

eacNews

Environmental Action Committee of West Marin

INFORMATION, UPDATES, INVOLVEMENT • FALL 2004 • EAC, BOX 609, PT REYES STATION 94956

Independent investigation will enhance understanding of Tomales Dunes Study finds dunes dynamic, yet delicate

EAC has sponsored coastal plant ecologist Peter Baye, Ph.D, working with entomologist David Wright, Ph.D, to prepare a comprehensive report that provides the basis for evaluating cumulative impacts on regional biodiversity of land use changes at Tomales Dunes. Baye's report, "Biogeographic Assessment of Tomales Dunes, Marin County, California: Vegetation, Flora, and Invertebrates," adopts a broader ecological focus than typical biological assessments and gives full weight to species of limited distribution and genetic distinctiveness.

The study makes clear that the varied landforms and the constant shifting of the dunes promotes their biological richness. The dynamic nature of the dunes results from the interplay of water and wind and their influence on sand movement. Indeed, the native plants that can survive in the shifting sands of a dune ecosystem are "bioengineers", in effect creating their own habitat niches and moving through the changing environment as conditions vary. In the late 1800s, non-native beachgrass (*Ammophila arenaria*) was introduced in

"European beachgrass alters the dune ecology by stabilizing active dunes, greatly reducing sand movement and increasing plant cover."

an attempt to stabilize the dune system, a goal at odds with the natural behavior the dunes.

What are the distinctive aspects of the Tomales Dunes flora? Many of the native plants common at other California dunes —silver dune lupine (*Lupinus chamissonis*), coast buckwheat (*Eriogonum latifolium*), dune sage (*Artemisia pycnocephala*)— are rare or absent at Tomales dunes. However, Tomales Dunes is home to several dune-adapted species (eg. dune tansy, *Tanacetum camphoratum*) that



PHOTO BY SCOTT FEERABEND

*An egret stands by a dune slack; European beachgrass (*Ammophila arenaria*) has invaded the nearby foredunes.*

would normally be found further north or south but reach the edge of their ranges here.

The main distinguishing features of Tomales Dunes are:

- the very high proportion and extent of dune slack wetlands, including calcium carbonate-enriched marshes and ponds;
- the very high proportion of naturally mobile, unvegetated or sparsely vegetated high-relief dunes still uncolonized by beachgrass
- the largest continuous expanse of native scrub vegetation on paleodunes (possibly Pleistocene age) in California north of Monterey Bay;
- the northernmost stands of extensive, continuous, and still-expanding dune scrub dominated by mock-heather, *Ericameria ericoides*. Mock-heather is the characteristic and dominant coastal dune scrub plant species of the entire central California coast, and Tomales Dunes represents the northern limit of its full development.

continued on page 3

EAC's lost history comes to light

EAC member Jim Gault recently found this fascinating memo from EAC's earliest days. If you have any EAC history in your files, we'd be pleased to have a copy for our archives. If you are interested in helping collect information for a history of EAC, please contact the office at 663-9312.

May 22, 1972

In the fall of 1970 the Environmental Action Committee of West Marin was formed as a result of the opening by the National Park Service of the road to Mt. Vision to the private auto. By April 1971 we were an incorporated group and by June, Jerry Friedman decided to leave Walden Center School in Berkeley after 6 years of teaching, in order to devote his time and energy in helping to solve West Marin environmental and planning problems.

John Holt, the well known educator and author (*How Children Learn, How Children Fail*), agreed to pay Jerry \$4,000 in order to keep the group going on a full time basis. Standard Oil contributed \$500 as a result of our work during the oil spill, and the Sierra Club Foundation has periodically contributed funds for non-legislative work connected with the Point Reyes National Seashore. In late fall of 1971, the Conservation Foundation of Washington, D.C., agreed to hire Jerry for the duration of the Tomales Bay Study as one of the coordinators, with funds separate from those collected for the study by local citizen groups.

During the next year, John Holt will diminish his contribution to the group so that we must be self-sufficient.

Consequently, to continue on as a viable, full time, self-supporting organization, a fund raising committee of volunteer members has been established. The goal of our fundraisers is \$5,000. With this amount our group will be able to support a full time representative to attend meetings and do all the necessary research and information dissemination crucial to accomplishing the goals of our organization. To date, EACOWM's primary expenditures have been for our monthly phone bill which has run around \$120, for our newsletter at a cost of \$15 per mailing, and for expenses connected with EACOWM meetings and special projects.

