



REGIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

March 2003

RPA Board Members

President: Helen Klebanoff, Vice-president: Kathryn Petersen, Treasurer: Pete Wilson
Judi Bank, Joe Engbeck, Hulet Hornbeck, Harlan Kessel, Kathleen Nimr, Greg Schneider, Amelia Wilson

Fern Cottage Opens its Doors for RPA Annual Meeting and Breakfast

Regional Park Association's Annual Meeting will be at Fern Cottage in Kennedy Grove, **Sunday morning, March 30**. We'll meet for the first time in a number of years at this lovely rustic facility off San Pablo Dam Road. The long history of the grove goes back into the 19th Century, and included two stops on the narrow gauge railroad bringing people across the hills to Orinda on the California Nevada Railroad.

Breakfast will start at 9:30, followed by the Annual Business meeting and election of RPA Board members. Cost for breakfast is \$3 and if you have not yet paid your 2003 dues, that \$10 may also be paid at the meeting.

For our speaker this year, we are extremely fortunate to have Richard Rayburn, Chief, Natural Resources Division of the California State Parks. In this capacity, he has responsibilities for resource elements of park plans, resource protection policy formation, stewardship funding programs and natural resource acquisitions. He'll talk with us about **"Natural Landscape Preservation and the Role of Livestock Grazing in Park Preservation."**

Directions to Fern Cottage: From the Richmond area: take I-80 to the San Pablo Dam Road exit. Turn south on San Pablo Dam Road and proceed through El Sobrante to the park entrance, about 0.25 mile south of the Castro Ranch Road intersection. From the Oakland/Orinda/Walnut Creek area: take Highway 24 to the Orinda exit and turn north on Camino Pablo, which becomes San Pablo Dam Road. Proceed north, past

the San Pablo Dam Recreation Area entrance, for about 1 mile further to Kennedy Grove. Turn in at the sign for Kennedy Grove and follow the road about ¼ mile to the large parking area. You will see Fern Cottage at one end. Wear your walking shoes for a stroll after the meeting.

Elections for RPA Board members will be held at the Annual Meeting. Hulet Hornbeck has indicated his willingness to continue, as has Greg Schneider, who was appointed to fill a vacancy last December. Nominations will be taken from the floor at the March 30 meeting.

We're on the Web!

RPA has entered the 21st Century! Thanks to our newly appointed Board member Greg Schneider, RPA now has a website: RegionalParksAssociation.org. Punch it up to see the beginnings of our outreach to those who have computers. We will update the site monthly with coming events and RPA Board actions, and with important EBRPD items we believe you should be aware of.

The site has an e-mail contact address and we welcome your comments and concerns.

If you are not connected to the Web, fear not. The RPA Post Office Box is still valid, and we will continue to mail announcements and newsletters to all. And if you have friends who are connected to the Web, check it out at their house next time you visit them!

Cattle Grazing at EBRPD under Increasing Scrutiny

RPA is placing an increasing focus on the importance of preserving the natural resources within our regional parks. This was certainly a principal component in the vision of the RPA founders and the EBRPD founders as well. Commercial cattle grazing operations in our

parks are having devastating impacts on native plant populations, wildlife habitat and overall biodiversity. Recent reports done by the *Friends of Sycamore Valley* have found that the park district is failing on many fronts to enforce its grazing management policies and terms of their grazing leases.

The RPA will be working with other environmental groups in the Bay Area to bring an increased public awareness to this problem so that EBRPD management will, as a minimum, once again begin to actively enforce these policies. RPA believes that to adequately address the problems associated with commercial cattle grazing the district must start with effective policy enforcement.

RPA Book Presentation to EBRPD

The RPA Board members presented the recently published book, *Welfare Ranching, The Subsidized Destruction of the American West*, to each of the EBRPD Board Members at its March 4, 2003 board meeting. This book edited by George Wuerthner and published by the Foundation for Deep Ecology, will provide an additional perspective to the EBRPD Board of Directors that cattle grazing is very harmful to the environment and therefore should not be the principal land use for the open space in parks of the East Bay region.

