

Saving State Parks, Open Spaces Point of Discussion at LLLC

By Lou Fancher



Cyclists enjoy the outdoors at Briones Regional Park in Lafayette.

An August 28th screening of the documentary *The First 70*, co-hosted by Sustainable Lafayette and the Lafayette Open Space Group at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center, brought together environmental activists, eco-minded hikers and bikers, grassroots neighborhood organizers and remarkably, even people with differing views on the role of government.

United by their increasing concern for California parks, potential foes dropped political posturing to witness the airport-shuttle-bus-turned-RV adventure that three young people filmed in an effort to preserve

the state's treasured open spaces. *The First 70*, shot in 120 days and funded by a Kickstarter campaign that aimed to raise \$35,500, but ended up with over \$57,000, profiles the 70 parks slated for closure due to state budget cuts.

Opening with time-lapsed views of ocean water, breaking into white foam on towering boulders; gold-tipped evergreens, touched by a setting sun; and families, following trails through fern-filled forests or ogling over antique furniture in a historic home, the filmmakers allow park employees to give voice to their cause.

"If you lose them, you're really

poor," one woman says, referring to the proposed closures of one quarter of the state's 279 parks.

The documentary asks a number of questions: What does it mean to close a park? How is a park closed? What are the dangers, the risks, both to the parks themselves and to taxpaying residents?

Photo Jennifer Wake

Expectedly, the answers are grim. The litany of suggested disasters unfolds against a backdrop of profound beauty, as each park is shown from a down-on-the-ground perspective.

The accumulative message is that the money saved by the closures will be insignificant, in terms of the state's overall budget. Worse, the abandoned parks could fall prey to vandalism, fires and decay. Already, one man says, he is the sole employee in charge of 5,000 acres.

Private businesses and non-profit organizations have stepped in to save some of the parks, the filmmakers announce, offering the first hopeful expression in the approximately 30-minute documentary.

The solution, it seems, is in everyday citizens, like the close to 50 people gathered in LLLC's Community Hall.

Ron Brown, Executive Director of Save Mount Diablo, quickly reviewed the history of the non-profit organization he joined 41 years ago,

before answering audience questions.

"Will [Governor] Jerry Brown's ballot initiative be enough?" one woman asked.

"If Prop 30 fails, the state of California as we have known it will be no more," Brown predicted. "It will be devastating to us and to state parks. This is me talking, but we're all concerned about the economic viability of the state if it fails."

Brown spoke at length about Mt. Diablo and other open spaces, where declining funds, spread over many years, have allowed roads to deteriorate and precious water reserves to be lost.

"And what is that money in the bottom drawer?" he asked, introducing a topic most people recognized from recent headlines.

In early August, Legislators in Sacramento ordered the state auditor to investigate the Department of Parks and Recreation, which reportedly hid \$54 million in two special funds, while seeking donations from the public to keep parks from closing.

... continued on page A14

Community Service

We are pleased to make space available whenever possible for some of Lamorinda's dedicated community service organizations to submit news and information about their activities. Submissions can be sent to storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com with the subject header In Service to the Community.

New Track at Springhill Honors Former Principal

Submitted by Suzy Pak



Retired Springhill principal Bruce Wodhams makes his inaugural run. Photo Shelly Hamalian

Springhill Elementary Principal Heather Duncan unveiled the new Principal Bruce Wodhams Running Track August 29 to honor Wodhams for his 24 years of service to Springhill (he retired in July 2011). This project was made possible through funding from the Springhill Parent Faculty Club and a generous grant from the Lafayette Community Foundation. Wodhams offered his heartfelt thanks and appreciation to all

those who worked tirelessly to make this happen during Springhill's weekly Spirit Wednesday ceremony. He christened the new track with a lap around it at an "impressive" pace, followed by two children from each classroom while Chariots of Fire played in the background. This wonderful addition inspired Springhill to start planning its first Walk-a-Thon next May to promote wellness and community service.

Dog Brings Smiles to Moraga Royale Residents

Submitted by Jessica McCormick



Piper with owner, Jan Monteyne Photo provided

Piper passed her AKC Canine Good Citizen test on February 5 and became a Therapy Dog for the East Bay SPCA in June. This 1 1/2 year old Miniature Australian Labradoodle visits residents at Moraga Royale nearly every week, and happily sits on the seats of residents' walkers so they

don't have to bend over to pet the dog's soft fleece coat. Piper is a bubbly, energetic little dog that becomes very calm each time she enters the doors of Moraga Royale. She will gently put her paw on a resident's arm and look into their eyes as if to say, "Tell me about your day."

People are talking...about The Terraces of Lafayette

Mention the proposed Terraces of Lafayette apartment community to people around the city, and you're likely to hear a lot of conflicting information. We thought we'd set the record straight on some of these concerns:

"New development is going to make traffic in the Pleasant Hill Road/Deer Hill Road area unbearable."

The Terraces proposes a new southbound lane from Deer Hill Road to the freeway and a protected left turn lane from Pleasant Hill Road into the community that would actually IMPROVE traffic flow. Although the Draft Environmental Impact report (DEIR) agrees that the addition of a southbound lane would "increase traffic capacity," it rejects the proposal. (www.ci.lafayette.ca.us)

"How can we support a project that will block views of the ridgelines and natural hillsides?"

The entire project has been planned on 23 acres of the lowest, least visible and most degraded (by road construction and quarrying activities) area of the 85-acre Dettmer family property, nearest to the freeway. The proposed project is located south of Deer Hill Road and NONE of it will be built on the natural open hillsides or the ridgelines. An illustrative plan of the site is available in the Draft EIR, online at the City website.

"The Terraces project is out of character for Lafayette."

The physical character of Lafayette includes several communities of two and three story apartments. The Terraces is entirely consistent with that character and will include planting of more than 700 trees on a denuded and eroded piece of land. Landscaping plans are included in application for development, online at the City site.

"I'm worried that the project will attract transients and people who will not put down roots in the community."

The Terraces could provide much-needed housing for local teachers, City employees, other professionals and long-time Lafayette residents transitioning out of their family homes.

"How can an apartment community live up to Lafayette's green goals?"

O'Brien Homes is one of the Bay Area's most respected builders, known for its design and construction of everything from townhomes to estates. The Terraces is committed to a minimum LEED silver rating. The company is not new to green building; its Fusion project in Sunnyvale has received Build it Green's "Green Point Rating." (www.blogfusionsunnyvale.com)



TERRACES OF LAFAYETTE

terracesoflafayette.com