

Non-native plants

Tackling invaders in Marin

by Nona Dennis

On July 21, a thousand goats supplied by Orinda-based Goats R Us arrived in San Rafael for an extended work assignment. Given an ample supply of food and water, they are good workers! At the time of this writing, they had chewed their way through numerous acres of noxious weeds on the 85-acre "Canalways" property, a remnant wetland (in a wet year) left over from the filling and development of the once-extensive tide lands of East San Rafael. The target of their assignment was jubata grass (*Cortaderia jubata*), commonly called pampas grass, which has become a site of recurring fires set inadvertently by itinerant campers on the property. The goats also ate their way through thickets of non-native Himalayan blackberry and fennel. The question is: how effective will the pruning-by-chewing be in the long term?

This article focuses on two non-native invasive plants that lie at opposite ends of the diverse spectrum of invasives that currently threaten Marin's native habitats. The November–December issue of the *Newsletter* will feature a different suite of invasive plants—thistles that are rapidly taking over Marin's agricultural lands. Together, these articles are indicators of a vastly larger problem.



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A highly compensated Goats R Us "employee" removes jubata grass at Canalways in East San Rafael.

Biological and economic threats

San Francisco Bay Area is a hotspot of biological diversity, both within California and at a national scale. The MMWD watershed is at the center of the Golden Gate Biosphere Reserve, supporting 113 distinct vegetation assemblages and at least 900 plant species.

Marin's biological diversity is threatened by many non-native invasive plant species. Extensive research has shown that the take-

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MCL Actions & Status Updates

Since MCL's last [Newsletter](#), the League has taken a number of important actions regarding local projects and pending state legislation.

Solar Farm Project

MCL recommended that the County Planning Commission approve the **Cooley-Porter Solar Farm Use Permit and Design Review** project, subject to conditions noted below. The project, which will install a 1.98 megawatt photo-voltaic facility on a 17-acre former rock quarry in Bowman Canyon (Novato), will be the largest renewable energy facility in the County. The proposal calls for placing ninety 40-module dual-axis solar trackers that follow the sun's motion across the sky, plus 4200 fixed ground-mount arrays.

Members of MCL's Land Use Committee joined the Planning Commission in a tour of the site on June 9 and found that, although the site is zoned A-60 (one dwelling per sixty acres), it is of limited agricultural value due to its historical use as a quarry. The quarry is currently implementing a closure plan. A distinct advantage of the site is that it is close to the San Marin PG&E substation, which

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A Message from the President



A summer highlight for MCL over the past dozen years is our annual "Picnic on the Porch." This year's "Picnic" took place on August 2nd—not on the old "Porch" but rather on the grass and patio behind MCL offices. This enjoyable BBQ-plus-Board pot-luck event brings over 100 MCL members and their guests together to relax and enjoy each other's company, and discuss current issues over beer and a burger.

I mention this to let members know that while much of our work is focused on our committees' work we also have a strong social component for our members to join together, share a meal, a drink and good company.

As we enter the fall, our committee meetings pick up from the summer pace. We have noted an increased participation in our committees. **Water and Watersheds** continues to draw a large attendance to hear speakers on a wide variety of issues surrounding the "drought" and watershed protections.

The **Climate Action Working Group** is developing a draft Solar Policy for rural parts of the County; representatives went twice to Sacramento to lobby against passage of AB 2145, the "Monopoly Protection Bill."

The **Agricultural Land Use Committee** held a popular field event in late June on the farmstead of John Wick to hear about progress of the Marin Carbon Project. Future field sessions will focus on the Fibershed project led by Rebecca Burgess and the Compost work of Dr. Jeff Creque.

The **Parks and Open Space Committee** is dealing with the re-released Marin County Parks' Road and Trail Management Plan and EIR as well as critiquing Park Service plans to address Muir Woods traffic and parking.

A newly-formed **Invasive Plant Species**

Subcommittee is setting priorities from among the many possible issues in the County.

And the **Land Use and Transportation Committee** always has a full plate of issues, ranging from proposed expansion of Gness Field to the County's Housing Element.

I am proud to say that the MCL Board committed \$5,000 to support acquisition of the 5-acre **Madera Bay Park** land, a long-missing piece in the Corte Madera Ecological Reserve. We will be asking our membership, too, to help in this important acquisition.

Many thanks for all your support, and see you at a meeting very soon!

Bunch Grass

I am here,
Trust in my root.
I have died back
after the heat and drought of seasons.

Next year I grow again
in the hard earth.
It is not that I can; it is: I must.

