

The Newsletter of the
FITCH MOUNTAIN ASSOCIATION



One mountain, one river, one community

March 2015

Springing Forward

Don't forget about springing forward into Daylight Saving Time early on Sunday March 8th!

And we hope you're looking forward to all the special features of this spring-time issue of the FMA newsletter. Don't miss:

A Long Time Coming, and Well Worth Celebrating: Coverage of the acquisition of the top of Fitch Mountain as a public park, a way to help support it, pictures of the celebration, and an invitation to take a nature hike to the mountaintop (pages 2-5)

A Good-Bye to By-Gone Days of Fun on the River: The history of Del Rio Dam and tales told at the party marking its demise (pages 6-7)

Farewell and Welcome: Check out what Mike McGuire is up to these days in Sacramento (page 11), and see if you can spot James Gore on page 4.

Chip Chip Hurrah! Impressive statistics from the County's chipping program (page 8)

Tenant, Property Owner, or Just a Friend of Fitch Mountain--FMA Is Your Association!

- Money Matters and Members (pages 8 and 9)
- Get Involved: Your ideas and participation are needed in new Standing Committees (page 9)
- Leadership: FMA trustees and officers—names, contact info, and upcoming meetings (page 10)
- You Know You've Been Meaning to Do This! Form for memberships or donations (page 12)

So plunge right in. Enjoy, take notice, and take part!

—*Ellen Silge, Editor*

Fitch Mountain Park Moves Forward

By Ann Carranza, Healdsburg Towns Correspondent

This article, originally published Dec. 4, 2015, in The Press Democrat, is reprinted with permission.

Ownership of the forested hill known as Fitch Mountain passed to LandPaths on Nov. 26, two years after the historic deal was announced to save the 200-acre parcel above Healdsburg.

For the next three years, the land stewardship organization will work jointly with the Healdsburg community to develop a fire safety plan, build hiking trails and remove invasive species. At that time, ownership will pass to the City of Healdsburg and the parcel will be opened to the public.

The Fitch Mountain deal was announced in 2012, but challenges with encroachment of property lines caused delays. The Agriculture Preservation and Open Space District continues to work on resolving issues with the 20 acres in question.

LandPaths is gathering names of people who want to become involved with the park, said Executive Director Craig Anderson. They will create trails, remove invasive broom, and work with Healdsburg Fire Chief Steve Adams to formulate the fire safety plan. In addition, they will develop an interim access plan for monitors and volunteers.

“There is no legal, usable trail at the current time,” said Anderson. “We are bound by legal constraints to make the improvements for wild lands and neighborhood safety, as well as that of visitors.”

Meanwhile, Fitch Mountain Park supporters Laura Tietz and Ray Holley have developed the Fitch Mountain Fund, raising a little over \$63,000 to date. Holley said a dozen or so private donors have stepped forward to add to the fund, in amounts ranging from \$50 to \$25,000. He hopes to raise \$2 million over 10 years for a park endowment.

“(Fourth District Supervisor Mike McGuire) cajoled, threatened and forced this deal through,” said Holley. “Now we need to fund it. I’d like to take the burden off the taxpayers for the park, and endowment will do that.”

Holley and a group of supporters presented McGuire with a bottle of the finest “Fitch Mountain soil” to take with him to Sacramento, where he will begin serving as a state legislator in January.

To donate to the Fitch Mountain Fund, visit Community Foundation Sonoma County at sonomacf.org or email rayholley@gmail.com.

Contact Healdsburg Towns Correspondent Ann Carranza at HealdsburgTowns@gmail.com.

Guided Hike to the Mountaintop on April 4th

Hike to the top of Fitch Mountain with FMA trustee and local biologist Kate Symonds (and possible guest co-leaders) on April 4th. The excursion is sponsored by FMA in conjunction with LandPaths. Hikers will meet at Villa Chanticleer’s lower parking lot that Saturday at 10:00 am (time is still to be confirmed). Kate says: “We’ll hike to the top, stopping for wildflowers and other natural history curiosities we find along the way. Perhaps we’ll get a sighting of a pileated woodpecker (North America’s largest)! Families are welcome. Bring snack/lunch, water, and sunscreen, and dress in layers. We’ll return to the Villa by 1 pm,” says Kate. Heavy rain cancels. Questions? Contact the leader at kate@terraserve.net.





