



Bennett Valley VOICE

www.bennettvalley.org

VOLUME 35, NUMBER 2

BENNETT VALLEY COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION (BVCA)

MARCH, 2012

A MULTITUDE OF DAFFODILS FLUTTERING AND DANCING IN BENNETT VALLEY
“All at once I saw a crowd, a host, of golden daffodils. Beside the lake, beneath the trees, fluttering and dancing in the breeze. ... Ten thousand saw I at a glance. Tossing their heads in sprightly dance... And then my heart with pleasure fills. And dances with the daffodils.” Excerpts, Wm. Wordsworth’s poem “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud”

Bennett Valley Road Update Report

By Craig S. Harrison

Sonoma County supervisors on February 7 approved an increase of \$2.2 million funding for long-term road maintenance, which means that the additional 5.4 miles of Bennett Valley Road from Grange Road to Warm Springs Road will be well-maintained as part of the county’s high priority road system. Funds are now available for an additional 42 miles of the high priority system, bringing it to about 198 miles. The new funds come from a portion of the franchise fees paid by solid waste haulers. SOSRoads provided information to the supervisors that showed a steady decline in general funding for road maintenance from \$15 million in the late 1980s to about \$4 million now (adjusting all amounts to 2011 dollars). Most of the supervisors thanked SOSRoads for its leadership in bringing attention to an issue that has been festering for years, if not decades.

The supervisors discussed how to maintain the remaining 1,164 miles (84%) of county-maintained surfaces that will receive only emergency repairs and will ultimately fail and become gravel surfaces. Long-term upkeep of the entire system might cost \$100 million annually. Supervisors Rabbitt and Zane have been asked to develop a long term solution. Initially they seem to be studying a property tax increase, possibly in the form of a countywide road maintenance district. This would require two-thirds approval by voters. The supervisors will return to this issue in the spring.

In Bennett Valley the focus of the Sonoma County Department of Public Works will continue to be devoted to fixing potholes, removing downed trees and clearing drainage culverts as the rainy season draws to a close. The department has yet to

announce when it might begin major pavement work to improve the parts of Bennett Valley Road that are in poor condition, now that the entire road is part of the county’s priority road system.

Candidates’ Forum

As mentioned in the January VOICE, Bennett Valley Community Association (BVCA) has scheduled a Candidates’ Forum on Thursday, April 19, from 7:00 to 9:00 pm, at the Bennett Valley Grange, for candidates running for the First District Supervisor position. This position has been held by Valerie Brown for the last ten years but she has decided to not run for re-election.

The five current candidates are Mark Bramfitt, a Sonoma Valley energy consultant; Gina Cuclis, a Boyes Hot Springs communication consultant; Joanne Sanders, the Mayor of Sonoma; and Santa Rosa City Council members Susan Gorin and John Sawyer. (Keith Rhinehart has dropped out.) The final filing date for this position is March 14, so there may be additional candidates. With so many candidates, it is expected there will be a November run-off election following the June primary.

Four of the five candidates have agreed to come to the BVCA Forum. Joanne Sanders says she is on a trip that day and is not sure she’ll be back in time. The BVCA Board will formulate topics and questions for the candidates at their meeting on March 15, and they are requesting and encouraging Bennett Valley residents to also submit questions/topics for the candidates prior to that March 15 meeting. You can submit your questions to Craig Harrison, charrison@hunton.com, or to other Board members. These questions/topics will be sent to the candidates in advance. Each candidate will also be asked to make opening and closing remarks.

PG&E VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PLANS FOR EASEMENTS UNDER HIGH VOLTAGE ELECTRIC TRANSMISSION LINES,

as related verbally by Eric Brown PG&E Vegetation Management Sr. Program Manager, to Marilee Jensen, VOICE Editor

PG&E Vegetation Management Sr. Program Manager Eric Brown explained that PG&E has no plans to “clear cut” trees. PG&E plans to remove incompatible vegetation in order to improve the safety and reliability of its high voltage electric transmission lines. Any tree that requires trimming now or in the future is considered incompatible when planted beneath or in close proximity to the electric lines. Although some tree trimming will continue, tree removal will occur to eliminate the risk the trees pose to the safe and reliable operation of the electric transmission system serving California and the western United States.

Following the massive 2003 east coast blackout the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) launched an investigation to determine the root cause of the cascading power outage. Investigators determined the cause of that outage was “the failure to manage tree-growth underneath transmission lines.”

