



# News from the Redwood Empire

## Town Hall Coalition Annual Report -- 2003

Town Hall Coalition's mission is to build a social movement that promotes ecologically and economically healthy communities through responsible land use.

Dear Friends,

What value do we place on the things we share in common? Public schools, libraries, national forests, parks, education, health care, gifts of nature like air and water, human knowledge and experience, science and culture form the basis of humanity's common wealth. Without them we could not breathe, drink or create. We call them, collectively, "the commons."

A recent Ecotrust ([ecotrust.org](http://ecotrust.org)) publication states that we have forgotten how to recognize the commons and act like the rightful owners of these riches. "The stewardship of our shared inheritance is embedded in our religious traditions, and laws about commons date back to Roman times. Some early American states called themselves "Commonwealths" and made the government responsible to care for that common property for generations yet to come."

These days our commons are threatened as never before. Elected representatives are breaking the public trust and selling off our collectively held lands, schools, forests and water and running others into the ground. The message to future generations seems to be "We are spending our children's common inheritance and some day none of this will be yours."

If we look closely, our commons are still there for us to claim and protect. It is time to Reclaim the Commons! We own the sky, fresh water, knowledge and culture, our airwaves, internet, quiet, and public spaces. Public spaces such as parks, libraries, schools, sidewalks and streets furnish the platform on which community and democracy flourish. When we sell off and privatize our public spaces, such as Harmony School in Occidental, we unravel the very fabric that holds our communities together.

The members of Town Hall Coalition urge all of you to elect decision-makers who will protect the common good for generations to come. Or better yet, run for office yourself and assume responsibility to protect our common heritage and build a common future where everyone can live and thrive. Get involved. Now is the time!

## 2004 Raffle - Great Prizes

**First Prize** - Two night's stay at the View Crest Lodge overlooking the Humboldt coastline in beautiful Trinidad!

**Second Prize** - Dinner for Two at Cape Fear Cafe in Duncans Mills

**Third Prize** - Free Kayak Rental for up to Four Persons on the Russian River - courtesy of Russian River Outfitters in Duncans Mills. ([www.russianriveroutfitters.com](http://www.russianriveroutfitters.com))



([www.viewcrestlodge.com](http://www.viewcrestlodge.com))

Raffle will extend throughout the year and culminate in the Fall with a Special Event where prizes will be drawn. Enclosed raffle tickets are \$2 each or 10 tickets for \$15. Just fill out your contact information on the tickets, keep the duplicates and return the number of tickets you want with your payment donation in the return envelope provided. Raffle proceeds benefit the Redwood Empire Environmental Center Programs and Scholarship Fund. Make checks out to Town Hall Coalition at the address below.

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♦ [www.townhallcoalition.org](http://www.townhallcoalition.org)

# Protecting the Commons – Forests and Water

## Forest Protection Program

Town Hall Coalition was formed in response to the rapid conversion of forestland in 1997. Since that time, we have continued to advocate for increased protection throughout the Redwood Empire. This year, Town Hall Coalition has embarked on continued efforts to preserve and protect the Redwood Empire from what we perceive as the biggest threat to our environment and our communities. A large portion of our action plan for this effort is currently focused on ensuring that the Sonoma County General Plan includes a proposal that would prohibit the conversion of 3 acres or more of timberland throughout the rural and coastal areas of Sonoma County.

In June of 2003, our efforts produced a major victory when the Citizen's Advisory Committee for the Sonoma County General Plan voted 7-4 in favor of **Option 3**, which would extend protection to over 80% of Sonoma County's timberland against the conversion to vineyards and other uses. Town Hall Coalition organized a diverse coalition of businesses, farmers, grape growers, environmental organizations, and individuals on a grassroots campaign to educate and activate citizens to take part in supporting this historic effort. We look forward to working with members and supporters to ensure the passage of this important protection measure as it moves onward to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors, who are expected to act on it later this year.

Town Hall Coalition members also commented and participated in two critical Timber Harvest Plans during their Second Review Hearings at the California Department of Forestry. THP 1-02-216 SON, which led to the formation of the Pocket Canyon Protection Group, poses a serious threat to a community water supply and tributary to the Russian River. The hillside conversion plan is also dangerously prone to landslides, with the potential of endangering numerous residents who live downhill. THP 1-00-484 SON, also known as the Haupt Creek THP near Annapolis, contains significant stands of old growth redwood, a rarity in Sonoma County aside from being some of the last areas of critical habitat for marbled murrelets and red tree voles.



Addie Evans joins the Chainsaw Protest in Santa Rosa

## Chainsaw Wine Protest Hits the Streets

In response to a pending 105 acre conversion in the heart of the redwood forest just outside of Annapolis, Town Hall Coalition joined up with the coastal forest alliance and other allies to engage in street theater events which included an 8-foot tall chainsaw-yielding wine bottle threatening to cut redwood trees (designed by Coastal Forest Alliance).

