

“Sharon Wrong” for The Environment

By Craig Litwin, Political Director

Although it is yet unclear who the most viable environmentally qualified candidate is for the third district Supervisor seat being vacated by Retiring Supervisor Tim Smith, one thing is perfectly clear: a vote for **Sharon Wright** is a clear vote against the local environment.

When gauging if a candidate will stand up for environmental issues it is important to assess three questions. One, what has the candidate advocated for as a member of the public or as an elected or appointed official? Two, where do the candidate’s campaign contributions come from? Three, who is supporting the candidate’s bid for elected office and who has the candidate supported in turn for elected office?

Regarding the first assessment, as a councilmember in Santa Rosa Sharon voted the wrong way on just about every environmental issue before her. She fought to **weaken the voter approved Urban Growth Boundary** passed by voters in 1996, she **approved ridge-top development** contrary to a city policy calling for the ridge tops to be left open, and she kept voting for continued city contracts for groups that she simultaneously held employment with (specifically **she was fined \$14,500 in 1998** by the Fair Political Practices Commission for ten counts of violations of Conflict of Interest Law).

The second assessment, even for a political novice, shows us that most of her campaign contributions come from development interests. Smart growth is a good thing in city centers, but a candidate that is so heavily supported by **development interests** time and time again tends to sacrifice the environment, affordable housing, and a strong local economy, and is not to

(Continued on page 3)

Rue Furch for 5th District Supervisor

On December 26th, Sonoma County Conservation Action (SCCA), the county’s largest environmental organization, announced its endorsement of Rue Furch for 5th District Supervisor. The



Rue Furch, Candidate for 5th District Supervisor

Fifth District is geographically diverse, encompassing the lower Russian River Valley, Sebastopol and the surrounding farmlands, S o u t h w e s t

Santa Rosa, the rural communities of Forestville, Graton, Occidental, Guerneville and Bodega, and all of coastal Sonoma County.

“A strong field of candidates has announced for this seat,” said Denny Rosatti, Executive Director for SCCA. “Rue Furch stands out because of her depth of knowledge and years of experience working on the environ-

mental issues facing Sonoma County.”

SCCA also endorsed Rue Furch because she is the only candidate who has the proven ability to bring together votes on the Planning Commission and then garner support from the Board of Supervisors. It was her tireless efforts, for example, that assured water resources and safe and sufficient water supplies will have a new priority when the county does its planning.

“The new General Plan wouldn’t have a Water Resources Element if Rue hadn’t convinced the county staff and a majority of the board that this was one of the key issues for the next 20 years,” said Rosatti. “She has also been able to deliver winning votes to increase affordable housing, expand the number of streams that have riparian corridor protections, and restrict water exports out of Sonoma County.”

SCCA has worked for 17 years recruiting, supporting and stewarding environmental candidates and those elected to public office in Sonoma County. Mike Reilly, the retiring 5th district supervisor, who has earned a

(Continued on page 2)

Sonoma Valley Hospital Endorsement

There’s an election quickly and quietly approaching in the Sonoma Valley, for a hospital bond for the Sonoma Valley Hospital District. Conservation Action has endorsed the “Yes on F” bond measure campaign, due in large part to the commitment of the district to build a city centered hospital adjacent to the existing hospital and medical infrastructure.

Conservation Action canvassers walked much of the district in the Summer of 2007, generating letters of support to the Hospital District for the reuse of the existing hospital and a city centered approach. The benefits of this proposal are clear for the envi-

ronment. By utilizing the existing hospital and building the new hospital building(s) nearby, we prevent additional pressure being placed on the Urban Growth Boundary, passed by 64% of the public of Sonoma just in the year 2000. We also allow the existing network of medical offices and businesses to continue to exist around the current hospital zone. These businesses would likely move to whatever new location the district chose, hence keeping them in town or near the existing site is critical when evaluating the overall impact of moving the hospital.

The bond is the first part of a two part bond strategy to finance the seismic upgrade to the existing hospital which will be used for offices, and the

Environmental Elected Corner: Mike McGuire, Healdsburg City Council

A Note to Our Readers:

This is the third installment in our ongoing series featuring environmental electeds and the policy and challenges they face in their roles as public servants. Here we have a City Councilmember from Healdsburg, who at the age of 19 was first elected to public office, for Healdsburg City School Board. Enjoy his latest in a litany of environmental policy movements, straight from the source!

