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Redwood Coast News

April 2023

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Nicole Forte**

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President's Message



Mark Escajeda and John Walton

Message from John Walton:

I have been honored to serve as Redwood Coast Land Conservancy's President for the past 15 months. It has been a period of growth, transition, and accomplishment. The successful acquisition of Mill Bend Preserve (MBP) changed many things for our local land trust, which rose to the challenge, together with broad community support. The arrival of Jim Elias, executive director, has bolstered our capacity to implement Mill Bend Preserve's Conservation Plan. Prunuske Chatham, Inc. will continue to serve as our environmental planning partner in the evolution of MBP, and the collaboration with our friends and colleagues at Mendocino Land Trust further strengthens our professional capacities. Local



pink-flowering currant



Trillium



Lupine

Photos by Chris Braley

volunteer support remains the backbone of RCLC's efforts to steward our public access projects, which are well-used by locals and visitors alike.

It is with a sense of satisfaction that I pass along the president's baton, allowing me to concentrate on specific areas of interest as I remain on the board of directors. I do this with added confidence as we welcome our new president, Mark Escajeda. Mark joined the board last year and quickly stepped into a leadership role, planning the September event introducing the MBP Conservation Plan. Mark brings tremendous enthusiasm and a fresh perspective that promises to serve RCLC and the community well. Please join me in congratulating Mark and welcoming him to his new role on the team.

Message from Mark Escajeda:

I find myself stepping into the role of president of Redwood Coast Land Conservancy during good times. Thirty years of hard work and dedication by many has built a community-based conservation group with much to be proud of and which holds tremendous promise in the years to come.

If you've walked the Gualala Bluff Trail (as my son and I just did on a recent wet evening – a whole new experience in the drizzle, with plantlife glistening and water running loudly and fast beneath our feet), if you've ever met the Pacific Ocean down at Cooks Beach or inside Hearn Gulch, or if you've begun explorations of the layered ecosystems that make up Mill Bend Preserve, you surely sense what I mean. These are lands worth protecting.

We will always be grateful to those in years past who rolled up their sleeves and got the job done. Now it's our turn. Countless opportunities await volunteers willing to get dirt under their fingernails or sharing their expertise in grant writing, photography, publishing, fundraising, outreach, and more. Financial contributors can witness their donations improving coastal favorites like Cooks Beach, Hearn Gulch, and the Gualala Bluff Trail while helping establish new trails and natural

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experiences within Mill Bend Preserve. Everyone – absolutely everyone – in our Mendonoma community is welcome in helping us build on Redwood Coast Land Conservancy’s first 30 years of phenomenal successes. We owe it to those who came before us and for all who will forever follow.

Serving as Stewards

by Jim Elias



Stewardship is a common term in environmental circles, though it means different things to different people. Merriam-Webster’s description resonates for me: The careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one’s care. All of us at RCLC—board, staff, volunteers—take our stewardship responsibilities to heart.

During a recent Eco-Walk through Mill Bend Preserve led by California Native Plant Society naturalists Julia Larke and Mary Hunter, I smiled as I watched folks examine emerging Calypso orchids and then later step off the trail to pull French broom or another invasive plant. Bob Rutemoeller, Mary Sue Ittner, and others regularly patrol the Gualala Bluff Trail, pulling weeds, picking up trash, and removing downed limbs. If you’ve visited Cooks Beach recently, you will have noticed how recent

storms dramatically bent the steel safety railing along the stairs leading down to the beach, necessitating a repair project being shepherded by Cooks Beach steward and past board director Joel Chaban.

Mill Bend Preserve will headline RCLC’s stewardship responsibilities for quite some time. After roughly 100 years of industrial impacts, we are actively pursuing a range of restoration actions on the now-Preserve. Caretaker Joaquin Jacobs works the property daily, repairing storm damage, removing invasives with energetic volunteers like Bruce Jones, and generally measuring restoration improvements over time.

RCLC is stepping up its restoration activities with new public funding. A recently-won \$268,000 State Coastal Conservancy Wildfire Resilience Program



grant will enable RCLC to purchase new equipment, contract for a forest management plan, and host skilled work crews to remove flammable invasive plants and downed debris dating back to the time of timber operations. Creating shaded fuel breaks will reinforce those actions. And we just learned we have been awarded a \$404,000 Fisheries Restoration Program grant from the California Department of Fish and Game, to fund a Prunuske Chatham, Inc. design plan to increase pool depths and improve salmonid habitat conditions in the Gualala River estuary. There's lots to do. We're committed to this extraordinary shared coastal landscape. We're fortunate to have your support!



