



President's Letter



C.S. Noel

ON THE WATERFRONT

“If water in our area were as abundant as all the opinions there are about it, we’d sure need a heck of a lot of lifeguards around here.”

~ Flo Lobanks

Recently there seems to be an undercurrent of questions bubbling up from people wondering what’s going on with the Los Padres Dam. So, we thought we’d take a look-see. And what it looks like is we have yet another dam problem.

So, How Did We Get To Where We Are Now?

Our area’s penchant for and problems with dams go back to the late 1800s when the area became more accessible and commercial interests became, well, commercially interested in the peninsula, its surroundings, and many attractions.

As growth ensued, pressure for a more robust and reliable water supply followed, resulting in the Carmel River’s first dam in 1883, retrospectively called “The Old Carmel Dam.”

Just 35 years later in 1921, the river received her second, the San Clemente Dam. Growth continued, and you can see where this is going...in 1949 our river was bedazzled with a third, the Los Padres. And, yes, somewhere in there two other dams were also proposed. Potential Grand Total? Five dams on a 36-mile river, averaging a dam about every seven miles. And, no, I’m not making this up.

Implementing one of the dams, proposed by SFB Morse in the mid 1940s, would have meant flooding the entire Cachagua Valley, residents be dammed (so to speak). The other proposal was made in the 1990s for

continued on Pg. 2

DISCOUNTS NOW AVAILABLE FOR PROPERTY INSURANCE

by Richard Bates, President, Fire Safe Council For Monterey County, Firewise Coordinator

Allstate, one of the nation's largest insurance companies, has joined State Farm in deciding to halt sales of property and casualty coverage to new customers in California. Allstate quietly stopped issuing new policies in California months ago but did not formally announce the move until June 2, 2023. A third carrier, Farmers Insurance, has already been significantly limiting policies for new customers. As wildfire season looms ahead, the reasons cited for this exodus include historic increases in construction costs outpacing inflation, rapidly growing catastrophe exposure, a challenging reinsurance market, and frustration with state insurance regulations.

Recent changes to Title 10 of the California Code of Regulations, Section 2644.9(d) “Mitigation in Rating Plans and Wildfire Risk Models,” may be one such regulation (Bulletin 2023-2 for Mitigation Rate Filings at ca.gov). One of the required actions for an insurance carrier is that within 180 days of the enforcement date of October 17, 2022, all California insurance carriers must recognize and reward efforts made by home and business owners to minimize wildfire losses. This regulation, incorporated in the Safer from Wildfires framework, (ca.gov) incentivizes communities and individuals to participate in the program. California is now the first state to require property insurers to offer premium discounts for home and business owners that are executing the guidelines stated in the program.

Section 2644.9 mandates 12 mitigation measures to be reflected in property insurance rates, grouped into the following three categories. By doing more, you can save more. Under Safer from Wildfires,

every action will qualify you for a discount.

A. Community-level designations:

Insurers must offer rate relief to policyholders whose homes or businesses are located in communities designated as a

- Fire Risk Reduction Community by the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection.
- Firewise USA site in Good Standing.

B1. Property-level: Immediate surroundings:

Insurers must offer rate relief to policyholders who take any of the following five mitigation measures:

- Clear debris and vegetation from under decks.
- Clear debris, vegetation, mulch, stored combustible materials, and any movable combustible objects located within five feet of the building being evaluated.
- Only noncombustible materials, including fences and gates, within five feet of the building.
- No combustible structures, including sheds and other outbuildings, within 30 feet of the building.
- Lot complies with Public Resources Code S. 4291, which requires a defensible space around the building, removal of trees and trimming of branches near chimneys, and no dead vegetation near roofs. Visit CAL FIRE’s website or Monterey County Regional Fire District Wildland Urban Interface - Monterey County Regional Fire District (mcrfd.org) for details.

B2. Property-level: Building hardening:

Insurers must offer rate relief to policyholders who take any of the following five mitigation measures:



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Letter, continued from Pg. 1

building an exact duplicate of the current Los Padres Dam some miles downstream from the existing Los Padres Dam. Neither proposal was adopted, so we managed to stick the landing at three.

The result of all this was that introducing dams into our river system changed the behavior of the Carmel River. This is evidenced by the problem of sedimentation, which caused silt to build up within the dams' reservoirs. This condition is exacerbated by wildfires that often contribute sediment and debris into the river course when heavy rains follow fire events.

