

## **Our Water after The Fires: Urgent Protection and Long Term Remedies**

*By Chris Grabill, SCCA Board Member*

More than 100,000 acres burned in the October wildfires, including hundreds of homes along Sonoma County's streams and creeks. This scale of disaster has a sizable and devastating effect on our water sources.

As winter rains pick up, they add the serious danger of hazardous materials entering our waterways, soils, and groundwater.

The burn area includes 617 streams and creeks, each with numerous damaged home sites in water runoff zones. Clean up efforts are moving as quickly as possible, and we are grateful for Cal Fire's efforts -- but the enormous extent of the fire damage often means that high priority hazards can be overlooked.

For example, days before our first rain, electrical wires lay scattered in Mark West Creek, along with arsenic- and creosote-pressure treated wood debris from 38 different bridges.

Based on our local knowledge, relationships with landowners, and our direct link to state cleanup agencies, SCCA members helped to target and mobilize State Agencies to get the toxic debris removed in a matter of days, just before the rains hit.

This is difficult and intricately detailed work, beyond the capacity of any single agency or organization. Every single dwelling site needs our attention, compassion for the owners and our help to contain the most immediate threat from of toxic ash and rain runoff into waterways.

We have a narrow window to prevent mass contamination through this rainy season, and it will need us all to step up. This means closely coordinating all actions. Grassroots groups move nimbly, but government which tends to be slower, has the resources.

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## **Leading Community-Powered Disaster Relief**

*By Neal Fishman, SCCA Board President*

In a matter of a week, over 15,000 family, friends and neighbors lost their homes to the largest wildfires in California history. And now, six weeks later, the second wave of impacts are hitting.

While fire survivors navigate a complex bureaucracy that regulates rebuilding, renters are displaced daily as rent prices soar in an already compromised housing market. Every day, Sonoma County Conservation Action takes regular calls from fire survivors who need help to mitigate toxic runoff and erosion around their property. Their anxiety over toxic exposure is palpable. Sadly, this disaster's impact is not yet fully realized.

Part of Sonoma County's beauty is the enormous amount of goodwill that springs up in the face of tragedy. As a grassroots organization built on people power, we know the capacity of our community when effectively mobilized.

But leveraging this outpouring of support requires channeling it, and quickly. So far, donated goods have sat in storage as families scrambled daily for basic necessities. Without effective needs management systems in

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**SonomaCounty.**  
**recovers**  
**.org**

## **Sonoma County's Fire History What can we learn?**

*By Jane Nielson, SCCA Board Member*

"We live in an ecosystem which has evolved to burn," notes Michael Gillogly, Pepperwood Preserve ranch manager, as he considers that much of the preserve's 900 acres of grasslands were burned.

The October Tubbs wildfire is not a new phenomenon, it overlaps the 1964 Hanly fire, the 1996 Porter Creek fires, and north of Calistoga, the 1960 Morrison and 1982 Silverado fires. Outlines of the Pocket fire, north of Geyserville, and the Atlas fire in Napa and Solano Counties, replicate areas that had burned in 1960s, 1980s,

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## **Toxic Exposure in Public Spaces**

*By Megan Kaun, Nichole Warwick, Lendri Purcell*

California will restrict farmers' use of certain pesticides near schools according to a new rule announced this November. Taking effect Jan. 1, farmers will no longer be allowed to spray certain pesticides within a quarter mile of public K-12 schools and licensed daycares from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. during the school week.

While we are thrilled to see this statewide progress, locally we continue to experience the use of toxic pesticides in our public spaces and schoolyards. Sonoma County, now more than ever, needs to hold onto this

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place, these resources would be lost.

To bridge this clear gap, SCCA spearheaded the launch of SonomaCounty.Recovers.org. This is a locally-managed, people-powered disaster relief platform, used across the nation in communities like ours when they face enormous devastation from hurricanes, fires or other natural disasters.

We knew that the County and survivors would need a nimble, simple and bilingual tool to keep everyone informed, to quickly distribute donated goods and to communicate to volunteers. We foresaw the need to match requests to resources in real-time across dozens of organizations and agencies, through a shared platform.

Kerry Fugett, our ED, contributed her database background, and combined it with our SCCA network, to guide the volunteer launch team of six energized millennials as we kicked off the site's implementation. Over a week of daily conference calls and never-ending texts passed before we even met in persons.

Through the SonomaCounty.Recovers.org website, we are able to offer personal support to displaced folks. With over 50 organizations sharing this platform, we've collectively helped over 1,200 people, received thousands of donations, and signed up over 2,800 volunteers seeking to contribute to our local recovery efforts.

Over 25 years of grassroots organizing prepared our response to this unique and tragic disaster — we have empowered our community by connecting people to action.

