

## Tim McKay Collection Finding Aid

### Collection Number

2007.01

### Contact Information

The Library, Special Collections

Humboldt State University

One Harpst Street

Arcata, California 95521

URL: <http://library.humboldt.edu/humco/holdings/mckay.html>

### Processed By

Edith Butler, MA, CA and Suzanne Guerra

With Assistance from: Susie Van Kirk, Kim Rollins, Michele Marta, Katrina Ehrnman, Robyn Wickland, Carly Marino, Connie Stewart, Andy Alm, Bill Turnbull, Ralph Robie and Capitol Business Machines, Chris Beresford, Laurel McKay, Forrest McKay

### Date Collection Processed

2008-2012

### Language

English

### Collection Creator

Tim McKay (1947-2006)

### Dates Covered by Collection

1850s-2006; Bulk dates 1970-2006

### Size of Collection

60 cubic feet

### Abstract

The Tim McKay Collection holds an excellent representation of the materials generated by environmental activists from the 1970s to 2006. McKay was employed by the Northcoast Environmental Center (NEC) in Arcata, California for 31 years, and was Executive Director for 30 of those years. In that position, Tim was at the center of a large network and information clearinghouse for issues of local, regional, state, national,

and world wide concern. The collection is especially rich in information about north coast regional forest land management, ancient forests/old growth, the Klamath/Siskiyou area, the Gasquet Orleans Road (G-O Rd.), national forests, and endangered species. Other strengths include forest practices, wilderness, bioregionalism, and land use policies. The McKay Postcard Collection was donated at same time and is maintained as a separate collection, 2007.02.

### **Access**

Open for research by appointment.

### **Copyright**

Copyright has not been assigned to Humboldt State University and has been retained by Tim McKay's children, Laurel McKay and Forrest McKay, and their heirs. To obtain permission to publish or reproduce in any format please contact the Special Collections Librarian.

### **Acquisition Information**

Gift from Laurel McKay and Forrest McKay. Additional donation by Michele Marta in 2012. CD of images taken at 2006 memorial donated by Mark Larson.

### **Funding**

This project was supported in part by donations to the HSU Library Special Collections Project Fund at the Humboldt Area Foundation.

### **Biographical Information**

Susie Van Kirk graciously wrote an [essay](#) based on her long friendship with Tim McKay and the materials in this collection. It begins with this overview of Tim and his life's work:

A life-long Californian, Tim McKay—naturalist, writer, scholar, historian, environmental advocate—was executive director of the Northcoast Environmental Center (NEC) in Arcata, California from 1976 until his death in 2006. Under his leadership, the NEC became an influential organization in regional campaigns for Wilderness, ancient forests, and salmon, and locally as the umbrella for every grassroots, “friends of” group that took up the gauntlet as advocates for their home watersheds. He was a man of persistence and unswerving dedication to the ecological complexities and beauties of the natural world. McKay was gifted and had an insatiable drive for knowledge and a mind to match, allowing him to absorb, retain, and use information to successfully advocate for wild places, functioning ecosystems, and their associated fauna and flora. His ability with words, his scholarship, his passion, and an uncanny political savvy

transformed a fledgling group of the early environmental movement into a force to be reckoned with, and one that has left its mark across the regional landscape. Often under personal attack, including threatening phone calls, McKay responded as a man confident in his position on the issues, always following his favorite rule-to-live-by: "Endless pressure; Endlessly applied."

### **Scope and Content of the Collection**

The collection consists of the papers, maps, photographic images, and audio recordings that were in Tim McKay's home at the time of his death. McKay's citizen activism, political activities (starting with the 1968 McGovern campaign), friendships and social activities, as well as his bird watching and gardening hobbies are well represented in this collection. Every locally relevant topic is represented. Tim's extensive library and his extraordinary collection of art were not included in this donation though they are documented in the Digital Files series described below. A large postcard collection was donated at the same time and is being processed as the McKay Postcard Collection.

