

# The Monthly Extractor

Volume 42, Issue 11

November 2017



***This is our newsletter that reflects the various techniques, theories and art of sustainable beekeeping.***

## This Month's Calendar

### Monthly Meeting: November 13

- 6 pm – **Gizmos and Gadgets Presentations** [See Below] Talk to the cluster leaders, share your gizmos and gadgets with others, check out the library and plant sale. Bring something you have made or bought that makes beekeeping easier. Let Susan know what you plan to bring. [2ndVP@sonomabees.org](mailto:2ndVP@sonomabees.org)
- 7 pm – **Dr. Jonathan Lundgren**, of Blue Dasher Farm “Where research, education and demonstration converge to support the regeneration of agriculture.”

### Upcoming Meetings/Events

- Nov 18 to Jan 1 – Holidays Along the Farm Trails

**Announcement:** We are taking nominations at the November meeting for 2018 Board Positions and encourage people to nominate themselves or others for various positions. We are especially looking for someone to take over the treasurer's position. Interested? Contact Jason Berkman [president@sonomabees.org](mailto:president@sonomabees.org)

## President's Message

Dear Community,

My mind is running every which way with these thoughts:

Collective grief and trauma. Compassion in action. Care. Cooperation. Hard to comprehend. Confusion. Being on alert. Packing the car. Witnessing. Not knowing.

Celebrating when we can. Consideration of others who have been more affected. Communication. Interpersonal challenges. Traffic. Heat wave. Inspired by generosity. Inspired by others. Fatigue. Overwhelm. Tasks and duties and errands and responsibilities. Gentleness with ourselves and with others. Showing up. Resting. Awareness. Shared observances. Receiving care and help. Checking on others. Not knowing how to help nor what to do.

Evacuations. Cleaning up. Starting over. Starting again. Hopeless. Hopeful. The stories that continue to emerge and trickle in, from friends, about friends of friends, businesses, homes, hives, pets, livestock. Heroes. 1st responders. Texts. Calls. Emails. Responding. Worry, anxiety, stress, feeling unsafe. Life. The impermanence of it all. The next breath.

I'm guessing that you can relate. And that you each have your own unique experiences. And that you know people who were and are affected. We are all affected, in some ways. We are all in this community, these communities.

And to those of us who didn't experience loss - how can we help?

In this newsletter, Maggie Weaver (Education, SCBA Board) wrote an article about how the board is responding to the fires and their effect on the members of the SCBA community.

Thank you, Community.

Sincerely,

*Jason Berkman*  
President



## Contents

President's Message .....	1
This Month's Calendar.....	1
SCBA to Help Our Members Impacted By the Fire .....	2
Beekeeping To-Do List by Serge Labesque .....	3
Bee Wise "A Burning Question" .....	4
SCBA Membership Reminder.....	5
Our Silent Auction is almost here! .....	5
Education Committee .....	6
Bee Plants of the Month .....	7
Top Bar Hive Dive .....	8
Central Cluster Honey Extractor .....	9
Honey Extractor Rental .....	9
Contact Information .....	11
2017 Board Members .....	11

# SCBA Plan to Help Our Members Impacted By the Fire

By Maggie Weaver

Sonoma County Beekeepers...to say we have been through a challenging month would be an understatement. For those of you still knee-deep in the paperwork and bureaucracy of recovering from this fire, we stand at the ready to assist you. The firestorm and what it has done to the people, landscape, and businesses within Sonoma County is beyond comprehension.

We, the board members of the SCBA, are already hard at work with a plan and a strategy to help our members most impacted by this tragedy. Here is an overview of the plan in the works.

1. The formation of the Sonoma Bees Fire Fund (SBFF). This is the umbrella under which our efforts to help fire victims with beekeeping losses will reside.
2. Amending our website to include the SBFF information including a link for direct contributions to aid in the beekeeping related recovery efforts.
3. A survey has been sent to our membership to assess bee related losses and identify member's prepared and willing to help. If you know of anyone with losses unable to complete the survey, let us know so we can reach out to them directly.
4. Working with our Gardening for Bees (G4B's) group to assist in the gathering and distribution of seeds and plants, and replanting of bee habitat quickly and efficiently. With the winter rains coming, seed distribution in burned out areas is very important.
5. We are hearing incredible stories of hives surviving in devastated areas. A task force has been formed to assess the status and needs of affected apiaries.