Normally we are pushing them to the polls to support good candidates, or to town halls to advocate for better policy; we used that same methodology to put them in touch with their ailing neighbors, our shared watershed recovery efforts, and the community that needs their attention, skills & goodwill.

We have impressive strength as individuals, but our power when we organize and work together is astounding. This recovery support system is stronger than any of us alone, and is the first step in helping retain our community while building a network needed for bouncing back. ♦ **Take an Action!** To request support, donate or volunteer, visit [SonomaCounty.Recovers.org](http://SonomaCounty.Recovers.org).



## Zero Waste and Good Jobs

By Jane Nielson and Janis Watkins,  
SCCA Board Members

Sonoma County Conservation Action is proud to endorse a local campaign to achieve Zero Waste and support Good Jobs for Sonoma County. This campaign provides an antidote to both garbage growth and a permanent underclass. San Francisco's Recology Program is tailored to achieve these objectives, and soon will be managing much of Sonoma County's waste collection, sorting, and trash-reduction disposal.

For most of human existence, people dropped their relatively minor and naturally sourced wastes right where they lived. Biodegradation diminished vegetative wastes, but many ancient discards still are largely identifiable. Since 1950, industry has convinced us to buy canned and otherwise packaged foods—and now virtually everything from cabbages to electronics come wrapped in plastics, none biodegradable.

By 1980 garbage volumes had grown immensely, overwhelming biodegradation capacities at established "landfill sites", which still rely on natural processes to keep us safe from the myriad of toxic chemicals in modern garbage.

At the same time, natural processes are highly effective at spreading contaminants: rain and wind erosion transfer trash and chemicals to soils, streams, and groundwater supplies, and streams dump plastics into the ocean, where currents concentrate them in extensive floating masses. The plastics eventually reduce to tiny fragments that marine animals mistake for planktonic food sources.

The existential threat of our garbage and our wastes is huge, and equivalent to that of global warming—also driven by waste emissions.

A Zero Waste program requires everybody to accurately sort their discards into one of 3 bins: Green for Compostable

wastes; Blue for Recyclable materials; and Black for landfill wastes. Each is then separately processed by bin type:

(1) Compostable materials go to a compost-making site, producing soil amendments for farmers, and helping to lower chemical pesticide usage. Since Sonoma Compost closed SCCA continues to advocate for the return of compost-making to a local site, for it is important to localize that resource as much as possible.

(2) Blue bin contents get mechanically sorted at the processing site, supervised by workers who manually remove wrongly sorted items.

(3) Re-usable items are removed from black bin contents, and although much of the rest goes to a landfill, the amounts are substantially reduced over current collections.

SCCA Board members who have toured the Recology Zero Waste processing centers, in San Francisco, are more than impressed. This innovative system supports unionization and provides wages above levels for most waste workers, allowing them to move up the employment chain into supervisory and management positions.

This program especially supports good wages for Recycling-line sorters—a job that requires accurate removal of any non-recyclable materials from a fast-moving line. Without the sorters' intense focus and dedication, a Zero Waste goal cannot be achieved. Recology innovations also include an Artist-In-Residence program, an Environmental Learning Center with sessions for school children, and a composting operation plus research station across the Bay.

SCCA sees Sonoma County's shift to a Zero Waste program as having the potential to enrich everybody by reducing landfill areas, and providing good jobs, with good pay for hard work. When we all pitch in to separate wastes correctly, we will win a cleaner environment and make a better future for everybody. ♦



Cover from left to right: All ages helping roll wattles for land remediation! • SCCA Board Member Chris Grabill inoculating wattles around high priority burn sites in Santa Rosa. • Volunteer Amara Gromm placing wattles in creek downstream from Coffee Park with SCCA & Clean River Alliance.





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vision of a toxic free future.

With contamination from ash and hazardous debris in runoff from burned areas, our watershed needs even more protection. This disaster reinforces the danger of depending on toxic materials in our everyday lives, because ultimately, they will end up in our environment.

Since SCCA launched the Toxic Free Future campaign in June, we have met with the department heads of key County departments responsible for public land management. These include the Agricultural Commissioner, Water Agency, Regional Parks, General Services and Public Works.

We've also met with multiple supervisors and continue to work directly with staff to move forward a County-wide centralized pesticide management plan. We need to create transparent reporting, identify a reduction goal and outline a work plan to reduce synthetic pesticide use.

We also are working with the Assistant Superintendent of Santa Rosa

City Schools, André Bell, to also reduce synthetic pesticide use at schools.

Over two hundred community members joined our panel discussion at Susan Moore's No Name Women's group in September. Erin Mullen from Landpaths proved that large scale land management without synthetic pesticides is possible. Mara Ventura from North Bay Jobs with Justice spotlighted the disproportionate impact of pesticides on low income landscapers and migrant workers. Nichole Warwick from Daily Acts shared her story of surviving environmentally caused cancer and the environmental health impacts affecting children in Sonoma County. Supervisor Lynda Hopkins offered her perspective as an organic farmer, and Megan Kaun ignited hope as a mom turned super activist.

