

Ridge Reporter

NEWSLETTER OF THE INVERNESS RIDGE ASSOCIATION

NOVEMBER 4, 2011

PHOTO: RICHARDBLAIR.COM

President's Message

As I write this, we've had over two inches of rain, followed by a string of sunny days. While the last weeks of September and October usually mean fierce, tinder dry winds, we've got the luxury this year of mellow days, clear nights, and damp forests. That's the good news.

Less good is the news about two recent incidents in PRE. Both highlight the need for all of us to look out for each other. One occurred on the Labor Day weekend, when a bunch of folks decided to throw a party on an unoccupied lot off Drakes View Drive. A tent was set up, with an open barbecue, sound system and the other accoutrements of a good time. The only two problems were that it was the height of fire season (no rain at that point) and the party givers did not own the lot and were total strangers to PRE. Happily the project was called off when the sheriff came calling—in response to a call from an alert neighbor.

The other incident seems headed for litigation. About three months ago, someone (not the owner) took it on himself to totally denude a large, steep parcel, also on Drakes View Drive, and also undeveloped. Mature trees were felled with chainsaws, and left on the ground. Though this sort of mayhem must have taken a lot of time, and made a lot of noise, no neighbor called, and the owner has been left with a degraded lot, and the potential for erosion and mudslides when the rains come.

A lot of cultures, ours among them, put a big premium on personal privacy, and on not getting involved in the affairs of others. Wise as this approach may be most of the time, it does not always work well in a place like PRE. As we have often been reminded, PRE is a long way from San Rafael. It is not incorporated, has no covenants or restrictions, and no decent road system. Utilities are unreliable, and many of our homes are only sporadically occupied. More than most places, we are on our own. This means that, as Ben Franklin said, “unless we hang together, we will all hang separately”.

Old Business: the Coastal Plan Rewrite

The latest chapter of this long saga nears an end. The County has announced five more public hearings on various individual issues. The result will be a “Public Review Draft”

which will then be forwarded to the Board of Supervisors. Once the Local Coastal Program is approved by the Supervisors, and reviewed by the State for compliance with the Coastal Act, the County will turn to individual community plans, including the Inverness Community Plan that governs PRE.

Nearly all of IRA's concerns have been addressed in the language now under review. Staff has decided to ask for no changes in current rules regarding new second units. The IRA position has been that the current rule should not be re-examined until we have addressed longstanding concerns about our substandard road system.

Updated Website

Do take a look at the updated IRA website:

<http://invernessridge.net>

Not only will you find agendas and minutes for nearly two years worth of Board meetings, but you will find links to the Road Advisory Board, the Marin Fire Department, The Point Reyes National Seashore Association, the Dance Palace, and all the other community resources that hold us all together.

More important is the disaster preparedness information. Escape routes are described. Disaster liaison persons for each sub-area are identified. To facilitate emergency coordination, we are planning (very shortly) to add a list of names, addresses and telephone contacts for all residents (where we have the information). We understand the privacy concerns of some, and will not publish e-mail addresses.

We have sent rosters by e-mail to IRA residents. It's really important for us to have complete telephone contact information for use in emergencies, especially for folks who are gone during the week, or during the day, and are reachable only by cellphone, or at their work, or at their primary residence. When you get the roster, please send corrections, and alternate phone numbers to Laurie Stetson at:

menace@horizoncable.com

State Parks: Saved By a Whisker

On October 6, the National Park Service issued a press release telling us that several Marin County state parks will continue operating past the September closing date earlier announced by the Governor. This was a serious threat: the

legislature could not agree on increased taxes or fees to keep the parks (and other state functions) going. The voters also failed to come through. This left it to the governor to meat-axe his way through the limited parts of the budget where he still has some discretion.

State parks are one such area. Logical targets were supposedly under-utilized properties, especially those in areas with fewer voters. By and large, southern beach parks were spared, Northern California venues were not. In Marin, Tamalpais, Tomales Bay, Olompali, and Samuel Taylor parks were all scheduled for closure.



Tomales Bay State Park.

There were obvious problems. Of the Marin parks, all but Olompali are partly or wholly surrounded by federal holdings. Visitors to Muir Woods, for example, often find themselves hiking trails in Tamalpais State Park. The same thing happens in Point Reyes: after exploring national seashore trails, visitors often picnic on sheltered Tomales Bay beaches. These cross-border visitations are seldom recorded, and miss the statistical analyses of the bean counters.

There was also the issue of who would take charge of patrolling the lands proposed to be abandoned by the state? Who would collect garbage left behind by hikers and swimmers? Who would ride herd on trespassers, boozers and pot farmers?

The solution announced on October 6 is temporary and partial. Hours and services will be reduced. There will be new fees charged at Muir Woods, but they will not yield enough to fully compensate the feds for assuming formerly state functions. No one knows what will happen if the current fiscal impasse continues in Washington.

But for the moment, we are very grateful to the bureaucrats who, for once, got it right.

Board Meeting/ General Meeting

The next IRA Board meeting is on December 10, 2011 at 9:30 am, at the home of David and Miriam Wilson, 21 Upper Robert Drive. All are welcome.

