



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

JUNE 2011

The sun has been shining brightly on our mountain of late. With all the rain we have had, everything is green and beautiful! Summer begins tomorrow and outdoor activities are in full swing. How fortunate we are to be here!

We are approaching our yearly July membership meeting and I would like to update you on this past year's activities and accomplishments. Many of you are painfully aware of the issues that the warm weather brings to the mountain. There are people seeking access to the river who are not always courteous and respectful and cause distress and unsafe situations to the mountain citizenry.

There was a community meeting held at the Camp Rose Inn on this topic last July. Additionally, Al Pucci and I, along with Don King of the Del Rio Woods Park Recreation District met with our newly elected Sheriff, Steve Freitas on May 16, 2011. We discussed concerns on the mountain and how we ALL could support law enforcement in keeping our living area safe for all. You may have noticed that there has been a very strong presence of law enforcement on the mountain already. Please reference the numbers listed in this newsletter. I would encourage you to call and report anything of concern. It may take some time (depending on the seriousness of the issue) but they will respond. Please reference the numbers listed in this newsletter.

Donita Proctor and I met with Supervisor Mike McGuire and his staff to discuss the need for a rate increase for CSA 41 Water District customers. Additionally, a public informational meeting was held in early May at the Healdsburg City Hall to present options and receive input. The notice for rate change increase that you have received has the option voted on by those in attendance.

There was also an informational meeting on the state of affairs with the mountain top property hosted by our Supervisor. Fitch Mountain was well represented and all were allowed time at the microphone. I am pleased to announce that Supervisor McGuire will be at our July 10th membership Meeting to update us on the state of issues affecting our living space.

A community service work weekend was held at the Villa BBQ/Picnic area on May 21-22. This neglected area was transformed by our willing band of volunteers. There is a separate piece that discusses this further.

A charitable donation of \$200.00 was made to the RUSSIAN RIVERKEEPER in support of maintaining the health and beauty of our river ecosystem. Don McEnhill, the RUSSIAN RIVERKEEPER, spoke on the river scourge Ludwigia last year. We hope to offer another educational opportunity this year. More to follow at the meeting.

We have elections this July and I am pleased to report the infusion of new energy and volunteers to our board. Please view their bios and welcome them at our July meeting. As of this writing, we are still lacking a candidate for Treasurer. Interested parties please contact me ASAP at: ann-and-laura@comcast.net or (707)433-9739. More to follow at the meeting.

Donita Proctor has done a fabulous job updating and maintaining our web site. If you have not visited, please do so at www.fitchmountain.org. As you can see, it has been a busy productive year for FMA. Your organization is as vital as its officers and citizens make it. Let's continue our good work on the mountain! See you on July 10th at 1pm. Please be on time!!!!

Laura E. Rodriguez

Meeting with Sheriff Freitas

By Al Pucci, Trustee

On May 16th representatives from the Fitch Mountain Association (FMA) and the Del Rio Woods Recreation and Park District (DRWRPD) met with Sheriff Freitas in his office to discuss the many concerns of the Fitch Mountain residents. Laura Rodriguez, President of FMA, Don King, President of the DRWRPD Board of Directors, yours truly, on both boards, and the Sheriff met for forty-five minutes.

The discussion centered on what we, FMA and the DRWRPD in particular and the residents of the mountain, in general, could do to support the Sheriff's office and what, if anything, the Sheriff could do to assist us in maintaining order in our community. We discussed underage drinking, illegally parked vehicles, trespassers going to the river and, in general, the rowdy behavior of the youths who come to the river and negatively impact our community, essentially beginning with the Memorial Day Weekend and lasting through the summer months.

The DRWRPD now has an ordinance prohibiting the consumption of alcohol on the beach that is enforceable by law enforcement agencies; FMA will disseminate phone numbers of relevant law enforcement agencies to its members. The Sheriff stressed that the residents of the mountain can act as his ears and eyes re. illegal behavior and emphasized the importance of the residents calling his office with reports of such behavior.

