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March 2009

News and Events from the Caspar Community

Volume XII, No. 1

## CASPAR 2020

On Saturday, March 14, at the Caspar Community Center about 19 people participated in the envisioning of a future Caspar at the CASPAR 2020 event. Charles Bush facilitated the day, while Michael Potts and Jim Tarbell helped. Stephanie Gold, a free-lance writer from Boonville joined the Casparados. Ms. Gold is writing an article on Caspar and Randy Hester of UC Berkeley who carried on a visioning of Caspar's future in 1998.

At 10 am, Charles opened the day by explaining back casting as a process of placing yourself in the year 2020 and telling the story of what you liked about the town's culture, economy and environmental life. Participants came up with positive possibilities and many wonderful ideas for our town 11 years from now. We shared that we have the opportunity: to slow down; to grow our own food; to keep our dark sky; to be authentic; to coin our own money; to encourage diversity; to make loan packets; to invest our retirement here; to use our national reputation; to become a green village; to be a model for other towns; to create our own goods and services; to mine our brain trust; and to work together with consensus,

Michael Potts helped us envision what the Caspar culture will be like in 2020. We saw people walking to the Caspar Café & Bakery in the morning for good conversation and freshly baked pastries; drinking tea grown in our community garden, with honey and lemon raised and grown locally. Local beehives provide us with candles. Music in the café is piped in from the local music studio that allows locals to record their own music, which is shared around the world on the Internet. Children of all ages romp in the café as elders tell stories about what Caspar was like in the '90s when there was no café, no beehives, no bakery, when we had to buy everything in our two neighboring towns. People walk to our community warehouse on the Caspar Wharf and pick up supplies we ordered on the net. The supplies arrived by steamboats and sailboats. Some people take their new tools back to their shops and create wonderful wood, metal or ceramic art and functional objects, which sustain the town. A huge ceramic cistern collects water from the Community Center roof. Metal workers recycle old metal parts and forge them into new tools, nails and other parts. Wood workers work with the potters to make High Doggie Diners, which are sold on the Internet. We have a library building, a tool library, an art gallery and a ceramics studio. We are comfortable in our homes, which have been winterized with double-pane windows, hydronic floors and state-of-the-art materials. Our visitors are also comfortable in small cottages provided for them in Caspar. We hitch a ride on the tram that goes from one end of Caspar to the other on overhead rails or in little vehicles run by local fuel, which will be methane from our cows or from gorse oil.

We feel that our relationships are supreme over stuff and we

enjoy our time together in our gathering places, but cherish our time alone in our own homes. We gather at night to watch TV or movies together or to enjoy a show at our performing arts space where our children teach their children music and dance and theater.

We visualized that for the town to stay the same it has to change. By 2020 we have created a politics to control unwanted, outside economic powers from impacting our future. We spend our Caspar Coins on supplies we need to make our crafts and to import food we can't grow ourselves. The coins could be worth one hour of service or in trade for local goods. It will be a participatory economy. We will have a desalination plant and trade our water to others. We appreciate that it is okay for land to stay untouched. We benefit from our own marine resources. We recycle our own garbage and make things from it. We have our own efficient energy from the sun, wind generators, waves, and from the bouncing highway. We are self-insured. We own our own homes on community land trust land and are able to move into other community land trusts around the country. The local bank reinvests our wealth into our community.

In 1998, Randy Hester listed our sacred spaces. In considering Caspar's future environment, we envisioned our creeks full of salmon because we cleaned them up. The old white superintendent's home houses our social services with a tower watching over our children at play. We gather protein from our fish, eggs, cows, goats and sheep to add to all the vegetables from our garden. Our sheep provide us with wool to make garments for ourselves or to trade with coastal visitors. Our precious water runs through the Caspar Water Works where it is filtered and bottled in our glass bottles or ceramic jugs and traded with the two towns nearby or put into pipes passing through our water garden of pools with fish, thermal baths, swimming pools, and exercise pools. The water runs along curved paths that pass flowers and sculptures. Our paths are a wonder to those coming from the North on the California Coastal Trail. The surplus water is sent via aqueducts to Boonville to help grow the grapes there. In exchange they send us back wine on trucks using gas from the fermented grapes!

