

# The Newsletter of the



June 2019

## President's Message

As I write this in early June, the river remains that translucent green it gets in the early Spring when rains are still occasionally in the forecast. Normally it would be totally clear by now. I don't need to remind Fitch Mountaineers of the Valentine's Day storm and the even more intense storms we endured the last two days of that month. Del Rio Woods park was largely inundated. The river did not get as far as the parking lot, but the picnic tables were tossed about and left in a pile. I feared the landscaping that hadn't even been in the ground a year would be devastated. But once the rains passed, Regional Parks located all the tables and placed them back where they belong, and the plantings came through with minimal damage. Our main road was not so lucky but is on the county's radar; more on that later in the newsletter. I'm sorry to say that some of you are still dealing with the aftermath of those rains as you try to get into Summer-on-the-river mode. And now that we won't likely see rain for the next 5 months the focus has shifted to fire prevention. The Fitch Mountain COPE group continues to get stronger and has established relationships with other like-minded groups throughout the county. As these organizations solidify and grow, they become more attractive to the county Emergency Services and local fire agencies as collaborators to help make our communities safer. Healdsburg's Fire Marshal, Linda Collister, was able to get a large CalFire crew up in the Fitch Mountain Open Space Preserve for 2 weeks in March reducing the amount of downed debris and ladder fuels around the trails. Regional Parks has become a consistent partner in chipping away at the *Arundo donax* infestations around Del Rio, and the FMA has settled into a regular schedule of semi-annual volunteer eradication events in the Spring and Fall. The Russian RiverKeeper collaborated with us in April to clean up a stretch of riverbank that accumulated a dense layer of man-made debris after the floods. Your Water District Advisory Committee worked with the county on the replacement of our aging water meters. Our water usage is now read and billed by the gallon instead of rounding to the nearest 1,000 gallons, and each of us now has access to our water usage down to the hour of the day if you're so inclined. You can even configure the system to email you if it looks like you've got a leak. All these relationships that the FMA has with our local agencies create an interconnected web that supports us all. I will continue to try to keep you abreast of events via our FMA "eblasts." I hope you have a great Summer.

—Pat Abercrombie

## FMA Annual Meeting and Potluck Picnic

**Sunday July 14th, 1:00 — 4:00 at the Villa Chanticleer Picnic Area**

Please bring your own plates, cups, and tableware (to help FMA in our commitment to reduce our “footprint”); and food to share based on the first letter of your surname: A – H, Salad or side dish; I – Q, Dessert or fruit; R – Z: Picnic main dish. FMA will provide beverages and pre-picnic chips, etc.

On arrival, you’ll sign in at the registration table, pay your dues if you haven’t already (*see below*), and get your ballot. Then take your potluck contribution to the serving table, get a beverage and some nibblies, and settle in at a table. The picnic will begin at 1:30, and the official meeting begins at 2:00. (Pre- and post-meeting, you can order a reflective house number sign if you don’t have yours yet.)

There will be a short business meeting with updates on Mountain issues such as septic, water, and roads, and introduction of FMA leaders, followed by voting for two elected positions. (*The candidate statements are on page 3.*) COPE leaders will introduce neighborhood captains and put on an interactive demonstration. Cal Fire Battalion Chief Marshal Turbeville will speak on “River Refuge in a Wild Fire Emergency, and representatives from Supervisor Gore’s office, CHP, and the FM Preserve will be on hand to introduce themselves and answer questions. The program will culminate in the introduction of the Volunteer of the Year, and will wrap up by 4:00 or earlier.

As President Pat says, “Most importantly, there will be time to visit with your neighbors on what will undoubtedly be a beautiful Sunday afternoon under those huge trees. Looking forward to seeing you there!”

### Time to Pay Your Dues!

A single (one person-one vote) FMA membership is \$20. Couples membership (each person gets a ballot to vote) is \$40. The annual membership runs from July 1 - June 30. You can pay online using a credit card and FMA's PayPal account at [www.fitchmtn.org](http://www.fitchmtn.org) (click on **JOIN US!**) Or, you can fill in the membership form on the last page of this newsletter and mail it and your check to the address on the form (to arrive by July 11th, if you’re planning to attend the meeting). You can pay your dues in person at the Annual Meeting. Bring the filled-in form to speed things up if you are a new member. You don’t need to bring the form if you are **renewing** your membership at the meeting; your current information will be available at the registration table for you to verify or update. Only paid members can vote for FMA Trustees and Officers or other items.