Two pictures, taken by a resident of the mountain, which showed over fifty young, and very likely, underaged drinkers on a small island about one-quarter of a mile down river from the Del Rio beach, were brought to the meeting and shared with the Sheriff. He wrote many notes on the pictures and stated that he would make the deputies who patrol the area aware of the situation. This was a good example of a local resident bringing a problem to the attention of the Sheriff.

I left the meeting with a renewed sense of confidence that we, the Sheriff, and us - DRWRPD, FMA, and the residents of the mountain - would be able to bring back a wholesome environment to the area. The events of the Memorial Day Weekend confirmed my confidence; there was a large group of young folks drinking on the above mentioned island, illegally parked cars and unruly behavior on the roads and beaches throughout the area. Many citations were given for under aged drinking, two DUI arrests were made and, to cap this off, a Sheriff's

helicopter landed on the island to deal with that situation. About two weeks later another group of young folks gathered on that island. Two deputies borrowed a canoe and paddled down to the gathering and, once again, confronted the youths and solved the problem. The Sheriff's Department has gone the extra mile to assist us in attaining a welcoming environment for those who want to enjoy a nice day on the river. Let us all assist him by acting as his ears and eyes.

Law Enforcement Contact

Sonoma County Sheriff Dispatch
565-2121

California Highway Patrol Dispatch
551-1400 (to report illegal parking)
911 for emergency and drunk driving
Healdsburg Fire Department
Business: 431-3360
Fire, accidents, medical,
emergency downed trees and electrical
wires 911

POT LUCK ASSIGNMENTS

July 10, 2011

A-F: Veggies or green salad

G-L: fruit, fruit salad

M-R: pasta or casserole

S-Z: salsa, chips, nuts

PLEASE R.S.V.P. by July 7, 2011
with your burger choice Veggie or
Meat.

To: ann-and-laura@comcast.net

THE VILLA BBQ/PICNIC AREA IS REALLY LOVED!!!!

Is it going to rain I wondered? The weather had been wet and the warm, sunny weather that had briefly shown itself was fleeting and not predictable. FMA was on a mission and it needed cooperative weather to accomplish it.

The Villa BBQ/Picnic Area needed to be loved. It has been the site of many a get together over the past decades but languished as its younger sister to the right was beautified with plants, flowers and lawn. A lovely gazebo, the site of many couples exchanging vows, is its centerpiece.

At the yearly membership meeting, the peeling tables were hidden from view by tablecloths. The kitchen area's peeling counters were hastily cleaned. SOMETHING HAD TO BE DONE!!!!

FMA sent out a call for volunteers and it was answered! A total of 18 people showed up on Saturday to pull staples, sand, and then power wash the 32 picnic tables. On Sunday, a hearty group of 5 strong painted said 32 tables along with prepping and painting the main serving table and kitchen counters!

Why did we do this? FMA is always looking for ways to save money. We were able to rent the site for FREE this year along with waiving the security deposit. True, with the amount of free labor provided we could have haggled for many years of free use. We are sensitive to the economic woes of our cities and did not believe this to be the spirit of our community service. The City of Healdsburg provided all necessary supplies, FMA provided nutrition/hydration and the members provided the spirit of community along with the muscle.

It is my hope that a yearly community service project will be part of FMA's future.

Go check the picnic area out!



Ann Bullard
Laura Tietz
Kathie Mathews
Laura E. Rodriguez
Ellen Silge
Rebecca Goodsell
Donita Proctor
Martin Silge
Emery Joy
Donal McEnhill
Nancy Buckley
Sheila Gaughan
Al Pucci
Kathryn Cerasoli
Rheyna Lancy
Dave Henderson
Collin Joy
Sharon Barbee

A big THANK YOU to the happy helpers
(listed in no particular order)

NOTES: FITCH MOUNTAIN WATER SERVICE MEETING

MAY 3, 2011-HEALDSBURG CITY HALL 6:30-8:30 p.m.

FMA wishes to thank the approximately 40 members who attended the meeting in person and the quick e-mail responses with options choice sent in by those who could not attend the meeting. We are especially grateful to 4th District Supervisor Mike McGuire for his initiation of a preliminary meeting with representatives of FMA, President Laura Rodriguez and Donita Proctor, Trustee on April 1, 2011 at his office. Before this meeting we were provided with the proposed budget for 2011-2012 for distribution to our trustees. Proposal for rate increases to offset the declining reserves was discussed and a tentative date for a community meeting with consumers was set. Results of the community meeting May 3, 2011 are recapped below.

