

The Newsletter of the

FITCH MOUNTAIN ASSOCIATION

One mountain,  one river, one community

January 2017

Your User's Guide to What's Inside

FMA President's Message	2
FMA Mission Statement	3
FMA Leadership Roster	3
Invitation to Trustees Meetings	3
Contact Info for Some Committees	3
Fitch Mountain Preserve Update	4
Del Rio Woods	5
Emergency Preparedness Committee	6
"Septicians" Committee Report	6
Water Advisory Report	7
FMA Money and Membership	7
Road Vision Report	8
Fitch Mountain Road—A Look Back	8
The Naming of Donita Proctor Creek	9
Donita's Creek, A Photo Essay	10
Report on 2016 FMA Membership Meeting ..	12
Special Get-Togethers in 2016	13
Fitch Mountain Fun Night	14
New FMA Website	14
Events Calendar	14

Full moon lets itself
be caught in oak tree's branches
Winter offering

(EGS)

President's Message

"The new advocacy role of the FMA...caught me unawares. (...) How do the officers and Trustees actually evaluate what the Mountain thinks? Is this survey proving helpful? Appreciate being kept apprised, but note that the FMA is not a Homeowners Association in the legal sense, with regular meetings and arrived-at consensus of opinions and a 'Unified Voice.'"

"To the extent that the FMA seeks to grow into a much larger, more representative (seemingly quasi-governmental) organization, I believe it must ... become a more robustly representative, accountable, transparent organization. At present, it is simply not democratic, or open in its operation. (...) Let's talk about what measures the FMA can take to inure itself to charges of being closed, biased and undemocratic."

The first quote is a comment from the Dec. 29 e-blast survey regarding the Fitch Mountain Preserve, while the second is from a private email to me from an FMA member (but I think the member meant "avoid" instead of "inure"). I thank them both for the input; both raise valid issues that the FMA should be discussing and grappling with.

In last June's newsletter I discussed the broad range of issues that have ended up "on the FMA plate," and why. The survey respondent above is correct: An advocacy role of a sort has been forced on us by circumstances. (*But see the revised, members-approved FMA Mission Statement on page 3.*) And no, we are not a Homeowners Association with CC&Rs; we are a voluntary association of (some) home owners and residents, so that makes our status somewhat murky. Therefore, what we want the character of the FMA to be in the future, in light of the issues and challenges that we are experiencing, must be a topic of continuing discussion by the members and Trustees. Expect to see this on the agenda for discussion at the general membership meeting on July 9th.

Secondly, how effectively does the leadership represent the FMA membership? Some may contest thus, but I will answer: Quite well. Trustees and Officers have all been elected, and re-elected, by comfortable margins. We have seven very active standing committees on important issues, and all the T&Os serve on one or more of those bodies. We are all active in our FM community, in different geographical neighborhoods, and in different "sub-communities." The latest example is the e-survey of residents on the issue of the Fitch Mountain Preserve; the results overwhelmingly supported the position that the leadership has taken on this issue. I will state unequivocally, until shown evidence to the contrary, that the T&Os are totally in step with the vast majority of the FMA membership. However, I do believe that the leadership—and the membership—can and should do much better.

Regarding the leadership, we should provide more "communications channels" to the members. For example, we now encourage members to attend our bi-monthly Trustees meetings (*see page 3*), and we will propose that each committee hold at least one annual "open-to-the-members" meeting to solicit wider input. The third possibility is adding another general membership meeting (in January?), if members wish, perhaps with a different format (single topic?) from that in July. Finally, we will take online surveys on certain topics, as we did very successfully with the FM Preserve issue.

Regarding the membership, if the FMA is to avoid charges of being "closed, biased and undemocratic," then, quite frankly, the members, too, have the responsibility of MORE PARTICIPATION. You are helping FMA be more democratic, representative, and responsive if you are helping us handle fire prevention, Del Rio Woods beach, the Fitch Mountain Preserve, upcoming septic system regulations, or our water district. Those are the committees that urgently need member participation--right now. Contact the committee Chair or me (*see Contact Info on page 3*).

So, in conclusion, each hand washes the other. I can pledge that we in the leadership will strive, during this year, to make our FMA more accountable and transparent, and we, in turn, hope that the members will make the FMA activities and impact more participatory and effective. Let's hope that the June newsletter will report progress in both areas!

Yours, Dave



The Mission of the Fitch Mountain Association

- To preserve and enhance the unique nature of our locale, and to promote the safety and well-being of its residents.
- To support and cooperate closely with public and other entities that impact our lifestyle and environment.
- To encourage a sense of community and shared pride in our Fitch Mountain environment.
- To disseminate relevant information to our members and serve as a forum for exchange of ideas.