**Donations to FMA are always appreciated.**



### FMA Treasury and Membership Snapshot

As of 5/31/19, the FMA had \$8,829 in its accounts (\$3,582 in checking and \$5,247 in savings [\$5,247 restricted and \$904 unrestricted]).

As of 6/24/19 there were 137 members, and 333 people on the e-blast list.



## FMA Leadership

### Trustees:

Donita Proctor 2017-2021: 431-8789, donitaproctor@gmail.com

Al Pucci 2014-2020: apucci@gmail.com

Ken Hite 2016-2020: kenhite@comcast.net, (415) 516-2702

Kate Symonds 2018-2019: kate@terraserve.net

### Officers:

Pat Abercrombie, President 2018-2020: patabercrombie@comcast.net, 473-8217

Rebecca Goodsell, Vice-President 2017-2019: rebeccagoodsell@gmail.com, 707 473-8479

Dana Eaton, Secretary 2018-2020: dana@eatonstudios.com, 433-4630

Marty Silge, Treasurer 2018-2020: martinsilge@yahoo.com, 1840 Redwood Dr., 431-0814

### Volunteer Leaders:

#### Committee Chairs

COPE: Priscilla Abercrombie, pdanp@comcast.net; and Carol Morrill, carolmorrill@comcast.net

Del Rio Woods: Pat Abercrombie, patabercrombie@comcast.net

Fire Prevention & Emergency Preparedness: Ken Hite, kenhite@comcast.net

Fun and Appreciation: Ellen Silge, ellensilge@yahoo.com, 431-0814

Road Safety: Tracy Logan, TrLoganImmordino@gmail.com, Pat Abercrombie, patabercrombie@comcast.net, and Al Pucci, apucci@gmail.com

Septicians (Wastewater): Pat Abercrombie, patabercrombie@comcast.net

Water District Advisory Committee: Donita Proctor, donitaproctor@gmail.com; and Pat Abercrombie, patabercrombie@comcast.net

#### Communications:

Newsletter Editor: Ellen Silge, ellensilge@yahoo.com

Webmaster: Chuck Eaton, info@FitchMtn.org

## Candidate Statements – 2019 FMA Elections

**Kate Symonds, candidate for Trustee:** I am currently serving out a Trustee seat vacated early (when Pat was voted President last year). We have owned our place on Redwood Drive for eight years as part-time residents, and I am transitioning to full time. I first served in the role of FMA Secretary (2012-2014) and then Trustee (2014-2016). I very much care for the Fitch Mountain area, especially the Fitch Mountain Open Space Preserve where I have put in many hours pulling nonnative broom. I like to take an active role in the Fitch Mountain Preserve and in other aspects that enhance our safety and quality of life here. I would be happy to stay involved.

### **Rebecca Goodsell Simons, candidate for Vice-President:**

Dear Fitch Mountain Association members,

I am standing for re-election as vice-president of the Association. I also served as acting President for a few months last year until the current president was elected to office.

I live on Riverview Dr. with my husband and three cats in the “glass house.” I value the spirit and values of the Fitch Mountain community and will work to ensure their future.

## **The Latest on COPE**

*by Priscilla Abercrombie, COPE Co-Chair*



Two recent incidents on the mountain, one on South FM and the other on North FM (Redwood Drive), point to the importance of COPE (Citizens Organized to Prepare for Emergencies). Here is what happened: Pat and I received a Pulsepoint alert on our phones that there was a structure fire on Redwood Drive, so we immediately ran out the door. I called my FM COPE Co-Leader, Carol Morrill, and Rhonda Bellmer, the Redwood Drive Neighborhood Captain, to let them know that there was a report of a structure fire. Rhonda went door to door letting residents on Redwood Drive know that they should be on alert and ready to go if the situation worsened. I was in communication with the Healdsburg Fire Dept Chief and Fire Marshal getting updates. There was no fire—it was simply smoke from food left burning on the stove—but it certainly was an opportunity to put COPE into action. Subsequently, an FMA email was sent to let people know about the situation.

