

Willits Weekly

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Little Lake Grange rejoins new California state grange

Mike A'Dair
Reporter
mike@willitsweekly.com

In a difficult and controversial vote, the membership of the Little Lake Grange in Willits last month decided to reconcile with the recently formed and nationally recognized California Chartered State Grange.

The vote brings to a close one phase of a six-year convulsion within the national and state grange movements.

That convulsion was centered along political lines. On one side of the divide in the California

Read the rest of **Grange** | Over on Page 13

Caltrans dropped from Eberhard's arrest suit

By Nicholas Iovino

SAN FRANCISCO (Courthouse News) – A photojournalist arrested while covering a protest against a controversial highway project in Northern California has agreed to drop his lawsuit against the state's Department of Transportation.

However, Steve Eberhard will continue to pursue claims against the California Highway Patrol and officers that arrested him when his case goes to trial in February.

Eberhard, who is a photographer for the Willits News, was arrested in July 2013 as he covered a protest against the Willits Bypass Project, a four-lane

Read the rest of **Eberhard** | Over on Page 11

Woman last seen in Willits found dead on the coast

Sheriff's deputies are still trying to determine how a 33-year-old coast woman staying at a Willits residential facility met her death on a state beach at the south end of MacKerricher State Park on January 7.

Anne Nicole Shapiro



Read the rest of **Shapiro** | Over on Page 11



At top, from left: Raindrops falling on a large puddle, creating rings and free-flying droplets. John Sherman, City of Willits flood plain administrator, stands with his city vehicle. This low-lying area on Locust Street was heavily saturated from last week's rain.

Above: Sherman smiles from underneath an umbrella while observing the newly added floodplain area at the westernmost end of West Commercial Street.

Photos by Maureen Moore

Below: One of the FEMA flood plain maps.

Floodplain answers

City to host FEMA outreach meeting January 19

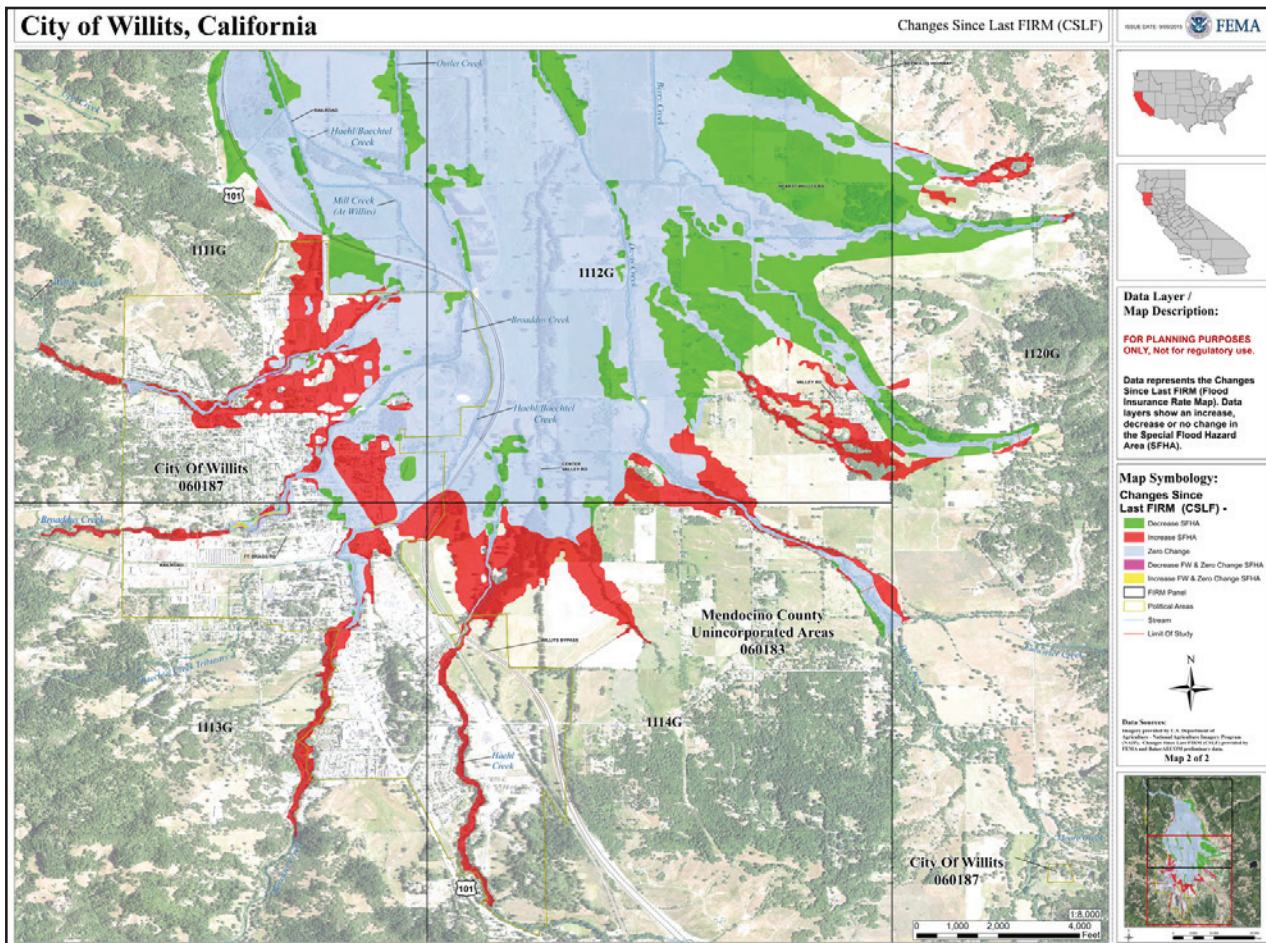
The City of Willits will host a FEMA flood maps public outreach meeting from 5 to 7 pm on Tuesday, January 19 in the City Council chambers at City Hall, 111 East Commercial Street.

