



Mill Bend. Photo by Craig Tooley

Post Office Box 1511, Gualala, CA 95445 • (707) 884-4426 • [rclc@rclc.org](mailto:rclc@rclc.org) • [www.rclc.org](http://www.rclc.org)

# Redwood Coast News

August 2022

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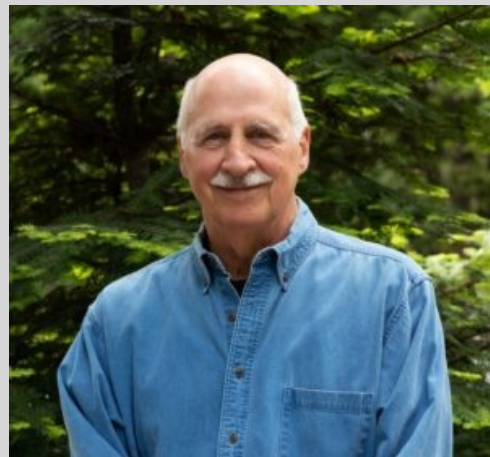
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**Updates and Our Wish List**

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**We are now featuring regular Bird Walks along Mill Bend! Slots fill up fast; keep your eyes open for our emails.**

## Planning for the Future



RCLC Board President John Walton

Since Mill Bend was listed for sale in 2017, RCLC has sought community input about its future. The responses have been consistent from the majority of those who've taken part in the live and virtual forums that have been held... purchase it, restore and protect it, and provide access consistent with protection.





The Gualala River and Estuary are great spots to birdwatch.



The scenery along the path of our bird walks is beautiful.



Rich Trissel works with the eBird app.

Photos by Teresa Burns Gunther

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The California Coastal Conservancy, one of the generous purchase funders, also provided funding to develop a Conservation Plan to guide our work. Dave Shpak, Mill Bend Project Manager, has coordinated the planning effort working closely with Prunuske Chatham Inc. (PCI), an environmental consulting firm in Sebastopol with extensive experience on the north coast. Many of you, along with the funders, local stakeholders, and regulatory agencies have joined us to examine the plans and provide feedback as they've progressed during the past two years. RCLC is happy to report the Plan is nearing completion.

We believe this Plan represents the balance of restoration, protection and access that will enable the environment to continue to heal from past uses, become more resilient for the changing future, and provide access to its stunning features. Watch for our upcoming event at Gualala Arts - your chance to view and celebrate the plan, ask questions and tour the property. We're confident that you will agree that the future is bright for Mill Bend.

Virtually all of the work leading up to the purchase of Mill Bend and the subsequent restoration work has been volunteer-driven. RCLC is grateful to the dozens of community members that have contributed their time and effort. Yet the work ahead to implement the Plan will be challenging and take many years to complete. Funding for Dave's position will end with the Plan's completion (no worries, Dave is now a board member and remains dedicated to Mill Bend). The complexity of the multifaceted Plan, along with managing RCLC's other properties, will require resources beyond what volunteers can reasonably be expected to provide.

We are pleased to welcome Jim Elias as our new Executive Director! Read more about Jim in this newsletter. Jim is committed to realizing the community's vision that we all have for Mill Bend and ensure that future generations can enjoy all



of the amazing places that we are dedicated to protecting.

*Sincerely,  
John Walton  
RCLC Board President*

## Mapping the Flora at Mill Bend Preserve



At Mill Bend, many hands have been hard at work over the past two years managing the diverse flora found on this 113-acre property.

Volunteers have been removing French Broom (*Genista monspessulana*), Andean Pampas grass (*Cortaderia jubata*), Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*), Periwinkle (*Vinca major*), multiple species of Cotoneaster, as well as many other invasives observed onsite. Goats and sheep were even hired to help. **Removing the invasives provides a chance for the native plants to grow and thrive, which in turn will allow the native wildlife to thrive.**

The task to manage such a large parcel of land has been a labor of love for the devoted volunteers under the guidance of Cheryl Harris, RCLC Board Member. Recently, a small group has formed to monitor and map specific areas (zones) using a free phone application, called *Observer Pro* which is managed by a non-profit called CalFlora ([www.calflora.org](http://www.calflora.org)). **Using *Observer Pro*, volunteers can use their phone onsite to plot the GPS location of targeted plants for removal and mark the location of valued native plants so that they are not removed accidentally.**

Some of the wonderful finds are the native flower, Swamp Harebell (*Campanula californica*) and Fringed Cornlily (*Veratrum fimbriatum*). Additionally, several native habitat shrubs emerged including a large Coast Silk tassel (*Garrya elliptica*) and a beautiful large Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*). The data resulting from this monitoring will help form a solid basis for future planning of trails and other improvements on the site.



Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*)

**Thank you to our volunteer monitoring team** Mary Hunter, Julia Larke, Nicole Forte, Laura Baker, Joaquin Jacobs and Cheryl Harris. Anyone who wishes to join our monitoring team is welcome. Contact Cheryl at [volunteers@rclc.org](mailto:volunteers@rclc.org).



Fringed Cornlily (*Veratrum fimbriatum*)



Coffeeberry (*Frangula californica*)

## Introducing Jim Elias, our Executive Director!

The Redwood Coast Land Conservancy is pleased to announce that Jim Elias will be stepping into the role of executive director on September 6. He will work alongside the board of directors and the broader community to help RCLC fully realize its ambitious mission to protect and restore natural habitats, and connect people to nature.

Jim comes to RCLC with an accomplished background in land conservation. He spearheaded acquisition initiatives that permanently protected more than 60,000 acres of natural, recreational, and agricultural landscapes in the Sierra, Rocky Mountains and Intermountain West. Jim is also a skilled organization builder, having led and grown several successful nonprofits, including land trusts.



Board President John Walton commented, “RCLC has always relied heavily on our board members and local volunteers to achieve its goals. With the successful acquisition of Mill Bend, the work load has simply outgrown us. The objectives outlined in the Mill Bend Preserve Conservation Plan require professional staff. RCLC’s board of directors feels very fortunate to have found Jim to fill this role.”

“I’m thrilled to be joining RCLC’s efforts to preserve our coastal lands, and to provide new points of public access,” Jim shared. “My family and I have deep roots in the North Bay. On any given day, you could find us in the ocean, on a river, or wandering the back roads of the Coast Range, so this position is a natural fit for me. I’m eager to get started!”

Jim will be at our upcoming presentation "Raising the Curtain! The Plan for Mill Bend Preserve" on September 17th. We hope you will come, learn about the plan, and meet Jim.



## Featured Volunteer: Eric Agnew

*Eric is a central figure in the revitalization of the Pioneer Cemetery that is part of the Mill Bend Preserve!*

### What brought you to the North Coast?

Originally from South Africa, my wife and I grew up where the Indian and Atlantic Oceans meet. After a career as a Civil Engineer living around the world, we wanted to retire at a place that was reminiscent of the coast of Cape Town. The North Coast gave us that, and it did help that our only grandchild lives in San Francisco.



### Why are you giving your time to RCLC?

My career taught me that I am not a "meeting" type of person. I would rather build than talk. The Mill Bend Cemetery and Trails are the perfect place for me to spend volunteer hours. RCLC allows me to be creative and have the enjoyment of seeing others enjoying our creations.

### What are a few of your favorite things to do in your free time?

I like history. Reading about it and collecting / preserving items of historical importance. Also, after ten years of living full time at The Sea Ranch, my wife, Jacky, and I still spend an hour every day on our roof-deck absorbing the beautiful view of the California coast.

### Anything else you want us to know?

I am a member of The Sea Ranch Hot Shots but we do enjoy our work north of the Bridge. The Hot Shots are a group of like-minded volunteers who enjoy physical work without too much talk. As a new recruit pointed out a few years ago - "You guys obviously don't get paid by the word".

## Gualala Cemetery - A Look Back to the 60's and a new Exhibit

**In the Spring of 1969**, a Beautification Committee for Cemetery Restoration was formed by the then South Coast Planning Committee, spearheaded by former American Redwoods lumber company owner Burke Long. Its task was to literally excavate the Gualala Cemetery from its hiding place under a thick canopy of tree limbs, ivy carpet, and weeds. So overgrown was the historic graveyard that the majority of tombstones had to be discovered anew.

Ironically, despite periodic maintenance efforts in succeeding years, the condition of the cemetery grounds at the time of RCLC's Mill Bend acquisition was not unlike that encountered by volunteers over a half-century earlier. But in addition to the problem of invasive vegetation, some monuments were toppled, vandalized, or had gone missing, and other examples of 19th century craftsmanship, such as decorative wooden and metal features, had succumbed to both theft and the forces of nature. The task of cemetery restoration, it seemed, was essentially back to square one, and then some.