The high voltage electric lines in this area start at the Geysers, then go through parts of Fountaingrove, Oakmont, Annadel State Park, Bennett Valley, Sonoma Mountain, to the Adobe/Frates Road area in Petaluma. As I understand it, Safari West and Annadel State Park in 2003 and 2004 are the only locations along this route where a significant number of trees have been previously removed.

Property owners who have these high voltage electric lines traversing their properties were sent an initial notification letter from PG&E, beginning in December 2011. Normally, six to eight weeks after these first letters are sent, field inspections are performed and completed. The notification provides the opportunity for each property owner to discuss the vegetation management plan with a PG&E representative by phone or in person. Even though certain trees have been marked for removal using blue paint, a final decision about the work has not necessarily been made yet. Each of these property owners will also receive a second notification letter “explaining more detail” about what can be expected and it will be approximately three weeks after that second letter is sent out before any of the trees will be removed. PG&E has scheduled an informational meeting to discuss their plans, **on Thursday, March 29, 4:00 to 6:00 pm, at our Bennett Valley Fire Station, 6161 Bennett Valley Road. Anyone concerned about these changes is encouraged to attend to learn more.**

Save Our Sonoma Trees, SOS Trees

Excerpts from Identified Sources, Selected By Marilee Jensen

• **Kenwood Press, March 1**

PG&E announced two months ago that it was ready to implement an aggressive tree management policy along the 39 miles of high voltage transmission lines that stretch from... the Geysers to the terminus at Adobe Road in Petaluma... The lines cross public and private lands, stretch over Sonoma Mountain, through Oakmont and Los

Guillicos, over the Mayacamas through Mt. Hood, (including Annadel State Park and Bennett Valley)... and other points north. As described by PG&E officials, almost all trees under and to the sides of the lines will be cut down, the slash removed, but the main trunks cut up and left to rot... In the past two weeks, Save Our Sonoma Trees has been formed by homeowners under the lines from Sonoma Mountain, Oakmont and points north, and have engaged other interested groups.... They have already developed a website at www.sos-trees.com... It allows people interested in the issue to sign up to keep posted on new developments... While clear cutting by PG&E is new to some residents, for Paul Hamilton, now 92, it's déjà vu. Hamilton, an architect for 65 years, has lived on Sonoma Mountain since the late 1950's. PG&E's clear cutting on a portion of his property – over his objections – led to severe erosion that cost him and a neighbor over \$50,000 to control in the 1960's. Recently, PG&E crews have been busy marking wholesale lots of trees for removal in the area. “If PG&E comes in and clear cuts something that is just beginning to recover, I'm going to have my lands on my neighbor's property,” he said, fearing that his soil and structures could end up sliding onto the property next door. An inspection of Hamilton's property under the transmission line shows dozens of oaks marked for destruction, most nowhere near the tall lines. Hundreds of redwoods at nearby Cooper's Grove, owned by the county's Open Space District, have been targeted for destruction as well. Hamilton's northerly neighbor, Tom Birdsall... is very concerned at the tree marking going on right now... “Hundreds of trees have been marked with the blue dot that says they will be clear cut,” Birdsall said of the nearly 1000 feet of power lines over his property. “Every tree under and to either side has been marked for removal, including very mature oak trees that will never impact their power lines... It appears they will completely decimate the trees.”

• ***By Rich Tavernetti, a marine/aquatic ecologist and biologist with family property on Sonoma Mountain under the high voltage lines. He has written extensively about possible consequences from this massive tree removal, such as landslides, erosion, negative impacts to threatened wildlife, etc.***

“In August 2003, utility operators lost control of their transmission systems due a series of electrical, operational, and computer-related errors. Multiple blackouts occurred and investigations later revealed that some of them may have been delayed, or possibly avoided, if utilities had not neglected trimming trees to the minimum safe clearances they were supposed to have been maintaining along their transmission lines.” (North American Electric Reliability Corporation, NERC, 2004)]... While trees were not solely to blame, it brought to regulatory attention that multiple utilities were increasing their profit margins by neglecting their vegetation management obligations. As a result, in 2006, federal regulations were enacted that could fine utilities if they neglected their transmission vegetation management programs. Unfortunately, PG&E is now attempting to use this legislation as justification to abandon the costs associated with its current tree trimming programs and instead electively clear cut whenever possible.”