It is not that I can,
it is: I must
in the hard earth
grow again next year.

I have died back
after the heat and drought of seasons.
Trust in my root,
I am here.

—Richard Cruwys Brown

Editorial

The Wilderness Act at 50

by Nona Dennis, Chair, MCL Parks and Open Space Committee

In late August, I scrambled down the glacier-carved granite of Pyramid Creek, which drains the lakes of Desolation Wilderness and joins the South Fork of the American River not far from South Lake Tahoe. When I was a girl, it was a rite of passage in my family to carry our backpacks into what was then "Desolation Valley Primitive Area" in the El Dorado National Forest. Our mattresses would be pine needles, John Muir-style. In 1967, the Desolation Valley Primitive Area joined the National Wilderness Preservation System and was re-designated "Desolation Wilderness."



Signed into law fifty years ago, on September 3, 1964, by President Lyndon B. Johnson, the Wilderness Act's national wilderness preservation system is administered by U. S. Forest Service, National Parks Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Fish and Wildlife Service. First proposed by Senator Hubert Humphrey in 1956, the bill survived 66 major revisions and nine hearings supported by 6,000

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MCL Actions & Status Updates

Solar Farm *from page 1*

will minimize the need for transmission infrastructure. Although the site is on private land in Bowman Canyon, an area that is high on the County's list of Priority Conservation Areas, the installation would not be visible from most locations in the adjacent Mt. Burdell Open Space Preserve.

MCL supports renewable energy projects in the County but because the County exempted the project from CEQA requirements, the MCL Board was concerned that the project could set a precedent for exempting future similar projects, especially on agriculturally-zoned land. MCL continues to believe that the permit review process should be used to identify and resolve all potential environmental impacts. Therefore, the League recommended that the following conditions be adopted as part of the administrative record:

- The County should proceed with developing an ordinance for siting ground-based solar energy projects and not set a precedent for categorically exempting similar future projects on agricultural land from CEQA;
- Financial assurance (bonding) should be required to ensure that project structures will be removed, recycled or reused at the

end of their useful life or as technology changes;

- Sediment and runoff should be contained on site by planting the nearby stream bank with native trees and shrubs; and
- The ability for fire trucks to pass through should be ensured.

The Planning Commission approved the project with some conditions, including the requirement (without bonding) to remove structures and restore the site to natural conditions, and to manage runoff to avoid the nearby creek. The commission did not commit to the immediate need for an ordinance, but agreed that future proposals should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Corte Madera Creek flood control project

County officials traveled to Washington in late July to meet with Congressional representatives and other decision-makers, in an attempt to secure federal funding for planning and environmental work on the final leg—Unit 4—of the **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' flood control project on Corte Madera Creek** through Ross and Kentfield.

MCL and other civic and elected groups submitted letters to show broad community support for completing this project, first authorized in 1962. In order for the County's Ross Valley Flood Protection and Watershed Program to move forward and obtain the planned benefits, the Corps' project needs to be completed in the lower reaches of the creek. Although design for Unit 4 has been completed and approved, funds have not been released by Congress.

AB 2145 (Bradford): An assault on CCA

As AB 2145 winds its way through legislative committee hearings, MCL has submitted two letters and MCL representatives have traveled twice to Sacramento this summer to urge its defeat. Existing law allows cities or counties to implement a **community choice aggregation** (CCA) program like Marin Clean Energy under which a municipality may purchase electricity for constituents within their political boundaries. A non-contiguous municipality may also join an existing CCA, or two or more municipalities may also form a joint powers agency to act as a CCA. The law currently requires investor-owned utilities such as PG&E to cooperate fully with a CCA in its operation and the California Public Utilities Commission does not regulate a CCA program unless it affects the rate and services for the investor-owned utility customers.

AB 2145, dubbed by businesses and environmentalists alike as the "Monopoly Protection Bill", would set up significant roadblocks to implementing the existing law, such as restricting the expansion of a CCA to three contiguous counties. This would effectively prevent smaller or lower income communities from joining CCA projects. The bill would also require a CCA to set rates five years in advance. MCL believes that this is blatantly unfair since the future energy market is not predictable.

Community Choice Aggregation is already proving to be a major help in moving California toward its climate goals. AB 2145 is a step in the wrong direction and should be defeated. MCL will continue to track the progress of the bill.

Expansion of National Marine Sanctuaries

A proposal to expand the boundaries of **Gulf of Farallones (GFNMS) and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuaries (CBNMS)** was a legislative priority for

The Bowman Canyon solar array will be situated on the dark grey 'slag' pile (the area from the central left side of this photo to the center-right side) and on the flat land in front of that area. The hills of Mt. Burdell Open Space rise in the background.