The Tim McKay Collection holds an excellent representation of the materials generated by environmental activists from the 1970s to 2006. McKay was employed by the Northcoast Environmental Center (NEC) for 31 years, and was Executive Director for 30 of those years. In that position, Tim was at the center of a large network and information clearinghouse for issues of local, regional, state, national, and world wide concern.

The Northcoast Environmental Center (NEC) is a 501 c3 non-profit organization and was established in 1971 as a collaborative project by a group of local environmental organizations inspired by Earth Day 1970. Their first major projects were the establishment of a community recycling program and publishing the ECONews. The NEC is an umbrella for several environmental organizations with representatives from the member organizations making up the majority of its Board of Directors. The NEC's library held information about all environmental topics, and the ECONews published information about all issues with a strong emphasis on regional concerns. The NEC's direct activism focused mostly in the management of public lands, especially the U.S. Forest Service. Tim was constantly seeking information about all topics so this collection includes something about everything that was an environmental concern from 1970-2006. It is especially rich in information about north coast regional forest land management, ancient forests/old growth, the Klamath/Siskiyou area, the Gasquet Orleans Road (G-O Rd.), national forests, and endangered species. Other strengths include forest practices, wilderness, bioregionalism, and land use policies. Issues and campaigns involving the Siskiyou Mountain Resources Council, Redwood National

Park, the Western Ancient Forest Campaign, Redwood Summer and others are well represented.

In July 2001 the NEC offices were lost in a fire that consumed half a city block. The records that would tell the history of the NEC were destroyed. What happened to be at activists' homes is what remained. Since then the NEC has built up a file of its Directors' meetings and collected back issues of its ECONEWS. Sadly, this Tim McKay Collection is now the best source of documents that describe parts of NEC's history. Researchers will need to explore other sources and carefully review the ECONEWS, regional newspapers, organizational newsletters and other archival collections to get the more complete history.

McKay's long time interests in Humboldt County history, especially the Westhaven and Trinidad area, as well as the history of the whole region are represented in small publications, maps, ephemera, photographs, and some of his writings.

Digital Files were recovered from computer disks and from Tim's home computer. More digital files were created at the time the collection was packed up and donated, documenting Tim's home library, art collection, political button collection, and other artifacts. All of these reflect his cultural and environmental values. The NEC started using computers for internal projects and publications as well as networking with other organizations in the early 1980s. Once researchers have reviewed the collection's paper files they will find additional material on every issue and subject in the digital files. Detailed lists of the digital files and some sample print pages accompany the digital files.

In August 2011 significant additional materials were donated. They are included with this collection because they directly concern Tim McKay. Two CDs containing images from the Tim McKay Memorial Service, NEC's 30th anniversary celebration, and the 2005 lecture McKay delivered for the Victor Schaub Memorial Lecture on Local Politics were donated by Mark Larson (Box 42). Michele Marta donated a large (about 300 pages) sample of email she received from Tim in 2002 (Box 5).

Tim McKay and Michele Marta were engaged to be married and were living together at Tim's Westhaven home at the time of his death in 2006. In 2012, Michele donated about 25 items. Some of them are items that were special to Michele and Tim, especially two years worth of email messages. There are a few photographs of Tim as a child and a few of him in his 50s. Many of them are cards, newspaper articles, official resolutions that represent responses by the community to the news of Tim's death. Though many of

the items date from after Tim's death they have been incorporated into the Tim McKay Collection because they pertain to his life. Printouts of email messages from Tim to Michele from 1998 to 2000 have been added to Box 5 (folder 7) where the email messages from 2002-2004 are filed. The rest of the 2012 donation has been filed in Box 53.

