

Eco Echo

Fall - Winter 2011-12

SAVE MOUNT SHASTA
HONOR OUR MOUNTAIN ENVIRONMENT
SAVE MEDICINE LAKE

MOUNT SHASTA BIOREGIONAL ECOLOGY CENTER
HONORING AND PROTECTING OUR MOUNTAIN ENVIRONMENT SINCE 1988

MOUNT SHASTA BIOREGIONAL ECOLOGY CENTER
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Events in Brief

Saturday January 21, 2012. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Winter Tracking Expedition to the Top of Sheep Rock with wildlife biologist Julian Colescott

Saturday March 10, 2012 5:30 p.m.
11th Annual Shasta Mountain Film Festival

Saturday April 21, 2012 all day
Our 21st Earth Day Celebration!

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Get the latest!

For detailed information about these events and other happenings, as well as electronic versions of the EcoEcho, see the Ecology Center website:

www.mountshastaecology.org

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About the

MOUNT SHASTA BIOREGIONAL ECOLOGY CENTER

The MOUNT SHASTA BIOREGIONAL ECOLOGY CENTER is a nonprofit grass-roots organization dedicated since 1988 to protecting and restoring the outstanding natural and cultural values of Mount Shasta, one of the sacred mountains of the world, and the surrounding bioregion—source of pure waters, magnificent beauty and rich biodiversity.

Projects of the ECOLOGY CENTER include SAVE MOUNT SHASTA, SAVE MEDICINE LAKE HIGHLANDS, FOREST AND WATERSHED WATCH, the H.O.M.E. (Honor Our Mountain Environment) STEWARDSHIP PROJECT, FRIENDS OF MOUNTAIN MEADOWS, CLEAN WEED, and the MOUNT SHASTA COMMUNITY GARDEN. We serve as the fiscal sponsor for CONCERNED MCCLLOUD CITIZENS, SHASTA COMMONS.ORG and FRIENDS OF THE PARKS.

We bring our common vision of a culture in harmony with nature into concrete action, and into the forums where outcomes are decided. Our efforts give citizens a voice, countering the pressures applied by vested interests, focusing the issues, organizing participation in the process, and showing up when it counts.

We actively promote stewardship, restoration and sustainability projects and are committed to working in close cooperation with the Native American Tribes of the region as well as with our conservation colleagues and communities in order to bring a unified voice that values nature, spirit and culture.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Defeated** a large ski-condominium resort proposed for Panther Meadows on Mount Shasta.
- **Forestalled** massive geothermal development on Mount Shasta planned by Vulcan Power.
- **Prevented** industrial geothermal development in the nearby Medicine Lake Highlands through our Ninth Circuit Court victory.
- **Gained** designation of Traditional Cultural Districts that strengthen legal protection of 130 square miles on Mount Shasta and Medicine Lake Highlands, in collaboration with local tribes.
- **Helped** defeat Nestlé's plans for a huge bottling plant in McCloud, averting exploitation of this region's pure springs and fisheries.
- **Halted** or modified numerous timber sales through persistent involvement in forest issues.
- **Prevented** air and noise pollution through vigilant activism with Roseburg's biomass plant at the base of Mount Shasta in Weed.
- **Prevented** day use fees on Mount Shasta thanks to ongoing volunteer stewardship projects.
- **Public Education** and community organizing.
- **Education and Celebrations:** annual Mountain Film Festival, Earth Day Celebration, Day on the River rafting trip, Harvest Celebration, and many educational forums throughout the year.
- **Sustainability Projects** include the Mount Shasta Community Garden and ShastaCommons.org, a Transition Town initiative.



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New Executive Director for Ecology Center

by Vicki Gold, Board Member

The Mount Shasta Bioregional Ecology Center is growing and evolving, like many of our institutions and like Mother Earth herself. After more than twenty years of dedicated leadership, Michelle Berditshevsky has stepped down from her post as Executive Director to focus on her work as Conservation Director. The Board of Directors has successfully conducted a search for a new E.D., as well as developing a model for shared leadership and greater community participation.

The life cycle of an organization is ever changing. The Ecology Center is now entering the stage where creating the foundation for generations to serve is important to keeping the mission thriving.

The most significant step in this process is to transition to a new Executive Director while maintaining the vital energy of our elders, like Michelle. We are so fortunate to have accomplished this step with the hiring of Pamela Cundy as E.D., while honoring and retaining Michelle as Conservation Director, mentor and visionary.

Pam comes to us with a more than 30-year history of working with and for nonprofit organizations. She is a seasoned E.D. and Certified Wealth Consultant. Pam is known for joining nonprofits going through transitions, bringing the expertise, systems and collaborations needed to move to the next level of success. Pam's love for volunteer work began at her

YMCA where she began volunteering and learning at the age of 14. Her experience in the nonprofit sector includes volunteer participation and management, event planning, fundraising, donor engagement and development, marketing, staff training, crisis management, strategic planning, long range visioning, board development, recruitment, training and governance. Pam has administered more than 300 grant projects in the Pacific Northwest since 1999, and she has developed millions of dollars through donor development, endowments and leveraging local funds to access foundation, state and federal grants.

"Of all the non-profits I have had the privilege to serve," said Pam, "the Ecology Center stands out because for 23 years it has stayed true to its mission while doing the work needed to protect this vital bioregion. Taking that history and adding the needed steps to reach the future is the job I have prepared for my whole life, everything I have learned will come into use here. With the community's help, and the support of people from around the world who know how important Mount Shasta is, we will, together, create sustainability for generations to serve and protect this area."

There were many moist eyes in the audience on November 5th at the Ecology Center's annual Harvest Celebration as Michelle lit Pam's torch, with Kathy Zavada providing musical accompaniment on this historic occasion. As Pam and Michelle proceeded to light the candles of

Ecology Center members who passed the flame to all attendees of the event, magic was definitely in the air. (Everyone around the world, visitors from all continents who love Mount Shasta can view this on FaceBook.) We feel that we have a new vision for the Ecology Center of greater collaboration and partnerships in the community, networking with other organizations and individuals, both local and international with this new team. We are stepping up to a new era of environmental protection. The Ecology Center will be a premier environmental and educational organization with retreats, workshops, and visioning intensives. We have a vision for the next 20 years and beyond.