• ***From Website, www.sos-trees.com, with video available.***

“...PG&E has the responsibility to maintain electricity service in a way that is safe and protects the public from

(cont'd) power line failures and mishaps. We recognize and support this duty. However, the new clear cut policy is deeply flawed. It is **needlessly aggressive** and has a number of unintended consequences, including:

- *Loss of thousands of trees, many of which will never impact the power lines.*
- *Loss of habitat, which may include significant impacts on endangered or protected species.*
- *Erosion from impacts of clear cutting directly over streams and headwater areas...*
- *Fire danger from tree refuse left behind (they do not clean up the felled trees and vegetation).*
- *Damage to water habitats impacting fish and other wildlife, through silting and stream degradation.*
- *Severe impact on the viewshed and scenic qualities of miles of Sonoma County.*
- *Devaluation of home and property values.*

...Our goal is simple, reasonable, and reflects the values of the people of Sonoma County. We are committed to ensuring that PG&E immediately cease all indiscriminate clear cutting along the power line easement, and return to a regularly scheduled, ongoing maintenance program of selective pruning and topping of only those trees and plants that pose a hazard; and that they do so with adequate, transparent, and accurate notification of landowners.”

Sonoma County Roads Crumble as Funding Shrinks over Two Decades

Save Our Sonoma Roads, SOSRoads.org website

Excerpts from White Paper No. 1

“...While it appears the (Board of) Supervisors have consistently funded roads for nearly two decades, county funding for road maintenance has actually been cut by nearly 70 percent, after adjusting for inflation during this period...

Under current county policies, more than 1,000 miles of county roads are destined to become gravel instead of paved roads.

To return to the levels of 1988 road maintenance, county funding would have to be increased to approximately \$15 million from the \$4.3 million currently allocated by the Supervisors.

Instead, Sonoma County has made even deeper cuts in general fund contributions reducing road maintenance budget (*by*) 42 percent since the housing bust in 2007.

Deferred maintenance has come at a steep cost. Years of decreasing funding for roads has resulted in a huge liability almost as large as the unfunded pension liability for the county... Rebuilding roads costs 10 to 15 times more than pavement preservation maintenance according to the DTPW. (Sonoma County Department of Transportation and Public Works).

...The question now is how the Supervisors plan to reverse the decline of our county roads and from where the money will come. Will they make roads a priority?”

Bennett Valley Clean-up Roads Day

By Sandy Sandine

Spring Clean-up along Bennett Valley roads is set for Saturday, April 28. Please meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Bennett Valley Fire Station for a donut and coffee before heading out to clean up a section of road. Wear sturdy shoes and garden gloves---we will provide a pick-up stick, safety vest, and trash bags. Students needing community service hours can earn them at this event. Clean-up day will be rescheduled if it rains. Questions? Call Sandy Sandine at 479-0282.

A Fond Farewell to Our Bennett Valley Calendar

By Sherry Parker

We are saddened to inform you that, after eleven years of publication, there will be no Bennett Valley Calendar next year. It has become increasingly difficult to compete against the many commercial calendars that are published each year, some of which are deeply discounted as early as November. Since our run is so small, our costs are high, and we have found we are no longer able to meet our commitment to our beneficiaries, the Bennett Valley Firefighters and the Grange.

It has been a rewarding project for many years. Thankfully, over those years our primary objectives have been realized: to bring together the participation of our community – photographers, volunteers, and retailers – and to raise money for our community support programs. The Calendar Committee would like to extend our appreciation to those who have volunteered to help market and sell the calendar, to the retailers, Ace Hardware and Bennett Valley Gardens who have been steadfast outlets for sales, and to those who have been loyal buyers.

It is possible in the future, perhaps in better economic times, that we will reinstate the calendar and/or find a new project to rally the community and "give back" to our valued community supporters.

Please feel free to contact the Calendar Committee with your comments or suggestions. You can email Sherry Parker at sherryparker@earthlink.net.

Reflective Gear On Dark Roads

By Peter Leo

We all know how dark our local roads can be. It would be a good idea to encourage wearing reflective gear while walking at night – especially during the shorter winter days. Inexpensive reflective vests, for example, work wonders for increasing nighttime pedestrian visibility and can be found at most hardware stores. Also, consider giving your pet a reflective collar for the same reason.

Bennett Valley Fire Protection District

6161 Bennett Valley Road, Santa Rosa, CA 95404

Phone: 578-7761 website: bennettvalleyfire.org

Board of Directors:

Mark Richardson, President; Joseph Mazeau, Vice-President;
Marilee Jensen, Secretary; Arnie Tognozzi,
and Don D'Avanzo, Directors.