The General Meeting/ Potluck will be in January, 2012. We'll announce the exact date in the near future.

Fire Stuff

Perhaps in response to IRA concerns, the Marin County Fire Department is showing new interest in enforcing long-

standing rules about defensible space around dwellings. They are also concerned about thickets of dead trees and brush on unimproved properties—a worsening problem because of sudden oak death. If you get one of those letters, please don't ignore it.



Mount Vision Fire-17 years ago.

Givers and Takers

A lot of people come to the Ridge to get away from it all. This is perfectly understandable. Life in the big city is stressful, careers are demanding, and urban neighbors are often contentious. As Virginia Wolfe is supposed to have said: everyone needs a room of her own.

Still, all of us are part of a community that could not function without a lot of volunteer effort. Even the most reclusive among us walk the beaches, wander the trails, and on occasion go into town for book sales, flea markets, concerts and shows at the Dance Palace. And when disaster comes, we are profoundly grateful that people are there to help.

This is a pitch to the shy ones among us to become joiners. You don't have to become a social gadfly. You only need to show your appreciation by sending modest amounts to the volunteer groups that make things work. Once you do this, you'll be in the loop and can choose how little or how much more you would like to give of yourself.

Examples are:

IRA

Our own little group costs only \$25/year to join. We know that nearly all the benefits provided by IRA are given freely to non-members as well as members. Yet more than 80% of our households voluntarily paid their dues this year. Thanks a bunch.

The Dance Palace

Go to their website: <http://www.dancepalace.org>. You'll be surprised at the breadth and frequency of their events. Language lessons, dance classes, lectures (Michael Ondaatje, a world renowned author, spoke in late October), concerts (classical, folk, the whole gamut), intense discussion (two public meetings on the NPS/oyster farm controversy are scheduled for the near future). The atmosphere at these gatherings is warm and welcoming. Membership is \$50 for individuals, and \$60/year for households.

Point Reyes National Seashore Association

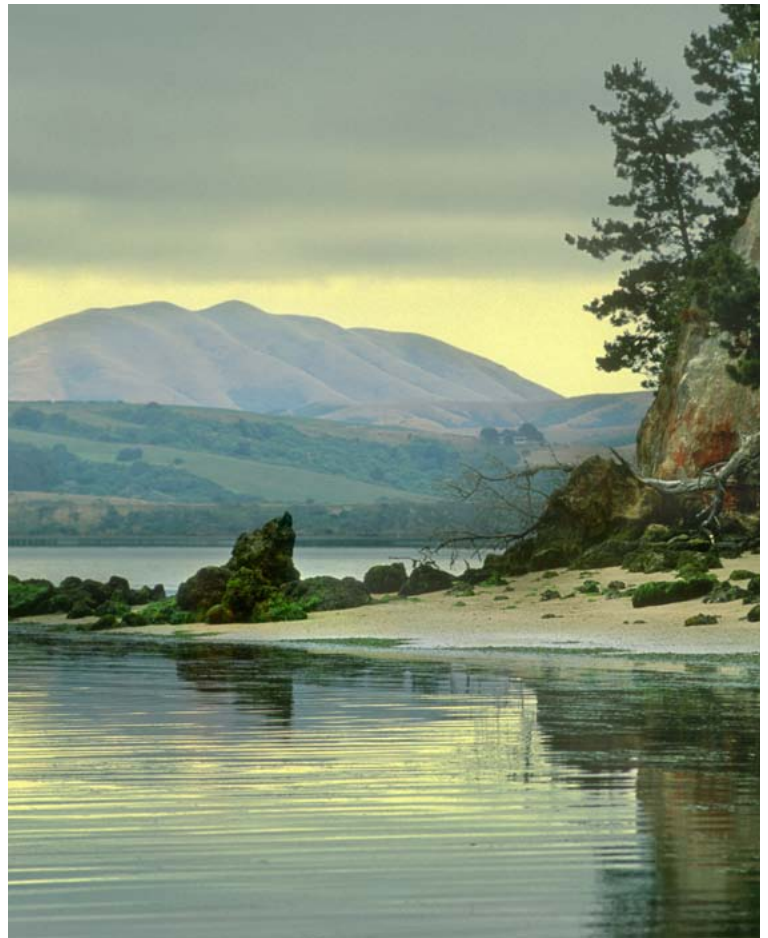


Group of Hikers on Mt. Wittenburg

Their web site is <http://www.ptreyes.org>. It is easy to forget what we owe to the presence of the national seashore. Without it, we'd have either ticky-tacky, or toney gated communities up and down our coast. PRNSA exists to do things that the park could not do on its own, like restoring tidal flows to upper Tomales Bay.

Check out the seminars offered (reduced rates for members), like night-time kayaking trips to see photo-luminescent sea creatures in Tomales Bay, and tours to the elephant seal rookeries at Chimney rock. Consider also the hundreds of inner city kids whose first experience of the wilderness is thanks to summer camp scholarships offered by PRNSA. Then join (\$40/ year).

David Wilson: President / Author
Richard Blair: Photography, Graphic Design
Kathleen Goodwin: Editor and Emailer



Shell Beach and Elephant Mountain–Kathleen Goodwin



Elephant seals