We have heard from bee groups throughout the state wondering what they can do to help in our recovery. The level of support and compassion is extraordinary. We will be working closely with them to maximize all of our efforts and resources and will continue to inform you of our progress. This is just the beginning. Please pitch in where you can. There will be tasks and needs great enough to include our entire membership body. After all, we are the Sonoma County Beekeepers Association and we are Sonoma Strong!

Maggie Weaver [Education@sonomabees.org](mailto:Education@sonomabees.org)



# My November

## Beekeeping To-Do List by Serge Labesque

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### A year of extreme events

2017 will stay in our memory for a long time, if not for the rest of our lives. Unfortunately, this is because the year brought a long series of calamities that struck all over the planet.

Following the recent earthquakes in Mexico and destructive hurricanes in Asia, on the East Coast and in the Atlantic Ocean, uncontrolled fires have erupted over immense areas of California. Based on what is presently known as I am writing these lines in October, the losses are huge, both in terms of human life and property. And yet, when looking at the scorched landscape and ash-gray rubble, it is difficult not to think about the animals, too; about wildlife; about the bees that may have lived there only a few days ago. How could they have survived this inferno? Awful thoughts, but a harsh reality nonetheless. If only they could have fled the fast-moving flames that trapped and engulfed them in the middle of the night...

Much will have to be done very quickly to rebuild. In time, the countryside will re-green, new houses will be constructed, and wildlife and bee colonies will rebound. But right now, at the onset of the rainy season, the dangers of massive mud slides and widespread erosion loom ahead where there is no vegetation left to anchor the bare soil in the burned areas.

Next spring, beekeepers will need to produce nucs and queens in large quantities locally in order to help repopulate apiaries. Sharing them with neighbor beekeepers in need of bees will be crucial in avoiding an overwhelming tidal wave of ill-adapted foreign bees that could obliterate the local bee population. So, yes, there is work lined up for us, but there are solutions, too. We just need to seek them and make them happen.

In these dreadful circumstances, a big "Thank you!" is in order for many people, near and far, as their comforting support and generosity toward those affected by this year's disasters have been outstanding.

### November in the apiaries

The tops of the hives are secured against the wind. Their entrances are reduced. Clean monitoring trays are in place under the screens of the hive bottoms. With the possible exception of a few minor details to complete the preparation of the hives for winter, the colonies are finally on their own. Barring any unforeseen emergencies or possible colony deaths, the hives will not be opened before the cursory end-of-winter inspections, three months from now. Breaking the propolis seals and manipulating combs sooner would stir up the bees and could do irreparable damage that might hurt the colonies. Right now, they need to be left undisturbed.

In spite of the occasional flurry of bee activity in front of the hives on mild days, the bees spend most of

the time clustered inside their brood chambers. While the last of the summer bees gradually disappear, young bees produced in mid-fall are emerging from the dwindling brood nests. Soon, with no brood cells to shelter them, all the varroa mites will be unprotected. At that point, the bees will have a chance to eliminate these parasites by grooming, which may be one of their most effective defenses. As evidence of this desirable trait and activity, dead, wounded, and discarded mites will be found on the monitoring trays. We can turn our attention to the equipment we brought back from the apiaries in recent weeks, when the volume of the hives was being reduced. Some may have to be repaired or discarded. Anything that will be used next spring should be cleaned. The bent end of a hive tool works well to scrape wax and propolis off the wood. Then, the flame of a propane torch can be used to sanitize its surfaces, the hive tools and the screens of the hive bottoms. Let's not forget to remove the ashes and the tar build-up from the smoker. Being positive, we may also start to assemble new frames for next spring. All these tools and equipment will be ready when we need them.

The call of the bees still draws us to the apiaries for occasional and peaceful fall walks. Somehow, it's a welcome change of pace. We make sure that the hives are safe and that branches cannot hit them when it's windy, as this would keep the bees agitated.

This is a good season for planting, too. Although it is easy to find plants in nurseries and home centers, the difficulty resides in finding healthy plants that were produced without the use of pesticides, especially the neonics, which are deadly to so many insects, including pollinators. To avoid these poisons, I like to propagate plants with material collected in my own garden. Obtaining certified organic seeds, scion wood or plants is another possibility that may give us access to varieties that are not at hand. But when in doubt about the use of pesticides on the seed and plant materials we want, it is better to abstain from purchasing them. This is just one little step toward building an environment that is healthy for all.