Attending presenters from the county of Sonoma: **Mike McGuire 4th District Supervisor, Donna Caldwell, budget analyst, Tom O’Kane, Deputy Director of Transportation and Public Works, Stephen B. Urbanek, P.E., Pavement Preservation Manager, Christopher Anderson, District Director office of Mike McGuire.**

Mike McGuire introduced the panel for discussion and gave a history of the preliminary meeting 4/1/2011. He explained the process of the meeting. Steve Urbanek gave an overview of the system and a report of capital improvements impacting the reserve fund.

1. Purchase of a backup generator for the McDonough Heights pump to the distribution system in case of power outages: \$17,049. The McDonough Heights area of Fitch Mountain Water District is situated above the water storage tanks that supply the other residents by means of gravity feed. Water flow is maintained to these customers by the way of electric pumps. With the sometimes frequent power outages that can occur in the area there are times these properties are left without water. **To maintain fire safety** and convenience to these customers an emergency generator is in the process of being installed.

2. Purchase of a new master flow meter (cost split 50/50 with the City of Healdsburg) Steve Urbanek (who will now take over system oversight) and Tom O’Kane gave a background on options for the future of the system with discussions about operations and maintenance being taken over by the City of Healdsburg or Russian River Utility (current contractor for operations and maintenance). <http://www.rruwater.com/countyWater.shtml>

The system is now operated under public works which does not specialize in water systems. Administrative cost of Public Works personnel and billing service is charged to the Fitch Mountain Water system. Tom O’Kane had previously stated the smaller districts within CSA#41 are moving toward becoming independent districts. (The four water systems in County Service Area 41’s “Zone of Benefit” are Fitch Mountain [346 customers], Jenner [123], Salmon Creek [99], and Freestone [28].)

Benefits for City of Healdsburg operation would be economy of scale (admin cost spread over a large user base) and the advantage of lower water rates, currently \$20.00 a month less than our water service with double the water. Our current average use is \$60.00 a month and 4742 gallons a month.

Benefits for Russian River Utility: Lower admin cost, reduced audit charges required by state law for county administration. Familiarity and experience with the system. Caveat RRU is a “for profit” enterprise.

Donna Caldwell discussed the budget and water usage stats. She noted a significant increase in Utilities (Water purchase and utility charges) for the first nine months of this year. 2.9 million gallons, or 650 gallons per month per user!) in the past 9 months. The 650 gal/user math works out for a little more than a year.

Our water cost for the previous fiscal year (July-June) was ~\$88,000. As of the end of March 2011, the 3/4 point of the current FY, our water costs have already reached ~\$87,000, and the reserves are down. They were equal to last year’s total charges. She answered many questions about the budget from the audience. Donna outlined the procedure for the required Proposition 218 budget hearing by the board of supervisors. 1st reading June 26, 2nd reading July 12- **Effective date Aug. 12th**, with new charges reflected in the September billing.

Mike McGuire asked for a consensus vote from the proposed options. The audience opted for Option 2. This increase is 34% over three years. See table on the next page.

Option 1 One Time 34% Rate Increase

Fiscal Year	2011 / 2012	2012 / 2013	2013 / 2014
Percent Increase	34%	0%	0%
Avg Monthly Bill	\$80.95	\$81.76	\$82.57
Reserves (Fund Balance)	\$59,191.62	\$50,851.32	\$49,174.15

Option 2 Three Year Staggered 34% Rate Increase

Fiscal Year	2011 / 2012	2012 / 2013	2013 / 2014
Percent Increase	15%	15%	4%
Avg Monthly Bill	\$69.55	\$80.68	\$84.72
Reserves (Fund Balance)	\$17,085.06	\$4,417.25	\$11,381.80

Option 3 One Time 10% Increase; Return with Additional Rate Increase for FY 2012/2013

Fiscal Year	2011 / 2012	2012 / 2013	2013 / 2014
Percent Increase	10%	0%	0%
Avg Monthly Bill	\$65.96	\$66.62	\$67.28
Reserves (Fund Balance)	\$ 3,788.25	\$ (68,255.86)	\$ (136,933.23)

Option 4 No Rate Increase. District will have a negative reserve fund beginning in FY 2011/2012.

