

Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods

Preservation through Education and Stewardship

Russian River District State Parks

Volume XXVI, Number 4, Winter 2011



A Plan to Keep your Parks Open

Michele Luna, Executive Director

After an intensive month-long strategic planning process the Stewards Board of Directors has made a final decision to step up and help keep Austin Creek SRA and closed areas of Sonoma Coast State Park open. Our process began with stakeholder surveys which were very telling. Our stakeholders had wonderful things to say about the work Stewards has been doing for so many years to support our parks. They were also very interested in seeing day-use restored on Sonoma Coast as their first choice, then camping on Sonoma Coast and then keeping Austin Creek open. All this, besides continuing our public education and stewardship programs. We also met in person with Stewards staff, park staff, partner agencies, volunteers and members of the tourism community. These meetings provided us with a vision from their perspective, and a list of our strengths and needs. Finally, the board met for an all-day retreat facilitated by Charley Money, on behalf of the Association of Partners for Public Lands (APPL), to review all the input we received and then draft a strategic plan with five major strategy areas.

Our number one strategy is to “determine and implement an appropriate expansion of Stewards’ role in caring for the Parks we support.” For this strategy our number one goal is to “develop, review, complete and implement an Operations Agreement.” We already have a draft operating agreement proposal ready for local State Park review. Once we get our proposal in a form that is ready for State Parks in Sacramento to review, we will start that process. As many of you probably are aware, there are many partnerships emerging all over the state to keep our parks open. The Parks Alliance of Sonoma County is supporting our efforts and also working on some exciting partnerships in eastern Sonoma County for Annadel, Jack London and Sugarloaf State Parks. The support in Sonoma County is exceptional.

Stewards’ priority has always been to support State Parks in maintaining a management role in our parks. We do not want them to walk away and leave it to Stewards and our partners to do all the work that will be required to keep our parks open. For one, we do not have the ability to do this on a long-term basis and we also don’t want to lose the wonderful relationship that we have with the dedicated park staff that we work with. To this end, our proposal includes new fees that will go towards increasing Stewards’ capacity, as well as paying for park staff, maintenance and utilities.

Mission Statement

Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods (Stewards) works in partnership with California State Parks to protect and interpret the natural and cultural resources of the Russian River District.

State Parks Supported

Armstrong Redwoods State Nat. Reserve
Austin Creek State Recreation Area
Sonoma Coast State Park

Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods
P.O. Box 2, Duncans Mills, CA 95430
707.869.9177, 707.869.8252 Fax

stewards@mcn.org

www.stewardsofthecoastandredwoods.org

State Parks has been planning for the installation of iron rangers at day-use areas on the Sonoma Coast and in the front parking lot at Armstrong Redwoods for some time. We feel the time has come and Stewards will be working hard to make sure the public understands why we need to charge for parking in areas with facilities, including restrooms and garbage service. In addition, we also hope to simultaneously make park passes more readily available for locals who use our parks on a regular basis. Operating campgrounds is also on our to-do list. We hope the revenue generated from the new parking fees will be enough to fund the staff positions necessary to keep campgrounds open year-round. Currently, of the 150 camping spots available on the Sonoma Coast, only about 50 of them are available for park visitors. This is a huge impact on the local economy and may not change even during the busy season.

With the help of many volunteers and our partners we plan to expand our public assistance programs to patrol Austin Creek and also assist with more stewardship efforts. Potential partners include the California State Parks Foundation, the Backcountry Horsemen, Landpaths, the Sonoma County Trails Council, and our local Resource Conservation Districts.

These efforts will take your support. Please consider donating today!

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E-News

To receive our E-Newsletter please go to our website and sign up for these periodic updates. You can customize your subscription.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Michele Luna, Stewards Executive Director

As another year rapidly comes to an end, it's time for reflecting on the success and challenges of the past year. Despite the very disappointing news of park closures, we have rallied once again and have come up with a proposal to work in partnership with State Parks to keep our parks open.