It's time to put a little honey on the Thanksgiving dinner table and to have a grateful thought for the bees and for all the good they accomplish.

*Serge Labesque*

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(Continued on next page)

## In summary, this month:

- Complete the preparation of the colonies for winter early in the month.
- Raise hives off the ground, if they are not already on stands.
- Ensure that the hives are adequately ventilated (upper ventilation slot open).
- Reduce the hive entrances.
- Install mouse guards.
- Secure the hive tops against high winds.
- Install clean monitoring trays. From them, we will obtain important information about what is happening inside the hives during the next few months without disturbing the bees.
- Inspect the exterior of the hives.
- Observe the flight paths.
- Clean and torch tools and equipment.
- Store unused equipment to protect it from damage caused by wax moths, mice and the weather.
- Start building frames and other pieces of equipment for next spring.
- Review notes from the year.
- Enjoy some honey. Be thankful for the bees and look forward to next season.

## Dr. Jonathan Lundgren

### November Speaker

By Susan Kegley, 2nd VP

Dr. Lundgren is an agroecologist, with a PhD in Entomology from the University of Illinois in 2004. He worked at USDA-ARS for 11 years, receiving the Presidential Early Career Award for Science and Engineering, the Rothbart Early Career Scientist for USDA-ARS, and the Early Career Innovation Award from the Entomological Society of America. In 2016, he left USDA, and with his wife Jenna, started Blue Dasher Farm, where the focus is on regenerative, no-till agriculture. He also started a research non-profit, ECDYSIS, focused on assessing the ecological risk of pest management strategies and developing long-term solutions for sustainable food systems. They maintain about 70 colonies of honey bees on Blue Dasher Farm and are working on developing hive-adapted predators as a non-chemical control for Varroa mites. Dr. Lundgren's ecological research focuses heavily on conserving healthy biological communities within agroecosystems by reducing disturbance and increasing biodiversity within cropland.

*Serge Labesque*  
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## Bee Wise “A Burning Question”

By Emery Dann


You may or may not agree with Henry David Thoreau who said, “The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. What is called resignation is confirmed desperation.” Many of us have been greatly affected by the massive fires in Santa Rosa and surrounding areas this October 2017. I met a man who lost his home in the Lake County fires 2 years ago. He moved to Santa Rosa and his home again burned to the ground here a few days ago.

A question I am asking is, “What can I do with my own desperation?” How will this experience change me for the better? What are new opportunities for me now to have a different mindset? I do not want continue to have my “same old—same old” desperation way of thinking about my life. Everything has changed. Many left with nothing but their lives. Of those of us who prepared to evacuate but did not have to leave have made many similar statements to me, “We have too much stuff!” What can we learn to do different from the unusual way we live our lives and in our beekeeping?

There are times honey bees abscond for different reasons. They can take nothing with them and are only able to escape with their lives. They must go to somewhere new and start over. They will survive depending, of course, upon the time of year and what is available to them. Honey bees help each other, work together, cooperate and serve one another for the collective good, doing selfless acts of kindness. Honey bees give us an example of how to live together providing us with hope for tomorrow. We can also help and serve one another as we experience traumas and tragedies by following their amazing example to us!

# SCBA Membership Reminder

SCBA membership is on a calendar year. **All 2017 memberships will expire on December 31st** and need to be renewed by January 1st for the 2018 year.

Renew anytime now and don't miss out! 

If you joined as a new member anytime after August 1, 2017, your membership is current through December 31, 2018.

How to renew for general and business memberships:

**Online at:**

<http://sonomabees.org/new-membership-page/>



Or, **download** and complete a membership application and mail it with your payment to:  
**SCBA, P.O. Box 98, Santa Rosa, CA, 95401**



Or, **apply at the next SCBA meeting:**

**Bring the completed application to the meeting, and payment can be made with Cash, Check, or Credit Card.**



Everyone (new and renewing) must complete an application with his or her payment. This is the only way we can ensure that the information we have for you is current.

