



Mill Bend. Photo by Craig Tooley

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# Redwood Coast News

February 2023

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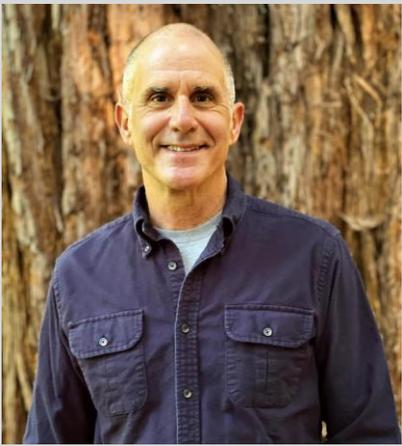
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## **Mill Bend Preserve 2023: Stewardship, Restoration, Trails Design**



RCLC Executive Director Jim Elias

**The recent storms brought some trees and limbs down along our River & Rail Trail:**



2023 announced itself with vigor on the North Coast. We are still picking up and completing minor repairs at Mill Bend Preserve following recent storms. These tasks provide pause to consider on-the-ground progress we want to make this year.



Photo by Joel Chaban

With the Conservation Plan guiding us, we are entering the new year with eyes trained on stewarding and in some cases restoring the Preserve's natural resources. RCLC recently won a \$268,000 Wildfire Resilience Program grant from the State Coastal Conservancy, intended to finance efforts to lower wildfire risks to the Preserve, Gualala, and surrounding communities by removing debris left after logging, certain dead and dying trees, and high-fire-risk invasive plants. The funding will also enable projects that restore low-fuel native vegetation, shaded fuel breaks, and a multi-year grazing program. These practical actions will be planned and evaluated through a careful habitat-sensitive lens.

We know the community is eager to see progress toward an expanded trails network, including connecting Mill Bend Preserve to Gualala's beloved Bluff Trail. On February 1, we shared Mill Bend with State Coastal Conservancy Project Manager Su Corbaley, together with our



Photos by Nicole Forte

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colleagues at Prunuske Chatham Environmental Consulting. Establishing the Bluff/Coastal Trail connection will be our first priority, and then we will develop an all-ages-and-abilities interpretative trails system for both the upper and lower portions of the Preserve. RCLC will soon submit ambitious State Coastal Conservancy funding proposals to support these steps.

Mill Bend Preserve progress is made possible by you. Your recent year-end gifts were humbling and encouraging. And those of you who enjoy rolling up your sleeves and getting dirty are critical to our efforts to remove invasive plants like jubata and pampas grass, and cape ivy. Mill Bend Preserve is a community effort – we're glad you're in it with us!

*Jim Elias*  
*Executive Director*

## Storms Scour Cooks Beach



Every few years, strong storms hit the Mendonoma coast, creating such powerful ocean swells and high surf that they strip Cooks Beach of its typical sands.

The early January storm that knocked out power in most of our south coast did just that. It literally removed all of the sand from Cooks Beach – tons of it. As you can see from the photo, it exposed all of the underlying rocks. Since the January storm, tide and wave action has started to redeposit sand on the beach, but it will probably be Spring before all of the rocks are covered again with sand.

In addition, logs floating in the surf battered the lower railing on Cooks Beach stairs causing it to bend and twist up and over the stairs. Since the stairs were built in 2010, this stair railing, along with its wire cabling, has been damaged and repaired numerous times. Through your donations to Redwood Coast Land Conservancy's Cooks Beach fund, the lower stair railing will be repaired soon.



When you go to Cooks Beach to witness all of this storm activity, please be careful walking on the beach because the rocks make balancing unsteady and walking difficult. Check weather alerts and high surf advisory links on RCLC's web site at <https://www.rclc.org#weather> before going to the beach.



*Text and Photos by Joel Chaban*

## Featured Volunteer: Deanna Boettcher

*Deanna is part of the Cooks Beach team of volunteers.*

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

In 2019 my husband Christopher and I decided it was time for a career change that would enable us to live the lifestyle we wanted for ourselves while creating wellness experiences for other people. Christopher grew up in Healdsburg and we were engaged and married in the same area. We have both lived in many places and have always wanted to return to Northern California. It was serendipity that when we were looking to create our dream job and life, Mar Vista Cottages went up for sale. Neither of us were as familiar with this part of the coast and we fell in love immediately and made it our home in late 2020 when we purchased the business.



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

This is the community we live in and the land and waters that we get to enjoy on a daily basis, so we want to help take care of it - for us, our community, our guests and for future generations to come. We are grateful that RCLC exists and for all the work they have done and continue to do, so my involvement is also a "Thank You" to RCLC.

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

I love spending morning walks on Fish Rock beach with my husband and our dog, Nuttah. I also enjoy running and hiking all the trails we have right here on our coast.

## Anything else you want us to know?

I am super excited about the Mill Bend project and all the work that is being done to restore our native plants and wildlife habitats. I look forward to the extension of the Bluff trail and enjoying many walks there.