Our **Annual Volunteer Celebration** was a wonderful event. We've received many compliments on the great food, decorations, music and the time volunteers got to spend with one another. I have been told by a number of volunteers recently that they have never felt so appreciated by any organization they volunteer for. This kind of compliment means so much to us. We try very hard to show our appreciation to those who are the heart and soul of our work.

Our program stats are impressive. We've provided public education opportunities for **tens of thousands of park visitors**, environmental education opportunities for **6,500 school children**, and docent-led programs for **2,500 students**. Our trail crews have maintained miles of trails, installed bridge crossings, stairs to the beach and a trail puncheon. Volunteers have completed eight years of monitoring water quality in Willow Creek, two years of monitoring pinnipeds on the Sonoma Coast and completed another year of marine debris monitoring on Sonoma Coast. All in all, our 350 volunteers have donated over **30,000 hours of services** to state parks.

I'd like to thank our dedicated staff and board. **Annie Cresswell** has been with Stewards almost ten years now and Stewards would not be the same without her sense of humor and great organizational ability. **Ruby Herrick's** wonderful disposition and efforts to connect personally with volunteers has made her popular with everyone. **Melanie Russell's** competence as the youngest member of our staff is impressive and a gift to us all. We are very pleased to add **Sukey Robb-Wilder** as our newest staff member. She will be job sharing with Ruby and we are already appreciating her can-do attitude and thoughtful perspective. We are also very fortunate to have a dedicated working board of individuals who care deeply about Stewards' values and our state parks. They have the willingness to help Stewards grow our capacity in the next few years to handle the new responsibilities we foresee taking on through an operating agreement with State Parks. Our board is growing and we are pleased to welcome the newest member, **Andrea Johnston**. Andrea has a vast amount of nonprofit experience including development expertise that we are thankful for.

Finally, I hope some of you may be able to come to our **Willow Creek 2nd Bridge Dedication** on December 16th at 11:30 am on Willow Creek Road. This project is the lynch pin for the restoration of fish passage for salmonids in the watershed. Stewards is honored to have been a key player in raising the funds to complete ten years of work to fulfill this exciting goal.

May each and everyone of you have a memorable holiday season with family and friends!

DOCENT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAM

The final schedule for our upcoming Docent and Community Education Program is now up on our website and we have printed copies available in the office. If you would like us to mail you a copy please don't hesitate to request one.

First General State Park Volunteers in Parks Orientation

January 14th, 9:00 am - No fee, registration required - please help spread the word
Programs overview and State Park requirements - required for all new volunteers

Cultural History of Armstrong Redwoods/Austin Creek Seminar

January 14th, 12:30 -3:30 pm - \$15 for non-members, \$5 for members
Instructors: John Shubert, Doris Dickenson, Carmen Finley

Memorable Interpretive Walks and Hikes

January 20th, 8:30 am to 3:30 pm - \$15 for non-members, \$5 for members - registration required
Instructors Kasey Wade, SRJC Instructor and Davie Zuckerman, Naturalist at East Bay Parks
A seminar not to be missed by anyone who wants to be an effective and engaging interpretor with adults or children. Classroom and outdoor experience.

CAL REPORT

Andrea Mapes, Supervising Ranger, CAL

THE LEGACY OF CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS: A PERSONAL REFLECTION FROM YOUR CAL

Stewards' Programs Manager, Ruby Herrick, had a wonderful idea for the Stewards' board retreat: share your most memorable experience in a State Park. Choosing just one was the difficult part for me. As a Ranger of nine years, of course, I already have too many to choose from. But, my memorable experiences in California State Parks date back a lot farther than 2002. In fact, mine date back to before I was born, and before some of our parks became parks. State Parks preserve the story of my family, just as they preserve the stories of more culturally and environmentally significant events.

