



Bennett Valley

VOICE

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BENNETT VALLEY HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

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BENNETT VALLEY 2000 MEETING, 11/6/99 COMMUNITY FORUM

FOLLOW-UP AND REVIEW

Approximately 65 people attended this meeting which was held on Saturday, November 6th, 1999, at the Bennett Valley Grange Hall. The agenda items included: Upper Matanzas Creek Watershed Group, Outdoor Recreation Plan, a brief speech by Bennett Valley Fire Chief, Kent Reynolds, Bennett Valley 2000 Study Group Reports and for the last 45 minute, an open-ended Community Forum. Subjects discussed at this meeting are described below.

After the slide presentation by Laurel Marcus, a biologist from Sotoyome Resource Conservation District (RCD), a majority of the audience raised their hands in favor of forming an **Upper Matanzas Creek Watershed Group**. Bennett Valley Homeowners Association has now sent a letter requesting assistance from Sotoyome RCD in setting up these watershed group meetings. A flier will be sent to every parcel owner in the watershed. They also will provide monitoring and training activities, bring in other experts, such as from Fish and Game, and eventually help to secure grants for identified problems in the watershed area. Chris Baker, Bobbie Blair, Patty Gundry, Marilee Jensen and Marilyn Stocks have agreed to be on this Committee. Sotoyome RCD has confirmed that they expect to make "Upper Matanzas Creek" their next Watershed Group and presumably the first meeting will be in the next few months. Everyone will be notified about this meeting, tentatively to be held at the Bennett Valley Grange. See the article on page 4 regarding the Sotoyome RCD **Watershed Stewardship Workshop**.

One of the last issues which came up during the Community Forum was the **Bennett Valley Design Review Committee (BVDRC)**. Once there was no longer a quorum on the BVDRC, Mike Cale suspended it, pending further evaluation with the County currently doing the Design Review for Bennett Valley. At this meeting people articulated their different views about BVDRC in positive ways. Everyone was in agreement that the beauty of Bennett Valley needs to be preserved plus a number of people said that we need to discuss the points of difference and find some common ground. A committee consisting of John Dinwiddie, Frank LaCombe and Bob Hasenick, representing the different views, volunteered to meet to discuss it further. They have met twice and are now requesting information about the the scope of the problem, the issues, and the conflicts, from particular individuals before their next meeting on December 9th. In addition, Michael Cronin is now attending these committee meetings. The BVHA Board of Directors approved a resolution at its last meeting, supporting this committees' efforts to identify "common ground."

The Bennett Valley Open Space Study Group has sold about 200 **Bennett Valley Calendars**. The calendar has lovely photographs of Bennett Valley and makes a very nice gift. If you are interested in purchasing one, you can buy one at the cost of \$15 at Corricks, Positively Fourth Street, Copperfield's in Montgomery Village, Bennett Valley Pet Center, and the Long's and Ace Hardware located in Bennett Valley. Ace Hardware has one on display in their window. (continued on next page)

BENNETT VALLEY 2000 (con't)

You can also purchase a calendar in front of the Bennett Valley Safeway, Saturday, December 11th, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

"**A Guide to Bennett Valley**" has been prepared and will be sent out to all Bennett Valley parcel owners by BVHA in the near future. This Guide resulted from requests for further information by the audience at the *Communications Meeting* held at Bennett Valley 2000 last year. This Bennett Valley Guide includes "*Important Phone Numbers, A History of Bennett Valley, Bennett Valley Organizations, Annual Bennett Valley Events, and a summary the Bennett Valley Area Plan*".

Dean Linscott, the Chairman of the **Pedestrian/bike Safety Trail** Study Group, presented information about what is being proposed along Grange Road. The audience voted to request an estimate for the proposed path with an asphalt covering rather than blue shale. This information has been communicated to John Maitland, Sonoma County Public Works.

In regards to **speed control**, Officer Bruce Hooley reported that CHP is now doing more patrolling in Bennett Valley, since once again radar can be used to identify and ticket speeding vehicles.

Levi Gurule, Senior Civil Engineer, Sonoma County Public Works, reports CALTRANS has recently requested more biological studies in regards to the proposed **Grange Road Bridge**. The earliest that construction can begin on the new bridge will be late next spring.

All of those completing the "**Forum Evaluation**" at the latest Bennett Valley 2000 meeting stated that the Community Forum "*was useful and interesting to them*" and all but one said they were interested in "*continuing Bennett Valley Community Forum*". The overall ratings were "Very Good". As the result of evaluations and audience response, BVHA is planning to **schedule the next Bennett Valley Community Forum in October, 2000. You will be notified well in advance.**

BENNETT VALLEY TIDBITS

🔔 The best example of the **address signs** being sold by the Bennett Valley Fire Department Explorers is at 6161 Bennett Valley Road, the Fire Station! These signs, which are being sold for \$12.50, are reflective and have the street number on both sides to make it easier to locate a particular address when there is an emergency. You can obtain an order form by calling 578-7761 during the week.