As a first step toward our goal of \$5,000 we are asking each individual member to contribute \$10 or more. (For those members who cannot afford \$10 a year, any contribution above \$1 will be counted as a membership fee.) The importance of such contributions is threefold.

First, it raises money. Second, it firmly establishes a roster of truly supporting members. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it opens the door to foundation matching grants.

Our next steps towards our goal are still in the exploratory stages, and we seek your advice and help. Members of the fund raising committee are actively investigating the possibilities of sponsoring an arts and crafts fair and/or auction, rummage sale, a musical benefit concert featuring a well-known artist or group, and the creation and sale of our own West Marin poster (complementary ones, of course, for all our members). All of these different projects could be profitable and fun with active support and participation from all of us.

We have an outstanding and well-respected organization. The positions expressed and actions taken by this group, made public through our representatives, have earned our group an ever increasing part in influencing decision making bodies not only in Marin but also in Sacramento and Washington, D.C. Your active support and participation will insure the future of EACOWM.

Sincerely yours,

Marj Stone, Chairman, EACOWM Fund Raising Committee

Some Highlights of EACOWM's Work 1970-1972

- Organized a coalition of groups to prepare a joint statement on the Seashore Master Plan.
- Supported the Sierra Club's wilderness proposal for Point Reyes National Seashore.
- Set up West Marin's first recycling center.
- Won the repeal of the West Marin General Plan, and the establishment of an Interim Ordinance to protect West Marin.
- Won the adoption of A-60 zoning.
- Won the extension of the Tidal Waterways Ordinance up Lagunitas Creek and all tidal areas in Marin.
- Won protection of Limantour Estero and Point Reyes Headlands as research natural areas.

Please note: Many of our battles would not have been won without the help of many other local and countywide groups.

Baye Report, from page 1

The unusual soil and vegetation conditions at Tomales Dunes favor unique communities and species of insects. Insects are important but often overlooked contributors to the ecological function of any community. Tomales dunes

“Despite the wealth of native dune plant species and their habitats, Tomales Dunes in their current condition are subject to progressive and potentially irreversible degradation of its dune vegetation. The unchecked spread of [invasive aliens] is likely to facilitate further wildland weed problems, such as dominance by annual non-native grasses, and reduce conservation potential for existing sensitive plant populations.”

hosts some rare and interesting insects whose populations would likely be bolstered by dune restoration.

Two rare bird species are of particular interest at Tomales Dunes. The Western Snowy Plover occurs on the beach and foredune in good numbers both prior to and immediately following the breeding season. With reduced human traffic, it is likely that this could become a prime breeding site for this federally-threatened species. The dune slacks (wetlands) host one of the few wintering populations of Pacific Golden Plovers in North America, a tes-

tament to the unique environment these rare wetlands provide.

The coastal dune and dune slack (wetland) plant communities at Tomales Dunes are, therefore, highly distinct from their closest comparable types at Point Reyes dunes and Bodega Head dunes. In fact, Tomales Dunes is most comparable to the historic structure of the San Francisco dune complex and is an important resource for the understanding and restoration of a portion of San Francisco’s dunes

Tomales dunes could play a critical role in the recovery of some rare or vanishing species that rely on coastal dunes. Tidestrom’s lupine, Myrtle’s silver spot butterfly, and the Western Snowy Plover, among others, could find refuge and establish viable populations here if the dunes were properly managed.

Urban development and dune destruction up and down the California coast—at Pacifica, San Mateo, San Francisco—has eliminated most coastal dune habitat and what still exists, such as Tomales dunes, is threatened with further degradation. There are simply few opportunities left to restore viable dune ecosystems and to insure a future for the plants and animals that are so delicately adapted to the shifting sands.

—Jules Evens



Tidestrom's Lupine (Lupinus tidestromii), federally endangered

EAC

Ballot box victory: Marin bans GMO crops

EAC was an early and active supporter of Measure B, the ban on genetically modified crops that voters approved overwhelmingly on November 2th. With 62% of the electorate favoring the ban, Marin becomes the third county in California (after Mendocino and Trinity counties) to outlaw GMO crops. Though similar measures in Butte and San Luis Obispo Counties failed, activists in at least a dozen other California counties are considering putting forward their own bans.

GMO-Free Marin Campaign coordinator Lora O'Connor said, “This is the beginning of a movement that’s going to be spreading across California and the country. Once people realize that they have a choice, they’re choosing no.”

