

Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods

Preservation through Education and Stewardship

Russian River District State Parks

Volume XXX, Number 1, Spring 2015



Thirty Years of Volunteerism

Michele Luna, Stewards Executive Director

Seal Watch began in 1985, when Dian Hardy and other local activists from Jenner discovered that the harbor seals at Goat Rock State Beach were in greater danger from beach visitors and unleashed dogs than from the pollution of a recent sewage spill into the Russian River. In response to these concerns, they organized and set up four-hour shifts on the beach at the river mouth where they asked visitors to abide by the Marine Mammal Protection Act and stay at least 50 yards from the harbor seals. The group was particularly concerned about disturbing the seals during their pupping and rearing season, which begins in March and goes through August each year.

State Park staff at the time worked with these dedicated volunteers to form a State Park Cooperating Association. They began the work of developing bylaws, articles of incorporation and becoming incorporated as a nonprofit public benefit organization in 1985. By 1986, Stewards of Slavianka was incorporated as a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. "Slavianka" is the name that 19th century Russian settlers gave to the Russian River. It means "little Slavic dancing girl."

Both Seal Watch and Stewards turn 30-years-old this year. Seal Watch and Whale Watch were the first State Park volunteer programs in the Russian River State Park District supported by Stewards. In the late 1980s, volunteers began to organize themselves at Armstrong Redwoods to provide visitor information and to lead school and adult tours through the park. I was hired as executive director in 1994 to increase the organization's ability to raise funds and implement the use of technology for recordkeeping. A co-worker used to remind me that Stewards' membership was kept track of in a small file box when I was hired. Our membership has now grown to almost 600. In 2003, the membership voted to change the name to Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods to promote greater name recognition, better convey its service scope, and increase donations to the organization.

Seal Watch volunteers continue to protect the Russian River harbor seal haulout and educate the public on weekends from March through Labor Day. The harbor seals are particularly vulnerable during their annual pupping season because mothers who are forced to leave their pups may abandon them if they don't feel safe and/or humans or other animals interfere with their pups. Good data has been collected about the Russian River harbor seals since 1989, when Elinor Twohy of Jenner started counting the seals at the

Continued on page 2

Mission

Stewards Promotes, Restores, and Protects Your State Parks.

Vision

Stewards is the Link between People and Their Parks.

State Parks

Armstrong Redwoods State Nat. Reserve
Austin Creek State Recreation Area
Sonoma Coast State Park

Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods
P.O. Box 2, Duncans Mills, CA 95430
707.869.9177, 707.869.8252 Fax

stewards@stewardscr.org

www.stewardscr.org

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

~ SAVE THESE 2015 DATES ~

April 11 & 12	42nd Annual Fisherman's Festival
April 18	Earth Day Clean up and Restoration Day
May 2	Armstrong Redwoods & Austin Creek Run
June 20	Art in the Park
July 11	Family Day in your Park
August 1	Sunset Dinner
August 29 & 30	21st Annual Bodega Seafood Art and Wine Festival
September 19	Old Grove Festival - Hot Buttered Rum

OUR UPCOMING SEMINARS AND ORIENTATIONS ARE

LISTED ON PAGE 5

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E-Newsletter

Sign up at www.stewardscr.org!

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Continued from front page

Michele Luna, Stewards Executive Director

river mouth daily. Based on consistent data collected about the Harbor Seals since the 1980s, Dr. Joe Mortenson and Stewards published a study in 1994 showing a direct correlation between human interactions and seals flushing into the water to be safe. Over the years, census data has continued to be collected by Dr. Sarah Allen, a biologist with the National Park Service, the Sonoma County Water Agency and NOAA.

In 2009, Stewards began a partnership with the Sonoma County Water Agency (SCWA) to monitor pinnipeds at and near the Russian River mouth in response to the need for a federal permit for incidental harassment of marine mammals during any activities associated with the requirements of the National Marine Fisheries Service's biological opinion (BO). This includes breaching the river mouth when the river gets to flood stage and when the outlet channel is managed as directed by the BO. This has provided an opportunity for Stewards' volunteer citizen scientists to continue to collect good data about the harbor seal haulout. Dr. Joe Mortenson compiles the data and works with SCWA staff to analyze the data. There have been over 500 seals counted at one time at the mouth of the river in the years 2000, 2005 and 2009. Currently, they average about 100 – 160 per day. The number of pups born at the Russian River mouth generally varies from 10 to 30 a year.

