

The

# Mattole Messenger

Issue 2

2001

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The Mattole Camp Council created this newsletter to inform others about the current events, projects and future plans happening at Mattole Camp. The Mattole Messenger is published semi-annually and is available free of charge. If you have any concerns, questions, contributions or comments about the newsletter or Mattole Camp and Retreat Center, please call or write to us at 36841 Mattole Road, Petrolia, CA 95558, (707) 629-3308.

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## **A Busy Year and a Bright Future** **By Steve Lovett**

This year has been the busiest season Mattole Camp has had in memory. The amount of visitors the camp served in 2001 was 591, nearly tripling the amount since 1999. Another giant step was doubling the days the camp is occupied from less than 30 in 1999 to 76 days in 2001. There are many days still available for groups to reserve, so help spread the word! The future of the camp is bright and this season promises to be our busiest and most successful yet.



Our monthly work parties have completed many vital projects for the camp's operation. The volunteers who make our work parties possible are greatly needed and appreciated. Every small or large task done by volunteers directly benefits the camp and we need more help! We have big plans to improve our camp and need all the help available. If you or someone you know is interested in our work parties, please contact us. Some projects and ideas we are going to develop or implement in 2002 are building additional trails, constructing a low elements ropes course, adding benches and landscaping throughout the camp and continue painting. We have a multitude of jobs available and welcome your ideas as well.

A tremendous thanks goes out to the Friends of Mattole Camp, who directly support the camp's operation. Without the assistance of the Friends of Mattole Camp our camp might not exist. An exciting development for 2002 is the creation of an endowment fund. This fund will provide the camp with a stronger foundation to progress in the years to come.

It has been a monumental year for the camp and myself. On August 4, my wife and I were blessed with a second child, a baby girl named Aiden Emery Lovett. I forgot how difficult it could be being a new father! Besides working part time at the camp I also work with the Mattole Salmon Group and the Mattole Restoration Council. My wife Shari, works at both Mattole Elementary School and Mattole Valley Charter School. Needless to say, our lives sometimes seem hectic for the tranquil Mattole Valley.



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## **A History of the Mattole Valley**

### **By Steve Lovett**

Many of you have been visiting Mattole Camp and Retreat Center for years and might have wondered about the area's history. Originally the area of the lower Mattole Valley (Petrolia and Honey Dew) was inhabited by native people who spoke one of the most wide spread native languages in the United States, Athapascan. Little is known about these native peoples. Certainly, the people found the Mattole (meaning clear water in Athapascan) a comfortable place to live with its ample supply of salmon, acorns and venison.

The first Euro-Americans discovered the already inhabited valley in 1856. Inevitably, the new settlers claimed the land that sustained the native Mattole tribe. In 1859 the Mattole Township was established in present day Petrolia. As more Europeans claimed the valley as their own, skirmishes, massacres and wars ensued. By 1859 with most of the native population decimated, the new settlers rounded up the remaining natives and sent them to Round Valley Reservation in northern Mendocino County.

By 1865 rumors about oil around the Mattole Township began. Oil promised prosperity to new companies like Mattole Petroleum Company and Union Mattole Petroleum. However, there was not enough oil to make their efforts worth while and all went out of business several years later. The oil boom did leave its mark on the Mattole Township by the change in the town name to Petrolia.

In 1869, Chinese labor built many roads into and out of the Mattole Valley. The Wild Cat, which leaves Ferndale and winds through the hills until reaching Petrolia, is infamous for its twists and turns. Another road built by Chinese was Wilder Ridge Road which leaves Honey Dew and travels towards Ettersburg.

In the 1880's, the valley experienced another boom, tannin. Many of the Tan Oak that used to be valued as food were now stripped of their bark for the tanning of leather. A wharf was built at the mouth of the Mattole River to deliver the bark to boats, which headed south towards San Francisco. The wharf was destroyed every winter and rebuilt every summer. This process continued to provide employment for the valley until a synthetic tanning process was developed in the 1940s. In the meantime, residents continued to make a living on grazing and orchards. Mattole Camp and Retreat Center was established in the late 1930's as a fishing camp.

During the 1950s and 60s the valley and much of Humboldt County experienced a timber boom. Unfortunately, in 1955 and nine years later in 1964, "hundred year" storms occurred. As the rain pelted down on the newly exposed hills, it increased the sediment into the river. In fact during the winter of 1955, floodwaters rushed over the bridge at the entrance to the camp. One unforeseen result of the increase in sediment in the river was its effect on salmon. Salmon require cool deep pools and clean gravel for rearing young. Today there are signs of the river stabilizing itself and washing the vast loads of sediment out to sea.

It remains to be seen what will happen to the Mattole Valley in the computer age. Most locals seem to think the Valley will not see a great deal of change. One thing however is certain, the future is bright for Mattole Camp and Retreat Center, as we have taken many steps to insure our camp as a resource and as a part of local history in the years to come.



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## **Buildings and Grounds**

**By Dave Goodman**

The house and grounds committee has been active this year. We would like to report on the success of our efforts to provide adequate and safe water for our camp. Our chlorination treatment, as required by the health department, has been regulated so that the bacteria is eliminated and the remaining free chlorine is in an acceptable range so that the water doesn't have a chlorine taste.

Our camp is extremely grateful and dependent on work done by volunteers. This summer we hosted several church groups that gave a tremendous amount to the camp. Stone Church of Willow Glen (San Jose) contributed a major part of the removal of the old and condemned Sky Room and Infirmary building. Additionally, two youth groups from Northminster and Grace Chapel, worked and nearly completed a new loop trail system this summer.

