

The Newsletter of the



January 2018

President's Message

In the President's Message in previous newsletters, I have written at length about the many issues confronting our Fitch Mountain community and of the FMA's responsibilities in those areas. This time I will address only one issue, and I will be uncharacteristically brief.

At this juncture, after the recent firestorms that ravaged the surrounding communities and struck our friends and family members there so hard, we all know the prime issue that confronts us. Our Fitch Mountain community was spared, but the fires will come for us. (Indeed, there were three fires on Fitch Mountain in 2017 that, under slightly different weather conditions, could easily have spread much wider.) And let's be frank: We all know that we are not prepared.

I promise, then, that in the remaining months of my term as President, I will push as hard as I can to ensure that the FMA works with the County and its members, and with the residents of the areas around us to:

- Create comprehensive, realistic fire-risk reduction programs that will be effective in both the near- and long-term;
- Design a comprehensive evacuation plan that will address various emergency situations;
- Complete the already well-launched COPE program (Communities Organized for Preparation for Emergencies) with its corps of very dedicated neighborhood captains.

I earnestly hope that the FMA can rely on every one of you, since our community is only as fire-safe as each member in it—our safety lies in the hands of every person reading this newsletter.

Yours, Dave Henderson



Jan 28th FUN Night!

“Fitch Mountaineers” will gather **at the Villa Chanticleer Annex on Sunday Jan. 28th from 7:00 to 9:00 pm** for the FMA’s fourth annual “Fun Night.”

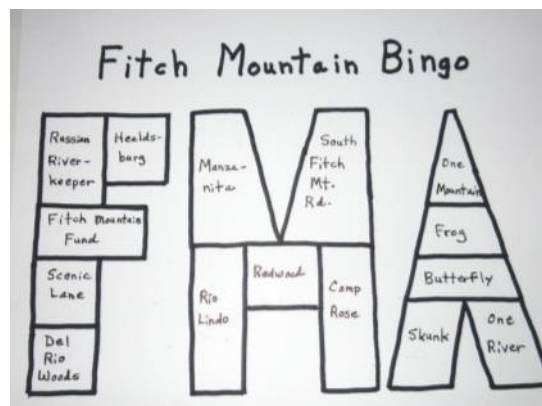
This casual, **family-friendly** event (bring the grandkids!) is **open to all**, whether FMA members or not, and it’s **free** (although donations toward the Annex rental cost are welcome). It’s a chance to get some information about safety on the Mountain, interact with friends and meet new ones, and enjoy some unique games and activities.

There’s not a meal this year, so eat dinner first, but skip dessert, and **bring 2-3 dozen cookies** for exchanging and munching on during the course of the evening. The activities will again include F-M-A Bingo, and you are invited to contribute **“white elephant” donations for prizes**—modest items for “letter” bingos and maybe one larger prize from your neighborhood for “blackouts,” remembering that we hope to have some youngsters in attendance.

You don’t have to reserve a spot, but it would be useful if you’d let me know you plan to come, and I’d be delighted if you tell me you can help with set-up at 6:30 that night! You can reach me at EllenSilge@yahoo.com or by calling 431-0814. One way everyone can help out, even if for some unfortunate reason you can’t attend the Fun Night yourself, is to spread the word about it, especially to newcomers to the Mountain.

I hope to see you on January 28th—it’ll be fun!

Yours, Ellen Silge



What Is the FMA?

With the number of paid members up to an all-time high of 118, and with 278 on our e-blast list, it seems a good moment to review what the FMA is—and is not.