“Fitch Mountain Now Wild Forever”

That was the exultant heading on the **LandPath’s** blog entry for Nov. 21, 2014. The entry continues in part:

“On Tuesday afternoon November 18, a recorder’s rubber stamp at the County of Sonoma quietly closed a land protection chapter 20 years in the making. Fitch Mountain, a rock so resistant that Russian River currents could not wash it away, nor housing successfully climb its uppermost flanks, was purchased [for \$1.5 million, generated by a county-wide quarter-cent sales tax] for future public parkland.

“... No fewer than four groups were united by the dogged persistence of 4th District Supervisor Mike McGuire to pull the deal together. First, our County’s Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District provided funds to buy the land and seed funding for land stewardship. Second, the City of Healdsburg agreed to accept the property as a future public park. Third, the people of Healdsburg and beyond spoke with seeming unanimity in favor of saving the wildness of the mountaintop for its wildness and vistas and respite from the din of urbanized life. Last but not least, Land Partners through Stewardship — better known as ‘LandPaths’—agreed to own and steward the mountain until the City is able to take ownership in 2017.”

And on November 22nd, It Was Celebrated

A large, jubilant crowd gathered at the Villa to celebrate the mountaintop and laud Mike McGuire, the man of the hour/years/decades. McGuire finished up his part of the program by making an energetic—and successful—pitch for pledges to the Fitch Mountain Fund. Other speakers were Craig Anderson, LandPaths; Ray Holley, Fitch Mountain Fund (and now acting editor of the *Healdsburg Tribune*); and Laura Tietz, FireFreeFitch. Our new 4th District County Supervisor, James Gore, was also one of the celebrants, as was James Wood, former Mayor of Healdsburg and newly elected California Assemblyman.



More photos on next page....



**Photos by
Martin
Silge**



Protecting Fitch Mountain Forever

By Mike McGuire, Laura Tietz, and Ray Holley

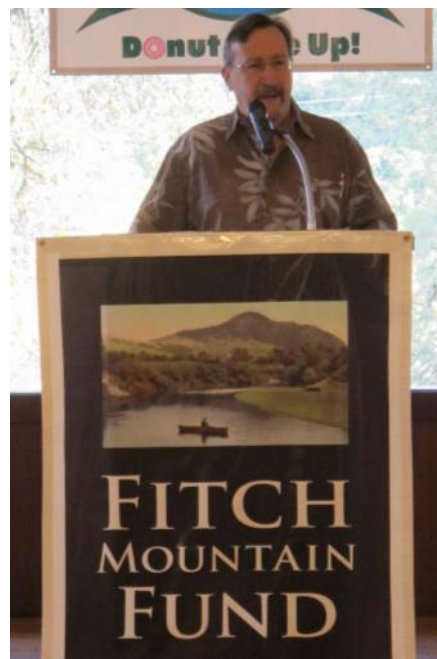
The top 173 acres of our beloved mountain have been preserved permanently, and public trails will open late in 2017. Now that our dream of a park at the top of Fitch Mountain is within our reach, let's make sure it stays within our grasp. Funding from the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District was used to purchase the land, and more funds from the District and the City of Healdsburg will be used to create a comprehensive management plan.

Funding from the Coastal Conservancy is also a likelihood, but what if it isn't enough? As the founders of the **Fitch Mountain Fund**, we want to make sure that funding shortfalls don't delay the opening of the park. We created a project fund that will cover unanticipated costs and allow the park to open on time and be accessible to all.

Once the park is open, the Fitch Mountain Fund will convert to a permanent endowment that will eventually generate enough funds to cover the annual costs of maintaining and managing this beautiful land forever.

We urge you to join us and be part of this magnificent legacy. Donors to the Fitch Mountain Fund will be permanently recognized, and will know that their support plays an important role in preserving this land for future generations.