Dennis Rosatti, Executive Director

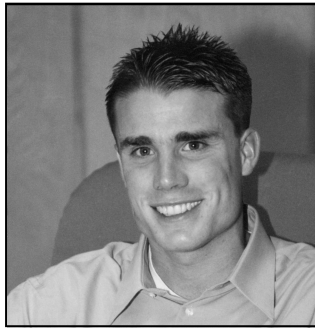
Plastic Bag Pollution

By Mike McGuire, Healdsburg Councilmember

Sonoma County's communities and pristine countryside are under attack. Take a drive on any major roadway around our beautiful County and you will notice the proliferation of petroleum based plastic bags tangled in tree branches, along corrugated fences and littering our waterways.

The American Plastics Council reports that petroleum based plastic bags have captured at least 80 percent of the grocery and convenience store market in the United States. According to the San Francisco Department of Environment, and facts compiled by reusablebags.com, the United States uses 100 billion petroleum based plastic bags annually which amounts to an estimated 12 million barrels of oil.

The Worldwatch Institute reports that less than one percent of plastic bags are recycled which means on a national level, **99 percent of the plastic bags we use end up in the landfill**, polluting our coastline or contaminating the sensitive eco-



Mike McGuire, Healdsburg City Council

system of the Russian River.

Assembly Bill 2449, the California law that was intended to restrict the use of plastic bags, was gutted by the powerful plastics lobby and the California Grocers Association.

Californians have been left with an ineffective law that provides little funding to promote a mandated plastic bag recycling program in local grocery and drug stores. In addition, the law precludes California lawmakers from enacting a statewide ban or allowing our local communities to impose a mandatory surcharge on plastic bags. It's time for all of us to organize, stand united against the powerful special interests and enact true reform on the local level.

I'm asking you to join me to support an important two step process that will **end Sonoma County's addiction to the plastic bag**. To accomplish the first step, along with Healdsburg Councilmember Eric Zeidrich, I'll be asking the Sonoma County Mayors and Councilmembers Association to join with Healdsburg and mandate

our local waste haulers integrate the recycling of plastic bags in our current single stream, curbside recycling bins. It is much easier for the garbage haulers to convert on a fleet or company-wide level, versus one city at a time, thus the need for a comprehensive approach.

Secondly, I believe that all 9 of Sonoma County's Cities, along with the County itself, should come together and enact a mandatory ban of petroleum based plastic bags. The City of Healdsburg has learned, through extensive study by a highly motivated ad-hoc committee, that the plastics lobby will pour unlimited financial resources into fighting individual cities that choose to do the right thing and ban the bag. The only way we will be able to push back against the greedy special interests is by working together on a universal, Countywide recycling program and plastic bag ban.

Power is in numbers, and it's time we start flexing our muscle. With a united approach and all of us working together, we can end our reliance on the plastic bag once and for all. In these busy times, I ask that you take a few minutes to contact your favorite local Councilmember or County Supervisor and tell them that you are ready for Sonoma County to **Ban the Bag!** Thank you for your support. ♦

Mike McGuire is an Elected member of the Healdsburg City Council, and is up for Re-Election in Fall of 2008.

Rue Furch Continued from Page 1

"Double A" on SCCA's environmental report card, has been a strong voice for environmental policy for the past 12 years. Watchful environmentalists say Rue Furch's environment record would qualify as a "Double A" on our report card.

According to Bill Kortum, Dean of Sonoma County's environmental movement and founder and president of SCCA, "No one knows how to actually get things done at the county level like Rue Furch. She'll continue to use that knowledge to develop strong environmental policies that

protect Sonoma County."

Rue has worked for affordable housing, comprehensive water management, and UGB's. SCCA is confident that Rue will serve the environmental community well in a seat dubbed "the soundboard for progressive political policies" in Sonoma County. ♦

Sharon Wrong continued from page 1

be trusted with our precious natural resources. This is true of Sharon today and in her past, and is one of the reasons that she consistently got F's on SCCA's annual report card.

