

CALIFORNIA
COAST & OCEAN

VOLUME 14, NO. 1

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Rosie
the
Riveter
and the
Second
Gold
Rush

FIGHTING THE OCEAN

SHOWDOWN AT HEARST RANCH

FLOODPLAIN RESTORATION





Because the United Nations has declared 1998 the International Year of the Ocean (OCEAN98), *Coast & Ocean* is focusing special attention this year on ocean-related issues, and on ways people are getting personally involved. To learn more about our water planet, look at the OCEAN98 web site (www.ocean98.org), the NOAA Year of the Ocean web site (www.yoto98.noaa.gov), or contact Matt Stout or Greg Hernandez at NOAA Public Affairs in Washington, DC by phone: (202) 482-6090; or by e-mail: webmaster@ocean.nos.noaa.gov.

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COAST & OCEAN
Coastal Conservancy
1330 Broadway, 11th Floor
Oakland, CA 94612
e-mail: calcoast@igc.org

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The Coastal Conservancy is a state agency that works with the people of California to preserve, improve, and restore public access and natural resources along the coast and around San Francisco Bay. It is funded primarily by bonds authorized by California voters.

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CALIFORNIA COAST & OCEAN
1330 Broadway, 11th Floor
Oakland, CA 94612
(510) 286-0934, e-mail: calcoast@igc.org

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COURTESY THE RICHMOND MUSEUM COLLECTION

**In the Rush to Build
Emergency Seawalls,
Who's Protecting
the Public's Beaches?**

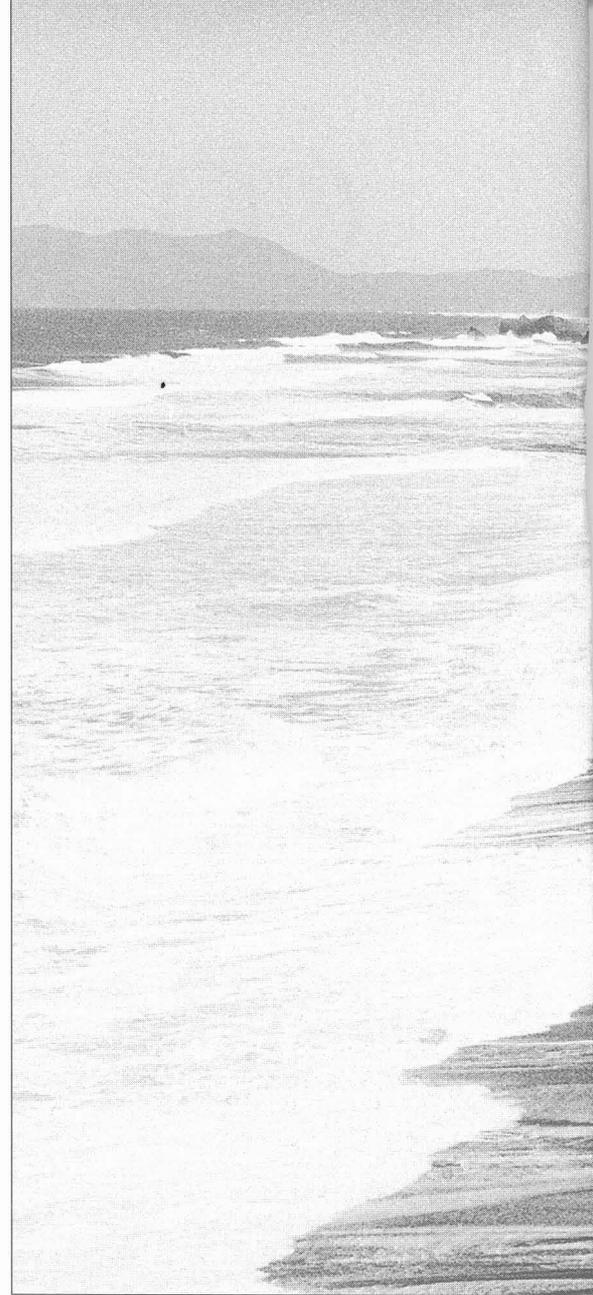
LINES IN THE SAND

A YELLOW OFF-LIMITS RIBBON was strung across the beach in Pacifica, just north of a bluff on which several homes stood teetering. The tide was coming in, and as huge double-header waves rolled ever closer toward the toe of the cliff, a uniformed officer walked to the surf's edge to pound a stake more firmly into the sand. It was a futile gesture that seemed symbolic of the effort under way here, as well as in other coastal communities, to hold back the ocean.

RASA GUSTAITIS

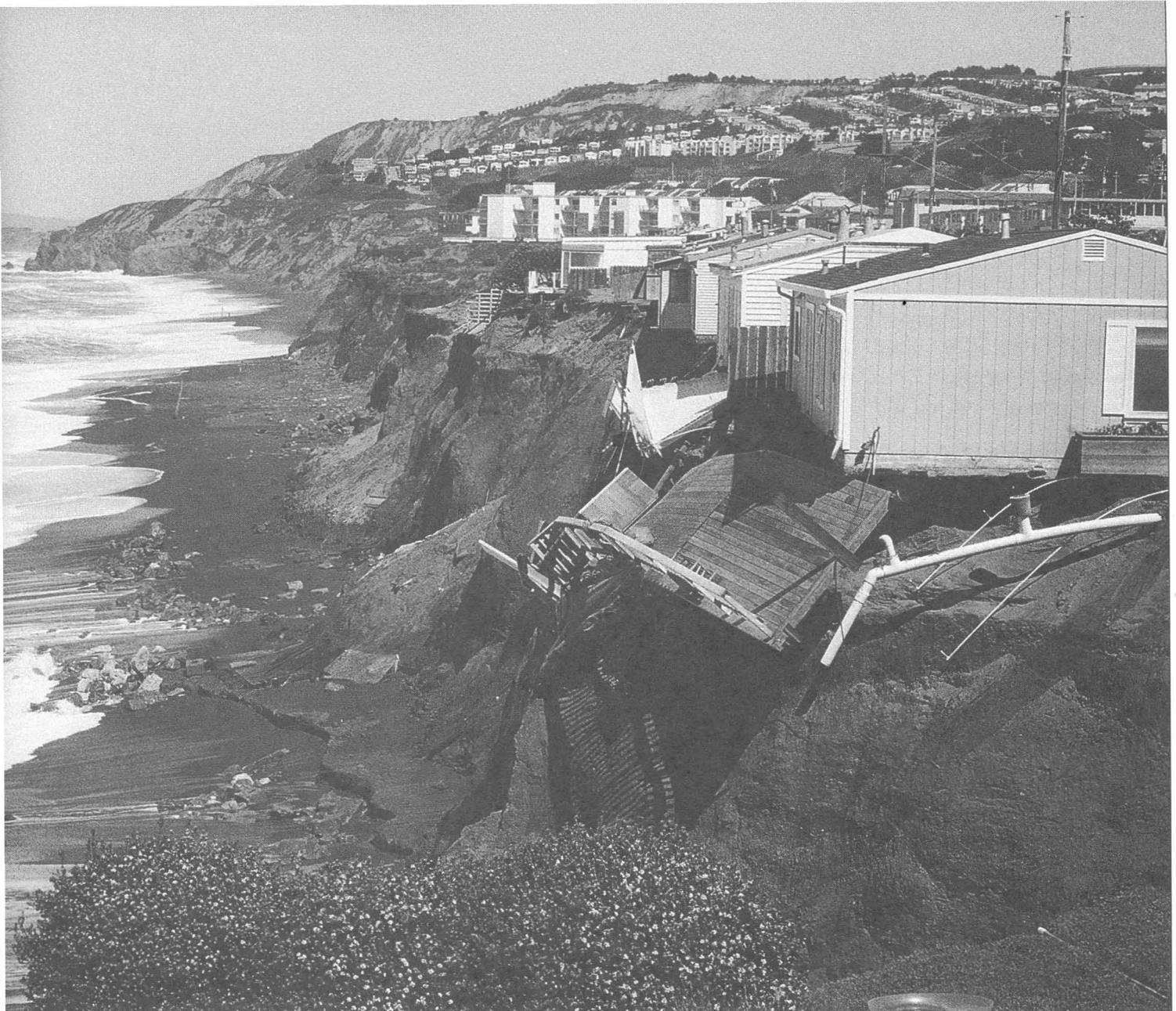
Ten homes were lost here when the bluff failed in February. More are likely to go, perhaps not this year, but certainly before long. Eventually the street along the blufftop may also go, despite efforts now being made to save it—as did streets in northern San Diego County which today exist only on old maps; as did blufftop houses at Big Lagoon, Humboldt County, where the bluff retreated more than 50 feet this year alone. The geological mechanisms may be somewhat different from place to place, but the basic cause for these failures is the same: construction on unstable bluffs that are inexorably eroding.

"Pacifica could be a poster child for the Coastal Act," said Bob Merrill, North Coast



District director for the California Coastal Commission. "A lot of houses were built too close to the cliff edge, so it's likely that this will be a continuing problem." About three miles of the city's shoreline are having problems, according to Tim A. Molinare, community and economic development director of Pacifica.

The California Coastal Act of 1976 allows emergency permits for seawalls, revetments, and other shoreline armaments to protect structures. These permits can be issued at a moment's notice by local governments or Coastal Commission staff, without the scrutiny normally required before approval of construction within the Coastal Zone. After the hard structures are built a follow-up hearing is held and, in theory, they can be removed or modified. In practice, however, they often lead to more



LUSHA MOSS

and more shoreline armament frequently built at public expense to protect private property in hazard zones. Dozens of emergency permits have been issued so far this year, though nobody has an exact count.

The City of Pacifica is building a 1,000-foot-long rock revetment (retaining wall), 40' wide at the base and 20' high, below the red-tagged homes. If the homeowners agree to maintain it (at an estimated cost of \$100-\$150 a month), the City might permit them to move their houses inland, sacrificing one lane of Esplanade Drive. Maintenance would require bringing in more boulders when needed, as well as picking up those that fall to the beach and repositioning them.

This is a desperate, risky, and expensive project, funded by a \$1.5 million grant from the Federal Emergency Management

Agency (FEMA). The bluff is being undermined not only by wave action but also by groundwater that seeps from upslope and creates cavities in the bluff's sandy layers. To drain off some of that seepage, borings will be made into the bluff-face.

There was an earlier revetment at this location, installed after the 1983-84 storms. The homeowners built it but did not maintain it, said City Manager David Carmany. Its boulders now lie scattered on the beach. Some will be retrieved for the new, better-engineered wall, and the City expects that the homeowners will agree to form an assessment district to provide upkeep funds. Even so, Merrill fears that this, too, will "turn out to be just a bandaid measure."

Meanwhile, the City is also dumping vast quantities of rock farther down the beach,

A 1,000-foot-long seawall is about to be built here in Pacifica.

To a coastal geologist, erosion is normal. When bluffs fail, they replenish beach sand. . . . No matter what humans do, the coast continues to retreat as the continental plate slowly rises, crowded and crunched by the Pacific plate as it slides below.

extending protection to more homes and a restaurant close to the surf, as well as to public property. State funds may be available to reinforce a deteriorated seawall shoring up a rent-controlled mobile home park, with the owner paying 25 percent of the total cost, said Assemblyman Lou Papan's aide, Edward Randolph. "Our office has been putting pressure on the landowner to repair it," Randolph said. "He just hasn't had the cash. With the wall as deteriorated as it was, it's easier to get some assistance."

Media attention and public sympathy have focused on the plight of the Pacifica homeowners. There has been little discussion, however, of the long-range cost of emergency shoreline armament to Pacifica's beaches—which, as Carmany points out, "are probably the main asset of the town."

The price is a steep one. "Over time," Merrill explains, "the beach may erode to the seawall and there might not be much beach left." With loss of sand that damps the waves' power, cliffs fail more rapidly. Kim Sterrett, engineering geologist in the Beach Erosion Program of the Department of Boating and Waterways, puts it this way: "In places with rapid beach or bluff erosion, if you protect one place and not the whole stretch of beach, that place eventually becomes an artificial headland. The unarmed shore on either side of a hard structure keeps eroding, eventually cutting off access along the beach."

The only way to avoid this problem would be to encase the entire stretch of bluffs in stone and concrete. But that not only would be exorbitantly expensive, it also would degrade beaches that are beautiful in large part *because* of the eroding cliffs. Although people and communities have a legal right to try to protect their property, armoring the coast spoils and may even destroy beaches that belong to the public and to wildlife.

In Tillamook County, Oregon, the owner of a \$400,000 home built on a sandy bluff 150 feet above the beach was recently denied a permit to build a seawall when the bluff started to crack and slump. The state's coastal management policy is "no hard structures on the beach," said Robert J. Bailey, Ocean Program administrator for the State of Oregon. This allows "beach, fore-dunes, and ocean cliffs [to] move where

they want to and maintain the sand." Some exceptions to this policy are allowed in designated zones and for buildings constructed before 1977, the year the coastal management program went into effect. This home did not qualify. The owner was permitted only to place netting at the toe of the cliff and pile sand on it as reinforcement.

To a coastal geologist, erosion is normal. When bluffs fail, they replenish beach sand, thus maintaining the natural slope that coastal scientists have found to be the most effective bluff protection. No matter what humans do, the coast continues to retreat as the continental plate slowly rises, crowded and crunched by the Pacific plate as it slides below.

Some time can be gained by avoiding practices that hasten erosion. "Our experience has been that on all sandy bluffs, whenever there is irrigation at the blufftop, bluff failure is not far behind," said Lee Otter, Central Coast District chief planner for the Coastal Commission.

The Cliffs Hotel in Pismo Beach was built in the mid-1980s more than 100 feet from the bluff edge—a setback that a geotechnical report deemed sufficient for more than 100 years, based on the historic rate of erosion of three inches a year. Yet already 30 feet have been lost. The lush lawn on the bluffside may be a reason, though that is not proven. Now the hotel wants to armor the toe of the bluff. Because the building itself is not yet endangered, no emergency permit has been issued. "It's clear from the Coastal Act that the structure must be in danger before you approve it," said Otter. "But how imminent does the danger have to be? Do you wait till the last minute?" And what of the danger emergency seawalls pose to sandy beaches—the public's property—ask others. A popular surfing beach and a marine sanctuary are just downcoast in Pacifica.

At press time, some of the ten red-tagged houses were about to fall because no action had been taken to move them or dismantle them on site. Once they hit the beach they will be on public property. FEMA could then consider another grant, for debris removal. At that point—once the seawall is in place—the homeowners may decide to rebuild on their oceanfront lots, which, Carmany learned from realtors, could be worth as much as \$200,000 each with the seawall. ■

SHOWDOWN AT HEARST RANCH

"An unspoiled shoreline with hundreds of coves, dozens of uncrowded beaches, rocky headlands and clean blue water stretching to a far horizon unmarked by oil rigs or air pollution... one of California's premier natural wonders."

—Coastal Commission Staff Report

M IDWAY BETWEEN LOS Angeles and San Francisco, San Luis Obispo County's north coast still looks much the same as it did over a century ago. Along some 20 miles of glorious shore, the view from two-lane High-

way 1 is open in all directions, almost entirely free of manmade structures.

Lush coastal terraces extend to eroding bluffs, rocky headlands, and sandy beaches. Dolphins and sea otters play offshore, elephant seals loll a few dozen feet from the road. Inland, cattle graze on rolling hills



DAVID MIDDLECAMP, SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY TELEGRAM-TRIBUNE

and rest on hot days in the shade of large oaks. While the coastline elsewhere is more and more crowded and developed, here clear streams flow freely from the rugged, forested Santa Lucia Mountains to pristine lagoons where juvenile steelhead prepare for adult life in the ocean. Up to a million tourists visit Hearst Castle each year, but few stay for long. Between San Luis Obispo and Carmel, some 130 miles north beyond the steep wilderness of Big Sur, the biggest town is Cambria, population 5,600.

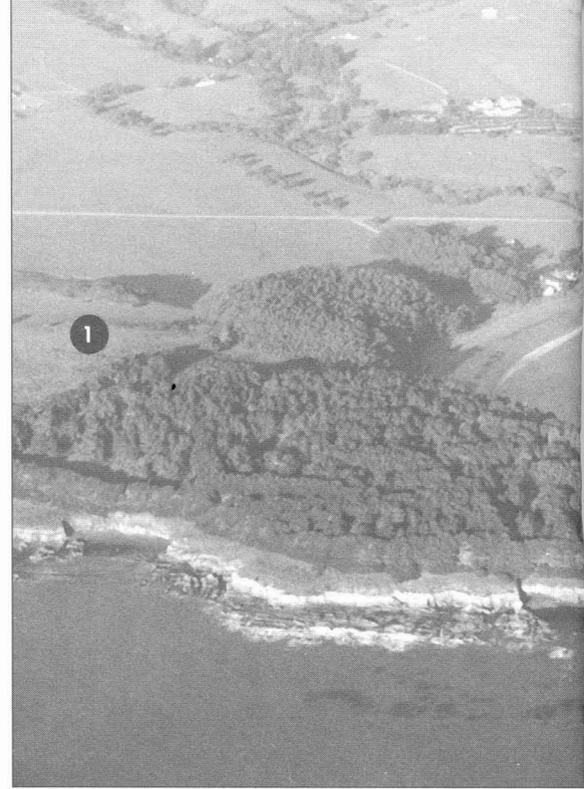
So great is the natural and scenic value of this stretch of coast that in writing the Coastal Act of 1976 the California Legislature extended the Coastal Zone five miles inland here (as it did in the Santa Monica Mountains) to include entire watersheds and ecosystems within a 100,000-acre area.