How often do you get to say that you helped save a mountain? For more information about joining the First 50 by donating to the Fitch Mountain Fund, call Ray Holley at 707.206.1867 or mail a check to 401 Center Street, Box 7, Healdsburg, CA 95448. The Fitch Mountain Fund is held at Community Foundation Sonoma County, a 501(c)(3) organization with more than 30 years' experience stewarding charitable donations.



Something gained and something lost

Healdsburg Tribune, December 10, 2014

by Michael Haran

Along with the dedication of a new park atop Fitch Mountain, a community treasure has quietly slipped into the past. On a sunny Sunday in September, Fitch mountaineers gathered for a potluck at Del Rio Beach to share memories of a lake that is no more. Al Pucci, director of the Del Rio Woods Recreation and Park District and a Fitch Mountain Association trustee, addressed the group and thanked everyone for their involvement and support. About 30 people came to pay their respects and share stories of their time spent on the Del Rio Woods summer lake.

The following account of Del Rio Woods was collected by Sylvia Seventy, a longtime resident of Fitch Mountain, and Jane Bonham of the Healdsburg Museum and Historical Society. In 1965, the *Healdsburg Tribune* reported that “Del Rio Beach is a privately owned beach that the local homeowners’ association makes available to outsiders.” The Del Rio Woods Park and Recreation District was established in 1961 by the Home Owners Association.

In 1927, two men (R. Cook and J. Pohley) opened a subdivision named “Del Rio Woods,” and several acres near the top of Fitch Mountain were reserved as a public park. Thomas Scoble of San Francisco subsequently bought the project and built a road to the top of the mountain. He then sold off most of the lots that had been reserved for the park. In order to attract summer vacationers he built a dance and band platform, a sales office, a store and a balcony with a “fine view of the river.” In 1937, a dance hall named “Palomar” was built by a new owner (E. Frampton) to replace the open platform.

In the 1930s, Scoble installed a gravel dam. In August of 1933 a lawsuit was filed against Scoble’s Del Rio Properties complaining that the dam was unsafe after it failed three times in several weeks. The County asked for a preliminary injunction against maintaining, operating or using a dam across the Russian River at Del Rio Woods.

In September of 1934, a semi-permanent dam with a permanent spillway was built. It’s kind of curious, but I guess not all that surprising, that the dam, which had passed inspection by the state’s Department of Public Works, was declared unsafe in February of 1935. Work was done in the following summer to strengthen the dam’s wing walls, but in 1941 the west wing was washed away by high water.

In order to avoid the need for annual fundraising from property owners and merchants, a permanent recreation district was created, and in the 1950s a new permanent spillway was built. The east and west wings of the dam, which consisted of large wooden boards packed in gravel, were built up in the spring and removed in the fall.

The last summer that saw the dam built was in 2002. Concerns about turbidity and mud endangering fish survival and reproduction during the build-up and removal of the wings cause the state and local wildlife authorities to ban the annual dam installation. The permanent spillway was removed this past August.

The three Daneri sisters, Claire (Harris), Carol (Gerhardt) and Jean (McShane – who came all the way from Florida) told of their summers spent swimming in the lake. They had a summer home on Redwood Drive that was built by their father in 1946.

[Continued on next page]

[*“Something lost and something gained” continued*]

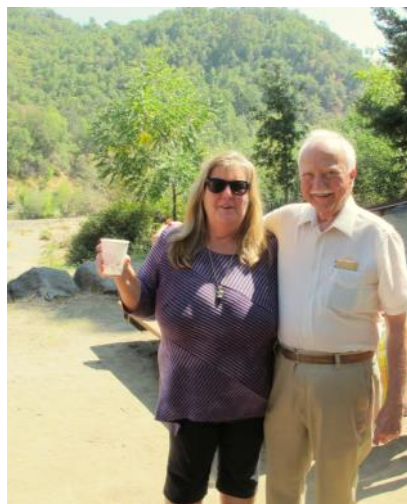
Martha Brooks of Windsor, who was there with her son James, told of meeting her husband Wes in 1963 at a freshman girls’ “all night” party at the lake. For years, Wes was in charge of building the dam each summer and, as a helper, it was a summer job for James. She said she was on the crew that would dive down to sandbag the slow erosion around the spillway. Martha told of the “pecking order” on the dam. It seems that the high school boys would perch near the spillway; the middle school boys would sit next to them, with the elementary boys being closest to shore. She also said that countless number of kids would consider themselves a “certified swimmer” if they could make it to the lake’s anchored platform and back.