Appreciating the unique situation and needs of the Fitch Mountain community, in 1979 a group of homeowners and other residents living in the unincorporated area of Sonoma County on the lower slopes of Fitch Mountain between the eastern border of the city of Healdsburg and the Russian River established the Fitch Mountain Association. The FMA is a California-registered 501(c)(3) non-profit. It is not an official homeowners' association (HOA), nor does it have enforceable CC&Rs; it has no legal powers whatsoever over its members. Rather, it has always been a purely voluntary association dedicated to the welfare of its members and their community, whose interests and views it strives to represent. Its official mission, formally approved by the membership, is to:

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

The FMA, because of the breadth and nature of the issues characterizing the Fitch Mountain area, interacts with various Sonoma County agencies, departments, and officials, including the Fourth District Supervisor. In those interactions the Association strives to vigorously represent the views and interests of its members, as determined by its elected Board of Trustees, by an annual Membership Meeting, and by periodic online surveys and community meetings. It realizes that its advocacy is purely advisory in nature.

Some residents think the FMS is too “advocacy-driven”; others urge us to be even more proactive. What we try to do is respond to real issues confronting our community, and to fairly represent what we believe to be the majority in our community. We rely on YOU to help us do that—watch for more online surveys!

Del Rio Woods

The Del Rio Woods Park improvement project, including some ADA accommodations, was scheduled for this winter. Work on the project began on October 30th and almost immediately ran into rain delays. After some initial demolition and replacement of the water line across the parking lot, the construction crew was diverted to help with fire clean-up. Work at Del Rio began again on December 12th. At the time of this writing the project is expected to be completed in January barring any further weather delays. The final step, the parking lot resealing and striping, requires dry pavement. If the necessary conditions don't present themselves, the paving may be postponed until spring. If this gap will be more than a week or so, Sonoma County Regional Parks will reopen Del Rio and then close it for a couple days in April/May to finish the resurfacing. More information is available at the Regional Parks website (<http://sonomacounty.ca.gov/Parks/Planning/Del-Rio-Woods>). As always, questions or comments can be directed to: patabercrombie@comcast.net

Lessons from the Fires

The recent Tubbs and Pocket fires that came close to Fitch Mountain in late summer brought home the importance of being prepared for fires and other emergencies here on Fitch Mountain. We know the risk for fire is very high here, and it is further complicated by roads that are difficult for emergency vehicles to access, and few options for evacuation.

Please be sure to take the opportunity to participate in the COPE (Community Organized for Emergency Preparedness) program. It is a great way to connect with your neighbors and to learn more about emergency preparedness. For those of you who do not live on the Mountain, it may be your neighbors who can help save your house and keep you informed. The COPE census form that the Neighborhood Captains use to gather information can be found at the link below or on our FMA website [*see below*]. Please participate by filling out the form and returning it to: FMA, PO Box 1233, Healdsburg CA 95448. It will go to the COPE captain in your own neighborhood. [We still need a captain for South Fitch Mountain Road. Do you know anyone? Please send her/him/them our way!]

Those affected by the fires are still in our hearts and prayers as we go into the New Year. Let's learn from their experiences and do what we can to be prepared here on Fitch Mountain.

Priscilla Abercrombie (pdanp@comcast.net) and Ginger Hobart (ginger@sonic.net), COPE Co-Chairs

Fire Prevention Activities

Fire Safe Sonoma, with the cooperation of FMA, is working with the Fitch Mountain community to develop a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). The purpose of the CWPP is to identify fire threats in the community and an action plan to remediate the threats. The first organizing meeting was held on November 14 and was attended by 21 residents. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for late February—watch your inbox for an announcement of the date and time.

To help in the vital work of preventing fires on Fitch Mountain, join our Fire Prevention Committee. There's plenty to do! Contact Chairman Ken Hite at kenhite@comcast.net.

Septicians

The North Coast Water Board was to have approved in its December 2017 meeting an Action Plan that would eventually trigger new County regulations on the minimum requirements for Russian River septic systems. On November 7th they announced that they were refocusing their staff on potential water quality threats resulting from the North Bay fires. "*New hearing dates for (the project) have not been identified, but will be noticed appropriately once they have been rescheduled.*" Go to the FMA website (<http://fitchmtn.org/septic.html>) for detailed information. Send questions or comments to davehen@sonic.net or patabercrombie@comcast.net or other members of the FMA Septicians Committee (names and addresses on website).