Thank you,  
SCBA 1st VP Membership  
[1stVP@sonomabees.org](mailto:1stVP@sonomabees.org)

*Ann Jereb*



## Our Silent Auction is almost here!

By Darlene McGinnis

The terrible fires that swept through Sonoma County beginning on Oct 9th left so many of us in disarray. My thoughts and prayers go out to all those who may have lost a loved one, home, business or bees.

This is our last push for donations. We have some great items but can use more. I can email you an auction request form and Letter of Intent to give to your donors to fill out and keep for their tax returns. Remember to ask your donors for signage, business cards and other promotional materials before you go to pick up their donation gift. We will be having a committee meeting on November 18th at 10:30am at John and Darlene McGinnis's house in Petaluma to assemble baskets and organize all the wonderful donations. Anyone creative wishing to help with this task is welcome.

Please bring your donated items to the general meeting in November. **AVOID THE HOLIDAY RUSH!** Please try to have donations turned in by December 4th! There is a lot of work behind the scene to figure out how to display and store, make bid sheets, paper work, and hours on the computer etc....so, the sooner we have your items the easier it will be for the committee.

Looking forward to a successful silent auction this year. All your help and donations are greatly appreciated. Thank you for being part of the biggest funder for our organization this year! I can be reached at 707-529-8053.

## Our Auction Needs Your Help!



## Education Committee

### Makes Visit to Home Schooled Group

Maggie Weaver and Ann Jereb visited a home schooled group and talked to children from 5 to 11 years old in Rohnert Park about honey bees. They know how to reach multi-aged children by having a variety of information in their presentation.



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Christine Kurtz



Honey Bee Consultant  
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# Bee Plants of the Month

By Alice Ford-Sala

## New beginnings.

It is with a heavy heart that we face the devastation the recent fires wreaked across our beloved landscapes and homes, leaving so many of us homeless and grieving.

At the end of this column, I have links to several sites that discuss fire resistant native plants.

If you have access to your land, or if you can help in re-vegetation efforts, now, with the (hopefully, normal) rainy season upon us, is the time to plant seeds and plants to hold the soil together and provide nectar and protection for insects and other wildlife. However, replanting in fragile wild lands should only be done with people with expertise in the native plants of that area. A native plant from one area of California could become an invasive plant in another, and vice versa. Most natives are adapted to fire; in some cases they need fire to germinate their seeds. Also, many trees and shrubs will come back from the roots, sometimes stronger than before.

So the home gardener needs to plant with an eye towards fire resistance and beneficial plants. Of course the key word is fire resistance. With the unprecedented conflagration that we just experienced, no plants or buildings could have withstood the high winds and intense heat in the heart of the demon fire.

## Salvia

We do continue with Salvia. It may seem that it would be a fire-prone plant, but in my research, I read of some varieties that are quite fire-resistant:

### ***Salvia sonomensis* Sonoma Sage**

We lament the destruction of our landscape, but honor a native named for our county, though Sonoma Sage is also native to our Napa neighbors, and ranges from the Siskiyou Mountains, to the Sierra Nevada, and along the coast all the way to San Diego

This is a low-growing sage, forming mats along a dry hillside or alongside chaparral paths. Apparently a bit of a shape shifter, Sonoma Sage can have purple to blue-lavender flowers, and long and narrow to short and round leaves.

Bees and hummingbirds vibrate amongst the flowers in spring, drinking nourishing sips of nectar.

Very drought resistant, plant with the rains if possible. If no rains come, irrigate to get the sage established, then do NOT water in summer, as Sonoma Sage is prone to fungus if overwatered. The soil should be well drained, even gritty. A rock mulch around the plants will help prevent soil diseases as well as aid in fire resistance.

### ***Salvia brandegeei***

A native of the Santa Rosa Island in the Channel Island archipelago, this California native does well in our more northern climate, also. *Salvia brandegeei* is able to grow in more diverse soils, including clay types that are so prevalent here. Also drought tolerant, needing no summer water once established.



**Sonoma Sage**

A large sage, she can reach from 4 to 6 feet tall and 5 to 7 feet wide. The loden green leaves are richly textured, with soft furry hairs on the underside. Flowers are pale purple or with 'Pacific Blue', dark blue. The flowers are borne on tall stems in whorls of tiny-lipped delights.