The third assessment, or the 'rubbing elbows' assessment, often gives the clearest picture of who a candidate is, or where their true alliances lie. Sharon has consistently been endorsed by Supervisor Paul Kelley, (who also has consistently received F's on SCCA's report card) who is has one of the worst environmental voting records in Sonoma County. She has always fought against people like Marsha Vas Dupre, Steve Rabinowitsh and Noreen Evans, and even came out against Lynn Woolsey, whose environmental record is exemplary.

Due to her status as a true wolf in sheep's clothing, Sharon Wright has earned the name "Sharon Wrong" for the environment!

Her development interest backed campaign will be a difficult assault to overcome. There is much work to do to ensure she does not get 50%+1 to cinch the election in June. The top two candidates in the primary, barring anyone getting 50%+1, will have a run-off election this November.

This is arguably the most critical race for SCCA's membership to get involved with. SCCA will continue watching this race with the greatest of care to report who the best environmental candidate will be.

Candidates that have announced for the 3rd District Supervisor seat so far include at least two prior endorsed SCCA elected City Councilmembers:

Veronica Jacobi, Santa Rosa*

Tim Smith, Rohnert Park*

Shirlee Zane, Council on Aging

***Prior Endorsed by SCCA**

This race will be quickly unfolding over the next several months. One thing is certain— together we can save the county from this newest assault on the local environment by working against Sharon Wright, or "Sharon Wrong", as she deserves. ◇

Genetic Engineering Bill Approved in the California Assembly By Renata Brillinger

Thank you for your calls and letters to Assemblymembers!

Stay tuned for an alert targeting Senators later this spring, as AB 541 now moves to the Senate.



Reap what you sow.

AB 541, which could become California's first state law protecting farmers from the hazards of genetically engineered crops, passed out of the full Assembly on January 29 with a vote of 49-13. It has the support of the California Farm Bureau as well as California Certified Organic Farmers, Community Alliance with Family Farmers, the California Farmers Union and many food safety and environmental organizations.

Introduced by Assembly Member Jared Huffman (D-Marin) early in 2007, the bill was held over in the Agriculture Committee in April. Since then, AB 541 has been scaled back to address two provisions related to farmer protections.

AB 541 will enact protections for California farmers against frivolous lawsuits that intimidate and harass those who have not been able to prevent the inevitable – the drift of genetically engineered pollen or seed. It will level the playing field for farmers accused by agricultural biotechnology companies and other patent holders of contract violations, and discourage the practice of biotech companies sampling crops without explicit permission from farmers and prosecuting based on unverifiable testing results.

Specifically, the newly amended bill would provide for:

1. Protection from patent infringement lawsuits for farmers unknowingly contaminated by GE crops. Currently, farmers with crops that become contaminated by patented seeds or

pollen have been the target of such lawsuits without clear recourse or defense.

2. The establishment of a mandatory crop sampling protocol to be used by patent holders when investigating farmers they believe may have violated patents or seed contracts. This protocol would require the farmer's written permission for sampling, and provide for a state agriculture official to accompany the patent holder during the sampling and collect duplicate samples for independent verification if requested by either party.

"I am very pleased that the stakeholders on this issue have found a way to address one of the issues related to genetic contamination of crops," stated Assembly Member Huffman. "While there is still work to do on other issues concerning genetically engineered food, AB 541 would be an important step in establishing basic protections for California's farmers."

The original bill included several other elements, including the establishment of the country's first system of notification for the locations of GE crops; the confinement of experimental pharmaceutical-producing crops to greenhouses to protect the food system from contamination; and, legislative clarity that the GE crop manufacturer is liable in the event of contamination, and not farmers.

"While AB 541 as currently amended represents only a small piece of what our stakeholders identify as issues to be addressed, we think this represents a move in the right direction," stated Renata Brillinger, director of the Genetic Engineering Policy Project, the 13-member coalition of organic and conventional farmers, food industry, environmental, and faith organizations sponsoring AB 541.

The bill will now move to the Senate for consideration. ◇

Renata Brillinger is a member of the Genetic Engineering Policy Project, and works at the Occidental Arts and Ecology Center in Occidental. Renata was very active in the GE FREE Sonoma County Campaign in 2005.

CONSERVATION ACTION ALERTS!

Keep Parks Open

URGE LOCAL ELECTEDS TO LOBBY TO KEEP OUR STATE PARKS OPEN!