## Weeding for Wildlife

**TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND square feet** of dense scrub have been cleared of invasive plants in just the last year at Mill Bend! Thanks so much to all of the volunteers who have helped us at monthly work parties or assisting teams, removing large areas of French broom, Scotch broom, Jubata grass, Cape Ivy and Cotoneaster. **These non-native weedy plants provide very limited habitat for wildlife,** deplete soil nutrients and flower profusely spreading millions of seeds which can remain in the upper soil layer for years. French broom plants, for instance, produce an average of 8,000 seeds per plant per year! The seed pods burst explosively and are spread by water, insects, birds and other animals. Additionally, as a fire hazard they are a priority for removal in the early stages of this wildlands management process.



Cape Ivy



By removing them, we are opening up areas to allow sunlight and nourishment to reach the seedlings of our valued native habitat plants: lupine, wild rose, monkeyflower, wild strawberry, our native honeysuckle (both the shrub Twinberry as well as the vining form), Pink-flowering currant, Coffeeberry and Tan oak, Coyote brush, wild strawberry, and others. These will provide food, nesting opportunities and cover for birds and other wildlife.

Following the removal of the invasives, we will continue to regularly monitor for regrowth or new seedlings and will treat these areas in various ways to prevent their regrowth and spread. The process includes torching, weed-whacking, digging or hand pulling, or laying a deep mulch layer over cardboard. You may notice our test plots just off the Toyon trail. Many thanks to volunteer leaders Nicole Forte, Jim Nybakken, Mark Escajeda and Cheryl Harris for leading and providing oversight for our volunteers. Formation of volunteer working groups is continuing. Please join us: the CIA (Cape Ivy Adversaries), the Sweepers (Broom and Jubata), or create your own team. New members are always welcome! Contact Cheryl Harris at [charris@rclc.org](mailto:charris@rclc.org)



Our invasives team monitors wetland plants and edges of the estuary by boat.

*Text by Cheryl Harris  
Photos by Joseph DiTomaso, Nicole Forte and Joaquin Jacobs*

## Upcoming Events

### Join Our Upcoming Work Party!



**Mill Bend Preserve on Saturday, February 18, 1pm-3pm**

Join one of our invasives eradication teams for a couple of hours:

**The CIA (Cape Ivy Adversaries)**  
-or-  
**The Sweepers (broom & jubata)**

View our progress, hear about plans for next steps, help make a difference! Find details and more on our website at [www.rclc.org](http://www.rclc.org)

### **Birds at Mill Bend: A Discovery Walk Saturday, February 18, 8:30am**

Join Rich Trissel and other birders in celebration of the annual **Great Backyard Bird Count** for a discovery walk along the Mill Bend Gualala River access road and beach. Learn about our local winter birds, how to identify and record them. See a demonstration of bird apps and other resources. Learn about using eBird to record your sightings.



Bring binoculars and wear sturdy shoes. Everyone welcome. No need to sign up in advance. No dogs please. Steady rain cancels.

Where: Meet at 8:30 am at the large CalTrans parking area located on the east side of Highway 1 just north of the Gualala River bridge.

For more information about the annual Great Backyard Bird Count [click here](#). Questions – contact Cheryl Harris [charris@rclc.org](mailto:charris@rclc.org)



## NEW! Open House at Gualala Historic Cemetery

Every Saturday in March, 10am - 1pm

The gate will be open for you to drive to the cemetery. We will have docents on site. Join us!

## Mill Bend Preserve Volunteer Docent Training

Saturday, February 25

Help us “**Open the gate**”! We are seeking volunteers to welcome visitors at our upper Mill Bend Preserve for the Gualala Cemetery Open House days in March on Saturday mornings 10am–1pm. With your help, we can share our beautiful property with visitors who have been unable to access it due to mobility issues.

A volunteer docent/tour guide training program will be offered on Saturday, February 25 which will include presentations about the cemetery and local history, an overview of the vegetation and wildlife that inhabit the area as well as updates on our efforts to preserve and enhance these special coastal habitats. These volunteers will also have the option of helping with other community outreach opportunities: providing support for group tours, assisting with family events or developing interpretive materials. Training will be limited to those who will commit to volunteering a minimum **of three hours a month in Spring and Summer 2023**. Advance sign ups required. For details, please contact Cheryl Harris [charris@rclc.org](mailto:charris@rclc.org) or Nicole Forte [nforte@rclc.org](mailto:nforte@rclc.org).



## Wildflower and Coastal Native Shrubs - a morning tour with the California Native Plant Society

**Save the Date! Saturday, March 25th**  
Join Julia Larke and Mary Hunter from the Dorothy King Young Chapter of the California Native Plant Society. in a walk through the Mill Bend Preserve. Learn about the native wildflowers and shrubs that flourish in our area and why native plants are so valuable to our habitat.



## Our Wish List

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
- Microwave
- Biodegradable weed cloth
- Tarps
- 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. Thank you for sharing your excess tools and equipment to help us maintain our conservation properties!



[Donate Today!](#)

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