The surprise of the evening came from Pam who announced her first matching grant of up to \$35,000 over the next six months. We trust that our friends and supporters,



Lighting the Torch Ceremony at Harvest Celebration - photo by Paul Boerger

both old and new, will rally to assist us in achieving this goal. Our opportunity for outreach and education will be greatly enhanced by this large donation from an anonymous donor. Several other large donors have given us a jumpstart on our new journey. We invite each of our members to play a role in this opportunity by extending an invitation to friends and relatives to become members now before the holidays. Thanks to this grant, each dollar will be doubled.

We end with a quote from Michelle. "At this important juncture for both the Ecology Center and the human species, I'm overjoyed to welcome Pam as our new Executive Director! I look forward to working side by side in a sacred space of protection, community and sustainability in harmony with the Mount Shasta bioregion and the web of life." As we transition into our next era of environmental protection and community service, we welcome new members, renewed support from current and past members and are grateful for all the help we can get! Please join us in protecting our sacred Mount Shasta and the larger bioregion for generations to come.

Save Mount Shasta

Concerns Over Proposed High-Elevation Rezoning Near Panther Meadows

by Michelle Berditshevsky

A proposal submitted to Siskiyou County to rezone 772 acres high on Mount Shasta's slopes is of great concern to many people. Those of us who spent ten years safeguarding the area from large-scale ski development in the 80s and 90s are especially hawk-eyed about this threat.

The rezoning proposal involves more than one square mile of private land owned by Roseburg Timber Products, situated just below the Panther Meadows campground. The company is requesting to change the designation from a Timber Production Zone to Rural Residential Agricultural (RRA-40), which could lead to subdividing the land into 40-acre parcels, potentially opening it to commercial development.

Shades of Lemuria Village

This same 772-acre parcel was the site of "Lemuria Village," the condominium development proposed as part of the commercial ski resort in the 1980s. As many of our readers know, the Ecology Center got its start in the decade-long challenge to the resort, which culminated in 1998 when the Forest Service took back the permit awarded to developer Carl Martin.

The superlative value of Mount Shasta

Then as now we speak for many who consider Panther Meadows "the jewel of Mount Shasta." The Mount Shasta Cosmological District and Panther Meadows Native American Ceremonial Site—recognized by the National Register of Historic Places—could potentially be greatly affected by the proposed rezoning. We need to again remind our public servants and elected officials of Mount Shasta's value as world-class destination for visitors who come from around the globe, from as far away as Europe and Japan. Travelers, nature lovers, spiritual seekers, backcountry skiers and hikers visit the Mountain because of its pristine beauty and grandeur. The fact that it rises high above the encroachments of civilization gives visitors a timeless and



unique experience that is healing, inspiring and unforgettable.

Potential Impacts

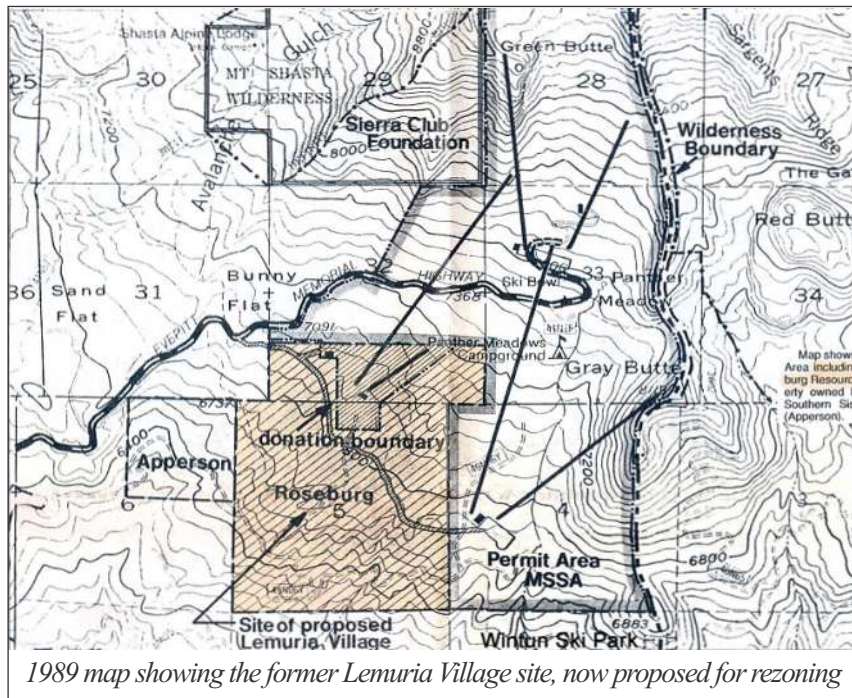
We stand in strong opposition to the rezoning and have submitted comments to Siskiyou County. The impacts of rezoning this remote environmentally sensitive area from a zone that limits development to one that would encourage development would be very controversial. Dividing the Roseburg timberland into as much as 20 parcels (with a potential for 40 houses and guest houses) could result in multiple ownerships and would invite conflicting uses to this side of the Mountain. Under the California Environmental Quality Act, an action that is controversial must undergo environment review leading to an Environmental Impact Report. Because the proposed action could also affect public lands, the National Environmental Policy Act and National Historic Preservation Act will also come into play. Impacts of potential development include effects on the traditional cultural sites, on the watershed, on forests, and cumulative impacts from associated development,

Views from the high slopes of Mount Shasta, from the Mount Shasta Wilderness, National Landmark, Native American Cosmological District, from Panther Meadows, Bunny Flat, Grey Butte, Sargent's Ridge, Shastarama Point, Green Butte, and many other well-loved places could be impacted by the proposed rezoning. Development would change the scenic quality of the Mountain by changing the vegetation, the colors, the forests and character of the area.

Our comments to the county can be seen at www.mountshastaecology.org/Save_Mount_Shasta.html

Reaching for a cooperative solution

We are striving to work in cooperation with all concerned stakeholders toward a solution involving a meaningful dialogue in which the overall good is considered before commitments are made, recognizing that preserving the Mountain in its natural grandeur is of paramount importance to our local communities, to Native Americans, and to people from all over the world.



Save Medicine Lake Highlands

Holding High Ground

by Michelle Berditshevsky and Peggy Risch

As the first high snows blanket the Medicine Lake Caldera, things are mercifully quiet in the Highlands, while we hold legal ground against the energy-at-all-costs decisions pressing against the invisible barrier of beauty and caring that continues to protect this magnificent mysterious landscape over fourteen years...



