



Saving the Gualala Watershed

By Thomas E. Cochrane, Geologist

The Threat

The 300 square mile Gualala River Watershed is located in northwestern Sonoma County and partially in southwestern Mendocino County. It's unique in that there are no cities or large towns within this watershed. The western half of this region is home to a sizable redwood forest. In fact, there are a couple of sections of 'old growth' redwoods still uncut. Save The Redwoods League (SaveTheRedwoods.org) has acquired a section of one of the Richardson Ranches east of Stewarts Point to preserve these trees.

However this vital watershed is under threat – from increased temperatures in both the water and the terrain resulting from Climate Change, as well as stepped-up timber harvesting. Clear-cutting reduces the canopy and allows the land to become hotter and drier. Although modern forest practices prevent cutting immediately adjacent to streams, 200' high redwoods cast a long shadow. This reduction of shading has allowed the temperatures of the streams to become too warm to support the salmon and steelhead fisheries.

Water usage is increasing as more homes are built within and adjacent to the watershed in Gualala and The Sea Ranch. An increased number of vineyards are also being planted in the interior of the watershed (this region has become desirable for growing pinot noir). This has led to increased sediment in the streams with the addition of the fertilizers and herbicides the growers use. Friends of the Gualala River (FOGR, GualalaRiver.org) is leading an active fight to protect the watershed. I was a co-founder of the group many years ago and we fought and won the defeat of the 'water bag scheme' which some of you may recall. Water is the fight of the future as clean water is either being overused, or its quality is threatened. We can replace oil and natural gas with green energy -- but finding new sources of clean water is far more difficult.

What YOU Can Do to Help

To combat these threats, we need more public awareness and involvement. The Gualala River Watershed Council (GRWC.info) is working with the timber companies and owners on watershed problems and restoration. Friends of the Gualala River are fighting Timber Harvest Plans (THPs) and additional construction of vineyards in the watershed. Various state agencies have halted building expansion in Gualala until the water company there finds additional water sources OR builds a reservoir for storage to handle demand during the dry season.

A few dedicated individuals take part in an annual river cleanup, but the good news is trash is minimal and most visitors as well as locals enjoy the rural landscape and do not dump their trash hereabouts, or pick up a piece of garbage when they see it.

To save our river, our environment, we must all become involved. The thoughtless act of throwing a cigarette or having a barbeque on a windy day can lead to a forest fire. Because of past logging, the undergrowth of shrubs and small trees has produced a huge supply of tinder-dry material. Old growth redwood forests can handle fires, but young forests cannot.

Although our fish are now greatly reduced in numbers, the watershed's streams still have precious habitats for other creatures. Some people still careen in their 4WD vehicles in these fragile streams. This must stop. The effect of one such reckless excursion is long-lasting – immediately killing critters and fish, but you can see still these tracks months or even years later. If instead we all continue to collectively press for wise stewardship of our area's beautiful natural environment, we can take a page from the Native Americans and ensure it's protected "for seven generations" hence...

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North Coast Winds

By Robin Joy Wellman

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I love September! For me I can just feel that change is around the corner. We start to think about the many fall time events and slow down a little. September generally has perfect weather for us, usually! While we still have warmth ahead and creek time, we also get to enjoy garden fresh produce everywhere we turn. Farmers markets are at their peak with variety although our amazing weather here in Sonoma/Mendocino County allows us to farm all year long.

I ran into a good friend the other day in Gualala, **Jef Schulz**, who used to teach while I ran the ELP at Fort Ross. He taught for over 25 years teaching and nurturing many of our youth here on the coast. Jef, who now carries the title of "**Farm Curmudgeon**", shared with me about his new adventures with his family farm, **Fortunate Farm**. I had to write about it. He is loving his life on the farm and I love love everything about what they are doing.

Jef says *'I feel downright at home on our progressive farm – like we have landed.'* Fortunate Farm, an inter-generational family endeavor is 40 acres of pastures, creeks, forest, and a large pond growing totally 'beyond' organic heirloom vegetables, berries and flowers in the small town of **Caspar** in Mendocino County. They are full of passion, heart, and gratitude 'committed to improving and protecting its beautiful, rock-free sandy loam soil' while focusing on feeding the community healthy nutritious food, managing carbon footprints, and empowering the community.

Gowan, (**Jef and Ellen's** daughter) the Farm Manager, began the partnership with **North Coast Brewing** before the family farm began, using the leftovers from brewing to create a rich compost. She now brings this unique relationship to the farm which not only feeds their plants but also diverts thousands of pounds of valuable nutrients from municipal waste systems. In turn they supply North Coast Brewing Company's restaurant, **The Tap Room**, with fresh produce. Awesome!

Gowan is the Fortunate Farm's farm manager who grew up around her great grandparents farm long ago. *"There is nowhere I would rather be and no one I would rather be working with than my family and North Coast Brewing Co"*. Ellen, Jef's wife, and business manager extraordinaire, is bringing years of talent to the farm creating partnerships and community outreach. Ellen says *"Fortunate Farm is much more than our business; it is a special way of life to which we are deeply dedicated, and part of our business goal is to live it fully and richly"*.

Lyle is the Farmers Market Coordinator, Allie is the Event Coordinator, and Cameron, and Megan are Farmers. To learn more about this wonderful family farm, the many locations to buy their produce, events you can hold on their land, the carbon farming, camping (where you can participate, enjoy the farm produce, sleep under the stars, and listen to the sounds of the creek and ocean), visit them at fortunatfarm.com.

They put everything they had into making a dream come true and we are all 'fortunate' to have them in our community and lives. Please reach out to them and support our local community. And one more great achievement from Jef is his new children's book **Camp Grandpa**, a sweet story full of fun, adventure, and education of Mother Nature with a worldview. This wonderful book is at **Four Eyed Frog** our local bookstore at foureyedfrog.com Speaking of **Four Eyed Frog** they have many events listed on their website to get you out and enjoy our community, see your friends at art-music-theater-theres-lot-going.

Check out **Gualala Art Center**, **Point Arena theater**, **Sea Ranch Thespians**, and **Artistic Expressions Artist Registry** are links to check out from this one website. By the way the 6th is 'Read a Book Day'. Many art openings, music productions, and movie showings are in the works. Point Arena Lighthouse has a few events and a lecture to check out at pointarenalighthouse.com.

And **Jenner Community Center** hosts **Fishstock**. This is a super fun event for the family, check it out at jennercommunitycenter.org.

This month many things are celebrated including chickens, hats, honey, square dancing, blueberry popsicle, and self-improvement. Of course we have Labor Day this month but we also have "Be Late for Something Day" on the 5th and the 11th is make your bed day.

The 13th is **National Positive Day** (my birthdate) which is good for all of us to remain positive, along with **International Peace Day** on the 21st. There are many other fun things to celebrate every day. The most important thing is to find the 'Fortunate' around. **Blessings to each of you**