### **Arrangement of the Collection**

Tim McKay died suddenly at the age of 59 in July 2006. It is understandable that he had not begun to put any of his "affairs in order", including his home office. There was evidence that older papers and books were shelved in some order. Tim's health problems made it increasingly difficult for him to get around, so his earlier attempts at organizing his files and keepsakes in his rambling, but small, house were barely evident by the time the collection was packed up. Most books were on shelves but other materials were stacked where they had been used. Fortunately, things had not been disturbed when packing the collection started. With the exception of published books, family mementos (such as children's projects), and financial records, all office materials were boxed up without weeding or sorting. In accordance with the donors' request the materials not retained in the collection (surplus copies, published articles with no evidence of use or local relevance, non local ephemera) were returned to them.

By the end of the packing up stage it was apparent that "original order" would not serve history or researchers and that it would be necessary to organize the collection. During processing, materials were grouped in general subject or project/geographic order. Details were provided in the file titles, nearly all of which were supplied by the processing archivist. The collection is arranged in 13 series:

[Biography](#)

[Calendars/Daily Notes](#)

[NEC \(Northcoast Environmental Center\)](#)

[Siskiyou Mountains Resources Council](#)

[History](#)

[Photographs](#)

[Audio Recordings](#)

[McKay Hobbies](#)

[ECONEWS](#)

[Clippings](#)

[Digital Files](#)

[Oversize](#)

[Whole Newspapers](#)

## Series Descriptions

### Biography

Subseries:

- Awards/Recognitions
- Credentials/Achievements
- Writings
- Memberships/Donations
- Young Adult
- Family
- McKay Home/Family
- Political Activism
- Education
- Correspondence Received

Details of Tim McKay's life and work are richly detailed in the [biographical essay](#) by Susie Van Kirk. In addition to her personal knowledge of McKay, Ms Van Kirk drew upon the materials in this collection. Researchers will benefit from a thorough reading of her essay before seeking more information from the files in this series.

The "Writings" section will be especially useful for exploring and understanding Tim McKay's many areas of study and the ways he choose to share his ideas about living within and advocating for the wellbeing of the Northwest California/Southwest Oregon bioregion. In addition to the paper files in this collection, there are numerous examples of Tim's writings in the digital files in this collection and in issues of ECONEWS (S940 .E37 HumCo; MF2433). The writings in the digital files included drafts of articles for ECONEWS while the published issues will present the content after editor Sid Dominitz reworked the drafts. ECONEWS was published eleven times a year, which demanded a fast pace of writing and nearly constant deadlines.

As the correspondence that McKay received was gathered and reviewed during processing about .25 cubic foot of materials were separated out. To protect the privacy of living persons, this small amount of correspondence is restricted and will be not be available until 2050. Researchers will be able to get a full view of McKay's personality and professional life from the non-restricted materials.

Michele Marta, Tim's partner at the end of his life, donated (in 2011) printouts of hundreds of email messages from Tim during 2002-2004. At that time they were still having a long distance relationship, which continued until Michele was able to move to

Tim's home in Westhaven in 2005. This packet was added to the correspondence series. Through these email records researchers can learn of Tim's concerns, activities, issue related opinions, and the relentless pace his commitments demanded of him. They add a dimension that isn't present in the rest of the collection.

### **Calendars/Daily Notes**

Some time periods are well recorded in the calendars and some are not. The Daily Notes are usually "to do" lists, but some include important informational or strategic details. The whole range of McKay's concerns and activities is apparent in these calendars and notes.

### **NEC (Northcoast Environmental Center)**

Subseries:

- Administration and Activities
- Ancient Forests/Old Growth
- Klamath/Siskiyou
- National Forests and Endangered Species
- Other Federal Agencies
- Northcoast Region Subject Files
- General Subject Files
- Tim's Essential Reading Materials
- Organizations in Northcoast Region
- Newsletters and publications; not local

All of the materials from McKay's activism era (1970-2006) about natural history and environmental issues, whether theoretical or applied, (except those connected to a formal class) are gathered into this series. McKay's professional interests were the same as his personal interests so it became impossible to try to separate the materials. All the materials were fully blended in McKay's home.