*Board meetings are held on the second Tuesday each month,
7:00 pm, at the BV Fire Station. Please confirm meeting date
ahead of time by calling 823-1084.*

Bennett Valley Paid Firefighting Staff,

Fire Chief: Andy Pforsich, 823-1084

48-hour Personnel: Lieutenant Matt Tognozzi, Engineers
Travis Browne and Rene Torres

Daytime Firefighters, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm:

Engineers: Patrick Tognozzi, Ronnie Lakin

Firefighters: Mike Alcocer, Ly Leng, John Matej and Derek
Alvestal

Bennett Valley Volunteer Firefighters

*There are about 25 BV Firefighters, including the volunteers.
Three rotating shifts of three volunteers each are paid a
stipend to sleep overnight at the Fire Station, for improved
coverage. During the day, interns are used when available,
allowing the fire station to have the ideal fourth on-duty
firefighter at times.*

Bennett Valley Fire Protection District

By Lieutenant Matt Tognozzi

Calls Activities; November/December 2011

Structure Fire – 2	Vehicle Fire – 0
Grass Fire – 2	Medical Aid – 17
Vehicle Accident – 3	Public Assist – 2
Strike Team – 0	Other Type Call – 6
Total Calls – 32	

Bennett Valley Fire Safety

By Andy Pforsich and Darrin DeCarli

A few seconds is all Cal Fire & Bennett Valley Fire have to determine if your home is defensible. If deemed unsafe, the fire crew will not try to save your house.

Things to Consider:

1. Can they get heavy fire equipment or life saving equipment into your driveway?
2. Is there enough space for them to turn around in your driveway?
3. Are there any low limbs or high brush along the driveway?

Here is a checklist to make your property defensible. (For more information, go to

www.firesafesonoma.org or you can request a defensible space inspection from the Bennett Valley Fire Station.)

- Trim all tree limbs up 6-8 feet above the ground
- Trim tree limbs along driveways to 15 feet high and a minimum of 10 feet wide.
- Clear out gutters and keep roof clean of needles and leaves

- Remove tree branches that overhang the roof to at least 15 feet above the roof.
- Remove any branches to at least 10 feet from your chimney.
- Cut tall grass down to a few inches, at least 100 feet around structures.
- If on steep hillside, take extra precautions to remove low limbs on trees and tall grass down-slope of house. This may exceed 100 feet.
- Remove flammable plants close to structures and along driveway; i.e. juniper bushes, Manzanita, chemise, Scotch Broom, Star Thistle, Pampas Grass, Acacia, Fir and Bay trees.
- Store firewood, construction materials and other flammable material a minimum of 30 feet from structures.
- Cover your chimney or stovepipe with a non-flammable screen of 1/2" mesh.
- Enclose the underside of decks.
- Replace flammable door mats with fire resistant door mats.

WHEN FIRE IS APPROACHING AND YOU ARE ASKED TO EVACUATE, DO IT NOW!!!!

If there is NO time, shelter in your home. Park your car facing out. Go to the opposite side of the house from where the fire is approaching. Your home is the safest place to shelter. Your house will take longer to burn than the time it takes for a fire to move over it. Once the fire has gone through, leave the house immediately.

Bennett Valley Fire Protection District (BVFPD)

Highlights of Approved Minutes & Agendas

Members of the public can request the meeting agenda to be emailed to them 72 hours before the board meeting or they may pick up a copy of the agenda at the BV fire station 72 hours before the meeting. Complete minutes from the previous month's meeting will be available to the public after board approval, either by picking them up at the next Board meeting, or requesting a copy be mailed to them. Please make these requests to the Bennett Valley Fire District bookkeeper, Kori Lantow, by email, klantow@comcast.net, at the BV Fire Board of Directors meeting or by telephone, 823-1084. Below are the highlights of the approved minutes for the December 13 meeting and the January 17 meeting, plus the agenda for the February 14 meeting, edited by Marilee Jensen. The February 14 minutes will not be approved until the next BV Fire Board meeting on March 13, so those highlights will appear in the May VOICE.