Lessons learned:

1. It was a neighbor walking by who saw the smoke and called 911. Neighbors helping neighbors make all the difference!
2. We all need working smoke alarms. One was installed for the resident before the fire fighters left.

COPE leaders are meeting with their neighborhoods to discuss communication among residents, and evacuations. For instance, on North FM Road we will be using GroupMe texting to communicate with each other in an emergency. The leaders are also exploring 2-way radios (challenging with our topography) and air horns when other means of communication are down. If you are not signed up with COPE yet, please go to the website ([www.FitchMtn.org](http://www.FitchMtn.org)), download the form, complete it, and send it to the FMA. It will be given to your neighborhood leader.

Remember, emergency preparedness starts at your house!

- Get reflective signs for the street and house (form on the FMA website)
- Defensible space inspections are underway. The California Fire Safe Council (CFSC) has a new brochure about defensible space that you can find on the FMA website, along with the link for the free chipper program.
- Clean your gutters now and throughout the summer. We have learned from the recent fires that flying embers traveling up to a mile can start fires in dead vegetation and spread under roofs into homes.
- Learn about home hardening. There is a great new brochure from CFSC about this on the FMA website. A structure fire on FM could be just as devastating as a wildland fire.
- When there is a Red Flag warning, be prepared to leave. The recent large, destructive fires have traveled fast. Have your go-bag ready and your car backed in. Plan for evacuation and communication with your loved ones.

## Upcoming Fun Events

*by Ellen Silge, Fun & Appreciation Committee Chair*

**Volunteers Welcome:** The Fun & Ap Committee doesn't meet officially very often, but there are many folks on the Mountain who readily turn out to help with special events. The Annual Meeting is the next big opportunity for Fun volunteer action—please **let me know if you can help with setup at the Villa at 12:00 on July 14th** ([ellensilge@yahoo.com](mailto:ellensilge@yahoo.com) or 431-0814).

## Summer Mixer

The FMA will have a casual pre-dinner get-together **at Del Rio Woods Park on Sunday August 18 from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m.** Bring a bottle of wine to share if you wish, and a finger-food appetizer. FMA will provide sparkling waters and sodas. No need to RSVP—just show up ready to savor food and drink and lively conversation with familiar folks and new friends! If you're not in walking distance from Del Rio, be sure to bring your Regional Parks parking placard. (Go to [soomacounty.ca.gov/Regional-Parks](http://soomacounty.ca.gov/Regional-Parks) for a year's membership with parking at more than 50 recreation areas plus other benefits for only \$69, \$49 for seniors.)

## Update on the Fitch Mountain Park and Open Space Preserve

*by Kate Symonds, FMA Trustee*

The Fitch Mountain Open Space Preserve was closed for several weeks due to significant slides along the trail system as a result of the extraordinary rain events in March. The same series of storms led to flooding along the Russian River, including some lower-lying residences along North and South Fitch Mountain Roads. The City of Healdsburg, which owns and manages the Preserve, conducted interim repairs to the Fitch Mountain trail system for emergency vehicle access and so hikers could continue to walk the Preserve. More long-term repairs are anticipated.

City staff continue to work with Prunuske Chatham Inc. to finalize the design and construction drawings for a formal access point to the Fitch Mountain Park and Open Space Preserve that will be located at the lower parking lot of the Villa Chanticleer. They anticipate receiving 100% complete plans by sometime in July.

The City hired a part-time employee who is focusing his time on the Fitch Mountain and Healdsburg Ridge Open Space Preserves. He will be informing users of use-policies, providing information about the open space preserves, and working closely with their partner LandPaths on natural resource management activities.

In November 2018, the City entered into a 2-year comprehensive agreement with LandPaths for management and stewardship of both Preserves. LandPaths continues to provide outreach and educational opportunities to the public, and stewardship workdays on both Preserves. We strongly encourage participation in LandPaths' stewardship days on the mountain. We have seen continual progress on reducing fuels, removing invasive species, and reducing runoff on trails. LandPaths was also very instrumental in working with Cal Fire and the Healdsburg Fire Department this past year, facilitating fire fuel reduction work at both Preserves.

