



Bennett Valley **VOICE**

VOLUME 28, NUMBER 4

BENNETT VALLEY HOMEOWNER'S ASSOCIATION (BVHA)

JULY, 2005

How Is Our Groundwater Doing?

By Doug Martin

Water supply has always been an issue in the west. We are beginning to realize that Bennett Valley groundwater may be declining. This article in the VOICE kicks off a long-term project in which we want YOU to be involved. Why should you be involved? An adequate and dependable groundwater supply is essential to the well-being of our valley. Could we have a problem? That's what we want to find out.

Some individuals and community groups have kept records and they find that groundwater is lowering year-by-year. Sonoma County recently identified Bennett Valley as one of the county's "water scarce" areas and commissioned a professional study of the groundwater in our valley. This study examined newly drilled wells, finding "The trend analysis of depth-to-water in new wells together with reports of dropping water levels, seasonal well failures, and complete well failures, all suggest overdraft conditions." "But, the data do not show whether water levels in existing wells are dropping." There is no organized historical record of groundwater depth in Bennett Valley.

This is where we residents must get involved to understand the condition of groundwater in our existing wells. It's clear that no one else will keep tabs on our groundwater; we have to do this together, as a community.

BVHA is recommending a project to start collecting depth-to-water data twice a year on as many wells as possible. The project, headed by Bennett Valley resident Doug Martin, would organize all the existing data supplied by Bennett Valley residents and would help those who are interested, but don't know how, to measure the depth-to-water in their wells.

Because the geology of our watershed is complex, we need data on many wells. We need you to believe that *Knowledge is Power and Science is*

Interesting. Join in the effort to understand and analyze the condition of our Bennett Valley groundwater.

Bennett Valley Groundwater Survey

You can help us start by taking a minute (*don't put it off – now's the time*) to fill out the short questionnaire and send it to Doug Martin, 2855 Rollo Road. If you would rather, email him at doug.martin@sonoma.edu or call 577-0360.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

I have data on the water level in my well _____

I'm willing to start measuring my water level in my well _____

I'm willing to be an "expert" and help others measure their water depth _____

I have the following questions, suggestions or concerns _____

Speakers on Solar Energy, July 19th

At the BVHA meeting, on Tuesday, July 19th, 7 pm, at the Grange Hall, Jason Cotter and Jay Ruzicka, from Real Goods Solar, will be speaking on installing solar energy in homes. "Real Goods has provided solar energy to over 60,000 homes and businesses in America since its beginnings in 1978. Depending upon the circumstances of individual installation, we are seeing system payback times that are as brief as 5 – 10 years with annual rates of return as high as 10% - 20% in some instances. Installing a solar electric system in your home is now cost-effective for the first time". (*Excerpts from Real Goods promotional material.*)

Bridging Our Community

Sunday, June 5th the new Grange Bridge was celebrated with a gathering of 16 classic cars from the Redwood Model-T Club plus residents participating with their own vintage cars. Strawberry School's chorus sang the national anthem and the school's flag team performed their award-winning routine. Speakers included Dan Felciano-Master of Ceremony, Marilee Jensen-BVHA, Jim Alfieri-BV Grange, Joe Vivio-BV Grape Growers, John Maitland-Public Works, Jim Carter-President of MCM Construction and County Supervisor Valerie Brown. The ribbon was cut by Valerie Brown, Jim Carter and John Maitland. After the ceremony, a parade of classic cars crossed the new bridge and led folks to the Grange barbeque. This day was a joint effort of the Bennett Valley Homeowners Association and the Bennett Valley Grange. A Bridge Celebration Committee, consisting of Jim Alfieri, Suzanne Dougherty, Lolly Mesches, Marilyn Stocks, Bill Allen, Patty Allen, Lois Brown, Jocelyn Thompson and Kevin Howze (Public Works Liaison) worked on the many details to make the day run smoothly. Many thanks to the event volunteers: Tom Knox, Al Fecarotta, Jodi Richardson and family, Eve Boling, Sandy Sandine, Linda Huisman, Sandra Carr, Bobbie Blair, Patty Gundry and Ann Hodder. Thank you also to Jess Jackson and Sidne & Blaine Goodwin for opening up their properties for parking for the event, and to the Bennett Valley Volunteer Firefighters Association, who sent firefighters and Explorers to assist with parking. Valley resident, Pat Sherman, photographed the ceremony and her album will be on display at valley functions. "Bridging our Community" t-shirts in men's small and medium sizes are still available. Call Suzanne 542-1608.