Jana Haehl

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Events

Sunday, October 19—

Addressing climate change through agriculture

Harvesting fiber and color

Agricultural environmentalism is multifaceted. On October 19 MCL members and friends will have an opportunity to learn about the production of fiber for clothing and the dyes used to color them, all from renewable agricultural resources. In an entertaining and inspiring presentation, Rebecca Burgess, educator, writer and natural dye farmer, will, among other things, share information about the biological roots of the materials.

There will be a morning program, from 10 a.m. to noon, appropriate for guests who are not familiar with Ms. Burgess' work through the Fibershed Project. An afternoon program, from 2–4 p.m. will be more technical and suitable for people who have some knowledge of her work or her book: *Harvesting Color* (pictured and available at local bookstores.)



The events will be at John Wick and Peggy Rathmann's Nicasio Native Grass Ranch.

This is the second in a series on agricultural environmentalism. It began in June, when over 80 MCL members and friends learned how a one-time application of compost to research plots in Nicasio and the Sierra foothills resulted in at least 2,000 pounds of carbon dioxide sequestered as beneficial soil carbon in each of seven years, a result that is predicted to continue for at least 30 years.

For more information and to register for these **free** events, go to the events/calendar page at marinconservationleague.org or call (415) 485-6257.

Top: Peggy Rathmann demonstrates the beneficial properties of compost from human waste at the June 29 MCL/Nicasio Native Grass Ranch carbon sequestration event; Right: JJ Thorner is well-suited to the farming life.



photos by Ann Thomas



May Tiburon Ridge Walk draws a crowd

35 MCL members and friends gathered at Old St. Hilary's Open Space Preserve for MCL's May 4 Walk into (Conservation) History #15. MCL directors Nona Dennis, Randy Greenberg and Jill Templeton and Tiburon Open Space Committee President Jerry Riessen gave an insightful talk about the history of the South Tiburon Ridge preservation and the current development threat to the Easton Point/Martha Company property.

Watch your email for the announcement for the next *Walk*, coming this fall!



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Events



Nona Dennis

April Cypress Grove Walk featured shorebird science & conservation history

On April 5, 40 MCL members and friends made the trek to Audubon Canyon Ranch's (ACR) Cypress Grove Research Center on Tomales Bay for MCL's 14th Walk into (Conservation) History. MCL director Nona Dennis was joined by Dr. John Kelly, ACR's Director of Conservation Science (second from left) and noted preservationist Dr. Marty Griffin (far left), who related the story of how he successfully persuaded the landowner, Clifford Conly, to deed this biologically rich land to ACR in the 1970s.

Picnic on the Patio – family fun!

On August 2, nearly a hundred picnickers of all ages enjoyed a warm and sunny Central Marin day at MCL's annual summer Picnic. Formerly Picnic on the Porch, this year's party was held on the green lawns (courtesy of recycled water from Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District's purple pipes!) of MCL's office building in North San Rafael.

The barbecue featured grass-fed beef from **Marin Sun Farms**, **Marin Brewing Company** beer, and a diverse and delicious array of salads, appetizers and desserts provided by MCL directors and staff. Many thanks to all the volunteers who helped make this picnic a success.

Next up: **MCL's Holiday Party on Friday, December 12, 4:00–7:00.**



Clockwise from top right: Anne Petersen, Susan Kirsch; Don Dickenson, Jack Krystal; Ed Ueber; Ellie-Moon Boughey, Dru Parker; Larry Kennings, Greg Zitney; Josh Foley, Nic Foley, Jaycob Milstein.

MCL Business Member Profile

Tom Harrison Maps

By Linda Novy

Tom Harrison will be the first to tell you that you want the Marin Conservation League as your friend! He points this out to friends and colleagues because he knows and supports the League's wide-ranging interests in the county, and its work protecting lands and Marin's quality of life. He said that the MCL is "...either out in front leading, or looking over the shoulder of decision makers, asking them – do you really want to do that?"

Tom is no stranger to the Marin Conservation League, as he joined the organization as a business member in 1999 and served on the Parks and Open Space Committee for several years. Why did he join? Tom shared that he wanted to know what was going on in the county and believed that MCL had its "thumb in the (environmental) pie!"

But, let's back up. Before forming Tom Harrison Maps, Tom was a State Park Ranger. As a rookie ranger in 1972, Tom rotated through all the parks beginning with Samuel P. Taylor, eventually settling at Angel Island, where he fulfilled a six year assignment. He was their nature interpreter, leading walks and giving slide shows about the island, and in his last year, he served as chief of the maintenance crew. Tom mentioned that it was a tough but fulfilling assignment and involved living on the island.