In this month's Made Local Magazine article, Supervisor Hopkins asked, "How do we make it normal not to spray chemicals into our ditches, which by the way runs straight into our creek, and from our creeks into our river where our kids play?"

We agree that we have to redefine "normal" and get these toxics out of our environment and homes, for our health and for the health of our planet. ♦

#### Take an Action!

Write your elected officials at [ConservationAction.org/ToxicFree](http://ConservationAction.org/ToxicFree)

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2008, and 2013 fires.



In Sonoma Valley, the huge Nuns fire covered more territory than older burns in that area, but only two 1960s–1990s fire zones lie outside its footprint. An exception is the great 2015 Valley fire, which burned from Cobb to south of Middletown, and largely affected lands that had gone untouched by fire for more than a half-century.

Similar conditions present for each of these fires over the last decade spotlight two clear elements: high temperature and high wind speed conditions. Early on October 9th, wind speeds up to 77 miles per hour were recorded on a hilltop in Napa County, close to the estimated origin of the Tubbs Fire.

These and other data suggest that hot fires are likely to sweep across areas of north-coast California on a semi-regular basis—perhaps with about a 30 or 40-year periodicity.

The lifestyles of indigenous people conformed better to this natural fire cycle: building smaller and simpler dwellings of lightweight materials, and moving village sites seasonally. Indigenous people also set fires in woodlands to keep forests open and accessible, and to encourage food and medicinal plant growth.

We now need to examine the likelihood that wildfire will always be a fact of life in Sonoma and neighboring Counties. Rising temperatures due to climate warming may increase the frequencies and the heat of cyclic fires.

Based on past fire frequencies and threats, fire researchers and local leaders need to study if and how American construction and living patterns might adapt to the natural cycle of fire in lands that may not be tamable. ♦

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nership with the Rose Foundation. Our immediate priorities focus on raising relief funds for organizations that support fire survivors who are underserved or already living on the margins.

Over the longer term, funds will be made available for specific local initiatives which focus on disaster relief and preparedness, sustainable planning, and building inclusive, healthy, networked and resilient communities and ecosystems. ♦ [www.awipcoalition.org](http://www.awipcoalition.org)

### Windsor UGB Renewed!

Thank you Windsor voters for renewing your Urban Growth Boundary for another 22 years and to Mayor Fudge for ensuring it got on the ballot!

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We need to communicate consistent best practices as a community and align our monitoring efforts. If we want to build community trust, and protect ourselves and natural ecosystems from toxins, we must not work in silos. We simply don't have the time for it. This is where grassroots shines. And we'll need your help. ♦ **Take an Action!** To volunteer go to [SonomaCounty.Recovers.org](http://SonomaCounty.Recovers.org).

### Join our Holiday Party!

December 18th from 5:30-8:00pm  
540 Pacific Ave, Santa Rosa

Come meet other SCCA Members!





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**SIGN UP  
TO BECOME A  
MEMBER  
TODAY!!**

## Just and Resilient Future Fund

*By Another World is Possible Coalition*

Kerry Fugett - SCCA, Trathen Heckman - Daily Acts, Evan Wiig - The Farmers Guild & CAFF, Chelsey Kolbeck - The Arlene Francis Center for Spirit, Art, and Politics, Davin Cardenas - North Bay Organizing Project, Tom Roth - The Sierra Club Redwood Chapter, Lawrence Jaffe - Sebastopol Grange, Monica Julian - The Schoolbox Project, Chris Bell - Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Santa Rosa

SCCA is a proud member of the Another World is Possible Coalition, a diverse group of community-based organizations who share a common vision for a more healthy, just and resilient future.

We know it will take cross-sector collaboration to make the changes our climate and community need. We believe that when we empower people, we are actually cultivating a future rooted in social justice, environmental resilience, and equitable economies.

For example, in January, 2017 we mobilized over 4,000 people to join the Community Engagement Fair at the Santa Rosa Fairgrounds, this plugged volunteer action into over 100 local organizations.

And now, in response to this crisis, our coalition has established the Just and Resilient Future Fund in part-

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Sonoma County Conservation Action



Thank You!



**THANK YOU to all of our sponsors, donors, attendees and volunteers for joining us at our sold out Grassroots Gala this year!**

Lieutenant Governor Gavin Newsom received a standing ovation after highlighting California's climate leadership. State Senator McGuire rocked the house and helped kick off our Toxic Free Future campaign—see campaign updates and actions inside! Our amazing sponsors are listed here:

[www.conservationaction.org/gala2017](http://www.conservationaction.org/gala2017)

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

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