About half this expanse—48,000 acres—is part of the 77,000-acre Hearst Ranch, which reaches from the ocean's edge to the watershed divide of the Salinas River Basin and includes 16 miles of the shoreline between San Luis Obispo and Ragged Point, the southern gateway to Big Sur. Even the strip of ground under Highway 1 is Hearst property, with Caltrans holding an easement.

The Hearst Corporation, which owns the ranch as well as a media empire, has proposed to build a resort complex with three hotels, convention center, blufftop golf course, dude ranch, restaurants, and shops. With more visitor-serving units than the combined total at the Pebble Beach and Spanish Bay resorts in Monterey County, this proposal has sparked what may well be the coastal battle of the decade.

The fight is not about whether development should be permitted; it is about the size, character, and location of the proposed Hearst Ranch Resorts. Can they be built without undermining the values the Coastal Act was designed to protect—without, that is, setting into motion a chain of events that would lead inexorably to more and more development, degrading fragile ecosystems and driving out agriculture?

The Hearst proposal cleared its first big hurdle in November 1996, when Mike Ryan, with the support of development interests, narrowly defeated David Blakeley in the county Board of Supervisors election, shifting the Board to a three-to-two majority favoring more growth. The County had just completed the first comprehensive update of its 15-year-old Local



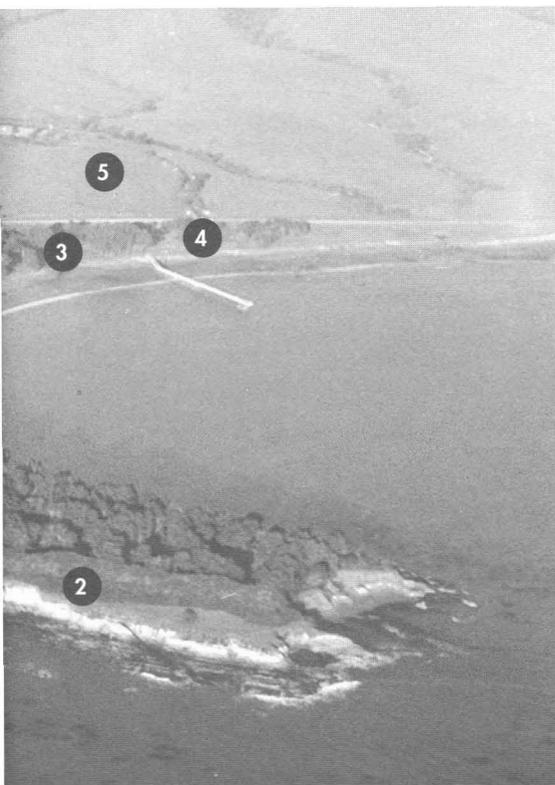
Coastal Plan (LCP), the framework within which permits are issued. The outgoing Board adopted the update, a product of eight years of work and many public hearings, but in June 1997 the new Board made changes that matched the expressed wishes of the Hearst Corporation and another developer, who hopes to build a 365-unit project, the East West Ranch, on agricultural land at the edge of Cambria. Later that month, 300 people gathered in Cambria's town hall and formed the North Coast Alliance, "dedicated to stopping this potentially disastrous development."

On January 15 the Coastal Commission unanimously rejected the County's LCP update and voted for extensive revisions recommended by its staff asking that the Hearst complex be scaled down from 650 to 350 units, that these be clustered at one site rather than built at four separate locations, that the blufftop golf course be disapproved, and that environmental and other constraints, notably the scarcity of water, be taken into account. Regarding the proposed East West Ranch, the Commission found that it could be considered only if Cambria's public utility district agrees to annex it—an unlikely prospect, given Cambria's severe water shortage.

The Commission's action, taken almost exactly 25 years after the Coastal Act went into effect, was a major milestone in the continuing struggle over the future of California's 1,100-mile coast.

"There are very few places left in this world where one can still go to see vast stretches of undeveloped coast; where anyone, no matter who he is or how much or little he has, can partake of this beauty—a beauty that belongs to us all."

COASTAL COMMISSIONER
SARA WAN



ROBERT DYER, SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY TELEGRAM-TRIBUNE

on an isolated stretch of the Sonoma County coast. In 1972 voters passed a ballot initiative that created the Coastal Commission and directed it to draft a Coastal Plan. This plan was embodied four years later in the most far-reaching coastal protection measure in the nation. Sea Ranch was scaled down significantly, and Sonoma's coast remains rural, served by two-lane Highway 1.

"The Coastal Act is not anti-development," explains Coastal Commission Executive Director Peter Douglas. "It is for appropriate development appropriately sited." A quarter-century after its passage each natural remnant of the coast is therefore more precious.

The survival of the north San Luis Obispo coast can be credited in large part to the Hearst family's careful stewardship of its vast land holdings for 130 years. The ranch was acquired by the family patriarch, George Hearst, who made a fortune in silver mining and bought up ranches from distressed owners after the 1862-64 drought. His son, newspaper publisher William Randolph Hearst, built Hearst Castle on a hillside overlooking San Simeon Point and filled it with art and treasure from Europe. In 1958 the family donated

1. Hearst wants to build a golf course here.
2. San Simeon Point
3. Old San Simeon Village
4. William R. Hearst Memorial State Beach
5. Staging area for Hearst Castle

Hearsts and the Coastal Act

THE COASTAL ACT GREW from the Save Our Coast movement sparked by citizen outrage at the loss of public access to the shoreline owing to private development in Malibu and at Sea Ranch, a huge, high-priced second-home community being built

Professional golfer and golf course designer Johnny Miller on San Simeon Point, swinging toward proposed golf course site.



JOHN MOORE, SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY TELEGRAM-TRIBUNE



DAVID MIDDLECAMP; SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY TELEGRAM-TRIBUNE

Hearst attorney Philip Battaglia addresses the Coastal Commission.

the castle to the State Parks Department. The rest of the ranch remains in the family corporation's ownership, administered for the benefit of the heirs.

The New York-based Hearst Corporation has had development plans for more than 30 years. In the 1960s it briefly considered building 20,000 homes at Piedras Blancas, a stretch of coast now repopulated by a huge colony of elephant seals (see p. 11). Later, it envisioned a 900-unit resort spread over five sites, with two golf courses. The Coastal Commission's January 15 decision on the proposed LCP update tossed the ball back into the County's court, and the battle is far from over. The meeting at which that decision was made, however, stands as a remarkable moment in the continuing drama in which coastal residents and other Californians confront strong development interests and prevail.

Economic Forces, Enduring Values

THE COASTAL COMMISSION had not planned to meet in San Luis Obispo. A blizzard of letters and pleas from North Coast Alliance members and other residents per-

sueded it do so—for the first time in 25 years. The largest room available, at the Embassy Suites Hotel, held only 400 people, so a closed-circuit TV hookup was set up in the hotel atrium for the overflow crowd. By 7:30 a.m. the lobby was abuzz like a Capitol hall at the end of a legislative session. Among the first in line was a group of university students who, surprisingly, vacated the two front rows of seats upon arrival of Hearst representatives just before the start of the meeting. Hearst supporters wore rectangular white stickers printed in black: "Jobs Yes" and "Hearst Yes." Opponents wore round yellow tags printed in red: "Save Our Coast for Our Future, for Our Families."

Hearst had mailed a packet to every registered voter in the county with cards addressed to Coastal Commission Chairman Rusty Areias urging support for the County's LCP update. It had aired a videotape about its project on a local TV station, and had thrown a party for supporters. Opponents had campaigned against the project by telephone, mail, leaflets, posters, and editorials. The Commission had received thousands of letters.

"No one minimizes what is at stake,"

"Golf will make our community more attractive"

WILLIAM C. BEALS,
CAMBRIA RESIDENT



RASA GUSTAITIS

Chairman Areias said at the start of the meeting. "We are gathered here on the north coast to consider a plan that some find terrifying and others find reasonable and logical." The duty to protect the coast must be carried out, but property rights must be recognized, he said. "We are here today to find out if that delicate, elusive balance can be maintained."

The Commission had an option: it could accept or reject the County's plan and/or its own staff's recommendations to modify the plan, or it could postpone a decision. Opponents of the County plan wanted an immediate decision; some commissioners appeared to favor postponement. Hundreds had signed up to speak.

A grave sense of order prevailed, despite the intense feelings in the packed room. Throughout the day and evening, the chairman did not once have to bang his gavel for silence or call for a ruling by counsel. At the request of Areias, there was neither applause nor booing. Instead, people waved their arms above their heads, thumbs up or thumbs down. Public officials spoke first, then large property owners who would be affected, then others.

County Supervisor Ruth Brackett said, in response to a question by Commissioner Penny Allen, that the County could use more time to review the Commission staff report, which it had received only a week ago. Supervisor Bud Laurent, who represents the north coast, urged the Commission to resist "the economic forces presently directed your way" and "preserve what is of enduring value to our north coast and beyond."

Hearst attorney Philip Battaglia disagreed with the Commission's contention that new circumstances required that the county's 1983 LCP be revised. He questioned the need for new information on water flow, habitat, and endangered species, especially steelhead, recently listed as threatened on the central coast. The 1983 LCP, he noted, permitted the golf course and as many units as had in fact been proposed. Other speakers later pointed out that this approval had stipulated agreement to protect for agriculture all the ranchland beyond the proposed development, but that the County had later removed this protection.

Ellen Stern Harris, a founder of the Coastal Initiative, told the Commission that

"the coast has been reserved nearly exclusively for the very rich." David Fiscalini, a fourth-generation rancher, urged the Commission to scale down the proposed development even further than its staff had recommended. "You've got to take the speculative value off our agricultural land," he said. Senator Jack O'Connell sent a letter urging that in exchange for any commercial development on agricultural land, the Commission require that the rest of the ranch be guaranteed as agricultural in perpetuity. William C. Beals, of Cambria, said he was supporting the Hearst project because "golf will make our community more attractive."

Representatives of building trade and construction unions spoke for the resort as a boost for families, jobs, and wages, but Miguel Donoso, of FUERZA Federation Inc., a nonprofit organization working with low-income Latino families, told the Commission that motels and restaurants pay such low wages that "some people have to work two or three jobs to survive."

After the dinner break, only those opposed to the Hearst proposal were stepping up to speak. The chairman called 159 names and got no response. Many Hearst advocates had left soon after finishing a complimentary breakfast in a cordoned-off area of the hotel atrium. With Commissioners looking bleary-eyed after such a long day, someone suggested that people forgo their say and cede their time to the Commissioners to allow time to deliberate.

In the end, the Commission voted unanimously to reject the County's plan, accepted the staff report by 9-3, and directed its staff to work with the County toward a plan all could live with. The County has until July to come back to the Commission with revisions of its LCP update, and can ask for another year's extension.

"The coast is never saved. It is always being saved," Peter Douglas likes to say. What eventually gets built along this unique shoreline will depend on many factors, including the next election, which could again change the makeup of both the County Board of Supervisors and the Coastal Commission. The January 15 hearing was one round—an important round—in a battle that continues. ■

—Rasa Gustaitis



RASA GUSTAITIS

"You've got to take the speculative value off our land"

DAVID FISCALINI,
FOURTH GENERATION
RANCHER

Five Dollars a Flush?

WHEN THE COASTAL Commissioners arrived in Los Osos to view the site of San Luis Obispo County's proposed wastewater treatment plant, they could not miss the signs planted in front yards, tacked onto lampposts, and held by people standing along the road: "This sewer is unsafe unfair unaffordable," "Less work for a better plan," and more.

Two days later, on January 16, some 400 of the people behind those signs faced the Commission as it met to decide whether to permit the County to go ahead with its long-delayed project. As homeowners and renters, they viewed this project as tantamount to an eviction notice. They had a different proposal.

An unincorporated community of 17,000, Los Osos/Bayview Park lies on the southern shore of Morro Bay. It is one of the few places on the coast where a young family or low-income person can still buy or rent a home. In 1988 the Regional Water Quality Board imposed a moratorium on water hookups, for the Morro Bay shellfisheries are suffering from nitrate pollution, which is attributed to septic tanks in Los Osos.

The County has wrestled with the problem for nearly 20 years and is now ready to build a tertiary wastewater treatment system of a type that was popular years ago, when federal funds met up to 85 percent of the costs. The trouble is, those funds are gone and the full costs of this project—estimated as \$68.7 million by the County, \$71.5 million by opponents—are to be met by property owners of this community, where almost 30 percent of the residents live in households with "low" or "very low" income, according to the 1990 State of California Census. The monthly charge will be \$75–\$80, says the County, \$90 or more, say opponents—which, some residents joke, translates to "\$5 a flush."

"The County plan addresses nitrates, but it would cost us our people. It will



DAVID MIDDLECAMP, SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY TELEGRAM-TRIBUNE

Supervisor Bud Laurent (left) with the Solutions Group's Pandora Nash-Karner and Gary Karner.

destroy them financially," Annie Mueller, president of the Los Osos Chamber of Commerce, told the Commission.

"As far as we know," said Paul Reynolds, a realtor, "we are the first community to be faced with the full burden of the cost of the sewage treatment infrastructure." He figured that about a third of the residents would lose their homes and be forced to seek cheaper housing inland, causing local businesses to collapse and properties to go on the market at distressed prices. Eventually, Los Osos could become just another high-income coastal enclave.

In August 1997, local citizens decided to go beyond protest. They pooled \$17,000 of their own money, organized the Solutions Group, and enlisted scientists and engineers to craft a proposal for an Advanced Integrated Wastewater Pond System, which they believe would do the job for less while producing environmental benefits.

The expert team, working mostly pro bono, developed a version of the biological treatment system that has served the City of St. Helena for 35 years. It treats effluent in a series of engineered algae ponds, using photosynthesis and microbial fermentation. Bacteria grow on sewage and, in the process, decompose it into nutrients that are assimilated by algae. Algae produce oxygen, which is used by bacteria to keep the cycle going and to sustain fish and other aquatic life. Pioneered and repeatedly refined by William Oswald, professor emeritus of engineering at the University of California, Berkeley, this system produces no

sludge and results in clean water, said George Milanes, chief operating engineer for the St. Helena Water Resource Recovery and Treatment Plant.

Whether it would work for Los Osos, be cheaper and produce other benefits, is in dispute. The County's hydraulic planning engineer, George Gibson, believes the Solutions Group is "naive to the many rules and regulations," and that its plan does not conform to the Regional Board's requirements.

When the Los Osos group asked the Board of Supervisors for an independent evaluation, they refused to fund a study, having spent \$5.5 million already on a system tailored to the Water Quality Board's requirements. The residents' last hope was the Commission, whose staff had recommended qualified approval of the County project. They asked for a 90-day continuance during which an independent study could be done.

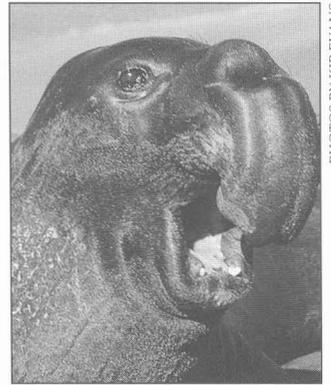
Ron Holland of the South Bay Property Owners Association contended that the Solutions plan is "nothing but another delay." He said he represents 200 people who own 800–1,000 properties which they have long been waiting to develop. But the Solutions Group won the day when the Commission voted unanimously to postpone a decision and directed the County to produce a comparative analysis by June.

"You are the most important people who have ever listened to us," George Kastner, owner of the Los Osos Book Exchange, told the Commission.

