

Assemblymember Huffman to Keynote 12th Annual Grassroots Gourmet Gala

Sonoma County Conservation Action's Grassroots Gourmet Gala Dinner and Auction will be held on June 23rd from 5:00-9:30 PM at the beautiful new Glaser Center on Mendocino Ave. in downtown Santa Rosa.

We are pleased to announce that our Keynote Speaker this year will be Assemblyman Jared Huffman, who was elected in November 2006. As a senior attorney for the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and as president of the Marin Municipal Water District Board of Directors, Assemblyman Huffman worked to protect Marin County's creeks, fisheries and drinking water for 11 years.

Jared Huffman has played a leading role in the epic battle to restore flows and environmental values to California's second-longest river, the San Joaquin.

Great Food & Beverages

Our dinner will highlight locally grown organic food prepared by Worth Our Weight Catering. A no host wine bar featuring local Sonoma County wines and beer is always popular, along with our fabulous silent auction.

Buy Tickets Online Right Now!

Mark your calendars for this extraordinary event that benefits the work and programs of Sonoma County's largest environmental organization, SCCA!

This event typically sells out early, so reserving a spot is suggested. Tickets to the dinner are \$45, and can be reserved online. You can also send a check for the number of tickets desired to SCCA, 540 Pacific Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA 95404 with "Dinner Tickets" written in the memo space, or call the office (571-8566) to reserve tickets with your Visa or MasterCard.

Sponsorship levels start at \$125 and are gratefully accepted. Sponsors will be listed on our program, and on our website.

Silent Auction items are needed, and Volunteer Tickets are still available. Please contact us right away to help make the gala great! ♦

Thanks for Your Support!

Unprecedented Growth

Over the past three years, SCCA has been blessed with strong leadership from its team of Co Directors, Craig Litwin and Dennis "Denny" Rosatti, as well as strong support from Diane Schulz, Office Manager. As Directors, Craig and Denny have primarily stewarded SCCA through several major organizational advancements, including the rebirth of the organization's letter writing campaigns, the pilot of the KYN program in the Fall of 2004, the hard fought GE Free Sonoma County Campaign in the Summer and Fall of 2005, and this past year's major ground campaign for SMART Rail and Trail and the successful Open Space District Renewal that SCCA marshaled 200+ volunteers for.

In that time, the organization has increased it's base of support, has almost doubled the size of it's staff, and now has a full time volunteer coordinator via the Know Your Neighbor program. **SCCA has also taken great strides in offering expanded campaign servicing for endorsed candidates and ballot measures**, to allow greater success at the ballot box and a broader support function that makes an SCCA endorsement that much more coveted.

Co Directors on the Move

It is in the spirit of growth and accomplishment that SCCA has decided to retain both Co Directors, for what we hope to be a long time to come. Denny Rosatti has accepted the position of Executive Director, and Craig Litwin has accepted the position of Political Director.

So why change anything when the machine is well oiled and still gaining speed? In the words of John F. Kennedy, "Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future."

We recognize that in order to gain the next level of achievement as an

organization, a clearly defined division of labor must be developed in order to put the attention to the programs that are vital for continued success of SCCA.

Dennis "Denny" Rosatti



Rosatti has been working for SCCA for the past four years, first as an entry level canvasser, and has gradually moved his way through the ranks of the organization. His drive to protect the environment, and affinity for local politics make Rosatti a great choice for the future of SCCA. SCCA feels strongly that Denny will lead the organization with integrity and stability, as he has for nearly 5 years.

According to Rosatti, "Conservation Action is environment in action. Serving as Executive to the Board, Staff, and membership of SCCA, and activating the grassroots of Sonoma County to protect local environmental resources is my dream job come true."

Craig Litwin



Litwin, who was born in Sebastopol, has been involved in local politics since a young man. He currently is in

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Sierra Club: Fighting to Save Forests with YouTube

The Redwood Chapter of the Sierra Club has just released a short video designed to educate the public and decision-makers about the proposed Preservation Ranch vineyard development project. The video is posted on the YouTube web site at the following URL: <http://YouTube.com>, search for "Worse Than a Clearcut".

The short video clip, "Worse than a Clearcut" is the first use of YouTube by the local Sierra Club to educate the public about the environmentally destructive Preservation Ranch project.



The video highlights the role of CalPERS, the California Public Employees' Retirement System, in facilitating this project through an investment of \$200 million with Premier Pacific Vineyards.