Because the Northcoast Environmental Center was destroyed in the 2001 fire there is no complete record of its activities, except for what was included in ECONews. The loss of the extensive library and information files denies all a full understanding of the breadth and depth of the holdings. In the days before the internet, when regional environmental activism was fully energized, accurate and swift information flow was a constant challenge. NEC tried to bridge the informational gap and to help with networking. NEC actively collected books, reports, clippings, etc. that told the history of human-environment interactions for this region. All the staff worked hard to help citizens who were seeking ways to have a beneficial impact on a wide range of concerns.

The files titled "McKay Activities," especially when used with the Calendars/Daily Notes series, shed light on day to day events and the urgency to respond, knowledgeably and effectively to fast changing circumstances. Even the batch of phone and visitor messages reveals the range of persons that regularly sought information or advice from the NEC and from McKay on an equally diverse set of issues.

McKay was deeply involved in the efforts to stop the Gasquet – Orleans (G-O) Road. The Forest Service intended to build a road that would allow access to timber in steep pristine watersheds of Klamath River tributaries and would interfere with areas that are spiritually important to several Indian tribes. Information about this protracted issue is located in the NEC series (especially the National Forest-Six Rivers National Forest files and the Klamath/Siskiyou files), the Siskiyou Mountains Resource Council (SMRC) series, Photographs, and in the Oversize-Rolled materials. SMRC was one of the NEC member organizations. It was created in the early 1980s to address the special threats and needs of the Siskiyou Mountains area. Eventually federal legislation established the Siskiyou Wilderness (1984) and then the Smith River National Recreation Area (1990) preventing both the completion of the already started G-O Road and logging in the pristine tributary watersheds.

### **Siskiyou Mountains Resources Council**

The Siskiyou Mountains Resources Council (SMRC) was a separate organization but its purposes were very similar to NEC's regarding the unique Siskiyou Mountains and in preventing finishing the G-O Rd. Organizational records and some project files are in this series but there is tremendous overlap with files in the NEC series.

### **History**

Subseries:

- North West California Region

- Publications

- Ephemera, brochures

McKay was nearly as much a historian as he was an environmental activist; in fact these were each an extension of the other. For years he researched in his own Westhaven-Trinidad neighborhood. The notes and the interview with Sam Merryman that contributed to his paper "Luffenholtz From Beginning To End: A Regional History Through 1908" are located in this series while the paper itself is filed in the Biography -Writings series.



This series includes all types of two dimensional materials from all eras, reflecting McKay's serendipitous gathering activities. They activities range from keeping ephemera to purchasing things at yard sales, on eBay, and everywhere in between.

## **Photographs**

Subseries:

Prints and Film

Historical Photographs

McKay's interest in photography started when he was a child. This collection has a small representation of his work. Other images relate to his environmental and political activities. Most family photographs remain with the family, though some were scanned and their digital representations are located in the Digital Files series

The Historical Photographs subseries contains noteworthy images of the Trinidad-Westhaven area obtained from several sources, including Katie Boyle. In the mid 1980s McKay obtained color photographic copies of paintings done by Loeffelholz in the 1850s; color slides of three of the paintings, though slightly cropped, are included here. (See Humboldt Historian Fall and Winter 2010 issues for more background information.)

## **Audio Recordings**

Included are a complete set of 1989-1990 group interviews (six sessions) on the Environmental Movement in Humboldt County with Tim McKay, Lucille Vinyard, Susie Van Kirk and Bill Devall. These include an overview of the contents for all six sessions and transcriptions for the first two sessions. Other tapes include a 1984 interview by McKay with his father and stepmother, a sampling of NEC programs (including 13 Econews Report, KHSU recordings) and events. The remainder of the tapes reflect regional environmental issues and musical creations by local residents.

## **McKay Hobbies**

Subseries:

Birding

Gardening

The records in this series are minimally processed, especially the gardening materials.

McKay was an avid birdwatcher, a hobby that overlapped with his professional responsibilities. He organized and participated in numerous local Christmas Bird Counts. He maintained bird lists for various locations and purposes.