—RC



Elephant Seals Get Right-of-Way at Piedras Blancas



PHOTOS BY KIP EVANS

SARAH CHRISTIE

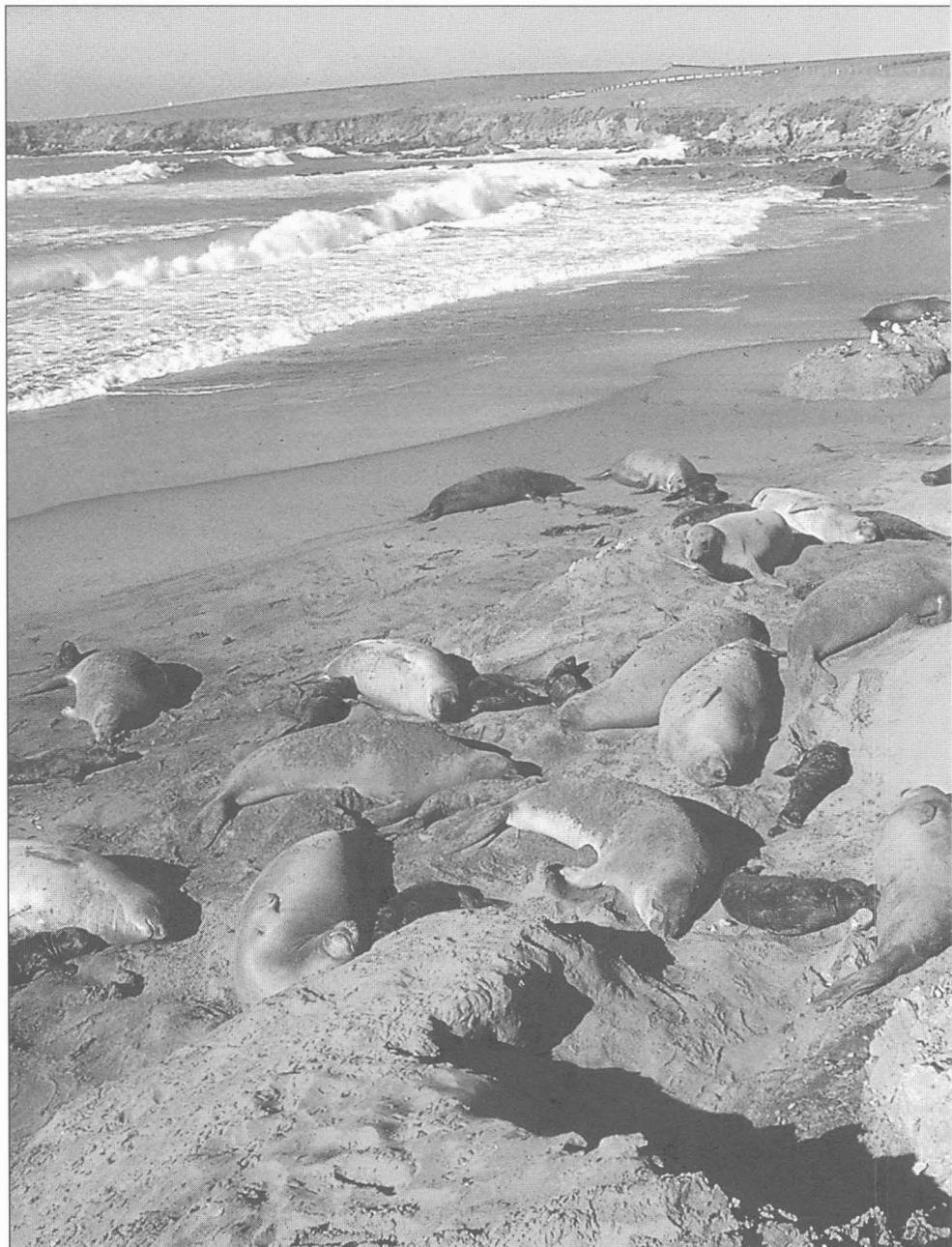
MARINE BIOLOGIST Bud Laurent never suspected he had the gift of interspecies communication, but these days he has to wonder. If he had sensed such latent talents back in 1988, when he was working for the California Department of Fish and Game, he might not have been so cavalier as to tell a young female elephant seal he was releasing after rehabilitation: "Now go out there and tell all your friends about this place."

Those words have come back to haunt him. The lone seal who washed up on the beach at Morro Bay ten years ago, sick and disoriented, was indeed followed by more of her kind. As many as 5,000 now arrive twice a year at Piedras Blancas, on San Luis Obispo County's north coast, to mate and give birth. Each season their numbers grow. This year they spilled over onto the two most popular beaches on that stretch of coast—Arroyo Laguna and San Simeon Cove—and are even hauling out at the campground at San Simeon State Beach. Laurent, now a county supervisor whose district includes this coastal zone, has been forced to grapple with a problem that has reached critical proportions.

The remarkable rebound of the elephant seal is both

Top: Breeding male elephant seals are loud and aggressive.

Right: At other times they seem inert and indifferent.



Elephant seals spend over half their lives at sea, typically staying 20 minutes at depths of 1,000 to 2,000 feet, plying the deepest channels of the Pacific for up to six months at a stretch.

These tourists obviously don't realize what can happen to people who harass elephant seals.

a victory and a liability, an opportunity and a headache, to residents and government officials. These giant marine mammals had been hunted to the brink of extinction in the 1800s for the oil in their blubber. They began their comeback after Mexico extended official protection to them in 1922, followed a few years later by the United States. About 60,000 elephant seals now range from Mexico to the Gulf of Alaska, coming ashore in the spring to molt and in the winter to breed and pup.

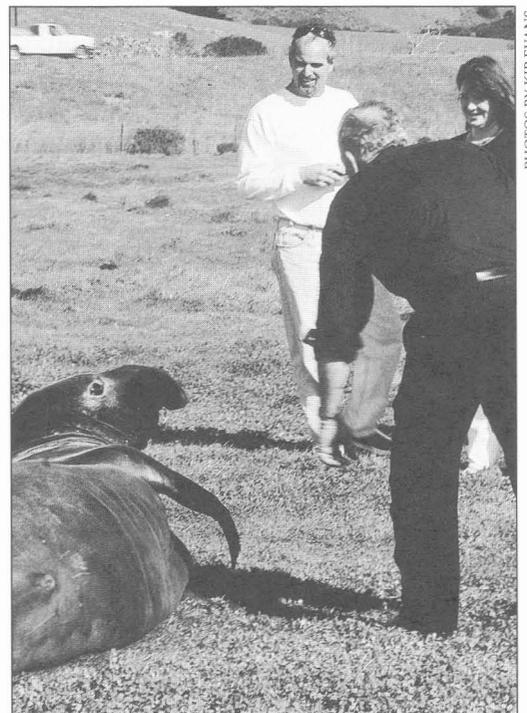
The best-known colony in California is at Año Nuevo State Reserve in San Mateo County, but the population at Piedras Blancas now rivals it in size. Unlike Año Nuevo, however, the Piedras Blancas shoreline is not a public wildlife preserve—it is owned by the Hearst Corporation. Until last year, access from Highway 1 had been informal and uncontrolled. Even now visitors can step from their cars and stand within a few feet of the animals. Not surprisingly, Piedras Blancas has become a destination for school field trips and tourists.

Clashes and Collisions

ELEPHANT SEALS ARE BY TURNS the most remote and the most accessible of all marine mammals. They spend over half their lives at sea, diving deeper than any other pinniped species in search of squid, skates, rays, and deep-sea fish. Typically staying 20 minutes at depths of 1,000 to 2,000 feet, they ply the deepest channels of the Pacific for up to six months at a stretch. When they do come ashore they seem almost oblivious to the presence of humans.

It is not uncommon to see windsurfers, dogs, and families picking their way past densely packed molting bodies as if the seals were so much driftwood. Seeing them at rest, podlike and immobile (except in mating season), many tourists don't realize that, when provoked, these giants can propel themselves across the sand with the speed of a galloping thoroughbred. Some have learned the hard way. A German tourist was bitten on the backside trying to outrun an immature bull a few years ago, and a woman who had strayed too close to a pup was knocked to the ground by a protective female.

Gawking tourists and illegally parked cars have caused many fender-benders on the narrow highway. In desperation, Caltrans recently straightened a stretch of the road and, at Supervisor Laurent's insistence, provided two parking areas, which



PHOTOS BY KIP EVANS

now accommodate most motorists who wish to stop. Interpretive displays and signs have been posted to warn people that they should stay off the beach and view the seals from the bluffs, but some refuse to cooperate. The signs have been stolen repeatedly. Meanwhile, seals continue to stray onto the highway. In four collisions this year, three bulls have been killed, two people have been hospitalized, and a van totalled.

Docents and Dramas

ALARMED BY REPORTS OF PARENTS posing children for photos on the backs of snoozing seals, dressing pups in sunglasses and baseball caps, and throwing sticks for dogs to fetch from between the seals' flippers, several agencies and groups have jointly tried to address the human/seal interaction problem. They include the County, the State Department of Fish and Game, the Resources Agency, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the California Highway Patrol, Caltrans, and the Hearst Corporation, as well as local residents. Last autumn, a volunteer-based educational group stepped up with a promising plan of action.

Bay Net, the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Volunteer Network, trains and organizes volunteers to become docents and stroll the shoreline, answering questions about wildlife and natural history. The Sanctuary (the nation's largest) extends well beyond Monterey Bay, as far south as Santa Rosa Creek in Cambria—just below Piedras Blancas. At the request of San Luis Obispo County, and with the help of a \$70,000 grant from the Resources Agency, Bay Net launched a docent program at the elephant seals' haul-out site last autumn.

More than 100 potential volunteers came to the first meeting, in November, and 30 were selected for the first training class. "I was amazed," marveled Rachel Saunders, program manager for Bay Net. "It was so heartening to see how passionately people feel about this issue, and how much they want to help improve the situation down here."

The 32-hour training touched on natural history, legal issues, public safety, and the psychology of interacting with visitors. The first graduates hit the beaches the day after Thanksgiving and, that first weekend, talked with 1,084 visitors. "We aren't beach police," local coordinator Susan McDonald explained. "We are here to educate people

What Kind of Tern Did You Say That Was?

WHEN YOU VISIT THE MONTEREY BAY shoreline, you may come upon someone standing beside a pair of binoculars mounted on a tripod. If this person is wearing a royal blue jacket with "Bay Net" emblazoned on it, you have sighted a docent, trained and ready to answer your questions and point out plants, animals, and natural features of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary.



KIP EVANS

Docents used to be found mainly in museums, but their range has been expanding to shorelines and wildlife preserves, where they serve as goodwill ambassadors and interpreters, eager to engage visitors in conversations that will acquaint them with wild creatures and their habitats.

Since Bay Net was founded in 1995 by the Center for Marine Conservation, 127 volunteers have been trained and fielded in the Monterey area, and 90 of them are still at work, testimony to the program's appeal and success. They worked only along Monterey Bay until last autumn, when the program expanded to Piedras Blancas. The long-range goal, according to Bay Net program manager Rachel Saunders, is to extend a network of volunteers along the entire Sanctuary, from Rocky Point in the Marin Headlands to Cambria in San Luis Obispo County.

To become docents, volunteers take 40 hours of training in both field and classroom, and pledge to spend 100 to 150 hours on duty within a year. Field training begins in the coastal dunes and moves toward the ocean, introducing the various habitats and their particular species of plants and animals and explaining their interactions and the threats to their survival. These themes are explored further in the classroom, along with techniques for relating to people in ways that may educate and inspire them. Volunteers come from diverse occupations and backgrounds, and lately have included increasing numbers of couples and parent-child teams. Training sessions are planned in San Luis Obispo and Santa Cruz this spring.

To learn more, contact the Center for Marine Conservation, 801 Lighthouse Avenue, Suite 108, Monterey, CA 93940; phone (408) 375-4509 or (408) 373-6396; web site: www.mbay.net/~baynet.

and teach them why the seals and all marine wildlife deserve to be treated with respect."

As the new docents soon learned, however, their own education had just begun. They were unprepared for the El Niño winter storms. In January, 30-foot waves annihilated the narrow beaches north of San Simeon at the height of breeding and pupping season. Newborns, unable to swim, were washed out to sea like flotsam. Frenzied cows, usually perceived as maternally indifferent, tried in vain to shield their pups with their bodies and shepherd them to higher ground, but waves overwhelmed them. The bulls, meanwhile, relentlessly continued to pursue the cows.

The drama was played out in front of hundreds of tourists, including a busload of students from Santa Barbara. Docents could only stand by helplessly, some with tears in their eyes, and advise onlookers not to

interfere. "It was heart-wrenching, but there was quite literally nothing we could do," said Maryanne Gail, a docent who lives in Cambria. "Our whole message is about not interfering. Besides, our own lives would have been at risk down there on the beach."

Dozens of dead pups washed ashore for days afterward. Some survivors washed up at beaches to the south, where, unable to locate their mothers, they were nursed by surrogates. "Some of the cows have up to five orphan pups around them," said McDonald in early February. "The true test will be to see how many of them survive." By mid-March, about 100 of the estimated 1,750 new pups had died. "Around this time the females are swimming out to sea," added Rachel Saunders. "The pups—now called weaners—stay behind, surviving on fat stored from mother's milk. The fattest generally do best, but it remains to be seen how many will survive."

Getting the Message

MOTHER NATURE CAN BE A HARSH teacher, but she also touches lives in profoundly positive ways, the docents have discovered. The Piedras Blancas site affords some of the most intimate, impressive, and accessible wildlife viewing anywhere in the country, and seals serve as goodwill ambassadors as only animals can.

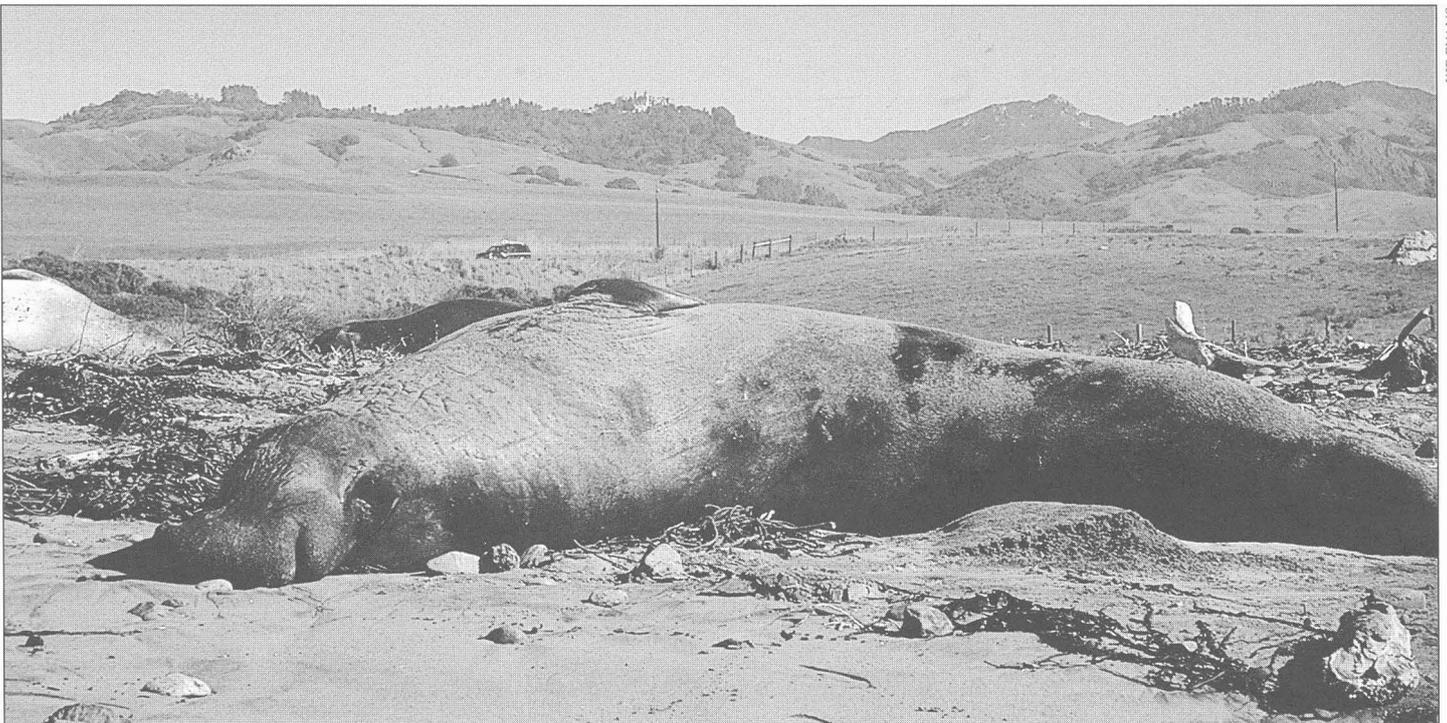
One docent reported seeing a blue-haired teenager poking an adolescent male seal with a stick. Intervening in the nonconfrontational manner he had been taught, the docent explained to the young man why this was a poor idea. The youth, a visitor from Australia, followed the docent back up the beach, apologizing all the way, and spent the rest of the morning on the bluffs, observing from a respectful distance. Before he left, he thanked the docent and told him, "I'll never look at a wild animal the same way again."

The docents have proved to be highly effective at Piedras Blancas, although so far they are present only on weekends. Another training session, planned for May, may enable them to expand coverage. They can only do so much, however. The Hearst Corporation restricts them to a relatively small piece of the coast, while tourists who walk along miles of historic coastal trails are free to approach seals elsewhere without supervision.

The elephant seals are certainly an attraction to the tourist-dependent towns of San Simeon and Cambria, and are therefore of economic benefit to the region. But they will continue to pose problems until a comprehensive plan is in place to protect them and their human visitors from each other. ■

Sarah Christie is a freelance writer and aide to San Luis Obispo County Supervisor Bud Laurent.

In the 1960s, the Hearst Corporation considered building 20,000 homes at Piedras Blancas.



KIP EVANS

The State's First Fully Accessible Fishing Pier

The Pier That Almost Disappeared

NIKI TENNANT

IN EARLY 1988, AS A NEWLY elected member of the Los Angeles City Council, Ruth Galanter was visited by staff from the City's Recreation and Parks Department who politely informed her that they would be demolishing the City's pier at Venice Beach and wanted funding to do so. Galanter had just spent several years working with the Coastal Conservancy to *save* public piers and was horrified to hear that the beloved Venice Pier was to be destroyed. She immediately began to search for ways to restore it to public use and enjoyment.

This 1,300-foot-long wood and concrete pier was built in 1963 with funds from the California Department of Fish and Game. It was closed in November 1986 after huge pieces of concrete began to fall, causing a hazard to beachgoers below. In the late 1980s, at the request of Galanter, the Conservancy did a study on the feasibility of restoration and concluded that it was possible. But the cost was estimated at several million dollars, and such funding was not available.

A group of Venice residents led by Frank Mattox, a fishing enthusiast, moved to mobilize community support. Calling themselves Pier Pressure, they launched a petition campaign to save the pier, collecting hundreds of signatures. In 1992, when Los Angeles County Open Space Proposition A passed, it included funds earmarked for the project.