FMA Treasury Snapshot

The FMA had \$6,951 in its accounts (\$1458 in checking and \$5493 in savings [\$4268 restricted and \$1225 unrestricted]) as of 12/31/17.

For details, archives, and updates on everything FMA, don't forget

<http://www.FitchMtn.org>

“Mountain Memories and Lore” by Sylvia Seventy

In June of 1973 my [now ex-] husband, Joe Schwinn, and I purchased the house on Redwood Drive that I still call home. After Joe finished some repairs, I moved from Southern California in August. We were full-time residents, with about 14 others on Redwood. Most of the 50+ houses on the street were part-time summer homes.

Zelma Ratchford lived on North Fitch Mountain Road. She had horses in a field below the house, and her relatives would ride the horses bareback around the Mountain. Occasionally they trotted down Redwood Drive to reach the beach, horses and riders taking a swim. Their homeward-bound ride would often be “buck naked.”

When I first arrived in town, I taught basket weaving workshops at Hildy Henry’s yarn shop. The shop was located on Matheson Street where the Senior Center is today. One of my students owned Palomar, the old Jazz Club on the Mountain that had been turned into a skating rink. She moved to Arkansas not long after the workshops and sent me a box of long southern pine needles for basket making. Before she moved, she rented the “rink” to a young man who was a musician, and he had rock and roll dance parties there. When she finally sold it, that was when it became a private residence.

Palomar was located next door to the Del Rio Store and Bar. C.B., who owned Del Rio, had a collection of “Road Toads” on the wall of the bar. There were so many wild toads on the Mountain that no matter how slowly you drove, your wheels would flatten a few. I told C.B. that I also had flat toads, on my bathroom wall. In fact, some of the neighbor kids could see them when the ceiling light was on, and they nicknamed me “Toad Lady.” C.B. said, “Oh, are yours all giving the finger too?” I looked more closely at his wall toads, and giggling replied, “No.”

Ralph Nelson lived on the river side of South Fitch Mountain Road about halfway between Palomar and Camp Rose. He was an active, hard-working member of the Fitch Mountain Association, and everyone called him “Uncle Ralph.” Uncle Ralph made sure there were beach parties, association meetings, beach parties, committee meetings, and beach parties. He knew what issues were approaching us from the County or City, etc., and kept his neighbors and Mountain dwellers informed. Some of us will always miss this intelligent character.

The school buses came up and down the Mountain for all ages. At first they were picking up and delivering students at the beginning of Redwood Drive. Eventually someone had the “brilliant” idea to create a bus stop by carving away the upper bank next to the fire trail that leads to the water tank. It only took a few winters for the first landslide to happen. The black plastic this winter at that location brings back these memories.

From her deck behind the Redwood Drive where Brian and Kitty live now, Mrs. DeRoach, a former opera singer, would sing to the canoe-ers as they headed downriver. In the front yard she had an apple tree with a hand-lettered sign saying, “Do Not Pick the Apples.” Very early in the morning during apple season, she would walk down Redwood Drive to the “Y” where it meets North Fitch Mountain Road. A big hat and a handbasket completed her usual elegant walking ensemble. In the basket she carried apples that she “gleaned” from other people’s trees along the way.

In the summer, the heavy aluminum Trowbridge canoes came by from Alexander Valley Bridge or even further upriver. Some canoe-ers camped and enjoyed the River for two or more days. Occasionally a canoe would be abandoned on the Redwood Drive beach and the paddlers would walk into town. If you called Trowbridge and guided them to the lost canoe, they would give you two free passes. I found a couple in my desk just recently.

Eagle Rock was always the swimming hole, and most people reached it by walking down the County right-of-way at the end of Redwood Drive and then taking an elevated dirt path along the beach. Eagle Rock was actually on the Scenic Lane property owned by the family of Mark Brown, a friend of mine. In 1986 the gravel company in Healdsburg mined gravel in the River at River’s Bend. That winter, heavy rains caused Lake Pillsbury’s regulators to order water released into the Russian River. The gravel mining had created a straight shot for water to rush at Eagle Rock. Numerous beach-front cabins lost land as the wave of water rushed down the Redwood Drive stretch of the River. Eagle Rock was landlocked for years and the trail to it washed away forever, but the memories remain.

