes.

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A.V. HIGH SCHOOL NATIVES NURSERY PROJECT

by Sandy Bartlett

Many landowners in the Navarro river watershed are concerned about declining fish and wildlife populations and are actively working to preserve and restore native habitat. Some of those folks have extensive knowledge about restoration practices; others make their living doing restorative work. Most of us, though, are already over-committed and have little or no time to learn current bioengineering techniques or other specific 'best land management practices.' Most of us would also like to plant a few natives but aren't sure what kind are best suited to our property.

The Mendocino Natives Nursery Project at Anderson Valley High School has been helping busy landowners for the past three years. The nursery manager specializes in growing site specific native plants for Mendocino County. The nursery also offers one-day workshops with experts that address native seed collecting, planting and maintaining natives and identifying and removing invasive non-natives. If you're not sure which natives would be appropriate for your planting area, we can help with that too.

After making the decision of what to plant we are happy to assist you with propagule collection. Then we process and grow a contracted order specifically suited to your place. Most orders should be placed in the spring as collection times take place in the summer and fall. It takes a full year before your natives are ready to be planted out of doors. The best news is that once established native plants require little or no maintenance.

Mendocino Natives Nursery, under the supervision of Director Sandy Bartlett, secured a grant from the State Coastal Conservancy in 2001. And, with the assistance of Patty Madigan, Navarro Project Manager for the Mendocino County Resource Conservation District, Sandy has applied for additional funding through the Department of Fish and Game to help sustain the program and to complete the creek-side student restoration project.

If you would like to find out more please call Ken Montgomery at 895-3853 or Sandy Bartlett at 895-9033. You can also leave a message at the high school Agriculture Department at 895-2514.

ROAD RECONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

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- Hold road grades below 18%, and provide "rolling dips" every 100 to 200 feet to move water across the road without gullyng along the road. Armor the bottom of the rolling dips with rock to prevent erosion.

Work completed so far includes:

- Portions of Nash Mill Road, Little Mill Creek Road, and several other roads within the Nash Ranch
- Portions of Hungry Hollow Road
- Portions of lower Holmes Ranch Road
- Several driveways on private property on Holmes Ranch

SUDDEN OAK DEATH UPDATE

by Karen Altaras

Sudden Oak Death has continued to spread in Anderson Valley, and researchers have confirmed the coast redwood and Douglas-fir are susceptible to the *Phytophthora ramorum* microbe. At this time symptoms in those species have been found only in saplings, and scientists are not able to predict how the disease will affect full-grown trees.

SOD appears to spread more easily than most plant disease and the number of identified species susceptible to this fungus-like pathogen has steadily grown. There are currently 10 affected plant families with a total of 17 specific hosts. While infected oaks die quickly, other carriers of the disease may exhibit less severe symptoms. Most of these hosts grow in the diverse environments in Anderson Valley, including madrone, bay laurel and buckeye. There is still no effective treatment of SOD and preventing the movement of infected leaves, wood and soil will be critical to slowing the spread of this pathogen.

Promoting tree health is the best defense against a range of plant pathogens and insect pests and with oak trees you should avoid frequent irrigation, the root zone should be a zone of no disturbance, and dead and dying branches need to be pruned. Information on oak trees may be found at www.californiaoaks.org.

If you feel you may have an outbreak contact Tony Linegar of the Mendocino Agriculture Department in Ukiah at 463-4208, or email at linegart@co.mendocino.ca.us

LEE SERRIE

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And that interest is what brought Lee to the attention of the AVL. It is the Land Trust's responsibility to annually document the condition of the Conservation Easements it holds. Accurate photographic records are an important component of this process.

"Susan (Addison) asked me about a year ago for help in documenting the easements. Since then, I've taken the photographs and prepared the photo logs for just about every monitoring session." Her interest and obvious love and concern for Anderson Valley made her an ideal choice for AVL's Board. Lee says her career has conditioned her to be "used and abused" in the line of duty, and considers it an honor to help the Land Trust and is doubly honored to be asked to serve on the Board.

"After years in the private sector, it's definitely time for more community involvement. Supporting the health of our watershed is one of the best ways I can think of to spend my time."

A FALL WALK WITH THE LAND TRUST

Would you like to explore a forested piece of property that has a conservation easement on it? If so, please join us on Saturday, October 19 for a two-mile walk on a property located on the ridge above Boonville. As we walk we will point out the conservation values of the property and those features that a monitoring team would be looking at. We will be walking on a road, but some of the terrain is a bit steep so you will need sturdy shoes.

We will meet you at 9:30 AM in the parking lot beside the AVL office which is located in the brick building between Glad's and Pic & Pay. We will carpool from there. Please bring a sack lunch so we can eat and talk while overlooking Anderson Valley. We will provide juice and water. This event is for people only so we ask you to leave your dogs at home. You should be back in the parking lot by 1:30. We need to count noses so let us know you are coming by calling 895-3150.