THE OUTLOOK

Renovation began on August 1, 1996, and was finished in September 1997, two months ahead of schedule. Venice Pier was reopened as the state's first fully accessible fishing pier on October 18, 1997. As someone noted, "those cutouts are so people in wheelchairs can get right up to the edge to fish."

By sunrise a Venetian was at the end of the pier offering a flute serenade. Soon families came strolling, and a few hardy folks were already catching fish. And of course Councilmember Galanter was there. At a local breakfast hangout someone said: "Yes, really, you can go all the way out to the end!" ■

Niki Tennant is communications director for Los Angeles City Councilmember Ruth Galanter.



"Stream and surrounding terrain always belong together, and the vegetation unites both in a living totality." —THEODOR SCHWENK

Restoring the Carmel River Floodplain

The Good Lake

CAROL ARNOLD

THERE ARE PLACES along the coast where water wants to be and where for many years it has not been allowed to be.

These are floodplains that have been separated from rivers and streams by levees and artificial channels. Before these structures altered the natural flow, floodwaters would spread out on the land, bringing sediment and nutrients

to replenish the soils and providing habitat for fish, birds, and other wildlife amid thick riparian vegetation. Floods were usually beneficial rather than disastrous events.

The 36-mile-long Carmel River flows from the Santa Lucia and Sierra de Salinas Mountains through steep ravines and canyons, winds through the Carmel Valley, and joins the Pacific Ocean just south of

Carmel. The Carmel Mission stands on a slight hill overlooking the lower river.

In 1874, Father Palou, a Franciscan missionary wrote:

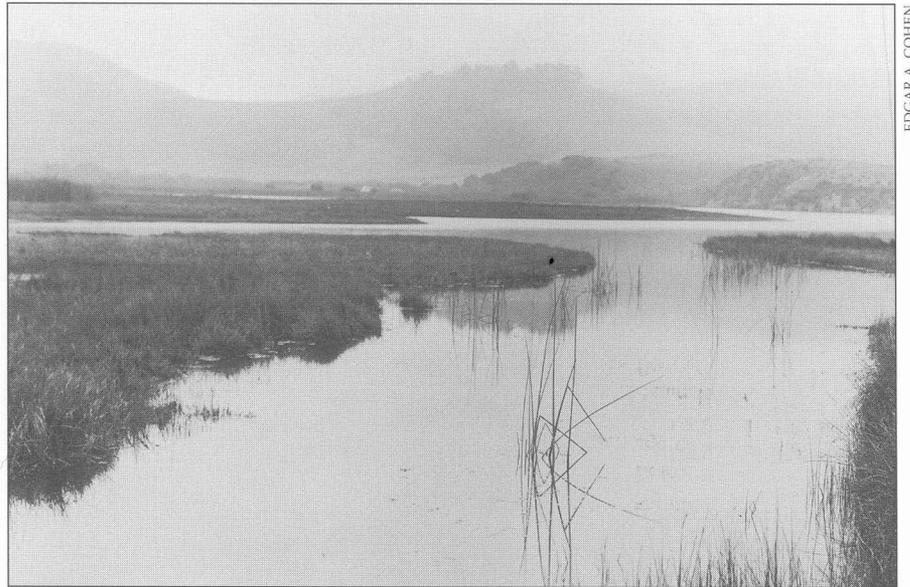
The mission . . . was in a pleasant location, situated on a hill with a view over an extensive plain which . . . extends along the Carmel River where water flows all the year. . . Although in dry seasons the water is not plentiful, in rainy seasons no crossing can be found. The plain has many trees, willows and other kinds, blackberry bushes. . . Nearby . . . is a good lake with so much water, especially in the rainy seasons, that its banks cannot hold all that it receives from the hills. (*Noticias de la Nueva California*, vol. 2)

The "good lake," presumably the Carmel River Lagoon, is still there, though much reduced in size. Instead of the willows and blackberries Father Palou saw, there are now fields of artichokes to the south, and suburban houses to the north. A bridge on Highway 1 crosses the lower river, which is now dry in many years, the result of dams and overpumping of the aquifer.

Like many coastal floodplains, the rich bottomland at the mouth of the Carmel River supports bountiful crops. Father Palou noted that the "good lake" was sufficient to provide "for all irrigation purposes on the plain."

As agriculture was developed at the Carmel River mouth, the floodplain was drained and filled, water was diverted, wells were dug, and the river was confined by levees in a narrow artificial channel. The fertile soils of the floodplain nurtured both livestock and vegetables, just as today they yield delectable artichokes. Later, as dams were built upstream to store water for human uses, the summer flow in the lower river and the lagoon diminished. Houses were built just north of the lower river, some with their backyards practically in the water.

Yet the Carmel River still wants to follow its ancient pathways, unrestricted and unconfined. This becomes dangerously evident during flood years, when damage to farmland and homes can be devastating. In the past, major floods, like those of 1862 and 1911, merely enriched the soil of the flood-



EDGAR A. COHEN



LEWIS JOSSELYN



CAROL ARNOLD

Opposite: Carmel Lagoon and Carmel Mission, 1905; Top: Carmel River Lagoon, 1908; Middle: Artichoke fields and lagoon, 1935; Bottom: Partially restored Carmel River floodplain, 1998

1. Houses that have been flooded in the past during large storms
2. Area being restored
3. Carmel River Lagoon

COASTAL CONSERVANCY FILES



plain. Now, when water overflows or breaches the levees, repairs cost millions of dollars.

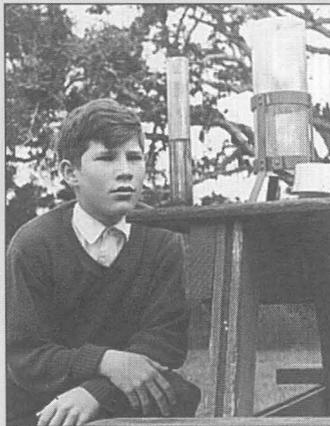
Less obvious, yet equally damaging, is the loss of fish and wildlife habitat that has resulted from the channelization and diversion of the river. The Carmel River used to have one of the premier steelhead runs in the state. In the 1920s some 20,000 fish made their way upstream to spawn. By the early 1990s only a few hundred were counted. Steelhead survival depends on healthy coastal lagoons and estuaries, shady channel banks, and adequate water supplies. In response to disastrous declines, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the central coast steelhead as a threatened species in 1997.

Ten years ago, a team of agencies and organizations launched an effort to recover some of what had been lost at the lower Carmel River. The Coastal Conservancy joined with the State Parks Department, Department of Fish and Game, Carmel River Steelhead Association, Monterey Peninsula Water Management District, and Monterey County Water Resources Agency to identify opportunities for returning the lagoon to something resembling its historic condition and function.

Each agency brought its own agenda. State Parks wanted to build some trails and restore native habitats west of Highway 1, on some 200 acres it owned, which included 150 acres of farmland, the shrunken lagoon, the beach, and the river mouth. The Water Management District, seeking to develop water supplies, was concerned that the restoration project not impede its use of river water. (The Carmel River is the principal water source for the Monterey Peninsula.) The Water Resources Agency was worried about flood hazards to developed areas directly north of the river and to the artichoke fields to the south. The Steelhead Association and the Department of Fish and Game were concerned with the preservation of fish habitat. The Coastal Conservancy, with its broad mandate and multiple programs, was interested in all of these issues.

The group agreed to cooperate on a plan to address these concerns. With funding from the Conservancy and other agencies, the nonprofit Steelhead Association retained consultants in 1992 to develop a draft plan to improve circulation in the lagoon, restore and expand fish and wildlife habitat, and reduce flood hazards to adjacent and upstream areas.

The Making of a Hydrologist

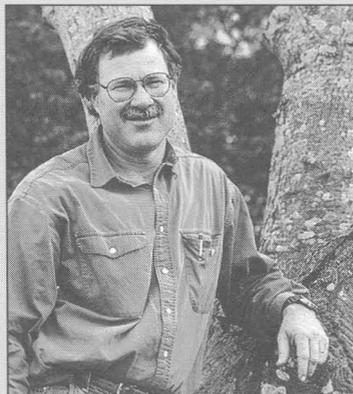


COURTESY JEFF HALTINER

JEFF HALTINER, of Philip Williams and Associates, project manager for the Coastal Conservancy's Carmel River project, first heard the call to a career as hydrologist at this very place forty years ago, when he was eight years old. While visiting the lagoon with several buddies on a sunny winter day, he noticed that its water level was nearly at the level of the beach dune top and five or six feet above the ocean. Digging with sticks and other primitive tools, he and his allies made a small channel and established a hydrological connection, a few inches wide.

A trickle of water began, then quickly became a raging torrent, twenty feet wide, flowing fast and deep. It created a "moat" that stranded dozens of beach visitors on the opposite side, unable to return to their cars, forcing them to walk east through the artichoke fields to Highway 1, where the City of Carmel eventually provided a bus ride back to the beach.

Never caught and brought to justice, Haltiner became a hydrologist. He has spent his later career attempting to manage water and channels with more control and environmental benefits. He sincerely regrets breaching the lagoon without the proper permits and inconveniencing so many. On the other hand, he has never forgotten the feeling of awe, amazement, and joy as this dramatic spectacle unfolded.



CAROL ARNOLD

Under the direction of Carmel native John Williams of Philip Williams and Associates, Ltd., the plan has mapped the way for restoration of the lower Carmel River west of Highway 1. State Parks and the former owner, now lessee of those lands, John Odello, negotiated a plan to allow a phased floodplain restoration project. The Monterey County Water Resources Agency removed or lowered levees south of the river, while Caltrans restored the adjacent 40 acres to allow overflow and reestablishment of natural floodplain vegetation. In 1996, the Coastal Conservancy provided a second grant (to the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District) to finalize plans for restoration of the remaining 150 acres west of the highway to natural floodplain, riparian vegetation, and an enlarged lagoon area. Additional funds will be required to implement the floodplain restoration work. Conservancy funds are also being used to construct a foot and bicycle bridge across the river to link with other trails.

This project does not resolve the issue of water supply for human use. In November 1995, voters rejected the Water Management District's proposal to replace one of the dams upstream with a larger one. Currently, a proposal by a private party to construct the new dam is being considered.

By this past winter, 40 acres of the floodplain had again been made available to floodwaters—just in time for El Niño! Instead of spilling into homes in the Mission Fields community to the north, as the river had done in prior years, it flowed over the restoration site on the floodplain to the ocean, just the way nature intended.

"This is incredible, what they've done here," said Kirstin Hewett, a Mission Fields homeowner, according to the February 4 *Monterey County Herald*. "It's done exactly what they planned it to do."

The Carmel River is just one of several coastal floodplains that the Conservancy, in partnership with others, is restoring (see sidebar). Another is the Morro Bay Watershed in San Luis Obispo County. Other Conservancy floodplain restoration projects are in the works for the Moro Cojo Slough in Monterey County, the Napa and Ventura Rivers (see p. 35), and elsewhere.

When completed, the Carmel River project will go a long way toward restoring the lagoon area to what Father Palou described. The willows and blackberries will return and, with luck, the steelhead

Restoring Farmland to Nature

PRIME-SOIL AGRICULTURAL LAND IS AN IMPORTANT coastal resource and strongly protected by the California Coastal Act. Therefore, a restoration project that involves the conversion of farmland back to natural floodplain must be carefully evaluated to establish whether the need to reduce or eliminate catastrophic flood damage and/or to expand fish and wildlife habitat warrants this conversion. The Coastal Conservancy will sponsor this type of project only when resource agencies and local jurisdictions agree that the benefits outweigh the loss. In all cases, the first essential step is to purchase the property to be restored from willing landowners, at fair market value.

At the Carmel River, the Department of State Parks had purchased the land west of Highway 1 in 1974 with the intention of restoring it eventually to a natural condition. In the interim, the Department leased the land back to the previous owner, John Odello, so that he could continue to grow crops on it. This year, however, he decided that he may want to stop farming the land sooner than he had planned. Recent wet winters and the flood-prone nature of the land have influenced his decision.

—CA



Carmel River Lagoon and Mission Fields subdivision

CAROL ARNOLD

population will rebound—perhaps not to the legendary numbers of the past, but at least sufficient for a local fisherman to tie a fly, pull on boots, and head for the river with the hope of bringing home dinner.

In the future, when the banks of the lower Carmel River and Lagoon cannot hold all the flow coming down from the hills, water will spread over the land south of the river, nurturing the plants that grow there, instead of damaging homes to the north. This natural floodplain, this place of the "good lake," is exactly where the water wants to be. If we hope to restore fish and wildlife, and prevent catastrophe during floods, this is exactly where we should let it be. ■

Carol Arnold is the Coastal Conservancy's Central Coast regional manager.

Ride Away From Road Rage

From Freeways to Seaways.



EXPRESS NAVIGATION

WESLEY MARX

AS TRAFFIC ON BAYFRONT freeways and bridges slows to a crawl in coastal urban areas, marine transportation is speeding up. Some roadbound commuters can now look out over the water and glimpse hassle-free movement: high-speed ferries.

By freeway, the 30-mile ride from Vallejo to San Francisco can consume more than an hour during times of peak traffic. The Vallejo Baylink ferry takes you there in 53 minutes, while you enjoy your coffee and morning paper or work on your laptop computer.

Driving from downtown San Francisco to

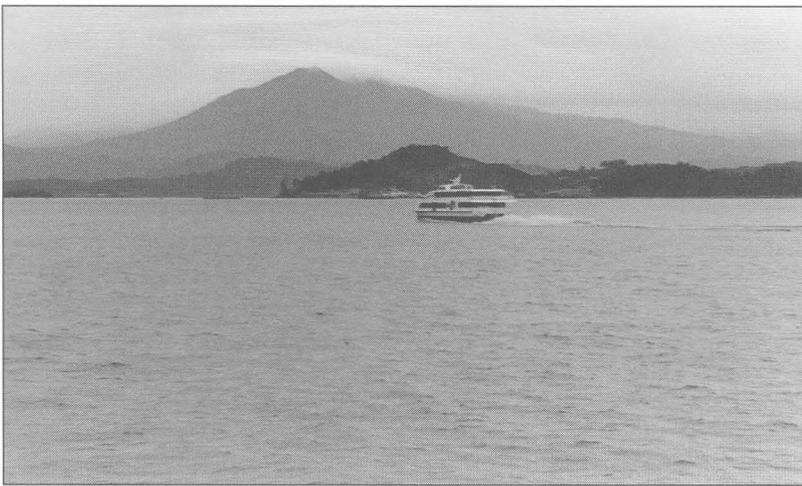
Marin County at rush hour may allow you to gain an inch-by-inch appreciation of the Golden Gate Bridge and the latest fender-bender. By ferry, you can check out the marine life, enjoy the sunset, and sometimes hear live jazz en route. The trip to Sausalito takes 30 minutes; to Larkspur, 45 minutes. In June a high-speed catamaran will start to ply the Larkspur route, cutting commute time to 30 minutes and allowing for more frequent trips.

A variety of high-speed services, public and private, has been launched on the Atlantic coast. In the New York metropolitan area, two catamarans operated by



ANNA HASTINGS

With a boat you don't need to bulldoze neighborhoods, erect soundwalls, or pay for rights-of-way. . . . the public health benefits are substantial.



LOWER PHOTOS BY DEWEY SCHWARTZENBURG

Express Navigation, Inc., carry 600 passengers daily between Highland, New Jersey, and Manhattan. By car or bus it can be a two-hour trip; the ferry takes 45 minutes. The walk from the Manhattan ferry terminal to Wall Street is just long enough to get your mind focused on the day ahead. On weekends and holidays the catamarans are chartered for whale-watching trips, excursions up the Hudson River, and trips to Yankee Stadium.

Modern ferries are a far cry from the ones that disappeared in most of North America as freeways and bridges proliferated. They move two or three times faster and can provide a stable ride on open seas as well as in harbors. These aluminum-hulled catamarans (cats) and hovercraft (boats that ride above the water, on a cushion of air) are

driven not by propellers but by waterjets that allow for easy maneuvering. Instead of diesel engines, some use lighter, quieter, and cleaner-burning gas turbine engines.

High-speed vessels don't come cheap, of course—unless \$7 million plus is pocket change to you. Then again, with a boat you don't need to bulldoze neighborhoods, erect soundwalls, or pay for rights-of-way. And the public health benefits are substantial. Even so, careful planning is essential lest high-speed water traffic create new problems, as freeways did on land.

Most of the 700 or so high-speed ferries now in operation worldwide are in Europe, where ferries were never entirely superseded by road traffic. Between England and France, fast ferries offer stiff competition to air travel and the new "Chunnel" (Channel

A chance to relax and make new friends on the Sausalito (top) and Vallejo ferries



Top: The Seattle–Vancouver Island catamaran cruises past Parliament buildings in Victoria, British Columbia.
Above: Aboard the Vallejo ferry

Tunnel). In California, they are increasingly attractive in coastal metropolitan areas that struggle with ever-thickening traffic snarls. To ease congestion on the San Diego–Coronado Bay Bridge, the City of Coronado operates a free commuter ferry service funded by bridge toll revenue. In the Los Angeles region, where the only ferry service is the daily 23-mile run between Catalina Island and terminals in Long Beach, Los Angeles, and Newport Beach, there has been talk about possible commuter links along urban piers from Malibu south to the Los Angeles–Long Beach Harbor area.