Medicine Lake and Mount Shasta, seen from Mount Hoffman

Quiet on the legal front

Following the 2010 Ninth Circuit Court decision that mandated a new review process on the lease extensions for the Fourmile Hill project, BLM proposed that all the parties (the Pit River Tribe, Mount Shasta Bioregional Ecology Center, Native Coalition, and Calpine Corporation) enter into discussions. The purpose of these talks would be to see if our second lawsuit could be bypassed and allow Calpine and the agencies to move directly into the required environmental review phase. One problem is that Calpine's proposal has now grown to full buildout of 480 megawatts of power, five times what had been proposed. After a series of meetings in the past year and much analysis on our part, negotiations are presently at a standstill as key issues on both sides have not been resolved. At this point, it is hard to predict if settlement talks will resume, or whether our second lawsuit (challenging the rest of the leases and the Telephone Flat Project), which has been joined by the Save Medicine Lake Coalition of environmental groups, will move forward.

Making good use of time

While we commend the Ninth Circuit Court for declaring the lease extensions invalid, we recognize the ambivalence of the decision in letting the underlying

leases stand, which confer property and development rights to Calpine on 38,000 acres (about 60 square miles) in this sacred landscape.

Yet this partial victory has bought us time to develop much needed information about the risks to the enormous pure aquifer that flows under the Medicine Lake Volcano.

Medicine Lake Highlands and Mount Shasta stand together

The Save Medicine Lake Highlands project is our ongoing effort since 1997 to protect the wild and sacred Medicine Lake Volcano from devastating, polluting industrial geothermal development. The geothermal industry and BLM have identified an unrealistic potential for large-scale energy development in both the Medicine Lake Highlands (480 megawatts) based on limited data and on Mount Shasta (280 megawatts). After more than 20 years of exploratory testing, there is virtually no evidence that supports this corporate ploy of exaggerating the geothermal potential for what is still called “renewable” energy despite polluting and degrading activities that cannot be mitigated.

While geothermal leases were denied on Mount Shasta in 2008, the equivalent of at least five power plants is still on the books and the decision is under appeal by Vulcan Power. Medicine Lake is where we are holding ground against geothermal development, and it will set a precedent for Mount Shasta.

High water sources

Keeping pristine high mountain water sources pure and safeguarding the major recharge areas of our bioregion have been and continue to be a primary goal of the Ecology Center. Watershed protection is at the heart of our two principal projects, Save Mount Shasta and Save Medicine Lake Highlands, which hold major sources of the north state water supply.

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Language of Land

Heavy grey clouds bring soft rain as we pass through the town of Tennant, population 71, not one of them visible. When we arrive through a path of ponderosa pines the lake is held in this wet softness. I can see nothing except the grey mist and water making it easier to imagine the depth as an endless vastness before me. I wonder what secrets she holds as two fishermen drift quietly by hunched and covered from the rain breaking the illusion of this uninterrupted depth.

On to Big Glass mountain where the storm passes through, leaving blue sky white cloud setting sunshine and bringing sharp clarity to this rise of broken blackness. Such interesting and mysterious land...walking into the heart of a million year old volcanic voice that has created this area of black sharp upheaval from inside; I think that I am seeing the same depths from within the lake rising in form.

And what in me is rising? What depths am I seeking. What storms are passing through.

I want to speak with this language of land.

Photo by Julie Cassidy

—Nickki Lee Hill

Update on Clean Weed Project: Cleaning up the ~~Biomass~~ Biomass Plant

by Molly Brown and Karen Rogers

It appears that burning “biomass” (wood) to produce electricity isn't so “green” after all. Recent science shows it causes more global warming than burning coal. Our life-giving forests are threatened as tax dollars subsidize biomass “mining” and hasten global warming.

Biomass energy may be appropriate in some situations, but environmental standards must be met and plants sited well away from homes and schools. The Roseburg Biomass plant in Weed, California, fails to meet these standards.

Backstory

In 2007, Roseburg Forest Products (RFP) began building a 15 MW wood-fired biomass plant in Weed, within 200 feet of homes and schools. When operated at full capacity, the plant will burn about 250 cords of wood daily and emit hundreds of tons of new toxic pollutants into the air around Mount Shasta each year. Weed Concerned Citizens and volunteers in the Clean Weed Project challenged the County approval of the 2008 EIR for this project, because it violated environmental law regarding air pollution, noise, diesel truck emissions, and water impacts. Our lawsuits remain in the California Third District Court of Appeals, with decisions still pending. (See previous articles in archives at www.mountshastaecology.org and at www.cleanweed.org).



Current Status

The RFP Biomass plant is now operating at 50 to 75% capacity, apparently not yet in compliance with regulations. RFP is reported to be testing and “working out the bugs.” Meanwhile, earlier this year, the EPA fined RFP \$75,000, stating that the company failed to monitor certain aspects of its biomass plant operations in 2008 and 2009. The electricity produced is not being sold to the intended customer, the City of Redding. We don't know if it is being sold elsewhere, nor to whom. We understand RFP is using some of the energy on site for their veneer plant.

More studies challenge carbon-neutrality of biomass

A new study at Oregon State University concluded that thinning trees from West Coast forests to generate electricity would release more carbon dioxide emissions than would be released under current forest management. Researchers found that harvesting for significant bioenergy production and wildfire reduction would increase CO₂ emissions by 14 percent under the most efficient scenario. This study, published in the journal *Nature Climate Change*, was conducted by the College of Forestry at Oregon State

University and institutions in Germany and France, and was supported by the US Department of Energy.

The study looked at 80 forest types in 19 eco-regions in Oregon, Washington and California ranging from temperate rainforests to semi-arid woodlands. Both public and private forests and their respective management regimes were included.

The findings contradict recent assumptions that biofuels from forests could be carbon-neutral or even reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Many people think (and the industry claims) that wood bioenergy is carbon-neutral, because the forest grows back and wildfire produces lots of carbon emissions. Thinning forests to protect them from wildfire, and using the wood harvested for bioenergy, would seem to make sense. However, this research showed that the emissions from biomass harvesting and transportation were greater than any savings.

The only exception was for forests at high risk of wildfire due to stress from insect outbreaks or drought; then thinning for bioenergy production could reduce emissions if certain criteria are met.

Concerns about Weed plant

Sensible biomass burning has its place – if located far from human populations, using sustainable forestry practices, and leaving adequate nutrients and habitat. However, these practices increase costs and therefore limit profits. The Roseburg biomass plant in Weed does not follow these practices, and has failed to comply with even current regulations of the EPA.