Highlights of BV Fire Board Meeting, Dec. 13

BENNETT VALLEY/GOLD RIDGE MOU (Memorandum Of Understanding) : Director Richardson explained that since bookkeeper, Kori Lantow, is a Bennett Valley Fire District employee that her position should not be included in the bid process. If we do decide to contract with another agency besides Gold Ridge, Kori would move her office back to the BV Fire Station. The Board had various questions relating to the scope of service that Gold Ridge is providing and the MOU. A discussion was held regarding these items as well as the formula for the MOU.

(continued on next page)

Highlights of December 13 meeting, (cont'd)

Brian Elliot then gave a presentation to the Board, introducing himself as a local retired fire chief that now owns Fire and Emergency Services Consulting. He explained how the Board could benefit from having an independent contractor help with this process. The Board asked Brian Elliot questions, including what the cost of his services would be. He was not able to give an exact cost without obtaining some information first, but it would be approximately \$3000. It was decided that Chief Pforsich would be able to provide Brian Elliot with the preliminary information he needed. The Board approved a motion to ask Brian Elliot for a proposal for his services, with Chief Pforsich providing him with the information he needed. The meeting was adjourned.

Highlights of Fire Board Meeting, January 17

BENNETT RIDGE/GOLD RIDGE MOU: The Directors had some questions for Chief Pforsich regarding the services which Gold Ridge performs for Bennett Valley. Then Brian Elliot presented his proposal to the Board. He could have a draft Request For Proposal (RFP) ready for the February 14 Board Meeting. In this instance, the Board would not have to accept the lowest bid. The different agencies would also be able to make statements about their added value. Brian Elliot would rate each bid with a score of 1-10 and give his professional opinion but the decision would be the Board's to make. The cost of Brian Elliot's service will not exceed \$3,800. The Board decided this expense can be paid out of the contingency fund in the budget. The motion to accept Brian Elliot's proposal was approved unanimously by the Board and the contract was signed by Brian Elliott and President Mark Richardson.

AT&T CELL PROPOSAL: Chief Pforsich reported on AT&T's proposal to add to the cell tower, with equipment added to the existing tower as well as an additional shed. AT&T offered to pay \$800 per month. Director Tognozzi questioned why we would accept less than the \$1500 per month that Verizon pays the district. Director D'Avanzo agreed and the board approved a motion for Chief Pforsich to go back to AT&T with the price of \$1500, and negotiate a contract with them.

PUBLICATION OF BOARD MEMBERS CONTACT INFORMATION: A request was made to make the Board Member's phone numbers and email addresses public. The Board discussed this and decided that if a member of the community needed to speak with them, they could do so through contacting the fire station or attending the Board meeting. They do not wish to publish their contact information.

MINUTES OF OUR FIRE BOARD MEETINGS: Director Tognozzi brought up the minutes and whether everything should be recorded. A discussion was held regarding what has to be included in the minutes and that most discussions are summarized. The meeting was adjourned.

Highlights of February 14 Agenda

- **BENNETT VALLEY/GOLD RIDGE MOU:** Brian Elliot will present the draft RFP to the Board. Recommended Action: Discuss and decide how to proceed.
- **MINUTES FOR THE VOICE:** Director Jensen has suggested summarizing the approved minutes for the VOICE rather than publishing the exact words. Recommended Action: Discuss and give direction to Director Jensen.

An Experiment in Oak Woodland Management

By Peter and Noni Verbiscar-Brown,
Summit View Ranch Homeowners Association members,
28 years, committed to preserving our Bennett Valley natural
beauty. Comments, questions to petervb1@gmail.com

In 2004 our property and another location on Summit View Ranch, near the intersection of Pressley Road and Sonoma Mountain Road, were identified as test sites in the ongoing Sonoma State University study on Sudden Oak Death. We learned that the pathogen fungus *Phytophthora (P.) ramorum* was prevalent throughout the ranch, that it was hosted by the ubiquitous California Bay Laurel trees among other host species, and that the pathogen was the likely cause of the die-off of numerable coast live oaks, black oaks, and tan oaks. The California Oak Mortality Task Force emphasized that landowners would be wise to more consciously manage their woodland resources to inhibit the spread of the pathogen, rather than accepting the predictable die-off of oak trees.

Over the next two years we removed the abundant bay trees on our property and we gained the added benefit of fire mitigation as recommended by Fire Safe Sonoma, creating defensible space and reducing "ladder fuels" and the potential for crown fires. Within the first year we lost one thin oak tree, likely weakened from competing with the bay, and have lost no other trees since. Other members of our Homeowners Association also thinned wooded areas on their properties, such that there is close to full compliance with fire safe guidelines, though one neighbor lost 9 oak trees to the pathogen.