Over time this will drastically reduce a dam's capacity to a degree where it can no longer support the demand for water required of it. This state of affairs also puts pressure on the dam's structure as it ages, creating a safety hazard relative to seismic activity.

Dam	Year Built	Cost	Original Capacity	Accumulated Sediment	Removal
Old Carmel Dam	1883	\$2,267	n/a	90%	2016
San Clemente Dam	1921	\$300,000	1,650 AF	95%	2018
Los Padres Dam	1949	\$848,000	3,300 AF	46%	TBD

The same dynamic also creates negative impacts to the watershed's ecosystem and native habitat due to reduced flow and narrowing of the river channel. The decline of steelhead is a prime example of the ecological consequences.

The combined issues of capacity, safety, and habitat degradation led to the decision to remove the San Clemente Dam. This was a three-year project that, in addition to removing the structure, also re-routed the river course. At the time it was the largest dam removal project in California, and its reservoir, instead of holding a lot of water, contained 2.5 million cubic yards of sediment.

In 2016, prior to the San Clemente Dam's removal, the Coastal Conservancy/Carmel River Watershed Conservancy removed the Old Carmel Dam in a major (and successful) habitat restoration effort.

While these organizations and efforts have clearly contributed to the great headway made in revitalizing an important stretch of the lower Carmel River, there is still much work to do. Like its predecessors, due to sedimentation, among other things, the Los Padres Dam is showing signs of aging out. This sedimentation has reduced its functional capacity to less than 55%.

Where Does This Leave US?

Based on findings in a comprehensive report commissioned by the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District in participation with Cal Am, not surprisingly, the Executive Summary identifies two key concerns with the Los Padres dam: 1) sedimentation management and alternatives for addressing its reservoir's diminishing capacity, and 2) the impact on habitat, chiefly relative to threatened steelhead.

The report developed multiple alternatives for addressing these problems, ultimately recommending two for further consideration: Alternative 2: Dam and sediment removal, and Alternative 3: Storage expansion and dredging.

Wrapping this up, the report's Executive Summary notes that additional studies are recommended based on the preferred alternatives chosen, along with the need for further action items identified in the report.

All of this seems to go at the glacial pace of water dripping from a stalactite onto a stone, taking eons to make the faintest

continued next page



HUMMINGBIRD SCARCITY MAY BE NATURAL

by Robin Sutherland

Where have all the hummingbirds gone?



Rufous Hummingbird

That seems to be a subject coming up frequently these days in conversations with folks who notice their feeders remaining full and missing the feathered flurry of activity they had happily become used to.

Anecdotal information from the Next Door site seems pretty evenly divided between those mystified by seeing no hummers to those who

Letter, continued from Pg. 2

impression in the rock that would provide a hint of forward progress, given all the stakeholders and agencies that will need to be involved and aligned on a solution. And with many factors from firefighting abilities to long-term water supplies, health of the dam structure, ground water extraction, and conservation impacts on water and steelhead and other habitat, there is a lot to be considered in a final solution before moving forward.

Nonetheless, with the increasing extremes of our area's evolving storm season, it behooves us to come together and act with a sense of urgency.

If we don't get out ahead of this problem, given the current predictable unpredictability of California's climate, the only alternatives left to us may just be to sink or swim.

Find Out More

If you want a river of information on this subject, see the extremely comprehensive report commissioned by MPWMD in participation with Cal Am that was just released on June 19, 2023. <https://www.mpwmd.net/water-supply/los-padres-reservoir/>

So jump in, the water's fine.

Photos by Laurel Sutherland

are observing an abundance of them sipping from their flowering shrubs.

There are several reasons that could lead to these observations. The lush blooms of native wildflowers blanketing our local hills that are the result of this winter's historic rainfall levels could certainly hold more appeal than our more mundane sugar water. And while it's normal for hummingbird populations to differ from one year to the next, there are some other possible explanations.

Adult male hummers are fiercely territorial and may drive all other male hummingbirds away during the height of the spring nesting season. By early July, after chicks have fledged, you may see more hummingbirds again. But by late summer, as migration begins, we may see another decline. The tiny orange Allen's hummingbirds will be off to warmer Mexico, but the larger, greener Anna's will remain in smaller numbers year round.