Recently the community became aware that this fall Roseburg burned slash piles for days on Rainbow Ridge near Mount Shasta, contributing to air pollution noticeable to many. When asked why this forestry slash was not being burned in the biomass facility, a company representative responded that it was not economical to chip and haul it to Weed. A main argument for the biomass plant was that it would prevent the need for burning of forest slash piles.

Support the Clean Weed Project

Thank to all of you who contribute dollars, time, and energy to this cause! All of our support for this project comes from designated donations, not any from memberships or general MSBEC operating funds. Your generous contributions help pay our ongoing legal costs. Please make donations to MSBEC – CleanWeed Project. Or volunteer to help. Thank you!

Castle Crags State Park closing - A community coalition explores innovative ideas to keep the park open!

by Karen Rogers

Beautiful Castle Crags State Park just south of Mount Shasta, with its awe-inspiring granite spires, is facing imminent closure due to California's severe financial crisis. This 4,350 acre jewel, one of the iconic landscape features of the area, and much beloved by local nature enthusiasts, attracts over 70,000 visitors each year.

The state has appealed to nonprofits to step forward with solutions. The Ecology Center has initiated a community coalition to explore how to keep this superlative park open.

A new vision is developing for Castle Crags Park: it can serve as an environmental Education and Training Center for our local youth, as well as a model of eco-sustainability.

Castle Crags State Park slated to close, due to state budget cuts

Castle Crags State Park is one of 70 state parks slated for closure in northern California. Closures are expected to save about \$22 million annually.

Castle Crags State Park's (CCSP) "official" closure will occur in July 2012. With the first snow the gates will be locked, and it is not known when or whether it will reopen in the spring.

Closing CCSP, a local treasure, represents a loss for our area in tourism economy, as well as a loss for locals and visitors enjoying this magnificent area. One of our oldest and most beautiful state parks, it was first recommended for park status as early as 1929; the land was acquired in 1933. It has been found to have "outstanding natural resource value," and has been identified as one of California's "iconic signature landscapes."

The park offers stunning vistas from craggy spires formed from over 2 million years of glaciation. A scenic overlook high within the park boasts a view staggering in its beauty - magnificent canyons, whitewater rivers, alpine lakes, and to the north, snow-capped Mount Shasta. The park's 28 miles of trails, including 8 miles of the popular Pacific Crest Trail, provides the gateway to the adjacent 12,232 acre Castle Crags Wilderness.

The Crags are rich with cultural history; prehistoric petroglyphs were discovered along Castle Creek a few decades ago.

With its 76 campsites, hot showers, day use picnic areas and amphitheater, the park generated annual revenues of over \$140,000. Studies show that for every dollar park visitors spend, another \$2.67 is spent in the surrounding communities - representing close to \$375,000 circulating in the south county. Moreover, deterioration and vandalism are expected to increase with the park's closure.

Park representatives acknowledge that "a new paradigm" is needed for park operations, and are inviting nonprofits to submit proposals to take over park operations.



A community coalition to keep the Park open

The Ecology Center arranged a meeting with state park representatives in October to explore the possibilities, inviting other concerned nonprofits and interested community members to participate in the preliminary discussion.

State park officials Marilyn Linkem and Heidi Horvitz attended, along with Joe Wirth of the Mount Shasta Trail Association, and several other participants. Horvitz and Linkem presented detailed budgets and a draft operating agreement. The park has been operating at a loss of \$70,000 per year with an aging sewer and water system - some of the reasons it was targeted for closure. No nonprofit group has yet submitted a proposal.

The Developing Vision of Possibilities - an Education and Job Training Facility, Field Station and "Eco Demonstration Center"

Steve Hill of Yreka, a retired 35-year state park employee and former Park superintendent presented an innovative proposal. Steve teaches natural resources at Yreka High School, works at the College of the Siskiyous and with the Resource Conservation District, and has a wealth of experience and contacts with the state parks system, educational institutions, and local agencies.

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Forest and Watershed Watch

by Michelle Berditshevsky

Forests are the lungs of the planet, sources of water, health and beauty. They store and purify waters, provide medicines, are home to countless species, absorb and sequester carbon from the atmosphere...

Grazing threats east of the Mountain

The vast forests and watersheds east of Mount Shasta don't always get the attention they deserve due to their remoteness. However, thanks to excellent research by two community members (who wish to be anonymous), the Ecology Center was able to provide substantial comments on an environmental assessment (EA) that will affect about 53 square miles (33,775 acres) 27 miles east of Mount Shasta near Pondosa.

The Toad Mountain area has a 100-year history of grazing with many negative impacts on springs, streams, meadows, sensitive plants, aspen, and wildlife. Our comments emphasized the need to assess the impacts of that history and apply its lessons to future management decisions. The Toad Mountain Range Management Project EA will lead to a decision on whether or not to reauthorize cattle grazing on one of the allotments in the area.

We found the EA to be biased in favor of approving the permit, through omissions and one-sided analyses. Some of the issues raised in our comments include: whether the Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives of the Northwest Forest Plan would be met; whether the grazing allotment justifies the considerable expenditure of federal funds on the range improvements that would be needed in order to prevent unacceptable impacts on the riparian areas (note that the Porcupine Watershed Assessment found that "The grazing program costs five times more to manage than grazing fees collected"); to what extent grazing would compete with wildlife needs for forage and water; whether water resources exist for the number of cattle proposed and the lack of contingency plans for drought conditions; and the cumulative impacts of grazing projects considered together with impacts of grazing on the neighboring allotments.

We recommended selection of the No Action Alternative and termination of the grazing permit. Complete comments can be found on our website at www.mountshastaecology.org/Forest_Issues.html.

Rules that govern forest management

New Forest Planning Rule proposed. The function of a Planning Rule is to produce good plans for national forests and to help make certain that local managers don't fall into

the kinds of mistakes that have already degraded too much of our public lands. The Ecology Center submitted extensive comments on a draft environmental impact statement (EIS) for a new Planning Rule that will determine the forest planning process under the National Forest Management Act. The proposed Rule would replace the 1982 Planning Rule that was revised by the Bush administration but defeated in the courts. Unfortunately, we found that the current version continues much of the trend attempted by President Bush, away from strong standards that would protect riparian areas, maintain viable wildlife populations, and provide clear road management.

Our comments emphasized much stronger guidance and standards in important areas, including: protection of water resources, clear mandates for addressing the impacts of climate change, mandatory use of the best available science, standards for timber management, strong guidelines for soil conservation, thorough ecosystem planning, requirements for managing the road system, and others.