We ended the day with a wrap-up, feeling a profound trust of our individuality. We sensed how hard we work to improve Caspar and to help our neighbors. There was a feeling of joyfulness during this relaxing Sunday, and we had a lovely time. Charles Bush noted at the end that with all the groups he has worked with we were the first who have a sense that they live in an intertwined village with a commons. He acknowledged that we do things with consensus and that we also appreciate our alone time and allow for the libertine in all of us. The land belongs to no one. We, Casparados, are just guests. — Rhoda Teplow

## Cutting and Disposition of Eucalyptus Trees

At the end of February 2009, the eucalyptus stand along the north border of State Park's Caspar Headlands had all but closed off the view from the middle of downtown Caspar to the ocean. Growing like wildfire, in 20 years this mass of highly flammable vegetation had quadrupled in size.

Then CalFire came. A crew of veteran tree fellers conducted a two-day training session in early March, and set the eucalyptus almost back to its 1994 extent. As can be seen from the black outline in the accompanying picture, a nice slice of ocean view now greets folks walking through the center of town. When CalFire left, clean-up crews from Parlin Forks bucked up the biggest trunks, chipped the branches and leaves, and got the wood ready for Caspar Community members to salvage the firewood. Another felling and clean-up session is scheduled for mid-April.

Usually the firewood from a project like this goes to State Park employees, but in this case, project manager Angela Liebenberg wanted to recognize the work of the Caspar Community in their twenty-year fight to repel the eucalyptus's advance. Members of Caspar Community helped Mendocino County's planners to understand the invasive and dangerous nature of the trees, and reclassify them so that removing them would not require a Coastal Development Permit. The Community met several times, starting in 2003, to reach consensus on whether, and how, the trees should come down, and how the resprouting would be managed. Parks favored chemicals, but Caspar Community members offered to chop down the resprouts until the eucalyptus root mass was depleted. This extraordinary effort on our part won us the right to salvage the firewood.

The firewood will be removed, bucked into stove lengths, and split as soon as the ground is dry enough to drive on. Volunteer labor is needed, and will be rewarded with firewood. The bulk of the firewood is to be sold to benefit the Caspar Community. For the latest information on the firewood project, visit the Caspar website and click on "Eucalyptus Firewood Information." There you will find a form for joining the firewood salvage team or for ordering firewood.

Wildfire is a good image for eucalyptus, as recent, deadly fires in Australia have shown. Throughout this process, the plan has always been to replace the invasive, alien Eucalyptus with native trees that don't poison the ground or flare up like torches during a drought. Shore Pines, a lower growing species native to these headlands, will probably be replanted as soon as the firewood has been removed. — Michael Potts



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## Around Town

Thanks to Ronnie James of Woodlands Wildlife for donating two birdhouses to the Center for the Violet-Green Swallows. And thanks also to everyone who helped get them up in time for nesting season ...just in time because the Violet-Greens have returned. I'd like to see more birdhouses put up to accommodate the cavity nesters, and perhaps someone could construct a bat house or two.

Along with the returning birds, there are mosquitoes also getting an early start. Natural ponds which support frogs and dragonflies are seldom a problem; but that coffee can you left out in the garden or those old tires you stacked up intending to plant with potatoes are now full of mosquito larvae, as are the various rain barrels. It's time to do mosquito patrol. Empty out the smaller vessels and put some feeder goldfish into the larger ones.

It's looking to be an early no-burn season. Keep in mind that the over-wintered burn pile will be full of critters sheltering in and under it. If you just torch it, you will be roasting newts, alligator lizards and frogs, along with early nesting birds. If you must burn, start a small burn pile downwind of the main one and slowly feed it from the larger pile. That way, you can give creatures some time to escape and/or capture and relocate them. Your garden will thank you.