Volunteers are always needed for Seal Watch and for the Pinniped Monitoring program. Contact Pete Bidigare, Stewards' Volunteer Manager at pete@stewardscr.org or (707) 869-9177 x1# if you are interested. Dr. Sarah Allen helps train volunteers for Stewards and reminds them about the significance of the Jenner Harbor Seal Haulout, the largest in Sonoma County. Dr. Allen praises Seal Watch as "a great and essential program."

More about Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods

Today, Stewards has grown to be a significant nonprofit organization working to support 23 State Park programs at Armstrong Redwoods State Natural Reserve, Austin Creek State Recreation Area and Sonoma Coast State Park. Of all the Cooperating Associations in the state, Stewards ranks in the top ten as far as revenue raised that goes back to supporting State Park programs and education, preservation and restoration efforts. When I was hired, Stewards was raising about \$50,000 a year generated from the Armstrong Visitor Center and campfire wood sales. In 2014, Stewards grossed over \$680,000 through a diversified fund development plan.

The nonprofit/public agency partnership between Stewards and State Parks has been a great success and is highlighted in the just-issued California Parks Forward Commission report. In 2012, Stewards began operating Austin Creek State Recreation Area when it was slated to close, and currently operates the entrance station to both Armstrong Redwoods and Austin Creek SRA. In 2014, camping revenue at Bullfrog Pond campground increased by over 90% from 2013 thanks to a new reservation system Stewards put in place with www.hipcamp.com. In 2015, with Stewards' support, new Harbor Seal interpretive panels will be installed to enhance the education of park visitors at Goat Rock State Beach, the river overlook above Jenner, and the boat launch by the Jenner Visitor Center.

From its beginnings 30 years ago, Stewards has been an innovative force in providing education about, and protection for, the natural and cultural resources in Russian River area State Parks. (Be on the lookout for the Steward Ship marine mobile education van - our newest program!)

Saying Good-bye to Lanny Keyston - 1933-2015

I am proud to have called Lanny and his wife Joann friends. Lanny joined Stewards around the same time as I did and he became Board President soon after. While Lanny made a wonderful, supportive and effective board president for many years, his legacy is starting the Armstrong Trail Crew program. Over twenty years ago, Lanny helped to recruit volunteers to work on trails and other maintenance projects at Armstrong Redwoods and Austin Creek on a monthly basis when he realized that Laura Parent and Gary Lathen of State Parks couldn't keep up with their workload. As



CAL REPORT

Ranger Greg Probst, Cooperating Association Liaison

Numerous wildflowers are now in full bloom along the Sonoma Coast as this unusually, mild winter season comes to a close. The rich, green, coastal hills are a welcoming beacon to us all as a new spring begins here in our local state parks. Spring tends to have me personally reflect upon my yesterdays. More importantly, spring also has me reflect on the possibility of new life and new growth that awaits me tomorrow. This transition between the seasons fills me with both trepidation and hope.

Our California State Parks are also in a transition; a transition filled with a small amount of trepidation and a large amount of hope. State Parks has brought together a Transformation Team that has four specific goals and thirty-one specific initiatives which attempt to implement recommendations brought forth by the Parks Forward Commission.



Steve Szalay, team leader of the Transformation Team, describes this new 'spring season' for our parks as follows: "Using the Parks Forward Commission's report as a beginning, a Transformation Team has been established. This team is comprised of qualified, experienced and dedicated personnel from State Parks staff, outside entities and professional consultants. The Transformation Team, along with input from staff, stakeholders, and partners, will be working through a number of initiatives that will lead to positive change. This process will be fluid and constantly evolving." State Parks Acting Director, Lisa Magnat writes that, "Through the collective efforts and continued dedication of our staff, partners, and stakeholders, the system will become stronger."

Five initiatives directly address how state parks will work together with our many park partners, to include Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods, in the future. The sub-committee on park partnerships will:

1. Review roles and responsibilities of the statewide support organizations
2. Review and update policies and procedures that enable partnerships for park operations
3. Develop a management structure that fosters positive relationships with new and existing partners
4. Improve the quality and quantity of volunteers and docents
5. Develop a new non-profit public benefit organization to provide operational, financial, and strategic support for organizations that manage parks in California.

