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## **June 2024 Newsletter**

*\*Field Trips will resume after June\**

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# Trip Report: Phillips Brothers Mill Tour



The SEA field trip to the Phillips Brothers Mill was a fascinating and informative tour led by family member Greg Hendrix, the current family patriarch who has been working at the mill since he was 10 years old. He started the tour with a look at an old steam-driven tractor built in about 1910 as we waited for a late arrival.

From here he took us to the logging pond and the sawmill where the initial cuts of logs are made and explained every intricate detail of the process including the loading of logs to be

ready to cut to how the logs are further cut as the boards go to the next step where they are cut into smaller lengths, all on the same track. This section is run by steam from a huge boiler and numerous belts on rollers are engaged and disengaged throughout cutting to special sizes.

Before going to the box factory, he answered many questions such as: How do you select the trees to cut? They cut the dead and dying trees interspersed in their forest, leaving room for nearby trees to increase in size and small saplings to grow.

Who do you sell your lumber to? Most is sold as custom wood, with one builder from Lake Tahoe who likes the rough-cut lumber for expensive homes. For others, it's custom orders including specialty boxes, with a brand name usually burned into the wood.



At times they have trouble keeping up with orders, other times such as winter it is slow. The price of wood is very low now due to all the wood on the market from salvage logging, but as their work is custom orders, they still keep busy.



They have the box factory on a steam furnace for power, but with small orders, machinery is driven by electricity from generators or solar power. The entire property is off the grid with solar power and battery backup powering the family home.

Because Greg has worked on the mill since he was 10 years old, he has a tremendous amount of knowledge about the mill and just as important, keeping their land producing wood without clearcutting, preserving it for the next seven generations.

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## More Free Shade Trees for Redding



SEA will again be planting free shade trees in the front yards of residents in Redding in fall 2024!

Shade trees such as these can will help not only shade homes, but can lower air conditioning costs, sequester carbon, and provide wildlife habitat. Additionally, they will help combat the “heat island effect,” where urban areas are significantly hotter than surrounding countryside due to heat absorption by buildings, streets, and vehicles. Trees can mitigate this by providing shade and cooling the area.

Redding residents wanting a free tree must fill out an [interest form on SEA's website](#) and commit to watering the tree for the first three years to ensure proper rooting and growth. A pre-selected group of trees, including native species, will be provided.

To apply for a tree, visit [ecoshasta.org](https://ecoshasta.org) and [complete the application](#). To volunteer, contact [david@ecoshasta.org](mailto:david@ecoshasta.org)

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# Trip Report: BLM Fire Treatment - Hornbeck Trail

By David Ledger

SEA organized a field trip led by BLM Ecologist Brooke Thompson and BLM Fire Management Officer Garrett Dunn on the Hornbeck Trail north of Redding to talk about the BLM proposed fire treatment planned for the 500 acres in the surrounding area.

This area is gray pine and oak woodland with a considerable understory of chaparral (shrubs). Brooke stated the reason they have to do a vegetative treatment is because 100 years of fire suppression has caused a huge fuel build-up and because of the encroachment of homes in the area. This is in what is called a Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Poor planning in many jurisdictions has allowed this continued encroachment into wildland areas and creating a heightened fire danger.



Without man in the picture, chaparral will burn every 30 to 100 years and it generally rejuvenates the habitat, allowing more nutrients and water for trees, and open space for grass and flowering plants to grow. The shrubs will come back too, but less dense for many decades as trees take up more of the space and shade out much of the brush. In a severe burn, chaparral will take over until trees grow and overtop it, eventually out-competing the shrubs. Many of the seeds in chaparral, both shrub and herbs, can remain dormant in the soil waiting for a fire to germinate and spring to life. In this sense, the fire is good except when houses are nearby.

Because it is so close to the urban area, fire treatment is not safe at this time due to the thick understory. This will be a primarily mechanical treatment of cutting shrubs and trees with burning limited to burn piles. Garrett stated that trees would be thinned to 30 feet apart as would clumps of shrubs. The larger logs over 10 to 12 inches would be left on the ground for habitat and slow decay of nutrients. The smaller trees and shrubs would be masticated and, in some cases, burned in place. He showed us a section that had been treated 10 years ago and while shrubs had grown back, they were still not as thick, so while needing thinning, the fire hazard was much lower.

While many of us do not like to see vegetation removed, the methods they are using will in some ways mimic a low-intensity fire and still leave habitat for wildlife. There will be some burning of piles on site and the heat from the fire and the chemicals in the smoke can break the protective seed coat of dormant flowers providing a wildflower bonanza in the spring. Visiting areas of previous burns of understory shrubs almost always provides a bonanza of wildflowers in spring.