Current FMA Elected Leadership

Trustees:

Sylvia Seventy: 2011-2017; 433-2946

Pat Abercrombie: 2016-2017 (filling out a term); patabercrombie@comcast.net, 473-8217

Al Pucci: 2014-2020; apucci@gmail.com, 433-0484

Ken Hite: 2016-2020 (filling out a term): kenhite@comcast.net, (415) 516-2702

Officers:

Dave Henderson, President: 2016-2018; davehen@sonic.net, 433-1930

Kathryn Henderson, Vice-President: 2015-2017; kathrynkeg@gmail.com, 433-1930

Dana Eaton, Secretary: 2016-2018; eatondc@comcast.net, 433-4630

Marty Silge, Treasurer: 2016-2018; martinsilge@yahoo.com, 431-0814

Drop in on Your Trustees Meeting

The four FMA Trustees (currently Al Pucci, Pat Abercrombie, Ken Hite, and Sylvia Seventy), together with the President, VP, Secretary, and Treasurer, meet regularly to discuss FMA business and concerns, hear committee reports, and approve FMA activities and initiatives. You elect all eight and they represent you.

We would like to remind you that any Fitch Mountain resident is welcome to attend these meetings. To make this easier, the Secretary will henceforth e-blast the meeting date, place, and agenda 2 weeks ahead of time, so those who wish to attend may do so. (Space is limited, though, since we meet at the homes of the T&Os—does anyone know how/where FMA can get a clubhouse/meeting center?!). As with most meetings of elected organization leaders, you are welcome to make brief comments at the beginning of the meeting, or during the meeting regarding a particular item on the agenda. If you would like to propose a topic for discussion/action by the T&Os, please communicate with the President at least 4 weeks before the meeting.

The T&Os have been meeting quarterly, but starting in 2017, because of “all that is happening on our mountain,” they will begin meeting every other month. It’s a heavy load! But the per-meeting remuneration will remain the same—one roll and a cup of coffee. Meetings are on the second Sunday of every other month, starting on Feb. 12, from 10.00 am to noon. The notice on Jan. 29 will indicate where the meeting will be held.

Some Contact Info for Expediting Participation

FMA President Dave Henderson: davehen@sonic.net

Del Rio Woods Committee Chair Pat Abercrombie: patabercrombie@comcast.net

Fire Prevention Committee Chair Ken Hite: kenhite@comcast.net

Fitch Mountain Preserve Committee Chair Kate Symonds: *see page 5*

Fitch Mountain Water District Committee Chair Donita Proctor: donitaproctor@gmail.com

Wastewater Systems Committee (The Septicians) Chair Dave Henderson: *see above*

Fitch Mountain Preserve Update *by Kate Symonds*

The City of Healdsburg (City) continues to make progress on its Draft Management Plan for the Fitch Mountain Park and Open Space Preserve (Plan), and the FMA continues to be closely engaged with the planning process. We appreciate the City's Community Services staff reaching out to us to obtain and consider our input, and we have seen many areas of the Plan reflect our recommendations (see FMA letter to City, dated March 16, 2016, on the FMA website). The process has been moving steadily, but some of that movement has frankly turned downward recently. Since our June 2016 newsletter update, the City released its Draft Plan in early November 2016, and we were pleased overall with the content. However, mountain biking advocates showed up in force at the first public meeting on the Plan on November 15, 2016, and also a week later at the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting. The City responded by revising the Draft Plan in December to include mountain biking. In regard to this issue we were outgunned, so to speak, and we went along with the bikers' arguments that the terrain is self-limiting so it will remain low use by bikers and that bikers will help manage and resolve any impacts. We hope that will be true. Furthermore, we felt that enforced speed limits and trail rules for bikers that are safe for all users and that also protect the trails, soil, wildlife, and plants would address the majority of our concerns. We hope this is reflected in the next Plan revision.

The revised Draft Plan contained another surprise: Without prior discussion or announcement, the City had added a second "Park Improvement Area" at the summit of Fitch Mountain (PIA2). A first PIA had already been included within Villa Chanticleer Park. According to the County of Sonoma Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District's Conservation Easement for Fitch Mountain (which sets limits on allowable activities and uses in the Preserve), special event gatherings of up to 50 people can occur without limit on frequency within a PIA, and up to twelve gatherings annually for up to 150 people! These can include weddings and fundraisers. Group camping of up to 25 could occur in the Summit PIA. These special uses were never discussed in any of our conversations with the City, at the Focus Group meetings, or publically. While the 2014 Conservation Easement disappointingly allows this level of use, it is in the City's purview to restrict itself from full utilization. We are advocating they do so by eliminating the Summit PIA, for multiple reasons (loss of serenity at summit, impacts to natural resources, vehicle access up Hilltop, restrooms, etc.), which we see in contradiction to the purposes for which the Preserve was established.