As described in the Fitch Mountain Management Plan, the City is slated to convene a single stakeholder group made up of various public access user groups, the FMA, and others with a "stake" in what's going on at the Fitch Mountain Park and Open Space Preserve, as well as for the Healdsburg Ridge Open Space Preserve. The group would provide a forum for information sharing and identification of issues and solutions. The City is still planning to convene the open space stakeholder group, and information on how to participate should be coming out via the City's social media and other outlets by July.



## CSA41-Fitch Water Advisory Report

By Donita Proctor and Pat Abercrombie, Co-Chairs



### New Water Meters

Our January report to you indicated that the meter replacement had begun and the target completion date was March 2019. It took a bit longer due to the winter storms in February with/floods/road closures. The job is now finished with all 337 meters installed.

We have 65 meters that are not consistently communicating with the server, and solutions are being worked out between Russian River Utility (RRU) and Badger Meter, the manufacturer. In the meantime, those meters are being read by the vendor. The data is then provided to RRU for billing. A permanent solution is forthcoming, and negotiations are being held with the vendor and county public works staff to achieve an equitable credit for any added material and labor cost to correct this problem.

The good news is that you can now monitor your water usage by computer or smartphone. (You may have missed the very small announcement on your last water bill.) **We have only 30 customers of the system monitoring their usage.** Here's how to do it:

On your computer go to [www.eyeonwater.com](http://www.eyeonwater.com) and set up an account. It asks for your zip code and water account number. You will need to set a name and password for signing into your account. (Detailed instructions for setting up an account are found at <https://helpeyeonwater.com>.)

For Smartphones you can select either Android from Google Play or IOS from the Apple App Store. The application allows you to set alerts by email which let you know when you have a leak on your side of the meter.

We have already begun to reap the benefit of these new and accurate meters by reducing our monthly water loss. This means we are not paying for unaccounted-for water bought from the City of Healdsburg. Our ultimate target of water loss is under 10%.

### Fire Hydrant Repair

Residents in the Redwood Drive neighborhood will be pleased to know that the pressure release valve for the broken fire hydrant has been repaired and now is in full working order. Remember, our equipment is now very old. We can thank our operators, Greg Passalacqua and Robert Sherod, for repairs and keeping things running. At times it takes a few extra days to order parts for old equipment.

### Water and Emergencies

Red Flag days and summer fire danger are on many minds. We have all been notified that PG&E will proactively cut power for safety in a wildland fire situation. At our last advisory meeting we began a discussion of equipment needed in our system to keep water flowing to homes in the event of a prolonged electrical shutdown. The energy company predicts restoration in about a day, but warns that in some cases it may be a week.

**Remember, the Red Cross suggests the following water storage for any emergency:**

*"You will also need water for food preparation and hygiene. Store at least one gallon per person, per day. Consider storing at least a two-week supply of water for each member of your family. If you are unable to store this quantity, store as much as you can. Don't forget water for your pets also."*

### Upcoming WDAC Meetings

**September 4, 2019**

**December 4, 2019**

### Advisory Committee Contacts

**Donita: 431-8789**

**Pat: 473-8217**

## Septicians Committee Report

Both the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board and the county's Permit & Resource Management Department have been regrouping. The Board of Supervisors requested changes to their proposed policy in response to homeowner and wastewater industry feedback. The FMA is part of the Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems - Russian River Residents advocacy group. We have been asking for reasonable accommodations in the tightening of regulations. None of us want a polluted river, but we're convinced that they can continue to protect it by implementing some basic, cost-effective adjustments rather than a sweeping overhaul. The most likely scenario for changes to septic rules looks like (1) a phasing out of cesspools either as the result of a building permit applications or direct action by the water board over the next 10 years or so; (2) a requirement that every septic system be subject to a "basic operational assessment" every 5 years; and (3) lots within 100' of the river or tributaries may be required to install "supplemental treatment components" on their existing systems. Elimination of cesspools on Fitch Mountain will have to make accommodation for our many small, steep lots; the water board says they are not in the business of red-tagging homes, so they will work with homeowners to grant waivers allowing leach pits or other affordable alternatives where code-conforming systems are impossible. Requiring the replacement of cesspools when a property changes hands is being talked about. We are pushing hard for certified pumpers to be qualified to perform the basic operational assessment, since 5 years is a typical pumping schedule and as an economical consideration. The water board is presenting their final proposal to the public in mid-June after this newsletter goes to press. We will keep you informed as things solidify.