Don McEnhill, the riverkeeper and executive director of Russian Riverkeeper, was there along with his son Jack. As a young boy, Don would play on the lake with his sisters. He said that although the removal of the dam from a historic and sociological standpoint was sad, not having the dam’s annual disturbance is an ecological benefit for the health of the river.

Penelope La Montagne, a long-time Fitch Mountain resident who lives on the river and is a poet laureate, used to compose poetry while wading along the lake’s shore. She said that losing the lake was sad and when I asked her for something from one of her “lake” poems she gave me a line from her poem “A Five Turtle Day”:

“With heart-shaped strokes, fingers together, I propel myself toward the bent cottonwood
that signals the shoreline of home.”

—*Michael Haran is a Fitch Mountain resident.*



(Photos courtesy of Martin Silge)

The Mission of the Fitch Mountain Association is to:

- Disseminate relevant information to the membership;
- Encourage community;
- Maintain the unique nature of our locale; and
- Establish a positive identity with the public sector.

FMA Money and Membership

The FMA has a total of \$3,502 in its accounts (\$2414 in checking, \$1052 in savings, and \$36 in petty cash), as of 12/31/14. The previous all-accounts total was \$3625 as of 9/13/14.

As of 2/17/15, the FMA had 58 paid members, representing 51 households, decreases of 31 members/16 households from the previous year. We have 172 people on the e-blast list, an increase of 18.

The FMA membership year goes from July through June. Renewals/signups for voting memberships will be solicited for the annual meeting on July 5, 2015. In the meantime, all Mountain residents and friends of the Mountain are very welcome to make donations or belatedly become members via the form on the last page of this newsletter.

Another easy way to support the Association is through Goodsearch, a Yahoo-powered search engine that donates half its advertising revenue, about a penny per search, to the charities its users designate. That's not a big amount, but those pennies can add up to a tidy sum if many people participate! You can contribute to the Association searches by going to www.goodsearch.com and making an account and designating Fitch Mountain Association as your beneficiary.



Chip Chip Hooray!

We salute the Sonoma County Fire & Emergency Services for a great program they introduced in 2014, offering free brush-chipping services to Fitch Mountain residents. The impressive results for the year:

- Total number of projects: 21
- Total acres treated as reported by homeowners: 15
- Total time spent cutting and trimming to prepare for the chipper: 231 hours
- Total size of all piles combined: Width, 116 feet; Length; 406, Height; 116 feet.
- Total cubic yards of piles: 381

Clearly this program helped us increase the defensible space around our homes and raised awareness of wildfire issues. The department hopes to be able to expand these efforts in the future. Thanks especially to Asst. Chief Roberta McIntyre, who worked personally on my four piles. What an example and what a program!

—Dave Henderson

New Committees Need You!

The FMA Trustees have decided that three important areas of our “community life” need broader, more in-depth and long-term attention than we have given them so far. So we have established three Standing Committees, and we invite all members to join a committee that represents your “area of concern.” You have the ideas we need, and need to represent, and more members on a committee means that we will enjoy a breadth of ideas and that the work will be better distributed. If you would like to find out more, just contact the committee chair (or Dave Henderson if no chairperson has emerged to date).

Fitch Mountain Summit Park Standing Committee: LandPaths (www.landpaths.org) has been commissioned to launch a 3-year program to create an overall design and operational plan for the summit park, which LandPaths will then turn over to the City of Healdsburg for implementation. The FMA is recognized as a stakeholder in this process, and LandPaths has specifically solicited our input. This committee will be our official “conduit” to LandPaths, in both directions; it will funnel our suggestions to LandPaths and it will disseminate “project news” to the FMA membership. If you have ideas, questions, and want to help, contact Kathryn Henderson at kathrynkeg@gmail.com.