We alerted our members of the Summit PIA via the eblast list, and many of you sent wonderful, articulate emails to the City opposing the use of the summit for such gatherings. Although the City made a quick change to accommodate the mountain bikers, the City appears to be steadfast in its commitment to a Summit PIA despite all the opposition they've received to date. To better gauge the sentiment for uses of the Preserve and what role the FMA should have, the FMA sent out an online survey to our eblast list (240+ addresses) about what you want for the Preserve. In a few days, almost 80 of you responded, which is a very good response rate. We learned that 88% of the survey respondents oppose using the summit for special event gatherings and 82% felt that an advocacy role (not just informational) was appropriate for the FMA. Full survey results are found at <http://fitchmtn.org/files/2017-01-03Surveyand77responses.pdf>. Interesting read! We thank all of you who responded and wrote emails and we hope you continue to make your voices heard at City Hall! As a side note, despite the FMA asking the City multiple times to at least post notices of availability of the Draft Plan at all the Preserve entrances so all users can be better informed of what's going on, they declared they will not. So we have taken it upon ourselves to hand out flyers to hikers, many of whom are from the City of Healdsburg and were not aware of the Draft Plan, much less the proposed Summit PIA. Pass on the word about the Plan! Mountain hikers we contacted were unanimously opposed to the notion of special event gatherings at the summit. Despite that, this remains an uphill battle, no pun intended!

[Continued on next page]

[Fitch Mountain Preserve Update *continued*]

Upcoming steps and important dates: At FMA’s urging, the City will hold a public meeting on **January 24 at 6 PM** at the Healdsburg Community Center to describe the additions in the December version of the Plan and receive public input, especially on the very controversial Summit PIA. **We strongly encourage you to attend and speak up and bring your City of Healdsburg friends**, as the City has apparently only heard from Fitch Mountain people. They will have card stock for you to write your comments on, and they said this is more effective than “form” emails. The City officials need to directly hear for themselves what you think of the Draft Plan. On **Feb. 8 at 6 PM**, the Draft Plan then goes before the Healdsburg Parks and Recreation Commission (we hope it will have been revised to exclude the Summit PIA) for recommendation, and then on **February 20 at 6 PM**, it goes to the City Council for approval. (Changes are possible at this level too, so please show up, write your comments, etc.). We’ll send reminder eblasts and notify you of any schedule changes.

The FMA will stay engaged throughout the City’s planning process for the Preserve and we do envision a positive role in future stewardship activities. If you’d like to have more information or want to get involved, **contact Kate Symonds at kate “at” terraserve.net** or Dave Henderson at davehen “at” sonic.net.

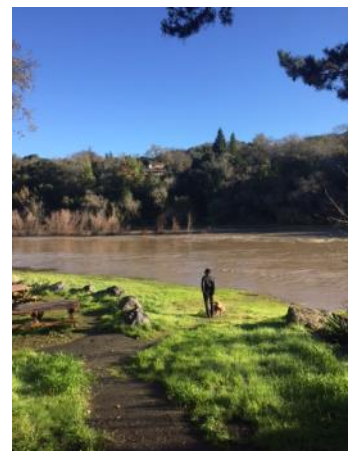
Del Rio Woods, by Pat Abercrombie

Your Del Rio Woods Committee continues to meet regularly with Sonoma County Regional Parks (SCRIP). The focus recently has been reviewing and providing input on the Preliminary Draft Improvement Plan for the site. This project will include significant work to bring the park into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as well as other enhancements to improve the layout and safety of the parking lot, picnic area, and pathways. The SCRIP design team will incorporate our committee’s input along with refinements from other planning groups within their sphere. A public meeting will be scheduled in March or April to present their plan and seek input from the public. The Del Rio Committee and FMA will make sure to broadcast the meeting particulars to the FMA community as soon as it is set.

