

# Ellen, oysters and agriculture

**GUEST COLUMN**  
BY MICHAEL STRAUS

Ellen Straus, my mother, died nine years ago, here on the farm that she so cherished, with a view of Tomales Bay and Point Reyes National Seashore. I have a pretty good idea of what she would say about the current battle pitting Drake's Bay Oyster Company, environmentalists, farmers and government officials: "Nonsense!"

Mom spent a lifetime dedicated to protecting, preserving and promoting the environment. She attended countless meetings and commanded respect because she listened deeply to all parties and forged common ground when others were ready to quit.

The phone never stopped ringing in our farmhouse—including and invariably during dinner, when my father, a dedicated and outspoken environmentalist, would nonetheless quip, "It's the environment calling." Our kitchen was the scene of endless, often cantankerous meetings, where ranchers and environmentalists would congregate (not a common scene, especially in the 1980s and 90s), brought together by mom's ineffable charm, relentless persistence and seemingly endless supply of cheesecake. Time and again, she helped steer folks to consensus on vital issues.

Today, it's easy to take for granted the marriage of farming and the environment—Marin Agricultural Land Trust protects nearly half of agricultural land from sprawl development, and serves as a nationally recognized model for land conservation. Marin Organic pioneered the concept of merging local food, organic certification and farmers committing to sustainability principles over and above mere regulatory requirements. A-60 zoning has staved off the worst of urban sprawl, and Point Reyes National Seashore demonstrated that government can successfully protect the environment while acknowledging the vital role of responsible farm stewardship.

My parents were ranchers and environmentalists. They saw beyond the "us versus them" mentality that runs rampant in our community and country. They knew, beyond a doubt, that the future of Marin County would depend on our ability to work together, to innovate, and, above all, to find common ground.

Just a few decades ago, this entire region was slated for massive housing subdivision and urban sprawl. Today's Marin owes thanks to the tireless collaborative efforts of the Environmental Action Committee of West Marin, Marin County Farm Bureau, Sierra Club, Marin Conservation League, Environmental Forum of West Marin, visionary politicians

and environmental leaders who rose up to speak with one, unified voice. Their efforts transformed environmental catastrophe into one of the nation's true environmental success stories.

Marin's agriculture and open space, whether publicly or privately held, are inextricably interconnected. The balance is tenuous, and it's not unfathomable that all of it—the park, open space, organic food, agritourism—could rapidly evaporate. Once Drake's Bay Oyster Company is forced out, there will be a clear road map for eliminating the rest of agriculture in Point Reyes National Seashore. As the farming dominos fall, so too will the critical mass of agricultural infrastructure, making the future of Marin agriculture increasingly uncertain, putting at risk all of our hard-won gains. In short, productive farming is critical to preserving open space.

If agriculture fails in the region, we will face new (and likely more fatal) battles with urban conversion. Mom knew that saving the land was only the first step, and that a long-term successful model would depend on the land being in active, responsible production, and community support for the local food system.

Here in Marin, we have created a model that has already inspired dozens, if not hundreds, of communities across the nation. Our solutions weren't created by decree, but by consensus and the devel-

opment of public-private partnerships. Now, more than ever, these victories must be preciously guarded. If Mom were here, she'd ask, "How can we do things differently? What will it take for the park and farms to coexist? How much cheesecake do I need to make today?"

Do we have the courage to follow the path forged by our elders? A path matching passion with restraint, determination with compassion and, above all, demonstrating a fierce conviction that only by true consensus will we be able to preserve the beauty that we all cherish so deeply?

That's what Mom did, week after week, year after year. My parents, Jerry Friedman, Sue Jacob and so many hard-working community members are long gone. But we—all of us—have a unique opportunity to continue their legacy as stewards of the land. But, to honor their memory, we must be willing to listen to each other.

Mom would support the Lunnys, advocate for continued farming in the park, and find a way to work together. She'd insist that the only viable solution would be a win-win. She would be outraged and saddened at the state of affairs, but wouldn't give up until the needs of the environment and agriculture were successfully addressed.

Please add your support for the Collaborative Management Alternative by December 9.

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## WEATHER

| Date  | High | Low | Rainfall | Wood. | Inv. |
|-------|------|-----|----------|-------|------|
| Dec 1 | 71   | 48  | -----    | 0.00  |      |
| Dec 2 | 77   | 48  | -----    | 0.00  |      |
| Dec 3 | 68   | 41  | -----    | 0.00  |      |
| Dec 4 | 62   | 28  | -----    | 0.00  |      |
| Dec 5 | 64   | 32  | -----    | 0.00  |      |
| Dec 6 | 57   | 26  | -----    | 0.00  |      |
| Dec 7 | 57   | 28  | -----    | 0.00  |      |

Temperature measurements from Inverness

Inverness rainfall since July 1: 9.31 inches

Inverness average since 1925: 37.38 inches

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## Estate planning for you & your heirs on KRCB

*Trial & Heirs: Protect Your Family Fortune with Danielle and Andy Mayoras*

Authors, legacy expert attorneys and husband and wife duo, Danielle and Andy Mayoras have compiled stories of highly publicized estate battles of celebrities and other wealthy individuals. While it's interesting to peek into the courtroom to see how the rich failed to adequately prepare their estates, the Mayoras have a much nobler goal. Intertwined with the tabloid stories is concrete information about estate planning.

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## TIDES

| Date         | HIGH  |      | LOW  |      |
|--------------|-------|------|------|------|
|              | A.M.  | P.M. | A.M. | P.M. |
|              | Time  | Ft.  | Time | Ft.  |
| Thur Dec. 8  | 9:55  | 5.4  | 4:27 | 2.7  |
| Fri Dec. 9   | 12:11 | 3.9  | 5:07 | 2.8  |
| Sat Dec. 10  | 12:50 | 4.0  | 5:45 | 2.9  |
| Sun Dec. 11  | 1:27  | 4.1  | 6:22 | 3.0  |
| Mon Dec. 12  | 2:05  | 4.1  | 7:02 | 3.0  |
| Tues Dec. 13 | 2:42  | 4.2  | 7:47 | 3.0  |
| Wed Dec. 14  | 3:21  | 4.3  | 8:38 | 2.9  |

These tide heights and times are accurate for the town of Marshall.