"Earth Hour" March 28, 8:30 p.m. Turn out your lights (or most of them) for one hour. Sponsored by World Wildlife Fund – sign up for 2009 at [earthhour.org](http://earthhour.org) – or just flip a switch.

Happy Trails. — Lila McMurtry

### Woodcutting Information Form

interested in:  buying wood  
 helping cut wood  
 making a comment

name: \_\_\_\_\_

email: \_\_\_\_\_

phone: \_\_\_\_\_

I can bring:  pick-up truck  
 4WD pick-up truck  
 splitter  
 chainsaw

I have filled out a State Parks volunteer form

comment: \_\_\_\_\_

Please fill out the form like this on line -- <http://casparcommons.org/Library/EucalyptusWood.php> -- or this form itself and mail to Caspar Community, Box 84, Caspar, CA 95420.

## Caspar Plant Swap and Sale

In these times of economic and universal uncertainty, I would like to put in a word about planting a garden. This can be as simple as a few pots of lettuce or flowers on your deck or anything beyond. It makes sense to me; not just in the money saved at the market and the energized attempt to postpone global warming, but also in my deep-rooted perception that it is the right thing to do. What better way is there to spend one's time than providing sustenance and beauty for our families, our community and ourselves?

I hope you will join me at the Fourth Sunday Breakfast on April 26 to trade, buy, sell or barter for plants: vegetable starts, flowers, house plants, etc. Bring what you have, and take home some more.

— Dalen Anderson



Tom Brown and Paul Garvin trenching for the garden water and electrical hook-ups. July 2008

## Manager's Report - March 2009

The CCC continues to be busy with many dance classes, after school and 4H projects, dances, weddings, yoga workshops, benefits, proms and breakfasts. For a complete schedule of classes, visit [casparcommons.org](http://casparcommons.org) and click on "calendar."

This month's free Caspar event, 7 p.m., on Friday, March 27, is a screening of the documentary, "The Dhamma Brothers," which follows the stories of Donaldson State Prison inmates who enter into the emotionally and physically demanding ten-day course of silent Vipassana meditation. Ed Murrell, manager of meditation courses at Donaldson, will be on hand to discuss the film.

On Sunday, April 19, independent filmmaker Beca Lafore will show "Shutdown: the Rise and Fall of Direct Action to Stop the War (DASW)." It is an action-packed documentary chronicling how DASW successfully organized to shut down San Francisco's financial district, and how they failed to effectively maintain the organization to fight the war machine and end the occupation of Iraq. AK Press notes, "It is a must-see film for those engaged in the continuous struggle toward social justice."

If you would like to "host" a free Caspar event, contact me, Dalen, at the Center at 964-4997 or [caspar@mcn.org](mailto:caspar@mcn.org).

— Dalen Anderson

## Lots of New Energy in The Garden

*It's spring, there are lots of new diggers in the Community Garden, and we are working on revising the garden organization. Come join the diggers.*

If you have extra manure, please call or email either Liz Haapanen at 964-1674 or [haapanen@mcn.org](mailto:haapanen@mcn.org) or Alexandria Alexander at 964-5512 or [alexalex2@netzero.net](mailto:alexalex2@netzero.net), and they'll arrange for picking it up.

If you have extra starts, please call Liz or Alexandria or just drop them off in the greenhouse.

Here's the evolving mission statement:

- The Caspar Community Garden (CCG) exists to make space available for people to garden.
- CCG encourages people to grow organic produce for the Community Center, for themselves, and for people in need.
- CCG fosters gardening by providing the following: common-use fencing; 24-20'-long beds; an irrigation system; a greenhouse; both worm and heat-based composting systems; and equipment such as a mower, chipper and shovels.

The greenhouse is available for starting plants and once the weather is a bit warmer, for growing heat-loving plants like tomatoes, basil and peppers.

