

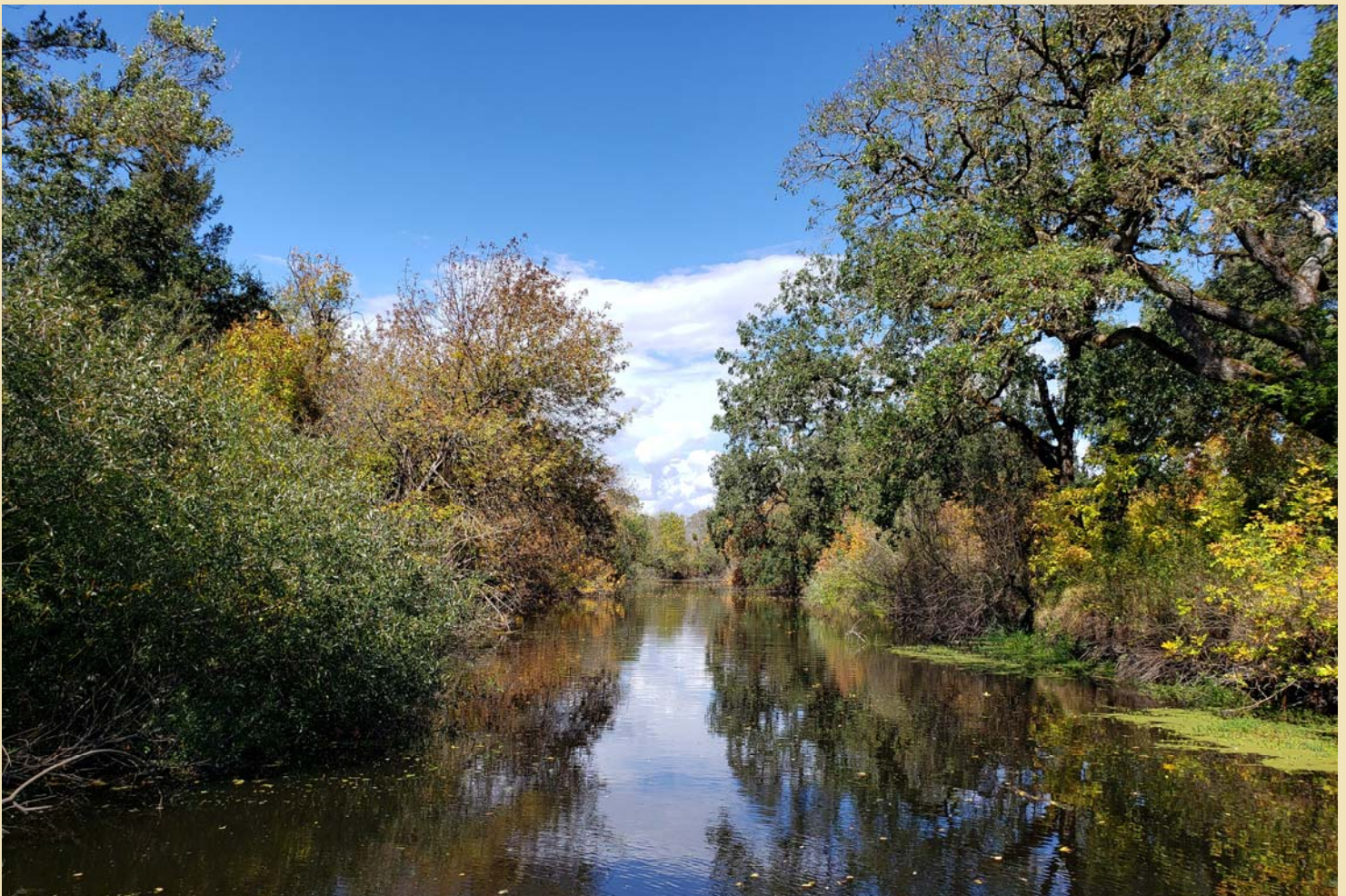
Redwood Needles



Winter 2025

Sierra Club Redwood Chapter

Volume 67, No. 1



[Celebrating and Reflecting on 2024—p. 2](#)

