

November 2006 Election: Environment Wins Big!

By Dennis Rosatti, Co Director

The November Elections are now behind us, and Conservation Action found great success in our endorsements. Overall, we were 77% effective on our endorsements; we got 23/30 endorsed candidates, measures, or propositions elected or passed into law.

Perhaps our greatest success came with the Sonoma County Agricultural and Open Space District Tax Renewal. More than 75% of the electorate voted to renew the OSD, guaranteeing at least another 20 years of land purchases for public ownership and conservation easements. These funds protect farms from being subdivided, prevent the lands around cities from being developed, and provide recreation land and access to pristine areas of Sonoma County. Conservation Action was very active on this campaign, distributing literature, identifying supporters and working to Get Out The Vote on Election Day.

The SMART measure found a 70% success rate in Sonoma County, but with only 58% of Marin (a healthy majority, mind you), we ended up with only 65.4%, and we needed 66.7%. The SMART Board is taking this razor thin margin of loss as a mandate from the vast majority of the



Steve Birdleough gives a presentation at the Starlight Wine Bar Fundraiser that SCCA hosted in Sept.

public to come back to the ballot in 2008. SCCA will continue our education and advocacy towards multi-modal transportation over the next two years, and work hand in hand with our members and volunteers to steward the rail vote in '08.

SCCA ran the ground campaign for the SMART campaign, something that we

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Landslide Victory for Sonoma County Agriculture and Open Space District

By Ted Eliot, Co Chair of Yes on Measure F

With their 75.7% support on November 7th for the reauthorization until 2031 of the 1/4 cent sales tax that supports Sonoma County's Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, the voters of the County underlined their desire to keep their open spaces, farms, clean water, and scenic vistas and to create more parks.

The campaign committee, which was co-chaired by Mike Senneff and me, have many people to thank for this outstanding victory. First and foremost, we ran on the platform of the success of the District since it was founded in 1990 in protecting 70,000 acres from development, including 13,000 acres added to state, county and city parks. This success was achieved by the staff of the District, headed by General Manager Andrea Mackenzie, by the County's Board of Supervisors which is also the District's Board, by members of the District's Authority which oversees its finances, and by the District's Advisory Committee and the many other volunteers who assisted the District's planning and operations.

The campaign itself was directed by a steering committee representing many different walks of life, by diverse regional committees and by scores of volunteers who worked at phone banks, walked precincts, planted signs and stuffed envelopes. The capable consulting firm, TBW&B, in the persons of Barry Barnes and Sarah Stern, kept us on message and produced first-rate signs and mailers. Our indefatigable campaign manager, Brian Bottari, saw to it that needed work got done on time and kept our spirits high 24/7. Support came from organizations representing business, agriculture, labor, teachers,

city council members and every newspaper in the County. Well over 400 donors contributed a total of almost \$330,000 to the campaign.



Hikers along Red Hill and the Russian River. Photo from Open Space District Gallery.

Our core support came in many different ways from environmental organizations and their members. The list is too long to include here, but special mention needs to be made of the contributions in both staff and money from The Nature Conservancy and the California and local Audubon Societies.

Special mention also needs to be made of Sonoma County Conservation Action which provided invaluable assistance to the campaign's phone banking, precinct walking and identifying supporters. SCCA's donated professional services helped free up funds for mailers, including one in the last week of the campaign. Its work highlighted the type of camaraderie which makes Sonoma County's conservation movement so effective.

This victory was summed up by County Supervisor Valerie Brown's statement in her January 24 "State of the County Message": "Solid voter approval of a 20-year extension of the County's Agricultural Preservation and Open Space tax ranks as last year's high point". ◇

Ted Eliot is the former US Ambassador to Afghanistan and is an avid bird watcher and Audubon enthusiast.

Environmental Elected Corner: Spotlight on Susan Gorin, Santa Rosa City Council

A Note to Our Readers:

It is with great pleasure that I present the members of Conservation Action with this new column. We hope to give space to the elected officials/candidates that are working hard on the environment, to give us all a greater sense of the challenges and tough issues that many of these candidates face in their governing roles. We welcome feedback on this column to letters@conservationaction.org

Thank you for your continued support!

Dennis Rosatti, Co Director

Turning Campaign Rhetoric Into Reality

By Susan Gorin

There is a scene near the end of the 1970's film "The Candidate" starring a very young Robert Redford when he realizes on election night that he has won the election. He emerges from his stupor, and on the way to his victory speech, he forces his campaign manager into a room and asks, "Now what do we do?"

That transition – from campaign elation to panic and confusion to determination – happens to all candidates. Only the timing is different. But it is now three months after the November 7th election. Hopefully our election debris is stored or recycled, our orientations with city staffs are complete, we have at least a passing acquaintance with our city-provided Blackberrys and computers, and we have several months of meetings under our belts. It is time to set the agenda for our community.