Grange Road Bridge Status Report

By Jim Alfieri, Sonoma County Bridge Engineer

Hello everyone. Like to give you one more update on our favorite bridge project – the Grange Road Bridge. Wasn't that a fantastic celebration we had to dedicate the bridge on June 5th? We have a lot of people to thank for this, especially our contractor, the MCM Company and its president, Jim Carter, who allowed us the privilege of being the first to occupy the structure before turning it on for the traveling public.

The bridge approach work is complete. Traffic is completely on the new alignment. The detour is history, including our well-renowned detour bridge. Our Goliath 90-ton crane is being disassembled. All parts are being sent onto its next mission, again to do what it does best. It will be

reassembled and build more bridges. It's what they live for.

The first lift of asphalt paving has been placed. Rock slope protection is now in its final stages. Massive boulders line the creek edges protecting the roadway embankments from future scour and erosion. Drainage structures and property line fencing work is also underway. The final lift of paving will be placed the week of July 11th. Later in the year, close to the fall season, under a separate program, landscaping work will begin, including tree planting and seeding.

Isn't that a marvelous view we now have as we cross the bridge? The See-Thru-Railing is a real beauty enhancer. Initially the galvanized coating gave off quite a glare. But even as we speak, the final "matte" appearance is taking shape.

Expect there to be one more article after the entire project is complete. So for now, way to go BENNETT VALLEY COMMUNITY. Thanks again for your always solid support. We have a bridge for which we can feel great pride!

2006 Bennett Valley Calendar

By Eve Boling

The BVHA's first calendar was published in 2000, for the millennium. In this first edition, there were original photographs by residents which portrayed the special qualities of Bennett Valley throughout the seasons. It was so successful, that another calendar was published the following year, and then another and another, with proceeds going to the BV Volunteer Firefighters. Last year 400 vintage-theme calendars were sold with proceeds going to the Bennett Valley Grange. At that time, the calendar committee was also looking for new volunteers to produce a 2006 calendar.

We now have new volunteers and are planning a calendar for 2006. Our deadline for submission of entries is August 15th. However, more people are needed to help. Please think about helping in a project that has become a tradition in our community. Anyone interested in being on the committee, call Kathleen Pitou at 525-0374. And don't forget to send in your special Bennett Valley photos before August 15th, using the Calendar Entry Form at the back of this VOICE.

VOICE Bulletin Board

▪ Need Help With Bees?

Anyone who has a swarm of bees in their yard or issues with honey bees, call local beekeeper, Bill Sirvatka, e-mail at billys95404@sbcglobal.net or call 579-8065. Bill will take care of the problem at no cost to you if you are local.

GE-Free Sonoma County Initiative

(Definitions - *GE* stands for *Genetically Engineered*;
GMO for *Genetically Modified Organisms*)

This initiative will be on the ballot in November, so in order to better inform our valley residents, the BV Grange is making their facility available for a Community Forum sometime in late September. Two speakers will present different sides of the issue, that is Dave Henson, Director, Occidental Art & Ecology Center, who is sponsoring this initiative to have Sonoma County free from genetically engineered farming and the other speaker from the Farm Bureau, which is opposing this initiative. This meeting is expected to be both informative and lively, so look for further details in the September VOICE.