MENDOCINO COUNTY GRADING ORDINANCE: 21 YEARS IN THE MAKING AND STILL WAITING

by Bruce Longstreet

Some people old enough to purchase alcoholic beverages hadn't been born yet when Mendocino County mandated that a grading ordinance be included in the General Plan. Passed in 1981, the General Plan mandates that the grading ordinance shall "include reasonable measures to retain and restore riparian vegetation, and protect and retain natural vegetation in or near construction or road building sites." It further provides for measures to protect and enhance fish habitat, including riparian vegetation protection and restoration, and erosion and sediment control. The mandate in the General Plan was meant to insure that environmentally sound grading practices were part of the county's future.

So when exactly *is* the future when it comes to these sound grading practices? When 1999 had rolled around and no moves had been made towards officially establishing what Mendocino County considers to be "sound grading practices", lawsuits by local conservationists and rebukes from the Grand Jury prompted the Board of Supervisors into action.

In January 2001, a new century, indeed a new millennium, arrived without a grading ordinance, but at least the Supervisors directed Planning and Building Services to establish and staff a Grading Committee. This committee was to include a cross section of agencies and organizations with an interest in erosion control. Seats on the committee were filled by the Agricultural Commissioner, the Department of Transportation, Fish and Game Department, the Farm Bureau, the U. of C. Extension Service Farm Advisor, Planning and Building Services, the Water Agency, the Mendocino Environmental Center, the Willits Environmental Center, Friends of the Garcia, Friends of the Navarro Watershed, the Mendocino County Employers Council, Mendocino Winegrowers Alliance, the North Coast Builders Exchange, a Geologist, and a Civil Engineer.

When the Grading Committee finally got down to work in April of 2001, it was estimated that their tasks could be accomplished in six to eight public meetings. As it turned out, the Committee held twenty-five public meetings over a fourteen month period ending in this past May.

So now we have a grading ordinance, right? Not quite, and it might be awhile. The most optimistic guess is that we may have a grading ordinance by Spring of 2003.

What caused the disconnect between the desire, and legal mandate, for a grading ordinance and the continued delay? Perhaps the biggest snag was over the protection of watercourses and riparian areas. Consistent scientific data was lacking, as committee members discovered a number of studies with a varying range of recommended stream setbacks. Environmental proponents wished to use the National Marine Fisheries guidelines which provides for setbacks of 100 to 300 feet, while agricultural interests argued that setbacks this deep would take too much private property out of production and development. It seemed for a moment that the committee was moving toward consensus by considering a site-specific approach, which would determine setback distances based on a property's actually existing riparian vegetation. If vegetation spanned 10 feet or 100 feet

from the stream bank, this then would be the setback zone. Since ultimately consensus could not be reached, the draft ordinance submitted to the Planning Commission offers two alternative plans for the protection of lakes and watercourses.

Another contentious issue was whether or not CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) review of grading projects was to be required. Some members were committed to requiring that agricultural grading on hill slopes, or grading activities that would move considerable volumes of material be subject to CEQA review, particularly in light of recent vineyard expansion in the County. Others felt that CEQA review was overly burdensome for agricultural landowners due to the amount of time, cost, public input and the potential for preparation of an EIR. The latter group felt that should agricultural grading require CEQA review, the landowners would more than likely subdivide the land and develop it rather than keep it in agriculture, which would be inconsistent with the agricultural land protection policies of the General Plan.

Late last year, a member submitted a proposed grading ordinance based on the vineyard ordinance of Sonoma County. This ordinance would regulate only agricultural grading, and the review process would not require CEQA oversight but would be administered by the Agricultural Commissioner. Agricultural interests found this acceptable while environmentalists found anathema a grading ordinance that would not provide environmental review for agricultural projects. The development of vineyards on steep hillsides, and subsequent sediment overload in watercourses being one of the motivating factors in the push for a county grading ordinance in the first place.

In all, the committee tabled over 40 incidental issues that could not be agreed upon to be addressed at their final meetings. In the end, they voted to pass these unresolved issues on to the Planning Commission rather than resolve them at the Committee level. Further hampering the work, this past April the Willits Environmental Center, and the Friends of the Garcia River withdrew from the committee process citing that, without environmental oversight any resulting ordinance would be worthless, and that the committee had been co-opted by the very industries it was charged to regulate. Several meetings later, the Mendocino Environmental Center also pulled its support of the committee, even though their representative continued working with the group. Still, this left environmental interests short of several votes on the committee. The MEC, and other groups, have submitted an alternative proposed grading ordinance for the Planning Commission to consider.

So wither goest the grading ordinance? The committee, in May, agreed that they could continue no further on issues where they were deadlocked, announced that their work was completed, and submitted to the Planning Commission a proposed ordinance that includes alternate proposals for several several disputed clauses and that asks the Commission to resolve the 40 issues that the committee could not come to agreement on. Now, the Planning Commission must chew on it for a while, and then submit a proposal to the Board of Supervisors who will further discuss it and ultimately vote on a final county grading ordinance. Some with informed opinions believe we won't have a grading ordinance until the spring, at the earliest.

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