



Mill Bend. Photo by Craig Tooley

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# Redwood Coast News

October 2022

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## **Standing on the Shoulders of 30 Years**



RCLC Executive Director Jim Elias

Serving as Redwood Coast Land Conservancy's executive director for the last six weeks has felt more like six months, but in a good way! RCLC's Board of Directors, its many supporters and volunteers, and the community have very much made me feel welcome and at home. Of course, I am still in the learning phase, but the path ahead seems clear.

We are now featuring regular Bird Walks along Mill Bend! Slots fill up fast; keep your eyes open for our emails.



The Gualala River and Estuary are great spots to birdwatch.



Black-Neck Stilt along the Gualala River.  
Photo by Ron Bolander

[Donate to Support RCLC](#)



Photo by Craig Mole

I am coming into the organization at an exciting time. The future of Mill Bend Preserve has been outlined in the recently completed [Conservation Plan](#), unveiled on September 17 at Gualala Arts Center. The Plan reflects both science and public input. It tells the story of the timber mills that recently shaped the property. It reminds us of the European settlers who came to this part of the world, some of whom are buried in Gualala Cemetery, located within the Preserve. And it acknowledges that Mill Bend Preserve, and surrounding lands, have long been the home of Pomo people.

Now it is up to us to realize the vision of the Plan; namely, restore Mill Bend Preserve's biodiversity, and share its natural wonders and human history, with visitors of all ages and abilities. This is a moment that stands on the shoulders of RCLC's 30-year history of preserving, restoring, and sharing Mendonoma Coastlands, a testament to hard work, perseverance, and broad community support.

*Jim Elias*  
*Executive Director*

## Mill Bend Preserve Conservation Plan Unveiled



On September 17th, Redwood Coast Land Conservancy lifted the curtain on the Mill Bend Preserve Conservation Plan, a nearly two-year effort of RCLC and environmental science and design consultant Prunuske Chatham Inc. (PCI), outlining the stewardship approach for the Preserve's 113 acres.

**An estimated 80 people** attended the unveiling held at the Gualala Arts Center, where they learned about the Conservation

Plan and asked questions of RCLC and PCI content experts.

The Conservation Plan features **designs for enhancing habitat within the Gualala River Estuary**, improving survivability of resident steelhead trout and encouraging the expansion of an elusive population of Coho salmon suspected to spawn up in the north fork of the river. The Plan **categorizes existing Preserve plant and wildlife - natives and invasives** - and how thoughtful management can expand the former and minimize, if not wholly eliminate, the latter. **Improving year-round access** through the establishment of new trails and boardwalks, and the addition of visitor amenities such as bathrooms and educational touch points within the Conservation Plan, all serving to create a Mill Bend Preserve open and available to all.



*Querido Guldo, Dave Shpak, Ed Scott and Kristen Procter on the River Rail Trail*

Visit our website here [Mill Bend Preserve Conservation Plan](#) to read a 9-page abstract of the Conservation Plan.





*Jim Nybakken showing a map of Mill Bend Preserve*



*Chris Braley's table showing all the RCLC locations*

*Photos by Teresa Burns Gunther and Jim Elias*

## Gualala Bluff Trail - Extension Plans!

A stroll along the 0.4-mile long Gualala Bluff Trail takes an average walker about 15 minutes, presuming one can resist the temptation of stopping to admire the scenery.

At the Trail's southern terminus lies Mill Bend Preserve, over one hundred acres of river, willow thickets, coastal chaparral, alder groves and mixed conifer forest.

**Soon, perhaps in as little as three years**, our walker above's next step will be not just into the Preserve, but onto the newest segment of the California Coastal Trail (CCT).

The Mill Bend Preserve Conservation Plan outlines an extensive trail system which will link the Bluff Trail to a seasonal path under the Highway 1 bridge.

Segments of the CCT extension will offer **expansive views of the middle and upper estuary**, with informational signs about the importance of estuarine habitats, the natural forces that formed and maintain the estuary, and the influences of human development and climate changes upon the ecological health of the estuary.

Adding additional mileage to the CCT brings the goal of a walking path stretching along the entirety of the California coast that much closer to reality.



## Featured Volunteer: Chris Howard

*Chris helped build the second phase of the Gualala Bluff Trail in 2005 and 2006 and has been a Bluff Trail monitor since then. That's 17 years!*

### What brought you to the North Coast?

Two things brought me... first, my family and I were ready to check out of the rat race with our busy careers and slow down the pace by settling in with nature and all of its beauty here on the North Coast. Secondly, I successfully lobbied and landed a job with the Sea Ranch Association, working with them for about 18 years before departing.