[Napa Group Hosts Skyline Park Social—p. 4](#)

[Worrying Signs in the Arctic— p. 6](#)

[Lake Group Supports Water Tank Mural—p. 3](#)

[Sonoma Developmental Center setback - p. 5](#)

[“Sempervirens” - a poem — p. 7](#)

Laguna de Santa Rosa Regional Park. Photo by Jim Horn

Celebrating and Reflecting on a Historic 2024

Sierra Club family,

As 2024 comes to a close, we wish everyone at the Sierra Club a happy and healthy holiday season. This is an important time to reflect on how far we have come, what we still need to do, and how we are going to get there. The good news is that we know what we need to do and we are already doing it. This year's election result brought both lessons and challenges that we are quickly adapting to and are ready to meet.

In order to grow, meet the challenges we face, and tackle the climate and extinction crises, we must deliver an environmental movement that speaks to the kitchen table issues that drive – and vex – families across this country; that speak to the issues of jobs and health that working people have shown us time and again are what will drive their engagement and their activism. The Sierra Club knew this and we were already doing this work. We were ahead of the curve, and our supporters recognize it – and their response since Election Day and in our year-end campaigns reflects that.



Ben Jealous
Executive Director,
Sierra Club

We are prepared because we have invested in the vision that Sierra Club's strongest days are ahead of us. Our leadership and Finance and Operations teams have worked with our Board to pass and balance our budget, and modernize our systems and make them more secure. Our Advancement and Membership Growth teams are working around the clock to construct a powerhouse operation, exceeding efforts from past years and leading a transformational turnaround. Our political operation had major downballot wins, with our Chapters and volunteers helping to elect many of our more than 800 endorsed climate champions, flip crucial seats and expand important legislative majorities. Our Communications team is again securing critical coverage in an ever-changing media landscape and telling the story of the Sierra Club. And our Chapters have never been stronger, with 13 more Chapter Directors than we had two years ago and 10 Chapters now having Directors that had never had one before.

We know we have a lot we need to defend in the coming year. But we also know our movement is more popular than any political party or presidential candidate... and with the work we have done, it will continue to grow. We will lean into that as we continue to usher in a clean energy economy that truly lifts all boats, and we will lean into our successes that are already benefiting millions of Americans.

Everyone at the Sierra Club is a leader in our communities. Let's embrace the responsibility that comes with that and keep working to ensure our impact is as profound and enduring as it has always been.

I encourage you to take a moment to celebrate all we have accomplished this year, and head into the break appreciating the life-changing impact the work we all do.

And here are some end-of-year recaps of what we accomplished this

Cont'd on page 3



SIERRA CLUB

REDWOOD CHAPTER

Redwood Needles

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Support Your Passion for a Just and Sustainable World

Create a legacy that protects and restores the natural world for future generations by naming Sierra Club's Redwood Chapter in your will or trust. Or, name Sierra Club Foundation as the beneficiary of your retirement plan for the benefit of your local chapter and leave less highly taxed assets to your loved ones.



To learn more about the advantages of making a planned gift and to become a member of the Rachel Carson Society, please contact us.



SIERRA CLUB
REDWOOD CHAPTER

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Redwood Chapter Leadership

The Executive Committee (ExCom) is the governing body of the chapter, with one member delegated by each of six regional groups and six members elected at large. Each group elects its own Executive Committee. The chapter ExCom meets every month over Zoom.

Chapter Chair, At Large, CCC/CCL Delegate, 30x30 Task Force:

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jhorn@hornengineers.com

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At Large, CCL Delegate, Membership Co-chair

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Climate/Energy Committee Chair: Vacant

Forest Chair, At Large:

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Mendocino Group Delegate to Chapter:

Robin Leler* • (707) 459-0155

Napa Group Delegate to Chapter:

Scott Thomason* • (707) 260-4455

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Solano Group Delegate to Chapter:

Paul Theiss* • (415) 902-3395

Sonoma Group Delegate to Chapter:

TBD*

Chapter Webmaster: Melanie Matway
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* Signifies voting member of the ExCom