If you want to garden, call/email Liz Haapanen or Alexandria Alexander (see above); they'll help you get started; or check the garden board in the greenhouse for "What's Needed." Produce is available to all gardeners. You might bring gloves and your favorite garden tools.

Gardening nourishes the soul and provides nourishing food.

What a winning combination! — Judy Tarbell

## President's Letter

On March 9 representatives from USDA-Rural Development visited the Caspar Community Center on their tour of Northern California facilities to which they have provided funding. They were very impressed with our level of involvement and all that we are accomplishing here. They said that they consider us an exemplary community project. Maybe we will be able to get President Obama up for his next "town hall" meeting.

Plans for the kitchen addition at the Center continue to move forward. Our application with USDA-RD for a low-interest, \$200,000 loan has been approved, which will be matched with \$125,000 in community donations. We hope to break ground this summer or fall.

One of the most exciting projects we are working on these days is the Caspar Community Playground. Last year an energetic group of families with young children proposed the construction of a playground that would be fun and safe for all ages. Through their hard work, fundraising and the inspired grant writing of Marissa Cohen, they have already raised \$10,000, enough to start Phase 1 of the project. We are working with the Department of Building and Planning to add the playground to our existing Coastal Development Permit for the kitchen expansion. The exact location will be determined by various parameters, including designated wetlands, future septic fields, ADA access, and impact on neighbors.

Please contact me if you have any questions, input, and concerns and/or want to contribute to this wonderful, multigenerational effort. — Paul Schulman



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## Coming Attractions

**Board Meetings: 9 a.m., Fridays, March 27, April 10 & 24, May 8 & 22**

**Friday, March 27, 7 p.m., screening of “The Dhamma Brothers”**

**Friday, April 10, 9 a.m., Caspar Community Board meeting regarding new playground. Public comments welcome.**

**Sunday, April 19, 7 p.m., screening of “Shutdown: The Rise & Fall of Direct Action to Stop the War”**

**Sunday, April 26, 9–11:30 a.m., Fourth Sunday Breakfast and Plant Swap**

**Sunday, May 24, 9–11 a.m., Fourth Sunday Breakfast and Flea Market**

*In the interest of economy and wise use of resource, we're also sending out a digital copy of this newsletter. If you would prefer the electronic version, call 964-4997 or email ([caspar@mcn.org](mailto:caspar@mcn.org)) the Center with your email address.*

## Caspar Community Playground

Caspar Community has received a \$7,000 grant from Tobacco Settlement Funds to help with the cost of purchasing new playground equipment for the Center. The broader local community has been enthusiastic about the idea of having another playground on the coast. The new play equipment will be purchased from Big Toys, a Washington State-based company that specializes in green playgrounds. They use steel salvaged from old cars, plastic from recycled milk jugs and wood certified by the Forest Stewardship Council. Their products carry a 50-year warranty. Other play equipment manufacturers also make products that comply with the strict playground safety standards now universally in place; however, Big Toys was chosen as the company most in line with the vision of the Caspar Community.

The playground, when completed, will cost approximately \$30,000. It will consist of climbing structures designed for 5-12 year olds, a slide and swings designed for young children, additional swings for older children and adults, and a play area designed for 2-5 year olds. So far, with the solstice event, the grant and our Halloween event, we have raised close to \$14,000. This will go towards Phase 1; the play area designed for the youngest group. One idea is to install the new play equipment near the garden. This would encourage families with young children to participate in the community garden, while instilling in our children the value and pleasure of growing food.

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The addition of new playground equipment will



enhance the Community Center while providing needed opportunities for our youth to develop their gross motor skills, muscle tone and most importantly, to have fun! Donations towards the cost of the playground can be sent to the Caspar Community Center.

A final decision about where to place the playground will be made at the Friday, April 10 board meeting, beginning at the Center at 9 a.m. Please come to the meeting, or contact a board member if you have questions, input or concerns. — Marissa Cohen