

In this Issue:

Breaking News!	1
To Our Readers	1
Volunteer!	1
Campaign Finance Ordinances in Sonoma County	2
Membership Form	3
Sonoma County Timber Forest Conversions	3
City of Petaluma Adopts Pre-Qualification Ordinance	4

Coming Soon:

Jobs-Housing Impact Fee
Petaluma City Council Elections – 2004
Local Hiring Preference Ordinances
Sonoma County Conservation Action Column
Santa Rosa Parking Attendants Sign Union Contract
Institute for Ecology and the Economy: Training Future Leaders
Early Endorsements in Political Races

What We Do:

The mission of the Coalition for a Better Sonoma County is to elect candidates who agree with, and will abide by, our Statement of Principles. For a full copy of our Statement of Principles, see www.bettersonoma.com.

Who We Are:

COPE of the North Bay, AFL-CIO
Sonoma County Conservation Action
Petaluma Tomorrow
IBEW, Local 551
Operating Engineers, Local 3
Sonoma County Latino Democratic Club
SEIU Local 707
Housing Advocacy Group
Concerned Citizens for Santa Rosa
World Stewardship Institute
Sheetmetal Workers, Local 104
Let the Voters Decide Coalition
UA Local 38, Plumbers and Pipefitters
UFCW, Local 101
Direct Action Network

BREAKING NEWS!

Sebastopol Adopts Living Wage Ordinance

On November 18th, by a 4-1 majority, the Sebastopol City Council adopted the first Sonoma County Living Wage ordinance. For all details of this historic event, and of the ordinance itself, please see www.livingwagesonoma.com.

Petaluma Adopts Jobs-Housing Linkage Fee

On December 1st, the Petaluma City Council, with a 6-1 majority, adopted the first Jobs-Housing Linkage Fee ordinance in Sonoma County. Details of this groundbreaking event can be reviewed at www.bettersonoma.com.

To Our Readers:

The Coalition for a Better Sonoma County exists to elect people to local office in Sonoma County who believe in our statement of principles and will be guided by them in making public policy decisions. We called our first newsletter "Take Back Sonoma County" to emphasize the theme that we were tired of people getting elected who didn't care about the issues we cared about. We're calling this issue "NEWS for a Better Sonoma County" to emphasize the positive aspects of what we're doing. If we get the right people elected to office, this will be a better place to live.

Some questions have been raised about our editorial policy. Our goals in publishing this newsletter are:

- To keep you informed about important local governmental actions and political activities that affect the Coalition's key policies and issues.
- To allow members to express their opinions about issues, so long as those

opinions are in keeping with our statement of principles.

- To keep you informed about the activities of the Coalition.

To those ends, our editorial policy is simple. We solicit articles of 300-500 words in length from our members. We may request that authors shorten those articles in order to fit inside the limitations of our newsletter format, but we do not edit submissions for content, unless they contain material that is obviously outside the scope of the Organization's concerns. So far, no one has written anything like that, and given the kind of membership we have, we expect that no one will write anything like that in the future. Additionally, if we have a surfeit of riches and receive too many articles for a newsletter, we will select articles for publication so that each member organization has a representative article, to the extent possible. And, of course, breaking news at the time of publication will supersede all else.

Volunteer!

FIRST: The Coalition for a Better Sonoma County will be doing pre-election polling, and needs volunteers to help. Please contact Guy Conner at guyc@sonic.net if you can help by making phone calls in either Petaluma or Santa Rosa. **Thanks!**

SECOND: We also have need for volunteers to do office work at our new offices, donated to the Coalition by the Sonoma

County Building Trades. Contact Guy Conner at guyc@sonic.net to volunteer. **Thanks!**

THIRD: We can save money by not mailing our Newsletters to you. If you are willing to download a pdf version of this Newsletter from our website, instead of getting a paper copy, please let us know at mail@bettersonoma.com. **Thanks!**

Campaign Finance Ordinances in Sonoma County

Willard Richards, Voters Service Chair, League of Women Voters of Sonoma County

In December 2000, a lame duck Petaluma City Council passed the most complete campaign finance ordinance in Sonoma County. The Council that followed wanted to weaken that ordinance, but could not do so because of a pending lawsuit. Last year, the suit was resolved and additional Councilmembers interested in weakening the ordinance were elected. July 7 this year, the contribution limit per election cycle was increased from \$200 to \$500,

public financing was eliminated, and the threshold for contributions that must be reported was increased. The requirement for an additional campaign disclosure statement on the second business day before the election, normally Friday, was not altered. Also, the loophole that allows two election cycles, hence two maximum contributions during a four-year term of office, was not closed.