As a child, my mother camped along the Sonoma Coast almost weekly with her family. My grandfather was an avid diver and Fort Ross was one of his favorite places to get abalone. My mother describes "renting camping space" on a ranch from a Mrs. Kruse; ring any bells? Fast forward to my childhood, and we spent many a weekend camping at Bodega Dunes, listening to the fog horn, barking at sea lions, overturning rocks looking for shore crabs, and hoping the time our dog got sprayed by a skunk was an isolated incident.

My paternal grandmother also had childhood ties to a place that would become a State Park. Her father was a doctor and lived in Morro Bay. He made house calls to a hilltop mansion, where the Hearst family lived, and occasionally let my grandma tag along. She describes being spooked by the indoor pool with its gaudy tile work and cave-like feel, but remembers fondly swimming in the Neptune pool. Who knew I would one day become a Park Ranger and get to swim in that same pool, or that I would work at another park (Asilomar) designed by the same architect (Julia Morgan)?

Although I never said "I want to be a Park Ranger when I grow up" as a child, it seems I was inherently tied to California State Parks and I found my way to this privileged profession. Daily, my career choice is reaffirmed; in the form of a visitor's wave; in seeing the banana slugs celebrating their favorite weather and the delicious fungal morsels it brings; in hearing a child's wonderment at finding a "dinosaur" among the redwoods; and being inspired by those who care enough to try and save our parks for these and infinite reasons. Now, as I expect my first child, I am overjoyed just thinking of all the magical places I want my family to experience together and to continue writing our family history. Many of these places are in State Parks. This is what the State Parks legacy means to me. What does it mean to you?



AMERICA'S STATE PARKS - FIRST DAY HIKES

Make California State Parks part of your New Year Resolution

January 1, 2012



Armstrong Redwoods State Natural Reserve: I I am with Ranger Ellen Brem

Meet outside the Visitor Center. Choose an easy .8 mile (one-way) hike or a moderate 2 mile (round-trip) hike through the redwoods. Bring water, snacks, hiking shoes, layered clothing, rain gear. Hike rain or shine. No dogs or bicycles. Moderate portion of hike may be too strenuous for children under 6.

Sonoma Coast State Park: 2 miles south of Jenner, 1:00 pm with docent Bill Ruppert

Meet at Goat Rock Beach parking lot at the end of Goat Rock Road, off Hwy 1, south of Bridgehaven, for a moderate walk on the beach to the mouth of the Russian River. Learn about the natural history of the area, the pinnipeds (harbor seals, sea lions, and elephant seals) and birds, people changing the area, and the current status of managing the estuary for fish restoration. Bring water, snacks, hiking shoes, layered clothing, wet weather gear. Heavy rain cancels.

PROGRAM UPDATES

WHALE WATCH

Bea Brunn, Whale Mother

On Saturday, November 12th we had our annual Whale Watch orientation at the Bodega Bay Grange. We had fifty people in attendance, many new faces and also several of our “old-timers.” Ruby welcomed everybody, then Ranger Lexi Jones talked about State Park Volunteer Programs followed by Bill Bambrick talking about the ways that Stewards supports various programs. Bea Brunn talked about our whale watch program and what is expected of our volunteers and then, of course, about the whales in our ocean. Calendars were passed around for everybody to sign up for the 5 months we are at the Head, and as usual we have covered every date that we will be at Bodega Head for the 2012 season.



Everybody enjoyed our new poster showing the different whale species and their various sizes and habits. We bring it to Bodega Head to share with park visitors. The poster was donated by Blythe Marshman from the Bodega Marine Lab. Thanks to Rich & Colleen Draffin for having it laminated and Richard Brunn for having it framed. It is beautiful. After our session at the Grange we went up to Bodega Head where we had our usual ocean safety presentation by lifeguard Steve Bouget.

Thanks to Ruby, Sukey Robb-Wilder and Michele Sokel for setting up everything and for all the goodies which were enjoyed by all.