Alarming, the proposed new Rule severely curtails public participation in the review of forest plan revisions. It sets an overly strict process for raising concerns, and shortens comment periods from 90 to 30 days for review of complex documents prescribing management for each national forest for a period of ten to fifteen years.

The Forest Service has not indicated when the final EIS will be released. Our complete comments on this issue can be found at www.mountshastaecology.org/Forest_Issues.html.

Good news! Roadless Conservation Rule is reinstated!

After 13 years of legal struggle, the Roadless Rule has been reinstated by both the 9th and 10th Circuit Courts in separate challenges. We weighed in on this issue, but Earthjustice deserves the credit for taking it through the courts on behalf of a number of conservation groups. The states of California, Oregon and Washington, as well as the U.S. Forest Service, also fought for reinstatement of the rule, which was challenged by the Bush administration, industry interests and certain states.

The Roadless Rule protects 58 million acres nationwide, providing critical wildlife habitat, vital supplies of pure water, and containing some of the most scenic lands in the country, including some wild and remote lands in California's north state. Parts of Castle Crags, Mount Eddy and Girard Ridge are among the 31 roadless areas within the Shasta-Trinity and Klamath National Forests.



Celebration of Salmon in the Shasta River

—Written from information provided by members who attended the event. —Editor

Saturday, October 22 was sunny and warm. And ten days earlier Nature Conservancy had chosen that date to hold an “Open Ranch” day at their property on the Shasta River and Big Springs Creek, timed to celebrate was the arrival of large numbers of spawning Fall Chinook Salmon coming to the Shasta River, and to provide a chance to walk and see a part of the Shasta normally closed to casual visitors.

Nearly 200 people from throughout the county came out for the opportunity to see these magnificent big salmon (15-20 lbs, 20+” long) that were readily visible in both the Shasta River and Big Springs Creek as they sought mates and places to spawn.

Fall Chinook Salmon historically were found from south of San Francisco Bay to Alaska, a territory they still largely occupy, if at much lower numbers than was once the case. Like all salmon, the adults lay eggs in freshwater streams in patches of clean gravel, where the eggs slowly mature and hatch after several months. Just how long it takes for eggs to hatch depends on water temperature through the winter. In most streams, winter water temperatures are quite cold, and eggs can take 4-5 months to hatch. On the Shasta near Big springs, eggs laid in October will hatch in late January, a period of about 3 months, and the juvenile salmon (fry) will work their way out of the gravel in February. Eggs there hatch early because the water feeding both the Shasta River and Big Springs Creek comes from many large springs, all of which supply water that is warmer than ordinary surface flows that have been exposed to winter air temperatures for many miles. Hatching early gives them a jump-start on life relative to salmon from elsewhere.

But the benefits of the Shasta water don't stop with getting an early start in life. Young salmon, like all young things, need to eat a lot and they really can't afford to wait. The relatively warm water, coupled with the nutrients brought back from the ocean in the bodies of their parents (who all must die after spawning and whose bodies remain in or near the stream to replenish the system—see http://www.inforain.org/reports/salmon_decline.html) serve as the food base for a wide variety of aquatic invertebrates that can begin building their population base as soon as spawning is over, and voilà—dinner is served as soon as the fry come out of the gravel. And Big Springs is able to take that one big step further—read on.

The water in the Big Springs area originates on Mount Shasta, a geologically young volcano. As snow on the mountain melts and flows through the multiple layers of volcanic sand, ash, and lava, it dissolves and carries with it one of the otherwise scarce nutrients normally in short

supply—phosphorus. That meltwater continues onwards, and sinks deeply into the ground, eventually encountering the mostly impermeable “Hornbrook layer”. This ancient marine layer, readily apparent to all of us as the sandstone formation visible from I-5 near the town of Hornbrook, tends to be relatively high in another scarce nutrient—nitrogen. So the already phosphorus-enriched meltwater grabs nitrogen too, and continues on its way, until underground barriers force it to re-surface as springs in the Big Springs area. There, the addition of sunlight, coupled with the nitrogen and

phosphorus and warmish water are able to transform the crystal clear spring water into a perfect hydroponic growth media, building a solid foundation of aquatic vegetation that in turn feeds more aquatic invertebrates—the herbivorous grazers—which also serve as fish food, while the plants provide cover and back eddies for fish to hang out in while eating.

So, salmon finding themselves in the Shasta River near Big springs are warm enough to grow fast, well fed, with an early start on life, with good cover and clean

water. Then later in the year, when other streams are warmed by summer sun and hot air, Big Springs water stays the same temp as always, its summer coolness a refuge for the fish.

From February though June, most of the salmon in Big Springs will stay there, eat and grow. But then, as summer approaches, they become “teenagers,” known in the fish world as smolts—they become more silvery, and instead of focusing on staying put and eating they get the urge to head downstream, and off they go, down the Shasta, into the Klamath, and eventually into the ocean, where they will eat and grow for another 1½ to 4½ years, at which point as adults ranging from 15-60 pounds they will find themselves compelled to return to their home streams to spawn and die, restarting the process.

Next fall, salmon will again be returning to the Shasta River. It's impossible to know from one year to the next just how many will actually make it to spawn. If harvest levels are set high, few will survive the hooks and nets, and the numbers returning will be so low that those few that manage to find their way home won't be easy to see. Hopefully next year we will be lucky enough to see another good run, so watch for an email from the Ecology Center to let you know, and with luck we can all come out again to celebrate the renewal of their world and ours.

See photos of the Shasta Big Springs Ranch and salmon at: <http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/california/interactive-media-shasta-big-springs-ranch.xml>



The Volunteer Corner

by Neera Paine, Volunteer Coordinator

Honoring all volunteers

As 2011 draws to a close it's time to take a moment to thank all those among us who consistently show their support for our environment, not only by being members of the Ecology Center, but also by volunteering in most areas of our organization, including Protection Efforts, Events, Education and Entertainment, Yard Sales, Office/Computer, and Outreach.

Too numerous to mention everyone of you by name, please know that you are more than appreciated. You are the valued backbone of the Ecology Center. Without you the organization simply could not exist.

We look forward to working with you again and invite others who have so far missed out on the wonderful opportunity to experience the spirit of love and connectedness in the service to our environment and each other. I am filled with awe and gratitude in the face of the generous hearts that gather over and over to show their support through action.

Please see the side bar on this page for the many opportunities beckoning to volunteers.

15 years of H.O.M.E. Stewardship!