🔔🔔 **Kent Reynolds, Bennett Valley Fire Chief**, is always so cooperative in letting Bennett Valley residents use the Fire Station for other activities, such as selling the Bennett Valley calendars, as long as we ask him ahead of time and don't interfere with any fire activities, such as training. His cooperation is much appreciated!

✂️ Accolades also go to the **Bennett Valley Grange**, particularly Bill and Patty Allen, who are always so cooperative and even helpful in scheduling the larger community meetings there. If you are interested in finding out more about the Grange and possibly joining; please call the Allens' at 544-3721.

🔗 Lin Olness, from Sonoma Co. PRMD, reports that Ron Christner, the owner of what was the "goat farm" at 5250 Bennett Valley Rd. has a permit requiring him to take out all of the "**loose rock at the bottom of the creek and put it back the way it was**" within 30 days. Apparently this "rock work" was done by Allen Buchanan, when he was hired by Mr. Christner to prepare his land for a vineyard. Ron Christner has expressed his intent to follow necessary rules and is apparently being cooperative in repairing the damage done. BVHA had written a letter of concern about these changes to a number of different agencies.

***Some excerpts of interest:** *Press Democrat*, 11/28/99 pg. A1- "Gone are many of the towering fir trees that gave 900-foot Rincon Ridge a wild profile...In their place stands a bulwark of stucco monoliths--luxury homes that loom over Santa Rosa and grow more visible as they proliferate." *Press Democrat*, 11/30/99 pg. B6 - "**This wasn't supposed to happen in a city with rules that prohibit ridge-top development...**this unhappy experience provides object lessons that every city (county) should post in a prominent place:...all of these are examples of projects whose impact weren't recognized until it was too late.."

🔔 If you know anyone who owns a parcel in Bennett Valley who has not received a copy of this "VOICE," please be sure to call Lois Brown at 578-0708. We have just completed an extensive "search" to be sure that everyone who owns property in Bennett Valley is on the **BVHA mailing list**.

BENNETT VALLEY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT Grange Hall Meeting 12/2/99

The Bennett Valley Fire Protection District (BVFPD) hosted an informational meeting on Thursday, December 2nd, at the Bennett Valley Grange Hall. The first order of business was introducing the new BVFPD Board of Directors, following the election in November, 1999. They are Lee O. Liddell, Marie Nottingham, Matt Phillips, Nola Stans and Wells Wagner. They will take office in January, 2000.

Greg Martin, who previously was the Fire Chief for Bennett Valley and who now is one of three Battalion Chiefs working for both the BVFPD and the Gold Ridge Fire Protection District (GRFPD), presented information to the audience. He related what brought about this Administrative Agreement between these two Fire Districts and how it was currently working. It was an informal meeting with the audience and others involved in the BVFPD, such as Joe Stans, the Assistant Fire Chief and Matt Phillips, both a volunteer and a new Director on the Board, presenting additional information. Most of this information was clearly presented in the recent newsletter which we all received from the BVFPD. Some of the other points which were made at this meeting are described below.

Not all volunteer fire departments have "sleeper programs" where there are firefighters sleeping at the Fire Station each night. BVFPD has one of the best sleeper programs going, with one to two volunteers as well as one paid firefighter sleeping at the Bennett Valley Fire Station every night of the year. This is to insure quicker response time during the night. GRFPD does not have this at their Fire Stations, apparently because more of their volunteers live closer to the three Fire Stations in that district. Because we are an independent Fire Protection District, even with this Administrative Agreement, this is an option which is maintained by the BVFPD Board of Directors.

The GRFPD has introduced both the Firefighter Intern Program (with volunteer college students) and the Explorers Program (generally for high school students) to the BVFPD, which is helping to recruit and train new firefighters. There is now a Firefighter Intern at the Bennett Valley Fire Station each week day, along with the paid firefighter and other volunteers.

Joe Stans, the Assistant Fire Chief, described in detail numerous instances of additional resources available to BVFPD through this Administrative Agreement, such as the three Battalion Chiefs each specializing in different functions to expedite the service. As one example of this he describes how Dan George, one of the three Battalion Chiefs, does such a great job at finding necessary firefighting equipment and supplies at the best price. He also talked about the greatly improved repair services for the necessary firefighting equipment with additional back-up resources now available between the two Fire Districts.