Tom felt called back to school and attended San Francisco State University, where he obtained his

Masters Degree in geography. Shortly thereafter he started Tom Harrison Maps. His wife Barbara worked with him for several years on the research, map production, business administration, and general operations of the small but growing business. They have been in business since 1976 and are very proud of the fact that they have been able to compete successfully in the outdoor retail market.

Tom Harrison Maps is a perfect blend of a business that provides a living and promotes the environment! Tom is interested in parks and the outdoors and believes it is important for people to have a safe experience in nature. Tom is concerned that if they don't have a positive experience, they won't come back. He wants people to know where they can camp, ride horses, hike, and bike, and believes that this leads people to support their public lands. He added, "I want people to understand parks are for their use but also to be good stewards."

To gather the most current data, Tom heads out into the parks he's mapping to get accurate field updates from resource managers, often directly measuring areas to confirm accuracy. He also tries to make his maps user friendly. He creates maps for public lands all over California and sends them to resource management agencies, whom he considers "partners".

For durability, the maps are printed on waterproof, tear-resistant plastic—he has seen people using editions of his maps that are more than 10 years old! The inks are all soy-based to reduce



Tom Harrison

VOCs (volatile organic compounds). He confides that if Jeep made an electric vehicle that would go 400 miles on one charge he might consider it. "Alas, I only have a 2003 Jeep Liberty. But I don't commute because I mostly work at home." Like most of the graphics art/printing industry, all the work is done now on a computer—no more film negatives.

I asked Tom "why is the Marin Conservation League important?" He responded that: "The MCL is one of the jewels of California. The MCL was instrumental in keeping large parts of Marin County undeveloped. . . the organization is not single focused . . it is interested in not just land protection, but in issues such as transportation and how it impacts life in Marin." He noted that Caroline Livermore, MCL co-founder, loaned personal finances to the County to protect Angel Island through purchase of a fire truck and paying staff to guard the island before State Parks took it over and assumed permanent ownership and responsibility.

Tom Harrison, his wife Barbara, and his company, Tom Harrison Maps, are also among the jewels of California, as well as an inspiration to members of the MCL's Business and Environment Community. **Thanks for your continued work and support, Tom.**

Actions/Updates from page 3

former Rep. Lynn Woolsey for many years. The proposal was also supported by Sen. Boxer. MCL encouraged Rep. Woolsey to pursue the proposal in Congress. In 2012,

MCL also urged NOAA to consider expanding the boundaries to include the southern-most eight miles of the Marin Coast for biological, political, and operational reasons. That segment currently is administered by the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary.

MCL opposed the controversial second part of the proposal; an "Authorization" provision could exempt otherwise prohibited activities from sanctuary regulations, such as construction, drilling, dredging, laying cables, pipelines, alternative energy projects, sewage outfalls, coastal armoring, new dredge disposal sites, etc., "if they were approved by another official entity or agency." Under this provision, such commercial activities could be authorized by the sanctuary supervisor without any further public process. MCL, along with many other organizations and individuals, opposes this provision as a violation of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

MCL also opposed allowing recreational jet skis in certain protected areas along the Sonoma coast for other than rescue operations. Recreational use of personal watercraft was not mentioned during scoping for the EIS, but was added into the record later. The Final EIS is in process.

