

"We don't want there to be a big difference between the richest and poorest, because poor people would just get really poor." "We don't want people living on the streets, if that happens, we consider that we as a society have failed." *Martin Drescher, general manager commenting on the \$20 an hour minimum wage paid to Burger King employees in Denmark.*

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Ranching in jeopardy says former National Park Service superintendent

By Shelly Ingram

The worst fears of local ranchers and agricultural advocates were confirmed very early in a presentation given by former National Park Service superintendent, Tim Setnicka, last Thursday night at the West Marin School.

"If you're in the ranching business in the Point Reyes National Seashore, your business is in jeopardy," Setnicka said.

Setnicka received his bachelor's degree from Colorado State University and spent his entire career with the US Forest Service and the National Park Service. But he said he has seen a change in the way things were done in the Park Service during his 35-year career, which took him to the Grand Tetons, Yosemite and Santa Rosa Island.

"The culture of the National Park Service has changed," Setnicka said. "I really despise the lack of honesty used on Santa Rosa Island, and with the Lunny's Oyster ranch."

At 53,195 acres, Santa Rosa is the second largest of the five islands comprising the Channel Islands National Park. The island's history has many similarities with the history of the Point Reyes. It has long been home to ranching and farming operations and also has a large population of elk, deer and at one time wild pigs.

Purchased in 1906 by the Vail and Vickers families for the sum of \$1 million, it was sold to the Park Service in 1987 for \$28.5 million, with a lease back deal that extended for 25 years. The story of the transfer of ownership did not have a happy ending and went quickly downhill.

"It started out good, went bad and then went very, very ugly," Setnicka told the audience.

Russ and Al Vail represented the two families in the sale and were the most active in running the ranching and hunting operations on the island. The brothers had successfully managed the operations, which included cattle grazing and a deer, elk and pig hunting business for which they had imported animals. The cattle operation was limited to "stocker" calves brought to the island to fatten for market and did not include any breeding animals.

The trouble began for the families with a change of Park leadership in 1990, and an influx of nearly approximately \$900,000 in funding for resource management staff. Soon the ranching operation was the target of a variety of ecological studies. Species were identified and the ranching operation was cited as detrimental to the survival of the species.

The ranching operations could not be conclusively blamed by any of the Park Service studies, Setnicka said. So the NPS sought the help of other agencies, calling in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Regional Water Quality Board. Over time the demands for more and more concessions by the ranchers made it impossible for the family to continue ranching.

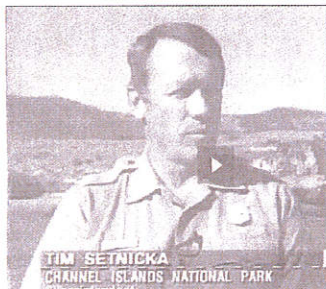
"We ran them out of business with our good intentions," Setnicka said. "It's not right, and it's not right here in Point Reyes."

During a question and answer period following his lecture Setnicka recommended using political capital to further the campaign at some point in the future. He also stressed the importance of continuing to participate in the NPS process and providing written documentation of all arguments against their proposed actions.

"The Park Service is starting to put ranching and farming into the crosshairs," Setnicka said. "They are starting to build an administrative record in preparation for litigation."

He referenced and commended a letter from the Point Reyes Seashore Ranchers Association written to the Park Superintendent that outlined the local residents concerns. The letter, which Setnicka called "clear and well written", can be found online at: www.nps.gov/pore/parkmgmt/planning_ranch_cmp_scoping_comments.htm (Correspondence #3076)

Another discussion of the issue is scheduled for Tuesday, November 11, from 7-8:30 pm at the West Marin School Gym. Speakers will include Nita Vail, Chief Executive Officer of the California Rangeland Trust, Will Woolley, members of the Vail family and Dewey Livingston, Point Reyes National Seashore historian.



The plain-spoken Tim Setnicka at an June 2001 C-Span interview about the Channel Islands National Park.



Sarah Phillips, the new Urban Streams Coordinator for the Marin Resource Conservation District, with Nancy Scolari, RCD Executive Director.

Marin Resource Conservation District launches new program to improve local creeks

By George Clyde, Associate Director, Marin RCD

After nearly 60 years of helping Marin County ranchers and farmers with creek restorations and other conservation projects, the Marin Resource Conservation District will soon be providing services to another group: people with homes and businesses along our local creeks.

Meet Sarah Phillips, the RCD's Urban Streams Coordinator, who is leading this new initiative to assist landowners who are near sensitive streams and creeks. With ambitious goals, Phillips will be working with all stakeholders – helping people with the challenges of protecting and improving their homes and properties, while also conserving and enhancing the quality of the nearby creeks and complying with the complex regulatory requirements.

Phillips says that her first priority will be to get to know everyone involved. "I'll be attending homeowner gatherings and meeting with the various advocacy groups, and I'm already meeting with the County and all the agencies. I want to be a real resource in providing solutions that benefit everyone, as well as protecting and improving our local creeks and the wildlife that depends on them."

Phillips comes to the job with plenty of experience. Since 2011 she has had a similar role for the South Yuba River watershed, where she helped resolve conflicting demands of the water agencies, creekside landowners, users of private water wells and advocacy groups. She also managed grant funds for watershed improvement projects and rolled up her sleeves for restoration field work that she organized.

"We are really fortunate to be able to have Sarah with us in Marin County," said Nancy Scolari, the RCD's Executive Director. "She'll not only bring her experience and energy to help tackle one of the County's most difficult issues, but she'll also be seeking grant funds to help with the projects."

Marin County is providing funding for the new program. Phillips welcomes calls from anyone involved with our local creeks and nearby properties

at the RCD in Point Reyes Station, sarah@marinrcd.org (415) 663-1170, ext. 302.

For further information: Nancy Scolari, nancy@marinrcd.org, (415) 663-1170, ext. 301; Sarah Phillips, sarah@marinrcd.org, (415) 663-1170, ext. 302.

Remembrance

Elizabeth Owen, 'Reporting for work'

By Jim Kravets, co-founder and former editor, West Marin Citizen.

In October 2008, Elizabeth Owen emailed me to say she had suffered a fall.

"Hi Jim. I'm ok, just pretty battered up from falling on my face Monday morning while looking at flowers in a friend's garden instead of the path. Big gash on forehead – lots of cuts, lots of blood because I was on a prescription for thinning blood to prevent blood clots and strokes. Also sprained left wrist, broken neck (2 vertebrae) cerebral hemorrhage and small concussion (still hurts.) I got out of MGH Saturday afternoon. Feel better each day – lots of loving care from Earle and my kids. I have a very annoying brace on my neck (for 3 months) and a cast on left arm for another week. I can do some editing if you need it."

Let I be distracted by the details of her injuries, she quickly sent me a follow-up email stressing her main point:

"Jim, To reiterate: I will be able to work tomorrow morning and I really want to do so."

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