Survey Helps RPA Board Determine Its 2003 Priorities

Preservation of natural resources and acquisition of new park lands were overwhelmingly chosen as the most significant issues by RPA members who returned the Board's January questionnaire. Forty two households took the time to make comments - and send in their dues! Most people expressed interest in the newsletter and about half said they might be interested in hikes on District lands. Many comments encouraged the RPA Board to continue its monitoring EBRPD to be sure recreational needs do not outstrip protection of natural resources. Others suggested specific concerns such as invasive plants, attracting new and younger RPA members, keeping bicycles off single track trails, monitoring the proposed Fuel Management Plan, and for many, the issue of destructive grazing on parklands.

The Board sincerely thanks all those who took time to respond. If you didn't get a questionnaire, or mislaid it and want to submit your comments, call Treasurer Pete Wilson at 925-376-6925 or email him at pete.amelia.wilson@RegionalParksAssociation.org

The RPA regrets to inform its membership of the recent death of Dr. Dan Lutén, close to his 99th birthday, and until a few years ago, active with RPA. Dan was our conscience for many many years. He believed so strongly in wildlands and was a force behind the biennial Wilderness Conference of the Sierra Club, and the influence behind RPA's republishing the Olmstead Report, the basis of EBRPD's formation.

A Memorial service will be held at 1:00 p.m. March 23 at the Faculty Club on the U.C. Berkeley campus. Our sympathy is extended to all members of his family.

Get Out of that Rut! EBRPD Offers Change of Pace

A few examples of the out-of-the-ordinary for the weekend of March 15-16:

Whale Watch on a boat out of Half Moon Bay, 9:30 –12, Saturday March 15, \$35. Call 510-636-1684.

Get seasick? Then try **Minus Tide exploring** at Crab Cove, Saturday March 15, 3-4:30.

Don't like wet feet? Try "**Nature Calls**", everything you ever wanted to know about outhouses! Ardenwood, March 16, 1-2 p.m.

Prefer something classier? Take a friend for **tea at Tilden** Nature Area, Monday, March 17, 4-5:30. Learn about natural and cultural history of teas and then stroll the area enjoying the wildflowers. Call 510-525-2233 for your reservations. \$5.

Would rather just enjoy the glories of Bay Area springtime **on your own**? Pick any trail in the District and thank your lucky stars for those good people who preserved the land for us way back in the 1930's.

**Annual Plant Sale at Botanic Garden
Sunday, April 19, 10 a.m. Rain or Shine
Native Plants for your Garden
Benefit the EBRPD Botanic Garden**

What's New at EBRPD

The future of Piedmont Stables is in question because of the District's high costs of operation. Several options are being proposed: open it only on a seasonal basis, mothball it until another business plan is developed, continue District subsidy, and/or add a surcharge of \$108 per horse. Staff's recommendations will be made to the EBRPD Board Operations committee on March 27. Boarders and supporters to save it.

District staff will try the new Trails Checklist for evaluating trails for multi-use (adding bicycles mostly) on 2 potential trails. Bicyclists want for 17 single track (narrow) trails throughout the District to be opened to them on a trial basis Bicyclists have created their own illegal trails in Pleasanton Ridge. These trails are being repaired and bicyclists (and others) are being asked to stay on the named trails.

Jerry Kent has retired and is staying on as a consultant to ease the transition. Beverly Lane is taping sessions with Jerry Kent on his knowledge of the histories and details of every park.

Good news! Wildcat Creek has spawning trout! Bad news: same problems as Redwood Creek with dogs/people disturbing the pools. Fencing and signage are being used protect the trout.

New irrigation and drainage systems were installed at Tilden Golf Course last year and the creek was renovated this year. Check it out!

Yes, I'd like to become an RPA Member

Please renew my membership

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email (print, please) _____

Mail to: Pete Wilson, Treasurer
35 Lost Valley Drive
Orinda CA 94563

\$10 dues enclosed

\$250 life membership