

Sierra Club YODELER

The Newspaper of the San Francisco Bay Chapter • January 2003



Drawing by Cody Chancellor, www.chancellor.net

Don't let the Navy give the Alameda Refuge away!

Should the federal government give away a planned wildlife refuge for private development? It could happen here—to the Alameda National Wildlife Refuge, and to other potential refuges across the nation.

Eight years ago, as the Navy began closing the Alameda Naval Air Station, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service requested the transfer of 565 acres of land and 390 acres of Bay waters to create the new refuge.

For eight years the transfer has been delayed by the presence of toxics on a 120-acre Superfund site at the west end of the Refuge. Recent tests indicate that the rest of the Refuge site is clean and could be transferred to Fish and Wildlife immediately. Under the Superfund law the Navy is responsible for clean-up of the contaminants, though it

has been very reluctant to move forward.

But it was assumed that eventually the land would be cleaned up and turned over.

Dark rider over the Refuge

This year, however, a "rider" (a last-minute attachment to a legislative bill) was stealthily added to the Defense Appropriation bill (H.R. 4546). It allows the secretary of a military department to transfer "surplus" military land (e.g., any land from a closing military base) gratis to a non-profit organization for natural-resource conservation and management. Once the transfer has taken place, though, the recipient can then decide to pay for the land at market rate and use it for any purpose whatsoever—including development—regardless of the land's natural values.

And even before the bill was passed, we believe that the Navy was negotiating such a transfer of the proposed Alameda Refuge lands. It has asked Fish and Wildlife to withdraw its request for the site.

Why would the Navy want to make such a deal? The military is obligated to clean up the toxic hazards on lands it is giving up. Proper clean-ups are expensive, though, and the services want to fill their budgets with other types of items. Therefore, it has been a general problem at clos-

continued on page 5

continued on page 4

The wonders of the Alameda Wildlife Refuge

The site of the proposed Alameda Wildlife Refuge hosts the world's most important nesting colony of the endangered California least tern.

The least tern traditionally nested on California's beaches from April through September, migrating south in the winter. As our beaches became human recreational centers, the least-tern population declined drastically. The least tern was one of the first species listed as endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act.

In the gravelly area next to the abandoned runways at the closed Alameda Naval Air Station, however, the terns have

found an unusual paradise. The Alameda site is located in the part of the Bay with the densest fish populations—just right for a fish-eating bird. The site is protected from wild predators and human intrusion. Even when the Navy was still there, the least-tern colony thrived, and since the Navy left, the population has grown significantly. This year the Alameda colony produced between 30 and 50% of all of the new least-tern fledglings in the world. The Alameda site is essential for the species' recovery.



Shop at the Sierra Club Bookstore, 6014 College Avenue (in Oakland), (510)658-7470. Monday - Saturday 11 - 6; Sunday 12 - 4
A great selection of books on the outdoors, natural history, and the environment
See the sale ad on page 3!



Eastshore Park Plan approved **6**
But Berkeley Marina troubles

Antioch Council hesitates on giant sprawl project at FUA#1 **7**
If it approves project, 30-day referendum begins



Wilderness Exchange

Winter Accessories
Hats, Scarves, Mittens, Goggles, Ear Buds, Sox, Gaiters, Gloves
SAVE 30-60%

FACTORY PRICES
1407 San Pablo Ave., Albany, CA 94706
Backpacking • Adventure Travel • Rock Climbing
Snowshoeing • Mountaineering • X-C Skiing
WildernessExchange.com • Open Every Day

fpo
insert Wilderness Exchange_16.pdf

Note that Cal Singles ad below this one should be upside down.

DANA MEYER



FPO
Insert
DanaMeyer.pdf

5 ARU

510-527-1938
700 San Pablo Ave., Albany
Mon – Fri, 8 am – 5:30 pm
Call for domestic car referrals

BAY AREA GREEN BUSINESS

Yodeler advertising works!
Give it a try.

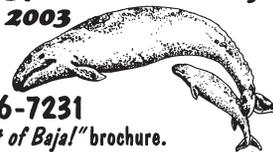
Membership open to all U.C. grads as well as those who join the California Alumni Association.

E-mail: cal_singles@alum.calberkeley.org
Call M.E. Martin at 510-843-7507 or

Cal Singles

Are you looking for a group of congenial single people?

The Whales are Coming!
Join our 37th season in Baja
Mar. 1-9, 2003



1-800-726-7231
Get your "Best of Baja" brochure.
The Friendly Whales are always there...are You?

