

Ridge Reporter

NEWSLETTER OF THE INVERNESS RIDGE ASSOCIATION

JANUARY 5TH, 2011

President's Message

THE NEW/OLD GIACOMINI WETLANDS: WHAT A MARVEL!



PHOTO: RICHARDBLAIR.COM

Over the years we had often taken the hike down to water's edge from the Tomales Bay trailhead, a mile or so north of Point Reyes Station. The trail was a bit treacherous, requiring one to dodge fresh cow pies and skirt mudholes before dead ending in a tangle of blackberries and poison oak. It was hard to get to the water itself, which was channelized behind dikes and an embankment originally filled in for the narrow guage railroad which made its way up the coast to Cazadero. Only a small piece of the original marsh was still a real marsh.

Then, a few years ago, the Point Reyes National Seashore Association ("PRNSA") and the park service scraped together some money and launched a restoration project. Many of us went to the opening of the dikes, when tide-waters crept up acres of sunbaked clay for the first time in over fifty years. The field mice and other varmints fled their flooded dens and the raptors feasted. We all stuck sprigs of pickleweed into the wet ground and retreated as the water rose higher and higher.

In mid October of this year, we took the same old hike down from the trailhead to a restored bayside. The trail is now well-signed, and graveled in most spots: the cows are discretely kept away, and most of the mud is gone. The walk can now be a circle tour: beginning at the parking lot and returning via Mesa Road. The climax is an incredible view at high tide of a sheet of water, merging into Papermill (aka Lagunitas) Creek. When the tide changes, there is a literal river of water rushing south or north, depending on the pull

of the moon. Birds are everywhere, migrating everyday as they follow the water: lots of ducks, and even an occasional bald eagle.

Feeling cooped up on these short, cold winter days? Take a look at the tide tables, bundle up, and do that hike!

You might also think about joining PRNSA. It's only forty bucks a year for basic membership, though tax deductible contributions are always appreciated. This fine group sponsors a string of educational events throughout the year, and provides scholarships to lots of kids who otherwise couldn't afford the multi-night summer programs where they get a first hand exposure to deep forests, crashing breakers, and wild creatures. The website is: www.ptreyes.org/



PHOTO: RICHARDBLAIR.COM

Annual Meeting

DON'T MISS IT! IRA's annual general meeting will be on January 15, 2011 at the home of Alan and Sydne Bortel, 1 Lower Dover, starting at 11:00 am and continuing through a potluck lunch.

Everyone brings a salad, dessert or main course, and drinks are on the house.

Our guest speaker this year will be talking about the extraordinary changes that are already apparent from the reintroduction of tidal action into the upper section of Tomales Bay. Few of us realize that when white people first arrived, the Bay at high tide reached Point Reyes Station, and the

outskirts of Olema. Schooners from San Francisco made their way up and down the whole stretch, picking up butter, potatoes and other agricultural products, while delivering day to day necessities. Grazing, deforestation, filling and dikework ended that. While the wetlands project cannot restore things to where they were in 1800, it has done a lot, as will be apparent when you look out of the Bortels' windows on January 15.

Our custom is to begin with very brief reports from the treasurer and from Road Board representatives, and move on to electing directors for the coming year. Here is the list of current directors (starred names identify those up for re-election):

Sydne Bortel*	Russ Ridge*
Sue Brown	David Starkweather
Richard Blair*	Eleanor Stern*
Bill Carlin*	Laurie Stetson
Alicia Jackson	Katherine Williams
Bob Lundstrom*	David Wilson*
Mike Ongerth*	

As always, we would like to hear from anyone who would like to serve. It's not a big time commitment (we meet every six weeks or so for about two hours on a Saturday morning), and it's an ideal way to get to know your neighbors while doing your part to make our bit of the world work better.

Whether you're a weekender or full timer, owner or tenant makes no difference. If you're interested, please send an e-mail to dmwilson7815@sbcglobal.net

Vegetation Management Update

The old saying is that there is often a slip between cup and lip. This was certainly true of this year's vegetation management project, which finally got underway in early September, and completed about three weeks later.

The date was far later than PRE-RAB had hoped. Due to environmental considerations, they usually refrain from disturbing native vegetation until the beginning of August, and that had been the plan for 2010. Bids were sought and a contract tentatively agreed to with the same contractor as in prior years. PRE RAB knew that the amount bid was on the high side, but also knew that there would be savings from the fact that the contractor had an intimate knowledge of the area, and ability to work with individual residents and owners.

That's where the County of Marin stepped in, asking for

more bids. Ultimately a different contractor won the business, resulting in significant savings. However, as had been feared, there were hidden costs. For one thing, the project was delayed (happily the delay did not increase the fire danger, because there was a lot more moisture this year than in prior years). There were also complaints from at least two homeowners about work quality. PRE RAB found that while the overall job was well done, the individual complaints had some merit. PRE RAB has talked with both the contractor and the affected residents to mitigate the situation.

On the plus side, we are happy to report that we got an exceptionally good response to our offer to chip dead vegetation left at the roadside. There are evidently a lot of folks who want defensible space but find it difficult to bring cut materials to the county sites in Inverness and Olema. Because the overall project came in below budget there will be no extra charge for this service, which we hope to repeat next year.

2010 Dues Report

At the November 6 IRA Board meeting, our treasurer, Alicia Jackson, reported on dues collected over the past year. It seems that fully 82% of households pay their dues and that many have even paid in advance for 2011. This compares very favorably with other voluntary associations like ours. Many thanks to all who responded to our appeals, and special thanks to Alicia for taking on the task of collecting and reporting.

Please update your addresses - most importantly your e-mail addresses. We have just addressed 22 envelopes to send out paper copies of the newsletter. We are sure some of these people now have an e-mail account. Others are newcomers who did not enclose this info with their dues. Contact Alicia Jackson at 663-1009, or speak to her at the general meeting.

For a fuller picture of our finances and other activities, you may go to the IRA website where Board minutes are posted as generated. The site is <http://invernessridge.net/>

It's never too late to send in a check of \$25 for your dues. The envelope should be addressed to:

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