The purpose of these events is to educate citizens of this pending forest conversion to vineyards and potential ecological catastrophe. Artesa Vineyards, based in Napa, is actually owned by Cordoniu, a Spanish Corporation reported to be the third largest in the world. This particular project represents a significant shift in terms of size and scope of its predecessors, and a dangerous precedent in terms of moving from small-scale farming to large-sized and internationally financed forest destruction and industrial vineyard development. Look for the Chainsaw Wine on the streets at a town near you!

# Defending the Public Trust

## Water Rights and Privatization

Shortly after a proposal to bag water from the mouths of two North Coast Rivers was defeated, the Gualala and Albion Rivers were both awarded the designation of being Wild and Scenic Rivers under Assembly Bill 1168, signed into law this year and introduced by Assemblywomen Patty Berg and Patricia Wiggins. Town Hall Coalition officially supported this Bill and we thank everyone who lent support to this historic outcome.

However, the threat of water commodification by outside interests continues, and Town Hall Coalition has set its sights on Ric Davidge and the newly-renamed Aqueous Corporation's latest proposal to transport water from the Mad River in Humboldt County using the same waterbag technology. A coalition of environmental groups quickly formed in response to this latest project, aptly named the Coalition to Stop the Mad River Waterbags, and an eleven page letter was presented by an attorney from the Western Environmental Law Center outlining our concerns. Town Hall Coalition also initiated postcards for citizens to fill out in opposition. The response resulted in the Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District shelving the issue, though not voting to specifically reject it. The coalition has continued to meet and confer over this vital issue, as it is sure to reappear in the near future.

## Climate Change and Redwoods - A New Threat to our Forests

Town Hall Coalition kicked off a public educational series spotlighting the ecology and health of coastal redwoods as well as the severity of climate change-induced threats to these and other trees of the Redwood Empire. In November we sponsored a presentation by Dr. Reese Halter, founder and President of Global Forest Science, a

scientific research organization pioneering methods to determine the causes and potential extent of catastrophic threats to forests around the globe.

Dr. Halter's work with redwoods focuses on studying the serious problem of redwoods top dieback, which is threatening the edges of the few remaining redwood reserves throughout the California Coast.

This Spring, Town Hall Coalition will feature a presentation by Save the Redwoods League on preservation priorities for coastal redwoods throughout California. In the Fall, we will host Dr. Todd Dawson, of the UC Berkeley-based Dawson Lab. to talk about the dynamics of fog-drip collection and explain the current tests they are performing on old-growth redwoods in the *Grove of the Old Trees* just west of Occidental.



photo credit: San Francisco Chronicle / Darryl Bush



Town Hall Coalition  
Profit and Loss Summary  
January through December 2003

Income

Individual Donations	\$ 11,813
Members	8,305
Donations, Other	3,000
Foundation Grants	3,000
Government Grants and Contracts	<u>7,500</u>
Total Income	\$33,618

Expenses

Administration	\$ 3,846
Fund Raising	2,109
Programs:	
Climate Change/Global Warming	\$2,092
Protecting the Commons	1,791
Education and Outreach	3,185
Forest Protection	3,716
Town Hall Forums/Events	9,771
Participatory Democracy	1,440
Water Rights/Privatization	<u>2,500</u>
Total Programs	<u>\$24,494</u>
Total Expenses	\$30,449
Net Income	\$3,169

**Help Us Protect the Quality of Life, Public Health, and Environment of the  
North Coast Redwood Empire - Become a Member of the Town Hall Coalition**

The Town Hall Coalition office, located in downtown Occidental, continues to act as a resource center for the community. We continue to collect information for our library, respond to citizen complaints, and comment on all important issues that effect the communities of the North Coast. We need your support to keep things running and continue our advocacy as a voice for environmental protection, public health, sustainability, and participatory democracy.

I want to contribute to the Town Hall Coalition:

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **\$15**    **\$25**    **\$50**    **\$100**    **\$500**    **\$ Other**  
**Address** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Phone, Fax, E-mail** \_\_\_\_\_

Send Contributions to: Town Hall Coalition, PO Box 1005 Occidental CA 95465  
Ph 707 874-9110 / F 707 874-2579      townhall@sonic.net  
[www.townhallcoalition.org](http://www.townhallcoalition.org)

The Town Hall Coalition is a California nonprofit corporation organized under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.  
Donations are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law (Tax ID #68-0458664).