Celebrating and Reflecting on a Historic 2024

(continued from p. 2)

year, together, from a few of our major campaigns:

[Beyond Dirty Fuels: Our 2024 Wins and the Fights Ahead >>](#)

[2024 Was a Year of Conservation Wins – Now We Have to Defend Them >>](#)

[Outdoors for All 2024 Retrospective: In Divided Times, Natures Unites Us >>](#)

[2024 Recap: Five Clean Transportation Wins to Celebrate >>](#)

We should feel an immense sense of pride in what our staff, volunteers and allies have accomplished this past year. Reflecting on our victories reminds us what we know we are capable of, even against tough odds. It will help us lead with hope in the months and years ahead.

Let's rest up and enjoy the Winter Break. And let's return ready to go, fight, win, and lead our movement to protect the people, places, and planet we love into the next year and beyond.

Happy New Year and thank you for everything,

Ben Jealous

Executive Director

Lake Group Supports Water Tank Mural

Some of you have probably noticed the beautiful transformation of the Callayomi County Water District's tanks on the hills above Middletown for The Water Basket Project—although the CAL FIRE water tank on Rabbit Hill is still a bland tan color. The Lake County Land Trust (LCLT), which owns that part of Rabbit Hill, is working with CAL FIRE and Middletown Art Center to remedy that situation.

The Middletown Art Center initiated the Water Basket Project, a collaboration with Middletown Rancheria of Pomo Indians of California, and the Callayomi County Water District to honor the cultural heritage of the Original People and ecology of the area while uplifting a community recovering from wildfire through public art.

Local artist Darina Simeonova's design, which was submitted for the Water Basket Project, and was one of the three community favorites, was selected for the third tank. Funding came from AES, the renewable energy corporation that is currently in the planning stage for a wind farm in Morgan Valley, in the form of a \$10,000 grant to LCLT. Our Lake Group has donated \$1,000. And, Sue Morton of Lakeport has also provided financial support. Xavier Pina of West Coast Painter, who painted the other Water Baskets, is slated to complete the project. We can't wait to see this beautiful work of art!



Lake Group Sierra Club ExCom Members JoAnn Saccato, Ed Robey, and Deb Sally presented a \$1,000 check to Lake County Land Trust's President, Val Nixon.

Proposed mural



Napa Group Hosts Skyline Park Social Gathering

The Napa Group sponsored a gathering of Sierra Club members on September 25, at Skyline Hall in Skyline Park. The event attracted current members and local dignitaries, including Scott Sedgley, Napa Mayor, and Melissa Lamattina, recently elected to the American Canyon City Council. Also in attendance were County Supervisors Joelle Gallagher and Anne Cottrell. (All photo credits: Joanna Mittman)



Our student interns (L to R) Maia M., Liliana K., Natalie C., Kate B., and Arya A.

Our Executive Committee Secretary, Elayna Trucker, did a fantastic job as the event's Master of Ceremonies. Event planners Nick Cheranich, Chair of the Napa Group, and Scott Thomason, Napa Group's Treasurer, made sure the event ran smoothly.



Elayna Trucker

Our invited speaker was Brendon Freeman, Executive Officer of Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) of Napa County, who gave a short background on what LAFCO

does and why. Briefly, LAFCO is the governmental agency designated by the California Legislature to manage local governmental boundaries, evaluate municipal services, and protect prime agriculture lands. Brendon walked those attending through some of the recent projects LAFCO has been involved in and its role in each of them.

Additionally, Susan Kenward spoke briefly about the importance of defeating St. Helena's Measure B, a proposal to permit the development of a luxury resort. Both Susan's group and the Sierra Club advocated for a "No on Measure B" vote.



Susan Kenward

Also attending the function were Sierra Club Napa Group high school student interns, including Paulina Zambrano, Katherine Bit, Liliana Karesh, Arya Adhye, Natalie Carr and Maia Medalle. Many of the students helped the event run smoothly, and also staffed a table representing another youth organization they belong to

called Napa Schools for Climate Action. The free event (paid partly with member donations) was catered by the Kitchen Door and included delicious



Executive Committee members Roland Dumas and Nick Cheranich (Left), with attendees.

wine donated by Christina Benz and the American Canyon Community & Parks Foundation.