Distribution of this short video clip through YouTube is one component of a wider public education campaign. Similar videos about Preservation Ranch will be distributed through other web sites, and on DVD in order to inform key decision-makers.

Conservation Action has worked for years with the local Sierra Club to implement a viable timber protection ordinance, generating over 1,000 letters in support of a local ordinance prohibiting the conversion of forests to agriculture.

Preservation Ranch is the latest in a long series of environmental assaults on western Sonoma County forests. After years of environmentally destructive logging, Sonoma County forests now face the additional threat of permanent development and conversion to vineyards. Numerous western Sonoma County forest conversions have been approved in the past, but the Preservation Ranch proposal is more than twice as large as all previous proposed and approved conversions combined since 1989.

Soon after acquiring 19,000 acres of western Sonoma County, Premier Pa-

cific Vineyards announced the Preservation Ranch project. Important aspects of the proposed project appear to have changed over time, but recent proposals have included conversion of some portion of the 19,000 acres of forest to vineyards. The current proposal includes 1,665 acres of vineyard development, more than 200 acres of vineyard development on other land, and 90 "vineyard estates". Beyond its 19,000 acres, Preservation Ranch will set a dangerous precedent of development for the rest of western Sonoma County and the North Coast.

Redwood Chapter Chair Margaret Pennington expressed confidence that public education can stop this destructive proposal. "The people of California care about protecting the environment. I don't believe that the public employees who are members of CalPERS want their investment being used to permanently destroy California forests. This video is one important tool for getting the message to the larger community."

Previous discussions between the Redwood Chapter and CalPERS concerning Preservation Ranch have been unfruitful. CalPERS has defended the Preservation Ranch project on the grounds that Preservation Ranch will comply with the state and local law. In response to this assertion, Jay Halcomb, the Chair of the Forest Protection Committee noted that, "Not everything that is legal is a good idea. Surely CalPERS has a higher environmental standard than the bare minimum required by law. CalPERS should demonstrate responsible environmental stewardship, not just what they can get away with legally. (For more info: <http://www.redwood.sierraclub.org/sonoma/ForestProtection>)



View of Gualala River Clearcuts

**Jay Halcomb is the Sierra Club representative to contact for more information on this issue. Jay can be reached at jhalcomb8@comcast.net*

Sonoma UGB Fight

By Larry Barnett, Former Sonoma City Council

It appears that the proposal to create a medical spa resort and "free" hospital at 8th Street East, one-half mile



Larry Barnett

from the current Sonoma Urban Growth Boundary has been abandoned. In the face of organized opposition and surveys showing that the community preferred a public to a privately owned

hospital, Cirrus Health and its partner real estate developer Henry Grause announced that their plan has been dropped.

The deadline for filing the petition for placing the Amendment expanding the UGB does not arrive until July, and until that happens, most of us who have been engaged in preparing for a ballot measure battle are not making any final assumptions. Friends of the Sonoma Greenbelt, a PAC established to work for the protection of the UGBs in Sonoma County remains active, and prepared to act should any effort to expand the UGB to 8th Street resurfaces.

The development community is chomping at the bit to acquire more land for development in Sonoma, and their complaints are a clear indication that the UGB is doing exactly what it was intended to do, prevent sprawl. The more they complain, the more obvious the value of the UGB. Yet, the threat of a ballot measure as a device to subvert the public-will is sure to appear again. Voter created ballot measure are not subject to CEQA or the type of scrutiny as measures placed on the ballot by elected bodies. Accordingly, Sonoma County can expect to see more developer sponsored ballot measures intended to expand the UGB, and every city must be alert to this possibility.

Development pressure is like air pressure; one does not always feel it,

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his second term on the Sebastopol City Council, serves as the Vice Mayor, and is also busy raising his three children.

As Political Director, Litwin is prepared to tackle the exciting tasks of strengthening SCCA's most vital program, the canvass, and further developing political support services that will result in wins at the ballot box.

"I have always looked forward to continuing to develop SCCA's infrastructure and programs. I am confident that the political services department will give the progressives a competitive edge in local politics. **We are here to win.**" Litwin commented.

There is no doubt that the challenges that face our county continue to grow, and Conservation Action is committed to providing the voice and the community organization tools necessary to meet these challenges. We will strive to continue to serve our membership with enthusiasm on our annual door visits, quality in our educational endeavors, and integrity in our political endorsements and campaigns. ◇



AB 541 Assemblymember Huffman's California GE Bill Staying Alive!