We especially feel grateful to the dedicated H.O.M.E. (Honor Our Mountain Environment Stewardship Project) volunteers who go up on Mount Shasta throughout the summer and into the fall, and lend their caring hands in keeping things clean at Bunny Flat, Everett Vista, and Red Fir Flat. Myr Skipper, Omanasa Star, and Jerry Sullivan have been serving in this way for many years, and Pete Marquis joined the team this past season.

The 2012 Challenge...

Worldwide many regard 2012 as ominous since it represents the end of the Mayan Calendar. People are getting ready to gather at sacred places around the globe, and one of them is Mount Shasta, especially Panther Meadows. If the Harmonic Convergence of 1987, considered to be a prelude to 2012, is an indicator, we may expect the influx of many thousands of people from around the world.



Happy volunteers at the Harvest Dinner

To meet this challenge to the Mountain's delicate ecosystems, the Ecology Center's H.O.M.E. project will focus this year on a program to train a corps of Meadow Monitors who will be needed to protect Panther Meadows and other important areas on the Mountain. We'll do this through H.O.M.E.'s ongoing partnership with the Forest Service. The Meadow Monitors will guide, educate and otherwise shepherd visitors in the ways of respect for the Mountain. We do not know how many people will come, but it's clear we need to be prepared.

We invite members of the community who would like to spend time on the Mountain, have great communication skills (possibly multi-lingual), and are willing to participate in training sessions this coming spring, to contact us. News bulletins will be released on our website and in local paper.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

AMBASSADORS / OUTREACH

Tabling, presentations to groups, conferences...

EDUCATION

Outings, speakers, slide shows...

EVENTS AND CELEBRATIONS

Earth Day, Film Festival, River Trip, Harvest Celebration

PUBLICITY

Newsletter, website, flyers, photography...

H.O.M.E. STEWARDSHIP PROJECT

Trails, cleanup, restoration, meadow monitors...

OFFICE HELP

Mailings, organization, cleaning, phone calls...

PROTECTION EFFORTS

Research, letter writing, community organizing...

SPECIAL SKILLS and INTERESTS

Please let us know...

FOR MORE INFO

Please phone 530.926.5655
or email NeeraTheresia@Gotsky.com

Highlights of the 2011 Season at Panther Meadows

by resident naturalist Johnny Dame

Because of the intensive snow year on Mount Shasta (two years in a row!), the Panther Meadows season began at the McBride Springs campground, while I waited for the eight feet of snow to melt to a manageable depth in the high meadows.

Controversial McBride Springs timber harvest

McBride Springs had become somewhat controversial due to a timber harvest that occurred there earlier in the year. Because of a tree-root fungus called annosus, many white fir trees had died, creating hazardous conditions for the campground. A timber company was contracted and apparently took more trees than were marked. This outraged members of the public and I heard many complaints. At a full moon prayer gathering at McBride, many people came to vent their frustrations, sing, pray and tell stories. This was very healing and we received fewer complaints from that point on. Subsequently, almost everyone at the Mount Shasta Ranger District came up to help clean up the campground, bringing much good will and teamwork.

The gate finally opens August 4

Though the gate was still closed in the beginning of August, people walked up to Panther from Bunny Flat. Several crews of young people from the Youth Conservation Corps shoveled trails in both lower and upper Panther, for which we were very thankful! When the gate at Bunny Flat finally opened August 4, twenty cars immediately rushed up to Panther. Lower Panther, which had mostly melted off, started showing new signs of springtime, as the alpine laurel began to bloom within its lovely pink blossoms. The campground filled quickly and stayed full almost every night, all season long. We were very fortunate to have three assistant meadow monitors to help me this year. Lisa Bryant, Dawn Astra, and Ernie Rosenberg all contributed many hours to watching over both the meadows and the campground.



Upper Panther Meadow - photo by Johnny Dame

Spring and summer together

In late August, summer wildflowers such as mountain arnica and Indian paintbrush began to appear, mixing in with alpine laurel and mountain heather for a delightful combination of both spring and summer wildflowers together! The great snowpack this year recharged the aquifer so much that the springs at Panther Meadow flowed stronger and longer than in many years. Numerous springs appeared in places I have never seen before, flowing until late in the season.

The upper meadow was still so wet in mid-August that the Winnemen Wintu did not bring the tribe up for their annual ceremony. Ever protective of the delicate ecology, they felt it was too sensitive for a large group of people, so only the Shaman and a few select tribal people came up for prayers.

In late August, Southgate Meadows were still melting out. Wildflowers were very minimal there this year. Great impacts occurred due to heavy visitation during the wet conditions. It is clear that Southgate Meadow is in need of a lot of attention.

15th annual Panther Meadows Community Planting Day

On Saturday, September 24, the 15th annual Ecology Center Community Planting Day was held, with a great turnout of 30 people forming crews that planted native plants, gathered seeds, and naturalized decommissioned trails. Carolyn Napper, the new Mount Shasta district ranger, came up to join us, bringing a strong background in soils and riparian habitats to the Panther Meadow restoration team! Forest Service heritage resources manager Julie Cassidy and Ecology Center conservation director Michelle Berditshevsky both gave talks during lunch, highlighting the history of the Panther Meadows area.

The upcoming 2012 phenomenon

Many people came to Mount Shasta in advance of 2012, the year that marks the end of the Mayan Calendar, which lots of people consider to be significant. There are as many opinions about 2012 as there are people holding them, but the general consensus seems to be that Mount Shasta is THE place to be for it. It is clear we will all need to be prepared for a very large turnout of visitors.

Season's end

On October 1st, a substantial snowfall dropped two feet of snow on Panther Meadow, but within ten days, the snow melted away and some people continued to come up and camp through October, in spite to the 20-degree nights. The powerful winter storm that came in early November put Panther Meadow into a peaceful rest.

News from Mount Shasta Community Garden

by Steve Funk, Garden Coordinator

With the inevitable turning of our planet, the verdant abundance of summer becomes another memory for the community garden. The long but moderate season led to a great year for peas, strawberries and leafy vegetables. The squash, beans, tomatoes and corn came later but were also very abundant. We learned about new life forms such as leaf miners and cutworms this summer, but these pests have been a minor hiccup. After we invested in two packets of ladybugs from Springhill Nursery, the garden was amazingly free of aphids. Grapes, raspberries, boysenberries and goji berries are new additions to the garden.



The garden always has a few openings in the Spring. To get on our waiting list, please call Bliss at 530.918.9518.

Some especially creative featured garden plots...