Road Safety Standing Committee: Yes, we’re all vitally interested in this! We want to make our roads—not just North and South Fitch Mtn Rds, but the “upper roads” as well—safer and more enjoyable for drivers, walkers and joggers, cyclists, and your dog! That means projects such as continuing the vegetation trimming project, pushing back those landslides, looking at dangerous areas, and ... well, add your voice and your concerns to the committee, FMA’s “official conduit to Sonoma County Roads.” Contact Chair Al Pucci at apuccie@gmail.com.

Membership and Fun Standing Committee: We need to expand our membership, improve FMA representation of other areas on the Mountain, welcome those who are new—owners and renters alike—to our neighborhoods, and just have more socializing and fun. If you have some ideas, like to have fun, and would like to brainstorm some possibilities, we’d love to have you on this committee. Contact Ellen at ellensilge@yahoo.com or 431-0814. She hasn’t committed to chairing, but would be glad of some help in planning something fun for us all to do in May!

2015 Donations Program

In their December 2014, meeting, the Trustees approved the 2015 donations for the FMA’s now-traditional program:

Russian Riverkeeper	\$150.00
LandPaths	100.00
Fitch Mountain Fund	100.00
S.C Deputy Sheriff’s Assoc.	100.00
Friends of Henry 1	100.00
Camp Rose Players	<u>100.00</u>
Total:	650.00

The Trustees felt that these organizations perfectly embodied important aspects of the FMA Mission Statement and that they therefore deserved our substantial and active support. Each contributes in a significant way to preserving and enhancing our life and environment here on the mountain.

- Everyone is familiar with **Russian Riverkeeper’s** tireless and imaginative efforts on behalf of our beloved river.
- **LandPaths** has been entrusted by the City of Healdsburg to craft a plan for the future park on the top of Fitch Mountain, and we will be working closely with them to ensure that we will have a true jewel on our summit.
- On the same theme, the **Fitch Mountain Fund** is raising funds that will provide ongoing future support for activities in the park.
- The **Sheriff’s Department** has been most responsive to our needs regarding traffic and parking, particularly on the three “crush weekends,” and a thank-you to them is in order.
- **Henry 1** is the Sheriff’s helicopter that plucks unfortunates out of danger on the river and off the rocks, and richly deserves our support.
- And, finally, a round of warm applause for our cultural gem, the **Camp Rose Players**.

We hope you will all agree with us that our benefits from all these groups are indeed priceless!

—Dave Henderson



Dues July 2014-June 2015	Become a new member or renew	Dues \$20.00 per member
Name(s)		
Address		
Phone		
E-mail		
Fitch Mountain Association P.O. Box 1233 Healdsburg, CA 95448		Amount enclosed: \$ _____
Donations are tax-deductible California 501c #C093278		

FMA Membership—Any Time Is a Good Time to Join!

Fitch Mountain Association membership is open to all residents and friends of Fitch Mountain, whether property owners or not. The FMA membership year goes from July 1 to June 30. You can mail a check for \$20 per member or for a simple donation to the address above.

Fitch Mountain’s Favorite Son Off to a Fast Start in Sacramento

In January, Mike McGuire, former Sonoma County Supervisor for the Fourth District (which includes Fitch Mountain), was sworn in as the youngest member (age 35) of the State Senate. He has also been named the vice-chair of the Senate Democratic Caucus and is the chair of both the Senate Human Services Committee and the Joint Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture.

As Human Services chair, Senator McGuire convened a recent hearing on possible overuse of psychiatric drugs on children in the state’s foster system. “We can’t let another decade go by without creating a system of care that is capable of helping kids heal from the challenging experiences they have lived through or protecting them from further harm,” he said in opening the hearing. On another front, the new senator from Healdsburg is proposing to make redwood burl poaching a mandatory felony crime punishable by jail time and a fine of up to \$10,000. “I liken shaving burls off California’s old-growth redwoods to killing elephants for ivory,” he said. His bill was co-authored by Assemblyman Jim Wood, former mayor of Healdsburg.