TIDEPOL PROGRAM

Hollis Bewley



October's school field trip followed several weeks of a red tide, which was responsible for the die-off of a number of invertebrates along the Sonoma Coast. We were initially concerned that the group of 60 7th graders who had traveled from Placerville might be disappointed by the absence of ochre sea stars and large gumboot chitons, normally the largest and most visible animals on Shell Beach. But a short talk on the red tide stimulated so many questions that we had to cut the discussion short to get the group down to the beach.

We walked over hundreds of empty mussel shells and encountered groups of “angel wings”, the skeletons of Pacific gumboot chitons who had perished and washed ashore as we talked about the opportunities available to the other animals living in this highly competitive environment. Students, parents, teachers and two freshman docents were all highly engaged. The weather was stunning and it turned out to be a wonderful autumn field trip.

Karl Menard of the Bodega Marine Lab reports that the bloom making up the red tide was patchy along the coast. He anticipates that species sensitive to the toxins will slowly move back in from areas less affected. The 2012 season will be especially interesting to docents as we observe the impact of this event. This particularly sensitive environment reminds us that we're all participants in a living laboratory subject to significant changes when there's a shift in the balance of organisms.

MARINE DEBRIS MONITORING

Keary Sorenson

Marine debris goes on as normal, we meet the first Saturday of every month. We had an interesting year; not a lot of large objects, but we did remove a considerable amount of environmentally damaging small debris. Speaking of damaged environment; roving naturalists this year started off with a deluge and progressed into a very strange spring, with storms and fog. This however didn't stop tourists and we made many new connections. The dinoflagellates caused die off and has brought a severe reduction in many populations of invertebrates with the tidepools north of Carmel Beach being the most affected. The tide lines at several beaches were 100% covered with dead invertebrates. Salmon Creek Beach isn't a tidepool beach but was covered with mole crabs. Our tidepools will of course recover, the interesting question is which species will or won't recover. However, it's the Sonoma Coast State Park, always dynamic, always interesting and IF YOU ARE NOT OUT THERE YOU HAVE MISSED IT!!!

INSIGHT FROM SIMON SLUG

Andrea Mapes, Supervising Ranger, CAL

Greetings humans,



Photo by Kevin O'Connor

I'm Simon, your banana slug friend. You'll be seeing a lot more of me and my fellow slugs this time of year, so I thought I'd tell you a little bit about what it's like to be a banana slug. I've spent most of my life on the ground and even a bit under the soil. My mom/dads (since we all have both parts, I believe you humans call us hermaphrodites) got together and deposited me and about thirty of my siblings in a clump, well hidden in a moist place in the forest. We were just small, colorless eggs then. When we hatched about five or six weeks later we were no longer than the nail on your pinky, but our mom/dads weren't around anymore, so we all went our separate ways to find food and good hiding spots. I noticed rather quickly that my skin dried out really easily, so I tried to stay near water or under moist leaves during the hot season. This also helped me stay hidden from all those critters that find my kind delicious to eat, like birds, raccoons, large beetles, foxes, moles, and snakes. When you're not stepping on us or running us over in your car, humans have even been known to eat us banana slugs. In fact, I believe it was right here in the Russian River that they used to have an annual festival called the Russian River Banana Slug Festival. You should know that my fellow slugs and I were not big fans of this festival. While the races might have been OK for some slugs, it meant we had to be handled by humans. Your salty skin is a little off-putting to us slugs. What really put us over the edge was the recipe contest. Hundreds of slugs have been sacrificed for this contest over the years, and then most of the humans eating us disguised in fried batter or sushi, had the nerve to complain that we didn't taste good!

Anyway, I have been lucky enough to have been spared from the festival and the other predators out there so far and have grown into a healthy seven inch slug. They tell me I'm getting to be an old slug already, and I'm only seven years old. Well, let me tell you, this old slugger has been looking forward to this rainy weather all summer. You see, in the summer I have to be kind of a recluse. I even stay underground for several days if I have to, when it's really hot. I come out at night to eat during that time. The summer may be great for you humans with all the vegetables and fruits ripening, but I prefer leaf litter, a bit of scat, and dead stuff you humans call detritus. The fall and winter are truly my time for feasting. That's when rains come causing the mushrooms to begin bursting out of the ground and the air is usually moist enough for me to be out during the day to take advantage of the fungal bounty.