BVHA MEMBERSHIP

We want to welcome all our 2005 BVHA members. Since March 15th, the following have joined or re-joined, after an absence: Bill & Jan Flory, Dixie & Martin Van Der Kamp, Donna & Don Parker, Catherine & Darrell Verdusco, Larry & Marcia Davis, Sarah & Eugene Crew, Claire Green & Steven Sapers, David Trezise & Alison Reynolds, Patricia & Jerry Pugh, Liz Yager & Stephanie Puentes, Robin Azevedo, Dr. Donald and Sondra Meyer, Colene & Russell Johnson, Ana & Jack Lunardi, Suanna Gurovich, Gretta & Rodney D'Acquisto, Jack & Mollie Blades, Doris & Robert Forsblad, Philippe & Penny Michel, Jack Humphrey & Sari Ulitalo, Gerald & Nadine Herold, Cathy Crowley, Marina Chang & Craig Harrison and Elizabeth Sikes. ***It is not too late to join and support your association.*** Send a \$15 check, made out to BVHA, to Blair/Dougherty, 7373 Bennett Valley Rd., Santa Rosa, CA 95404.

Upcoming BVHA Board Elections

Come one, come all! The time has rolled around once again for nominations for positions on the Bennett Valley Homeowner's Association (BVHA) Board of Directors. This last year the Board has changed their meeting day from the third Wednesday to the third Tuesday of every other month (seven months a year), at 7:00 pm at the Bennett Valley Grange Hall. Occasionally, there are also special meetings, as needed. **Each year three directors are to be elected, and the term of office is three years.** The directors whose terms are expiring are Bobbie Blair, Eric Burns and Michael Friedenbergl. Each of them may choose to run or not to run for another term.

Qualifications for office (from the BVHA bylaws) are that each candidate (1) must be a voting member of BVHA and (2) must have a strong commitment to

promoting and preserving the rural character and natural environment of Bennett Valley. This second qualification must be evidenced by a statement of 250 words or less, to be included with each candidate's request for nomination. Members may declare their candidacy and submit their statements after July 1st. All requests for candidacy, with accompanying statements, must be in the hands of the Nominating Committee Chairman, Phil Temko, by 5 pm, Monday, August 29. Candidates, please send notice of your candidacy together with accompanying statements to Phil Temko, 4780 Hidden Oaks Rd., Santa Rosa, CA 95404, (707) 544-0234. BVHA members or others having questions concerning these procedures should also contact Phil.

For campaign purposes, such as sending out fliers, candidates may submit a written request to BVHA, including a statement about the intended use, for a list of names and addresses of those members entitled to vote in the election for directors. Telephone numbers cannot be used for this purpose.

Ballots, together with candidates' statements, instructions for voting, and return envelopes, will be mailed out to the membership with the September VOICE, on September 15th. Results of the election will be announced at the following meeting of the BVHA Board of Directors, on October 18th.

BV Clean-Up Day By Eve Boling

Once again rain cancelled a regularly scheduled clean-up day, and Spring clean-up was rescheduled to June 4th. It was a beautiful day, and volunteers did a great job picking up bags and bags of litter. Thanks to all who helped; *Jim Stocks and Susanne Dougherty* for driving and providing trash pick up and water to volunteers and also to *John & Carla Carnajal, John Fitzpatrick, Mike & Patty Hickey, Frank LaCombe, Carol McNeil, Dave & Sandy Sandine, Lu Schultz, Noellene Sommer, Mike Treinen, Pat Werth and Eve Boling.* A special thank-you for John and Carla who picked up 24 tires and other trash on Enterprise Rd., and to Dave Sandine who wrestled with a discarded extension ladder which he managed to get to the Fire Station.

VOICE Correction; Dogs Running Loose

There was an article last month in the VOICE about dogs in rural Bennett Valley being required to be kept on their owner's property or on a leash. An incorrect phone number was given to call Sonoma County Animal Regulation when you see a dog running loose. The correct phone # is (707) 565-7100. (*Thanks to BV resident, Julie Henig.*)

WHAT IS IN A NAME?