With financial incentives such as grants, such ideas could be nudged forward. Federal and state funding helped launch fast ferries in the San Francisco Bay Area. When the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway, and Transportation District purchased its \$7.8 million catamaran, the Federal Transit Administration covered 59 percent of the cost and the California Transportation

Commission chipped in another 36 percent. The Vallejo service meets its \$4.3 million annual operating cost with financial assistance from Caltrans, a regional transit tax, and bridge tolls.

Grants from a 1991 state transportation bond have helped both Vallejo and the Golden Gate District to expand their facilities, including terminals and parking. To reduce demand for parking space that consumes scarce waterfront land, both districts provide free transfers to transit services and allow bicycles aboard free of charge. The Golden Gate District also offers a free shuttle service from Marin County communities to the Larkspur terminal.

Coastal communities that invest in ferries have a backup during emergencies that shut down other means of transportation. The Oakland–Alameda–San Francisco ferry service was started after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake closed the Bay Bridge. Some people enjoyed the trip and continued to ride ferries after the bridge reopened. In 1997, when a strike shut down the Bay Area Rapid Transit system, many more people discovered the advantages of ferries.

More Uses, More Riders

THE NUMBER OF BAY AREA FERRY riders has increased by 15 percent in the past four years, to nearly three million a year. This has prompted the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, which represents the nine Bay Area counties, to review its regional ferry plan. Potential new routes could link Oakland and San Francisco International Airports with downtown San Francisco. Meanwhile, at the request of the State Senate, the Bay Area Council, a regional business group, has established a Blue Water Task Force to study regional ferry service and funding needs.

Experience outside of California suggests wider-ranging possibilities, such as aquatic commuter links between San Francisco, Monterey, and Sacramento. In the Puget Sound region, where ferry service has remained an integral part of the public transportation system, Clipper Navigation, a private catamaran service, has cut travel time from Seattle to Vancouver Island in Canada from four and a half hours to two hours and 15 minutes. Some 300,000 passengers a year ride these cats.

Federal funding is available from the U.S.

Maritime Administration, which has guaranteed loans for five high-speed vessels that now serve New York and two ferries that will operate between Miami and Key West later this year. In a joint program with the Defense Department and shipbuilders, the Maritime Administration has also provided funds for research on advanced designs.

The nation's shipbuilding industry, which has lost 80,000 jobs since 1980, has an obvious interest in revived ferry service. By law, vessels serving domestic routes must be built, owned, and operated by U.S. entities.

In 1996, the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Council, which owns and operates the Foxwoods Casino in southeast Connecticut, established its own shipyard in New London, to the delight of idled shipyard workers there. The Pequot are building two high-speed cats to provide dependable service to casino patrons from New York City, as well as one for a private operator who wants to open a 150-mile-long run between Naples, Florida, and Key West. The turbine engines for these ferries are manufactured in San Diego.

Safety Concerns

AS FAST FERRY SERVICE EXPANDS—not only for commuters, but for entertainment cruises and high-value cargo as well—safety concerns arise. Vessels propelled by waterjets are able to stop, reverse course, and turn more quickly than conventional propeller-driven vessels; they slow down before docking to reduce collision risks and prevent wakes that might erode shorelines or swamp small craft. But they are only as safe as the people who operate them.

In 1995 the *Saint-Malo*, a 350-passenger catamaran, smashed into La Frouquie Rock, a well-known navigation hazard off the Channel Islands in the United Kingdom. Part of the aluminum hull was ripped apart and 55 people were injured during evacuation. Accident investigators found that the captain had veered off course to avoid running over fishing marker floats but had not, as required when off course, reduced speed.

As the presence of the marker buoys suggests, inshore and coastal waters can become congested. Channel Islands fishermen are not permitted to set equipment near port entrances, but may do so farther seaward, in shipping lanes. Careful planning will be required to make sure that



WESLEY MARX

marine user groups do not run afoul of each other. Eventually, central dispatch or control towers may be needed for urban harbors crisscrossed by fast vessels.

Environmental concerns are also not negligible. If high-speed boats carry more tourists, with greater frequency, into sensitive coastal and marine habitats, there could be serious damage from noise, pollution, and erosive wakes.

As ferry routes extend into suburban areas, pressures will mount to dredge and fill wetlands and other sensitive habitats to create new terminal sites. The Golden Gate District's Larkspur terminal stands on a former wetland. To mitigate such losses, the District is restoring tidal marsh habitat for the endangered clapper rail and researching ways to protect and improve harbor seal haul-out areas. Extending ferry service to San Francisco and Oakland airports would almost certainly have impacts on wetlands.

High-speed ferries may provide one effective alternative to freeways. But careful planning is required now to avoid squandering their potential economic and environmental benefits. ■

Wesley Marx, a frequent contributor to Coast & Ocean, used to ride ferries in the San Francisco Bay Area in the 1950s, while he was a student at Stanford University.



DEWEY SCHWARTZENBURG

The Vallejo-San Francisco ferry and Captain Tom Lee on the bridge



"Shipyard workers, 1943" by Dorothea Lange

All Dorothea Lange photographs © Dorothea Lange Collection, Oakland Museum of California

“The Second Gold Rush Hits the West,” announced the *San Francisco Chronicle* in the spring of 1943. . . . Indeed in California, World War II was to the twentieth century what the gold rush had been to the nineteenth.

Marilynn S. Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush*



COURTESY THE RICHMOND MUSEUM COLLECTION

Margarite Drake, shipfitter, 1942, Richmond Shipyards

Legacy of the Second Gold Rush

THEY STREAMED INTO the San Francisco Bay Area from the South, the Midwest, and other parts of the country—people from towns and farms, men too old or unfit for military service, women with children, entire families coming in cars, on buses, on trains—to work in the Kaiser shipyards, building Liberty and Victory Ships.

By 1940 more than 115,000 workers had arrived from the South, 110,000 from the central and northern states, and 54,000 from the mountain states to work in hastily built or expanded shipyards in Richmond, in Oakland, on Mare Island, in Sausalito, at Hunters Point in San Francisco, and in South San Francisco.

The Bay Area was permanently changed by this great burst of wartime production and so were many lives. People of different races worked side by side for the first time, and women held jobs that only men had held before in this country, and earned good wages. By 1944, over 27 percent of all workers at the Kaiser shipyards were women—including 41 percent of all welders and 24 percent of all craft employees.

The woman in overalls, wielding industrial tools, became an icon, popularized by the 1942 song “Rosie the Riveter.” By the end of the war more than six million women had worked in shipyards, steel mills, foundries, and other industries and services on the homefront.

“There wasn’t a day that went by that you didn’t see or hear something that you hadn’t seen or heard before,” said Vera Minker, of Crockett, who worked in the Kaiser hiring hall, “because you were working with and being around people you’d never seen before.”

Lovie Amos, who came from Missouri with her husband and two children in 1943, recalls that she had never worn slacks before and that her husband “was scandal-

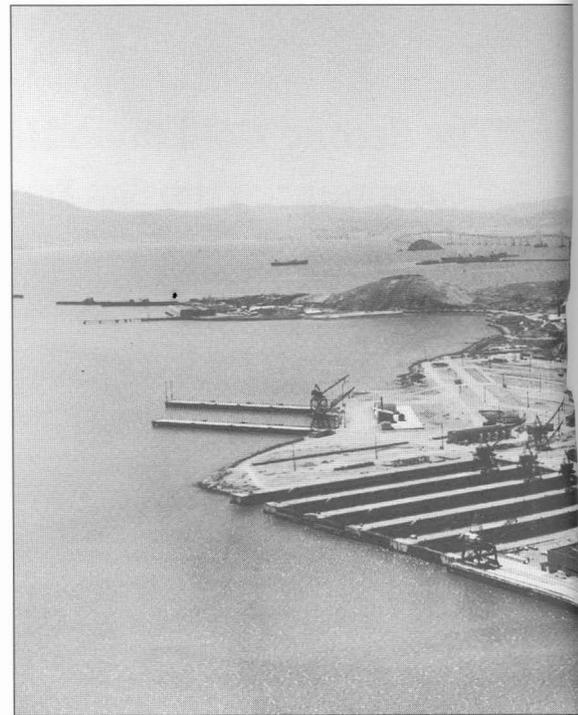
The shipyards provided the biggest single opportunity for African Americans to get into skilled work.

ized to see all these women running around in pants." But that was just one thing to which people adapted. "There was a sense of purpose," said Amos. "The goal was to win the war. If you complained about anything, 'Don't you know there's a war on?' was the standard answer for everything."

After the war ended, many women returned to traditional roles as wives and mothers, but some wanted more in life. "I found I missed working and I never went back to housekeeping," said Amos, who had been the only woman on a seven-person crew at one of the Richmond shipyards. "I think it caused some friction between a lot of couples. The women had had their first taste of independence, and they realized that they could work, they could earn a living, they could make decisions." She took a job with the East Bay Municipal Utility District and became the first female division manager. Minker, meanwhile, opened her own newsstand and started a taxi company.

For African Americans, the shipyards provided the "biggest single opportunity for black workers to get into skilled work," according to historian Marilynn S. Johnson. That did not mean that minority people enjoyed equal opportunity, either in work or in government-provided housing. "Seeing them as well suited to arduous labor, shipyard employers concentrated black workers in the hull trades—hard, outdoor work," Johnson writes in her book, *The Second Gold Rush* (University of California Press, 1993), which chronicles the labor migration, its effects on the Bay Area, and its legacy. But when labor demands required, African-American workers, as well as women, were shifted to welding, burning, shipfitting, and a number of other semi-skilled trades.

After the war's end, many of the immigrants remained in the San Francisco Bay Area, settling near the shipyards. The African American population more than doubled between 1940 and 1945. In Richmond, which had the greatest concentration of shipbuilding and the nation's largest wartime housing program, it rose from 1.1 percent of the total in 1940 to 13.4 percent in 1950.



Richmond Shipyards, Yard Three, c. 1950

Women and minority workers were the first to lose their wartime jobs, and they found it harder than white men to secure new employment. Because federal policies permitted wartime housing to be segregated, and home loans were offered most readily to whites, the public housing built for the workers became the core of poverty-stricken black ghetto communities, which remain poor to this day.

In the 1950s, the City of Richmond demolished much of the wartime housing in the name of "slum clearance," evicting thousands of tenants. At that time, half of the city's population still lived in this worker housing, including 78 percent of the city's black population. Many whites managed to move to suburbs, but blacks who tried got a hostile response.

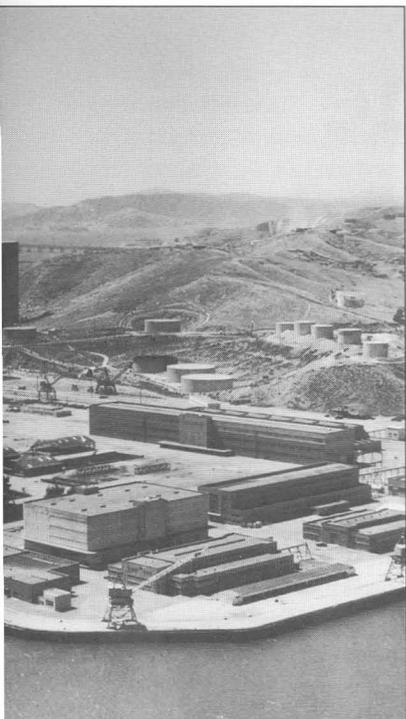
Today a returning "Rosie" would not recognize the Richmond waterfront. Instead of shipyards and acres of wartime housing she would see pleasure boats docked in a marina and costly condominiums facing manicured lawns.

Nevertheless, the shipyard experience "planted a seed for the future," Johnson writes. It laid a foundation for racial conflict but also for the civil rights movement and the women's movement. The "Second Gold Rush" also enriched the cultural diversity of the entire San Francisco Bay Area, and especially the East Bay.

—Tony Shen



"Pay Day, 1943" by Dorothea Lange



COURTESY THE RICHMOND MUSEUM COLLECTION



Top right: "On the Ferry, 1943"; Bottom: "MacDonald St., Richmond, 1943" by Dorothea Lange



Built in Days, the Liberty Ships Endure

JN 1940, AS GERMAN U-boats were devastating the British merchant fleet and British shipyards were working at capacity building warships, Great Britain appealed to the United States, which had not yet joined the war, for help in building cargo ships.

Most U.S. shipbuilders, also swamped with orders for warships, were reluctant to take on the project. They held back not only because of the intense time pressure of the required building schedule, but also because of doubts about the design the British presented. Although this design had been well tested and found seaworthy, the

“Ocean”-type vessel was to be constructed primarily by welding rather than riveting and shipbuilders feared the ships could not withstand the additional stress of wartime.

Then a newcomer to shipbuilding entered the bidding process, ready to do the job. Henry J. Kaiser was best known as the builder of the Hoover, Boulder, and Bonneville dams and the San Francisco Bay Bridge—all engineering wonders of the time—but he had also recently purchased shipyards on both the East and West Coasts. He offered to develop and institute the requisite building methods and was awarded the contract. Construction of 60 “Ocean”-type ships began in Kaiser’s East Coast yards.

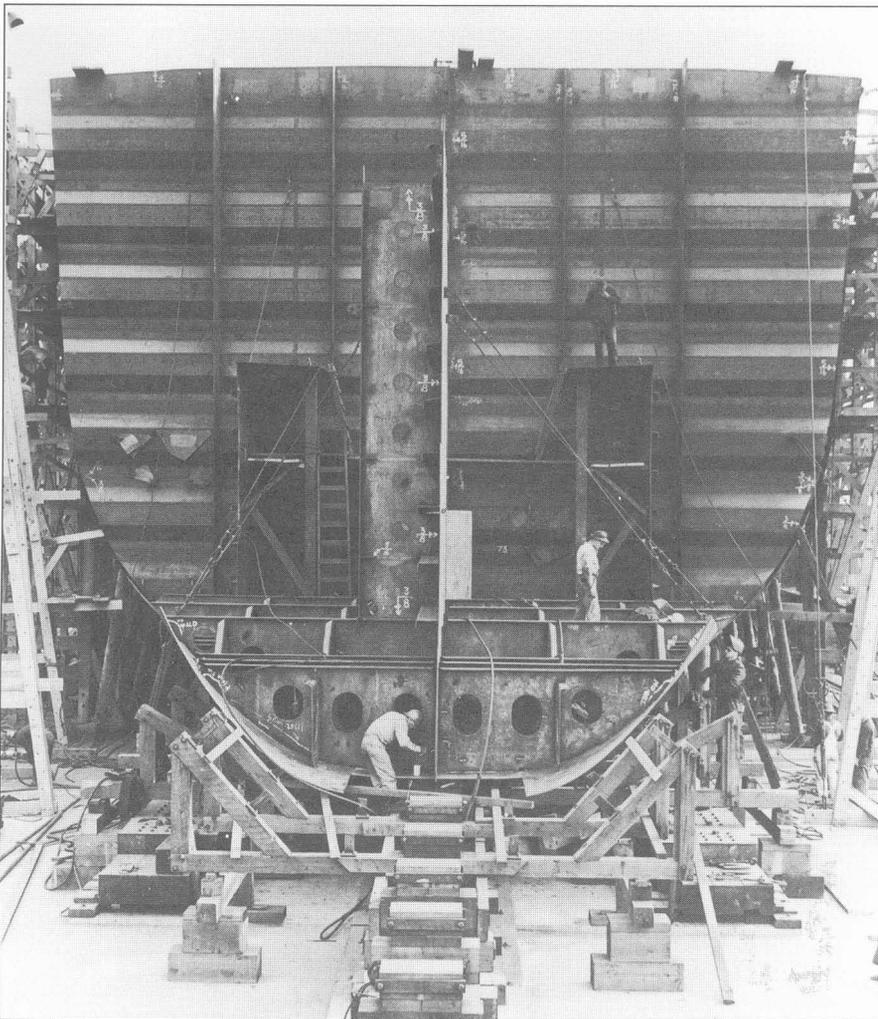
President Franklin Delano Roosevelt called the British vessels “dreadful-looking objects,” and the press mocked them as “ugly ducklings.” “Sea scows with blunt bows will carry tools to Britain,” read one headline. But slow and graceless though they were, they proved to be highly seaworthy.

As the war spread, it became apparent that the U.S. also needed to increase the size of its merchant fleet. In February 1941, President Roosevelt announced the inception of the Emergency Shipbuilding Project. Hundreds more of the “dreadful-looking objects” were to be constructed for the U.S. cargo fleet.

The Liberty Project

KAISER NOW BROUGHT HIS West Coast yards into play: California Shipbuilding Corporation (Calship) in Los Angeles; Marinship Corporation in Sausalito; Kaiser Company in Vancouver, Washington; Oregon Ship Building Corporation in Portland; and Permanente Metals Corporation (Shipbuilding Division) Yards One and Two in Richmond. Workers—mostly women and men unfit for battle—were recruited from all over the country. “Probably only one in every 200 of his workers had ever seen a shipyard before,” wrote Leonard Sawyer in

Opposite: Launching the *Robert E. Peary*, built in less than five days
Below: Kaiser Shipyards, Richmond, c. 1943



PHOTOS COURTESY THE RICHMOND MUSEUM COLLECTION

The Liberty Ships, “and 25 percent had not even seen the sea!”

By relying on prefabrication and assembly-line techniques, Kaiser was able to use unskilled labor and turn ships out with amazing speed. Workers could quickly be taught a single operation, which greatly reduced the number of skilled tradesmen needed. To drum up enthusiasm and to counter derisive comments, the undertaking was named the Liberty Project, and the vessels became known as Liberty Ships.