Highlights of the changes in store for Del Rio Woods:

- Replacement of the chain link fence along Del Rio Woods Road with a more attractive split-rail wooden fence.
- Removal of the old shed.
- Reorientation of the parking lot to a one-way design. The entry will remain where it is at the south end and the exit will be at the other end of the lot so drivers there will have less jockeying around to do resulting in fewer dings and scrapes. The parking spaces will be realigned a bit, with a net addition of one space (total = 21).
- The porta-potty will be moved near the park info sign under the trees at the top of the stairway and a hand-washing station added.
- The picnic area will be enlarged to accommodate a total of six new redwood tables and a drinking fountain/jug-filling station. If all goes well, the old tables will be recycled to make a couple of Adirondack-style chairs to be placed on a small seating area downslope on a new ADA-compliant switchback path to the grassy area below.
- The large boulders situated throughout the current layout will be repurposed to form better-defined boundaries for the picnic area and the pathways below.
- A few benches will be installed in various locations around the site.
- The parking lot will have two gates allowing for closure to cars between sunset and sunrise, as is the practice now.

It is anticipated that work will begin in the Fall; however, funding has not yet been fully identified.



News from the Emergency Preparedness Committee (EPC)

Priscilla Abercrombie

We have a few new projects to report on. First, we are very excited that the FMA is part of a grant that was funded to develop a **Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)** for Fitch Mountain. It is a 2-year project beginning in March that will be administered by Fire Safe Sonoma. The aim is to create a data-driven, sophisticated picture of our risk for fire and develop a long-term strategic plan to lessen fire danger based upon the data collected. We will have the assistance of County experts, a certified forester, and fire-modeling computer experts. We look forward to sharing more details of the CWPP in the next few months. **As a condition of the grant, the FMA has promised 100 hours of our community's time, so we need your involvement!** Committee Chair Ken Hite is standing by for YOU to express your interest. You can reach him at kenhite@comcast.net.

In addition, the **EPC will be implementing the COPE program (Citizens Organized to Prepare for Emergencies)** in the coming year. The community of Oakmont developed the program because of their high risk for fire and other disasters. The purpose is to help us all become well prepared to respond to and recover from emergency situations. It involves developing individual response plans, maintaining individual emergency supply kits, and outreaching to the community. We have established eight neighborhoods on the mountain and someone has stepped forward to be a neighborhood captain for each of them. The captains will be meeting very soon, and you'll be hearing from them shortly after that. They will be collecting information from you (e.g., emergency contact info, location of gas line shut off, etc.) and offering you information about emergency preparedness. We are looking forward to getting this project off the ground and hope that you will be involved.

Speaking of information about emergency preparedness, **our new FMA website has a great deal of valuable emergency preparedness information** that we have acquired from Fire Free Fitch—check it out! (*See page 14.*) Also, be sure to **sign up for SoCo Alert** so that you can get local emergency alerts (<http://sonomacounty.ca.gov/FES/Emergency-Management/SoCoAlert>). As you know, communication is key in an emergency, and this is the best way for you to get the news of a fire or other disaster on the mountain.

The Never-Ending Septic System Saga

Where does it all go? “Fitch Mountain Wastewater and Impairment of the Russian River” was the title of a FM community meeting held at Healdsburg's Tayman Golf Course on Sat. Nov. 19, 2016, which attracted about 85 residents. With Supervisor James Gore presiding, Charles Reid and Matt. St. John of the North Coast Water Quality Control Board gave a presentation on the State-mandated Action Plan to establish maximum pathogen limits (TMDL) in the Russian River to attain minimum recreational water standards. The final standards will be released in early 2017, followed by public workshops, in which the FMA will participate.

Tennis Wick and Nathan Quarles of the County Permit and Resource Management (PRMD) then presented the County's current policies regarding septic systems and permitting. PRMD will eventually (read, a number of years from now) formulate new septic system regulations aimed at meeting the State's TMDL requirements. We are grateful for these experts' presentations, and will welcome them back in the future to report on developments.

Your FMA Septicians Committee currently consists of Chair Dave Henderson, Al Pucci, Don Dana, Michael Swicegood, Rick Kolb, and Joe Trouette. We met on Jan. 6 with the OWTS Residents of the Russian River (OWTS-RRR) group, which we helped found; it pulls together representatives of the communities along the banks of the lower Russian River who rely on septic systems. The group discussed numerous issues of common interest, including the near impossibility for many property owners to upgrade their systems, the need for considerable financial assistance, and the desirability of working together for maximum political effectiveness. We are hoping that supervisors James Gore (our 4th District) and Lynda Hopkins (5th District) will fold us into an official Community Advisory Commission (CAC) that can act as a stakeholder and participant in the lengthy, complex, and extremely important process.

FMA members, this matter is obviously of extreme importance to our community, and the Septicians Committee desperately needs more members! You do not have to be an expert, just willing to study and learn with us. Please contact Dave ASAP!

