

Community Comment
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Sam Pennisi

Arcata's Redwood park and National selective memory

There are two issues I'd like to think thru today. One is in my home town and the other is reflective about national politics.

We walk every morning from our house in central Arcata, east on 14th St. and into Redwood Park. This provides us with an hour of brisk exercise but is perhaps the most beautiful walk in the world. We are grateful to this community for providing this wonderful resource. I came here in 1966 and was a member of the HSU Forestry Club. We were looking for a community project to do and noticed that the forest adjacent to the meadow had no organized trail and no information on what we were seeing.

The club proposed building a nature trail complete with a trail, steps and bridges where needed, and markers and a pamphlet so visitors could learn a little about the forest when they visited. The council agreed to the idea and supplied chips and tools Saturday mornings so that the volunteer student labor force could realize the dream. Over about 18 months, the club built the trail and bridges and chose various sites to write about in the pamphlet that would tell the story of this grove of redwoods. As a faculty member, I led more projects that upgraded the park. As a council member, we instituted an advisory committee to upgrade the health of the forest and continue recreational opportunities.

The last few years of drought, and especially inconsistent weather, has taken it's toll on the areas that get the most foot traffic. But humans are doing the most damage. I'm pretty sure the forest is not designated to be a campground but that is what we have. When I worked for the Forest Service, we rotated camping spaces each year to lessen the impact of the inevitable soil packing, root damage, and understory clearing. But since this is not a real campground, there is no real environmental management being done. As a result, real damage is happening. I read letters to the editor in local papers about the taking of a few trees and the damage that is done as a result, but the erosion problems we will face due to the many random camp sites and trails that have developed are just as problematic.

We have an election coming up soon. Some recognition of this problem by the various candidates would be helpful on deciding who to vote for.

At the national level, there is anger by some on the right that the economy is not as good as it should be. Let me remind you of factual history. George Bush took office in 2001. He inherited a strong economy, a better budget than normal, and good employment numbers. He went to war to get Osama Bin Laden but then mislead us into Iraq. His war ruined our economy, the housing bubble burst and he left us with way too many people out of work. Obama gets elected partly to get us out of Iraq. He bails out the Auto industry, begins the nearly impossible job of repairing our economy and creating jobs and

is met on the day he was sworn in by a Republican Congress bent on making him less popular so he would be a one term President. They just said no to anything that he advanced. We haven't gotten much done for the American people as a result. And people are mad at the democrats? We are in the era of irrational politics. I hope we get over it soon.

This has been Sam Pennisi for community comment.