



Happy New Year

January 2007

Treasurer's Report

Checking: \$ 1223.16

Savings: \$ 2357.30

Welcome! New to the neighborhood?

We invite you to join us at the FMA meeting on January 14th. Meet your neighbors, learn about the issues and how to effect change.

Please consider joining us; the sign-up form is on the back of this newsletter.

We welcome newcomers and are anxious to meet you and give you our warm Fitch Mountain greeting!

FMA Meeting: January 14th at 11 a.m.

Villa Chanticleer Annex

Guest speaker:

Don McEnhill, Russian Riverkeeper

His topic:

Santa Rosa Incremental Recycled Water Project.

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President's Report

Kate Barrett

The Association officers have been busy since their July installation. Regular officer meetings have been held dealing with several important issues facing our community.

We have been closely monitoring the proposed Santa Rosa wastewater plan as well as the SCAPOSD (Open Space District) negotiation of the existing Conservation Easement and adjoining private property on the top of Fitch Mountain.

Additionally, we have been in contact with Sonoma County Department of Transportation and Public Works regarding the on-going North Fitch Mountain Road slide area and the general poor condition of the entire roadway.

Letters have been written and phone calls placed to various persons and agencies. This newsletter summarizes these activities, and we urge your attendance at the January 14th meeting.

As many county officials view us as primarily summer residents, we will be starting a petition drive at the meeting requesting Transportation and Public Works for the required road repairs.

Importantly, the Association has made a financial donation to both the Russian River Watershed Protection Committee and The Russian RiverKeeper, as they are highly active, effective and visible organizations engaged in protecting the river.

See you on the 14th!



October 31, 2006

Supervisor Paul Kelley
Sonoma County Supervisors
575 Administration Drive
Santa Rosa, California 95403

Dear Mr. Kelley,

With the future funding of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District on the ballot, we have not anticipated a decision by the District regarding the purchase of the property on Fitch Mountain owned by FRANCEZ, LLC until after the election.

Ideally, the result of the nine months of negotiations would extend the current conservation easement to encompass the entirety of the LLC's property. In recent years we have appreciated the management of the land by the property's owners and their attorney, specifically their demonstrated consideration for those of us who live here on the mountain. The owners' perspectives regarding the importance of research, conservation, and maintenance of the mountain's environmental integrity reflects responsible stewardship.

Were the mountain property to be purchased by Open Space and turned into a public park, our concerns would swell. Increased traffic, parking issues and random trash accumulation would alter our quality of life, especially when combined with the river attraction, which is already a strain on the community during the summer months.

Certainly, the development and management of a park would necessitate close attention as any system of trails would beg for occupants of every description, potentially compromising the immediate environment. Despite our preference that the land remain in private hands, the Fitch Mountain Association stands ready to assist in whatever ways possible to uphold the integrity of this sanctuary.

Sincerely,

Kate Barrett
President

Cc: Edwin Wilson, Attorney at Law (representing FRANCEZ, LLC)
Andrea Mackenzie, SCAPOSD

FMA Members, Please Note:

The letter above was sent to Supervisor Paul Kelley on October 31, 2006. A response was not requested, and none has been received. Over the many months of political wrangling over the future of Fitch Mountain, no one except attorney Ed Wilson addressed the residents here or your representatives in the Association about our opinions or concerns. What's important to your officers and trustees is that we have clearly established our position, one that we feel is in the best interest of our mountain community and our local environment long term. We appreciate your support and welcome your opinions.

Arundo Donax: Why Should We Get Rid of Giant Reed?

Nelson Roseland, Trustee of Circuit Riders and FMA Vice President

We have again invited representatives from Circuit Riders to share a few tips about the eradication of the invasive plant Arundo. The erroneous belief that the plant is useful for bank erosion prevention is simply a myth. The agency has completed the GIS mapping of the river to identify the location of the plants. Grants will soon be available for eradication. In the meantime the presentation will feature the “dos and don’ts” of handling the plant on your own property.



Giant Reed is a Fire Hazard.

- It produces large amounts of combustible material, averaging 20 feet in height.
- It spreads quickly and resprouts rapidly after fire, while native riparian vegetation is destroyed.

Giant Reed Decreases Water Availability.

- It uses 5-10 times more water than most native riparian plants.

Giant Reed Provides No Benefits to Wildlife.

- It outcompetes native vegetation that would serve as habitat or food sources.
- It provides little shade, thus increasing water temperatures and threatening salmonid populations.

Giant Reed Destabilizes Banks.

- Its shallow roots are easily undercut by running water, causing bank failure.
- The broken root mass and stalks float downstream to colonize other areas.
- It replaces more effective stabilizers, like native cottonwoods and willows.

How Bad is this Problem?

Giant reed is spreading rapidly throughout the Russian River watershed. In 1996, giant reed had overtaken an estimated 250 acres of riparian habitat. This grew to over 300 acres by 2005. At this rate, infestation will double to 600 acres over the next forty years.



How is this Problem Being Addressed?

The Russian River Giant Reed Removal Project has piloted efforts to eradicate the invasive plant from the watershed and replace it with native species. Funded primarily by state regulatory agencies, the project has mapped the extent of the infestation, worked with landowners to identify and understand the impacts of the problem, and piloted non-toxic and least toxic removal methods to begin the eradication.

Free Removal

By participating in the project, you will receive giant reed removal from your property free of charge. If you can supply irrigation to the site, we will provide a comprehensive restoration project, complete with labor, materials, and native plants grown in Circuit Rider’s nursery. This service is estimated at \$50,000 per acre.