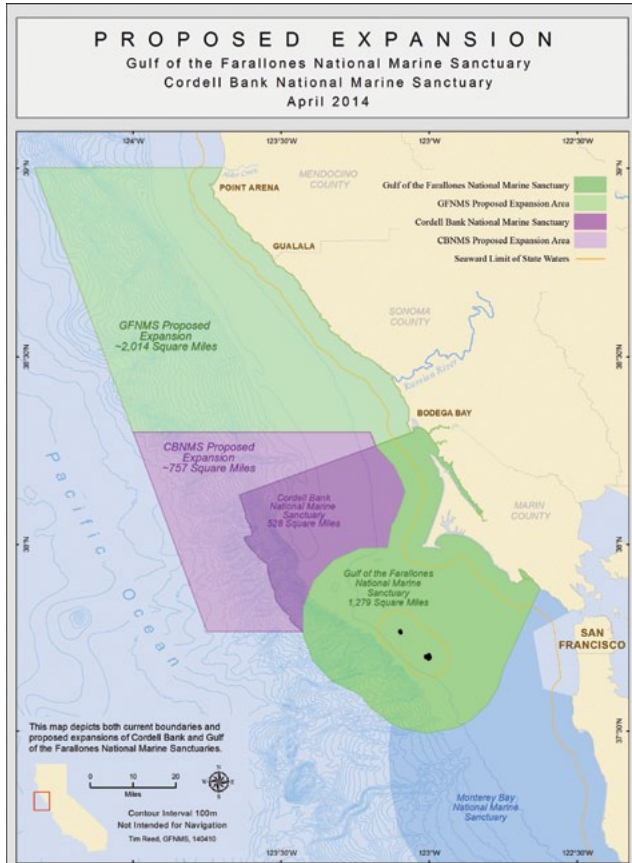
Whaler's Point Hotel, Richardson Bay

MCL recently opposed yet another attempt by Littoral Development to obtain County approval to construct a hotel and spa on a 2.2-acre site on the Richardson Bay shoreline next to the Shoreline Office Center. MCL has been tracking the project since the 1970s. During that time the applicant has gradually reduced the size of the proposed hotel. In 2009, a proposal

for a three-story 71-unit hotel plus spa was denied by the Board of Supervisors because it exceeded floor area ratio (FAR) standards in both the Countywide Plan and the Tam Area Community Plan) as well as height limits. The 2014 proposal is for a 34,031 square-foot, three-story, 56-room hotel complex, plus a detached 4,922 square foot spa. The project continued to exceed FAR, so in an attempt to increase the dry land base for calculating FAR, the applicant requested that the County vacate portions of three adjacent streets.

MCL urged that the applicant's request be deferred so that the requested vacation of streets could be taken up *together with the merits of the proposed project*, but not until the county has a complete application.

MCL has numerous concerns pertaining to the merits of the proposed project itself that argue for thorough review, such as future sea level rise in that area. In July, the Board of Supervisors denied the request to vacate the streets, as MCL had advised. Further, County Counsel stated that, even if vacated, the streets would constitute public rights-of-way and therefore could not be used to calculate FAR.



with Congressional support, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) initiated environmental review of the proposal. Finally, in June, NOAA held a series of public hearings along the Coast to take comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). MCL's comments were both supportive and critical of the EIS.

In support, MCL agreed that the expansion would greatly improve protection of the rich food web and marine ecosystem off the coast of Marin, Sonoma and southern Mendocino Counties and continue to protect the area from off-shore drilling. By expanding from the existing 1,808 square mile sanctuaries to 4,580 square miles, the protected area would encompass the entire Point Arena upwelling system that is the foundation of both commercial and recreational fisheries.

Do you have questions about water?

Visit Marin Municipal Water District online at marinwater.org

or North Marin Water District at nmwd.com.

Both sites contain comprehensive, up-to-date information about the drought status, water-saving advice, rebate programs, volunteer opportunities and much more!

Invasive Plants from page 1

over of natural communities by aggressive intruders alters native community structure, leaving a landscape diminished in plant and animal diversity. New plants find an open site with agreeable climate and diverse soils and moisture regimes, and, in the absence of competitors, spread via wind and water or hitchhike on wildlife.

Humans play the major role as vector: wherever we go, we leave behind new species from somewhere else, sometimes through deliberate introduction as ornamentals before realizing their invasive qualities. Eventually the non-natives squeeze out local species and take over large areas.

There are also practical, economic reasons for removing these species, such as reducing fire hazard, as shown in the story of jubata grass in East San Rafael.

Goats and jubata grass in East San Rafael

The large tussocks of jubata grass that cover higher portions of Canalways are evidence of a long-lived blight along the California Coast. Jubata grass and the similar "true" pampas grass (*Cortaderia selloana*) have been a familiar sight in the Bay Area since the plants' introduction to California as ornamentals from South America more than 150 years ago. They were cultivated for gardens for many decades—and are still offered for sale by nurseries—but escaped long ago to exploit newly disturbed lands, such as vacant lots, road cuts, ditches, eroded or exposed soils, and, especially appealing, partially filled, diked former bay tidelands.

The Canalways site, which lies north of Home Depot and the new Target store, is just the kind of environment that jubata grass can colonize: a wide open seed bed, indifferent soil, plenty of sun, ample soil moisture during the wet season, and little competition from other plants. Wind can disperse millions of seeds from the tall flower-plumes up to 20 miles. The seeds and root fragments (tillers) spread out and create dense, tall clusters of jubata

grass which can be a source of shelter for itinerant campers. This situation has existed for a number of years at Canalways and on a similar site in east Corte Madera, with campfires frequently igniting the flammable dry plant debris.