This was the second social event hosted by the Napa Group in 2024, and the Executive Committee is eager to continue these gatherings in 2025. Each event will focus on a unique theme, bringing like-minded members together to enjoy food, beverages, and an evening of connection and camaraderie. In these challenging times, we believe that fostering social capital is as vital as advancing our shared environmental goals.



Sonoma Developmental Center housing plan sees another major setback

(Reprinted from the Santa Rosa Press Democrat, Dec. 3, 2024: <https://bit.ly/3BGE4pz>)

A citizens' lawsuit to derail a massive redevelopment of the shuttered Sonoma Developmental Center reached the corridors of the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday, prompting additional delays in what county leaders hoped would be one of their largest housing initiatives in years.

Following a series of judicial rulings earlier this year, supervisors unanimously agreed to decertify an "environmental impact report" and related county zoning changes for the state-owned property near Glen Ellen, abutting Jack London State Park. They also repealed approval of another document, called the "specific plan," that had guided a developer's vision for the project.

Board members reached their decision after discussing the subject, and getting an earful from the public on it, for more than 100 minutes.

"It is my opinion and the opinion of the Glen Ellen Historical Society that we support the board's proposal to decertify the EIR and set aside the specific plan," said Teresa Murphy, vice chair of the Glen Ellen Historical Society, which has been among the most vocal opponents of the Sonoma Developmental Center proposal and also has been among a coalition of groups fighting it in court.

"It's time to redraw the plan according to the wishes of the community, which is a scaled-down version which has many advantages, including health and safety, and climate and wildlife protection," Murphy also implored to county supervisors. "It's also the opinion of the Glen Ellen Historical Society that there has not been sufficient review of the vast historical resources at SDC, making these assets vulnerable to complete destruction."

Besides Murphy, more than [a dozen other opponents of the project voiced deep](#)

[concerns about it](#), citing traffic, wildfire and environmental concerns. Initially, Permit Sonoma, county government's planning and code-enforcement division, approved placing 1,000 housing units on the 180-acre SDC core campus, part of what once was a 945-acre site. Portions have since been set aside as park land.



In January 2023, residents took that plan to court. A coalition called Sonoma Community Advocates for a Livable Environment that month sued Sonoma County, alleging that the project, as approved, failed to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act.

In April 2024, [Sonoma County Superior Court Judge Bradford DeMeo](#) ruled that the county didn't define the number of housing units allowed, respond to community concerns in the draft environmental impact report or adequately gauge impacts on biological resources and wildfire evacuation. DeMeo also ruled that the county didn't fully consider the impact of another large development proposal just to the south, at the Hanna Center, a child-welfare campus that also is proposing selling off some of its land for a 600-home development alongside retail and commercial space.

The judge issued a writ in October that all but compelled the county to decertify the environmental impact report and related zoning amendments for the Sonoma Developmental Center. As a result, county staff and attorneys suggested abandoning the "specific plan," arguing the county would be powerless

to enforce it on the SDC developer: Eldridge Renewal LLC, led by Napa-based builder Keith Rogal.

That set the stage for Tuesday's decision by the supervisors to abandon the environmental impact report and specific plan.

What happens next is difficult to predict. The project, at the very least, faces a complicated road ahead, with the supervisors' action appearing to push back a final decision on it for months.

Neither Rogal, nor anyone from Eldridge Renewal, publicly addressed the board Tuesday.

Board members and Sonoma Valley residents voiced a need for the State of California and the developer to engage with residents about the SDC's future and the scale of the project.

Meanwhile, county leaders decried that the State of California, which continues to own the property as the sale to Eldridge Renewal is pending, might be requesting \$2.3 million from county government because the project has not met deadlines.

"I appreciate the discussion and I think we're getting to a place where we need to go," said Supervisor Susan Gorin, who represents District 1, which includes Sonoma Valley. "I can't help but state that the State has made an intentional disinvestment from the property for decades, so for them to expect a developer and the county to come up with a financially feasible plan with a detailed infrastructure is immoral."

