

letters

Extend Dillon's Ethical Leadership

Dear Editor:
Supervisor Diane Dillon deserves re-election to the Napa County Board of Supervisors. Supervisor Dillon has tirelessly worked for 16 years on the Board of Supervisors to improve the quality life for all residents.

In the past few years, we have experienced devastating losses from earthquakes, wildfires, and, most recently, the tragic loss of life at the California Veterans Home. Currently, we need Supervisor Dillon's expertise and leadership, working together with all our local, county, state and national representatives, to help with a successful recovery and garner the additional funding for first responders' preparations for future emergency responses.

Supervisor Dillon also has an impressive history protecting the environment and our quality of life. She co-chaired the No on W and X Committee to protect the Suscol Ridge agricultural watershed in southern Napa from urban development. So, I am not surprised to see many supporters and opponents of Measure C supporting Supervisor Dillon. These residents understand that Supervisor Dillon's ethical leadership and commitment to our agricultural farmlands and watersheds will be an invaluable aid to bring together Measure C factions and county government to continue preservation of our precious natural resources.

I encourage all Yountville and District 3 voters to honor an outstanding record of public service by re-electing Supervisor Dillon. Please postmark by mail or turn in your ballot no later than Tuesday, June 5.

Eric Knight
Yountville

Land Trust Takes No Stand on Measure C

To the Editor:
As the June election draws

nearer and campaigns for and against Measure C begin heating up, the Land Trust of Napa County wants to state that last September, our board decided to take no position on the measure. This stance is very consistent with both our long-standing practice as well as those of land trusts across the country.

Our mission is to pursue conservation through real estate transactions between willing parties. Although individuals involved with the Land Trust are, of course, free to state their own personal opinions for or against Measure C, those opinions are expressly made by individuals and do not reflect the Land Trust's position, either way, on this measure.

Doug Parker, CEO
Land Trust of Napa County
Napa

Measure C Opponents' Credibility Questioned

To the Editor:
Sierra Club officially endorses Measure C.

As a body we decry misrepresentations made by its opponents.

Measure C is a sensible initiative requested by over 7,000 voters. It sets reasonable limits on destruction of oak woodlands in Ag, Watershed and Open Space zones of Napa County.

Limits which will:

Protect shared watersheds for clear, naturally filtered water supply,

Conserve multiple species habitats connected through wildlife corridors,

Sequester carbon through mature oak canopies and associated vegetation, and

Set upland buffers at waterway or woodland edges to ease climate change effects.

Sierra Club participates in the grassroots Yes on C campaign which respects community interests that care for the environment and seek limits on haphazard development in watershed hillsides through Measure C.

Two opponents of Measure

C have signed election documents representing themselves as "Sierra Club Member" and "Former Sierra Club Board Member" to which we take strong exception as attempts to mislead voters in the face of approval by the Sierra Club at all levels to endorse Measure C.

More telling are the elected and appointed officials who have also signed to condone objectively false and misleading statements to Napa County voters. All of those who signed on the election documents were party to having in fact been ordered by Napa Superior Court Judge Stone to correct those statements and pay proponents' legal costs by settlement.

Where is their credibility now?

Sierra Club has confidence in Napa County voters and calls upon our membership to join and vote yes on Measure C.

Diane Shepp,
Chair of the Napa Group of the Sierra Club

Same Lawyers Wrote Measures C and J

To the Editor:

Did you know that two experienced land-use lawyer-wrote the legal text of the Measure C initiative? One, Tom Adams of Dickenson Peatman & Fogarty, represented the Napa Valley Vintners, and the other, Robert Perlmutter, with Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, has often represented the Napa County Farm Bureau as well as Napa County, itself. Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger also wrote Measure J and successfully defended it before the California Supreme Court. Now, these organizations oppose Measure C saying that it's "legally misleading and confusing?"

Did you know that the Board of Directors of the Napa Valley Vintners, the Napa County Farm Bureau and the Napa Valley Grapegrowers did not take any formal survey of their members before they voted to oppose Measure C? Many members, possibly even a majority, still support Measure C.

Did you know that Measure C allows the removal of 795 acres of oak woodlands -- because this condition was required by the Napa Valley Vintners to get their original support? It effectively allows "business as usual" for the first 795 acres. That is why Measure C is needed to protect the rest.

Did you know that without Measure C many thousands of acres more can be clear cut? With Measure C, once the 795-acre cap is reached, developers can apply for an oak removal permit, similar to what residents already do in every town and city in Napa County.

Reject corporate big money misstatement and deception! Reject deforestation as a means of expansion. Protect our reservoirs. Save our watersheds. YES on Measure C!