Are goats a final control?

In the weeks that Goats R Us worked, they made substantial headway in consuming much of the biomass of plant material, but permanent eradication is elusive. By itself, animal browsing, like controlled burning, will rarely, if ever, completely eradicate this plant, so it must be combined with other control methods. In view of Canalways' other sensitive wetland habitat features, treatment with herbicides could be controversial. The site has been monitored by both California and federal Fish and Wildlife for years. The only permanent solution would be to remove remaining foliage and the roots, which can extend tens of feet both laterally and vertically.

In a two-year West Marin Pampas Grass Control Program, begun in 2009, the Inverness Association and partners took on the eradication of 20 patches of pampas grass that had invaded steep embankments along Sir Francis Drake Boulevard on Tomales Bay. Cutting the top growth was only the beginning. As roots could not be dug out without compromising bank stability, clumps were covered with a plastic material, wired in place, and left to "smother" any attempts to resprout. The effort seems to have been successful. Whether San Rafael and the owner of

Canalways will go to similar lengths to achieve a permanent solution remains to be seen. Otherwise, the best that can be hoped for is that the goats' efforts grant a temporary reprieve from incidental fires as the jubata grass begins to re-emerge. Along the way, the goats have provided collateral benefit by chewing through other invasive weeds common to the site, but this too is temporary.

A foreign sea lavender invades the salt marsh

If it takes a mattock and winch, or suffocation with plastic, to remove jubata and pampas grass, it takes only a pen-knife to remove a tiny rosette of leaves that signals the recent arrival of a non-native in Bay Area salt marshes—a species of sea lavender (*Limonium duriusculum*). At the other end of the invasive plant spectrum, this small "European sea lavender" now threatens to crowd out native species in several San Francisco Bay salt marshes, including the shoreline of Richardson and Corte Madera Bays. In contrast to the taller native species of sea lavender (*Limonium californicum*), which is a familiar sight on the higher margins of Bay salt marshes, the European species is inconspicuous when not flowering but provides a bright purple cover when in bloom. Although still in the early stages of colonization, it is aggressively competing with native plants in several Marin salt marshes.

Possibly originating in gardens from nursery stock, European sea lavender was

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The goats rest after a long day of grazing the pampas grass down to twigs.



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first discovered off Seminary Drive in Strawberry Marsh in 2007 by Prof. Kathy Boyer of San Francisco State University.



Limonium duriusculum

Jude Stalker

The following year, Jude Stalker, Bay Area ecologist and volunteer, discovered a similar non-native species, the Algerian sea lavender (*L. ramosissimum* subsp. *provinciale*), at a marsh in Burlingame while she was conducting surveys for invasive cordgrass (*Spartina* spp.). On a recent walk along Seminary Drive, I found Jude and two colleagues crouched in the salt marsh carefully digging up plants and snipping inflorescences (the plants' flower heads) with scissors to prevent seed production.

Over the past few years, Jude has watched the non-native *Limonium* spread quickly up and down the Central West Bay, then across to the East Bay and to a few sites in Marin County—Corte Madera Ecological Reserve, Richardson Bay, along Seminary Drive shoreline, and in Bothin Marsh in Tam Valley. It is now spreading along the Sausalito shoreline. One of Dr. Boyer's graduate students conducted his thesis on the biology of the plant and concluded the most important reason to control the spread is that the plant takes advantage of disturbed areas of high marsh habitat. In a classic Catch-22 situation, habitat restoration requires initial disturbance, so numerous restoration projects that are underway in the Bay Area could expose new sites for invasion by non-native *Limonium*.

Organizing response

The [California Invasive Plant Council](#) (Cal-IPC) was formed in 1992 to address

invasive plants as one of California's top environmental threats. More recently, [Bay Area Early Detection Network](#) (BAEDN), a collaboration of regional land managers, invasive plant experts, and concerned citizens, was established to coordinate early detection of new outbreaks of invasive plants and deal with them before they can grow into large and costly (to remove) infestations. BAEDN made the several species of sea lavender a priority and for two years, worked with Marin Audubon Society volunteers to remove it from the known Marin County sites. Others were removing it at other locales: Prof. Boyer's students removed some of it at Strawberry Marsh, while County Parks staff focused their eradication efforts on Bothin Marsh.

BAEDN, now a project of Cal-IPC, hired Jude to oversee volunteers removing plants from Seminary Drive shoreline and Corte Madera Ecological Reserve where they especially threaten a population of the rare Pt. Reyes bird's beak (*Chloropyron maritimum* subsp. *palustre*) that inhabits several salt marshes along Richardson Bay. This year, with official permission, Jude took it upon herself to try to remove plants before the species can spread further.