McKay's yard was filled with native plants and most years he had a vibrant vegetable garden as well. He maintained records of these, though they were not organized in a central place or with a consistent style. The collection includes a full box of yard and garden related materials. These materials were gathered together filling one box but they are not further sorted by date or by subject.

## **ECONEWS**

The collection includes a large, but incomplete, set of NEC's publication, ECONEWS, for years 1974-2006. The HSU Library has a complete set: most issues are on microfilm (MF2433) and the most recent issues are in the Humboldt Room (S940 E37).

## **Clippings**

Subseries:

Sorted by subject

Unsorted

McKay was constantly gathering information for his many forums and presentations and to build up files for the NEC library. He marked and clipped the papers and then volunteers filed them into subject files. Before the 2001 NEC fire there were about 40 file cabinets filled with all manner of informational items. The clippings in these five boxes were ones that had not made their way to any file at the time of McKay's death. They represent the type of news that caught his eye and reveal one of the many ways that Tim was constantly gathering information.

## **Digital files**

The computer disks (36 disketts, 110 floppies), covering years 1982-1995, that were at the McKay home were kept in the original groupings, analyzed to find ways to open them in a way that, as much as possible, maintained the original formatting, and copied to new CDs. Information about this process and an explanation of the contents are in print documents that are filed in Box 42 along with Disks 4 and 5, the public use disks.

These files were processed by Suzanne Guerra who provides a [fuller description](#) of them. Researchers will benefit from reviewing this fuller description before attempting to use the files that were retrieved from obsolete media or from McKay's computer. Also, use of the paper files in this collection before attempting to use the digital files is strongly recommended.

Disks 8-12 contain files created in 2006 and 2007, shortly after Tim McKay's death. In addition to documenting McKay's home they record information about items that were not included in the donation to HSU. Subjects include: images of McKay's Westhaven home in 2006, McKay's art, tee-shirt/baseball cap, and political button collections, images taken by McKay ranging from student era art photos to family photos when his children were very young, images of anti-Vietnam demonstration and HSU student protest, 2001 images of the NEC fire, correspondence between Tim and his father (James Kohnken), NEC documents. Additional details about the contents of Disks 8-12 are available [here](#).

Disk 13 contains the 263 images shown at Tim McKay's memorial service in August 2006. They include a wide variety of images from every era of Tim's life, including images of friends, co-workers, and associates.

### **Oversize**

Materials that did not fit into file boxes, both flat and rolled, are included in this series. The subject matter is the same as that found in the rest of the collection. See Container List (boxes 47-50) for more information.

### **Whole newspapers**

There are issues from the Blue Lake Advocate, Ferndale Enterprise, Humboldt Standard, Humboldt Times, and the Times Standard. See Container List (boxes 51 and 52) for more information.

### **Container List**

[List](#)

### **Bibliography**

Muller, Gerhard P., Tim McKay and Michael Wolf. Destination California National Parks; Oxford: Windsor Books International; 1992.

Silvaggio, Tony. Grassroots Environmentalism: "The Significance of Ecological Identities Within Humboldt County Forest Activism." Master's thesis, Humboldt State University, 1997.

Stanton, Kathleen and Susie Van Kirk. Timber and Forests: Postwar to Present, 1946-1999. Report prepared for Congressman Mike Thompson and The Library of Congress, 2000. Includes transcript of interview done with Tim McKay. (call # HD9757 C2 S83)

**Related Collections**

ECONEWS (MF 2433 and recent copies in the Humboldt Room, call # S940. E37)

Rudi Becking Collection at HSU(2003.04)

Rudolf W. Becking Collection (REDW 27748) at Redwood National Park; Orick, CA

Boyle Photograph Collection – HSU (1999.03)

McKay Postcard Collection – HSU (2007.02)

McKay's tee shirts and baseball caps having artwork or slogans at the Clarke Historical Museum, Eureka, CA

**Subject Headings**