By Michael Friedenberg

A LOT! There has been much heat but not much light on the discussion about changing the name of **Bennett Valley Homeowner's Association**. One argument for a change is that the term "Homeowner's Association" is usually used for organizations like condominium associations where the association has control over common areas, covenants, conditions and restrictions and the right to levy assessments. Membership is mandatory. Since none of the above describes BVHA, it could be confusing as to exactly what BVHA is and does. While there is some validity to this view, in practice it has not been much of a problem. BVHA has been around for over 30 years and this has just not been a big issue. We do not have a history of much confusion around the name. When there has been, a simple explanation settles the question quickly: we are not that kind of Homeowner's Association, we do not have authority over members' or non-members' property and membership is voluntary. That is the end of it.

For those in the County that know us – and with our long history we are well known – there is no confusion. When we go before the Board of Supervisors or talk with them privately, they know exactly what we are and how we are structured.

The other arguments that have been brought to the Board of BVHA is that changing the name would symbolize some type of "healing" in the valley and would put to rest the confusion with the defunct design review board. I question that the valley needs any healing. Everyone will not always agree with everyone at all times. Sometimes disagreement can be healthy and discourse can also be healing. BVHA has made itself much more accessible and open for discussion and input.

Changing the name will not change the mission or activities of BVHA. BVHA DOES NOT FUNCTION IN ANY WAY AS DID THE DEFUNCT DESIGN REVIEW BOARD. Despite all the evidence to the contrary, those who feel that BVHA now acts that way or may in the future, apparently have still not been convinced by the actions of BVHA over the last few years. We have reached out to the entire valley by sending all residents the VOICE newsletter, making our meetings more transparent, holding numerous community forums, and requesting and receiving input on our mission and actions. A few residents have expressed they do not want any organization to be involved in monitoring changes

and actions that happen on any private property anywhere in Bennett Valley. The original impetus for BVHA and the Bennett Valley Area Plan was a proposal for commercial development in Bennett Valley in the 1970's on private land!

The main mission of BVHA is to support the Bennett Valley Area Plan, preserving the scenic and rural character of the valley. We also serve as a community forum. Since almost the entire valley is private property, naturally the BVHA will be engaged in being aware of changes that are contrary to the Bennett Valley Area Plan and its intent. The vast majority of our feedback is that residents support the Bennett Valley Area Plan and in general, BVHA's policies and actions. Changing the name will not change that.

BVHA also serves to give its members a voice in community affairs. Through communication, it improves its members' access to government officials, stakeholders and other organizations in the County. All of those doors are often opened on the strength and recognition of that name. The consistent history of representing its members has built credibility and stature. Changing a long held name will lessen the recognition we have built and earned. Changing the name is like the proverbial "throwing out the baby with the bathwater".

A name is an important symbol. It is one we should hold on to. Our name could be claimed by another group which could lead to real confusion. There is already a group that took the name "Homeowners of Bennett Valley" to try to collectively express viewpoints of its members. Some of these views were specifically to oppose actions of BVHA. Clearly picking a name that is similar had an effect of adding credibility to that organization. Sometimes change seems good in and of itself. You may even like the sound of a new name like Bennett Valley Community Association. But that name could also be confusing in other ways.

Bennett Valley is a wonderful community. We are long-timers and newcomers. Like most residents I am proud of our valley and to live in it. Within the guidelines of current zoning and the Bennett Valley Area Plan there is room for sensible development of new homes in the valley and preservation of what we have.

Keeping us the Bennett Valley Homeowners Association preserves our place in our larger community and reflects the values of community and place we hold dear.

Bennett Valley Fire Protection District

6161 Bennett Valley Road, Santa Rosa
(707) 578-8471 (Non-Emergency #)

BENNETT VALLEY FIREFIGHTING STAFF

24-hour Shift Firefighting Engineers:

Brian Campbell, Mike Musgrove and Bryon Reid
Daytime Firefighting Engineers, 8 am to 5 pm:
Kevin Burris, Danny Connelly, Matt Tognozzi

Bennett Valley Fire Protection

District's Continuing Open Door Policy

Following 9/11/01, we have all seen a great increase in security measures throughout our society. Fire stations all over the country have increased the protection and security of the firefighters inside the fire stations. Previously in Bennett Valley you could walk in the front door of the fire station most of the time during the day and now that door automatically locks each time it is shut.