CSA41-Fitch Mt. Water Advisory Report By Donita Proctor

Your committee members, Dave Henderson, Susan Steinman, Pat Abercrombie, and I, bid goodbye to former member Dennis Byrne in August. Mr. Byrne's legal practice made it difficult to continue with our meetings with the county. We thanked him for his service and his willingness to give legal advice when needed. When you see him at FMA meetings, please extend your appreciation.

The NBS (National Bureau of Statistics) study of new rates for CSA41-Fitch was presented at a public meeting in Healdsburg in June that was attended by 11 customers of the system. In September the Board of Supervisors (BOS) adopted the rates as voted upon by the customers in the June meeting. The BOS hearing was attended by 3 water customers and produced 17 written protests of the recommended rates.

A customer contacted the committee in protest after experiencing October 2016 billing that implemented the 100% rate increase for 1-inch meters. After this initial jump, the increase will be 4% annually. The committee assumed that most of the system clients were using 5/8" meters. There are seven users with 1" meters. We contacted Johannes Hoevertsz, Deputy Director Sonoma County Transportation and Public Works, for an explanation to pass on to our system users. The following was provided:

"The new meter rates were established based on a cost of service analysis. The cost of service analysis allocates system costs based on capacity of the meter and the actual water usage. Since the 1 inch meter can draw more water than the 5/8 meter (i.e., gallons per second) and therefore causes more wear on the system, the 1 inch meter received a greater cost allocation than the 5/8 meter. This results in a higher fixed monthly rate. A 5/8 inch meter is the base meter size that the rates are based on; using AWWA hydraulic capacity industry standards as a reference, a 1 inch meter has an equivalency of 2.50 when compared to a 5/8 inch meter."

We will be discussing the correlation of the meter size and the monthly usage reports received by the committee at the next advisory meeting. We are able to reduce rates with justification but unable to raise them without following Prop. 218 procedures.

Capital Improvements: Our system is now 28 years past the last rehabilitation. Russian River Utility developed a list of improvements that need to be addressed. The new rates will enable the funding for these projects at the end of 5 years.

We asked RRU to give us a tour of the current facilities and provide information about the improvements needed. Touring the facilities, water tanks, telemetry stations, and pumps gave the members a better understanding of the status of needed equipment improvement as well as the complete layout of the system. The photo below was taken on this tour. The personnel in the picture know the system like the backs of their hands.



Left to right: Jamie Dunton, President Robert Sherod, and Greg Passalacqua, Russian River Utilities; Pat Abercrombie and Dave Henderson, FMA. Photo by Donita Proctor.

FMA Money and Membership

The FMA has \$7661 in its accounts (\$1528 in checking and \$6133 in savings [petty cash was moved to savings]) as of 12/31/16. The previously reported all-accounts total was \$4390 as of 5/1/16.

We currently have 115 paid members representing 98 households, an increase of 24 memberships and 26 households from the previous year. We have 129 people on the membership email list.

The FMA membership year goes from July through June. Renewals/signups for voting memberships will be solicited for the annual meeting on July 9, 2017. At this point there is no provision in the by-laws for half-year \$10 memberships, but donations can be mailed at any time to the Fitch Mountain Association, P.O. Box 1233, Healdsburg, CA 95448. FMA is a registered nonprofit organization.

Fitch Mountain Road Vision Process Continues

You may recall that the June 2016 newsletter had an article about the embryonic Fitch Mountain Road Vision, requested of us by Supervisor James Gore. The process and schedule it announced were wildly unrealistic. Since then we've made a lot of progress, including forming—what else?—a committee, composed of a good cross-section of the mountain: Al Pucci, Pat Abercrombie, Kathryn Henderson, Denise Sanders, Steve Johnson, Dee McGuffey, Dana Eaton, Gerda Englebart, Barbara Recchia, Mark Tietz, and Scott Pitts. We are putting together an overall Road Vision document, now in its 12th version, as well as a 7-page “Walking Notes” map that lists, by post-mile, PG&E pole, and street addresses, anything that poses a problem on North and South Fitch Mountain roads for vehicles, walkers, etc., including drainage problems (lots!), landslips (three), pavement condition (mostly bad), invasive vegetation and over-hanging branches, and narrow, dangerous stretches, et cetera.

The latest activity was a very useful 3-hour “boots on the road” walk, on January 6, with Sonoma County Transportation and Public Works (TPW) Deputy Director John McCarthy and his Traffic Engineer, Andrew Manalastas, who took copious notes. Both were very encouraging, and are really determined to help us. Thank you, County!