Some dead trees have caused real concern for the committee. We are in the process of contracting for their removal which takes the expertise of a professional. We are hoping to contract with a faller who has done work for us before. Getting these down will insure our safety and also provide lots of firewood or logs for other purposes. Our attempt to plant and maintain new trees is working and some are doing really well despite our dry weather this year. In fact we plan to plant many more trees through out the campground.

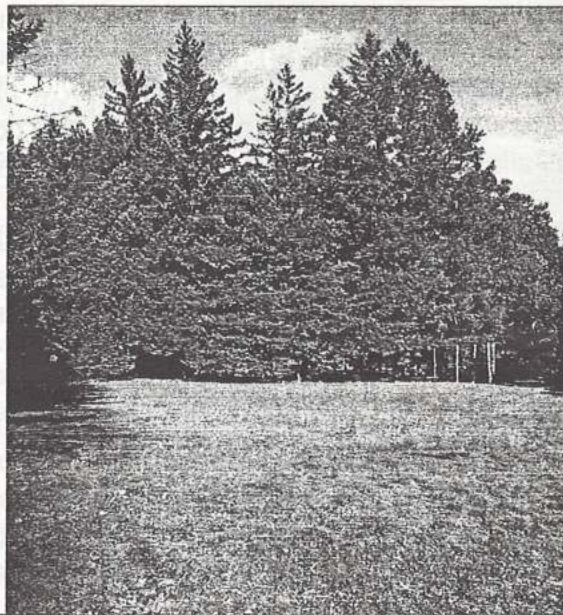
All in all, we have had a wonderful year and we are most grateful for all those who have worked so hard to improve the camp. We encourage anyone interested in helping out at our monthly work parties to call the camp at 629-3308 or email [mcamp@inreach.com](mailto:mcamp@inreach.com)!



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### **Wish List**

Any tools  
Shovels  
Mattocks  
Loppers  
Pruners  
Work Gloves  
Garden Cart  
Table Vice  
Bolt Cutters  
House Plants  
Landscaping Plants or Trees  
Mulch  
Ping Pong Table, paddles, balls  
VCR and T.V.  
Office supplies  
New work party members!





## NOTES FROM THE COUNCIL CHAIR

By Wayne Johnson

The Mattole Camp and Retreat Council now consists of Chair-Wayne Johnson, Vice Chair-Javan Reid, Secretary-Beverly Clensay, Bookkeeper-Holly Freitas, supported by hard workers-Barbara Burke, Amy Combs, Bill Combs, Lee Dedini, David Goodman, Pat Johnson, David Mielke and Alex Reid. The new members in 2001 are Beverly Clensay, Amy Combs, Bill Combs, Holly Freitas and Pat Johnson. Beverly worked for years at Arcata Presbyterian Church as a secretary and our bookkeeper Holly Freitas works at Humboldt State University. Amy (daughter of Bill) is interested in landscaping and Bill is a contractor, both welcomed by the Building and Grounds Committee. Pat Johnson has volunteered for many tasks including, work party chef and speaker for any congregation, church group or service organization interested in the camp. As the Council is always seeking new and interested members, speak to any of the officers as to the opportunities to serve on the Council or participate in our many work parties at the Mattole facility.

Recently, there has been concern for the power outages that are typical for the Mattole Valley. While typically the outages occur in winter, outages predictably occur several times throughout the summer. When the outage occurs while groups are using the camp it can become a burden to many. We are beginning to consider acquiring a generator for back up power. Anyone with expertise with generators and interested in helping out, please contact the camp.

Plans to do a major overhaul of Seldom Inn have been put on hold after much investigation of costs and other factors. Progress was made on demolition of the old Infirmary building, thanks to Stone Church, and there is a thought about building a cabin or lodge facility on the site. The building would be for small groups of ten to twelve and could operate independent of the main lodge for events and meals.

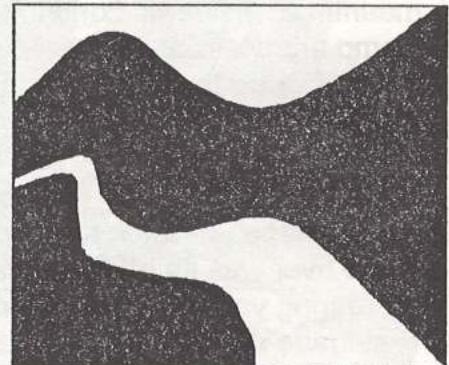
After installing the new water system this year, the Council is looking at new projects for 2002. Roads, landscaping and parking areas will be worked on as our site plan is continually being developed and implemented. We have been fortunate that even in what has been considered a drought year, there has been an ample water supply even with a full camp. Future ideas for the camp include, a ropes course, climbing wall, additional trails and other activities for the young campers, upgrading what our camp's facilities will offer and attract more children to our summer camps.

As one can imagine, the Council has quite a challenge in administering the camp. With Steve as our director and the presence of the Holy Spirit, our camp has been blessed over and over again. It is a great joy to serve God through Mattole Camp and Retreat Center.

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***The mission of Mattole Camp and Retreat Center is to invite and recognize each guest as a child of our Creator God and to welcome each one in to experience this place of beauty and renewal.***

***The purpose of Mattole Camp is to develop and maintain our campground and facilities so that they best serve the needs of north coast churches and other organizations that seek a place of beauty in which they can renew themselves, create community and build relationship with God and one another.***



Mattole Camp is owned by the Presbytery of the Redwoods, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Our camp is open to everyone, regardless of race, gender, disability, class or religious persuasion.