Burn times of native plants:

[http://www.laspiliitas.com/classes/fire\\_burn\\_times.html](http://www.laspiliitas.com/classes/fire_burn_times.html)

Deer and fire resistant natives:

<http://www.laspiliitas.com/easy/deerfire.htm>

Fire retardant plants, mostly natives:

[http://www.fourdir.com/garden\\_fire\\_retardant.htm](http://www.fourdir.com/garden_fire_retardant.htm)

From the California Native Plant Society. Lots of information on how to plant in fire prone areas:

[http://www.cnps.org/cnps/conservation/pdf/fire/frem38.2\\_38.3\\_schettler.pdf](http://www.cnps.org/cnps/conservation/pdf/fire/frem38.2_38.3_schettler.pdf)

# Top Bar Hive Dive Holds Healing Hive Dive

By Thea Vierling

On Sunday October 22nd, Jim Spencer sponsored the Top Bar Hive Dive at his house. That was 2 weeks after the devastating fire that really hit East cluster area hard! He was worried if it was too soon for folks to drive up to his property in East Cluster territory because many of the burned out homes were in his area, some even next door. But Mike Turner and Jim decided it would be healing for all of us to go ahead as planned and it really was. There were 3 beekeepers who had lost everything and one who had lost a LOT but some precious things were spared including her bee hives.

There was so much sharing and it was good to hear everyone's stories from evacuation to where they are now. Even stories about what it felt like to come back home again, with or without a home. Everyone wanted to know what is happening with his/her bees. Somehow we all survived the 2 weeks and many hives did as well.

Here are some pictures showing the group celebrating life and survival, our survival and the bees! Mike Turner was the presenter about how to winterize your top bar hives but discussed lots of topics related to the firestorm and loss of forage. Then we went through Jim's two top bar hives and his top bar hive nuc. The bees looked amazing! They look like they will make it through winter! Let's all hope for the best!

What really was evident to so many of us, and there were 20 in attendance, is how we all care about rebuilding our Apiaries and helping each other. There was such a feeling of community. Like Lizanne says we are not just a collection of hives nor just a collection of people, we are together a community of HOME AND HIVE!

Another member of the group Erin Grey said, "Mis abeja's son tus abeja's." Which means my bees are your bees. Such an expression of community. Very beautiful.



Lizanne Pastore's hives were saved by a miracle.



Before and After the Fire. Hector Alvarez had over 60 hives in an apiary on Lovell Valley Rd. They were all destroyed.



## Editors Note

### Central Honey Extractor

An update about the honey extractor that was at Janet Leisen's farm.

Sadly Janet Leisen and her family lost their entire farm including both houses and barns. By chance the honey extractor was at Rita Maloney's home as Janet and her husband had gone off on a well deserved vacation when the fire broke out. Rita has agreed to house the extractor until another convenient location can be found for it.

If you are in the central area and can store it and be in charge of checking it out, please let Rita know.



## Honey Extractor Rental

Members have use of the association's honey extracting equipment, as available. Rental fee is \$5 per day. Extractors must be returned clean.

Email or Call to reserve:

### **South**

Ettamarie Peterson  
707-479-1613  
editor@petersonsfarm.com

### **Central**

Rita Maloney  
707-291-3071 (Leave a message)  
ritamaloney@outlook.com

### **West**

Cheryl Veretto  
cheryl@cbfreelance.com

### **East**

Susan Simmons  
925-408-4529  
Susanjsimmons@gmail.com

The Top Bar Hive group has a fruit press available for use in honeycomb crushing. Contact Jim Spencer at topbargroup@sonomabees.org

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### **Symposium:**

#### **Better Beekeeping in the Bay Area By Jerry Przybyiski**

Saturday, November 4, 2017, 9:00 am - 4:00 pm  
Organized by the Alameda County Beekeeper Association  
at the Ed Roberts Campus, 3075 Adeline St., Berkeley, CA 94703  
(at the Ashby BART)

For more information, visit <http://www.alamedabees.org/2107symposium/>

To Register, visit [www.acba-2017.eventbrite.com](http://www.acba-2017.eventbrite.com)  
\$60 for ACBA members | \$70 for non-members  
register on-line, or pay at the door  
Box lunch included with online registration

Commercial beekeeper, author, Michael Bush will present his "Whole Bee Concept" talk with excursions into related topics. Beekeeper, author, TED talk presenter Noah Wilson-Rich will discuss the importance of urban beekeeping, and the honey the bees produce. Grand master beer and mead judge and brewer, David Teckam, will discuss mead making and judging. PhD Ecologist Joseph Sullivan will describe the two-year sample collection and discuss detected levels of pesticides, fungicides, and bee treatment chemicals measured in nectar and pollen from urban hives. Technologist Jonathan Zamick will describe the ACBA's swarm-hotline system for conveying swarm contact information to members of the swarm-list in a way that fairly distributes swarms, and efficiently serves the community.