EAC endorsed the ban because we believe it is essential for the safety of our health and our local agricultural industry, which relies on its reputation for producing clean, healthy foods. Well-known GMO researcher Dr. Ignacio Chapela spoke at our Potluck on the technical uncertainties of genetic engineering.



Dr. Ignacio Chapela demonstrates the challenges of genetic engineering with his famous tabletop rope trick at this year's Potluck dinner.

EAC

Thanks to all who supported EAC this year (donations received from 11/1/03 to 10/31/04).

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Celebration of Tomales Bay and Ed Wayburn

In October, EAC hosted a small lunch to celebrate the designation of Tomales Bay as a Wetland of International Importance under the Convention on Wetlands, commonly known as the Ramsar Convention. Thanks to our efforts, Tomales Bay is one of only 19 Ramsar sites in the United States and one of only two in California. We also wanted to honor Dr. Edgar Wayburn, whose support was a key factor in the success of our nomination.

Among the guests were the heads of the two agencies that manage Tomales Bay, Don Neubacher of the Point Reyes National Seashore, and Maria Brown of the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary, along with her predecessor, Ed Ueber. They were joined by representatives of the public officials and organizations that supported our nomination, Senator Barbara Boxer, Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey, the California Department of Fish & Game, and the Sierra Club. Dr. Wayburn was presented with a copy of remarks made on the floor of Congress by Lynn Woolsey to mark the event. An excerpt is below.

"Now 98, Ed Wayburn has a record as one of the most successful environmental leaders in the country. Locally, Ed and his late wife Peggy are known for their roles in the expansion of Mount Tamalpais State Park and the creation of Pt. Reyes National Seashore and the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Nationally, they spent 13 years fighting to protect 104 million acres of Alaskan wilderness, an achievement that doubled the size of the national park system. In 1995, he won the Albert Schweitzer Prize for Humanitarianism, and, in 1999, he won the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest

civilian award, for his exceptional service on behalf of environmental preservation.

"Dr. Edgar Wayburn is principally responsible for saving more open space than any other living American. Although not the hiker he used to be, he is still awed and inspired by the natural world. "Wilderness is enjoyed not only by the young and hardy," he says. "Sometimes it is simply enough to know it exists – to remember and to dream." We share the dream of Ed Wayburn for a world in which mankind honors and preserves our natural heritage."

The lunch ended with a reading of a poem written especially for EAC by Inverness resident and poet Robert Hass about the bay he lives by and loves. We are very grateful to Bob for this honor.

Tomales Bay, Autumn

*Tomales Bay is flat blue in the September heat.
This is the moment when hikers on Inverness Ridge
stand on tiptoe to pick the ripe huckleberries
the deer couldn't reach. This is the season of lulls—
egrets hunting the tidal shallows; ribbons of sandpipers
fluttering over mudflats, white, then not; steam,
just a little, rising from the bay. This is the season
when bliss is what you glimpse from the corner of your eye,
as you drive past, running errands, as the wind comes up,
and the surface of the water glitters hard against it.*

—Robert Hass

Composting West Marin

Following the lead of the successful Bolinas-Stinson Beach green waste composting project, the West Marin Compost Coalition (which includes EAC board member Lynnette Kahn) is proposing a new West Marin Community Compost Program. The proposed program will deal with the green waste generated by homeowners, tree crews, park maintenance, and landscapers, and the livestock manure generated by dairies and horse ranches, with a view to improving water quality within the Tomales Bay watershed.

The Coalition wants to develop several small community composting operations that would corral sources of nutrients and organic matter, processing them under controlled conditions so as to render them pathogen free and environmentally benign. The idea is to return the finished compost back to the parks, farms, ranches, gardens and landscapes from which it was derived. This would have several benefits. It would reduce or eliminate the need for imported mineral fertilizers on these watershed soils and it would increase soil organic matter, thus improving the soil's nutrient holding

capacities and reducing nutrient and sediment runoff. With several small strategically located sites, the projects would share equipment, reduce hauling costs in the form of fuel use, air pollution, traffic and labor, and minimize pollution risks potentially attendant to larger scale facilities.