In 2007 we proposed to the Environmental Committee of our Summit View Ranch Homeowners Association to apply what we learned to the management of the woodlands in our community common area. With the Committee, we identified seven small experimental areas where HOA members would remove select Bay Laurel trees, clear dead wood, and in general, reduce fire hazard and observe what occurred over the changing seasons. The experimental areas were different from one another and called for different strategies. In all areas we observed the presence of the *P. ramorum* pathogen on bay leaves and stems.

One area had multiple dead oak trees mixed with thick bay trees of all sizes. The oaks appeared distressed as there was negligible growth lower to mid-level on their trunks. We removed all bay trees except for the largest, which resulted (*continued on next page*)

An Experiment in Oak Woodland (cont'd)

in open sky and increased sunlight penetration. Another area had abundant, healthy oak trees, one dead, interspersed with scattered bay trees. We removed all bays up to 6 inch diameters, and ringed several of the larger ones by cutting through the bark near ground level, also removing the lower limbs within reach. Removal of the bay trees here caused no perceptible change in the appearance of the woodland, other than it appeared "lightened." As the ringed trees died and lost their foliage, more sunlight came through and these standing snags were left as habitat for wildlife; one standing dead or dying tree per acre is recommended by the Audubon Society. We continue to experiment with tree-ringing, minding the need to remove fire fuels, and only employ this technique in non-trafficked areas away from roads and homeowner property line-of-sight.

In an area on the edge of grassland and riparian habitat with no inhibitors to light and air, we were more selective, only removing bay trees within the drip line of nearby oaks. One deep gully on the ranch is essentially a bay tree forest with few oak trees. Here the transition from mature oak woodland to dense mixed woodland has been almost complete. Our plan is to remove the small to medium bays for fire prevention purposes only, leaving the large bay trees. Otherwise complete bay removal would create an almost clear-cut environment.

In his excellent presentation at the BV Grange, Arthur Dawson of the Sonoma Ecology Center discussed how the Native Americans and the ranchers that followed would not recognize the woodlands we see today. The former would "tend the wild," set fires to burn undergrowth, make it easier to spot wildlife, and encourage the growth of tan oak, an important acorn food source. Photos of Sonoma Mountain and Bennett Valley from 100 years ago show vast open lands with scattered oak tree clusters, whereas we have come to accept abundant thick forests as natural. Mr. Dawson said that our current forested areas are "not particularly healthy." While the California Bay Laurel is native to the area, growth was kept in check by burns and white settler desire for open lands for grazing livestock.

After several years of experimentation with our own woodlands, we can make the following observations: By opening to more light and air and decreased humidity, lower to mid-story oak growth has been impressive, in some cases phenomenal. Previously hidden small, struggling oaks are flourishing. We presume the reduced competition for sunlight, water and soil nutrients would be a factor. In those areas most opened, the first year showed plenty of notorious thistles, but with general removal before flowering, in subsequent years native grasses were more prevalent. Several varieties of ferns arrived quickly; wild ginger, pacific bleeding hearts, western hazelnut and Ribes, that is fuchsia-flowering gooseberries and red-flowering currants prospered, all of which are food sources for birds and other wildlife.

While Toyon trees appear similar to bay trees, apparently they do not carry the P. ramorum pathogen and, when no longer competitive with the bay, exhibit strong new growth. The native California buckeye trees

show good vitality, as well as madrone, yellow twig willow, and the non-native wild plum. Felled dead oak branches brought to ground level add decaying material for a healthy forest floor. Felled bay trunks placed parallel to the contour of the land retain forest materials upslope, reduce erosion, and improve water percolation.

Aesthetically, the increased sunlight in our managed areas gives a pleasing, dappled appearance on the forest floor, the negative space accentuating the stately oak forms, more prominent in both foreground and depth, creating a more inviting place to walk and enjoy nature. We must leave an assessment of how the wildlife fares to more expert opinion. But we would swear there are more birds enjoying flight though the open under-and mid-story canopy. And as the Native Americans knew, you can see more deer.

A Sonoma State researcher indicated to us that scientific studies on Sudden Oak Death treatment for large land tracts would likely not be forthcoming soon due to budget constraints, but the anecdotal evidence of what works to limit pathogen spread is amassing from private and public lands. We hope our experience on Summit View Ranch will add to the body of knowledge. We are interested to learn other BV homeowners' strategies. The work is labor-intensive but thoroughly enjoyable given the beautiful Bennett Valley environment in which we all live, and knowing that we are doing our part for fire safety, encouragement of native species, and the preservation of our magnificent heritage oak trees.