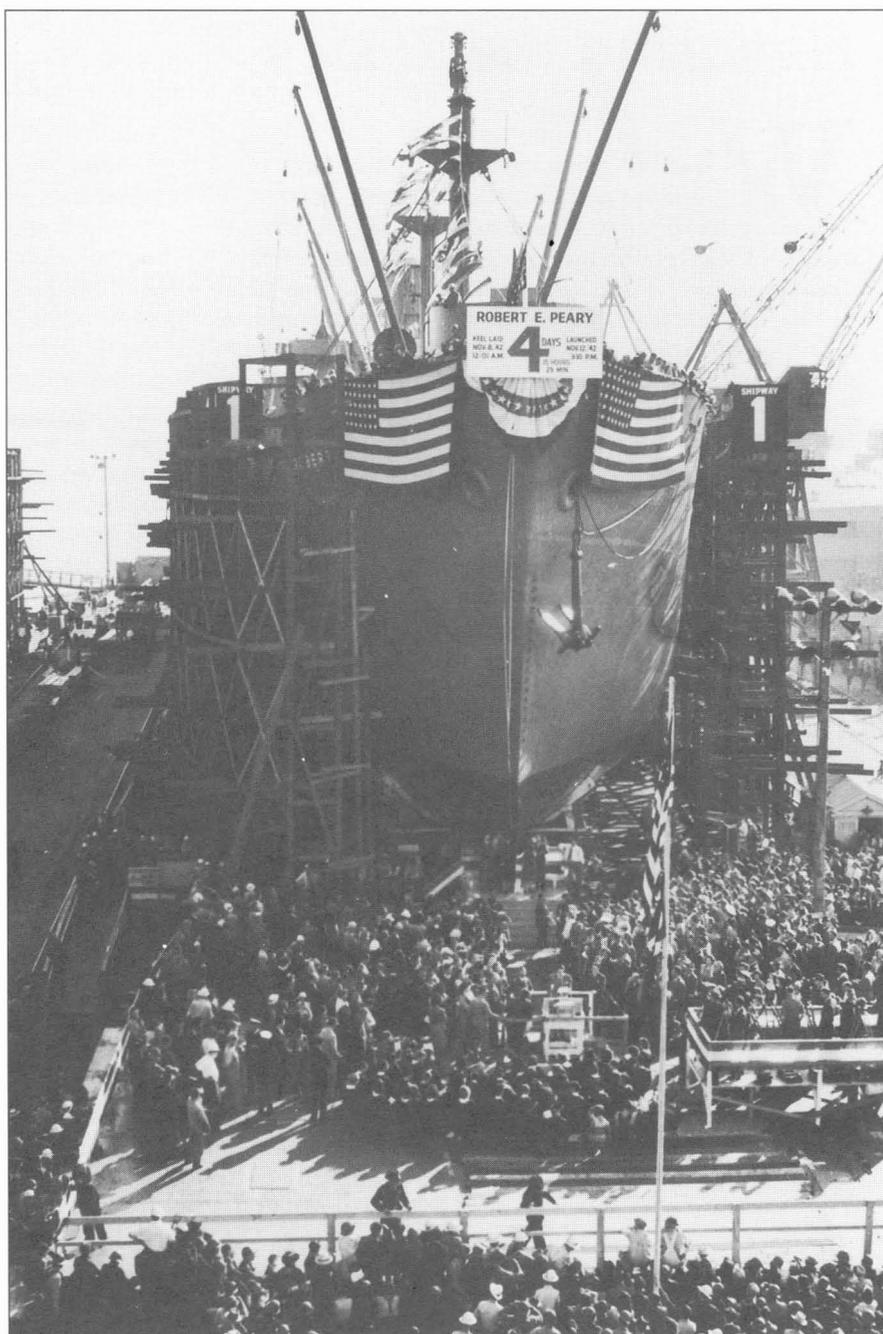
Both Kaiser’s methods and the Liberty Ships soon exceeded all expectations. The yards were turning them out in record time—by 1943, the Portland shipyard averaged 17 days for complete assembly of a ship from the keel up. To accelerate production, the yards were encouraged to compete. In mid-1943 the Portland yard’s record assembly was 10 days; soon thereafter Richmond Yard Two completed the *Robert E. Peary* in four days, 15 hours, and 30 minutes—the record to this day.

Although these record times were basically publicity stunts made possible by increased pre-keel fabrication, Kaiser had transformed the shipbuilding industry. “In this type of shipbuilding, which is ship manufacturing, shipbuilding experience is not necessary, and those people who have not had shipbuilding experience have done a better job than the people who have had it,” Admiral Vickery, vice chairman of the Maritime Commission noted after the war.

The Liberty Ships proved to be remarkably durable. Their sturdy compartmented hulls could stay afloat even when severely damaged. The *William Williams*, which had been torpedoed in the stern, drifted for several days awash over half its length and with its poop deck completely submerged. A tug arrived to steer it back to port, but it still ran under its own power. The *Helena Modjeska* ran aground, and when eight tugs tried to free her, she broke in half. Heavy winds swung the pieces apart at right angles—still afloat.

Altogether, 2,710 Liberty Ships were built by August 1944, 489 in the Richmond shipyards. Then the yards were converted to build the faster Victory Ships or LSTs (Landing Ship, Tank—amphibious landing craft).

The Liberty Ships were built as emergency vessels, not expected to serve longer than five years, but after the war hundreds continued in use. Their versatile design was easily



adapted for a variety of special functions: tankers, colliers, boxed aircraft transports, army tank transports, hospital ships, troop ships, animal transports, or to carry war brides and military dependents. They were to become one of the most popular and practical types of tramp steamers, some serving well into the 1970s. In 1994, the *Jeremiah O'Brien* sailed from San Francisco, where it docks as part of the Maritime Museum’s collection of historic ships, to France for the 50th anniversary of D-Day. Many of her original crew were aboard for the voyage.

—Hal Hughes

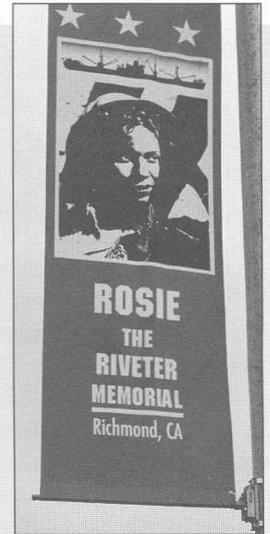
Honoring the Rosies

WHERE THE KAISER SHIPYARDS ONCE THROBBED with the concentrated effort of thousands of wartime workers on the bayshore of Richmond now lies a broad green lawn surrounded by comfy condominiums. There's no sign that this spot stood at the heart of California's "Second Gold Rush." The City of Richmond's Rosie the Riveter Memorial Committee is working both to remind us of that era and to honor those who were part of it, especially the women.

In February the Committee announced five finalists in a competition held to select an artist who will design the permanent memorial to be placed at Marina Green and Park, the former site of Kaiser Shipyard Number Two. "This memorial will help a broad audience understand the crucial role women played in helping the U.S. win the war—and the changes that those new jobs ushered in for women and their families," stated Richmond City Council-

woman Donna Powers, who has been spearheading the project. The winner of the competition will be announced in May, and the dedication of the memorial is scheduled for spring 1999.

The project also includes educational programs; gathering photos, documents, and memorabilia for archives at the Richmond Museum of History; recording oral histories of shipyard workers; and compilation of a Rosie the Riveter cookbook. The beginning of the Rosie the Riveter Memorial project was celebrated October 5, 1996, at the Marina Bay site. Dozens of women who had worked in the World War II shipyards gathered for the event.



PHOTOS THIS PAGE BY RASA GUSTAITIS



Florence Berg is the daughter of Margarite Drake (p. 25).

Florence Berg

THEY HIRED MEN AT FIRST, then they started hiring women for the graveyard shift. I had two brothers overseas. My mother, my sister, my stepfather, and I all worked in the shipyards, my grandfather too. We lived in San Francisco, so I took the streetcar and the ferry. It took two hours to get there.

My mother and stepfather got in as shipfitters, my sister was hired as steel expeditor, and I got in welding in 1942. They taught you right there how to weld. I did that for six months, until I hurt my eye real bad. It's still blurred if I take off my glasses. I did wear goggles, but I lifted them up to check something and someone beside me struck an arc and that was it. So after a while I was in charge of the plate shop. I had men under me.

I did really enjoy it, I think it was one of the nicest parts of my life. I had just had my 20th birthday. There weren't many young men—most were old enough to be my grandfather—but a lot of us went bowling and to shows together, because shows ran 24 hours a day and most everything was open at midnight, not only in Richmond but also in San Francisco.

On July 2, 1943 I got married. My husband had been in Pearl Harbor and also in Guadalcanal. The Navy sent him back to San Francisco because he had malaria, but in 1944 he went back to active duty again, in

Hawaii. I took off to have our first child, then went back to work. I got another Navy wife to move in with me and she took care of my baby in exchange for staying in the house.

Then, in 1945, they started laying people off, little by little. Women went first, and I was one of the first because I had taken time off. So I went to work for a little lady on Polk Street who bought and sold second-hand furs. I worked for her until my husband came home.

What was so special about that time I worked in the shipyards? I was young, I was occupied, and I felt I was useful. Before, women could only do this and that, and this was completely different. Men and women were equal. But then we went back to wearing skirts again. I had been saving money for college, but with kids, you just don't go. I had four. The youngest is married to a Navy man, stationed at the Great Lakes.

Willa Thomas

WE CAME IN 1942 FROM LEWISVILLE, Arkansas. I was 17, my husband was 19. Like most everybody in my town, we paid our way to California. All my family came, except my father, and everybody worked.

We lived with my brother, sister-in-law, and two or three sisters in one room for about a month, and then my husband found a place for us to stay. The housing was very bad, but people really shared. If they had one or two bedrooms, ten people



Willa Thomas

may have stayed there at different times.

I got my job at the shipyard after our daughter was born. My husband took care of her in the daytime. I'd come back at four or five o'clock and cook and he could sleep some more before he went to work at midnight. I worked in the double bottom of the ships as a scaler.

The scaler would go in after the welder. You had to crawl in, with this big hose attached to a gun that might look like the riveter gun but was probably bigger. And you had to lie on your back and blast the rivets with a blast of air, and if the weld wasn't good, a bubble would come up and you would put a yellow mark on the weld. Then the welder would come back and weld it again.

I did that for a year and a half. It wasn't a good job. It was hard. Now that I think about it, there were many better jobs that paid more money. But to make \$45 to \$50 a week was just great. I had a husband and a child, and I was looking for the future.

My mother worked at the Point [Point San Pablo], canning sardines, whales, whatever. She worked there until the cannery closed down, then she went back home, raised a garden, stayed back there, came back to California. She was a go-getting woman; she should have been born in this time. She had nine children, but she was not really into children that much. She died in 1979, at age 97.

When I was growing up, my father was a cook, my mother took in laundry. We had a farm, with chickens and cows, so we had plenty of food and never got welfare from

anyone. But where other kids could sleep late, we had to get up at six or seven. On Saturday and Sunday I was wishing the cows would all die. But that's life on the farm, and I don't regret any of this, because it really taught us how to work, and I have taught my daughter and grandchildren how to work. That's a legacy you pass on down.

After the war jobs were scarce and a lot went home. I went to nursing school, and then worked at Children's Hospital as an LVN for 23 years. My husband first had a very hard job as laborer, then got a better job at Union Oil and retired at age 59, but then went to work for the University of California for 14 more years. For seven years we had a grocery store.

We were constantly putting our resources into buying property, every time we saved a little bit. We bought our first home for \$8,000, paying maybe \$50 a month, then bought some more property. At that time I didn't know about discrimination as much as I know about it now. When we would go to the bank to borrow money, they'd say, "You're not making enough to buy this property." But each time, we got the money, because we were saving, even if it was just \$10 a month, and the bankers looked at that.

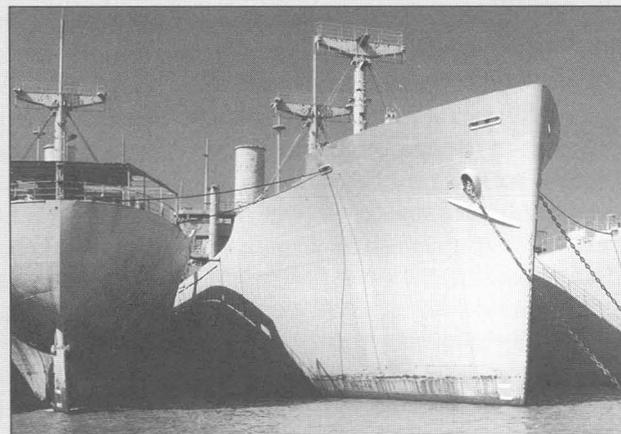
I wanted a lot. When we had Janie, I knew she had to go to college, and that I wanted a home. And she went to the university, and all my grandchildren have gone to college. One has another year to go, the other two have their degrees. Those were our goals, those are the things that we worked hard for. ■

"The women had their first taste of independence, and they realized that they could work, they could earn a living, they could make decisions."

A Victory Ship Comes Home

ONE OF THE 747 SHIPS BUILT in Richmond is being restored and moved to a new home at Point Molate later this year. A museum will be created in one hold, a dining room, available for rental, in another. The Victory Ship may also be chartered for short cruises.

The *S.S. Red Oak*, named for a small Iowa town that had suffered heavy losses, was launched in 1944 and served as an ammunition carrier in the South Pacific, and later also in the Korean and Vietnam wars. In 1968 she was hermetically sealed and docked with the Mothball Fleet in Suisun Bay. Congress conveyed her to the Richmond Museum Association in 1996. Under the guidance of Captain James Knowland, crews of maritime workers and other volunteers have been working to get the sturdy ship ready, with the help of a \$97,500 grant from an anonymous donor. "The outside looks pretty bad," said Lois Boyle, president of the Museum Association, "but inside it's remarkable—the bunks are solid oak—and it was so well sealed it wasn't even dusty!"



S.S. Red Oak in the Mothball Fleet

COURTESY THE RICHMOND MUSEUM COLLECTION



Hazard Park:

A Wetland in East L.A.

SEAN WOODS

THE LOS ANGELES metropolitan area has one of the worst parks-per-resident ratios of any major urban center.

Within the L.A. metropolitan area, the sprawling East Los Angeles district is among the worst off. Hazard Park is one of four parks that lie along the abandoned Union Pacific railroad tracks.

Bisected by the tracks, this 25-acre swatch of hilly green space is heavily used by people who live and work nearby. The two baseball diamonds accommodate 58 teams. One typical mid-week afternoon, uniformed

schoolchildren were doing calisthenics on the tennis courts, white-coated hospital workers lounged on the grass eating bag lunches, women pushing strollers stopped to chat under pine and eucalyptus trees.

Until this year, few people outside the area knew or cared about Hazard Park. Now, however, it has become a magnet for scientists, environmentalists, and officials from various public agencies at the local, state, and federal levels. They have been drawn to Hazard Park by the news that it harbors a highly valuable natural feature, rare in any city and certainly in this one: a freshwater wetland.

This natural treasure was discovered in a densely overgrown gully that traverses the park with the old tracks at

its bottom, hidden by lush vegetation. Giant reed, date palm, and other invasive species grow up the gully's sides, mixed with willows, cattail, mulefat, and other native wetland plants. The thicket provides refuge for birds and small wildlife, as well as for homeless people. Not long ago a stolen bulldozer was dumped here and was not found for months.

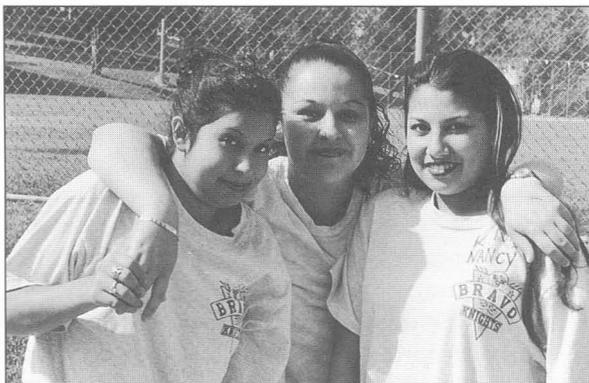
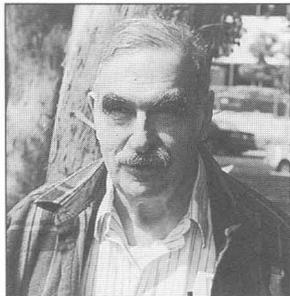
It was Alex Man, 76, chairman of the Friends of Hazard Park and a warrior in the park's behalf for 34 years, who "discovered" the wetland. He had noticed that there was moisture at the bottom of the gully and wondered why. So he dug into city archives and found a map produced in 1894 for the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power which showed a stream, Arroyo

de las Pasas. He also found evidence of *zanjas* (irrigation ditches) that crisscrossed the region as part of an intricate irrigation system dating back to Spanish settlement, which diverted water from the Los Angeles River for agriculture and municipal use.

Man cares for Hazard Park with a passion that only a committed activist can sustain. He helped found Friends in 1966, when the city appeared ready to destroy it. Negotiations were under way for a land trade that would have allowed the nearby veterans hospital to use Hazard Park as a building site with a new park to be constructed in Westwood, a prosperous area 16 miles away. Friends pointed out that there were plenty of other potential sites nearby for the hospital—including one being used for a junkyard—and that Westwood already had a lot of parks, while East L.A. was in dire need of more. Hazard Park was saved.