**But the cleanup approach proposed decades earlier provided the key to understanding the original landscape design of the site,** with which Mr. Burke was familiar. The May 16, 1969 edition of the Mendocino Coast Beacon reported: "The plan is to clean the paths first which reveals the outlines of the family plots which are nearly all marked with wooden timbers." And indeed, when in December 2020 the site had been newly cleared of tree limbs and other vegetative debris, the remnants of

redwood plot borders, though often scattered and decayed, provided a view of the historic site plan and a roadmap for reconstruction.

**Civil engineer and cemetery volunteer Eric Agnew** determined that the redwood plot borders conformed to a limited number of basic designs which could be duplicated and provide the basis for site restoration. As these borders have been rebuilt on individual burial plots in recent months, the cemetery is gradually taking on its historic character.



**A new exhibit is being built on the cemetery grounds** to illustrate for visitors the standard design of one common border type at the Gualala Cemetery and how it was originally constructed. The exhibit combines remnant redwood border components that have been recovered from the best-preserved burial plots, all of which are over 125 years old. These standard components, which will be identified by number and an illustrative sign, included four six-inch corner posts with hand-chiseled slots designed to receive twelve-inch side boards. The side boards were topped on either side with a decorative molding and a two-inch beveled T-top. The corner posts were typically topped with a molded trim, post cap, and a decorative finial. This exhibit is scheduled for completion in August.



## Upcoming Events



### Save the dates! California Coastal Cleanup Day!

Help protect our waterways. Please join us for a couple of hours and participate in this event at:

**Cook's Beach** on Saturday, September 17, 9am – 11am

**Mill Bend Preserve** on Friday, September 16 9am-11am

Find details and sign up on our website at [www.rclc.org](http://www.rclc.org)

**Volunteers – You are needed.** Many tasks are available at home or in the field, to suit your schedule and abilities. We have temporarily eliminated our Mill Bend drop-in workdays but are currently establishing small work teams that can choose their own projects and flexible hours. Please contact us if you are interested at [rclc@rclc.org](mailto:rclc@rclc.org).

**“Raising the Curtain! The Plan for Mill Bend Preserve”** - an in-person event on Saturday, Sept. 17th. Drop in from 1:00 – 4:00pm.

Join us at the Gualala Arts Center to learn about next steps for development of new trails, habitat restoration and more! We'll have our experts available for questions afterward and will have a special tour available. Check our website for updates at [www.rclc.org](http://www.rclc.org)



### The Stream Team's next monitoring event is coming up!

Saturday, October 22nd 9:00 am to noon followed by a Thank You Picnic.

Upper Mill Bend Preserve, 46903 Old State Highway, Gualala (gravel road on the right 400 feet from Highway 1).

Visit their [Facebook](#) Page to sign up.

# Our Wish List and a Big Thanks

**A big THANK YOU is in order!** Pearl Watts donated gardening tools, a wheel barrow, saw horses, a work table, carpentry tools and materials, gas cans and garbage cans in June. Pearl and her husband Jeff are long-time supporters of RCLC. This donation expanded the tool kit available to control invasive plants and maintain native landscape at Mill Bend Preserve.

**Can you help by providing any of the items below or donating funds to help purchase?**

Redwood Coast Land Conservancy is in need of the following items. *(Many thanks for the items recently donated!)* If you have something to donate, please contact us at the information below. Thank you!

## Tools and items needed

- Digging and pitch forks
- Loppers and clippers
- Mattocks
- McLeod fire rakes
- Weed Whacker (battery operated)
- Utility Vehicle/Pickup/4 WD Gator
- Chipper
- Wheelbarrow
- Watering can
- Bio-char kiln (portable)
- 5-gallon backpack sprayers
- Hand-pump water sprayer
- Yard cart (4-wheel with dump feature)
- ATV utility trailer
- Road utility trailer and trailer cover
- Backhoe with front loader
- Barbeque grill (propane)
- Rainwater collection and storage system

If you would like to contribute toward a purchase of one of these items or have an item to donate to RCLC, please contact us at (707) 884-4426 or by email at [rclc@rclc.org](mailto:rclc@rclc.org) and leave a message. If you come to a work party at Mill Bend, feel free to bring your donated item.

Thank you for sharing your excess tools and equipment to help us maintain our conservation properties!





Donate Today!

REDWOOD COAST LAND CONSERVANCY  
Web: [www.rclc.org](http://www.rclc.org) | Email: [rclc@rclc.org](mailto:rclc@rclc.org)