That's right, winter is my time to shine. And speaking of shine, you may notice that I am a bit shiny from the slime I am constantly producing. My slime is kind of a signature and it's really important for lots of different things like moving around, protecting me from predators, helping me stay moist, and when it comes time for me to find another slug to mate with. Other than mating time, I don't often hang out with my fellow banana slugs. We tend to stick to ourselves, no pun intended. Since we don't move too fast or like to go too far for food, there isn't really enough room to have another slug around to compete with for food. From what I have heard from the slugs I have come across, we banana slugs only live in four states (California, Oregon, Washington, and Alaska) and in western Canada. This must have to do with the weather, since we slugs don't do well when it gets too cold or too hot. Despite our limited range, we are the largest of any slug in North America, and the second largest in the world, not to brag.

So, the next time you come across one of us banana slugs on a trail, or the road, or climbing up the side of your house, or sneaking into your salad, go easy on us. We don't have very long in this world and we don't mean you humans any harm. In fact, we help recycle the nutrients in the soil of the forests you humans love so much. This is Simon, sluggishly, slimily signing out.

Volunteer Opportunities

Call the Stewards office:
869-9177 x1# or email
volparks@mcn.org

Program Activities

Armstrong Redwoods

Visitor Center Staffing
Friends of Armstrong
Redwoods
Docent Tour Guides
Trail Maintenance
Habitat Restoration Project
Pond Farm Interest Group

Sonoma Coast State Park

Visitor Center Staffing
Seal Watch
Whale Watch
Tidepool Programs
Watershed Program
Environmental Living Prog.
Sonoma Coast Stewardship

Other Projects

Recycling & Firewood
Office Help & Special
Events

Volunteer Program Coordinators

Joyce Bacci, ARVC
Lanny Keyston, AR Trails, FAR
Laura Parent, Pond Farm
Linda Fisher, Jenner VC
Bob Caricato, Seal Watch
Bea Brunn, Whale Watch
Suzanne Abrams, ELP
Fred Luna, Recycling
Vacant, Willow Creek Ed.
Bill Bambrick, Sonoma Coast
Water Quality Monitoring
and Trail Crew
The Sorensens, Marine
Debris & Beach Cleanups
Hollis & Jerry Bewley,
Tidepool Programs

State Park Volunteer

Coordinators

Ranger Ellen Brem
Armstrong/Austin Creek
Ranger Ben Vanden Heuvel
Sonoma Coast State Park

MOMENTS IN NATURE

Ruby Herrick, Programs Manager

We have started collecting “moments in nature” and below are our first offerings. We want to share these short and inspiring stories from people’s lives.

I remember family camping trips as a child and I will never forget my father standing outside our tent in his underwear chasing a bear away. ~**Michele Luna**

During an Armstrong Trail Crew volunteer day I was picking up rocks and someone pointed out a rattlesnake under the rock I had just lifted. ~**Bill Bambrick**

When I moved to California, I hiked in Armstrong and encountered some large strange birds which I later learned were wild turkeys. ~**Cindy Brennan**

When camping at Sunset Bay we were treated to a 30 minute serenade from Swainsons Thrush at sunrise. ~**Sukey Robb-Wilder**

While leading a hike I discovered I had lost a hiker. After extensive searching we found out that the person had gone home without letting anyone know. ~**Gregory Fearon**



Photo by Kevin O'Connor

While camping at Spring Lake I woke to discover a squirrel in the tent with me. ~**Melanie Russell**

After setting up tents and campsite for a group of 6th graders, gale force winds collapsed tents and we spent the remaining time rescuing the equipment. ~**Elizabeth Vega**