Just as any new season holds many unknowns - so does this 'new spring' in our California State Parks. I urge you all to stay informed and visit the state park webpage. (Be sure to click on the Transformation Team link for more in-depth and the most current information). http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=28074 I also challenge all those who love our many state parks to continue to stay involved and become part of the positive change that will soon be blooming in a park near you.

Remembering Lanny Keyston *Continued from page 2*

trail crew coordinator, Lanny called volunteers the week before each trail day to find out who could make it. That way Laura and Gary could have the projects laid out for them. Over the years, I saw how tired these dedicated volunteers were at the end of their workday but each and every one of them came back with a smile on their face. Lanny also helped us with processing firewood for a number of years and came up with the innovative idea to use feed sacks, which he got at the local feed store to bag up the wood for sale. The Armstrong monthly trail crew led the way for another monthly workday on Sonoma Coast started by Bill Bambrick. Lanny participated in both trail crews until just a few years ago when he and Joann moved to Santa Rosa from Sebastopol. Besides trails, Lanny volunteered as an Armstrong tour guide, Seal Watcher, helped start the watershed education program, helped coordinate the Friends of Armstrong Redwoods (FAR), worked on Armstrong restoration projects and at special events. The following are thoughts shared by others from Stewards and State Parks who knew and loved this wonderful man:

"I am so saddened by this news. I truly loved this man. He was smart. He was funny, considerate, humble, fair, good listener, patient. How could anyone not love him. I told JoAnn once that she better not turn her back on him and she said not to worry, he's too good a cook. We've lost a very special person."~ Joyce Bacci, Armstrong Visitor Center Coordinator

"Oh how truly sad! Lanny gave so much to the park and really wanted to pass along his knowledge and appreciation for our parks to others. He was a hard worker on the trail crew and I truly appreciated his "tell it like it is" style and sense of humor. My deepest condolences to his wife and the rest of his family and friends. May he rest in peace."~ Andrea Mapes, State Park and Recreation Specialist

"Lanny was very close to being a gentleman, personified and a great guy who quietly got things done. Audrey and I had a chance to work with Lanny for something like 16 years. Lanny raised two kids after a divorce and did the cooking at home. He was the leader of the trail crew, yet he never seemed to have to order folks around, we just seemed to know what was to be done. Lanny's demise is a loss to us all and to State Parks."~ Doug and Audrey King, dedicated volunteers

Stewards is honored to be suggested as a nonprofit for donations in Lanny's memory.

PROGRAM UPDATES

WHALE WATCH

Bea Brunn, Whale Mother

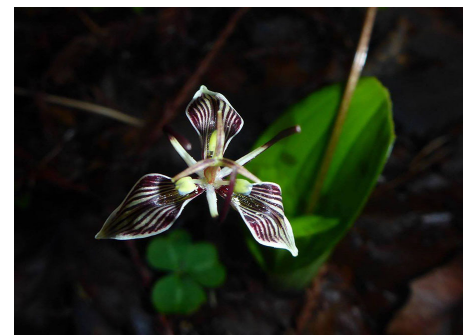
What a fantastic start to our 2015 whale watch season. All of January we had beautiful clear weather and no rain. On opening day we had 25-30 whales putting on a show for us with many breachings to the delight of not only our volunteers but the many visitors. Every weekend we had many whale sightings with quite a few breachings, all just outside the buoy and seemingly taking their time swimming by on their way down south.

We are all excited about the many early sightings and breaches, which is very unusual in our area. We are also seeing changes in the behavior of our gray whales as some of them are not swimming all the way to Alaska but stopping off on the way north where they are finding different ways of feeding, being very opportunistic feeders.

According to official counts by the American Cetacean Society down south, the numbers of gray whales as well as several other whales seem to be in record numbers this season. We are looking forward to a continued great season during our northward migration, although the first weekend of February we had to cancel because of very stormy and windy weather.

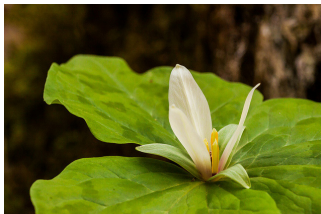
WILDFLOWERS OUT AND ABOUT

A patch of Fetid Adder's Tongue flowers bloom in late January/early February next to the Waterfall Trail each year at Armstrong Woods. This photo taken by Pete Bidigare, shows its unusual flower and it has limey green spotted leaves at its base. When it opens, this lily family member emits the scent of rotting meat to attract the fungus gnat (small type of fly), one of the few pollinators active at this time of the year. Once the seeds are formed on slinky pods that look like snake tongues flickering, they are dispersed to new areas to grow by ants and slugs! Its scientific name is *Scoliopus biglovii*.



