

PULSE OF THE PUBLIC

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Nature at risk at SDC

EDITOR: Protecting the Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor was one of the main drivers of the push to secure the open space at Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) in addition to habitat protection, biodiversity preservation, wildfire risk reduction, and defense against climate change. While these lands are on their way to permanent protection, there are several concerns that still need to be addressed.

Most importantly, Sonoma Creek and significant tributaries that serve as riparian corridors at SDC do not appear to have been included in the transfer of the open space that has been conveyed to California State Parks. The creeks run through the campus which is slated for major development.

That is of concern, because riparian corridors are often some of the most frequently traversed parts of a wildlife corridor system. These waterways knit together various parts of the broader web of the Corridor. At least the Sonoma Creek riparian setback was widened in the SDC Site Specific Plan to 100 feet from each bank. As minimally adequate as that is, it is better than the 50 feet on each side, which is all that protects Hill/ Mill Creek.

Riparian corridors serve as habitat, access to water, wildlife transit corridors, protection from humans and transportation interactions, and so much more. At-risk salmonids and frogs live in the creeks. Knowing where the boundaries of the riparian corridors and setbacks are, and what buildings and roads or paths, if any, fall within those setback boundaries is a crucial piece of information to protect those spaces. And as far as I can tell no specific mapping has been done of those areas.

I am also concerned that leaving the protection of those riparian corridors up to the developer/s of the SDC campus subjects the corridors to serious risk. Developers are not experts at habitat restoration, stream rehabilitation, wildlife movement or salmonid migrations. Groundwater restoration, stream bank erosion control and protection from water pollution caused by runoff will all need to be addressed among other potential problems.

Instead, could Fish and Wildlife create a plan for protecting the corridors? I know they are underfunded and not necessarily the optimal overseer, but they might engage due to the recovering salmonid population in the Sonoma Valley Creeks.

Alternatively, Ag+Open Space, Sonoma Land Trust or Sonoma Ecology Center might be persuaded to acquire an interest in the corridors to ensure oversight through an open space preserve or outright ownership.

I fear if this matter is not addressed early in this multi-pronged process of development it might be left too late to solve. Plus, I'd like to relieve the developer/ s of any temptation to bargain away the riparian corridor protections.

Nancy Kirwan

Sonoma Mountain Preservation

Tyre Nichols beating

EDITOR: What leaps out to me on reading the description of the beating of Tyre Nichols is, what will the dear ones of those officers think? What do they teach their children? Do they take them to Sunday school? Do they teach them to be truthful and kind to animals? Will they have any moral authority in their family in the future? Do they tell them police are hired to protect and serve? As the grandmother of mixed-race children, the fact that

it was Black men who did this to one of their own is doubly tragic. Did these officers teach their children to beware of white cops?

Jessie Gordon

Sonoma

Leading the state

EDITOR: I was surprised not to see any mention in the Press Democrat of Index-Tribune about the incredible accomplishment of one of its own. I had to go to Facebook to learn that Emily Charrier, the I-T's publisher and editor, was

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Scientists and conservationists have identified an important wildlife corridor running through Sonoma Valley and the Sonoma Developmental Center between the Mayacamas Mountains and Sonoma Mountain.

DENNIS BOLT / FOR THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

Pulse

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named president of the statewide California News Publishers Association.

I learned the organization protects the business of journalism, but also fights for transparency in government and beyond.

They helped pass laws that require police body cam footage to be made public, and that police personnel records that include misdoings like excessive force are also made available to the public.

We often take for granted the work that local journalists do especially when it comes to holding our politicians accountable.

I was very proud to know one of our own is leading the state in this important work.

I found it fun to learn that former I-T leaders Bill Lynch and Robert Lynch also held the gavel Emily received as president of this important group.

Bravo, Emily!

Jane Ante

Boyes Hot Springs

The wrong message

EDITOR: Why do police departments give their units aggressive names like Scorpion or SWAT?

This is a symptom of the mentality and a cause, among others, of the behavior that resulted in the death of Tyre Nichols. The primary mission, which should be reflected in unit names, is peacekeeping and rescue of the innocent.

Dave Stein

Santa Rosa

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