The intent was not to lock you, the public and Bennett Valley residents, out of the fire station but to create a safe environment for the firefighters. Whenever you want to visit the Bennett Valley Fire Station, please feel comfortable ringing the bell so that someone knows you're there and can let you in. The Bennett Valley Fire Station doors are as open as ever, with just a little effort to get the firefighters' attention. But please don't let that stop you! Come down to visit, ask questions or request pertinent information and/or material related to fire protection

BV Firefighter Activities, May and June

By Bryon Reid, 24-Hour Shift Firefighting Engineer

Medical Aids-10; Vehicle Accidents-3;
Vegetation Fires-4; Structure Fires-0;
Trees Down-4;

May and June have been months that the Bennett Valley Fire District has taken proactive steps in preparing for the wildland fire threats that are prevalent in the Bennett Valley area. As the result of massive fires throughout the state last year, all firefighters in the area have been taking classes and training in preparations for the urban wildland fires that challenge all of the firefighters in the area. We are in full gear for fire season and have already had several vegetation fires in the area.

We cannot stress vegetation management enough! Trim back high weeds, clear out dead trees and branches from around your house, and remove branches which are over your house; this will result

in defensible spaces around your house, and provide you with increased fire protection.

In relation to the warm summer months being upon us, it is important to monitor fluid intake. Warm, dry weather can lead to dehydration that can rapidly deteriorate to a medical emergency. Remember, in the event of ANY emergency, the best way to summon help is through dialing 9-1-1. Have a safe summer holiday season!

Bennett Valley Fire District Emergency Call Statistics, 2003 and 2004

	<u>2003</u>		<u>2004</u>
Medical Aids	77	-	70
Vehicle Accidents	52	-	56
Vegetation Fires	12	-	31
Structure Fires	11	-	18
Mutual Aid Fires	22		(not identified)*
Alarm Soundings	10	-	17
Hazardous Conditions	16	-	17
Other	19	-	16
Public Assists	8	-	12
Smoke Checks	(not identified)		4
Vehicle Fires	7	-	3
Illegal Burns	(not identified)		2
Haz-Mats	(not identified)		1
TOTAL CALLS	247	-	247

*Apparently Mutual Aid Fires in 2004 were classified as either Structure Fires or Vegetation Fires, rather than as Mutual Aid Fires.

Bennett Valley Homeowner's Association **(BVHA) Board Of Directors**

P.O. Box 2666, Santa Rosa, CA 95405

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mf@eHomeSonoma.com

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Leanore (Lolly) Mesches, *Corresponding*

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datamonk@svn.net

Frank LaCombe, *Director* (585-3482)

Tim Murphy, *Director* (542-7114)

tjmcpadv@yahoo.com

Marilyn Stocks, *Director* (528-2458)

mjstocks@sonic.net

Board Of Directors' Tentative Agenda

For July 19th Meeting, 7:00 pm, BV Grange Hall

- Speakers Jason Cotter and Jay Ruzicka Discussing Solar Energy In Homes
- Groundwater Project, Doug Martin; Survey to be sent with Ballot? Decision
- Summary Of Grange Road Bridge Celebration.
- \$50 Contribution To BV Grange For Each BVHA Meeting To Cover Costs; Action
- BVHA Web-Page Update, Transparency In Correspondence?
- Update, BV 2006 Calendar
- Approval of BVHA's Adherence to The Brown Act
- BVHA Name Change, Wording On Next BVHA Ballot; Decisions
- Publicity Committee for BVHA Special Events
- BVHA Election Update
- Discussion Re: Bridge Railing Metallic Glare