Kent Reynolds, as the Fire Chief for both BVFPD and GRFPD, has recently worked out an informal agreement with the North Bay Fire Authority to share Duty Chiefs between the five Fire Protection Districts, depending on which Duty Chief is physically the closest to the emergency. These Duty Chiefs may come from Rincon Valley, Valley of the Moon, Rancho Adobe, Bennett Valley or Gold Ridge. The one that is physically closest responds first. This has markedly improved the response time and efficiency for the Duty Chiefs from each of these five Fire Protection Districts.

The point of all this is that it has become more difficult for small Fire Districts to meet increasing State and County requirements. More of these Fire Districts are finding ways to share these responsibilities rather than duplicate them. It has been found that these "connections" with other Fire Districts are more successful when the Districts are more alike in their administrative structures. For example, a number of the Fire Districts which are closer to Bennett Valley have fully paid staff, rather than volunteers and much bigger sources of revenue, based on the higher density of homes within their Districts. Gold Ridge FPD, while it is further away, is more similar to Bennett Valley FPD and was also interested in maintaining its independence and autonomy. But they also wanted to explore a connection to another Fire District, in order to decrease their operating expenses while increasing available resources. This seems to have been successfully accomplished for both Bennett Valley FPD and Gold Ridge FPD, through this Administrative Agreement, which does NOT share any revenue between the two Districts and can be terminated within 30 days, without cause, if either Board of Directors so chooses.

A LINK TO THE PAST

by Eve Boling

There are old barns scattered throughout Bennett Valley which are a pleasant sight to many residents as they drive through the valley. One of the most familiar of these is the barn located approximately one mile from the Santa Rosa City Limits sign on the south side of Bennett Valley Road.

This barn is at least 140 years old. In the 1880's it was part of a farm that belonged to Dana B. Bremner, a blacksmith from Wisconsin. Mr. Bremner had the distinction of being the first man to shoe oxen in California. He also was very industrious. He operated a family resort on his farm; ran the local Bennett Valley Post Office (also from his home); and operated his blacksmith shop, located in this barn which is still standing today.

Unfortunately, this historic old building is in a state of disrepair resulting from natural weathering. That includes 140 years of rain, wind, sun, etc. A more recent problem is that people have been vandalizing the property. At the same time, art students and photographers are frequently seen around this barn.

Recently, the owner, Jane Lang, attended a BVHA meeting, to request restoration ideas and possible help in restoring the barn. We are living in a valley with a rich history; these older buildings link us to our past. Most residents drive by this familiar sight, this old barn, without thinking about it, but it would surely be missed if it were no longer there. If you have any restoration ideas or would be willing to help in a restoration process, please be sure to call Jane Lang, at 523-2553.

Sotoyome Resource

Conservation District (RCD)

WATERSHED STEWARDSHIP

WORKSHOP This workshop will be held on January 7 & 8, 2000, from 9am to 5 pm, at 970 Piner Road, Santa Rosa. The registration deadline is 12/31/99 and the attendance is limited to 35. The registration fee of \$25 includes the two-day workshop, all workshop materials, coffee, muffins, afternoon snack and lunch for both days. The training includes hands-on workshops, land stewardship concepts, watershed planning and management, and watershed dynamics. If you are interested, you can get a registration form by calling Sotoyome RCD at 569-1448.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

The Bennett Valley Homeowners Association meets the 3rd Wednesday of every month at 7:30 pm, at the Bennett Valley Fire Station. Interested Bennett Valley residents are encouraged to attend, with or without specific issues or questions.

The Bennett Valley Fire Protection District Board of Directors meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm, at the Bennett Valley Fire Station. If you have any questions about the Bennett Valley Fire Protection District, or if you'd like to talk to the Bennett Valley Fire Chief, Kent Reynolds, you can call 578-7761 during the week.

The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors meets every Tuesday except on weeks when there is a holiday. Information about the Board of Supervisors agenda or meeting dates can be found at www.sonoma/county.org or you can call 527-2241. Mike Cale is the First District Supervisor representing the Bennett Valley area.

Bennett Valley Homeowners Association Board of Directors

Bill Sullivan, President (528-6804)

Marilee Jensen, Vice-President & Editor (576-0405)

Nancy Dell'Ergo, Treasurer (525-1202)

Leanne Mesches, Corresponding Secretary (545-8684)

Bobbie Blair, Recording Secretary (542-1608)

Kent Chilcott

Ray Longman (545-2054)

Jim Katon (528-9487)

Marilyn Stocks (528-2458)

This is the new Board of Directors, following the October, 1999 elections. Our praises go to Eve Boling who served on the Board for six years, as Editor of the VOICE and Recording Secretary. She also has been the sponsor for the Bennett Valley clean-up days, which she has agreed to continue doing. She chose to not run for re-election to the BVHA Board but she is continuing to provide a great deal of help on Bennett Valley issues. We certainly appreciate all of her hard work over the years.