Bliss has a trellis to train the cucumbers and shade the salad greens behind it. A carpet of alyssum borders the plot.



Barbara Penningroth and Carolyn Real practice a modified square foot gardening. It is hard to spot the grid and the precise spacing beneath all of the abundant veggies.

George Kraemer, a former Fresno orchard grower, always produces lots of lettuce, carrots, parsnips, onions and potatoes. He saves money on tomato transplants by burying a jug in the ground and direct seeding a month early.



Our parade entry took second place on Independence Day!



Two Towns in Transition: Some Musings

—by Sherry L. Ackerman, Shasta Commons

When author and environmentalist Bill McKibben visited Hardwick, Vermont in October 2008, he offered the following comments:

"After spending a day in Hardwick, I feel a great burst of pleasure and possibility. Deep and transformative things are happening here. Hardwick has all the pieces of a healthy food system connected and ready to fall into place, and is as far ahead in sustainable agriculture as any place in the country."

I visited there in October 2011...and I agree. Hardwick is a town in transition. And, much like Hardwick, Mount Shasta is also a town in transition.

The Transition Town movement is currently one of the strongest antidotes to an otherwise collapsing social structure. While the old paradigm is unraveling, the Transition Town movement is building a strong, sturdy footbridge to sustainable futures. It is comprised of grassroots community initiatives that seek to build community resilience. The Transition Movement seeks to engage its communities in home-grown, citizen-led education, action, and multi-stakeholder planning to increase local self reliance and resilience. Transition methodology revolves around capitalizing on local assets, innovating, networking, collaborating, replicating proven strategies, and respecting the deep patterns of nature and diverse cultures.

It all starts off when a small collection of motivated individuals within a community come together with a shared concern: How can our community respond to the challenges and opportunities of peak oil, climate change and the economic crisis? This small team of people begins by forming an initiating group and then adopts the Transition Model. In Hardwick, the model organized as the Center for an Agricultural Economy (CAE). In Mount Shasta, the model organized as Shasta Commons.

The Transition movement represents one of the most promising ways of engaging communities to take the far-reaching actions that are required in the current crises. Furthermore, relocalization is designed to result in a life that is more fulfilling, more socially connected and more equitable than the one we have today.

Each Transition Town is unique. While always rooted in a set of crucial principles, every initiative reflects the specific needs and qualities of an individual place. It's rather like giving a great cake recipe to a dozen different cooks and watching how their particular ingredients, techniques and creative ideas produce subtly different results. No two

Transition communities will ever look quite the same – and in that flexibility lies the strength of this movement.

Only a decade ago, Hardwick, Vermont was down-at-the-heels. Unemployment was rampant, people were discouraged and there wasn't much reason to

expect things to change. Then came Transition! Through the efforts of the Transition community, Hardwick became home to the Center for an Agricultural Economy (CAE) whose mission is to bring together community resources and programs needed to develop a locally based food system that supports the desire of rural communities to rebuild their economic and ecological health. Through community involvement, integrated and responsible agriculture, and a commitment to economic, ecologic and nutritional health, CAE has built a vibrant regional food system.

The same decade ago, Mount Shasta was a town that was dependent upon tourism. But, with the recent economic downturn, tourism declined. Like Hardwick, though, Mount Shasta is also in Transition! Now, through the efforts of Shasta Commons, Mount Shasta is building a strong, resilient local economy where the majority of its basic needs are supplied locally. Shasta Commons is a resource network that assists in the organization and promotion of local, sustainable goods and services through education, existing and planned community projects and the shastacommons.org website. Projects include cooperative organic gardening and distribution, a garden-share program, seed saving efforts, beekeeping initiatives, workshops and a neighborhood fruit harvest project.

Both Hardwick and Mount Shasta are in Transition. Both towns are getting new direction, focus and energy from the movement. But, each town is gearing their Transition efforts in ways that are distinctively their own. Hardwick is using a decidedly more institutional, top-down approach; Mount Shasta is implementing a grassroots, bottom-up methodology. It strikes me that Mount Shasta's approach is going to be more resilient and sustainable as resources continue to dry up and the global economy gets increasingly volatile. While Hardwick remains dependent upon existing socio-political structures, Mount Shasta is building new avenues of social equity. Mount Shasta is truly unique in its understanding of gift culture, community networking, and spirituality. I think if Bill McKibben were to visit Mount Shasta, he would be very, very pleased!

Sherry L. Ackerman, Ph.D., author of *The Good Life: How to Create a Fulfilling and Sustainable Lifestyle*, is a member of the Shasta Commons Core Group.



Why Should Nature Have Rights?

—by Molly Brown

Biologists who have studied living systems know that a subsystem cannot threaten the survival of the larger system, because the subsystem simply will not survive without the larger system. By the same token, the rights of a subsystem cannot supersede the rights of the larger system—at least not for long. This is a simple fact, a natural law of life. Yet in much of the world today, human law recognizes the “rights” of corporations to do business and make money, but not the rights of ecosystems and natural communities to survive. This is nonsensical, because no corporation can exist without employees and stockholders, who in turn utterly depend on the larger ecosystem to meet their basic life needs. Destroy the life support system and eventually you destroy the humans—and their corporations.

The Rights of Nature refers to an world-wide effort to conform our human laws to the natural laws of living systems by which we all live, recognizing that necessarily rights of individuals and groups cannot supercede the rights of the larger system—in this case, the ecosystems in which we live. To tolerate laws that give corporations the right to damage and even destroy ecosystems is ultimately suicidal.



Castle Lake photo by Terry Lawhon

etc. It refers to the rights of “ecosystems and natural communities” to survive and thrive. Cutting a tree, pulling a weed, or killing a gopher would probably not adversely impact the ecosystem within which it lives, so would not infringe on the Rights of Nature. However, cutting a whole stand of trees on a hillside above a river might result in the hillside eroding into the river, thereby harming all the species that depend on that riparian system. Keeping the Rights of Nature in mind means paying closer attention to the effects of our actions on the ecosystems and natural communities in which we live.

This speaks to the need for our laws to recognize the rights of local communities to protect their local environment and resources. Corporations headquartered in distant cities cannot possibly ascertain the effects of corporate actions on local ecosystems, even when their leaders want to (and generally speaking they don't, because profit is their primary concern). So recognizing the Rights of Nature also means recognizing the rights of local communities to enforce those rights within their bioregions. We cannot continue to allow corporations to undermine and harm communities and ecosystems in the name of their more limited right to do business.