This concept, developed over several years by the Coalition, has been influenced by the Bolinas-Stinson Beach experience. Lunny Grading and Paving, Inc. has agreed to act as the private sector sponsor of a proposed public-private pilot composting facility for Nicasio Valley. The proposed Nicasio project would process dairy waste, horse stable manure, and green waste generated within the Nicasio Creek watershed. It could also serve as a green waste handling facility for the Pt. Reyes area until a Pt. Reyes facility is developed. The Coalition, which welcomes new members, has already met with a number of local groups, and will soon make a presentation to the Nicasio community.

For more information, contact Jeff Creque at JACreque@aol.com.

EAC coordinates community effort to set marine reserves for Marin coast

In 1999, the California legislature passed the Marine Life Protection Act, specifying that a network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) be established along the California coastline to protect marine biodiversity. To design and implement these MPAs, the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) initiated several regional working groups comprised of stakeholders including fisherman, recreational users, scientists, agencies and environmentalists to cooperatively discuss and design mutually agreeable networks of protected areas for discrete sections of the coast. These networks would then be considered for recognition by the state. However, with the state budget crisis beginning in 2002, the working groups were suspended. Recently the process was re-initiated, but with a focus on central California. The working groups will not address the Marin Coast for several more years. At that time, DFG will consider MPA proposals from local community groups, in addition to those proposed by the DFG-sponsored working groups.

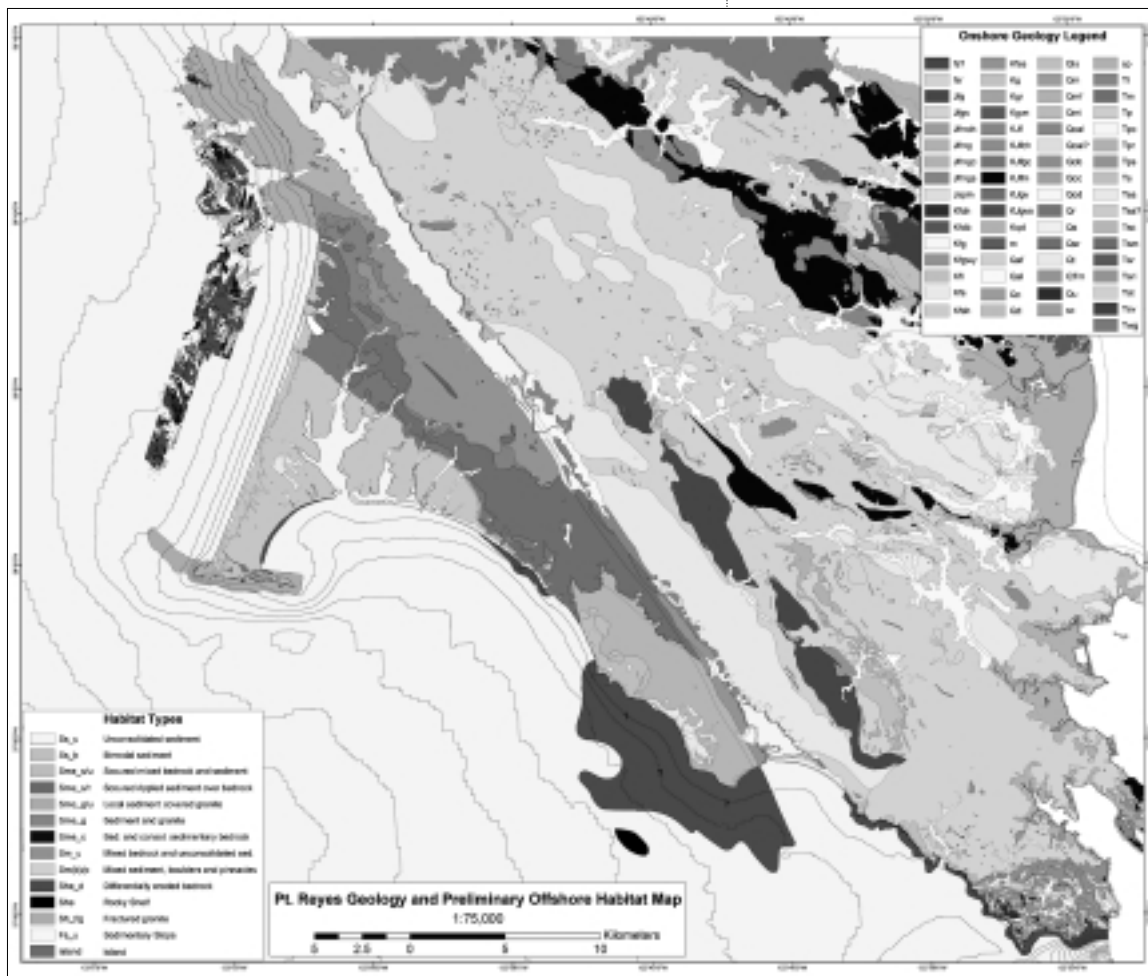
To help ensure that the Marin Coast has a sustainable and stakeholder supported array of MPAs, EAC is coordinating a local MPA working group composed of local recreational fisherman, government agencies, environmental groups, and scientists. The working group intends to develop a mutually agreeable and scientifically defensible array of MPAs to propose to DFG for consideration. By having an MPA array that is widely supported by local stakeholders, we are more likely to have a proposal considered and implemented by DFG, since disagreement over size, number and placement of MPAs can often stall or derail the process.

