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# Redwood Coast News

February 2022

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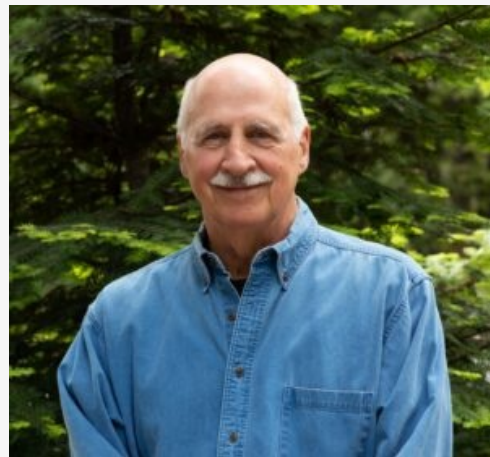
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## **A Message from the RCLC Board President**



In January, RCLC quietly celebrated the first anniversary of its ownership of Mill Bend. A lot has happened to protect, restore, and improve community access to this gem during the past year, including the transformative cemetery work, the significant reduction of invasive plants, the uncovering of existing trails and the continued planning of this 113 acre Preserve. The story of this acquisition, and its progress, is a story of community vision, determination, and support. Watch this newsletter, our social media posts, and the ICO as we tell these stories over the course of this next year. Meet the people who are creating the Mill Bend Preserve of the future and consider how you can join in.

We enter this year with great hope that we will be able to share our excitement and



Photo by David Susalla,  
taken along Gualala Bluff Trail

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celebrate Mill Bend with the community in person, on site showing the gains that have been made and sharing plans for its future as they continue to evolve and crystalize. Together, with your continued support, there is so much more we can accomplish. Thank you!

*Sincerely,  
John Walton  
RCLC Board President*

## Upper Mill Bend Cleanup is a Success!

Let's begin with a bit of Mill Bend history...

Sometime following closure of the mill in 1965, the area surrounding what is now the Gualala Arts Center overflow parking lot was used as a dumping ground for dirt, concrete slabs, tires, abandoned cars, a truck frame, miscellaneous auto parts, metal/plastic piping, refrigerators, steel rails and other assorted bulky trash. This all needed to be removed but was obviously too much for volunteers to deal with.

Fortunately, Caryl Carr and David Presotto, who'd previously donated \$50,000 toward the purchase of Mill Bend, stepped up again and donated \$10,000 to be used for the removal of large items of trash and concrete from Mill Bend that were too big and too heavy to be managed by volunteers.



So, in November Nick Manley of *Manley Recycling* was retained for the haul out and off-site disposal of everything but the concrete. Fortunately, with all the proper equipment, Nick and his crew made short work of what would have been an impossible task for us. The haul out



included four cars, two refrigerators, an abandoned length of heavy logging cable and 60+ tires, much of which required haz-mat disposal!!

We're still looking for someone who could help with the removal of concrete that's left on the site, so if anyone has a lead on that, please let us know by emailing [rclc@rclc.org](mailto:rclc@rclc.org).

*Thanks again to David and Caryl for their generous donations!*

*Photos and Text by Jim Nybakken*

## Gualala Bluff Trail



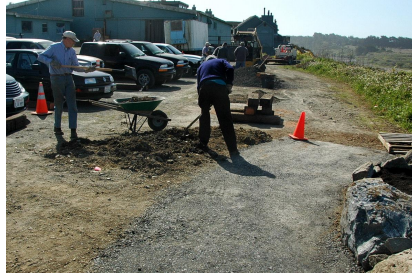
Next time you enjoy a park or a trail, send a mental thanks to the people who created the vision, built it, and maintain it for your enjoyment.

The Gualala Bluff Trail (GBT) is a good example of a RCLC project that's been built and maintained with local efforts, headed up by husband and wife team Bob Rutemoeller and Mary Sue Ittner.

This trail overlooking the bar-built estuary of the Gualala

River is popular with locals and tourists as a quick access to viewing the river, sand bar, and ocean beyond. You're almost sure to see birds, and maybe river otters, seals, or the resident bald eagle pair. It's a photographer's delight due to the open vistas and long views of water with wildlife.

The trail was started in 1998 and completed mostly by volunteers in stages through 2013. The trail includes landscaping, a footbridge over a creek, stairs, view benches, and a curved overlook of the estuary.



The photos above (thanks to Mary Sue Ittner and Bob Rutemoeller) show the before and after pictures of going from a weed-edged parking area to a beautifully landscaped scenic trail.

Want to help maintain the Gualala Bluff Trail? Volunteers are always welcome. Contact Mary Sue Ittner at [msittner@mcn.org](mailto:msittner@mcn.org). And who knows... with a view like that, your participation could net you an exciting wildlife sighting!

*Text by Robin Applegarth, Photos courtesy of Mary Sue Ittner and Bob Rutemoeller*

## Featured Volunteer: Harmony Susalla



We recently interviewed Harmony Susalla, a Bluff Trail Volunteer. We hope you will enjoy learning a little more about our volunteers.