The voters of Santa Rosa recognized that we were playing catch-up to our more innovative sister cities in the County. The initial differences between the candidates at the beginning of the campaign melded into a strong campaign theme of smart growth, alternative



Susan Gorin, 2006

transportation, affordable housing and green building programs. The concurrent campaigns of SMART and the Open Space Reauthorization only enhanced those discussions. The voters decisively elected Veronica Jacobi and me, and re-elected Bob Blanchard. And with determination and vigor, they rejected candidates representing more-of-the-same development and negative campaigning.

The challenge now becomes how to move that campaign victory into a winning agenda incorporating many of our campaign messages. That is easier said than done.

The process of goal setting often resembles sausage making – it's messy, at times incoherent, and you can still see bits of the individual pieces in the sausage. This week Santa Rosa City Council spent two days talking around and sometimes to its five 2030 Long Term Visionary Initiatives.

- Creating a Vital Downtown
- Thriving Diverse, Healthy & Safe Neighborhoods
- Open Space and Recreational Activities
- Creating Additional Transportation Alternatives
- More Inclusive Community

Staff and council two-year goals were melded into this vision for the future.

The major thrust of the council over the next two years was separately identified:

- Deliver a Safe and Efficient Transportation System
- Develop Regional Gang Prevention and Intervention
- Assume a Leadership Role in the Region for Environmental Initiatives
- Promote a Healthy and Growing Economic Base
- Provide Resources for Seniors and Youth

The challenge, of course, for any newly elected council member is to introduce new initiatives, but recognize when to push for those initiatives that have support on the council and knowing when to table others. On the whole, Veronica and I were able to push for expanded transportation alternatives, a review of how we fund and produce affordable housing, expanded climate protection efforts, and modified language in economic development. But we had to table a few others, such as a review of parking policies.

Sonoma County is blessed with a richness of progressive political thought and discourse. The electorate understands the importance of preparing for the future, and they elected an incredible mix of dynamic women and men to join our veterans on our city councils and other offices.

Veronica Jacobi and I look forward to working with other progressive city council members throughout the county to forge a common agenda. To make that agenda a reality, let's work now to identify those strategies successful in the last campaign and elect even more progressives to add to our strength and purpose. ◇

ACTION ALERT! Affordable Housing and Green Design in Downtown Santa Rosa

BACKGROUND

The City of Santa Rosa is planning the future of the ½-mile around the Downtown SMART Depot. This area includes downtown, the Plaza, Railroad Square, and the corridors that serve as entryways to these areas. The document that will guide development in this area is called the Santa Rosa Downtown Station Area Plan.

WHAT'S AT STAKE

The future of the city's core is being decided, and we need YOUR VOICE to make sure that the downtown area becomes a walkable, bikeable location where housing is available for the whole community, buildings have reduced environmental impact, and the design of development creates an inviting place to live, work, and play.

Take Action Now!

In your own words, ask that the following changes be made to the Draft Station Area Specific Plan:

Points to include:

- Include a **requirement** that residential development in the Station Area meet a minimum of 40% affordable housing (20% moderate-income and 20% low- and

very low-income).

- Include a **requirement** that all development in the Station Area meet a minimum level of "green building" standards. All development must include: water conservation measures, energy conservation measures, wastewater reduction, stormwater run-off reduction, public green spaces, and use "healthy" building materials
- Require bicycle access to the downtown core that is easy and safe, and bike parking that is plentiful, public, safe, and secure for all new retail and office areas
- Mandate that developments on publicly-owned lots include benefits for the community: green building design, affordable housing, bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly design

Address the letter to:

Ken MacNab, City Planner
Department of Advance Planning & Public Policy
City of Santa Rosa
100 Santa Rosa Ave.
PO BOX 1678

Santa Rosa, CA 95402

Fax: (707) 543-3218

KMacNab@ci.santa-rosa.ca.us

CC: Santa Rosa City Council

100 Santa Rosa Ave.

PO BOX 1678

Santa Rosa, CA 95402

SCCA Permaculture Training/Party

Saturday, March 31st on the corner of King and Spencer St. in Santa Rosa

Workshop 9AM-Noon (\$30-\$50 sliding scale, call Craig @ (707) 571-8566 for details)
Featuring International Permaculture Expert Erik Ohlsen and SCCA's Own Craig Litwin

Potluck Lunch 12-1 PM

Permaculture Work Party 1-6PM (Free)

After Hours Music (Donation Suggested)



Participants of the workshop will learn:

Permaculture design, site assessment, water conservation and harvesting, growing Food Forests in small spaces, working with varied microclimates, soil building, Integrated Pest Management, bioremediation (cleaning toxic soil and water), creating wildlife habitat, beauty in design.

**Donations of \$, tools, & seeds welcome!*

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have never done before! We found great success here in Sonoma County, distributing 1000's of lawn signs and facilitating more than 200 volunteers for the effort. We know that the task ahead is in Marin, and we are taking steps to solidify our support to the South.