Cindy Gillease, Naturalist

After these earlier flowers we see the white mustard family member Milkmaids. Hound's Tongue leaves and their pink-purple flowers are next, as well as Shooting Stars. These plants are on the woodland slopes and meadows that are on the margins of the redwood forest and becoming more abundant in the mixed conifer woods. Shooting Stars are such a vibrant part of spring and form in clumps of wet soil. The pink sepals thrust backwards away from the stamens. The anthers form a ring of bright yellow between the stamens and the sepals. This primrose family member is called, scientifically, *Dodecathon* ssp. Often yellow buttercups are nearby.



In the redwood forest, both at Armstrong Woods and in Pomo Canyon, one of my favorite plants is the trillium. Of a few different species, my favorite is the Western Trillium with its single flower raised on a small stalk above the whorl of leaves. They get the name trillium because of 3 deep green leaves coming out of one center along the stem. They get their flowers after the redwoods themselves have had their pollen spread by the wind in January and February. The redwood sorrel, the beautiful "carpet" of the redwood forest has had a sprinkling of white to pink flowers already and should be at its height of beauty in late April.

HAVE YOU WALKED THE KORTUM TRAIL?

April Reza, Outreach Coordinator

Upon opening a Sonoma Coast State Park map, you will see a green dotted line running south from Goat Rock to Wrights Beach Campground. This stretch of 4.3 miles of coastline has been gently tailored to welcome all visitors to enjoy the beauty of their State Park. Panoramic views can be savored as one walks through the prairies of native grassland. Simply stated, the Kortum Trail is as momentous as the man whom it honors. In August of 2007, Coastwalk California and California State Parks officially signed in the Kortum Trail in recognition of William Kortum's unwavering dedication to preserve Sonoma County land. Bill was honored in life for his significant contributions, which directly affect how public outdoor spaces in Sonoma County are valued and preserved today. Among his achievements is the towering victory over Pacific Gas and Electric Company. Along with his contemporaries, Bill reverently advocated against PG&E's plan to build a nuclear power plant upon the San Andreas Fault at Bodega Head. Community activists organized in such a way that PG&E literally abandoned the construction site for the nuclear reactor, leaving a huge excavated hole just behind the Campbell Cove parking lot. Today, the "Hole in the Head" has transformed into a pond which serves as a refueling station for migrating birds. Bill has been quoted to have said that this is "a great lesson that you could take on a giant and win." Not only did Bill spearhead a culture of conservation in Sonoma County, but his dedication as an active community member demonstrated that we can preserve the things we value most. Every step taken along the Kortum Trail, every heart moved by the beauty of this coast, will celebrate Bill's efforts for generations to come.

SPRING 2015 ORIENTATIONS AND SEMINARS

Geology of Sonoma Coast

Saturday, March 21, 9:30 am - 3 pm. This seminar will take place at Shell Beach and Bodega Head. Learn about unique geologic formations, landforms, geologic history, plate tectonics, and their significance on the Sonoma Coast.

Salmonids and Fishing on the Russian River

Saturday, March 28, 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm. Join us for an exploration of the life cycles and biology of Russian River Salmon and Steelhead. We will address the current habitat restoration efforts throughout the basin and the work of the Coho Recovery Project. We will also learn about fishing along the Russian River.

Wildlife of Western Sonoma County

Saturday, April 4, 1 pm - 4 pm. Learn about the fauna, from banana slugs to mountain lions inhabiting our forests, woodlands and grasslands, by exploring stories told by Scats and Tracks, a few skulls, pelts and sounds. Learn about rehabilitating and releasing wildlife.

Archeology and History of Sonoma Coast

Saturday, April 25, 9 am - 2 pm. Join this popular field seminar about the fascinating changes that have taken place from an archeological and historic perspective on the Sonoma Coast.

Edible and Medicinal Plants of the Sonoma Coast

Sunday, April 26, 10:00 am - 3:00 pm. Join us for an easy hike as we explore the abundance of food and medicine that grows all around us. During this seminar, we will learn how to identify, use and eat our local plants. We will also be making a special herbal preparation to take home. Come and join us as we celebrate our diverse flora.