Now retired from his job as a technician at the USC Medical Center, Man has never stopped working for this park. Because it is surrounded by large institutions ever in need of more space—The Los Angeles County—University of Southern California Medical Center looms above the park, the USC Medical School is just across the street—he believes it's important to stay vigilant against any further attempts at a land grab.

Besides, the park's amenities have been neglected, he says: "There's not a single



Top: Stolen bulldozer in gully; **Middle:** Alex Man; **Bottom:** Belin Arellano, Laura Lopez, Nancy Navarette



PHOTOS THIS PAGE BY SEAN WOODS

drinking fountain, not a picnic table or barbecue pit on the eight-acre eastern section." Hoping that the presence of a wetland might help obtain such improvements, and would also assure the park's survival, Man invited biologists and science teachers to check out his discovery.

Botany professor James Henrickson, of California State University, Los Angeles, came and found the wetland "much deserving of recognition and restoration." Gina Schultz, a biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, was astonished at the variety of native bird species she saw on a visit. "These urban parks tend to be dominated by introduced species such as the European starling," she said. Yet here were a downy woodpecker, common yellowthroat, bushtit, Anna's hummingbird, and the California towhee. "Even in the current condition," she said, "Hazard Park provides an essential food source to a variety of migratory birds."

Soon Dennis Piliien, science teacher at the adjacent Francisco Bravo Medical Magnet School, was using the wetland for environmental education, and three other magnet schools were interested in doing likewise. Man talked to Dorothy Green of the Los Angeles and San Gabriel River Watershed Council, who came to look

along with Hendrickson and Chris Kroll, project manager of the Coastal Conservancy.

The Conservancy granted \$10,000 to the Watershed Council, which represents public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and others, for a hydrological and biological assessment of the wetland. The Council now envisions a wetland restoration project that also includes bicycle and pedestrian paths to link this park with others.

Before restoration can begin, a conservation easement must be secured or the gully must be purchased from the railroad. Joel McLafferty, a real estate developer and member of the Watershed Council, has begun negotiations and is optimistic.

Man, watching these developments, now worries that wetland preservation might somehow undermine other park values. "The integrity of the wetland depends on the integrity of the park," he emphasizes.

Much will depend on whether the community rallies for its park, says the Conservancy's Kroll. The hope is that with support from local agencies, larger conservation organizations, and L.A. Councilman Richard Alatorre, a restored wetland in East L.A. may soon become a reality, along with other park improvements. Hazard Park could even become a model of how to improve the quality of life in the inner city for both people and wildlife. ■

Sean Woods is an environmental consultant working with the Coastal Conservancy on a wetland assessment of the Los Angeles River Watershed.

Three Partnerships for Conservation and the Outdoors

RECREATION, PARKS, AND TOURISM ROUNDTABLE

CALIFORNIA'S GREAT outdoors is a magnet for its 33 million residents and for some 52.5 million people who flock here annually from other states and abroad. Until recently, however, the many public agencies and private businesses that serve those millions have not collaborated much, missing valuable opportunities to accomplish more with less.

Each, for instance, tended to offer public information about its own jurisdiction only. Vacationers planning trips would have looked in vain for a source providing a full picture of any particular region. They would need to call, write, or consult web sites of the State Parks Department, Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and National Park Service, as well as local and regional agencies. "Nowhere [could] you get all the hours and fees for all the parks," said Gil Zimmerman, chairman of the California Desert Recreation Association. To find commercial services and accommodations, a further search was required.

Now an effort is under way to join forces for the benefit of all concerned. Two years ago, inspired by the 1995 White House Conference on Tourism, Donald W. Murphy, then the director of the State Parks Department, founded the California Roundtable on Recreation, Parks, and Tourism as a forum to bring together high-level representatives of public agencies, environmental groups, outdoor, travel, and hospitality industries, and others. The stated goal is to "coordinate and promote public and private efforts to provide quality, sustainable outdoor recreation."

Although it only meets quarterly and has no paid staff, the Roundtable has

already shown encouraging results.

"The biggest thing that has emerged is networking," said Tim Smith, recreation planner for the Bureau of Land Management's California office. "The Roundtable is able to talk about recreation in a seamless manner." Trail users on public lands don't notice who put out the map they are using, or what uniform a ranger they meet is wearing. Only the agencies care about jurisdictional lines, points out another mem-

The new recreationists are snowboarders, in-line skaters, paragliders, mountain bicyclists, and skateboarders.

ber, Dana Bell, of the American Motorcyclist Association.

"The demographics of the state are changing so much that we have to work together," Bell said. "The new recreationists are a more diverse ethnic mix. Yet most of the literature has been in English, not Spanish, Cambodian, or any of the languages that are now also commonly spoken. And they're not like the baby boomers, who were introduced to the outdoors by their families. They're introduced by school or TV." Among them are snowboarders, in-line skaters, paragliders, mountain bicyclists, and skateboarders.

To discuss some of the changing recreational needs and how they are being met, the Roundtable held a Recreation Management Leadership Institute in October 1997. Some 50 land managers from federal, state, and local agencies and the private sector attended. Another conference, on future

needs, was held April 1 at the San Francisco Presidio.

Working together toward "seamless service," Roundtable members have already improved public information delivery. They have collaborated on a 16-page introductory guide, *California Outdoor Recreation*, which lists many sites and activities and provides contacts for further information. (For copies, contact the California Division of Tourism, phone: (800) 862-2543; web site: gocalif.ca.gov.) The Roundtable has also established a web site: www.caroundtable.com.

Zimmerman now attends trade and travel conferences to represent not only his association but all involved in the Roundtable, as "California Outdoor Recreation." When he recently asked a group of tour operators from Japan and other Asian countries what most interested their clients about California, he said, they named hiking, nature, and camping. But they sometimes bypass opportunities to plan such trips because "the average length of time it takes to produce a tour product is three weeks, and that's too long. So they simply route clients to Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Las Vegas."

The Roundtable is now working with the Department of Tourism to develop travel planning guides for tour directors on nature tourism, camping, fishing, and motor sports opportunities. Later, historical tour information will be produced.

"California is so big, and we offer so much to the public collectively, but until now there was no forum to bring the private and public sector together regarding recreation and tourism," said Ken Jones, State Parks deputy director, co-chair of the Roundtable.

—RG



OUTDOOR BUSINESS CONSERVATION ALLIANCE

IN 1987 I WENT TO NEPAL with two business partners and my 14-year-old son to test our outdoor products at high altitudes. That trip reshaped my business perspective and opened my mind to a new sense of environmental and community responsibility. Until then I had been unconscious of the negative impact that the Western trekking trade and tourism were having on both the culture and the environment abroad. When I returned to California, I began immediately to redesign the marketing for one of our products, so that profits from it would be used to help people and communities along the trekking route.

A few months later, at the 1988 Outdoor Retailer trade show, Kevin Sweeney of Patagonia, Inc., invited me

to a meeting with Wally Smith (R.E.I.), Yvon Chouinard (Patagonia), George Grabner (Kelty Pack), and Bill Simon (North Face). The talk was about the devastation of our own backcountry, pollution of rivers and streams, the air and ocean, about the widespread loss of habitat and biodiversity. What had gone wrong with the management of America's natural resources? It was obvious that those in government leadership—whom we had empowered—were failing in their stewardship. The meeting was about our love for the outdoors, what we all have in common, and

about how we as companies could "make a difference." A proposal was presented for an Outdoor Industry Conservation Alliance.

I was the first in the audience to pledge company membership to this organization, which we later renamed Conservation Alliance—Outdoor Business Giving Back to the Outdoors. The experience in Nepal was fresh in my mind, but I also remembered the San Joaquin-Sacramento River Delta, where I loved to swim as a child, and where frogs had been stilled and fish poisoned.

To date, 56 outdoor companies have joined the Alliance. That's just a small percentage of our \$4.7 billion industry, but it's already enough to have made a difference. We have given 66 grants, totaling over \$2.2 million, to nonprofit community-based activist (or action-oriented) groups. Of these, 65 have been in the U.S. and Canada; one is in Chile. So far, \$417,080 has gone to projects in California.

Our grants have leveraged matching and challenge funds from elsewhere, working to protect over 12,000 miles of

rivers and countless miles of trails; to halt the construction of 14 dams and remove one; and to support lobbying and political action that have resulted in ecosystem/biodiversity protection, management reform, wild and scenic lands protection, and passage of environmental legislation.

Membership is open to businesses based on human-powered outdoor activities whose livelihood depends on conserving our outdoor environment. Companies in all aspects of the outdoor industry may join, including manufacturers, retailers, mills, publishers, contractors, and dealers/ reps. Many of the member companies are competitors in the marketplace but partners with nature. Dues are based on members' annual revenues and calculated at a rate of \$1,000 per \$1 million in annual sales. Some companies volunteer additional funds.

We believe that the Alliance is unique in that all the income from dues goes directly into grants to "preserve, protect, and restore the natural environment upon which our existence depends." The member companies absorb all administration and overhead costs. The Alliance has no paid staff or overhead expenses.

The projects we like to fund are hands-on, grassroots, and action-oriented. We look for local groups that are driven by passion to protect their own local piece of paradise; groups that know how to organize volunteers, that are savvy at involving citizens in environmental policy issues. Projects that relate to muscle-powered activities get priority. We support lobbying for specific projects (our 501(c)(4) tax status allows that), and we expect our projects to have a goal, a plan to reach that goal in a predetermined period of time, and the willingness to close up shop and go home when the goal is reached. The Conservation Alliance generally does not fund groups associated with motorized sports, research or data-gathering, or broadcast media. Funds are allocated to specific projects, not salaries or new staff or project director positions.

Our funding increases and encourages access to the outdoors. This translates to more hikers, campers, climbers,

boaters, and the vast array of other nonmotorized users turning to us for outfitting, education, guidance, and direction. This translates to long-term sales opportunity.

That's an economic argument for the Alliance. But clearly that's not all that drives us. Each of us has a favorite place, a place close to the heart, that calls us to act responsibly toward nature. One of mine is the Sinkyone Wilderness on the Mendocino County coast. I trace my connection to an experience I don't try to explain.

It happened on a typical misty north coast summer day. I was sanding incense cedar in a clearing. I was alone, but had an eerie feeling that I was being watched—a feeling that you might get alone at night, when you're on the edge of being just a bit afraid and struggling not let the fear get to you. I kept turning off the electric sander and looking into the thick forest surrounding my home, until I saw people coming out of the forest. They moved swiftly to the edge of the clearing. Some had spears, and others had bows and quivers, and there were wide bands of paint, red or black, across their faces. The strongest quality about them was their unified presence—the many were one, all parts of a whole. As I stood there, stunned, they seemed to vaporize and blend into the woods from where they had magically come, but I was alert and deeply grateful to the deeper forces in nature that keep us on the edge of insight, mystery, and adventure. I felt I had received a gift and a message.

One of the Conservation Alliance's grants later helped to establish the first Native American InterTribal Wilderness Park in Sinkyone. It will be a center for learning about Native American land stewardship and ecological restoration.

Ron Nadeau is president of Grabber Performance Group, a company specializing in hand, pocket, and body warmers, and president of Shaman's International, a business consulting firm. He is a board member of the Conservation Alliance—Outdoor Business Giving Back to the Outdoors and has served as its president twice.

"TEAMING WITH WILDLIFE"

HUNTERS HAVE PAID A surcharge on guns and ammunition since 1937 to help fund conservation of wild turkeys, deer, and other game species. Since the 1950s, that surcharge has also been levied on fishing gear. Now a coalition of wildlife conservation agencies has proposed that a similar but smaller surcharge be applied to outdoor equipment, so that wildlife watchers, hikers, bicyclists, kayakers,

The proposal follows a precedent set by hunting and fishing groups: asking those who take part in an activity to invest in the resources that sustain it.

and others who enjoy wild places also pay a share toward their conservation.

The proposal, "Teaming with Wildlife," comes from the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA), which represents all state fish and wildlife or natural resources agencies and also federal agencies concerned with wildlife. It has been endorsed by the National Audubon Society, Defenders of Wildlife, the National Wildlife Federation, other major environmental and outdoor recreation groups, and by over 600 outdoor-related businesses, including four optics firms (Swift, Zeiss, Swarovski, and Kowa), Bass Pro Shops, American AGCO (which deals in bird seed and feeders), and San Diego-based PETCO, the nation's second-largest retailer of pet supplies. Fourteen governors have spoken out in favor of the proposal, including the governors of Alaska, Colorado, Washington, and New Mexico.

"We are working hard to gain enough bipartisan support within Congress to introduce a bill this year," says IAFWA spokesperson Naomi Edelson. "We need the California conservation

community behind us. We estimate that a surcharge could raise some \$350 million a year to protect wildlife."

Hunters and fishermen pay a surcharge of 10 to 11 percent. The proposed outdoor equipment surcharge would add 2.5 to 5 percent to the price of an item. It would apply to gear used by hikers, birders, and others who enjoy the outdoors, and would fund conservation of nongame species. A formula based on a state's size and population would be used to allocate the funds. "We estimate that California would receive \$17.5 million a year under this program," says Edelson, a sum that would cover up to 75 percent of conservation projects approved by the secretary of interior.

Some tough policy decisions lie ahead: What will be defined as outdoor gear? What guidelines will be used to allocate funds between wildlife recreation services, such as trail maintenance, and wildlife habitat protection? "The division between these two needs can be a contentious issue, even among supporters of the surcharge," says Bob Ferris of Defenders of Wildlife.

While the devil may be in the details, the proposal follows a precedent long ago established by hunting and fishing groups: asking those who take part in an activity to invest in the resources that sustain it. It also recognizes the significant increase in wildlife watching and nature tourism as recreational activities. According to the National Survey on Recreation and the Environment, bird-watching was the fastest-growing outdoor activity between 1982 and 1995, with more than 54 million people spending \$5.2 billion a year on related goods and services.

If "Teaming with Wildlife" is enacted, those most concerned about wildlife conservation will have the satisfaction of knowing that when they buy binoculars and hiking boots, they are helping to secure a future for the creatures they hope to see and the natural places they may visit. ■

—Wesley Marx



LOS ANGELES RIVER IDEAS

OPENING THE CONFERENCE on the future of the Los Angeles River downtown, Congressman Xavier Becerra told of a school in his downtown district where only a few children raised their hands when asked if they had ever been to the ocean. How, he asked, can we expect people of the inner city to care about the river when most of them have never even been to the ocean?

The need to "bring green to the inner city," as Becerra put it, became a theme for the conference, which brought some 250 people to the Central Library on February 28 to hear visionary proposals for the river as it flows through downtown. The conference was preceded by a series of neighborhood focus groups and a three-day planning and design workshop, all organized by the Friends of the Los Angeles River.

The conference concentrated on redevelopment of Taylor Yard and Chinatown Yards, two former railroad yards near downtown; the confluence of the Los Angeles River and the Arroyo Seco; and development of a green corridor to connect East Los Angeles to the river, as a way to "bridge the gap" between the mostly Anglo westside of Los Angeles and the predominantly Latino eastside.

Before each of these topics was discussed, the organizers of the earlier workshop presented design proposals for each site. The design for Taylor Yard was for wetlands, parks, and community-based businesses, as well as for a large detention basin to protect downtown from major floods. The design for Chinatown Yards called for the development of a new mixed-use neighborhood, "River Park," to be shaped around a central water channel based on the historic zanjas constructed by the Spanish to bring water from the river to the city.

A "Confluence Park" was proposed to celebrate the merging of the river and the Arroyo Seco, with the mouth of the Arroyo Seco, widened and naturalized, as its focus. A bikeway connec-



Above: River Park Plan
Right: Arroyo Seco Confluence Park

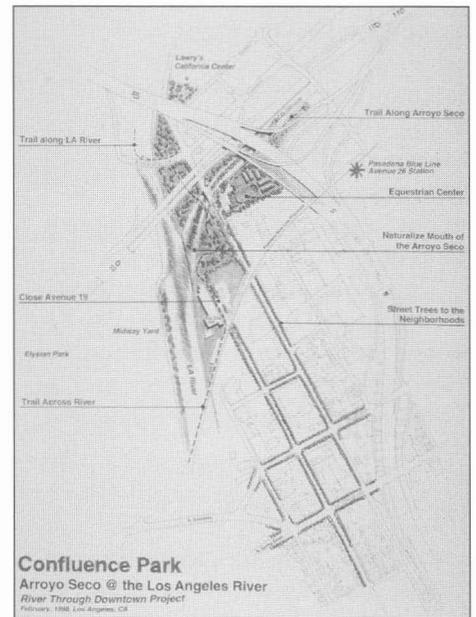
tion from downtown Los Angeles along the Arroyo Seco was also presented. For the Boyle Heights/Pico Aliso/Little Tokyo section, the designers proposed a north-south linear park on the east side of the river, with a network of east-west parks to connect the river with neighborhoods.

For more information and a copy of the conference program, contact Friends of the Los Angeles River, P.O. Box 292134, Los Angeles, CA 90029; phone: (213) 223-0585.

LIVING RIVER FLOOD PROTECTION GETS THE "GO!" SIGN IN NAPA

FLOODS HAVE PLAGUED Napa County for years, causing hundreds of millions of dollars in damage, but citizens have repeatedly declined help in the form of flood control projects that would have encased parts of the Napa River in concrete. Now they have given the go-ahead to a very different strategy, one that is being watched nationwide as a model. Instead of speeding storm flows by channelizing the river, this strategy aims to tame the river's destructive power by letting it do what comes naturally, with some guidance.