The revised Floodplain Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) for Mendocino County

Services Agency have shown an increase in the Willits floodplain area from previous maps. Many local homeowners are concerned they may have to buy flood insurance or rebuild their properties to come into regulatory compliance.

"A lot of people are concerned about what this really means to them," said John Sherman, flood plain administrator for

Read the rest of **FEMA** | Over on Page 11



Question still open on how to spend 'extra' school funds

The question of how to use an "extra" \$775,000 in state funding promised to the district in December has not yet been decided, according to Willits Unified Superintendent Patricia Johnson,

Mike A'Dair
Reporter
mike@willitsweekly.com

District Financial Officer Tanya Michel announced at the December 16 meeting a nest egg of \$775,000 had come to the district thanks to California Gov. Jerry Brown, who figured it was time for the state to pay up some of its mandated costs to the school districts.

According to Michel, California has long promised to pay the schools for the many mandates the state puts onto the schools. For an equal length of time, the state has failed to make good on that promise, and a considerable backlog of mandate money had accrued to school districts all over the state – sort of an eternal IOU from Sacramento.

Last year Brown decided to pony up. The state will give districts a "mandate block grant" to take care

Read the rest of **Funds** | Over on Page 11

'Fire safe' report accepted ... with reservations

Mendocino County Fire Safe Council Executive Director Madeline Holtkamp battled to a draw with supervisors Dan Hamburg and John McCowen during the January 12 board meeting.

Mike A'Dair
Reporter
mike@willitsweekly.com

The two supervisors growled and rumbled at Holtkamp's tentative submission of the long-awaited scope-of-work report addressing how to make Mendocino County more "fire safe."

The submission was tentative because it included a paper written by University of California Cooperative Extension Forest Advisor Greg Giusti which was still in draft form. Giusti had requested more time to finish the paper.

Last spring, as the County of Mendocino and state of California were heading into their fourth straight year of drought, environmental activists and coastal fire district officials asked the supervisors to restrict how

Read the rest of **Fire Safe** | Over on Page 10

New chair, new year at Willits school board

Mike A'Dair
Reporter
mike@willitsweekly.com

Willits attorney Christopher Neary, elected chairman of the school board at trustees' December 2 meeting, has brought a breath of fresh air to board proceedings.

At the January 6 meeting, Neary presented outgoing board President Cynthia Carni with a plaque congratulating Carni for her service as board president for the past two years. He thanked Patricia Johnson for some very astute relationship building that Johnson has accomplished over her term as superintendent of schools, while opposing

Read the rest of **Neary** | Over on Page 10

Supes address internet outage

Mike A'Dair
Reporter
mike@willitsweekly.com

The board of supervisors on Tuesday took action on three routine items connected with a far-from-routine event: the September 3, 2015 fiber optic outage that crippled Mendocino, Humboldt and Del Norte counties for 24 hours.

The outage occurred after an exposed section of the main line was cut by vandals near Henry Station Road, west of Highway 101 near Mendocino County's southern boundary.