# Land Use and Participatory Democracy

## Formation of the Redwood Empire Environmental Center

Town Hall Coalition has joined with other environmental groups to form the Redwood Empire Environmental Center located above Howard's Station Cafe in Occidental, Sonoma County. We continue to act as a powerful vehicle for citizen advocacy, action and information. Staff and members of the Town Hall Coalition submit comments for the public record and appear before elected and regulatory bodies. We distribute Action Alerts, election information, newsletters, special events, and information about community forums. We also respond to citizen complaints by notifying elected officials, regulatory agencies, and communities about potential dangers or developments in or near their neighborhood. Examples have included illegal forest conversions, exposure to pesticide spray or drift, contaminated wells, bird depredation by toxic chemicals, destruction of riparian forests, fill or proposed development of fragile wetlands, and illegal water appropriations.

### For the Public Record

Town Hall Coalition submitted comments or added public testimony for the following items during 2003:

- Fish and Wildlife Service in support of listing of California Tiger Salamander as Endangered Species
- State Assembly in support of listing Albion and Gualala Rivers as Wild and Scenic
- California Department of Forestry concerning Pocket Canyon Timber Harvest Plan threatening community water supply
- City of Santa Rosa concerning Incremental Recycled Water Project
- Sonoma County General Plan Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) supporting moratorium of timber conversions
- Submitted Coalition Letter from 21 Environmental Organizations, Business Owners, Wine Growers, and Farmers into General Plan CAC in support of Option 3 protecting forests from conversions
- Sebastopol City Council in support of Living Wage Ordinance. Town Hall Coalition is a member of the Sonoma County Living Wage Coalition
- Sonoma County Agriculture and Open Space District and Board of Supervisors in favor of Willow Creek Land Acquisition

## Participatory Democracy

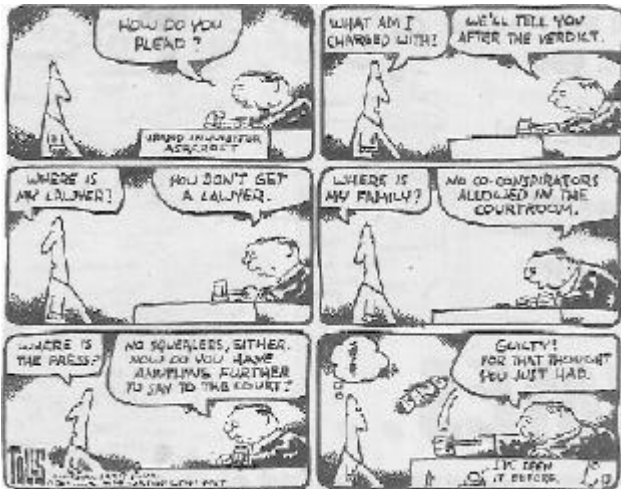
Town Hall Coalition has continued to push the idea that an informed citizenry is the foundation of democracy. 2003 was quite the year for exercising voting rights and making responsible choices. Town Hall Coalition's role as part of our Participatory Democracy Campaign is to provide information on issues pertaining to local elections and promote citizen action. Our activities this past year include:

- Posted and distributed information about Local Special District Elections, including information pertaining to where, when, and how perspective candidates can run for these important offices.
- Published and distributed a Fact Sheet on the California Governor's Recall Election, which included important absentee ballot guidelines.

# Upcoming Events

"I firmly believe, from what I have seen, that this is the chosen spot of all this earth as far as Nature is concerned."  
Luther Burbank (From a letter sent home to Massachusetts, soon after arriving in Sonoma County 1875)

## Environmental Activism, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties



April 16<sup>th</sup> at the Sebastopol Veteran's Building 7:30 PM  
Guest Speaker-Civil Rights Attorney, J. Tony Serra.  
We will be joined by a representative of Greenpeace.

Greenpeace was recently indicted by US Attorney General John Ashcroft as part of an ongoing effort to undermine free speech and public protest of the Bush Administration's horrific environmental destruction policies.

### Town Hall Coalition Board of Directors

Lori Bazan  
Margaret Howe  
Don Frank  
Chris Stover  
Lynn Hamilton

### Staff

Toben Dilworth  
Consultant  
Program Manager

## Redwood Empire Strikes Back

Fall Event - Date and Time to be announced.

Raffle Drawing - Festive Celebration - Live Music - Guest Speakers

## Redwood Lily Bouquets to:

\* Marimar Torres and Marimar Torres Estate Vineyards for their full conversion to organic viticulture for their 60-acre Don Miguel Vineyard in the Russian River Valley. Find out more at [www.MarimarEstate.com/organic.htm](http://www.MarimarEstate.com/organic.htm).

\* Paul Dolan at Fetzer Vineyards for his commitment to sustainable growing methods and innovations. Most of all for his support of forest protection in Sonoma County.

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