What's next? A couple of meetings with TPW to review their recommendations, feasible projects, proposed budget, timetable, etc.; a meeting or two with the fire departments and emergency services; and—finally!—a FM community-wide meeting so that we can present the Committee's draft and get everyone's input, before sending the “Vision” to Supervisor Gore.

Stay with us—a better road is coming!



Fitch Mountain Road—A Look Back

As your Road Vision Committee complies with Supervisor James Gore's request to come up with a master plan for our road, it is good to take a look back at history. This article from the Healdsburg Tribune was published June 3, 1949. (The Del Rio Woods Homeowners Association disbanded and later became the FMA with the Camp Rose Conservation Club.)

Del Rio Woods Group Asks for Better Road Maintenance

Del Rio Woods home owners gathered on the grounds of the Palomar Monday noon of this week for their annual association meeting and launched a program which they hope will result in better maintenance of county roads in the area. The group maintained that the roads in the area, and in particular Riverview Drive and Orchard Road, were in a deplorable condition and a disgrace to the area.

Presiding officer of the group, president Angelo Daneri, sought to temper the feelings of the members present by calling on Supervisor Joe Cox for an explanation of the condition of the roads. Cox said the county was not responsible for roads having less than a 40-foot right of way. Property owner James Johnson countered with the fact that Spring Street and other roads not having a 40-foot right of way were being maintained by the county. Mrs. Lincoln Johnson, resident of the area, recounted how the county agreed to install two culverts if she would purchase them. She said she supplied the culverts, but that they were still alongside the road not installed.

A motion was made by Frank Byington requesting Supervisor Cox to investigate the road situation and inform the group what steps should be taken to get action on maintenance work. Mrs. Lincoln Johnson, Frank Byington, and James Johnson were appointed as a committee to work with Cox on the problem.

[Continued on next page]

[Del Rio Woods Group Asks for Better Road Maintenance (in 1949) *continued*]

Constable protection was also on the agenda. Cox suggested the group contact Gino Stefani, township constable, for details about the extent of his duties. A member present said “no dumping” signs were repeatedly torn down and claimed the dumping of rubbish along Fitch Mountain roads has become a nuisance.

Speed limit signs were requested by the group, and it was learned steps are being taken to have roads marked by name plates and lots and homes numbered.

Glen Higgenbothan reminded area home owners that a signed petition for natural gas is the only medium the P. G. & E. Company recognizes, and the more signed applications for gas the company receives, the sooner natural gas pipes would be installed around the mountain. Higgenbothan said he would have application forms at the Del Rio Woods store for anyone interested in natural gas service.

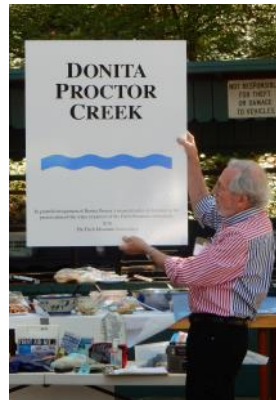
The annual Fourth of July celebration at Del Rio Woods will be the biggest ever staged, the chairman for this year’s activities said. Committee members are working hard to complete all plans to ensure the success of the event, he said.

Source: California Digital Newspaper Collection; researched by Donita Proctor.

Giving a Creek an Honored Name

In its periodic reports on stream monitoring, the North Coast Water Quality Control Board has referred to “an un-named creek on Fitch Mountain.” This is the creek that begins near the big redwood water tank at the Villa and joins the Russian River near the north end of Redwood Drive.

The creek is no longer un-named. The leaders of FMA decided to give it a worthy moniker, and (with a *nihil obstat* / “nothing hinders” nod from the County) at the annual membership meeting in July two signs were unveiled, to prolonged applause from those present.



At the bottom the signs proclaim:

In grateful recognition for the many decades of devotion by Donita Proctor to the preservation of the water resources of the Fitch Mountain community. The Fitch Mountain Association. 2016.

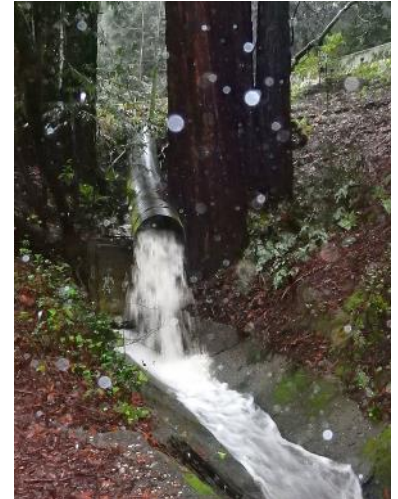
Donita has served for many years as the 4th District Supervisor’s designated ombudsman for our CSA41-FM Water District. She has been both our eloquent historian and tenacious advocate. Our water system—and our rates!—would not be in the good shape they are without Donita.