Thus far, AT&T has declined to install a second alternate main line to the North Coast which would carry the signal if the main

Read the rest of **Outage** | Over on Page 10

March 1 deadline fix for pot bill moves forward

Assembly Bill 21, North Coast Assemblyman Jim Wood's bill to remove the March 1 deadline from last year's Medical Marijuana Regulation and Safety Act, was unanimously passed by the state Senate Government and Finance Committee on Wednesday.

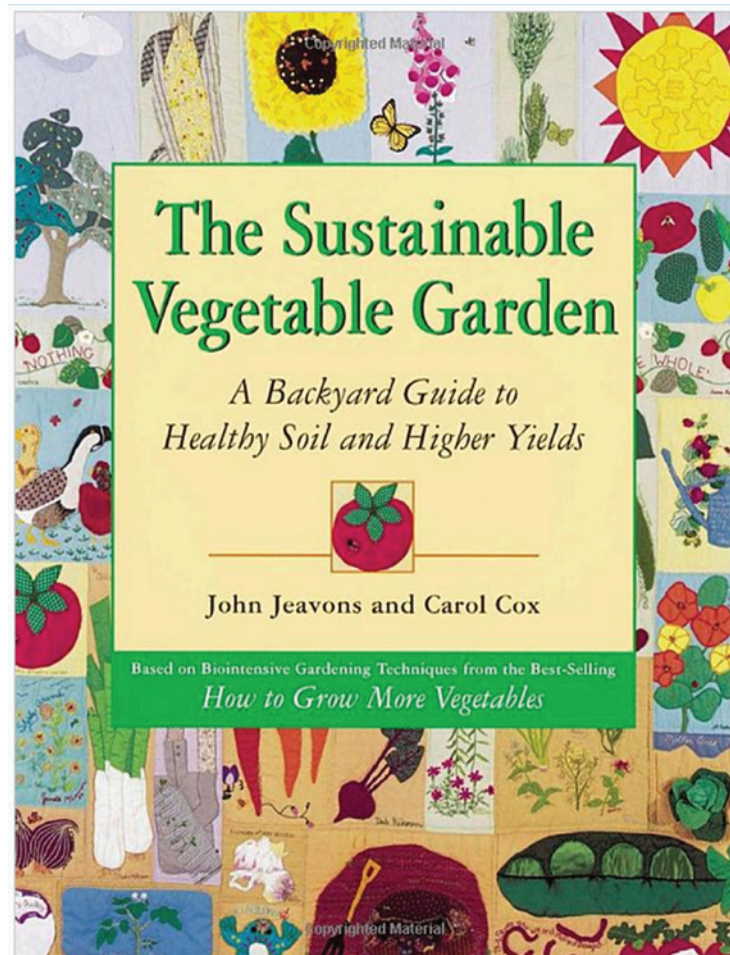
Assemblyman Wood said, "Nobody intended to give local lawmakers such a short timeline to develop regulations for an industry as complex as medical cannabis."

As passed and signed by the governor on October 9, 2015, if cities and counties do not create their own ordinances by March 1,

Read the rest of **Deadline** | Over on Page 11



From left to right: Willits Garden Club President Kitty McDill, guest speaker Carol Cox, Vice-President Gary Bodensteiner, Secretary Fran Gardner, and Treasurer Pat Collins at the January meeting.



Gardening in Small Spaces

Carol Cox speaks at Willits Garden Club's January meeting

The Willits Garden Club hosted a talk on Monday, January 11 by long-time Ecology Action member and Willits resident Carol Cox, titled "Gardening in a Small Space."

Co-author with John Jeavons of the book "The Sustainable Vegetable Garden" and with nearly three decades of bio-intensive gardening experience, Cox imparted her wisdom to the attendees at the Golden Rule Mobile Village Clubhouse.

Damian Sebouhian

Reporter
damian@willitsweekly.com

"Ecology Action's goal is to teach and research small-scale, organic, closed-system gardening for people who can raise their own food," Cox told the group, adding proudly that her car has a bumper sticker that says, "Compost Happens."

For people who have limited space, creating strong vegetable yields can be a challenge.

"In thinking about a small space, you don't have room for a lot of plants or a lot of beds, so it's important to focus on roots," Cox explained. "If you understand roots, you understand why you need to go down deeper in the soil than you did before."

While most gardeners start with beds whose soil is loosened down to roughly 10 inches, Cox explained that in order to create a strong root structure, soil should be loosened down to at least two feet.

This can be accomplished through double digging, using a garden fork for the second step to get deeper and loosen the soil. The looser the soil, the more pore space for air to get through.