At the time I met up with Jude, the Pt. Reyes bird's beak was in bloom. Fearful of damaging the native bird's beak population while in flower, volunteers were snipping inflorescences of sea lavender rather than digging up entire plants. With

volunteers, Jude had removed most of the inflorescences and many plants from the Corte Madera Ecological Reserve and from Strawberry Marsh. She has also removed plants from the Sausalito shoreline but keeps finding more. Absent funding from BAEDN for a Bay-wide eradication program, she hopes to keep it managed in Marin with the help of community volunteers. Next winter and spring she has high hopes of removing the invader from all known Marin sites (except those managed by the County). Local volunteers, she says, bring more eyes to spot the plant in new places.

Goats and human volunteers offer two diverse approaches to the ongoing struggle to control these two invaders of Marin's open spaces and marshes. Other well-known problem species include non-native cordgrass (*Spartina densiflora*) in Corte Madera Creek wetlands, and the ubiquitous French broom that has taken over large areas of Marin County open lands and watersheds. Land managers, with the help of many volunteers, are tackling these interlopers with the same determination shown by the goats and Jude Stalker's team, but the battle is uphill. MCL recently formed an Invasive Plant Species Subcommittee to focus on this problem and encourages all MCL members to participate in community efforts to combat invasive plant species. Visit MCL's [online Community Bulletin Board](#) for volunteer opportunities.

Eva Buxton and Jude Stalker contributed to this report.

Dana Morawitz of Cal-IPC and botanist Eva Buxton work at controlling non-native sea lavender in Strawberry Marsh.



Jude Stalker

Wilderness from page 2

pages of testimony before it was passed by both houses. Since then, Congress has designated nearly 110 million acres of public wild lands in the United States for permanent protection to ensure that they remain "unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness."

These days, the Desolation Wilderness is so popular that overnight stays are by advance reservation or a "first-come, first-served" basis. But it was remote when I was a child, and continues to feel remote, even though it is within a few hours of many trailheads. Under the principle of "Leave no Trace," it still fits the Wilderness Act's definition:

"... an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. . ."

Or, as a recent Yelper put it with a contemporary twist: "Desolation Wilderness is where I like to go when I'm having a 'screw you, civilization!' moment."

So what is wilderness?

We have come a long way from the "howling wilderness" that Roderic



United States Forest Service

On September 3, 1964 President Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law the Wilderness Act. This historic bill established the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) and set aside an initial 9.1 million acres of wildlands for the use and benefit of the American people.

Nash described the colonists' finding in *Wilderness and the American Mind*. Wilderness is not a myth but consists of physical places that can wear many faces. Long before the Wilderness Act was passed, forester and writer-philosopher Aldo Leopold found these values in wilderness: as reservoirs of biological diversity, having both scientific and educational value; as life support systems providing services to support humans; as places with historic and cultural qualities that help to define

what it is to be American; as places to appreciate nature's beauty; as recreational opportunities, offering both physical challenge and solitude; and as places to make spiritual connections. Library shelves are filled with the body of wilderness literature—still growing as cultural attitudes toward wilderness have shifted over time, even as our love affair with wilderness persists.

Much has been written recently to mark the 50th Anniversary of this landmark legislation. Generally it has been positive, suggesting the kind of praise for wilderness that comes from personal experience, like mine in Desolation Valley, which framed my early attachments to the natural world. Writer Kenneth Brower wrote recently that the Wilderness Act demonstrates after 50 years that ". . . we understand how important it is to protect the nation's wildest and most remote landscapes, seen or unseen." Brower also remembered his father and wilderness hero Dave Brower's tongue-in-cheek definition: "Wilderness is where the hand of man has not set foot."

Some recent writers have muted their respect for the law with concern. We know that nature is in flux and is not a stable system. Climate change is already bringing



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Sunset at Jabu Lake – one of the author's favorite destinations in Desolation Wilderness.

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Wilderness *from page 10*

unimagined shifts to familiar ecosystems. Christopher Solomon, in a July *New York Times* piece, asked whether in confronting climate change and other changes in wilderness areas, we can continue to abide by the "uncompromising language" of the Act that requires that "we be guardians, not gardeners" of protected lands? Eric Biber, in *Legal Planet*, contends that the scope of authority available under the Wilderness Act already is large enough to encompass enough active management options without tampering with the act itself—that managers can intervene in "natural" processes in a wilderness after making certain findings, particularly in those wildernesses that have been most impacted by human activities.