While driving down Pt Sur Lighthouse Rd at sunset, I saw a Gray Whale breach fully out of the water. ~**Andrea Mapes**

While at the Stewards' Conference room, I enjoyed watching the leaves come down and the fall colors. ~**Linda Rath**

During 1977 Ranger training I was in the forest before sunrise and discovered a large oak leaf pile. I felt that someone was following me, so I waited in the shadows and saw a mountain lion come to it's kill in the oak leaf pile I had just stood by. ~**Rich Lawton**

We rescued an octopus from the jaws of a Western gull. ~**Hollis Bewley**

I remember camping at the Avenue of the Giants and hearing lumber trucks going by. ~**Mike Von der Porten**

I was at a gas station in Big Sur and noticed people looking off shore. I went over and saw a massive Blue Whale's back slide above the surface. ~**Jan de Wald**

The first time I took a school group hiking in Armstrong a student thanked me for “letting us hike in your park”. I let the student know it was his park and he is welcome to return with his parents. ~**Annie Cresswell**

At the Estuary in Jenner I noticed a dog in the water and saw it encounter an elephant seal. The dog survived with many stitches. ~**Kathie Lowrey**

Me, a yellow Lab and a skunk in the same tent at Mono Lake. ~**Charlie Money**

Chased by a bear in Yosemite. ~**Clara Else**

Watching ant bodies turn a glowing red color as they drank fruit punch. ~**Ruby Herrick**

Watched my wife interpret tidepools to a blind boy scout, beautiful! ~**Keary Sorenson**

I watched Keary rescue a woman and her dog off of Portugese Beach. Intense! ~**Sally Sorenson**

My most memorable experience is petting the grey whales in San Ignacio Lagoon, when Richard grabbed hold of me and told me to stay in the boat instead of getting out and kissing the whales. ~**Bea Brunn**

While bird watching in a Texas park we were lured to a small pier by the sound of hundreds of tree frogs and got cornered there by a herd of peccaries in front of us and alligators in the lake behind us. ~**Linda Fisher**

If you have a very short story of an experience in a park, camping, or out in the environment, we would love to share it with everyone. Please email us so that we may continue these “moments with nature” in the next newsletter. Thank you to everyone for contributing these jewels from your life experiences.



Photo by Rich Lawton

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Senior/Students

Gary Austin
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Stewards members receive this quarterly newsletter by email or mail .

Members are also entitled to 20% discount on purchases at Stewards-run visitor centers and at our special events. In addition, Members can attend our educational seminars for a \$5 donation.

Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods

Membership Form

Renewal

YES, I'd like to become a member.

- Senior/Student \$25.00
 Individual \$30.00
 Family \$45.00
 Contributing \$100.00
 Supporting \$150.00
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 Patron \$250.00 plus
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Name(s) _____

Address _____

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I'd like to help with an additional donation of \$_____

Payment type: Check Charge Card Visa MC Total tax deductible donation \$_____

Make check payable to Stewards. Account # _____ Exp. Date _____

Annual Renewal Date: February 1 Signature: _____

Bequests

Your Gift to the Future of State Park Preservation

With your help, future generations will enjoy the State Parks in the Russian River District, including education and stewardship programs supported by Stewards. A gift to Stewards is a rewarding form of giving from your estate. There are several types of charitable bequests by will (or beneficiary designation). Sample:

I hereby give and bequeath to Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods, a nonprofit organization incorporated under the laws of the State of California, with a principal address at P.O. Box 2, Duncans Mills, CA 95430, _____ percent of my estate, (or) the sum of _____ dollars, (or) the following assets _____ . Tax ID # provided upon request.

For Information on contributing to Stewards' Endowment in support of Armstrong Redwoods please contact Michele Luna at the Stewards office (707) 869-9177 X4#.

CALL 800-320-0476 TO MAKE A VEHICLE DONATION IN THE NAME OF
 STEWARDS OF THE COAST AND REDWOODS

Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods

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