The Legacy of Pond Farm Pottery

Saturday, May 2, 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm. Learn about the inspiring story of internationally renowned ceramic potter, Marguerite Wildenhain and Pond Farm Pottery.

State Parks Volunteer Docent/Stewards General Orientation – Session 3

Saturday, May 2, 9 am - Noon. General Orientation about all volunteer opportunities available in Russian River Sector State Parks. One General Orientation is REQUIRED for all new volunteers.

Cultural History of Sonoma Coast

Saturday, May 9, 1 pm - 4 pm. Learn about the cultural history of Sonoma Coast State Park, including the Kashaya Pomo, Russian American Fur Company, ranching families and logging operations.

Introduction to the Coastal Prairie

Saturday, May 16, 9:30 am - 2:30 pm. Come learn about the most diverse and endangered native grassland in North America and four of the threats to its existence: urbanization, shrub encroachment, invasive species, and conversion to agriculture. Then hike through some of the remaining 1% of California's native prairie along the Kortum and Pomo trails.

Birding on the Sonoma Coast

Saturday, May 23, 9:00 am to Noon. Explore birds of the Sonoma Coast near the mouth of the Russian River. Learn about gulls, grebes, loons, common murrelets and more!

Harbor Seal Viewing by Kayak

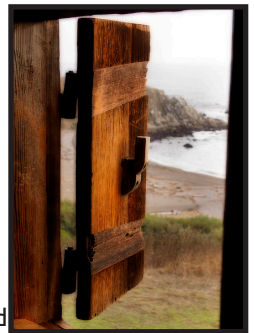
Saturday, May 30, 9 am - 12:30 pm. Explore how to view harbor seals safely by boat, with special consideration for keeping appropriate distance and being mindful of tides, wind, and water conditions at the mouth of the Russian River. Kayak rental fees apply.

Seal Watch Orientation

Saturday, May 30, 1:30 - 4:00 pm. Help protect the harbor seals at the mouth of the Russian River during the pupping season (March to Labor Day).

REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED - To register for orientations and seminars use our Online Reservation Form. Time and location details will be confirmed upon registration.

For more information and directions, contact Pete Bidigare, Volunteer Manager at 707-869-9177 ext. 1# or pete@stewardscr.org.



Volunteer Opportunities

Call the Stewards office:
869-9177 x1# or email
pete@stewardscr.org

Program Activities Armstrong Redwoods

Visitor Center Staffing
Friends of Armstrong
Redwoods
Docent Tour Guides
Trail Maintenance
Habitat Restoration Project
Pond Farm Interest Group

Sonoma Coast State Park

Visitor Center Staffing
Seal Watch
Whale Watch
Tidepool Programs
Watershed Programs
Environmental Living Prog.
Sonoma Coast Stewardship
Pinniped Monitoring
Seabird Monitoring

Other Projects

Office Help & Special Events

Volunteer Program Coordinators

Joyce Bacci, ARVC
Doris Dickenson, FAR
Laura Parent, Pond Farm
Linda Fisher, Jenner VC
Jim Fleming, Seal Watch
Bea Brunn, Whale Watch
Suzanne Abrams, ELP
Cindy Gillease, Willow
Creek Education Program
Bill Bambrick, Sonoma Coast
Water Quality Monitoring
Trail Crew
The Sorensens, Marine
Debris & Beach Cleanups
Hollis & Jerry Bewley,
Tidepool Programs
Hollis Bewley,
Seabird Monitoring
Louise Patterson, MAU
Mark Anderson, Foot Patrol

TIDE POOL OUTING WITH VILLAGE CHARTER SCHOOL

Cindy Gillease, Naturalist

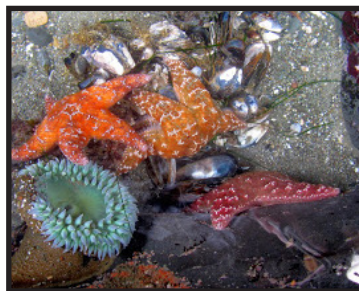
A class from Village Charter School in Santa Rosa came out for a return visit to the tide pools at Shell Beach during the last week of February after spending the morning with a marine educator from the Bodega Marine Lab, a field science facility run by U. C. Davis. The students ranged in age from about 8 to 11; I could see they were used to discovering things outdoors and making smart observations about what they found. They eagerly followed our Stewards' docents/natural-



ists down the steep path and across the pebbly beach to view first-hand the treasures of the tide pools, with red and black oystercatchers and gulls watching from the rocks nearby. After hosting visits by this group in 2014, I've concluded that they are some of the most talented and bright students I have encountered.