Photos by Craig Tooley and Bob Rutemoeller

Featured Volunteer: Nicole Forte

Nicole leads our "CIA" group (Cape Ivy Adversaries) as well as numerous other stewardship roles at Mill Bend Preserve.

What brought you to the North Coast?

My husband, John, and I had been coming up the coast since the early 90's to escape the busy Bay Area and to relax. His family has owned a home in the Sea Ranch since 1976. I loved the coast and the surrounding area from my first visit. Tidepools, wild mushrooms, whale watching, and a hot tub - what's not to like! We now are retired (but busy volunteering) and living in Gualala under the Redwoods! Peace at last!



Why are you giving your time to RCLC?

I got involved with RCLC soon after moving here because I believe in their vision for the Mill Bend property to be a preserve. It will not only become a restored wildlife habitat but a place to enjoy the beauty of the Gualala River and learn about the surrounding watershed. Since I like to kayak, I wanted to see the kayak launch area continue to be an area for the community to have access to the river but at the same time understand the need to protect the fragile ecosystem.

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

I love to walk the trails at The Sea Ranch and forage for wild mushrooms. I enjoy working in our vegetable garden and sharing the harvest with our neighbors. I am an avid reader so the 'bookstore' at the bi-monthly Pay 'n Take as well as the library at The Sea Ranch has allowed me to discover new writers and genres. And last but not least, I enjoy volunteering with RCLC and learning about the native plants, local wildlife, and history of this area.

Anything else you want us to know?

We are parents of two wonderful grown sons (Peter & Guy). We are thankful that they love to vacation at the Sea Ranch so we can see them more often.

Ring of Fire - Biochar Kiln

by Joaquin Jacobs

A “Ring of Fire” Biochar kiln is the latest tool at the Mill Bend Preserve thanks to the efforts of Joel Chaban and Dave Shpak. Creating biochar from branches and cuttings sequesters up to 80% of the carbon released from burning thereby reducing greenhouse gasses. The kiln is portable and sets up in about an hour.



On January 25, RCLC reduced 12 tons of volunteer-collected invasive plant material to 12 inches of ash in three busy hours within the 8-ft wide, 44-inch tall double-sided kiln. On February 8, volunteers and staff burned to ash another 8 tons of aged material. On March 23, the kiln disposed of another 20 tons after being moved near other piles of debris collected over the last 12 months.

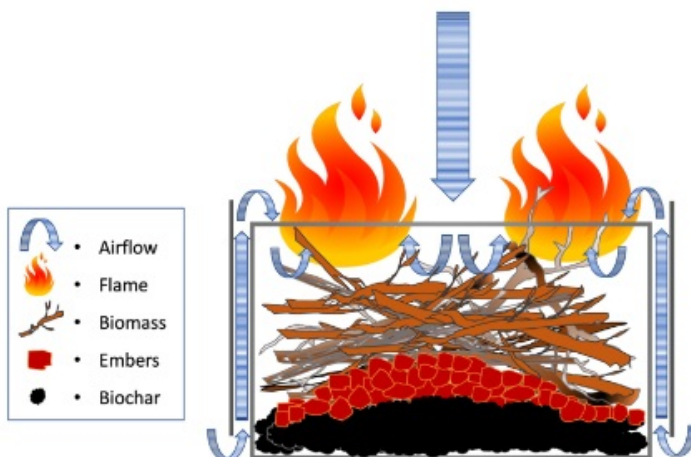
Our next step towards a more environmentally-friendly method of removing undesirable green material will be to learn how to apply water during the burning process to slow consumption biochar, a garden soil amendment, can form.

Many thanks to the RCLC volunteers: Jim and Marcia Nybakken, Nicole Forte, Cheryl Harris, Bruce Jones, Patricia Davenport and Mark Escajeda for their hard work.



The Ring of Fire makes **Biochar**

The Ring of Fire Kiln® is a metal container for converting waste wood and brush into biochar, a valuable soil amendment. The kiln consists of an inner ring composed of six sheets of mild steel that are bolted together. An outer ring of lighter gauge steel bolts onto the brackets that hold the inner ring together. The purpose of the outer ring is to serve as a heat shield that holds in heat for better efficiency. Total volume of the kiln is 5.6 cubic yards.



How the Ring of Fire Biochar Kiln® works:

- The outer heat shield holds in heat for a faster burn
- Heat shield protects the operator from radiant heat
- Air moving through the annular gap pre-heats for more efficient combustion
- Air flow tends to suck smoke back into the kiln for a cleaner burn



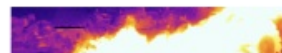
Biochar expert and consultant Kelpie Wilson is now offering the new and improved Ring of Fire Biochar Kiln for converting your waste wood into soil-building biochar.