Anna's Hummingbird

Assuming one maintains good cleanliness and a steady feeding routine with a correct sugar water mix (one part sugar per four parts water), and cleanliness (important to avoid contamination and possible disease transmission), there is probably no reason to worry about our local population. What we are seeing locally does not necessarily reflect what is happening to the species as a whole. It seems that there is no lack of hummingbirds this year, but the population is more spread out across the landscape. If fewer of these little jewels are observed for multiple years, that could be more serious.

Not to get too bird nerd here, but we should count our blessings. Hummingbirds occur only in the Americas with 300 species. Here at our feeders in Carmel Valley we are lucky enough to have three: Anna's, Allen's, and the Allen's lookalike, Rufous. So, if you are missing the fascination of hummers at your home feeder, consider heading out on a local trail to spot them feasting on the abundance of native blossoms before they're gone until next season.

Insurance, continued from Pg. 1

- Class-A fire-rated roof, which provides the highest level of fire protection and resistance.
- Enclosed eaves, which reduce the risk of embers igniting the roof or entering the attic.
- Fire-resistant vents, which resist or prevent the intrusion of flames, embers, and radiant heat.
- Multi-pane windows, which help prevent fire from entering the home.
- At least six inches of noncombustible vertical clearance at the bottom of the exterior surface.

Because insurance is the major financial signal of where risks lie, changes in coverage availability and cost can spur individuals, businesses, and policymakers to change their behavior. Police departments and even entire states are having to adjust to insurers demands (Misconduct settlements have led insurers to force police reform - Washington Post). Prior to enactment of Regulation 2644, several insurance carriers offered voluntary premium discounts to residents of a Firewise community in good standing (Firewise Insurance Discounts NFPA). The new rules now require insurance companies doing business in the state to provide discounts for residential property insurance when policyholders reduce their wildfire risks. In my opinion, the current requirements to qualify for a discount will soon become the very same actions required to simply be eligible to obtain coverage.

You owe it to yourself and your community to get ahead of the curve. Becoming "firewise" is the first step. Please contact me at Firewise.FSCMC@gmail.com to learn how.



HASTINGS RESERVE PROVIDES LOCAL NATURAL HISTORY LESSONS

by Rick Manning

From being the cattle ranch of Russell and Frances Simes Hastings, to becoming a wing of the UC Berkeley Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, and to its current place in the UC Natural History Reserve System, the Hastings Natural History Reservation has remained an exceptional property. Drive east of the village to the 26-mile marker, and you find the entrance. Drive the narrow road into the reserve, and it's like being in another world. You enter the nearly untouched landscape of the Sierra de Salinas: the creeks, ponds, fields, foothills, forests, and wildlife of the protected and cherished space known as a biological field station.

Hastings' history includes over 70 years of intensive observation and collection efforts, 50 years of research on vertebrate ecology and oak-wooded biology, and over 30 long-term ecological data sets. Hastings provides ongoing research projects, supports university and K-12 teaching activities, and has produced hundreds of research publications. The facilities have grown and now include a museum, barn, Linsdale Library, Davis Laboratory, workshop, aviary, office, housing for researchers and interns, conference center, and the modular Arnold Classroom. Museum of Vertebrate Zoology Director Michael Nachman, Faculty Director Eileen Lacey, Reserve Resident Director Jen Hunter, and Reserve Steward Jaime Del Valle continue to administer and care for these treasured 2500 acres.

Visit the website. It's all there: history,



Barn at Hastings Reserve built by homesteader John Scott in 1860. Photo by Mibs McCarthy

research, guiding principles, beautiful photos and videos. But reading on a screen doesn't compare with being on site, listening to the scientists talk about their work, breathing the air while walking the property, seeing the structures and sensing the reserve's long history, experiencing the tempo of scientific observation, or imagining how students working there have grown in their careers.

You must make arrangements to visit Hastings, but going there may convince you that the current vocabulary of "natural resource," "sustainability," and "preservation" somehow falls short in describing the special relation and dedication of the Hastings group of

scientists to the entire beautiful complexity of their work-world. One envies the privilege of those who can experience an extended time on site as scholars.

Carmel Valley locals know that Hastings is renowned for its thorough, long-term study of acorn woodpeckers, their breeding and family groups, communal activities, feeding habits, and storage granaries. It is a project that reminds us of the native Americans' intimate relation to nature, and invites a comparison of the ways cultures exist in the world of nature and think about the nature of the world.

Hastings: what was once a ranch is now a special habitat where observation, collection, discovery, reflection, and connection endure.

