



# RIO DELL – SCOTIA NEWS



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OCTOBER 2025 VOL. XXXIV NUMBER 10



## HAPPY HALLOWEEN

Vote in the Halloween decorating contest Oct. 15 – 29.

Go to the Rio Dell-Scotia Chamber of Commerce  
event page for the map of locations.

Remember trunk or treat is Oct. 31, 6 – 8 p.m.  
at the Rio Dell fire department

### Get ready to vote in the special election

A special election will be held Nov. 4 throughout California with one ballot item, Prop 50, the Use of Legislative Congressional Redistricting Act. Also known as the Election Rigging Response Act, it is undertaken to offset Texas' redistricting in an effort to secure five additional Republican legislators in Congress after the 2026 midterm election to more reliably continue that party's hold on its present majority.

A Yes vote would support use of the newly-developed redistricting maps until new ones are drawn following the 2030 census. A No vote would keep existing maps in place for the 2026 midterm election.

California supporters, in agreeing to temporarily lay aside the redistricting approved after the 2020 census by the independent California Citizens Redistricting Commission (a structure put in place 15 years ago to ensure there would not be partisan gerrymandering) say they are "fighting fire with fire" to combat what they see as an egregious over-reach demanded of Texas by the current administration.

Opponents fear once the work of the independent commission is laid aside for this election it will not be picked up again, and the California gerrymandering that favors Democrats will stay in place. Some believe that the new districts will cause local voices to be overwhelmed. District 2, in which Humboldt County is located, will be greatly enlarged in the proposed change, encompassing Redding and inland, northern counties while slicing off more of Santa Rosa.

October 20 is the last day to register to vote in this election. Mail-in ballots will be sent to all registered voters starting Oct. 6 and ballot drop-off locations will open Oct. 7. In-person voting begins Oct. 25. Watch for ballot materials coming to your home which will indicate drop-box and in-person voting locations.

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Deadline for November newsletter is October 10th..

Call the Rio Dell-Scotia Chamber of Commerce at 707-506-5081 to advertise.

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## Two new teachers join Scotia school district

Becca Duerr and Layla Dias join the Scotia school district this year as new teachers.

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Duerr, 29, is teaching a TK (pre-kindergarten) class. She's excited to be in a small, rural classroom. A fifth-generation resident of Nevada City and descendant of loggers and miners, she notes she was the first in her blue-collar family to attend college.

Duerr came to Humboldt County nine years ago for college, majoring in Elementary Education with minors in Studio Art, American Sign Language and Special Populations, after completing her associate degree in Natural Science. "School was always home to me," she says of her comfort as a learner and a teacher. She's taught at Maple Creek (a two-room school), Hoopa, Willow Creek and other small and far-flung districts. While completing her credential training, Duerr substitute-taught at so many different schools she won an award for most districts visited.

Interests include travel, the outdoors, dance, roller-skating and art projects, such as a mural she did for a school, and years at Pastels on the Plaza, an Arcata outdoor art event. Duerr hopes she can bring art experiences into her classroom. She lives in Manila with husband Patrick, a commercial fisherman whom she met in college; two cats and six chickens. She is especially fond of times she can be on their wooden boat, Sangria, fishing together.

Dias, 26, is a local name, returning to her alma mater for her first job teaching in a public school. The Rio Dell native is a professional singer, songwriter and musician who will be teaching music part-time to grades K-eight. "Music is my one true love," she says. "I took every music class I could" in Scotia, Fortuna High, College of the Redwoods, and Cabrillo College in Santa Cruz where she was able to major in the subject while also taking Early Childhood Education classes. Of all those experiences, she fondly recalls her time with Dana Christen, the now-retired music teacher at Scotia. "I think of her when I think of music teachers," Dias says.

After college Dias stayed in Santa Cruz but found the high cost of living meant she had to work long hours, which played havoc with some health issues such as arthritis, making a move back home welcome. She is working on her fourth album, Songs From the Heart, which will be released next year. She teaches private guitar lessons (people interested in learning more can contact her at [layladiasmusic@gmail.com](mailto:layladiasmusic@gmail.com)), and travels to the Bay area where she performs with various groups. Dias has a Gofundme site to help pay the musicians and other professionals involved in producing the new album.

Counting guitar, piano, sax and violin among the instruments she plays, Dias has been teaching herself all the other instruments in an orchestra, so she could assist students seeking to master one of them. She sees the opportunity to teach Scotia youth about music as a way to help them express themselves, to feel safe as part of a group, and for self-fulfillment.