John Hart, reflecting on 50 years of wilderness protection in *High Country*, grants qualified praise for the staying power of wilderness. The act has significant limitations, he admits, but wilderness areas "continue to offer the surest possible protection, acre for acre, to watersheds and many plant and animal species—a safe harbor or region of calm whose goal is to do as little, not as much, as we can get away with doing."

In *Bay Nature*, Hart tours wilderness areas in the San Francisco Bay Area, proving that wilderness need not be either "remote" or "difficult to access." From Cache Creek Wilderness to the back country of Pinnacles National Park, wildernesses can be found close to people while still meeting the criteria of the State and federal Wilderness Acts. Such proximity to urban areas brings its challenges: people who love wilderness tend to love it to death!

Marin's wilderness

Phillip Burton Wilderness, established in 1976 as a portion of Pt. Reyes National Seashore and named for the 11-term Congressman in 1985, has been so beset by controversy in recent years that few have stopped to consider what might have happened to the Seashore without it. An observer said: "In one sense the most beautiful vistas on this



Hikers on Point Reyes Tomales Point Trail in the spring.

©Miguel Viera, Flickr Creative Commons, 2009

peninsula today are what you **don't** see." Imagine subdivision houses and condos on view parcels overlooking Drakes Bay, together with motels, gas stations, and shopping centers; scenic roads along much of the peninsula's ocean shoreline, with parking viewpoints along the Drakes Bay cliffs; Limantour Estero dredged and dammed into a fresh-water impoundment for motor boats; a cable railway to the top of Inverness Ridge; and more.

Each of these things that we don't see was at one time planned, and some of these plans began to be carried out, by developers or by officials of the National Park Service. In 1970, the Seashore had only recently been rescued by the massive Save Our Seashore campaign which freed up federal funds to complete most property acquisitions. According to Bill Duddleson, former aide to Congressman Clem Miller and who died in April 2014, the Park Service was backing away from its 1965 development plan and held a pre-planning meeting attended by 170 people. The common theme that united the diverse crowd of politicians, naturalists, dairymen, professors, and fishermen was preservation of the peninsula and banning of the intrusive auto.

Duddleson "... was surprised (then) that any stretch of coast near San Francisco could still be a candidate for addition to

the Wilderness System." The Park Service proposed a modest 5,150 acres as wilderness, while the citizens' far more ambitious proposal, backed by many national and local organizations such as MCL, was for 36,000 acres, including 5 miles of ocean beaches, together with estero and lagoon shores and submerged land and a tideland strip one-eighth mile wide. This vision became the 33,000-acre Phillip Burton Wilderness, providing, as the Wilderness Act defines in part, "... an outstanding opportunity for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation."

To what extent should the guardians of wilderness also be gardeners?

Millions of visitors later—and through inevitable "natural" changes in the Pt. Reyes landscape—one continues to find in that wilderness a very special place—an "island in time." One is also left with a fundamental question that pertains not just to the Phillip Burton Wilderness but to Desolation, Joshua Tree, and so many other wildernesses across the country: To what extent should the guardians of wilderness also be gardeners?

Perhaps, as Aldo Leopold suggested long before the Wilderness Act was passed, the answer lies in allowing "intelligent tinkering" with wilderness.

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Issues Committee Meeting Schedule (subject to change—check website)

Land Use and Transportation:

1st Wed. of the month, 9:00 AM—Noon

Parks and Open Space:

2nd Thurs. of the month, 3:00—5:00 PM

Water and Watersheds: 4th Thurs. of
the month, 4:00– 5:30 PM, San Rafael
Corporate Center

*Agricultural Land Use; North Marin
Unit; Climate:* Vary, check website

Marin Conservation League was founded in
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San Rafael, CA 94903

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Coastal Cleanup is Saturday, September 20th

Join Marin Conservation League
on Saturday, September 20, from
9 a.m. to noon for the 30th Annual
California Coastal Cleanup. Last year
on a very rainy day, 966 volunteers
in Marin collected more than 4,300
pounds of trash and nearly 1,000
pounds of recyclables from our
beaches and waterways.

MCL will host two locations
for the annual cleanup: Novato
volunteers meet at the Scottsdale
Pond Gazebo and the Southern
Marin site will be at the Sausalito
Waterfront, meeting at the Bay
Model.

The Sausalito Lions Club and
Friends of the Bay Model provide
a free BBQ for all volunteers
following the cleanup at the
Bay Model Visitor Center. Visit
[marinconservationleague.org/
events](http://marinconservationleague.org/events) for more details.