### **What brought you to the North Coast?**

I believe this area has a magnetic pull on some people that just calls them to live here. My husband and I felt that pull from the first time we visited the area as tourists. We moved here in 2001.

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

Because it feels good to leave the sandbox better than you found it.

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

Hiking, hiking and more hiking!

### **Anything else you want us to know?**

I would like people to know/remember that RCLC would not exist without the Gualala Bluff Trail. RCLC was founded to accept the “offer to dedicate” for the land that the Gualala Bluff Trail is built on. A small group saw the need for an entity to step forward to protect the public access to the estuary and ocean views from downtown and thus RCLC was formed. RCLC’s land stewardship has expanded exponentially since that first acquisition — most recently and notably with the Mill Bend property. I hope that in the process of expanding that we don’t neglect the foundation that started it all.

### How can others help maintain this trail?

The Gualala Bluff Trail is actively maintained every **Tuesday morning 9:30 am - 11:30 am** so anyone who wants to help can just show up behind the Surf Market at 9:30 am on Tuesdays. Bring your own set of gloves and any gardening tools you may have. I’ve found this time to be a great way to learn about the local plants and you can’t beat the view!!

## A Little History: Gualala Schoolhouse

Mill Bend is best known for a series of lumber mills that were sited at the Gualala River estuary and on the adjacent uplands between the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries. This property also hosted facilities that served the infrastructure needs of mill employees and



local farming families, such as workforce housing and a community cemetery created in the late 1870s by a land donation from mill owner Zemri Heywood. Perhaps lesser known is Mill Bend's role in providing educational opportunities for local children.

During the town's early days, parents commonly sent their children away to urban areas where schools were available, either to live with relatives or to enter into service with host families to earn their room and board. Alternatively, family units with multiple children sometimes endeavored to recruit a teacher to board in the home in exchange for instruction. But in 1882, W. B. Heywood, son of Zemri, and the Gualala Mill Company granted land directly across from the cemetery to the Gualala School District for the establishment of a one-room schoolhouse to serve grades 1-8.

And a model school it was. Heywood personally supervised its construction in 1883, ensuring quality workmanship and painting it at his own expense. The new school boasted the latest Sander's patented school desks, and what the January 27, 1883 *Mendocino Beacon* described as "...beautiful blackboards, sawed expressly for that purpose are 4 x 10 feet and three in number." The Gualala School operated until 1924, reopened in 1927, but finally closed its doors for good

in 1930 when the area was joined with the Point Arena School District. The unique schoolhouse building was subsequently salvaged, and is no more.

For more Mill Bend history visit our website: [www.rclc.org/mill-bend-history/](http://www.rclc.org/mill-bend-history/)

*Text by Kay Martin*

## Learn More About RCLC Properties



Discover more about the very special properties managed by RCLC – Cook's Beach, Hearn Gulch, the Gualala Bluff Trail, and Mill Bend. Read about these properties on our [website](#).

Better yet, join a tour or help at a volunteer work party. Tours of the upper Mill Bend Conservation area will be offered several times this Spring. Announcements of dates and times will be sent by email to our members, posted to our website and

shared on social media.

Helping at a volunteer work party is a great way to learn more about the area and our plans for trails, interpretive materials, habitat restoration, and more. Monthly third Saturday work parties have been scheduled at upper Mill Bend as well as weekly work parties on the Gualala Bluff Trail and cemetery.

**The next Mill Bend work party is scheduled for Saturday, February 19, from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm.**

Additionally, 'drop-in' work days at Mill Bend are Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. See details [here](#).

Want to learn more about accessing our properties? Visit our table at "Pay N Take" on the first and third Saturdays of the month. Meet our volunteers, browse photos, get updates on our progress, pick up our RCLC Coastal Access brochure.



\*\*\* Please Note: You must be vaccinated against Covid to participate in RCLC activities.\*\*\*

## Our Wish List



**Can you help by providing any of these items?**

**Hand tools:** loppers, clippers, pruning shears

**Tools:** shovels/spades, digging forks, metal yard rakes, fire rakes, mattocks, post hole digger and digging bar, wheelbarrow, yard cart (4-wheel with dump feature)

**Watering Equipment:** water hoses, reels, spray nozzles, watering can, hand-pump water sprayer, 5-gallon backpack sprayers, Water buffalo (500 gallons, trailer mounted, electric pump, hose and nozzle)

**Power Equipment:** weed whacker (battery operated)

**Miscellaneous:** carpentry tools, workbench and sawhorse, barbecue grill (propane), bio-char kiln (portable), burn cage

**The Big Stuff:** utility vehicle / pickup / 4WD Gator, ATV utility trailer, road utility trailer and trailer cover, chipper / shredder

*If you 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!*

**Monetary donations can also help us fund equipment purchases! Find information about ways to donate [here](#).**



**Donate Today!**

**REDWOOD COAST LAND CONSERVANCY**

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