Brief Summary, BVHA Board Meeting

May 17th, 2005

- Jane Nielson and Stephen Fuller-Rowell from Sonoma Co. Water Coalition gave us some good information and answered questions about ongoing groundwater issues. For the first time the County General Plan, currently in the process of being approved and finalized, will actually address the water issue.
- Craig Harrison discussed new rules governing septic systems. He will research a speaker to talk at one of the BVHA Board meetings on this subject.
- Michael Friedenbergl reported the State is proposing a well policy that would require a test of wells with the sale of property covering flow, bacteria count and testing for certain minerals.
- Opening/Dedication Celebration Plans for the New Grange Road Bridge were discussed.
- BVHA Web-Site: Eric is trying to stop spam that has set itself up as if it is being sent from our website.
- Bobbie handed out a first draft for the Board to consider in regard to the BVHA policy and the Brown Act. (See Next Column.)
- The Board approved the consideration of a name change for BVHA by a vote of 7 yes and 2 no. Tim Murphy handed out a draft of a ballot measure that may be on the September BVHA ballot. A decision will be made at the next meeting re: placing this on the ballot. Suggested new names include BV Association, BV Community Association and BV Rural Association. Input has been encouraged.
- Phil Temko was approved as the chairman of the BVHA nominating committee and will appoint the remainder of his team.
- Discussion of publicity for BVHA special events was discussed; to be considered further.

E-Mail Reminders

As stated last month, if you'd like to request an e-mail reminder for any Bennett Valley Homeowner's Association event, please contact Bobbie Blair at (707) 542-1608 or dreams7373@sbcglobal.net to let her know.

BVHA's Proposed Adherence to Brown Act

Prior to the rescinding of the Resolution 94-1042, the BVHA Board was required to follow the Brown Act when acting in an advisory capacity to the Board of Supervisors, as authorized by that resolution. Since then the Board has agreed they want to follow the intent of the Brown Act, even though it is no longer required. The following is a summary of some of the proposals being considered.

- We will post our agenda in a location "that is freely accessible to members of the public" at least 72 hours before a regular meeting. Notice of special meetings will be posted at least 24 hours prior to the meeting, unless there is an emergency situation.
- The agenda that is posted will include the time and location of the meeting and a brief description of the items to be discussed. The description will provide information on the scope of the proposed action so the public can decide whether or not they are interested in attending. Discussion items and action items will be listed.
- At the meetings only items on the posted agenda will be discussed or acted upon, except to briefly respond to statements posed by persons exercising their public testimony rights, to ask questions for clarification, make a brief announcement or to make a report on activities undertaken.
- There will be no discussion of possible BVHA action items with more than four other members of the Board privately, when not at a publicly posted meeting. Information can be sent on any item to all of the Board by phone or email for further discussion and action at one of the posted public meetings.
- We will have a sign-in sheet for the public which specifically says that signing this document is voluntary...The public will always be given the right to speak on any item of interest to the public either before or during the Board's consideration of an item on the agenda...
- All agendas of public meetings and any other writings distributed to the Board regarding issues to be discussed or considered at a public meeting are disclosable public records and shall be made available upon request.

Bennett Valley 2006 Calendar Photo Entry Form

Deadline: August 15th, 2005

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____ **NUMBER OF ENTRIES** _____

- Photos of the valley and photos of original images of the valley are acceptable.
- A horizontal format works best on the calendar page.
- Please put the photo title and date taken on the back of each picture.
- Please do not put your name on the back of the photographs.
- If you want your pictures mailed back to you, please include a SASE.

Mail this form and photos to: Karen Sommer
2707 Bennett Ridge Road
Santa Rosa, CA 95404

We are happy to answer questions.
Call: Karen, 528-8982 or Email: ksommer11@earthlink.net

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Bennett Valley Homeowner's Association
P.O. Box 2666
Santa Rosa, CA 95405

BVHA web-page: bennettvalleyhomeowners.org

SPECIFIC PURPOSES OF BVHA: *"To promote and preserve the rural character and natural environment of Bennett Valley, serve as an open forum for Bennett Valley community participation and provide a bridge for communication between government agencies and the Bennett Valley community."*

Return Service Requested

Note BV Groundwater Survey!
Solar Energy Info July 19th, 7pm