Dear friends of Fort Ross,

All of us with Fort Ross welcome you to 2016 and wish you a healthy, happy, and productive year, with abundant opportunity to enjoy time in the rain-fresh air and vibrantly green landscape.

It’s a special year for us, as 2016 marks the 40th anniversary of the founding of Fort Ross Interpretive Association. While Kashia lived at Metini for millennia, the Russians and Alaska Natives were at Ross for less than forty years. Our nonprofit era of preserving and promoting this history is now longer lived than the Russian settlement itself!

FRIA became a legal nonprofit in 1976, and although we changed our name to Fort Ross Conservancy, we’re still the same entity with a slightly modernized mission. Thanks to funding from Renova Fort Ross Foundation, we thought it’d be a good time to look back on our organization by scanning all available newsletters, thereby commemorating the 40 years of community activism that has brought so much energy to Fort Ross and Salt Point. (It’s worth noting that going back even earlier, the Fort Ross Citizens Advisory Committee was established in 1972, under the prestigious guidance of State Parks Director William Penn Mott, Jr.)

These newsletters, created with patience on trusty typewriters, are a joy to read, full of passion. The diversity of opinion and ambition of projects is remarkable, and, frankly, humbling. These forty years of advocacy took place amid the backdrop of the Cold War, numerous waves of Russian immigration, and, most importantly, during the new State Parks transition towards expanding the narrative to capture the "flow of history" which allowed the Kashia, Ranch, and Alaska Native peoples bigger chairs at the table.

Within the coming months all newsletters will be available on FRC’s digital library, and we’ll also be updating Maria Sakovich’s "Partners in Preservation" chapter in FRC’s Fort Ross book.

By keeping the history alive we too are part of that history. We’d love to hear from you - send us your stories from years’ past. Let’s keep talking, and working, together.

Sincerely,
Invitation to Apply for Scholarship to Attend FRC’s Marine Ecology Program

Dear Educators, Parents and Students,

We all know the amazing impact that field trips can have on students' educational experience. We invite you and your students to participate in Fort Ross Conservancy’s Marine Ecology Program (MEP), and we are offering sliding-scale scholarships to encourage you to join us.

Fort Ross offers fantastic educational experiences in one of the most beautifully pristine natural areas of our state. The Marine Ecology Program is a full day or overnight experience with hands-on curriculum, geared toward natural history. You will be working with a dedicated, well-trained, and professional staff that fully engages your students in one of the most memorable experiences of their school careers.

To apply, interested teachers should complete the application form to help us understand why this field trip would benefit their students and their school. We are very excited to offer this program and we'd love to make it available to you!

With thanks to the California Coastal Commission and Renova Fort Ross Foundation, FRC is able to offer fee waivers for high school students interested in attending our Marine Ecology Program.

Questions? Please Email Sondra Hunter at sondrah@fortross.org or call 707-847-3437.

Common Earth, Common History
Fort Ross Conservancy has been fortunate to partner with the wonderful team at the Izborsk open air museum in Russia. In 2014 we had our first exchange. Our follow-up project, Common Earth, Common History, aims to find the commonality between our respective settlements by highlighting crafts and trades at our historic parks. We are still working on these pages but we thought our readers would enjoy a preview.

By searching historical documents for references to the most prevalent trades - blacksmithy and metalworks, ship building, brick making, woodworking and coopering, fiberworks, and tanning - we hope to better describe these crafts and daily existence at Settlement Ross. Thanks go to Leyla Holt for culling the history books (Glenn Farris’ So Far From Home, Gibson/Istomin/Tishkov’s Russian California, and The Khlebnikov Archive) to prepare the relevant excerpts such as this one which attests to the variety of products manufactured at Fort Ross:

"The brickworks and tannery were in a fairly satisfactory condition; in particular the latter produced a considerable number of good tanned hides. Coopering was improved as much as possible. On the brig Kyakhta, which arrived at New Archangel in 1826, 50 shoe-upper hides, 10 yurt hides, 100 sea lion skins, 150 chamois skins, 4 thousand bricks, 10 barrels of clay, and 5 barrels of pitch, besides a thousand puds of wheat, were shipped from the settlement."


FRC thanks the U.S. Embassy in Moscow's Peer-to-Peer grant program for the opportunity to work on this project.

2016 CALENDAR of EVENTS

Mark your calendars for these fantastic events when we celebrate the wonderful diverse international flavors and cultures of Fort Ross.

May 21st: Alaska Native Day - Kayak race, skin boat building demonstration, Alaska Native crafts and stories.

July 30th: Fort Ross Festival - Highlights the Kashia, Russian, Alaska Native, and California ranch era peoples who have called Fort Ross home over the centuries. We’ll offer costumed historical vignettes, hands-on crafts, horse and buggy rides, music & dance from numerous cultures, an international food bazaar -- and of course, the Fort Ross Beer Garden!
October 15th: Harvest Festival - Starts out with a morning of gentle apple picking in the historic orchard, where we'll harvest fruit while enjoying the Eastern European harmonies of Kitka Women’s Ensemble and Russian House Kedry. The celebration then moves to the historic Fort Ross compound where we'll enjoy the old-world charm of the 19th century Russian settlement. Fort Ross-Seaview AVA will be pouring wines grown in the Fort Ross viticultural area that consists of the steep ridge top vineyards that overlook the Pacific Ocean.

December 10th: Community Potluck - Please join us for our end-of-year celebration as we bring friends and family together to celebrate the holiday season and make plans for the new year.

Questions? Email info@fortross.org

California State Parks supports equal access. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact (707) 847-3437.

STANFORD U.S. - RUSSIA FORUM at FORT ROSS

FRC is pleased to welcome SURF back to Fort Ross this spring. The Stanford U.S.-Russia Forum (SURF) is an independent organization for students dedicated to cultivating U.S.-Russia cooperation in spheres of mutual interest. Bringing together students from leading Russian and American universities for research in public policy, business, economics and other disciplines, each year approximately twenty students each from America and Russia are selected for the program, which begins with a fall conference in Moscow followed by eight months of work on collaborative research projects and then a capstone conference in the spring at Stanford University.

Since 2011, the Stanford U.S.-Russia Forum delegation has traveled to Fort Ross annually as part of the Capstone Conference at Stanford. Program delegates learn about our shared Russian American history at Fort Ross, engage in community service activities, and also participate in team building exercises.

The Stanford Conference Fort Ross retreat is made possible through the generous support of the Renova Fort Ross Foundation. This retreat provides an opportunity for delegates to understand the history that the U.S. and Russia share. At the same time, the delegation has an opportunity to explore the unique ecosystem along the Northern California coastline.
For more information and a slide show of past SURF events check out our webpage.

Photos by FRC, Paul C. Miller, Tomas Pacha and Sarah Stierch