Bennett Valley Community Association **(BVCA) Board Of Directors**

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

Website: www.bennettvalley.org

Craig Harrison, President

charrison@hunton.com 573-9990

Larissa Goliti, Vice-President and

Membership Coordinator

lgoliti@hotmail.com 578-3453

Fay Blair, Treasurer

fayblair@sonic.net 576-0152

Frank LaCombe, Secretary

FrankKLaCombe@gmail.com 585-3482

Gary Barner, Director

gbarner@cds1.net 481-6196

Tim Bosma, Director

tbosma@comcast.net 953-8873

James K. Cobb, Director

cobblaw@pacbell.net 586-9172

Richard Lukasko, Director

rlukasko@hotmail.com 566-7803

Karen Sommer, BVEP Coordinator, Director

ksommer11@earthlink.net 528-8982

BVCA VOICE Editor – Marilee Jensen, 576-0405

marileejensen@gmail.com

BVCA Webmaster – Bill Finkelstein, 536-1026

bill@williamfinkelstein.com Any questions you have about the BVCA website can be directed to Bill Finkelstein.

Summary of BVHA Minutes

January 19, 2012

- **Treasurer's Report;** Fay Blair presented the financial report for 2011. The expenses for the Bennett Valley calendar exceeded the revenue and may not be continued. Dues for 2011 were down from 2010.
- **Name Change;** It was decided to put the name change on a separate ballot to go out to the membership in January. The updated name, if approved by the membership, will need to be submitted to all relevant agencies and services, i.e. IRA, State, P.O. Box, banking, web, etc., including letterhead.
- **BVEP;** Karen reported that CERT classes will be held in the Spring if we have enough people to warrant them (minimum is 10 people). She also stated that a new condensed version of CERT from FEMA has been developed and she will see if it would be a good alternative to the current 20 hour course.
- **Use of Mailing List:** The issue was tabled until the next meeting, to give James Cobb an opportunity to design the wording.
- **Road Issues:** Craig announced an event: "Save Our Roads" on March 7, 5:00 – 6:30 pm. Gary made a motion for BVCA to donate \$100 to the event. Approved by the Board. Craig also noted that the Board of Supervisors will be reviewing the funding source for the additional "priority miles", such as the rest of Bennett Valley Road, as well as all the non-priority roads. It would be good if BV members attended this meeting on Feb. 7.
- **Speakers for the year:** Ideas for topics were: Natural History and Wine Talk.
- **The board approved a motion made by Fay** to send a check to the Grange for \$600, as our annual contribution.

Board of Directors Tentative Agenda

Thursday, March 15, 7:00 pm, BV Grange Hall

- Announcements and Public Input
- Approval of Minutes
- Treasurer's Report and Spending Requests
- Election Report on Name Change to Bennett Valley Community Association, and next steps to be taken
- Bi-Monthly County Reports: Board of Supervisors, Open Space District, PRMD, Public Works, Alcoholic Beverage Control Permits
- Use of Bennett Valley Mailing List
- Report from Bennett Valley Emergency Preparedness Committee
- Road Issues
- PG&E Tree Clearing
- Speakers for Spring/Summer 2012
- Developing Questions for Candidates' Forum, April 19, First District Supervisor's Position
- New Business as Determined by the Board
- Adjourn

Join or Renew Your Bennett Valley Community Association Membership for 2012

The annual dues for BVCA membership (previously BVHA membership) are \$15, plus any extra donations you're willing to make, to better enable us to pursue our mission. You may either send in your check, to the address listed below, or pay online with a credit card or PayPal account. To pay online, go to the BVCA website (www.bennettvalley.org), and choose "Join/Renew: BVCA Membership" from the menu on the left side of the first page You then follow these instructions. If you have any questions, please call our Membership Coordinator, Larissa Goliti, at 578-3453. If you prefer to send a check, mail it in with this form, with your name, phone number and email address included, to: Bennett Valley Community Association, P.O. Box 2666, Santa Rosa, CA 95405.