Baja's Frontier Tours
Natural & Cultural History Since 1966
piet@bajafreontiertours.com

One more reason to live in Bay Area

PLANET ORGANICS HOME DELIVERY SERVICE



"Best Produce Delivery Service in the Bay Area as chosen by the readers & editors of San Francisco Magazine"

- Select from California's best organic produce
- Award-winning Niman Ranch Meat (hormone and antibiotic free)
- Over 300 grocery items including environmentally-friendly household cleaning products, organic and all natural coffees, teas, juices, pastas, cereals and more.



To learn more or place an order, go to: www.planetorganics.com
or call 1-800-956-5855



California least terns in breeding plumage (this page and next). Photos © Peter LaTourrette.

Don't give away the Alameda Refuge

continued from front page

ing bases to get the military to clean up and turn over the land. By turning the Alameda land over to a non-profit for clean-up, the Navy believes it can get out of the clean-up more cheaply.

Throughout the country, military bases provide some of the best wildlife habitat—because military use often protect lands from other more ordinary impacts. Examples in California include Camp Pendleton, which holds a great diversity of warblers as well as the world's largest colony of least terns (though this year not a healthy one) and Fort Ord. If the Alameda Refuge is lost, other comparably important lands are in danger.

Why would the non-profit Realty Restoration Gift Fund (RRGF) want the land? This is a harder question. Its mission statement does not mention environmental conservation and restoration. Its board consists primarily of individuals with real-estate backgrounds and ties to oil and mining firms. It has no track record of successful projects of any kind.

Worries cloud the deal

The proposed deal raises troubling questions. Who will manage the colony of endangered California least tern on the proposed Refuge site? If the non-profit is going to manage it, how can we be assured it won't allow the colony to disappear, and then buy out the land and sell it for a huge profit?

If the non-profit's intentions are honorable and it does indeed want to manage the land as a home for wildlife, where will it get the funds? Does it even have the expertise to manage for endangered species?

As long as the land remains in federal hands, the Endangered Species Act requires that it be managed for the recovery of endangered species. The requirements of the Act for privately owned land are much weaker: merely that the owner not destroy the species.

What should be done?

We believe that the Alameda site should be managed by Fish and Wildlife as a national wildlife refuge. This will protect the site's fragile habitats and endangered species in the long term.

As long as Fish and Wildlife maintains its request for the land, the Navy can not give it away to anyone else.

What You Can Do

Write to Craig Manson, assistant secretary of interior, at:

U.S. Department of Interior
1849 C St., N.W., #3160
Washington, DC 20240.

Ask him to reject the Navy's proposal to transfer the Alameda National Wildlife Refuge site to Realty Restoration Gift Fund. Ask him to prod the Navy: to immediately transfer all uncontaminated parts of the site to the Fish and Wildlife Service and to speed the prompt and thorough clean-up of the rest.

Also contact U.S. Sens. Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein at:

Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
Boxer: (202)224-3553
Feinstein: (202)224-3841

and your representative as well as House minority leader Rep. Nancy Pelosi at:

House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515.
(202)224-3121.

Ask them to oppose the transfer of the Alameda Refuge site to the RRGF. Ask them to urge the Navy to immediately transfer the uncontaminated portion of the Alameda site to the Fish and Wildlife Service and thus formally establish the Alameda National Wildlife Refuge.

The future of the California least tern depends on us. Please write or call.

For more information, call Arthur Feinstein at (510)843-6551.

Arthur Feinstein, executive director, Golden Gate Audubon

The wonders of the Alameda Refuge

continued from front page

The Alameda site also hosts the Bay's only night-roosting site for the endangered California brown pelican. Last year over 2,000 pelicans at one time were seen on the breakwater.

Over 100 other species of birds inhabit the Refuge site, including large numbers of raptors. (I've seen over 30 red-tailed hawks there in one day.)

As a Refuge in the middle of one of the densest urban centers in the nation, Alameda is an ideal location for bringing people to nature—and a wonderful opportunity to provide nature experiences to the East Bay's diverse low-



income communities who might otherwise not have such opportunities.

Arthur Feinstein

Unfortunate losses, good efforts in runoff elections

In San Francisco and Berkeley the Sierra Club endorsed pro-environmental candidates for December runoffs for City Council seats. Both ran strong campaigns but lost.

In Berkeley the Sierra Club endorsed Andy Katz for the Berkeley City Council District 8 seat. Andy is a graduate student at UC Berkeley and a member of the Zoning Adjustments Board. He made a strong showing for his first run for City Council. We look for big things from Andy and more chances to work together.

In San Francisco the Club participated in a community/union/environmental coalition campaign to try to elect neighborhood leader and healthcare professional Eileen Hansen. Hansen is a strong opponent of the plans by San Francisco Airport to fill San Francisco Bay for expanded runways, whereas her opponent supported these plans. Hansen ran an extremely strong campaign and lost by only a few percentage points.

The Club promoted these endorsements in mailings to members residing in the districts involved. Due to Internal Revenue Service restrictions, the Sierra Club must limit our mention of endorsements in newsletters, and it was not feasible to announce them in the December Yodeler.