Reach the reporter, Dan Johnson, at daniel.johnson@sonomanews.com.



Worrying Signs From the Arctic

Scientists are seeing changes that could have consequences for the whole planet.

(Reprinted from the *New York Times*, Dec. 17, 2024, by [David Gelles](#):

In a year full of troubling signs that Earth's climate is rapidly changing, some of the most alarming signals came from the Arctic.

The thawing tundra has become a source of greenhouse gas emissions, instead of locking away carbon. Sea ice levels are near historic lows. Fires are getting worse. Surface air temperatures are near record highs. And, yes, the polar bears are in trouble.

"There's a lot going on in the Arctic," said Brendan Rogers, an Arctic scientist at the Woodwell Climate Research Center in Falmouth, Mass.

"There's big changes in the rivers, and with salmon, and big changes in the atmosphere, and with sea ice, and ocean productivity, and the fauna."

One area of particular concern to Rogers is the increase in wildfires. Fire season is getting longer, the fires are burning bigger and hotter, and more fires are being ignited by lightning strikes.

"The primary reasons are all directly tied to climate change," he said.

Some fire activity is natural, of course. But Rogers said that, because of climate change, "the fires are happening too quickly, too much; they're also increasing in severity and intensity."

Another point of acute concern: Parts

of the Arctic that have long stored carbon are now turning into sources of carbon.

Last week, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced that the Arctic tundra has in recent decades been "adding more



The Russell Glacier descending toward a lake of its own meltwater near Kangerlussuaq, Greenland, in July. Credit...Sean Gallup/Getty Images

carbon dioxide to the atmosphere than it has removed, a reversal from the usual state of affairs since the peak of the last ice age," my colleague Raymond Zhong wrote.

What happens in the Arctic doesn't stay in the Arctic

A warmer Arctic has the potential to alter global weather patterns. It's the temperature gradient between the polar regions and the Equator that drives air currents that move high and low pressure systems around the globe.

Major changes to the Arctic will most likely have far-reaching consequences, though scientists can't yet predict exactly what they will be.

"There's a lot about the Arctic that does very directly affect the rest of the

world," Zhong told me.

The thawing Arctic is also shaking up geopolitics.

With sea ice melting, new shipping lanes are opening up. As a result, Russia and China have sought to project their influence in the region in recent years.

That has led Canada to step up its military presence in the region and seek to work more closely with the United States. Announcing the move, the Canadian government called climate change "the overarching threat" to control of its Arctic territories.

Meanwhile, tensions between Russia and the West have resulted in scientists being shut out of the Russian Arctic, compromising efforts to collect reliable

data on one of the largest and most significant swaths of the Arctic on Earth.

It's too early to say we've hit a tipping point

Scientists can't yet say that the changes being observed in the Arctic are irreversible, or that they are accelerating and compounding.

And while the tundra is now a carbon source, other permafrost areas, including beneath boreal forests, are still net carbon sinks, or natural reservoirs that store more carbon than they emit. (Though the forests are burning at an alarming rate.)

Still, things are moving fast up north.

The Arctic is warming four times as

Worrying Signs From the Arctic

(cont'd from page 6)

fast as the rest of the planet. In the waters that connect the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans in northern Canada, sea ice was the lowest ever recorded in the period from October of 2023 to September.

In Canada's Western Arctic, thawing permafrost is triggering landslides and making it a near certainty that some villages will have to move. This summer, the eastern half of Hudson Bay, home to the world's most-studied polar bears, was ice-free a month earlier than usual.

A group of scientists recently warned that the Arctic could experience its first day that is practically ice-free by 2027. And, for the 11th year in a row, the Arctic was more abnormally warm than the world as a whole.

In a recent guest essay for the Times' Opinion section, a former park ranger, Jon Waterman, revisited Arctic landscapes he first encountered 40 years ago and witnessed a world transformed by fires, landslides, new vegetation and melting permafrost.

When Waterman asked a villager, sweating in the heat, what could be done about climate change, he replied, "Maybe people down south could reduce their emissions."