The signs were mounted in September on either side of the creek on North Fitch Mountain Road. (Thank you, Rick Kolbe.)

[See the next page for pictures of Donita’s creek as it makes its way to the river.]

Donita Proctor Creek — From Mountain Origin to River Destiny

The Creek descends shyly from her birth-place close to the water tank by the Villa, seen only by hikers until she crosses under North Fitch Mt. Rd. at the curve by the tall redwood tree and the C-wall.



She usually chooses her own decorous way under the road, but on a very wet day (*above right, with raindrops on the lens*) she powers exuberantly through the metal culvert onto the Silges' property.

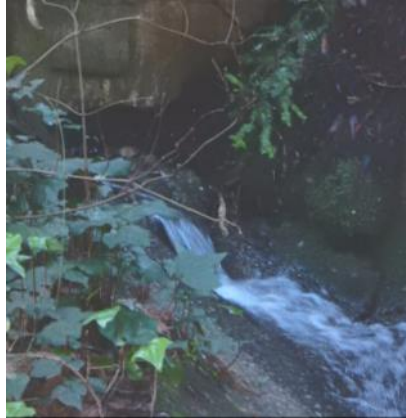


As she passes through she checks out the river rock stonework from the 1940s as well as the erosion-fighting boulders installed in the late 1980s to slow her down.



On Jan. 8, 2017, she thumbed her nose at the intended impediments.

Freed from the confines of 1940s concrete, she begins a steep but private descent through Eldon and Toni's property toward her goal, showing herself briefly at the hill side of Redwood Drive before plunging into a culvert under the road to burst forth onto the stairway path to the River.



FINALLY!

Summary of the 2016 Annual Membership Meeting

It seems eons ago that we had our 2016 FMA General Membership Meeting, but a brief recap is in order for those unable to attend (although the minutes were e-blasted soon afterward). By the way, **save the date for the 2017 meeting—Sunday, July 9**, noon to 4:00 pm, outdoors at the Villa Chanticleer, as usual. Note that this is the second Sunday in July rather than the Sunday closest to the Fourth of July, due to a member-approved change in by-laws several years ago.

Sixty of us enjoyed a relaxed, neighborly, informational, collegial, and decisional meeting!

- After our BBQ lunch, Priscilla Abercrombie led us in a fun activity in which we each introduced ourselves, stated how long we'd been on the mountain, and what was our favorite aspect of "FM life."
- Sonoma County Fire and Emergency Services Chief James Williams explained how the just-approved Fire Fuels Abatement Ordinance will work, with the first property inspections probably occurring in April 2017.
- Priscilla and Ginger Hobart, who are spearheading our Emergency Preparedness efforts, demonstrated what an emergency "grab bag" should contain and distributed FM maps so we could define our own neighborhoods, a step toward organizing neighborhood emergency response.
- All candidates nominated were elected (or re-elected): Ken Hite and Pat Abercrombie to Trusteeships, Dave Henderson as President, Marty Silge as Treasurer, and Dana Eaton as Secretary.
- The updated Mission Statement was approved, with only four Nay votes.
- The idea was floated of two signs introducing "the historic Fitch Mountain area," to be installed on Powell St. and near the golf course on SFM Rd. A show of hands revealed that a majority of the members present did not favor the concept.
- We awarded the 2016 FMA Community Service Award to Laura Tietz for her many years of generous efforts, through her founding and guiding the Fire Free Fitch organization, in improving fire safety on Fitch Mountain. Laura then surprised us by presenting the FMA with a check for \$5,000, which will be earmarked for fire prevention-related initiatives. **Thank you, Laura!**
- Signage proclaiming a hitherto un-named mountain creek as "Donita Proctor Creek" was unveiled, to prolonged applause. (*See details on page 9.*)
- Vern Losh, of the Kiwanis, introduced the Gutbuster Run, a benefit for stomach-cancer research, with runners going up over FM, not just around it. (The race took place in November and was a great success. Watch for the 2017 edition.)
- Kate Symonds, with Mark Themig of the City of Healdsburg, presented an overview of the current and near-future planning process for the FM Preserve.
- Finally, three discussion groups gave members a chance to give individual input re Del Rio Woods, the Fitch Mountain Summit Preserve, and Emergency Preparedness and Fire Prevention.