In May 2002, a committee of citizens appointed to review the Charter of the City of Santa Rosa recommended that the Charter be revised to include a section requiring lower contribution limits, more timely reporting, and public financing for Council elections. The City Council put this on the ballot, and it was approved by a 62.8% yes vote in November 2002.

The League of Women Voters of Sonoma County studied campaign finance ordinances in California cities and prepared recommendations for provisions that could be adopted to comply with this voter mandate. The new ordinance, adopted September 9, included the League recommendation that an additional campaign disclosure statement be required on the second business day before the election and that all disclosure statements be posted on the City web site.

The new Santa Rosa ordinance lowered the contribution limit from \$1000 to \$500, and closed the loophole that allowed two election cycles, hence two separate contributions, during a four-year term of office. The League feared that the Council would not provide sufficient monetary funding to be meaningful when complying with the mandate to provide public financing. Therefore, the League recommended that the City provide each candidate who agrees to a voluntary spending limit one full page in the city newsletter that goes to all households in Santa Rosa. This publication would cost the City less than \$10,000 every two years.

The new ordinance passed by the Council limits the space for each candidate in the newsletter so the entire publication will be no more than 8 pages. However, information on the candidates will also be made available on the City website along with links to non-partisan web sites that provide additional information on the candidates. The feature of the ordinance that is unique is that public financing is given to all candidates, and is not limited to candidates who agree to comply with a voluntary spending limit. This eliminates the incentive to limit campaign spending, which is a key

feature of public financing in all other campaign finance ordinances known to us.

The activities in Petaluma and Santa Rosa sparked an interest in campaign finance ordinances in other cities. In August, Vicki Vidak-Martinez put a campaign finance ordinance on the Rohnert Park Council agenda, but it was delayed. It has now been withdrawn because she believes it would be unwise to change the rules in the middle of fundraising for a potential recall election and the November Council election.

In July, the Healdsburg City Council discussed strengthening their campaign finance ordinance, and specific language was discussed November 3 and 17. The first reading of a new ordinance was passed on December 1. Healdsburg will lower the contribution limit to \$500, require an additional disclosure statement a few days before the election, make disclosure statements available on the City web site, and require the disclosure of each independent expenditure of \$500 or more. The Council will not close the loophole described above that results from a two-year election cycle.

Also in July, the Cotati City Council discussed a campaign finance ordinance and referred the matter to a committee of Councilmembers Gilardi and Orchard. The committee has met, and the City Attorney is currently working on various options to bring back to the committee.

We will keep you informed of activities around Sonoma County campaign finance in the future.

The League of Women Voters of Sonoma County is a non-partisan organization, and is not a member of the Coalition for a Better Sonoma County.

62.8% of Santa Rosa voters decided, in November 2002, that they want campaign finance reform for Santa Rosa elections. They asked for lower contributions limits, more timely reporting of campaign contributions, and public financing of campaigns.

Join the Coalition for a Better Sonoma County – make a difference!

YES, I want to become a member of the Coalition for a Better Sonoma County.

Enclosed are my annual individual dues: \$25 (Annual Individual Dues)

Enclosed are our annual organizational dues: \$100 (Annual Organizational Dues)

I want to really help the Coalition. Enclosed is: Other Amount _____

YES, I want to be notified of the Coalition's Meetings and Action Alerts.

For more information, call the Coalition offices at 576-9675, or email to mail@betersonoma.com

Print Name(s) 1) _____ 2) _____

Address _____ City/State/ZIP Code _____

Phone: _____ FAX #: _____ Email: _____

Occupation: _____ Employer: _____

Signature(s) 1) _____ 2) _____

Please make checks payable to: the Coalition for a Better Sonoma County

Please clip and return this form in an envelope to Coalition for a Better Sonoma County • 1700 C Corby Ave., Santa Rosa, CA 95407.

Sonoma County Timber Forest Conversions

Helen Libeu

Looking at conversion issues, we can review 1) the *policy issue* of whether we want much more of Sonoma County converted from forests or other uses to more grapevines, and 2) what happens on the ground when forests are converted to grapes. A ride along West County roads will demonstrate how far the conversion has already gone. The prices for grapes have already taken a dip, due in part to a glut of grape plantings. You know, that old supply and demand thing. What will happen to abandoned vineyards when the owners pull up their stakes and move on?

When Gallo converted from apple orchard to grapes along Guerneville Road some years ago, Frei road was inches deep in sediment; and Fish and Game made them construct traps in order to save the Laguna from some of the sediment load. Gallo then built berms out into the Laguna, and has its own private lake with Laguna waters.