Jon Waterman hiking back to camp in the Noatak headwaters with smoke from a wildfire in the distance. Credit...Chris Korbolic

"Sempervirens"

(a poem by Elizabeth Carothers Herron, taken from *Sempervirens Fund newsletter*)

'Twas the night before solstice, when
all through the forest,

Creatures were stirring, trees swaying
in chorus.

Redwood saplings were planted in
the soil with care,

In hopes that ancient giants someday
would be there.

The owls were nestled in hollows so
deep,

While deer in the meadow lay silent
in sleep.

And I in my fleece, with scarf
wrapped up tight,

Had ventured to witness this magical
night.

When out in the grove rose a moon so
round,

I peered past the shadows, my heart
started to pound.

Away to the clearing I hurried, wide-
eyed,

And gazed at the forest so vast and so
wide.

The moon through the branches cast
beams soft and pale,

Revealing the mountains in their
white misty veil.

When, what to my wondering eyes
should appear,

But a fairy ring of trees flourishing
here.

Vibrant mushrooms sprung from an
underground lair,

Where their threads weave the forest
together to share.

The redwoods stood tall in the
moon's silver glow,

Guarding the forest from ages ago.

Once-dammed creeks, now flowing
like fountains,

Welcome endangered fish back to the
mountains.

Untraveled roads, returned to the wild.

The forest restored; a gift to every
child.

My troubles shrank beneath the tower-
ing trees,

Inhaling their healing terpenes on the
breeze.

As the moon beamed, the stars danced
on high,

And the trees seemed to sway as if
breathing a sigh.

So deep was their wisdom, so still was
their grace,

That I felt all the forest alive in this
place.

The wind seemed to whisper, "this
land you behold,

Is a gift to protect, more precious than
gold.

Its rivers and ridges, its creatures and
air,

Are threads of a tapestry woven with
care."

And as quick as it came, the breeze
faded on cue,

Leaving frost-kissed needles and a
world born anew.

But I thought I heard, before they van-
ished from sight,

"Honor the redwoods, and to all, a
good night"



Redwood Needles

Sierra Club

Redwood Chapter

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Volunteer with Us!

NEW MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE—COME JOIN US!

We're seeking committee members who want to help recruit new members and volunteers and invite them into the Chapter. Committee members will help current members, Theresa Ryan and Elayna Trucker, build the committee and put into place policies that will make all new members feel welcomed, informed, and ready to help with this important work.

As the committee grows, we hope members will help with tabling and other recruitment events, as well as host regular orientation and onboarding meetings. We're especially looking for members who have worked within the Sierra Club framework for some time, but all assistance is welcome! Please reach out to us at redwoodmembership@gmail.com.

COMPLIANCE OFFICER

Redwood Chapter needs to recruit a Compliance Officer to help our political program follow Sierra Club rules and state and local law. Working closely with the Political Chair and other volunteer leaders, the Compliance Officer needs to be willing to become familiar with the latest version of the Political Compliance Guidelines prepared by the national Sierra Club political team, as well as any local ordinances in any of the chapter's nine counties that may restrict our political work. Familiarity with state election law would also be helpful though the state compliance officer can be relied up to provide guidance on that subject.

Time commitment depends on issues that may arise, but is ordinarily very slight. A full job description is available on the chapter website, at <https://www.sierraclub.org/redwood/help-wanted>. Chapter Political Chair Victoria Brandon is also glad to answer questions: feel free to call her at 707.994.1931 or to send an email to vbrandon95457@gmail.com.

OUTINGS CHAIR

We're looking for a committed, well-organized person to provide direction and oversight to the chapter outings program -- it is NOT necessary to be an Outings Leader to fill this crucial role. Work to make outdoor activities an integrated and vital element of chapter efforts. Responsibilities include ensuring all chapter and group outings follow Club policies and procedures, officially approving all outings, taking responsibility for publicizing outings in the Redwood Needles and elsewhere, and ensuring that active leaders meet training and first-aid certification requirements. *Estimated Time Commitment: 5 hours a month and up.*

Interested? Contact Chapter Chair Dan Mayhew at drmayhew356@gmail.com to find out more.