By Jenna Brager

On Wednesday April 25, Assemblymember Jared Huffman introduced his bill, AB 541 – **The Food and Farm Protection Act**, to the Assembly Agriculture Committee, 2 weeks after it passed out of the State Judiciary Committee. AB 541 addresses problems associated when genetically engineered plants contaminate non-GE crops. This bill puts the responsibility of contamination and resulting economic losses on the GE crop manufacturer rather than the farmer who planted the GE crop. It also requires a notification process with the planting of GE crops, as well as prohibiting open-air growing of crops engineered to produce pharmaceutical drugs.

Following Huffman's excellent introduction of his bill, 3 testimonials supporting the bill and 3 challenging it, there was agreement to keep discussion open and the bill was tabled most likely until January 2008. With the bill still alive, we have added time to build support! Please write to your representatives in the Assembly Agriculture Committee in support of AB 541– See our Website for examples at www.conservationaction.org/actionalert

To learn more about the bill: www.leginfo.ca.gov/bilinfo.html

*You can hear Assemblymember Huffman speak about this bill and others at our June 23rd Annual Gala, featuring Assemblyman Huffman as keynote speaker. ◇

THE SCCA NEWS SCOOP

By Denny Rosatti

Green Building Taking Hold

Ever wonder that given available technology, why aren't all new or remodeled buildings built green, with high standards of environmental protection incorporated in design, construction, and usage? Well it appears that the City Councils in Windsor and Rohnert Park asked themselves the same question, and couldn't come up with any good reason not to require green building standards into their local building codes.

Windsor and Rohnert Park join Sebastopol and Cotati as the four cities in Sonoma County with mandatory Green Building ordinances, a trend that is growing in Bay area municipalities. SCCA has worked in the past 6 months to encourage Santa Rosa and

Petaluma to start requiring their developers to built green as well. **It's time to get with the program**, and stop wasting our valuable energy, water, and materials resources, while saving residents money and creating healthier living environments.

We remain perhaps foolishly optimistic that these two giants among Cities in our County will **wake up to the green revolution of the 21st Century**– before it's too late, and all the hip, educated "new urbanists" flock to the shores of Rohnert Park.

Cloverdale UGB

Cloverdale is still moving towards a voter approved Urban Growth Boundary. The City's General Plan Process is waiting for release of a draft Environmental Impact Report, at which time the City Planning Commission will again deliberate the UGB options.

SCCA and Greenbelt Alliance are

planning a community wide forum to discuss this most worthy of land use decisions. We'll keep you up to date on the when and where; and if you live in Cloverdale and want more information on this topic, email us: SCCA@conservationaction.org

West County Supervisor Race

By the time you read this, our friend Mike Reilly will have announced whether he'll make another run at West County Supervisor. Rumors are flush in West County, with everyone from "Ranger" in Occidental to an old Abalone named Phil out in Fort Ross as having thrown their name in the hat if Mike decides to step down.

One thing's for certain, there will be no shortage of good candidates in the field. SCCA will be watchful and vigilant in keeping this lone environmental seat on the Board of Supervisors in the upcoming election. ◇



Sonoma County Conservation Action

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Sonoma UGB Fight, Continued from Page 2

but it is always present. Whenever a vulnerability in land use ordinances or general plan regulation is uncovered, the development pressure rushes through, capitalizing on the gap in regulation until it is plugged. This is simply the nature of development pressure in an area where land values are high and mandated growth limitations are in place. To pretend that it is otherwise is a mistake.

Through the actions and support of SCCA, The Greenbelt Alliance and others, vigilance is maintained and appropriate community awareness is increased. Accordingly, while these organizations play a vital role in mobilizing efforts to defeat sprawl and sprawl-inducing development, individuals in each community must nonetheless stay informed and be prepared to communicate with others about their observations. SCCA and others can only help when they become aware of situations requiring assistance. Unless members of the community devote time to attend Planning Commission meetings and review City Council agendas, the risk of not catching events early enough to influence outcomes is greatly reduced. In the end, each of us must exercise some respon-

sibility as watchful citizens, or the risk of the rush of development can sneak past all of us.

Larry Barnett served on the Sonoma City Council for twelve years, was twice Mayor, and is a recipient of the SCCA Upstream Swimmer Award of 1998. ♦

**SCCA's 12th Annual Dinner and Auction
June 23rd 5:00-9:30 PM**

Come Celebrate our Common Successes!

***Grassroots Gourmet Gala
Glaser Center 547 Mendocino Ave
Santa Rosa, CA 95401***

**To Purchase Tickets Call: 571-8566,
email scca@conservationaction.org,
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