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**Your Comments Make a Difference!**

Aaron Hatch, Chair of the Redding Planning Commission, retained his position as Chair of the Redding Planning Commission, as Mayor Audette was unable to get a single council member to support her efforts to remove him. This was in large part due to the 120 emails and letters sent in support of Hatch and 26 people who spoke in support of him at the City Council meeting on May 7. His removal was sought primarily by Mayor Audette because he objected to the weaknesses in the new Redding General Plan, which the Planning Commission did not approve. Read an interesting report on the meeting from [anewscafe.com](http://anewscafe.com)

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## Blue Oak Seedling Work Day

*Photo by Doug Mandel*

On Thursday, May 29, SEA worked on putting up burlap to shade the oak seedlings we have grown in the burned area of the Westside Trail. Almost all are still surviving, but blue oaks do grow slowly, but some have reached 3 feet. In the wild, blue oak seedlings usually grow in the shade of other trees or shrubs. After they are established several years, their growth rate accelerates, but much slower than the common black and interior life oaks

found in the area. A 12-inch wide blue oak could easily be over 100 years old. We also cleared out a few competing toyon and thinned resprouting black oaks to one or two trees to concentrate the growth.



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# Bad News for Trees in Redding

Mayor Tenessa Audette stated at an April City Council meeting in discussing her appointments to the Planning Commission and her effort to have Chair Aaron Hatch removed, that she was pro-Redding and to be pro-Redding you must be pro-growth. Her appointments to the Planning Commission have stated they are very much pro-growth and if Audette were successful in removing Hatch, she would have appointed someone who sees growth as paramount and the environment as secondary. This is bad news for an effective new tree ordinance which is still in the hands of the Planning Department and when completed will have to be approved by both the Planning Commission and the City Council.

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## Trip Report: Lillian Nelson Nature Preserve



Jeremy Kelly of the Western Shasta Resource Conservation District (WSRCD) led a field trip sponsored by SEA and the Shasta Chapter of CNPS where WSRCD is doing a restoration project on the Lillian Nelson Nature Preserve in Redding city limits near Bethel Church. We walked the Preserve area and he showed us an area where Boulder Creek had some natural berms that created a large pond and widened the flow of Boulder Creek into adjacent meadows. He also pointed out Red

Sesbania (*Sesbania punicea*) also known as rattlebox, an invasive shrub in the pea family that has made it up the Sacramento River to Redding. The WSRCD is removing the shrub as their restoration project progresses. The shrub can be pulled by hand when small and the soil is damp or they use a weed wrench to pull it out by the roots.

Jeremy also showed us a demonstration plot where they covered the entire area with tarps to determine how many invasive plants return after removing the tarps. This is a beautiful area literally in our backyard with many birds, especially in the winter and spring as there are detention ponds on City-owned land nearby that fill with water in the winter with overflow from Boulder Creek.

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# Update on Jones High Plains Shooting Range Near Millville

Patrick Jones has filed two motions to disqualify Judge Benjamin Hanna from hearing the lawsuit filed by Millville residents against the shooting range. Another hearing will be held on June 10. The Shasta Chapter of CNPS, SEA, and the Shasta Group of Sierra Club have donated to the Millville residents' lawsuit because they feel the Biological Review of the project was completely inadequate. You can also read an in-depth article on the legal maneuvers on [anewscafe.com](http://anewscafe.com).

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## Clear Creek Clean-Up

Shasta Environmental Alliance had a cleanup on the Clear Creek Trail north of the Gorge Overlook Parking lot on Saturday, June 1, with eight hardy souls participating. They picked up trash between the parking lot and where it crosses Clear Creek Road. We also had three people with weed eaters clearing 4 to 5 feet high weeds which were quite thick on the first section of the trail. It was heartening to see that most people using the trail are picking up after themselves and the trail is remaining fairly clean. We had two energetic young people who took every side trail down to the creek and picked up trash along the shoreline. For our next trail work, we will be cutting back brush on the little used section closer to Horsetown Clear Creek Preserve.

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## **\$250 to \$499**

Barbara Featherstone, Ryan Henson, Cathy Lefler, Peter Waller, Shasta Chapter of the California Native Plant Society

## **\$500 to \$999**

Mary Belkin, Ray Pfister

## **\$1000 & Up**

Don and Laurie Burk, Lang Dayton, Chris Harvey

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## **Please consider a donation to SEA!**

You can go to [ecoshasta.org](https://ecoshasta.org) to donate!

*If you prefer to send a check, our mailing address is:*

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