LIGHT POLLUTION

By Timothy Ferris

Editor's Note: Since we first published this article in 1994, and then again in September, 1997, people continue to express an interest in what it had to say, so we are printing it again for general information.

In addition to the many conspicuous virtues of living in Bennett Valley---the sweeping mountain views, abundant wildlife, the clean, bracing air, and the peace and quiet of country life--we are blessed with another important resource, less often talked about but no less valuable: the sight of dark night skies filled with stars.

As recently as a generation or so ago, most Americans grew up in places where they could go out on a moonless night and see the four thousand or so stars normally visible to the naked eye. Parents taught their children to recognize Cygnus the swan and Orion the hunter, constellations that date back to the days of the ancient Greeks.

Today, as civic and commercial electric lighting has spread across the continent, many children--and often their parents--have never been privy to the thrilling sight of a genuinely dark night. When they look up at night they see a milky gray scrim, through which can be perceived only a few dozen stars. Lost to them is excitement of a direct encounter with nature on a grand scale, and also an important sense of historical continuity: After all, it was knowledge of the stars that oriented Odysseus as he navigated the Mediterranean, guided the Magi in search of the infant Jesus, and led escaped slaves on their way north to freedom.

Responsible for this loss is what astronomers call "light pollution". In a quest to better illuminate streets, sidewalks, and parking lots, many municipalities have inadvertently installed lights that also shine upward, blotting out the stars. It is estimated that Americans waste \$1 billion worth of electricity a year illuminating the bellies of airplanes and birds.

Light pollution has already taken a toll in Bennett Valley. At Rocky Hill Observatory off Enterprise Road, where an 18-inch reflecting telescope is used to search for exploding stars in distant galaxies, we estimate that about a third of the naturally visible stars are blotted out by the glare coming from Santa Rosa and other neighboring communities. Near the zenith the sky remains dark enough that we can investigate galaxies and quasars up to a billion light years away. But our community is growing, and each year there are a few more lights in the Valley, like a twinkling reflection of the real constellations above.

If we are to preserve our night skies, we need to keep light pollution under control in the Valley, while encouraging our neighbors to do the same. Homeowners can help by taking a few easy steps that also save money. To fight light pollution, make sure your exterior lights are shielded. Ideally none of your neighbors--even those across the Valley--should be in the line of sight of a bare bulb. Avoid the use of glaring "security" floodlights that stay on all night. Law enforcement officers advise that much better security is provided by lights equipped with motion sensors. These come on suddenly, startling intruders, and they can pay for themselves by cutting your monthly electric bill.

On the municipal level, great progress would be made if nearby communities shaded their street lights and replaced obsolete high-pressure sodium (HPS) globes with low-pressure sodium (LPS) ones. LPS lights use a third as much electricity as HPS, and they have a pleasing, sun-yellow hue. (A recent survey in Tucson, Arizona which years ago passed an ordinance mandating LPS street lights, revealed that 88 percent of city residents preferred them to the old kind.) By taking just these few simple, cost-saving precautions, we can help insure that our children and their children will continue to benefit from the Valley's priceless window on the wider universe

GOOD NEIGHBOR OUTDOOR LIGHTING**

If outdoor lighting is not well-designed and properly installed, it can be costly, inefficient, glaring and harmful to the nighttime environment. What is good lighting? It has four distinct characteristics:

- 1. It provides adequate light for the intended task but never over-lights.
- 2. It uses "fully-shielded" lighting fixtures that control the light output in order to keep the light in the intended area. "Fully-shielded" means that no light is emitted above the horizontal. Fully-shielded light fixtures are more effective and actually increase safety since they have very little glare, which can dazzle and considerably reduce the effectiveness of the emitted light.
- 3. It has the lighting fixtures carefully installed to maximize their effectiveness on the targeted property and minimize their adverse impact beyond the property borders. Even well-shielded fixtures placed on tall poles at a property line can cast a great deal of light onto neighboring properties. This "light trespass" greatly reduces and invades privacy.
- 4. It uses fixtures with high-efficiency lamps, while still considering the color and quality as essential design criteria. High-efficiency lamps cost more but will save you money in the long-run, by saving energy, reducing operating costs, lasting longer and reducing maintenance costs. Balancing against high-efficiency, though, is the quality of the light emitted. In some applications, the yellow light cast by low-pressure sodium (LPS) lamps may not be as desirable as a less-efficient, but much whiter fluorescent or even incandescent light source. In other applications, color is not of importance, and LPS lamps do a very good job at lower cost.

**The above information was from the New England Light Pollution Advisory Group (NELPAG). For more information, write them c/o Daniel Green Smithsonian Observatory, 60 Garden St., Cambridge, MA 02138. You can also check "light pollution" on the Internet, for further information.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Bennett Valley Homeowners Association
P.O. Box 2666
Santa Rosa, CA 95405