—Pat Abercrombie

## Road Report

by Al Pucci

In short, nothing new.

As was stated before, your Road Committee has met over the past year with the Deputy Director of Public Works and Transportation. The Committee was told that the County is committed to repairing the slump, slide, and road.

The slide and slump are awaiting federal funds, at which time a geotechnical study will be done to determine the solution.

The surfacing of the road is on schedule to be addressed in 2020. With respect to resurfacing, the Committee feels and advised the County that it would be prudent to address the infrastructure before paving; i.e., we have many drainage problems on the road including but not limited to blocked/broken drainage pipes as well as the need to determine new locations to address the mud flows that occur with heavy rains. Once the drainage issues are resolved, the resurfacing would begin.

Stay tuned to future emails updating you on the situation.

## Indeed, Nothing New?

*The following interesting bit of history was provided by a volunteer of the Healdsburg Museum & Historical Society and published in the Feb. 28, 2019, "Flashbacks" column of The Healdsburg Tribune, where it was first published on February 27, 1969.*

**South Fitch Mt. Road to be closed for four weeks to repair slide damages:** South Fitch Mountain road's massive slide area is due to be closed again for at least four weeks while county road crews put in 120 feet of hillside viaduct. The new length of bridge will join the viaduct which was installed in 1957 in the vicinity of 1932 South Fitch Mountain Rd. on the west. Cost is estimated at \$15,000. Leland Stanford, longtime resident of Fitch Mountain, said that a total of seven houses have slipped into the river or been so badly damaged they have had to be torn down since about 1957. Currently, one house is about to go into the river, and three more homes have been affected by the shifting landslide area. A spring, earthquake fault and river currents all contribute to the continuing massive land movement in the area.

## **Our Experience with Lyme Disease**

*by Dana and Chuck Eaton*

My husband, Chuck, was diagnosed with Lyme disease this May. Where and when he was bitten by an infected tick is unknown. He doesn't remember being bitten by a tick and he didn't develop a bull's eye rash, which is a common sign of Lyme disease. His symptoms were more flu-like, weeks of feeling fatigued, body aches, and joint pain with intermittent sudden spikes of 104°F temperatures.

Over the course of two weeks Chuck saw three different doctors. All three of them thought he had the flu. Before Chuck's third doctor's visit, our daughter, a doctor in New York, advised him to ask the primary care physician to order a Lyme disease test. When the test came back positive, Chuck was put on Doxycycline for three weeks.

Since my husband's diagnosis I've told many people about his illness and I have been surprised how often the response to his illness was either "I've had Lyme disease" or "I know someone who has had Lyme disease and is still ill." The common thread to these stories was how difficult it was for these Californians to get a correct diagnosis. So if you have a bulls eye rash or flu-like symptoms that persist, ask your doctor for a Lyme disease test. The sooner Lyme disease is treated, the easier it is to cure. The longer the active bacterial disease is active in one's body, the more damage it can do.

A friend recently came home from a hike at Sonoma Lake and had five ticks on his clothing. Wear long pants and long sleeves when you're hiking, spray Deet, particularly around your shoes and ankles, and tuck pant legs into socks. After being outside in tall grass, wooded areas, or along the river, check your body and clothing for ticks. An ounce of protection goes a long way.

**For membership info, archives, and  
updates on everything FMA, go to**

**http:// [www.FitchMtn.org](http://www.FitchMtn.org)**





**Note: This form is primarily for mailed or hand-carried new membership processing.** If you want to process a membership with a credit card via the internet, you can do so at the FMA website (<http://www.FitchMtn.org>). If mailing, send form and check to Fitch Mountain Association; P.O. Box 1233; Healdsburg, CA 95448. For more info, see “Time to Pay Your Dues” on pg. 2.

# Fitch Mountain Association Membership Form 2019-2020

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address:

#	Street	City	State	ZIP
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Fitch Mountain Address (if different): \_\_\_\_\_

# \_\_\_\_\_ Street \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Membership: ☐ Renewal ☐ New

Dues are \$20 per voting member.

Number of memberships being paid: \_\_\_\_\_

Names of the member(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Members x \$20 each: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I'd like to make an additional donation of: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

(Thank you for your support!)

Total enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

What are your Fitch Mountain concerns? \_\_\_\_\_

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