It takes patience to stop and watch for movement in the pools to see the hermit crabs scuttle along in their "borrowed" snail shells, as well as to observe quick sculpin fish and eel-like blenny fish. One of the boys found a sea star unattached while its "arms" were wrapped around a mussel, which he picked up and shared with the rest of the group. The sea star continued to eat the mussel with everyone looking on! Gently, it was placed back in the pool where it had been found in order to finish its meal.

The children were introduced to life forms – at once bizarre and beautiful – that have adapted



to this harsh and regularly changing habitat. The tide was low enough to see the tops of the "sea palm" seaweeds

swaying at the outer edge of the tide pool area, which are able to grow in the roughest part of the pounding waves. Students looked at marine organisms found in layered zones of the rocky intertidal, based on how long they typically can be exposed to air, from the battered "sea palms" and red octopi of the lower tidal zone to the paint-like barnacles and limpets of the splash zone.

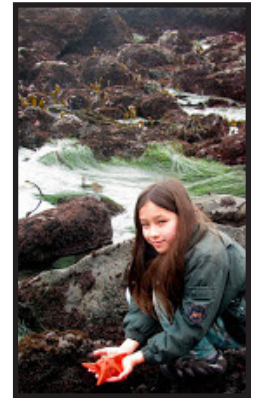
Docents Ray Rapp, Alan Hahn, Kathleen Escamilla, and Alan Kostelnik have been trained to aid the children in looking closer at how these animals survive in harsh waves, sunlight, salt, and constant chance of predation. They carry tide pool field guides and help students identify their names and whether they are part of the jellyfish or mollusk clan or some other animal groups. Everyone from docent to student, teacher to parent enjoyed this process and were delighted to be at the seashore together.

Millie is a student who had found a rare sea urchin species last year

and continued to find more unusual creatures tucked away in the rocks this time. As we reflected at the end of the day about what each student and adult had seen, Millie observed that the best way to find the most unusual animals was to look upside down under the rocky ledges of the pools.

She was curious and persistent in the way those headed for a career in science or wildlife often are. Millie and her classmates were definitely "unplugged" looking at the world from every angle, unafraid to pick up and examine colorful nudibranchs (sea slugs) and kelp crabs. Their teacher, Elsie Batten, emphasized a sense of appreciation and stewardship with the students, and I feel very certain that this is a group who will know, understand, and care for the natural environment.

As one of our docents says to students, like the Lorax character in the book by Dr. Seuss, "Who will speak for the TREES?" or in this case, "Who will speak for the living things of the ocean?" I believe these students will!



In Appreciation of our Donors

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California State Parks Foundation
Clifbar Foundation
Community Foundation Sonoma County
County of Sonoma
Dean Witter Foundation
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The Joseph and Vera Long Foundation
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Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods

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STEWARDS.**

For information on contributing to Stewards' Endowments please contact Michele Luna (707) 869-9177 X4# michele@stewardscr.org

Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods

Membership Form

RENEWAL

YES, I'd like to become a member.

- Senior/Student \$25.00
Individual \$30.00
Family \$45.00
Contributing \$100.00
Sustaining \$150.00
Business \$150.00
Patron \$250.00 plus
Osprey Circle \$500.00 plus

Name(s) _____
Address _____
Phone _____
Email _____

I'd like to help with an additional donation of \$_____

Payment type: Check Charge Card Total tax deductible donation \$_____

Make check payable to Stewards. Account # _____ Exp. Date _____

Annual Renewal Date: February 1 Signature: _____

Bequests

Your Gift to the Future of State Park Preservation

With your help, future generations will enjoy the State Parks in the Russian River District, including education and stewardship programs supported by Stewards. A gift to Stewards is a rewarding form of giving from your estate. There are several types of charitable bequests by will (or beneficiary designation).

Sample:

I hereby give and bequeath to Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods, a nonprofit organization incorporated under the laws of the State of California, with a principal address at P.O. Box 2, Duncans Mills, CA 95430, _____ percent of my estate, (or) the sum of _____ dollars, (or) the following assets _____, Tax ID # _____ provided upon request. Contact your legal advisor for further information. There are also other planned giving options for your consideration.