



*Inverness Ridge Association  
PO Box 342  
Inverness, CA 94937  
Spring 2010*

## *President's Message*

When I was kid growing up a bit west of Fairfax, my parents would often pile us and our Irish born grandmother in the car for Sunday drives through the Nicasio Valley. I will never forget one such jaunt in early April when grandma's cheeks were wet with tears. "It looks so much like Ireland", she said.

We are once again in that blessed season, and (welcome change) the reservoirs are filled, and local creeks are clear and deep. It's time to give thanks.

Speaking of thanks: we really need to say again how much we appreciated the offer of Joe and Harriet Burgess' spectacular home on Sunnyside for our General Meeting in mid January. It was a blustery day out on the deck, but talk was lively, and appetites sharp when we broke for lunch inside the warm, wood paneled living room.

Talk was lively, wasn't it? Our invitation to Norm Solomon as guest speaker attracted a certain amount of attention in the local press, where some predicted a highly politicized gathering (two reporters showed up, but were gently asked to leave). What followed was an intelligent conversation among neighbors about the intimate links between our own local scene and larger issues around the world.

It is nice to know that there are still a few places where people can disagree without being disagreeable. Along with Norm, we had on our agenda a discussion

of revisions to the Marin Coastal Plan. Few people realize how much our little world is impacted by the LCP, which directly addresses substandard roads, our exposure to wildfires, and the impact of Paradise Ranch Estates (that's what we're called) on views from neighboring parks and private lands. Indeed, PRE probably gets more attention in the LCP than any other similar area. Perhaps this is because while the PRE subdivision was approved during the "anything goes" 1950s, it continues to be built out at a time when there is a lot more concern about open space, native vegetation, and the like.

IRA's comments on proposed changes to the LCP have been sent to the County, and are posted to the IRA website. For the most part these comments were non-controversial and if put in effect would eliminate a lot of ambiguous language surrounding new construction, defensible space, and the like. Other issues sparked debate, such as our decision not to seek any change in current rules about second units.

A couple of people have told me that the Association should not get involved in anything controversial, particularly those having to do with planning issues. Our Board has taken this question seriously and has concluded that if we don't let the County (and the Park Service, and the Coastal Commission) know what we want, others will do it for us, with unhappy results. The key, then, is not to avoid controversy; rather it is to conduct our debates in as civil a way as possible, and arrive at solutions that please most of the people most of the time.

## *It's Dues Time Again*

What with tax time upon us, we hate to bother you about IRA dues. In the bigger scheme, \$25 a year per family may seem like a trifle, but for our little group it's critical. While nearly everything we do relies on dedicated volunteers, there are exceptions. There are for example out of pocket costs that we just can't avoid, like postage, filing fees, drinks and sandwiches for our volunteer trail and road maintenance crews, and emergency radios for Bob Lundstrom's neighborhood emergency liaison crew.

There are also bigger ticket items like our ongoing vegetation management programs. During the last ten years, IRA has obtained nearly a half million dollars in federal and other grants which have allowed us to create and maintain significant buffer zones along rights of way and adjacent to parklands. Sometimes these require matching funds (this is how we funded our "chipper day" program last summer). Occasionally the need is really great. For example, IRA a couple years ago allocated more than ten thousand dollars in accumulated dues to help clear flashy fuels along our roads...this was a critically dry year just before our voter approved property tax increase took effect.

Last year more than 80% of our community were dues paying members of IRA. This is a very good participation rate, which we'd really like to meet and beat this year. So please drop your \$25 check in the mail, addressed to IRA, to the attention of our Treasurer, Alicia Jackson, Box 342, Inverness CA 94937.

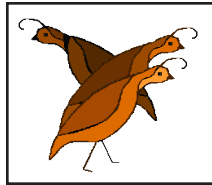
## *IRA Website*

The efforts of Katherine Williams have resulted in a beautify and useful place for you to keep up with what's going on in our community. Do check it out, and do let us know how we can make it better. Just punch in <http://invernessridge.net/>

## PG&E, and Related Issues:

Thanks to our collective efforts, IRA has gotten PG&E's agreement to increase coordination of the work that it and IRA do in managing vegetation along roads and rights of way. This has become especially important with the dramatic spread of sudden oak death, which has left hundreds of tanoak carcasses along our roads, and utility rights of way. PG&E has an obvious interest in eliminating potential threats to its service. IRA shares that interest and in addition wants to cut down dead trees which might fall on the roads and block access. Dan Kida is the PG&E Forester to whom we've been talking. Tamia Anderson and Mike Ongerth are the neighbors most closely involved on our side.

If you've got dead trees on your property, you are primarily responsible for making sure that they don't endanger you, your property, or your neighbors. IRA has worked out multiple ways to help. The Road Board for its part has been cutting down/cutting back dead trees that put the roads at risk. PG&E (whose jurisdiction may be wider than that of the Road Board) has been doing the same thing, and wants to hear from us where we see a danger to their operations. IRA will match costs incurred by individual members (up to \$100) where they clear away vegetation that is out of the utility and road rights of way, but which could still threaten their homes. Finally, the County sponsors nearby dump sites that are open free of charge on specified weekends every summer.



## Coastal Plan Update:

County Staff has responded to the comments of the IRA Board as they relate to the ongoing re-write of the Coastal Plan. The Staff draft indicates that the ban on second units in PRE will not at this time be revisited. Old language, no longer relevant, about lot consolidations will be dropped. The bed and breakfast rule (i.e. that no permit is required for the nightly rental of up to three bedrooms) will not be revisited unless we come up with ground for a tighter rule in PRE (as opposed to the rest of the County).

The LCP is a work in progress: for example, staff has adopted many but not all of IRA's suggested clarifications of the rules for new construction. We will be trying to persuade them to go further to straighten out this very confusing part of the County's rules. Stay tuned for further developments.

## Road Crew Volunteers:

Road Crew Volunteers: you may have noticed that otherwise welcome rains have accelerated the accumulation of roadside vegetation and debris. In some places we've actually lost up to three feet of usable roadspace. It's time for another volunteer effort to scrape away the loose soil and weeds. We will shortly be sending out an appeal: please help us out if at all possible.