Norma J. Tofanelli
Calistoga
Past President
Napa County Farm Bureau,
2013-2016

Guest Editorial

Salmon, Local-Serving Reservoirs in Peril

(Editor's Note: The ability of Rector Reservoir to meet the year-round water demands of the Town of Yountville and the Veterans Home was recently called into question by a state agency. Pending litigation by Water Audit to require larger annual releases of water from Rector Dam into Rector Creek to repair lost fish habitat may well drain more water from the dam than in the past. With these factors in mind, the following perspective seems especially relevant as voters consider Measure C on the primary ballot.)

By Patrick Higgins

Consulting Fisheries Biologist

McKinleyville (Humboldt County), Calif.

Napa County voters are being asked to consider Measure C -- the Watershed and Oak Woodland Protection Initiative. This measure will protect some of the last intact uplands from development for viewshed considerations, increased recreational access and protection of biodiversity and clean drinking water sources.

I am a consulting fisheries and watershed scientist, and I offer my perspective on the benefits, if Measure C passes, and a note of caution about potentially irreversible impacts to domestic water supplies, should Measure C fail.

The Napa River was the largest salmon and steelhead producing tributary of San Francisco Bay and had robust, fishable populations of steelhead trout and Chinook and coho salmon into the 1950s. Today these fish species have gone extinct or have been reduced to remnant populations. The change in the aquatic habitat over the last 70 years is profound, and the loss of these iconic species is due to the wholesale change in the aquatic environment. We have passed an ecological "tipping point," and the Napa River has almost no functional coldwater habitat that these species require.

The cumulative effects of water development for municipal and agricultural supply have caused tributaries to become dewatered. The main Napa River was once fed by groundwater on the valley floor, but pumps installed to water the vineyards have reduced or eliminated coldwater contributions to the lower Napa River in summer. The result is that the main Napa River is now a warmwater habitat, where exotic fish species, washed down from reservoirs, proliferate and Pacific salmon species cannot survive. Studies by the University of California and Stillwater Sciences documented that most tributaries of the Napa River lost surface flow in 2001 and that steelhead juveniles were extremely rare.

Steelhead are amazing animals. They can live as resident rainbow trout in headwater streams, such as Bell Creek, upper Conn Creek and Milliken Creek, but they can also adopt an anadromous life history, if they are washed downstream to the bay. Steelhead adults that have been to the ocean can leap more than 15 feet, which allows them to reach the headwaters in wet years and replenish some trout populations.

Upland development of Milliken Creek, near the Walt Ranch Project, and the Le Colline project in upper Conn Creek, would impact water-bearing areas that support rare native trout populations. Desiccation associated with these projects would drive these populations further towards extinction, which should be sufficient reason for blocking such developments. However, there is another even more important concern -- to protect the water supply for the City of Napa and for other domestic water users.

Water storage reservoirs were constructed in the eastern portion of the Napa River watershed to provide drinking water. When first constructed, they were clear and cold and excellent trout habitat year around. Steelhead confined to these artificial impoundments began to use them as their feeding grounds and subsequently spawned in headwaters when they were only few inches in length.

Historically, headwater streams had robust, cold, perennial flows into these impoundments, until upland vineyard and rural residential development proliferated. As flows have diminished, the quality of water in Napa River reservoirs has deteriorated, and they may be on the verge yet another tipping point, developing toxic cyanotoxin blooms that would compromise domestic water supplies.

In summer, cold creeks flowing into reservoirs create a cold water lens at depths that trout can inhabit. Without this cold water input, surface waters heat up, creating ideal conditions for the formation of cyanobacteria, some of which are toxic. Nutrient run off from leaky septic tanks or agricultural activity can further fuel cyanobacteria growth.

Cyanobacteria, also known as blue-green algae, are photosynthetic bacteria that have inhabited the earth for a billion years. Not all species are capable of producing toxins, and those that can don't produce them at all times. Proliferation in water bodies around the world is likely being caused, in part, by global warming. However, the greatest influence is land management in areas upstream of reservoirs and lakes.

Lake Chaohu in China is now dominated by the toxic cyanobacteria Microcystis, and 20 million people are drinking bottled water as a result. Closer to home, Pacific Northwest and California reservoirs are experiencing toxic cyanotoxin proliferation, including some operated by the East Bay Municipal Utility District.

Passage of Measure C will help protect oak woodlands, biodiversity, aquatic habitat, endangered steelhead trout and the community's water supply. Development pressures and the influence of big money have made protection of Napa Valley uplands challenging. It is time the people spoke through the initiative process, before it is too late.