This discussion will focus on point 2) – what can happen when forests are ripped out for grape plantations.

The redwood tree is sort of a fossil very ancient species and the only conifer with no tap root. Instead, they hold up those sometimes huge

trunks and limbs by sending out a wide circle of heavy lateral roots. Thus converting a redwood forest to anything else requires grubbing out the roots to about three feet deep and in a wide circle otherwise they resprout easily.

In planting a vineyard on former redwood/fir ground, the owner may install a reservoir for irrigating his vines, and underground tiles for quick drainage, thus imposing man's idea of hillslope hydrology on the defenseless slopes. In one Sonoma County conversion, the plans call for putting a reservoir either ON or beside a landslide; the location seems to be fluid at this point, and the Regional Water Quality staff is interested in the problem.

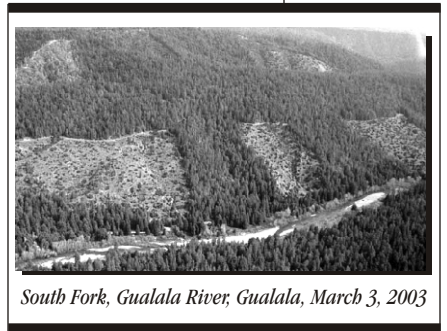
In that instance, the river affected is the Gualala, already federally listed for excess sediment and high temperature. Tearing up the ground and removing the shade provided by trees will not help with either problem—quite the reverse.

Adding **any** sediment and temperature problems to the already-impacted Gualala is another nail in a coffin lid already nearly nailed shut. About 30,000 acres of that watershed are owned by one

owner Gualala Redwoods Inc. which prefers clearcutting. Coho salmon, once flourishing in the Gualala are now nearly extirpated. The river bed is choked with sandbanks, with the river a small line struggling through.

Of course wildlife habitat is permanently changed by grape plantations even when they leave an opening in their fences for wildlife to escape through fences put up specifically to keep wildlife out.

So the *policy* issue of whether more grape industry plantations are desirable is entwined with the ecological issue of how much more of the county's land we want changed for water quality impacts, wildlife habitat, and, yes aesthetics. In my opinion, anyone who prefers to look at grapevines and their wood and metal stakes and wires to forested slopes is either the owner or his mother.



South Fork, Gualala River, Gualala, March 3, 2003

Coalition for a
Better Sonoma County

1700 C Corby Ave. • Santa Rosa, CA 95407
707-576-9675

**MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN
SONOMA COUNTY!**

Join your friends and colleagues at
our regular monthly meetings on the
Second Monday of every month.

Check www.bettersonoma.com
for the date and location.

**THANK YOU TO THE
SONOMA COUNTY
BUILDING TRADES FOR
DONATING OUR
NEW OFFICE SPACE!**

City of Petaluma Adopts Pre-Qualification Ordinance

Steven A. Benjamin

On Monday August 4, 2003 the Petaluma City Council voted 6-0 to pass an ordinance that would require all contractors bidding on city public works projects to go through a comprehensive pre-qualification process. This is a big victory for reputable contractors and construction firms in the North Bay area. Pre-qualification is a system of checks and balances that a public awarding agency, such as the City of Petaluma, can use to look at a number of factors regarding contractors and construction firms before awarding a contract. It gives an awarding agency a chance to take a closer look at a company that is bidding on a public works project in an effort to help them make a more informed decision. Some of the requirements of a pre-qualification

ordinance are past performance on similar projects, bonding, financial and insurance capacities, safety records, labor compliance-state law violations, use of apprentices in state certified apprenticeship programs (20% of all construction hours on a public works project must be done by apprentices in state approved apprenticeship programs according to state law), quality and skill level of workforce, and the potential to create a local hiring consideration to keep transient contractors and workers from underbidding local contractors.

Given the fact that the city of Petaluma has had problems with past public works projects, this is a timely and welcome change in city policy. Petaluma City Councilman Mike

Healy worked with the Sonoma County Building and Construction Trades Council and North Bay Construction for over eight months to make this a reality.

The City of Petaluma will be the first public awarding agency in Sonoma County to require a pre-qualification process. We are working on other awarding agencies, including cities and school districts in the county, to follow suit. This is a good common sense public policy that will protect our construction tax dollars and ensure that we hire responsible local contractors who play by the rules. The hiring of local contractors helps with our local unemployment problem and ensures that our tax dollars will be recycled into our local economy!