[More photos from the Annual Meeting on the next page]





More photos from last July's meeting



Special Get-Togethers in 2016

Last year we tried two new things within the FMA organization to help neighbors and members get to know each other—Saturday night mixers and a Volunteer Appreciation Dinner. We're sure to continue both of them in the new year!

Mixers: Our first mixer was held August 3rd and the second on October 1st. Both were held at the Del Rio Woods (now the DRW County Park) in the evening. It's a great place for get-togethers—picnic benches, centrally located for all Mountain residents with parking, and a wonderful view of the river. Everyone brought something to eat and share (from chicken to chili), and some brought wine. FMA supplied sparkling water and other non-alcoholic drinks, tablecloths, and table service. It was easy for everyone! We will be having mixers again this spring when the weather gets nicer and the days are longer.

Volunteer Appreciation Dinner: FMA held its first Volunteer Appreciation Dinner at Del Rio Woods on Sunday Sept. 18th in the early evening to honor the many people who put in countless hours to make FMA a better organization and our community a better place to live. Committee volunteers, board members, and others who have served FMA, as well as their spouses, were invited to attend. The evening kicked off with appetizers, followed by chicken, broccoli, and whipped potatoes, and ending with pumpkin pie. Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves, and we'll be holding the Second Annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner on September 17th. Mark your calendars, volunteers!

—Kathryn Henderson

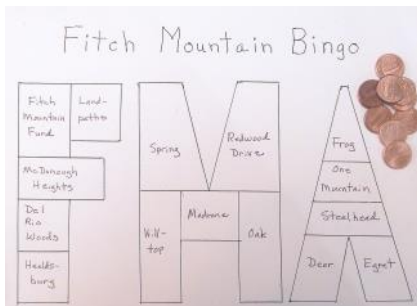


Come One, Come ALL to an Evening of Fitch Mountain Fun!

The Third Annual Fitch Mountain Fun Night will take place at the Villa Chanticleer Annex on Sunday January 29th from 6:00 to 8:00 pm. Although sponsored by FMA, as in other years the event is open to the whole community. Mountain residents, “flatlander” friends, members of FMA and non-members—all are welcome. There is no charge, although donations toward the cost of the Annex rental will be gratefully accepted.

A little differently than before, this time **the dinner is potluck**, and the cooking competition will be a cake bake-off. The after-dinner entertainment is again Fitch Mountain Bingo, with our unique cards and a variety of “white elephant” gifts and local merchant certificates as prizes for “letter bingos” and blackouts.

FMA will provide beverages and paper plates, etc. Your potluck contribution can be a main dish, a salad or veggie, bread or chips, or fruit. The dessert will be cake!



We need some helpers ahead of the event to spread the word and gather prizes, and on the 29th, anyone who wants to help with set up at 5:00 o'clock or clean up at 8:00 is welcome to pitch in! Please let Ellen know (at 431-0814 or ellensilge@yahoo.com) if you want to be part of the Fun Team. (We're not an official committee—just Mountain folks who pitch in when needed.) Also contact Ellen if you want more information, especially about how to enter the cake bake-off. And call or e-mail by Wednesday Jan. 25 to tell us that you are coming (and what you're thinking of bringing), so we have an idea about our logistical needs.

This is a chance to catch up on old friendships and make new ones while enjoying some sparkle in the gloom of winter. Don't miss it!



Jan 24 (Tues): City of Healdsburg public meeting for input on Fitch Mountain Preserve Plan, 6 p.m. at the Healdsburg Community Center

Jan 29 (Sun): Fitch Mountain Fun Night, 6:00-8:00 p.m. at the Villa Annex

July 9 (Sun): FMA Annual BBQ and Meeting, noon to 4:00 at the Villa picnic area

Sept 17 (Sun): Second Annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner, in the evening at Del Rio Woods Park



FitchMtn.org

A New FMA Website

Charles “Chuck” Eaton has picked up the reins of the FMA website. We no longer need the advertising connected with the former site, and a new domain, FitchMtn.org, has been created for our organizational presence on the net. The new pages carry most of the content from the previous website plus relevant sections from the former FireFreeFitch.org site. The FFF info can be accessed via the Fire Safety link on the FitchMtn.org Home page. Included is information on how to get reflective signs and borrow broom wrenches. Chuck hopes to get more current information onto the site and relies on others to provide or suggest additions and improvements. You can send your feedback and ideas to him via the webmaster@FitchMtn.org email address. Be sure to visit and bookmark the new FMA URL, <http://FitchMtn.org/>.