

# POINT REYES LIGHT

Volume LXI No. 29/ Point Reyes Station, California

September 25, 2008



**OLEMA** > Obama sign hand made by artsy inn owner gets national press. / **9**



**HOMES** > Green designs were showcased in a tour of West Marin homes. / **18**



**POINT REYES** > Rubber duck race raised funds for the Dance Palace. / **2**



**CALENDAR** > Fairfax mural will be dedicated on Sunday at the Good Earth market. / **16**



A prescribed burn near Limantour Road was tended by nearly 60 firefighters from nine different agencies. The burn is designed to provide a wildfire fuel break, as well as rejuvenate native grasslands. Photo by Jacoba Charles.

## Two-year sentence for Manetta

by Zach Klassen

Thoren Manetta of Mill Valley was sentenced to two years in state prison yesterday at the Marin County Courthouse for his role in the assault of Bolinas resident Ricky Green.

In front of a full courtroom, Judge Paul Haakenson denied defense attorney Robert Casper's request for probation and ruled that Manetta, who is 21 years old, take responsibility for his felony charge.

Manetta is one of six young people charged in the assault and beating of

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## Park burns Limantour

by Jacoba Charles

The fire started as a thin dribble of flame. Within moments the entire grassy hillside above Limantour Road in the Point Reyes National Seashore was engulfed; grass blackened and coyotebrush burned

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### COMMENTARY /4

**Palin's facade collapses before media queries**

### HEALTH & FITNESS /8

**Lazing around is as bad as smoking cigarettes**

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**Feathered surfers prove that brains are relative**

## Documenting Bo Lagoon

by Molly Birnbaum

Bill Chayes, a documentary filmmaker with long gray hair and a home in Petaluma, began pointing his camera on the Bolinas Lagoon five years ago. He and fellow filmmaker Chuck Olin had been approached by some locals active in the lagoon's long and controversial restoration process. The group was looking for filmmakers, thinking that a movie just might speed things up.

"Chuck and I had always wanted to make a film together," said Chayes, sitting in his home on Tuesday morning. "We

said, okay, let's take a crack at it."

He and Olin began to shoot soon after—soft, panning views of the blue lagoon waters; interviews with fishermen and activists, and county meetings. Tragedy, however, soon struck: Olin, a Stinson Beach resident whose interest for the lagoon grew exponentially as their project progressed, was diagnosed with the incurable disease, amyloidosis, around Thanksgiving of 2004.

"That's when he turned the camera on himself," said his wife, Nancy, on

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### LAST CALL FOR ZUCCHINIS

The *Point Reyes Light's* annual Heavy Zucchini Contest ends Monday, September 29. Bring your squash, weighed at the Palace Market, between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. on Friday or Monday, to get your picture in the paper. Age limit is 14 years. Grand prize: \$50.

# >> Limantour

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with a crackle that sounded almost like falling rain. Eerie brown shadows raced across the ground as columns of smoke scudded in front of the sun.

“Someday this could save Bolinas if we get another big fire,” said park Superintendent Don Neubacher yesterday, as he watched the flames gradually spread.

Wednesday’s prescribed 25-acre burn is part of a network of fuel breaks designed to stop another disaster like the Vision Fire of 1995. Keeping the vegetation low through burning and mowing should help slow or stop a future wildfire.

The park plans to burn the Limantour sites every five to ten years, said Jennifer Chapman, a fire communications specialist with the Point Reyes National Seashore (PRNS). This will keep the coastal scrub in an immature stage with smaller, widely spaced coyotebrush where fire will move more slowly than in areas with large, dense coyotebrush.

“We want to punch little units of different age classes along the road,” said Roger Wong with PRNS, who was in charge of the fire crews.

Having patches of younger, recently burned vegetation is also healthy for coastal California landscapes. Many of the historic fires, thought to have been started by coast Miwok, benefited plants and animals that are adapted to coexist with fire.

Bishop pine, for example, can only release seed after its cones are opened by a fire. Coyotebrush can survive a hot burn, resprouting from the roots even if its leaves and stems are killed.

Without regular fire, forests get clogged with tinder and grasslands disappear under dense shrubs. Fires benefit tule elk, rabbits and myriad bird species, which rely on open grassy areas to survive. Endangered Myrtle’s silverspot butterfly only lays its eggs on the leaves of grassland violets.

“A lot of people think that one of the top five threats to the native ecosystem is a lack of fire,” Neubacher said.

It’s also possible that fire suppression



A drip torch ignited grass, coyotebrush and a bishop pine stand during a prescribed burn on Monday. Photo by J. Charles.

has contributed to the spread of Sudden Oak Death, PRNS senior science advisor Sarah Allen said on Wednesday.

PRNS first used prescribed fire as a resource management tool during a small burn in 1978, Chapman said. By the 1990s a prescribed burn program was well established. Fire management is the first goal of the program, and improving ecosystem health through reducing non-native plants

and improving biodiversity is the second.

Control of the invasive French broom is one goal for a second 115-acre burn scheduled to take place this Friday along Highway One. That site, which will mainly serve as a fuel break, is scheduled to be burned more frequently in order to control the broom.

Almost 60 firefighters from nine different crews came out to participate in

this week’s burns. Participants included the Inverness Fire Department, Marin County Fire Department, the Mount Tam fire crew, the Golden Gate National Park fire crew, and a Yosemite National Park crew.

“We have more engines here than we need, but it’s sort of a training opportunity,” Chapman said. “We get to bring all the agencies together and work on a project.”

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