Fiscal Year	2011 / 2012	2012 / 2013	2013 / 2014
Percent Increase	0%	0%	0%
Avg Monthly Bill	\$60.56	\$61.56	\$61.75
Reserves (Fund Balance)	\$ (70,029.62)	\$ (70,516.14)	\$ (62,103.69)

- Notes:
1. Current ordinance in place allow for annual increases based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Each of the scenarios above assumes a CPI increase in each year at 1%.
 2. To comply with government regulations, every other fiscal year a financial audit of the system is required. The audit costs the system approximately \$15,000.00 each year that it is required.

Follow up actions.

1. Begin exploration talks with both Russian River Utility and the City of Healdsburg. McGuire stated that if the City of Healdsburg option were chosen it would be two to three years out as a government agency requires feasibility study, discussion with the City Council etc. The option for Russian River Utility would be more expeditious. System users would vote before either option was implemented.
2. Public works will undertake a system loss report to determine why there has been a significant spike in water usage.
3. Public works will explore the “rounded” meter reading reported by the consumers at the meeting.
4. Prop.218 public hearing procedures will be implemented as described above.
5. Public works will continue working with fire services to determine responsibility for fire hydrant testing.

6. Donita Proctor was designated as “Ombudsman” for communication of member concerns/communication to public works and distribution of information from the county to consumers. Questions and concerns should be sent to donitaproctor@gmail.com

WEB SITE NOTES:

You can download a notice of the public hearing on the first page of our site: www.fitchmountain.org

The water quality report by the City of Healdsburg and Russian River Utility. We were requested by Sonoma County Public Works to post this information. We have created a blog for our site for rapid dissemination of information relating to our area. The site allows for comments and is designed as two-way communication. You can reach the site through the main site or independently at: <http://blogfitchmountain.wordpress.com/> Check it frequently.

OFFICER ELECTION

REMINDER: YOU MUST BE A CURRENT PAID MEMBER. THE BYLAWS ALLOW WRITTEN PROXY VOTES. WRITE IN CANDIDATES ARE ALSO WELCOMED.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

President Laura Rodriguez's term ends 2012. Kathryn Cerasoli is running for V.P. Dave Henderson is running for Treasurer. Martin Silge is running for the balance of Kate Barrett's Trustee position. There are two Trustee positions open due to the retirement of Don McEnhill and Donita Proctor. Sylvia Seventy and Rheyna Laney, are running for the two Trustee 6 year terms. We will be taking nominations from the floor! The continuance of the association is dependent on willing members who will step forward into leadership.

Candidate Statements

Kathryn Cerasoli

Kathryn is new to Fitch Mountain. She moved in with her partner Dave Henderson last year in October and they made it successfully through their first winter. They work on their house whenever they have a spare moment and love it. They love the neighborhood also. Kathryn enjoys cooking and entertaining; luckily the house has a nice big kitchen. Gardening is another passion; there is some room to work plants into the landscape. She has lived in Sonoma County for almost twenty years and has two grown children.

Kathryn is an art teacher throughout Sonoma County and teaches at various facilities, schools and at her home. She loves to create all kinds of art, but paints mostly, and works in Acrylics. Mosaics are her second passion, which she is trying to incorporate into the house. She and Dave love to travel and have travelled together to Italy twice. They love the food, wine, art, architecture and the people. They will be teaching a travel course on Sicily in the fall.

She became the temporary Vice President for FMA a few months after she moved in. She would like to become the permanent V.P. and be involved with the FMA as much as possible. She believes it to be a valuable and helpful organization.