"That air is very important," Cox said. "The microbes that live in the soil and help your plants grow are aerobic. They need oxygen, so there needs to be soil air in order for your plants to thrive."

In that regard, Cox cautioned gardeners not to over-water the soil, as too much water will clog pore spaces, blocking the necessary air the roots and microbes need.

With deeper, loosened topsoil, more pore space is created, allowing the roots to spread out and go deeper as well.

"The bigger the root system, the more access the plant has to nutrients, water and air, the essentials it needs to thrive."

In other words, the bigger and healthier the root system, the bigger and healthier the plant.

Rather than bringing in soil from an outside source, Cox explained that it is better, when beginning a garden, to use the soil you have on site and to improve it with compost. In order to determine the health of your soil, Cox suggested getting

it tested through a company called Timberleaf Soil Testing (www.timberleafsoiltesting.com).

"They will send you a printout of all the desired levels of nutrients," she said. "And what you need to add in order to create that balance."

On the topic of composting, Cox discouraged gardeners from using tumblers, as they doesn't properly duplicate nature's process.

"Nature drops leaves in the fall and moisture comes up from the soil and loosens the leaves," Cox explained. "There is a succession of organisms that go through the material and decompose it. If you're turning a compost machine every day, then this is not happening."

Rather, Cox prefers either creating piles on the ground itself or in bins. The bins she uses have sliding doors at the bottom so she can access the decomposed and ready-to-use compost. She throws fresh compost – kitchen waste and the like – on top.

For people growing in small spaces, it's important to create a balance of two types of compost. Ecology Action calls these types "mature" and "immature." Immature compost is found in kitchen scraps and decomposes quickly. Mature compost is made from materials such as corn stalks and straw, which decompose very slowly.

The immature compost creates nitrogen, and the mature compost creates carbon.

"What the microbes need," Cox said, "is both the nitrogen to give them energy and the carbon from the mature stalk material that helps them build their bodies."

Because many small-space gardeners don't create as much mature compost through their kitchen scraps, Cox suggested using newspapers, used paper towels, and even toilet paper.

"Often I will take newspaper, and crumple it up and layer it in the compost bin," she said. "One layer of immature material followed by a layer of mature material."

When all is said and done, the ideal small garden bed is 24 inches deep with loosened soil, three to four feet wide, and fertilized by compost that has been decomposing for several months, containing a balance of mature and immature material.

For more information on bio-intensive gardening and Ecology Action go to: www.growbiointensive.org.

To find out about upcoming Mendo-Lake District Garden Club events contact District Director Gary Bodensteiner at 459-2708 or drbode101@gmail.com.

Baked Polenta with Sauteed Broccoli Rabe and Pancetta

- 2 cups chicken stock
- Sea salt
- 1 1/3 cups coarse yellow cornmeal, or substitute instant polenta
- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 6 ounces thickly sliced pancetta, cut into 1/4-inch cubes
- 1 large yellow onion, thinly sliced
- 2 large cloves, thinly sliced
- 1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 2 pounds broccoli rabe, thick stems removed and discarded, cut into 3-inch lengths
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2 cup freshly grated Pecorino Romano cheese

Preheat the oven to 425 F. Lightly oil an 8x11-inch or 9x13-inch baking dish.

In a medium-size saucepan, bring the chicken stock and 2 cups water to a boil. Add 1 teaspoon salt and gradually whisk in the cornmeal until smooth. Cook over medium heat, stirring with a wooden spoon until it has thickened, about 10 minutes. Pour the polenta into the oiled baking dish and smooth the top; brush the top with 1 tablespoon of the olive oil. Bake for 1 hour 15 minutes, or until the top and bottom are golden and crusty.

Meanwhile, in a large deep skillet, heat the remaining 3 tablespoons of olive oil over medium-high heat until hot but not smoking. Stir in the pancetta and cook until golden, 4 to 5 minutes, stirring frequently. Add the onion, garlic and pepper flakes, and cook, stirring until the onion softens, 5 to 6 minutes. Add the broccoli rabe and 1/4 cup water, season to taste with salt and pepper, and toss gently. Cover and cook until the broccoli rabe is softened, about 5 minutes. Uncover and cook, stirring occasionally, until the water has evaporated and the broccoli rabe is completely tender, 2 minutes longer.

Cut the polenta into six equal pieces and transfer them to six small plates or, using a small circular cutter, cut the polenta into circles. Stir 1/4 cup of the Pecorino into the broccoli rabe and spoon it over the polenta. Sprinkle with the remaining 1/4 cup of the Pecorino and serve.

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