Mike Daley

A Sierra Club party at your home?

How would you like to open your doors—literally—for the Sierra Club?

You can host a gathering of friends (as few or as many as you like), and we will send one or more local Sierra Club leaders to make a presentation.

These get-togethers are a great way to have a good time while raising awareness and support for our critical local campaigns. Get more information today! Contact Eric Saddik at the Bay Chapter Office at (510)848-0800, ext. 307, or: eric@sfbaysc.org

Photo contest

continued from page 2

California Flora: living forms (other than animals) in a natural setting;

Animals in Nature: a native California animal in a natural setting;

Water: water, ice, fog, etc.;

East Bay shoreline from eastern Contra Costa through southern Alameda County. Newsworthy events are expected throughout the year, and photos may be selected to accompany Yodeler articles.

As last year, selected winning photos will be published in a special edition of the Yodeler, and the photographs will be exhibited in four galleries (one in each of the four counties of the Bay Chapter), including the Bay Model Gallery in Sausalito and the Epperson Gallery in Crockett.

For an entry form and full entry guidelines, come to the Bay Chapter Office or the Sierra Club Bookstore, or e-mail:

seamerci@yahoo.com

Volunteers appreciated

Help make the Photo Contest happen.

Volunteer roles include:

- organizing publicity and exhibits;
- soliciting awards; building databases;
- registering and cataloging entries during submittal week (March 3 - 8);
- sorting and displaying entries for judging on Sun., March 9;
- delivering photos to galleries, putting exhibits up, and taking them down;
- planning the reception.

For more information or encouragement, and to volunteer to help, contact Anne Seasons at:

seamerci@yahoo.com

or (510)841-2389.

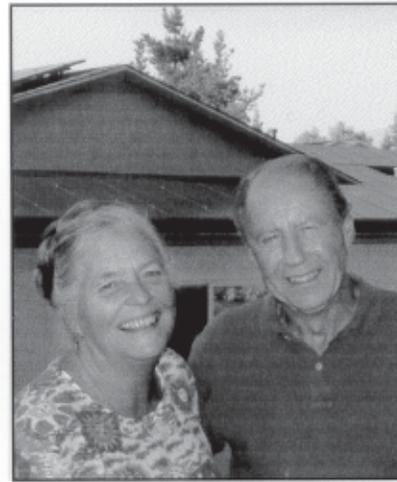
Club web sites

The Sierra Club, the Bay Chapter, the Chapter Bookstore, and many of the activity sections have web sites. To find them, access the Club's web site at:

www.sierraclub.org

From there you will find links to the Chapter site and many, many others.

Bring the Sun's Power Home!



• Solar-Electric Systems

Save up to 50% with state incentives, for a limited time only

• Solar Pool Heating

The most economical way to heat your pool

• Solar Hot Water Heating

Save \$750 with state incentives

• Radiant Floor Heating

By far the most comfortable and energy-efficient heat for your home



Light Energy Systems.

965 D Detroit Ave. Concord, CA 94518 800-559-7652

www.lightenergysystems.com solar@lightenergysystems.com

Please, no platitudes

Car traffic, Housing, *wage-hustling,*

the **Sloughing** economy, open space &

THE ENVIRONMENT

If you earnestly want to address these topics with clarity not confusion, you had best understand the language and principles of political economy.

Make the difference!

the Henry George School of

San Francisco is offering a 10 session course in the **Fundamentals of Economics**

•Tuesdays beginning January 14, 2003 •7-9 pm •downtown SF
•\$25 includes the textbook and studyguide

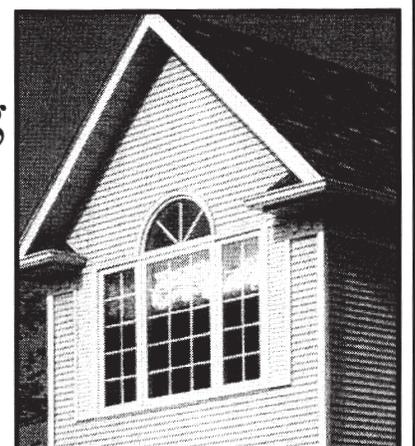
415-452-8860

henrygeorgesf.org

deep-down thinking that answers questions

Custom Windows & Exterior Siding

- ◆ Never paint again!
- ◆ Energy Efficient
- ◆ Family-run company
- ◆ Locally-owned
- ◆ Free Estimates
- ◆ Lifetime Warranty



FINANCING AVAILABLE

Ask about our Senior Discount!

10% off

up to \$500.00 by mentioning this ad!

american
HOME RENEWAL INC

Call now for your free estimate

1-800-747-0272

California Contractors License # 740587