How to Get Involved

If your property borders the Russian River or any of the streams feeding it, or you would like to learn more about this project, please contact Circuit Rider Productions, Inc. at 707 838-6641 Ext. 227.



Camp Rose in 1907!

A Bit of

Local History

Since the early years of the 20th century Camp Rose has been a destination for swimmers and sunbathers, both locals and out-of-towners. The site is named after J.W. Rose, an attorney who, in 1905, built a road from Healdsburg to his undeveloped property on the south side of Fitch Mountain. He set up tents, built a boarding house and established a summer camp that he called Camp Rose. By 1912 Camp Rose Inn was a permanent fixture and included a store, tents, and a dance platform. The property changed hands over the years and was subdivided so that privately-owned cottages were built. However, Camp Rose continued to be enjoyed as a popular summer resort and swimming spot for many decades to come.

Researched and written by Whitney Hopkins.
www.healdsburgmuseum.org

Hazardous Road Conditions on Fitch Mountain

On November 6, 2006 we sent a letter to Dave Wallace at the Sonoma County Department of Transportation and Public Works expressing our concern about the deteriorating road conditions on Fitch Mountain and offering potential remedies for him to consider. Specific attention was given to the depressed area (the “slump”) immediately downhill from where Scenic Lane intersects with North Fitch Mountain Rd. While we await a permanent solution, blinking hazard lights would at least warn unsuspecting drivers of the danger ahead. Limiting the weight of vehicles using the road was another suggestion.

In addition, we made a plea to repaint and maintain the double solid line on the mountain road, the 25 mph markers on the pavement adjacent to the speed signs, and the same for the STOP signs. We also suggested painting SLOW on the road along the straight-aways as a reminder to drivers to maintain the speed limit.

Lastly, we urged that the county road crews who annually care for the road prior to the rainy season pay due diligence to the clearing of roadside ditches and culverts to ensure proper drainage during the winter months.

Mr. Wallace spoke with me at length following his receipt of our letter. He drove around the mountain and experienced the slump at 20 miles/hour. In the 20 years he has been with the county, he has seen no decrease in accidents based on adding flashing lights. It is his contention, based on geologist’s reports, that the slumping area is a deep, unstable slide that will no doubt keep slumping. He said the county might “shave off” the ridges where the slump begins and ends to allow for a less abrupt transition. He pointed out that there is no budget for a major fix. He believed that the slide was too deep to drive pilings and would require a larger bridge than the South Fitch one and, of course, there is no budget for that. Wallace believes that the area is not high on the list as it has traditionally been a seasonal area with rental occupancy. He was informed that the majority of residents on the mountain now are year-round renters or owners. As far as painting the speed numbers, he said there is no legal requirement and that they only do new or renewed painting of them in school zones.

Kate Barrett

SPEEDERS QUIZ

Respond at your own risk... then grade yourself (see below).

This quiz doesn't apply to me.

I drive Fitch Mountain Road and...

- I prefer the curves to the straight-aways.
- During commuter hours I try to beat my own time.
- At other times, frankly, it's... whatever.
- Getting to school on time is essential, regardless!
- If lunch breaks were longer, I wouldn't have to speed.
- I judge my speed by the flight of the ravens.
- My job justifies the speed I drive.
- Experience is essential. I've been driving this road for years and know it well.
- I'm new to the mountain. I'm just driving like the old-timers!
- I can never leave the mountain fast enough.
- It's important that I get home in a hurry, after all...
- Of course I talk on my cell when I'm driving; we all do.

I know the posted speed on the mountain is 25 mph but...

- Straight-aways are an exception.
- 25 mph is just a suggestion.
- 25 mph is the minimum.
- 25 mph is for visitors only, not residents.
- 25 is my IQ.
- There's no enforcement so who cares.

I have a deep respect for living things except...

- Deer (raccoons, opossums, etc.) have no business on the road, especially at night when I can't see 'em.
- Cats are expendable day or night.
- Children should be kept off the road at all times.
- Walkers and joggers should use the shoulders, and walk/run single file.
- Cyclists have plenty of other roads to use elsewhere.
- Cars do have the right of way!

I know about the double solid line, but...

- It's okay to cross it when no one's coming.
- It's okay to pass where the line isn't visible.
- It's okay to cross the line when the road curves.
- It's safer to drive in the middle of the road.
- Our road should be widened!
- I'd prefer a broken line all the way around.

Grading: if you have answered any of the above affirmatively, get a (new) life before you end one... or more.

Submitted by Sheila Menzies and Joe Taylor who lost their cat to a speeder this fall.



Del Rio Dam Update

After receiving input from the appropriate agencies (Water Quality Control Board, Dept. of Fish and Game, Army Corps of Engineers, etc.) the Del Rio Board directed its engineer to produce construction drawings to the level of specificity that will satisfy all the concerned agencies. Concurrently with this, the Board commissioned a law firm to conduct an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) which fulfills the requirement of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The goal is to have the drawings and EIR completed by late winter or early spring so that the agencies will have enough time to review the documents in a timely manner.

If everything goes smoothly, the District will go out to bid and, if the bids are within budget, let a contract to have the summer dam constructed before the next rainy season. The operative word is "smoothly." That is, if everything goes well, a dam will be in place for the summer of 2008.

Al Pucci, Trustee DRWPRD and FMA