### Why are you giving your time to RCLC?

I am an outdoors person and working on the bluffs of the Pacific could not be more beautiful and rewarding. Currently my wife Took assists me with my RCLC duties, and previously my son Chuck volunteered together with me on construction of the Bluff Trail. I also love being around the wildlife, being a harbor seal and pelicans kind of guy at heart. I volunteered as a harbor seal docent with The Sea Ranch for many years during my career there.

### What are a few of your favorite things to do in your free time?

I love to spend time together with my wife, my son who lives nearby in Fort Bragg, and ride motorcycles. I've been an avid street motorcycle rider and racer since high school.

### Anything else you want us to know?

I enjoy international travel to Asia. My wife is from Thailand and I enjoy many things about Japan relating to fashion, music, trains, and motorcycles. Japan has a fantastic underground music scene which has drawn me there at least five times during the last decade.



## Eyes Open for Monarch Butterflies

Growing up, many of us have fond memories of the Western Monarch butterfly visiting our backyards. Unfortunately, **California's Monarch population has declined by over 90%**, and there is great concern about its continued survival. Intensive studies are being undertaken to better understand this decline and provide a remedy.



The good news is, you can help by collecting current data about Western Monarch migration and roosting patterns. **Please keep an eye out** for these beautiful orange and black butterflies, knowing that when you spot one, you have seen an increasingly uncommon species. **You can report your sightings** to the app iNaturalist, which can be accessed on your phone or computer. Key information should include the date seen, number of Monarchs, and plants where the butterflies were found resting. **It is important for us to better understand**

**which plants are providing nectar during their migration, and in the spots where they overwinter.** There will be a locally organized monitoring period on November 22-23; contact Diane Hichwa at [dhichwa@earthlink.net](mailto:dhichwa@earthlink.net).



At Mill Bend Preserve, there is a sizeable stand of eucalyptus trees. Though a non-native species, **RCLC has decided to leave this grove intact** because naturalists have learned that they attract and provide habitat for Monarchs, apparently due to their height, density, and topography. RCLC will continue to monitor this grove of eucalyptus in hopes that they serve as roosting habitat for Western Monarchs, and contribute to their resurgence in California and beyond.



*Photos by John Russell and Anne Hanlon*

## Upcoming Events



### Save the date! Mill Bend Work Party

Please join us for a couple of hours and participate in this event at:

**Mill Bend Preserve** on Saturday,  
November 12, 1pm-3pm

View our progress, hear about plans for next steps, help make a difference!

Find details and more, sign up on our website at [www.rclc.org](http://www.rclc.org)

**Volunteers – You are needed.** Many tasks are available at home or in the field, to suit your schedule and abilities. We have temporarily eliminated our Mill Bend drop-in workdays but are currently establishing small work teams that can choose their own projects and flexible hours. Please contact us to learn more at [rclc@rclc.org](mailto:rclc@rclc.org).

## Our Wish List

Can you help by providing any of the items below or donating funds to help purchase?

Redwood Coast Land Conservancy is in need of the following items. *(Many thanks for the items recently donated!)* If you have something to donate, please contact us at the information below. Thank you!

### Tools and items needed

- Digging and pitch forks
- Loppers and clippers
- Mattocks
- McLeod fire rakes
- Weed Whacker (battery operated)
- Utility Vehicle/Pickup/4 WD Gator
- Chipper
- Wheelbarrow
- Watering can
- Biodegradable weed cloth
- Tarps
- 5-gallon backpack sprayers
- Hand-pump water sprayer
- Yard cart (4-wheel with dump feature)
- ATV utility trailer
- Road utility trailer and trailer cover
- Backhoe with front loader
- Barbeque grill (propane)
- Rainwater collection and storage system

If you would like to contribute toward a purchase of one of these items or have an item to donate to RCLC, please contact us at (707) 884-4426 or by email at [rclc@rclc.org](mailto:rclc@rclc.org) and leave a message. If you come to a work party at Mill Bend, feel free to bring your donated item.

Thank you for sharing your excess tools and equipment to help us maintain our conservation properties!

[Donate Today!](#)

REDWOOD COAST LAND CONSERVANCY  
Web: [www.rclc.org](http://www.rclc.org) | Email: [rclc@rclc.org](mailto:rclc@rclc.org)