Background: On January 10th, the Governor released the proposed FY 08-09 state budget. We expected it to be difficult but it turned out to be worse than we had thought. The budget proposed to close 48 state parks - that's almost 20 percent! Some on the local list include Armstrong Redwoods, Austin Creek, and Petaluma Adobe. At a time where more people are moving into the area we need to find ways to make new parks. We cannot afford to lose these local natural treasures.

SCCA is working in partnership with Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods to let our local representatives know that our state parks, and especially the ones on the chopping block, are priceless. Last year alone Armstrong Redwoods saw over 800,000 visitors, many of them school children who have only before read of the majesty of an old-growth redwood forest.

Take Action Now!

Parks are good for wildlife, students, our economy, and our health!

Points to include:

- Urge your City Council/County Supervisor to pass a resolution in support of saving our state parks.
- Urge them to send the resolution to their state representatives and to the governor.
- Urge them to follow up the passage of the resolution with personal phone calls to their state representatives and to the Governor's office to lobby for the saving of our state parks!

Address the letters, one to your Council (in phone book) and one to the Board of Supervisors:

Contacts for the Board of Supes:

Sonoma County Administration Building,
B.O.S.
575 Administration Drive, Room 100A
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

- District 1 (Sonoma Valley and Oakmont): Sup. Valerie Brown
Email: vbrown@sonoma-county.org
- District 2 (Southern Rohnert Park, Petaluma and Penngrove): Sup. Mike Kerns
Email: mkerns@sonoma-county.org
- District 3 (Midtown Santa Rosa, Northern Rohnert Park): Sup. Tim Smith
Email: tsmith@sonoma-county.org
- District 4 (North County and Larkfield/Wikiup): Sup. Paul Kelley
Email: pkelley@sonoma-county.org
- District 5 (West County, Sebastopol, Western Santa Rosa): Sup. Mike Reilly
Email: mreilly@sonoma-county.org

Protect Water Resources

TELL MEMBERS OF CONGRESS TO FIX NORTH COAST WATER BILL!

Background: A US Senate vote will happen very soon on S.1472, the North Bay Water Reuse Program Act (Feinstein, Boxer). This project would send some 22-30,000 acre feet of recycled water, originally taken from the Eel and Russian Rivers and Santa Rosa Plain groundwater by SCWA and used by its contractor cities, then treated and pumped through a massive pipeline project mostly to benefit grape growers who have overdrafted their local water supplies in southern Sonoma and Napa Valleys and Solano county. We strongly believe that the highest priority for reuse of treated wastewater is to use it locally by cities to greatly reduce current and future urban demands for water from our North Coast rivers, not to create new vineyard customers.

This SCWA-Bureau of Reclamation Project would use 5-11,000 new horsepower for pumps, but deliver only 1400-1459AF/Yr of recycled water to displace potable water de-

mands in Novato and Sonoma. The Project cost is estimated at \$311-512M in capital costs, with \$10-12M/yr operating costs.

Opposition to the bills have come from Friends of the Eel River, Sonoma County Water Coalition, O.W.L. Foundation and Sonoma County Conservation Action. No North Coast river and fisheries stakeholders were consulted in developing the Program or the legislation. The Bureau of Reclamation itself testified that the Program's legislation is premature. Yet, the House has already passed its version of the legislation (HR236, Thompson, Woolsey).

As currently defined, the Program and S.1472 are indeed unacceptable.

Board members David Keller and Bill Kortum are now in negotiation with SCWA and the Bay Institute. They are working to get our priority policies incorporated into the Project Definitions and Purposes statement in the forthcoming Environmental Reviews. All project alternatives would have to be judged for their compliance with those priorities. If we can't achieve that by mid-March, then we will resume strong opposition to S.1472 at Sen. Feinstein's office.

Take Action Now!

Write Senators Feinstein and Boxer today to keep our water where it belongs, with us!

Points to include:

- Sonoma County recycled water should be utilized to offset potable water demand in Sonoma County
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions need to be fully evaluated in the project
- Ask that the lawmakers continue to work with local stakeholders
- Ask to stay informed on this issue

Mail to:

Senator Dianne Feinstein
One Post Street, Suite 2450
San Francisco, CA 94104
DC Fax: (202) 228-3954

Senator Barbara Boxer
1700 Montgomery St., Suite 240
San Francisco, CA 94111
DC Fax: (202) 228-2382