The working group asked stakeholders to suggest potential areas for MPAs that are mutually agreeable. Then, researchers from Moss Landing Marine Labs collected habitat data for these areas using sidescan sonar. Finally, the habitats and MPAs are entered into a spatial fish population and dispersal model being developed by UC Davis that will calculate the MPA array's effectiveness at sustaining nearshore

rockfish populations. Thus, different arrays of MPAs proposed by the group can be tested for predicted effectiveness at sustaining fish populations into the future. In addition, Environmental Defense is conducting a survey of marine resource users to determine which areas are most ecologically, economically and socially important.

The state has postponed decisions on MPAs in Northern California until at least 2010. We therefore hope to have a scientifically rigorous, socially responsible and sustainable MPA plan endorsed by all local stakeholders to present to the state for consideration at that time.

—Ben Becker,
Pacific Coast Science
and Learning Center,
Point Reyes
National Seashore



MOSS LANDING MARINE LAB

Preliminary marine substrate map that will be used to delineate rockfish habitat. This map does not yet include new high-resolution sonar data collected in September 2004 at the Pt. Reyes Headlands and from Drakes Bay down to Duxbury Reef.

Thanks to our great volunteers!

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Piper Dan McNear trades fashion secrets with Joseph Monroe, father of Mia Monroe, at this year's Piper on the Ridge

New Members in 2004

Mary Kent: *Berkeley*. Bobbi & David Kimball: *Bolinas*. Susan & Nicholas Pritzker: *Chicago, IL*. Dr. & Mrs. William Serber, Pauline Zamora & Andreas Bengough: *Corte Madera*. Paul & Maureen Draper: *Cupertino*. Patricia Todesco: *Davis*. David Weinstein: *El Cerrito*. Mario Guarneri: *Fairfax*. David Herbst & Nancy Beck, Robert Cardwell, Gayanne Enquist, Bridger & Katherine Mitchell, Richard & Eve Anne Pearson, Martha and Alan Proctor, Susan Scott, Dwight & Elaine Straub: *Inverness*. Sandra Bird: *Kentfield*. Mary B. Linton: *Larkspur*. Frank Werblin: *Marshall*. Cherie Anderson: *Mill Valley*. Kate Merriman, Porter Merriman: *Napa*. Rebecca Kurland & Patrick Mason: *Oakland*. Karen Anderson: *Olema*. Michael A. Kraus & Nancy Sasser: *Petaluma*. Lee Benzinger Rob Hayden, Ellen Holmes, Gary Knoblock, Ruth L. Stahl: *Point Reyes Station*. George Dirkes, Diane Fruin: *Ross*. Beverly McIntosh: *San Anselmo*. Kristine Johnson & Timothy Dattels: *San Francisco*. Thelma Arlom: *San Rafael*. Michael Ellis: *Santa Rosa*. Joyce and John Moldovan: *Sonoma*. Faith Echtermeyer: *St. Helena*. Bill Duddleson: *Williamsport*. Peter and Ann Jones: *Woodacre*.

For the latest on EAC activities & West Marin issues go to www.eacmarin.org



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Catherine Caufield,
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Sign up now for Bob Stewart's Easter walk

Popular naturalist Bob Stewart has kindly offered to lead an Easter morning (Sunday, March 27) walk at Chimney Rock to benefit EAC. He'll talk about birds, birdsong, wildflowers and thenatural history of the area. What better way to welcome Spring? This trip is for EAC members only and it is limited to the first 15 to sign up. Bob's walks always fill up fast. Call 606-2235 to enroll. \$50 donation to support EAC's work.

eac Environmental Action Committee of West Marin
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