Becca Duerr



Layla Dias



October 1 – Yom Kippur, Day of Atonement,  
begins at sundown

October 13 – Indigenous Peoples' Day

October 31 – Halloween

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## Horse rescue promotes healing

If you took a horseback ride, or accompanied someone who did during August's Wildwood Days, you've met some of the team at Happy Hooves Horse Rehab and Rescue which is based on five acres on Ogle Avenue in Rio Dell.

Owner Maria Smoorenburg purchased the land about three years ago, moving from Sacramento after falling in love with the area her partner, a Humboldt native, brought her to visit. Originally from Santa Rosa, she spent a decade in the Navy, where she was injured in an accident, and then later injured again in a car accident, and was in need of healing. She turned to horses, mentored by her sister Christina Gri, a horse trainer, farrier and nutritionist, and found herself with a collection of special-needs horses she in turn set out to heal.

The horses range from Buti, at three years old – with a club foot for which she is raising money to pay for surgery – to 30 years of age. The rescue received its 501.c.3 non-profit status in January, making it possible to accept tax-deductible donations, and Smoorenburg says they are appreciated, from cash to feed and fencing. She hosts fund-raisers, seeks donations of cans for recycling, and gives riding lessons to cover expenses. She is assisted by volunteers and welcomes more.

On a Sunday afternoon one could meet a couple from Miranda, discussing fostering one of her horses. That's important, Smoorenburg said, because she wants to help additional horses but is limited by zoning and logistics to how many she can have. Placing them in the care of others helps make room for more. "I learned she needed volunteers on Facebook and started coming," says Jasmine Patton of Rio Dell, and soon husband Sean was joining her. Smoorenburg has ambitious goals, including an indoor riding arena and a trail along the hillside that would be developed and shared by neighboring property owners.



Left to right, volunteers Jasmine and Sean Patton, neighbor Karlee Garrett, Smoorenburg, and Amy Valenzuela-Mier (who with her wife Lorri was discussing horse fostering), shown with horses Maisy and Flower.

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## The Patron Kitchen wins over many

The Patron Kitchen in Rio Dell is featured in the September issue of My Humboldt Life, a quarterly publication by the firm that also produces the North Coast Journal and Ferndale Enterprise. Writer Jessica Ashley Silva details the makings of several menu items that bring her joy and memories of her home in Southern California where such flavors can also be found. Included in the story of the business Geraldo Gonzalez and wife Letty Escobar opened eight years ago was their win in last year's Taco Fest, hosted by Bear River Casino, in the Best Birria category. With the current year's Taco Fest taking place after deadline for this publication, further congratulations might be in order,

## Barber slates food trucks, farmers market to build downtown foot traffic

Alex Calderon (Lex the Barber), owner of Neighborhoods Barber Shop at 220 Wildwood Ave. in Rio Dell, has completed the permitting process to operate a farmer's market and invites growers and makers to set up shop in the parking lot adjoining his building on Thursdays, 3 to 7 p.m. "I'm starting small now with the intent to go bigger next season," he said, but this is the time for people growing fall vegetables to bring them to sell, as well as people making gifts, crafts and other items in advance of the holidays.

He is licensed to operate year-round, he says, making his the second market, after the one in Arcata, to do so. Another effort to drive traffic downtown, especially late in the afternoon when, he says, things die down, is to invite food trucks to set up, from noon to 7 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays. "When the trucks are here, people show up, and I might get three more customers," he notes.

## What's with the trucks in the median north of town?

Preliminary utility work and other staging is taking place ahead of next year's start of a seismic retrofit of the Eel River bridge north of Rio Dell. PG&E is planning to use traffic control at the end of this month as part of this work, shifting lanes for two to three days, and to remove all traffic control equipment by Nov. 7.

The seismic retrofit project itself is anticipated to begin in 2026, with a construction cost of approximately \$69.8 million, including more than \$61.8 million in federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act funding and \$8 million in state funding.

The project will partially replace the north frame and fully replace the south frame of the bridge structure, according to Myles Cochrane, Cal Trans public information officer. Seismic vulnerabilities were discovered in the bridge, which was built in 1941 and repaired in 1965 and 1989. A public meeting was held in November 2022 to answer questions and share information about the planned construction.

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