Don't we already have environmental regulations in place to take care of this problem? Unfortunately, most regulations are written by the industry being regulated, and at best serve only to limit the damage, rather than prevent it. Moreover, regulations are always subject to corruption—from corporations misrepresenting data, to regulatory agencies being underfunded and under-staffed or bought off, to governing bodies bending the rules in favor of industry, to campaign contributions and even outright bribes—all of which ultimately leaves enforcement up to private citizens after the damage is underway, citizens who must use their own limited funds and time against the deep pockets of the corporations involved.

In short, the human world needs a paradigm shift from “market” economics to life-sustaining economics, in order to survive and thrive over the long term. Recognizing the Rights of Nature is key to such a shift of consciousness and conscience.

Mountain passage

*it's the Mountain
that flows through this work
it's the Mountain that lit my light
much bigger than just me...*

*at the base is a way of seeing and listening
to breathe in silence with the forest
until something responds
from the Oneness within all life...*

*high on the Mountain in the early light
from deep in the night a long pure tone
spreads the symphony of dawn*

*I enter a vastness where light and sky
impose their presence
emerging from background décor*

*...breathe in dark trunk
breathe out swaying branches
breathe in glistening needles*

*breathe out in all directions
roots deep, arms reaching high
grounding the spark of an unseen source*

*this...is a face of an ancient thought
etched in our cells, a primordial future
toward which we are groping...*

*fierce love like a stream winds a path
around obstacles, among eddies
and byways of the human drama*

*inserting itself as a wild player
an emissary of all that is wild and giving
reminding us ...
that our survival depends on it*

—Michelle Berditshevsky

*This poem was recited at the
2011 Harvest Celebration*

Medicine Lake Highlands *continued from page 5*

The complex strata, lava tubes and ice caves of Medicine Lake Volcano and the Modoc Plateau collect, filter and store more water volume (36-40 million acre-feet) in this underground aquifer than all of California's reservoirs combined! These high quality waters come through California's largest spring system, the Fall River Springs, reliably making their way into the Sacramento River and San Diego Aqueduct even in drought years.

The risks to the aquifer from geothermal development are great, and relatively little is known of its complex structure and characteristics. Politically, agencies have thus far largely ignored its critical importance for California. We are seeking the means to assure that adequate studies exist that will favor science-based management decisions and counter the industry-driven studies, in light of Calpine's latest push to claim that 480 megawatts exists in the Highlands. Such studies will allow us to advocate strongly for this prime water resource in the upcoming process.

What is at stake

The problem we're addressing is inappropriate industrialization of near-pristine public lands without regard for the values that already exist there. Geothermal extraction involves drilling 9,000-10,000 feet into the earth through 800-1,000 feet of a huge fresh water aquifer and risking contamination from toxic emissions, spills, well casing failures, blowouts, and "enhanced geothermal systems" that include "fracking," a process that injects toxic hydrochloric and hydrofluoric acids under pressure in order to fracture the strata and access the resource in an area that is highly prone to seismic activity.

Growing a regional coalition

Our approach involves fostering our partnerships and alliance of stakeholders, including the Stanford Law School Environmental Clinic, the Pit River Tribe, the Native Coalition, Save Medicine Lake Coalition (including Medicine Lake Citizens, Fall River Wild Trout, and Klamath Forest Alliance), the Fall River Conservancy, and the large network with which we are involved through participation in developing an Integrated Regional Water Management Plan for the Upper Sacramento Watershed.

The regional coalition includes all who care about the bioregion, so please continue your support by sending in your new or renewed Membership!!



Medicine Lake panorama Photo by Peggy Risch

Castle Crags *continued from page 7*

Steve's brainchild is to develop an Education and Training Center for local colleges and high school students, where students can learn real-world skills while earning degrees. Internships and curriculum would offer on-the-job training, with students working in the park services jobs, including natural history interpretation, visitor services, maintenance, and even accounting and law enforcement. A Field Station could provide for research in ecology, botany, fire science, archaeology and other disciplines.

The Ecology Center has long envisioned an eco-demonstration center for sustainable living, using alternative energy, composting, recycling and other sustainable technologies. Youth and adult ecology classes, and an annual bioregional gathering could be tied in with local curricula, for an integrated approach.



Next Steps and Solutions

The College of the Siskiyous has expressed intent to attend future meetings, as has Shasta College. The Mount Shasta Trail Association has strong interest in keeping the park open, as well as keeping the trails open, accessible and maintained. Siskiyou Land Trust has expressed interest in a possible role. All south county and north Shasta County cities are natural partners.

Conclusion

The potential is huge for this park to be operated by the community, with many accompanying benefits.

Keeping the park open will circulate money in the local economy, create jobs, expand the education and job training opportunities for local youth, and demonstrate sustainable technologies.

This Park belongs to the people. If you feel an interest in helping to keep Castle Crags State Park open for everyone, please join this project. It will take the Village to do this. Please contact the Ecology Center to be notified of future meetings, at 530.926.5655 or info@mountshastaecology.org.

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~creating a foundation for our success~

by Molliegrace, Business Sponsor Coordinator



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Shasta Yoga Center * North State Parent Magazine * Couch Critics * Directions
Scott Valley Bank * Shambhala Center and Specialty Store
Mount Shasta Light Publishing * The Gallery in Mount Shasta * Sacred Seed Crystals
Beloved Heartsong * Barbara J. Semple**

It is through the support of our communities that the Ecology Center is able to continue its ongoing protection and conservation of this unparalleled region. We warmly invite you, our local businesses, to join in this work as an annual Business Sponsor, entitling you to free advertising for a full year at all events, in publications and on our website, plus local membership discounts, free tickets to events and more. Levels of annual sponsorship with increasing incentives begin at \$125. Please see details on the other side of the enclosed Membership Form, or

contact molliegrace at 926-5655 or sponsors@mountshastaecology.org.

For those wanting to contribute to the guardianship of this bioregion on an individual basis, your tax-deductible donations and membership not only support the Ecology Center's important work, but also offer each member donating \$60 or more, annual discounts at a growing number of local businesses. Please see the enclosed membership form or donate via PayPal at www.mountshastaecology.org.

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BIOREGIONAL
ECOLOGY CENTER



PLEASE HELP!

JOIN the ECOLOGY CENTER or RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP to support protection of our magnificent bioregion. Huge campaigns such as SAVE MOUNT SHASTA and SAVE MEDICINE LAKE HIGHLANDS stretch our financial resources to the max!! Please see the enclosed Membership Form.

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