BV EMAIL ALERT! You'll want to be sure to sign up for the BV Email Alert. In October, 2010, we sent out our BV Email Alert to let you know about a number of BV burglaries during that month. In April, 2009, when a man was frequently following women driving cars at night in Bennett Valley, we had to send a BV Alert by mail, with the added cost of postage, because we did not have many email addresses at that time. We're requesting your email address in order to send you the occasional BV Alert in the quickest, simplest, most economical way. Please write down your email address here, so you're on our BV Email Alert list: _____

If you already receive a paper copy of the VOICE every other month, you'll continue to receive it that way. If you want to change the way you receive your VOICE from a copy mailed to you to an email transmission of the VOICE, please check here _____ and include your email address. We will only send your VOICE by email if you've been receiving it that way or you left a check mark here.

When sending in this membership form, please include your name(s), address, and phone number, noting any changes.

Name: _____ Address: _____ Current phone number: _____

We're also interested in any comments or concerns you have. Please insert additional paper for your comments. Thanks!

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

www.bennettvalley.org

PURPOSES OF BVCA: *To promote and preserve the residential rural character and natural environment of Bennett Valley; To educate, instruct, train and inform the local residents on disaster preparedness and emergency response as well as local land use and environmental issues; to serve as an open forum for Bennett Valley community participation; and to provide a bridge for communication between government agencies and the Bennett Valley community.*

Return Service Requested

Inside You'll Find

PG&E's Plans For Tree Removal
Save Our Sonoma Trees, sos-trees.com
Kenwood Press, Rich Tavernetti, Website
Roads Crumble; SOSRoads.org
BV Clean-Up Roads
Fond Farewell, BV Calendar
BV Fire Board, Staff, Activities, Fire Safety, Highlights of Meetings
An Experiment in Oak Woodland Management
BVCA Board, Minutes, Agenda, Annual Membership Form

PG&E MEETING, March 29
4 - 6 PM, BV FIRE STATION

Bennett Valley Community Calendar

Mark your calendars now!!

- **Bennett Valley Homeowner's Association:** The next meeting is Thursday, March 15, 7:00 pm, BV Grange Hall. See Tentative Agenda on Page 7.
- **Bennett Valley Fire Protection District:** The Board of Directors meets the second Tuesday of each month, 7:00 pm, at the Bennett Valley Fire Station. Please call 823-1084 to confirm meeting date ahead of time.
- **Bennett Valley Grange: You're invited!** Corn beef & cabbage dinner, Friday, March 16, Reservations by March 14, \$7.50 donation. Planning meeting for June picnic/fundraiser, March 29, 6:00 pm. All input and suggestions are welcome.
- **PG&E Sponsored Informational Meeting Regarding Properties Under High Voltage Lines, Bennett Valley and Sonoma Mountain areas, Thursday, March 29, 4:00 to 6:00 pm, Bennett Valley Fire Station, See Pages 2 and 3.**
- **Spring Clean-Up Bennett Valley Roads Day:** Saturday, April 28, 8:30 am, BV Fire Station. Watch for signs! See Page 3.
- **Candidates Forum, First District Supervisor Candidates, Thursday, April 19, 7:00 – 9:00 pm, BV Grange**
- **Amateur Radio (Ham Radio) Licensing In Just One Day:** (From website smrs) Below are the dates set for the one day licensing classes and exams. Preparation fee including exam is \$25.00. Please pre-register in order to get help with obtaining your Federal Registration Number. Contact Dale, 762-0414 or wb6tms@arrl.net; Saturdays, March 10, April 21 or May 19., Petaluma Senior Center; Thursdays, April 12, or June 14, Santa Rosa Red Cross. All with 9 am class, 1 pm exam.
- **Sonoma County Board Of Supervisors:** Meets every Tuesday (except weeks when there is a legal holiday), at varying times, 575 Administration Drive, Santa Rosa. Valerie Brown is the Supervisor for our First District, but she has chosen to not run for re-election this year. You may call her or her staff assistant, Jennifer Hainstock, at 565-2241, if you have any concerns.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

- For emergencies, use your landline or your cell phone to call **911**. To talk to someone at the Sheriff's office 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to either report concerns that may be an emergency or to discuss a situation that may require law enforcement response, call 565-2121.
- Call Sonoma County Road Maintenance, at 565-5100 to report dangerous potholes, fallen trees or landslides and to request possible help with litter control and bulk trash in the road.
- Call Sonoma County Animal Control, at 565-7100, regarding the removal of dead animals along the road.
- Call California Highway Patrol, at 588-1400, if debris is causing imminent traffic hazards on county roads.