

MINUTES OF THE FITCH MOUNTAIN ASSOCIATION
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING OF JANUARY 14, 2007
(held at the Villa Chanticleer)

President Kate Barrett called the meeting to order at 11:10 a.m. Trustees present were Penelope La Montagne, Donita Proctor, Al Pucci, and Joseph Taylor. Officers present were Pres. Kate Barrett; VP Nelson Roseland; Treas. Joseph Taylor; and Interim Secretary Ellen Silge, who is replacing Bruce Johnson. Bruce has resigned due to time constraints; his steady presence and sense of humor will be missed.

A motion was made (Frances Trouette), seconded (Robert Arkin), and passed (unanimously) to approve the minutes of the meeting of July 2, 2006.

Treasurer's report: Funds at the end of 2006, \$1,143.16; current balance, \$1,243.16.

Donita Proctor discussed a petition that asks the County to do something about the condition of Fitch Mountain Road. County officials have cited a lack of money and the seeming hopelessness of achieving a permanent fix. Donita asked for volunteers from different sections of the Mountain to take copies of the petition and ask their neighbors to sign it. Signed petitions should be returned no later than March 1.

Sylvia Seventy said there may be a drainage pipe under the sinking area by Scenic Lane, and that a water line goes under the road near there, both of which could be damaged if the surface sinks further. Glen Sirchuk pointed out that the slumps go all the way down the hillside, and that efforts have been made to stabilize it, but a "deep, unconsolidated soil mass" is difficult to manage. Don McEnhill said the official he has spoken to about repairs seems to think the majority of Fitch Mountain residents are "summer people" (and thus less needy of service?). Kate confirmed that she has encountered this attitude also; the petitions and "squeaky wheeling" may help change the official mindset.

Al Pucci gave an update on the Del Rio Dam project. The Del Rio Recreation and Park District has called for further plans to satisfy the agencies involved (Dept. of Fish and Game, Regional Water Quality Control Board, National River Fisheries, and Army Corps of Engineers). An environmental consulting firm in Santa Rosa has been hired to prepare an Environmental Impact Report. The firm got all four agencies together to sound out their requirements and concerns. The goal is to have all the paperwork done by early spring, with the hope of getting bids and beginning construction during the coming dry season. If all goes well, the dam could (optimally) be in place for the 2008 season.

Nelson Roseland introduced guest speaker Sean McNeil, Restoration Project Manager for Circuit Rider Productions (CRP), who spoke about the removal of *Arunda Donax*. Of the approximately 300 acres of Arunda in the Russian River watershed, 26 acres (390 tons) are on Fitch Mountain. This "Giant Reed" is a nasty interloper that displaces native plants and has no redeeming qualities whatsoever. It provides no habitats (except for rats), it increases erosion, and it uses much more water than the average riparian plant yet is very flammable. Funding is available to eradicate it because it is detrimental to three

salmonids. It can grow 40 feet in a year, and it resprouts with ease. One clump of Arunda, incorrectly “killed” and allowed to get into the river, can become 60,000! Chipping is the best way to dispose of the remains. The CRP removal program gets rid of them the right way and re-vegetates with “good greens.” Most projects are now upriver in the Alexander Valley, with Fitch Mountain targeted for 2008, but CRP will provide advice and aid to landowners who want to remove it themselves before that. There is the possibility of having a demonstration and educational day on the Mountain this summer. Sally Arkin volunteered to be our contact person for the project.

In keeping with the topic of river ecology, resident poet Penelope La Montagne read her moving poem, “Ask the Salmon.”

Don McEnhill, of Russian Riverkeeper, spoke about Santa Rosa’s proposed wastewater disposal project. There are several methods under discussion for dealing with the city’s longstanding problems of inadequate infrastructure and poor-quality effluent. One is a reuse project, which involves constructing holding ponds. Other proposals are for indirect or direct discharge into the Russian River via extending the Geysers pipeline at Steelhead Beach, at a spot near 101 in Healdsburg, and at West Soda Rock Road.

The biggest issues with discharge into the river are: nutrients, which results in algae blooms that suck oxygen out of the water and kill fish; toxics, especially copper, which affects how salmonids can smell their way home and escape predators; and emerging contaminants, like estroidal, for which there are no regulatory standards.

Santa Rosa is estimating costs of \$100-200 million to dump/discharge at reuse ponds or into the river or \$600-700 million for new equipment that “fines” the “product” well enough to result in acceptable solids that can be carted away. Riverkeeper knows of a membrane filtration system and reverse osmosis combination that results in uncontaminated water, at a cost of about \$130 million. Riverkeeper will present information to Santa Rosa to lead them toward this alternative. In the meantime, it’s important that the negative impacts of each proposed discharge site be raised prominently; it would be good if the citizens of Forestville, Healdsburg, and Alexander Valley banded together to shout, “Not in the river ANYWHERE!” What can we do? Check the *Tribune* for unbiased information about the status of the proposals, notification of open meetings, etc. “Comment robustly” about how 3 or 4 billion gallons of wastewater dumped into the river will impact you.

The EIR process on the North County Reuse Option is just beginning. It’s a plan to store water in the winter and sell it to farmers for use in the summer. Issues that should be raised in the EIR review are the potential for leakage from the 17 dirt reservoirs and the accumulation of salts and other “unidentified compounds” in vineyard soils.

Kate Fraga commented on the November election of two Santa Rosa City Council members who are concerned about the watershed, and the possibility of more like-minded officials being elected in 2008. Martin Silge suggested that it might be better to limit future growth rather than accommodate it.

Riverkeeper's focus is on water quality and river health. Their goal is to lay out for Santa Rosa a scientifically valid alternative that's financially feasible; failing its adoption, future strategies could involve litigation or politics. ("Light up those soccer moms" about what estrogen-laced water could do to their sons.)

Kate Barrett noted that Circuit Riders (crpinc.org) and Riverkeeper (russianriverkeeper.org), both nonprofits, can always use volunteers and monetary contributions. FMA has contributed \$100 each to Russian Riverkeeper and the Russian River Watershed Protection Committee.

New Business/Announcements: A kitten was recently shot with a pellet gun on Redwood Drive. The identity of the shooter is unknown; vigilance is urged. A "speed declivity" has developed on South Fitch Mountain Road near 2306; caution is urged. There is a continuing problem of cars being parked on the shoulder near Scenic Lane during the high school's lunch time, with garbage being left behind; perhaps this could be mentioned to the Sheriff's Department.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:55 p.m.