Beekeepers of all skill levels are welcome, and non-beekeepers too.



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## Contact Information

Regular monthly meetings of the Sonoma County Beekeepers' Association are held on the second Monday of each month, at 7 pm at the Rohnert Park 4-H Building. The meetings cover a wide range of topics of interest to beekeepers. Everyone wanting to learn about honeybees is cordially invited to attend. You do not need to be a member nor a beekeeper to attend these meetings. Dues can be paid online at our website [sonomabees.org](http://sonomabees.org), at our monthly meetings or by mail. Please see our Website for the application and various kinds of memberships available.

Our mailing address is:  
**Sonoma County Beekeepers' Assoc.**  
**P.O. Box 98**  
**Santa Rosa, CA 95402-0098**

## 2017 Board Members and Other Helpful People

President - Jason Berkman [president@sonomabees.org](mailto:president@sonomabees.org)  
1st Vice President - Ann Jereb [1stVP@sonomabees.org](mailto:1stVP@sonomabees.org)  
2nd Vice President - Susan Kegley [2ndVP@sonomabees.org](mailto:2ndVP@sonomabees.org)  
Secretary - Peter Jones [secretary@sonomabees.org](mailto:secretary@sonomabees.org)  
Treasurer - Lew Spengler [treasurer@sonomabees.org](mailto:treasurer@sonomabees.org)  
Volunteer Coordinators - Karen Kappa, Carol Ellis, Sonja Moug and Emily Gaines [volunteer@sonomabees.org](mailto:volunteer@sonomabees.org)  
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Chris Conrad [atLarge2@sonomabees.org](mailto:atLarge2@sonomabees.org)

Assistant - Linda Burns [assistant@sonomabees.org](mailto:assistant@sonomabees.org)  
Auction - Darlene McGinnis [auction@sonomabees.org](mailto:auction@sonomabees.org)  
Bee Sharing - Christine Kurtz [beesharing@sonomabees.org](mailto:beesharing@sonomabees.org)  
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Gardening- Ellen Sherron [gardening@sonomabees.org](mailto:gardening@sonomabees.org)  
Historian - Kirstie Stramler [historian@sonomabees.org](mailto:historian@sonomabees.org)  
Librarian - Nadya Clark [librarian@sonomabees.org](mailto:librarian@sonomabees.org)  
Regional Coordinator - Kelly Cox – [regionalcoordinator@sonomabees.org](mailto:regionalcoordinator@sonomabees.org)  
Regional Coordinator 2 - Sally McGough – [regionalcoordinator2@sonomabees.org](mailto:regionalcoordinator2@sonomabees.org)

### Cluster Leaders:

Central - Molly Kuhl, Joy Wesley, Maggie Weaver, Ann Jereb [centercluster@sonomabees.org](mailto:centercluster@sonomabees.org)  
East - Laurie Dorman, Susan Simmons, Nadya Clark [eastcluster@sonomabees.org](mailto:eastcluster@sonomabees.org)  
North - Cheryl Caletti, Laurie Smith, Candice Koseba [northcluster@sonomabees.org](mailto:northcluster@sonomabees.org)  
South - Nikki Campbell, Cynthia Rathkey, Brian Martinelli [southcluster@sonomabees.org](mailto:southcluster@sonomabees.org)  
Topbar - Jim Spencer [topbarcluster@sonomabees.org](mailto:topbarcluster@sonomabees.org)  
West - Chris Dicker, Bruce Harris [westcluster@sonomabees.org](mailto:westcluster@sonomabees.org)

Swarm - John McGinnis [swarm@sonomabees.org](mailto:swarm@sonomabees.org)  
Webmaster - Bill MacElroy [webmaster@sonomabees.org](mailto:webmaster@sonomabees.org)