On March 3, voters approved by the required two-thirds majority a half-cent local sales tax, which is expected



PLANS BY ARTHUR GOLDING & ASSOCIATES

to raise a total of \$120 million during the next 20 years. These funds will be used for the Napa River/Napa County Flood Protection Project; the goal is to provide flood protection in the context of a "living river" that is allowed to meander and spread into its floodplain at selected natural sites.

Designed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in conjunction with a broad-based community coalition, the project will maintain mudflats, shallows, sandbars, and other natural river features along most of a 6.9-mile stretch. More than 300 acres of tidal wetlands are to be restored.

Typical Corps of Engineers flood control projects call for rivers to be deepened, widened, and lined with concrete. In the process, riparian vegetation that supports fish and wildlife is removed. In recent years this strategy's shortcomings have come to the fore as rivers have broken through artificial channels—most notably the Mississippi River in 1993—with devastating results. In addition, concerns have been raised about the environmental and economic costs of dredging to maintain artificial river channels.

The strategy for the Napa River was devised by the Napa River Community Coalition, organized in 1995 by the Napa County Flood Control and Water Control District in an effort to break the impasse between citizens and the Corps on what constitutes appropriate flood control. The design, developed with the Corps' cooperation, provides not only flood control but also fish and wildlife habitat; in addition, it maintains high water quality and supply, conveys variable flows, offers recreational opportunities, and maintains aesthetic qualities of the river.

The community coalition process was sponsored by the Napa Valley Economic Development Corporation, the Napa Chamber of Commerce, and the Friends of the Napa River. Goals and

principles were established during numerous meetings. Heavy emphasis was placed on education of all members about river processes and river restoration. Design alternatives were suggested, studied, weighed, and, if they conformed with geomorphologic principles and financial constraints, acted upon.

Availability of expertise and evaluation tools was critical to the process of determining what options should be developed further. The Coastal Conservancy provided technical assistance when issues arose that the coalition was unable to address.

Important lessons learned:

- Lack of expertise and insufficient assurance that alternative designs would not result in higher flood risks led the Corps to be reluctant, initially, to try alternative flood control measures.
- The Corps requires outside expertise to test new ideas using advanced models and other tools not always available to them. These tools can demonstrate that the risk of using alternative methods is reasonable.
- The project succeeded thanks to strong project management at the local level and the participation of informed, energetic, and dedicated

citizens, river experts, and agency staff in all aspects of project design.

—Nadine Hitchcock

SINKYONE INTERTRIBAL PARK ACCESS

THE INTERTRIBAL SINKYONE Wilderness Council will plan for the development of three public trails, campgrounds, and other access facilities in the newly created InterTribal Sinkyone Wilderness Park with the help of \$30,000 approved by the Coastal Conservancy in February. The public access will be part of a resource management plan that will establish operating standards for the park and provide for protection and restoration of sensitive natural and cultural resources.

The 4,000-acre park was established in August 1997 on ruggedly beautiful land west of the northernmost ridge and road in Mendocino County, when the property was sold by the Trust for Public Land (TPL) to the InterTribal Council. That transfer was the culmination of more than ten years of effort by the Conservancy, working with TPL, the Council, and the Pacific Forest Trust.

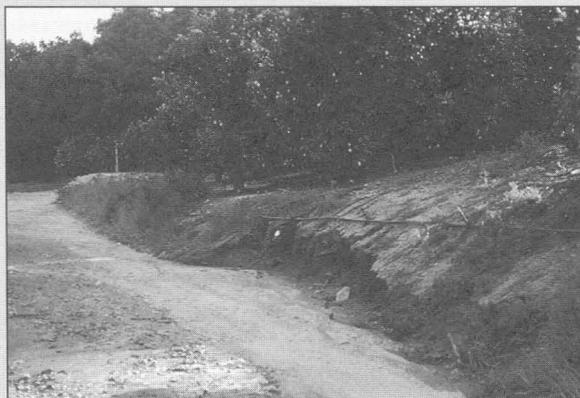
NEW WETLANDS AND PARK AT HUNTERS POINT

PIER 98 IS NOT ACTUALLY a pier; it is a landfill jetty created in the 1970s near Hunters Point in San Francisco for the proposed Southern Crossing Bridge. The bridge was never built, and the jetty has, ever since, been a wasteland where nature is valiantly trying to make a comeback and some adventurous people come to fish, watch birds, or just relax. The 25-acre jetty offers grand views of the bay and close-up views of port shipping operations. It is easily accessible to residents of the Hunters Point/Bayview community.

Now "Pier 98" is about to be improved, for the benefit of birds, plants, and people. Trails, a fishing pier, and a picnic area will be constructed and five new acres of intertidal wetlands will be created, with \$2 million in funding: \$1 million from the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, \$500,000 from the Coastal Conservancy, approved in February, and \$500,000 from the Port of San Francisco.

Calleguas Creek Restoration Project

A bare stretch of streambank was damaged by stormflows last winter, while revegetated areas held up much better in this demonstration project in the Calleguas Creek watershed. To prevent loss of farmland to erosion, the Ventura County Resource Conservation District and farmers are trying out 15 different mats, fabrics, and webbings, and a special native seed mix, along 1,500 feet of a creek where it runs past lemon orchards. The Coastal Conservancy provided partial funding for the project.



PHOTOS BY PETER BRAND



Beneath the Sea in 3-D, by Mark Blum. Chronicle Books, San Francisco, 1997. 96 pp., \$18.95 (hardcover).

FOR MOST PEOPLE, the strange and beautiful creatures that inhabit the underwater realm of the planet are accessible only as images in TV documentaries or as captives in an aquarium. Mark Blum's book provides a new way to experience them: through the use of 3-D or stereoscopic photography, and 3-D lenses built into the cover of his book.

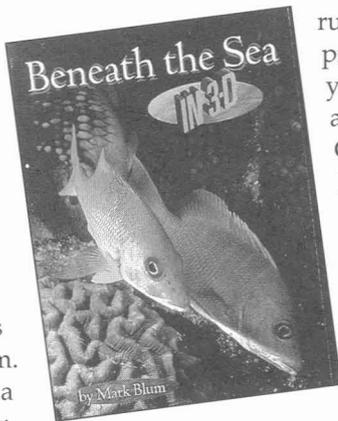
Equipped with several different custom-built stereo cameras and scuba gear, the author has traveled to some of the most interesting reefs of the world.

The 44 stereoscopic photographs in this collection are brightly colored and of excellent quality. The real impact, however, comes from the innovative three-dimensional aspect of viewing the animals in their natural environments. Fish appear suspended among rich corals, while shrimp and crabs peer out of their colorful holes. Each photographic plate is accompanied by a brief informative description of the fish or other animals in the picture. I would recommend the book to anyone, of any age, who has an interest in exploring the great variety of unusual life in the sea.

Dr. Dwayne Reed is an epidemiologist, diver, and underwater photographer.

California's Wild Gardens: A Living Legacy, by the California Native Plant Society, Sacramento, 1997. 236 pp., \$29.95 (paper), \$42.95 (hardcover). Order from CNPS, 1722 J Street, Suite 17, Sacramento, CA 95814. Phone: (916) 447-2677; FAX: (916) 447-2727.

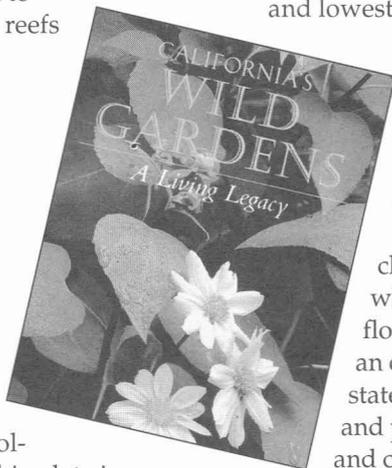
STUNNING, GLORIOUS, magnificent! Browse through a copy of California's Wild Gardens, and you will soon



run out of words of praise. Read the text and you will gain a new appreciation for why California's natural habitats are so precious, so unique, and now so threatened.

This visual transect of California takes the reader from one corner of the state to the next, from arid

desertscapes to lush meadows, from sand dunes to the craggy peaks of little-known mountain ranges, all the while displaying our unique floristic fortune. With over 6,000 plant species, the oldest and tallest trees, the highest and lowest elevations in the



continental United States, and over 100 million acres, California offers much to be discovered.

The introductory chapter explains why California's flora is so rich, gives an overview of the state's vegetation types and plant communities, and challenges citizens to preserve their botanical

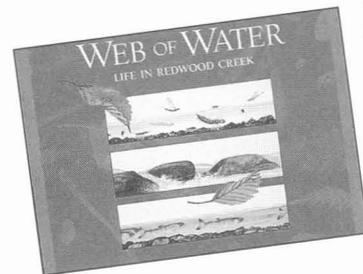
heritage. In successive chapters, more than 100 of California's finest botanists and ecologists reveal their special places with intimacy, zeal, and clarity. Sidebars highlight peculiar plants, restoration efforts, and unique sites.

Sincere thanks are due to Phyllis Faber, who assembled the "Who's Who" of botany to collaborate on this volume. Published by the California Native Plant Society for the California Department of Fish and Game in association with the California Academy of Sciences, *California's Wild Gardens* is a powerful talisman for preservationists.

Elizabeth Riddle is associate director of the University of California Natural Reserve System.

Web of Water: Life in Redwood Creek, by Maya Khosla. Illustrations by Maryjo Koch. Golden Gate National Parks Association, San Francisco, 1997. 62 pp., \$9.95 (paper). Order from Retail Division, GGNPA, Building 201, Fort Mason, San Francisco, CA 94123.

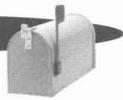
THIS LOVELY LITTLE BOOK has a big goal: to encourage the reader to spend "hours in and around water" in order to increase awareness of the beauty and complexity of a stream and its watershed. The combination of Khosla's elegant prose and Koch's



wonderfully fluid illustrations provides a taste of the real Redwood

Creek, enhancing our understanding of its seasonal patterns of life. Although Redwood Creek in Muir Woods is a special place because it is one of the last refuges of coho salmon along the central California coast, the dynamic, intriguing life processes Khosla describes occur in all streams. She takes us along into the stream by describing her experiences both as a biologist and as a person who finds great pleasure in simple observations of light, color, and movement. Thus the book contains elements of basic stream ecology, explains the life cycle of coho salmon, and introduces the common fish and invertebrates. But the book also wants the reader to stop periodically and "think like a fish," to see the world in more than verbal terms. Koch's paintings, realistic yet abstract, are the guide here. Read this book (and read it to your kids) before your next trip to Redwood Creek or any other coastal stream. I guarantee that this will enhance your experience.

Peter B. Moyle is a professor in the Department of Wildlife, Fish, and Conservation Biology at the University of California Davis.



Editor:

JUST A NOTE ON YOUR ARTICLE "The Jet Ski Furor"—it was great. I am a surfer and a member of the Doheny Longboard Surfing Association in Dana Point, California.

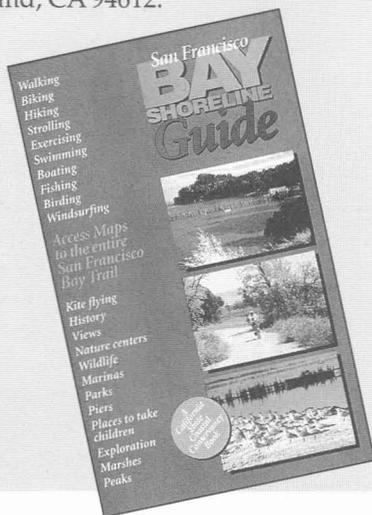
We are trying very hard to get the jet skis away from the beach and the tide pools. We have a Blue Water Task Force with the Coalition of Surf Clubs up and down the coast of California, which our club started.

The surfers at Doheny State Beach and the people that just go to be at the beach say, "You can smell them just being here." The surfers can even taste it in the water.

What are we to do? We don't want to make this a sanctuary. We just want to let the tide pools come back and let the surfers surf and let the people enjoy some of the wonders of the ocean without jet skis.

BAY GUIDE TAKES YOU THERE

SPRING IS HERE, AND TRAILS are calling. Find your way to the Bay Trail with the Coastal Conservancy's *San Francisco Bay Shoreline Guide*. It's packed with maps, information, and almost 500 illustrations, yet compact enough to carry along as you explore. Ask for it in bookstores or send a check for \$16.18 (\$14.95 plus sales tax), payable to Coastal Conservancy, 1330 Broadway, 11th Floor, Oakland, CA 94612.



At our beach they should stay more than 200 feet off shore—far enough away to let the ocean come back to life. Surfers have a harmonious relationship with the ocean and its sea life—can we keep this?

Nyle Schafhauser

P.S. You all are doing a great job. Thanks!

Editor:

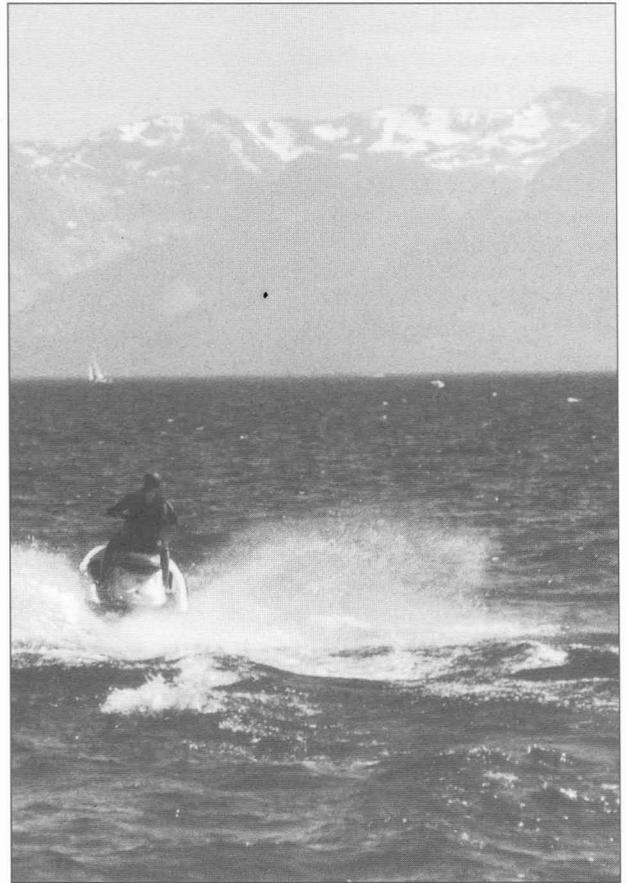
JUDITH COBURN'S article on jet skis underlined an important point: Jet skis are *multiple impact* machines which have had an unprecedented effect on our waterways. The impacts of these vehicles are now being documented by scientists and government agencies, not just incensed shoreline residents and recreational marine users.

Providing unfettered access to jet skis will set a dangerous precedent for future high impact motorized activity. That's why Bluewater Network, a coalition of boaters, scientists, marine industry experts, and clean water advocates is working to ban jet skis in our National Parks. We also act as an information clearinghouse and offer support to those who are working to regulate and ban jet skis. For more information, contact us at Earth Island Institute, 300 Broadway, Suite 28, San Francisco, CA 94133; phone: (415) 788-3666; e-mail: bluewater@earthisland.org.

Kathryn Morgan, Outreach Director

Editor:

IT WAS WITH GREAT PLEASURE that I read the very informative article "Oceanside Hostels, and More to Come," by Bill O'Brien in the Winter 1997-98 issue. The article, however, didn't mention two excellent coastal hostels in the greater Los Angeles area.



JIM HILDINGER

The Hostelling International (HI) Los Angeles/Santa Monica Hostel, opened in 1990, is the largest hostel built specifically for that purpose in the United States, with 380 beds, and last year recorded over 76,000 overnights. The HI Los Angeles South Bay Hostel, in Angels Gate Park in San Pedro, serves thousands of international visitors. It also conducts environmental education programs for area school groups in partnership with the Cabrillo Marine Museum and the Marine Mammal Care Center at Fort MacArthur. The Los Angeles Council of Hostelling International—American Youth Hostels is very proud of these facilities and the role they play in providing affordable access to the California coastline.

We believe additional hostels are needed in Santa Barbara, Ventura, Malibu, and Long Beach, and we are working to develop hostels in those areas, but it is a difficult task. We are very hopeful and look forward to the day when there will be a chain of hostels along the entire California coast.

*John Estrada, Executive Director,
LA Council, HI-AYH*



ON FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13 huge hunks of the bluff at Big Lagoon started falling. Within a few days, the

bluff had retreated more than 50 feet, and seven houses built in the mid-1970s were red-tagged. Rita Lakin's house, built with a 56-foot setback, was threatening to fall to Patrick Point State Beach, so she had it demolished and removed except for the foundation. Four neighboring houses were moved inland and owners are now trying to find new lots for them. Had their property landed on the beach, they would have been required to pay for removing the wreckage, according to Donald C. Tuttle, environmental services manager in the Natural Resources Division of Humboldt County's Department of Public Works. Lakin, who lives in Los Angeles and also owns the Lost Whaler Inn in Trinidad, says "the county should never have let this subdivision be built." Coastal Commission permits provided that no seawalls or other bluff armament would be allowed. Previous bluff failures were recorded here in 1850, '51, 1906, '40, '83, '84, and '85. "Never in a million years did I think something like this could happen," said Lakin, who said she had assurances that the house was safe for a hundred years.

DONALD C. TUTTLE

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High-Speed Ferries