The New Ring of Fire Kiln® features:

- Bigger capacity, better value
1.8 times more volume
- Easier to ship, move and store
- Smoother field assembly

Still the same great function:

- Burns the smoke
- Converts biomass to biochar with 10-20% efficiency
- Faster and safer than an open burn pile
- Made in USA



Events and Updates

Join Our Upcoming Work Party!

**Mill Bend Preserve on Saturday, May 20,
1:00 PM - 3:00 PM**

Join one of our invasives eradication teams for a couple of hours:

The CIA (Cape Ivy Adversaries)

-or-

The Sweepers (broom & jubata)

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

Find details and more on our website at www.rclc.org



Springtime Bird Walk at Mill Bend Preserve

A Discovery Walk

Thursday, April 27, 8:00 AM

(Note: our bird walks fill up quickly, and we do have a waiting list available if you find it is full)

Join RCLC Board Director Rich Trissel and other naturalists on a discovery bird walk along Mill Bend Preserve's Gualala River access road and beach, which provide excellent views of the estuary. We are likely to see several raptor species, including Bald Eagles, and water birds such as Common Mergansers and Buffleheads. Belted Kingfisher, grebes, and the occasional rail may also be spotted here. Expect songbirds to serenade us from the willows. After an hour or so, we will move to the upper Preserve, in search of forest and grassland birds. Spring wildflowers will border the trails, including possible swaths of Calypso orchids.

Trails can be rough and muddy in some areas. Wear sturdy shoes, bring binoculars and water. Everyone is welcome, but no dogs please. The walk is limited to 15 people. [Sign Up Here](#)

Where: Meet at 8 am at the large CalTrans parking area located on the east side of Highway 1 just north of the Gualala River bridge.



For more information, contact Cheryl Harris (707) 294-6423 or charris@rclc.org

Birding by Ear Presentation

Friday, May 12, 7:00 PM

Learn to identify our local birds by their songs and calls with Nathan Pieplow.

The language of birds

All around us, the birds are constantly telling us who they are and what they are doing. In this talk for any audience, Nathan Pieplow unlocks the secrets of their language. You'll listen in on the pillow talk of a pair of Red-winged Blackbirds and learn the secret signals that Cliff Swallows use when they have found food. You'll learn how one bird sound can have many meanings, and how one meaning can have many sounds—and how, sometimes, the meaning isn't in the sounds at all. This talk from the author of the Peterson Field Guide to Bird Sounds is an accessible, entertaining introduction to a fascinating topic.

Free and open to the public; donations welcomed.

Where: Ohlson Ranch House, 37405 Shoreline Highway, The Sea Ranch 95497

Parking passes are required for this event and may be obtained on site.

Contact Cheryl Harris for more information at charris@rclc.org

An additional half day workshop will be held at Mill Bend the following day by reservation only. It is limited to 15 attendees and a few spaces are still available.

The workshop fee is \$36.

This event is sponsored by Mendocino Coast Audubon.

To see the flyer for this event on RCLC's web site, [click here](#).



Come join our Outreach Team!

Our non-profit organization has a **volunteer board of directors**. RCLC also has many ambitious community volunteers who work on projects from public outreach and social media campaigns



to fundraising and natural habitat restoration. Broader Mendonoma actively supports environmental preservation.

RCLC's community outreach team is looking for volunteers to engage with the larger community and other public and non-profit organizations.

Activities include all aspects of community engagement activities, both virtual and in-person, including the following:

- Conduct research, find resources, and propose new ideas to help make informed and impactful decisions about event opportunities, achieve event team buy-in
- Event planning, coordination with community partners, prepping of event materials
- Design basic visuals to support events and promotional efforts (event fliers, online images, etc.)
- Assist volunteers with planning and logistics, as needed, and track activity results
- Support the coordination of volunteer outreach programming, attend volunteer meetings
- Coordinate school programs, special events and projects, gardening and other special projects; welcome visitors
- Volunteer recruitment

If you would like to get involved, please send an email to tgairola@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!

Equipment/Tools needed

- Digging and pitchforks
- Loppers and clippers
- Mattocks
- McLeod fire rakes

- Weed Whacker (battery operated)
- Wheelbarrow
- Watering can 5-gallon backpack sprayers
- Hand-pump water sprayer
- Yard cart (4-wheel with dump feature)

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 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 | Email: rclc@rclc.org