On the City Council side of things, we had smashing success! Thirteen of our sixteen candidates earned seats on City Councils. We won 2 seats in Santa Rosa, perhaps the most important of all the cities, with all the appointments they get to make! Susan Gorin and Veronica Jacobi will need to hold down the fort in Santa Rosa, as we need two more seats in 2008 to gain a majority on the council.

Pam Torliatt won the Mayor's race in Petaluma, and Teresa Barrett won a council seat. Sam Salmon and Robin Goble helped us retain an environmental majority in Windsor, and Steve Barbose and Ken Brown won in Sonoma.

Pam Stafford won a seat in Rohnert Park, ousting Armando Flores and giving us a progressive majority for the first time in the history of Rohnert Park city politics! Now its time to put the gavel to the grind, so to speak, and enact sound environmental policy in "The Friendly City."

Of the three candidates who won in Cloverdale, Bob Jehn was the only person endorsed by SCCA, but all three committed to supporting an Urban Growth Boundary.

In Cotati, only Pat Gilardi won from our list, in a very tight race. SCCA is eager to work with John Guardino, who was endorsed by the Sierra Club, and is a newcomer to Cotati City politics.

On the school board side of things, neither of our candidates won the SRJC School Board seats. A well funded developer supported opposition was able to out-mail and gain more votes than these fine candidates.

On the bright side, Kellie Noe was top vote getter in the contested West County High School District race, earning more

than 13,000 votes! Kellie ran a grassroots campaign, knocking on over 3,000 doors by the time election day rolled around.

At the state level we are doing very well! All 4 of SCCA's state candidates won their elections. Pat Wiggins is back in politics as our State Senator, Noreen Evans is still serving us well as Assemblymember for the 7th District, and Patty Berg is scoring points in the 1st Assembly District. Jared Huffman, of Marin county water district and National Resources Defence Council fame, is the Assemblymember for the 6th District. The environment will be in good hands in Sacramento!

Lynn Woolsey is back in Washington as our 6th District Representative in the House of Representatives. Lynn will continue to speak sensibilities in Washington, and keep those oil rigs off our coastline!

In short, the local environment was well served during the Fall 2006 Election. SCCA will continue to educate the public about the issues that matter to us most: clean air and water, open space protection, and alternatives to automobiles. Thank you for your support! ◇



Sonoma County Conservation Action

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Willow P-Whitcomb

Phone Manager

Joshua Stithem

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SMART Rail & Trail Progress

By Steve Birdlebough, Chair, Friends of SMART

SCCA's support for the SMART Rail and Trail Project was critical to the near-victory attained in last November's election. Professional canvassers provided support and guidance for hundreds of volunteers who walked precincts and made phone calls to garner favorable votes. Everyone was inspired by support from groups as diverse as the Sierra Club, chambers of commerce, and the League of Women Voters. While these efforts were not quite sufficient to reach the two-thirds vote needed for a tax measure, SMART came within two percentage points of success.

To decide the best way of moving the project forward, the SMART District moved to talk with both supporters and critics. Directors Boro, Jehn, Kerns, McGlashan, and Reiley were appointed to an *ad hoc* Committee to undertake in depth discussion of concerns about factors such as the sound of train whistles, grade crossings, train schedules and the performance of clean diesel engines. Much of the misinformation and resistance to rail service expressed during the campaign can be reduced or resolved in the process.

Growing experience with quiet zones that prevent trains from blowing whistles at grade crossings can demonstrate their practicality here in the North Bay. Experience with the types of signals that prevent SMART Trains from blocking intersections can reassure those who are worried about the effects of trains on rush hour travel. The costs and benefits of more

attractive schedules that would serve off-peak travelers in the SMART Corridor can be explored, and the January 1st arrival of ultra-low-sulfur diesel fuel should make it clear that SMART Trains can in fact run clean.

The fact that a solid majority of voters in both Sonoma and Marin counties supported the SMART Project is creating a sense of optimism about rail and trail synergies. The Presidential election in 2008 is likely to draw a great deal of interest from voters, and a large turnout can help push the train into the winners' column. Success depends on a broad effort by people with concern for the environment, and we appreciate the efforts of SCCA and its members. ◇

SCCA PAC Fundraiser
March 5th, 2007 6:45-9:00PM
Keynote Speaker: Ted Eliot, Co-Chair
of the Yes on F Open Space Campaign
Odd Fellows Hall
545 Pacific Ave.
Tickets \$30-\$100 Sliding Scale:
Call (707) 571-8566 or online at
conservationaction.org/gi/pac/html
Proceeds to Benefit SCCA Political Action Committee

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Contributions to SCCA support our advocacy and grassroots Organizing work. They are not tax-deductible.

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*Please join our growing list of **Sustaining Members** who give Regularly-scheduled donations via credit card. Call us at the office at 571-8566 for more information*

Please share this newsletter with your neighbors and friends! Thank You!