Dave Henderson

Dave is a teacher of Italian at Santa Rosa Junior College. Dave spent many years living in Italy, then capped his study of Italian with a PhD from U.C. Berkeley. He has been teaching Italian at SRJC since 1982 and also worked 30 years in the Napa-Sonoma wine industry. That experience helped him start his own wine translation business in 2001. He now translates from Italian to English for some 60 winery clients in Italy and travels frequently to Italy.

Martin R. Silge

I am a life-long Northern Californian. In the late '40's and early '50's our family had a summer home in Sonoma County. I soon fell in love with the unique character of this region. I have always believed that the character and spirit of the residents here must be preserved and improved to the benefit to all of us. Residents must come first!

I have been a Fitch Mountain resident and member of the FMA for 25 years. From 1986 until 2005, my wife Ellen and I were "Weekenders." In 2005 we moved here as full-time residents. We have always supported the intent of Fitch Mountain Association.

I have a good grasp of the problems and opportunities facing our mountain home. We must become and remain unified as a well-organized group to preserve the lifestyle and area we love.

My background combines technical training, working with people for win-win goals, and having my own business. Because of my experience, I work well to achieve the key goal of attaining consensus and sensible compromise.

All residents of the mountain must get involved and pull together so that we are able to face down those who would want to impose their will on us, be it from bureaucrats, interests that are working for their own gain, or even negligent or uninvolved residents.

I will strive to get more involvement from all Mountain folks to work for mutually beneficial goals.

I appreciate your support.

Sylvia Seventy

In August 1973, I moved north from the Los Angeles area with my husband to our new home on Redwood Drive. We looked at the house in June, and we walked on the beach by the river. When I stood by the water and looked up at the redwood trees surrounding the house, I knew I had found my home. So now, 38 years later, I still love the trees, the Russian River, the many birds and other critters that make their homes in my country garden. Healdsburg is the town that I call home, and even with all the many changes I have seen over the years, I love its casual elegance.

Sometime in the 1980's I became involved with the Fitch Mountain Association, because of the construction of a new water delivery system on Fitch Mountain and the sale of the private water company on the Mountain. After attending many Water Committee meetings with FMA and other private water district meetings in Sonoma County, I remained involved with FMA as Vice-President for 10 years, and edited the FMA newsletter during those years.

Along with my environmental interests, I am an artist, art instructor at the Santa Rosa Junior College, volunteer art teacher at Becoming Independent, dog walker for a friend's Chihuahua, and an avid listener of live music.

Rheyne Laney

Rheyne Laney moved to Fitch Mountain with her husband Colin Joy in 2002. Subsequently, most of their spare time has been spent reconstructing the 1932 summer cabin into a viable year-round home. They have a daughter, Emery, who is 6 years old. Their favorite thing to do is float down the river and picnic together. Rheyne is a professor of Geography at Sonoma State University.

Election Notes

Please read the candidate statements carefully. Two of the candidates, Martin Silge and Rheyne Laney, are unable to attend the annual meeting due to prior commitments!

Financial Statement
Savings : \$ 1,850.65
Checking: \$ 531.91

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the County of Sonoma Board of Supervisors will hold a public hearing at the following date, time, and location to consider a proposed increase in the water rates charged to the customers of the Fitch Mountain Water District and to receive protests against the proposal.

Date: July 12, 2011 Time 10:00 a.m. Location: Board of Supervisors Chambers
575 Administration Drive, Room 102A Santa Rosa, California, 95403

At the hearing, all interested persons will be entitled to address the Board of Supervisors concerning the proposed rate increase. Procedure to Protest the Proposed Water Rate Increases. Under Proposition 218, if you are the owner of record for a parcel or a tenant directly liable for payment of fees subject to the proposed rate increases, you may submit a written protest regarding the proposed rate increases.

In order to be considered, written protests must be submitted in the following manner:

- 1) written protests must be actually received (not postmarked) by the Department of Transportation and Public Works, Attention: CSA #41 Fitch Mountain Protest, 2300 County Center Drive, Suite B100, Santa Rosa, California, 95403, by 5:00 p.m. on July 11, 2011;
- 2) written protests will be accepted if hand delivered to the Clerk of the Board prior to the close of the public hearing on July 12, 2011.

**DOWNLOAD THE DOCUMENT
FROM THE WEB SITE!**