Current FMA Leadership

Trustees:

Donita Proctor: 2017-2021; 431-8789

Pat Abercrombie: 2017-2021 patabercrombie@comcast.net, 473-8217

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

Ken Hite: 2016-2020; kenhite@comcast.net, (415) 516-2702

Officers:

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

Rebecca Goodsell, Vice-President: 2017-2019; rebeccalgoodsell@gmail.com, 707 473-8479

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

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

Volunteer Leaders:

COPE Committee Co-Chairs Priscilla Abercrombie, pdanp@comcast.net, & Ginger Hobart, ginger@sonic.net

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

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

Fitch Mountain Preserve Outgoing Committee Chair Kate Symonds

Fitch Mountain Water District Committee Co-Chairs Donita Proctor, donitaproctor@gmail.com and Pat Abercrombie, patercrombie@comcast.net

Fun and Appreciation Committee Chair Kathryn Henderson, fmafunappreciationkathryn17@gmail.com

Road Safety Committee Chair Al Pucci, apucci@gmail.com

Road Vision Committee Chair (Temporary) Dave Henderson, davehen@sonic.net

The Septicians Wastewater Systems Committee Chair Dave Henderson, davehen@sonic.net

Newsletter Editor Ellen Silge, ellensilge@yahoo.com

Webmaster Chuck Eaton, webmaster@FitchMtn.org

Trustees and Officers Meetings

The T&O's are scheduled to meet February 11, April 8, and June 10. The usual meeting time is 10 am to noon; location varies. Any Fitch Mountain resident is welcome to attend these meetings. You may make brief comments at the beginning of the meeting, or during the meeting regarding a particular item on the agenda. Check with the President or Secretary several weeks ahead of time about the location and agenda.

Hello fellow FMAers,

Elections for officers and trustees are once again upon us. At the July annual FMA BBQ/business meeting, elections will be held for president, secretary, and treasurer.

To be eligible to run for any of these three positions, a person must be a member of FMA. To be an FMA member your dues must be current. That is, you must have paid your dues for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2017 and ending June 30, 2018.

All three positions hold office for two years—that is, from the July 2018 annual FMA BBQ/business meeting to the July 2020 annual FMA BBQ/business meeting.

Detailed information about these positions will be forthcoming in future e-blasts.

—Al Pucci

FITCH MOUNTAIN ASSOCIATION

Form for Annual Membership for July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018*

*The FMA fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30. Although you can join the Association at any time, there is no provision for a discounted, partial-year membership. This form is the one to use if you do wish to join "mid-stream" in the 2017-2018 year (as you might if you want to run for office this July). The membership will be up for renewal in July. You can also use this form to make immediate donations. The form in the newsletter in June will be suited to both renewals and new memberships.

Name(s) _____

Home Address

#	Street	City	State	ZIP
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Fitch Mountain Address (if different) _____

Street

Email(s) _____

Best Phone Contact _____

Membership Type: New Member Lapsed Member

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION:

Single Membership (1 Person) \$20 \$ _____

Couple's Membership (2 Persons) \$40 \$ _____

Additional Memberships (\$20 each) \$ _____

**Extra Donation (Help FMA do more!) \$ _____

TOTAL: \$ _____

Payment Method:

Check # _____ (preferred) Cash (should not be mailed)

[**A donation in addition to your membership supports the FMA's efforts on behalf of ALL residents of the Mountain. Check with your tax preparer about deductibility of your dues and donations. (FMA CA 501(c)(3) Federal EIN 94-270278)]

Mail this form and payment to FMA, PO Box 1233, Healdsburg, CA 95448; or hand-deliver to Treasurer Martin Silge, 1840 Redwood Drive.

Help FMA help you by sharing your thoughts, ideas, comments, and concerns about Fitch Mountain on the reverse of this form. THANK YOU!