The campaign for Tatum's Treehouse playground at the Carmel Valley Community Youth Center is ramping up for a summer of connection with the community through exciting fundraising events, including an opportunity for playground component sponsorship. This beautiful playground will be Monterey County's second fully-inclusive and accessible playground. After 18 months, the committee has raised nearly \$200,000 of its \$800,000 goal. Community contributions continue to be needed, along with volunteers to help with fundraising, planning, and construction. To help, please go to the project's volunteer page at tatumstreehouse.com.

Playground concept from playgroundsbyleathers.com.



AT AGE 105, THERE ARE NO REGRETS *Story and photo by Carolyn Rice*

Gerontologists challenged to guess Sophia Gasser's age might fall far short of what her birth certificate states. Most people probably would be taken aback to know her age. This sprightly, white-haired, friendly woman takes part in lively conversations, has a good memory, plays bridge, and enjoyed riding a horse a few years ago. Her engaged lifestyle seems somewhat extraordinary when she mentions that August 18, 2023, marks her 105th birthday.

Sophia has lived at the Carmel Valley Manor retirement facility for 17 years. For many years she walked around the perimeter of the sizable facility twice a day. Slowing a bit these days, she exercises in her room and uses a walker for shorter outdoor strolls, "Just moving is very important. As kids we walked everywhere because we had no car."

She did a lot more than walk as a youngster. The eldest sister in a family of seven children, Sophia at age 14 managed the household after the death of their parents. Her youngest brother was just a baby when the family was orphaned. Her dad died of tuberculosis at 35, and then her mother of cancer at 36. Sophia recalls, "I learned to move fast. I missed a lot of fun then, but it seemed like good things happened to us. There were no bad times, but there were hard times." The children remained in the family home, and when they left for school each morning, took their youngest brother to his godmother, who lived two houses away. Their uncle lived



in their small town of Glassport, PA, with his family a few blocks from them and oversaw their legal matters and finances.

Sophia and her sister loved the Emily Post etiquette articles, read them regularly, and based their behavior on the information, deciding, "If we just do what she advises, we will do okay." Every family member graduated from high school and business school. She remembers her school fondly and recalls the teachers were wonderful to all the children.

Sophia married her high school sweetheart, Jim, at age 20. Her first baby was the most

exciting event of her life. "I loved each one (of her four children), but I treated him like a baby doll." When her husband left to serve in the Navy during World War II, she was left at home to care for their three little boys, with their daughter coming later.

When the last of her children left for college, Sophia worked in a hospital business office "clunking on a Royal typewriter."

After her husband retired, they moved to California in 1962. He died in 1984. Sophia later relocated to the Monterey Peninsula to be near family, including their daughter, Karen Curtiss, and her husband, Richard, who live locally, as does a granddaughter and her family. Two of Sophia's sons, Bill and Wayne, are no longer living. Another son, David, planned a horse ride for her when she visited his Idaho ranch. "I was maybe 100." Six grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren complete her "tight-knit family."

With no hesitation she says the invention that changed her life the most was the automatic clothes washer.

Describing her diet, Sophia likes food of all kinds and enjoys a glass of wine with dinner. When it comes to attitude, "I try to think positive. I think change is good. It keeps you going." Hard work is what she first mentions when asked what she attributes her long life to.

Looking back over her life, the thing about the United States that makes her proudest is the country allowed her Yugoslavian parents to come here, become citizens, and be accepted. Her father's success in business provided for his orphaned family during the years they were growing up.

After a short hospital stay recently, Sophia questioned her doctor about any needed lifestyle changes. "Just keep doing what you are doing," was his advice.

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Banner photo courtesy of Ron Pierce, 2023. Carmel Valley Village May Sky

CARMEL VALLEY FIESTA 2023
SATURDAY & SUNDAY — AUGUST 5 & 6



*All dogs are winners!
 Photos by Luana Conley.
 More information and details at cvk.weebly.com.*



Beginning with the pancake breakfast at 8 a.m. at the Community Youth Center, through the big raffle drawing for a trip to Costa Rica on Sunday afternoon, the Fiesta weekend will be filled with activities for everyone. There will be loads of vendor booths with unique arts and crafts, participating community groups with useful information, a wide variety of food offerings, the Kiwanis bar, a classic car show, and six bands with talented performers for both days' dancing and listening. A highlight is always the Sunday Doggie Show, with awards for every dog.

The proceeds from the Carmel Valley Kiwanis event all go back into the community for good works by their members. Your attendance helps to support the community and future Fiestas.

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