



ALTADENA FOOTHILLS CONSERVANCY

Issue 2, June 2001

President's Message

AFC has made much progress since we sent out our August 2000 newsletter, and I'd like to take this opportunity to review our short history. The AFC has been in existence for 1 ½ years. A small group of Altadenans began meeting in December 1999, and we decided to incorporate as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation shortly thereafter. On the business side, we received our incorporation letter as of April 2000, with non-profit status conferred by the IRS soon after. We registered our web site domain name, www.altadenafoothills.org, last summer, and signed up for insurance in May. Our Finance Committee is working on a budget and completing the first year's financial statements. All these activities make me, as President, feel that AFC's business side is sound.

If you have any questions about AFC, I invite you to ask me or one of the other Board members. Have a good summer!

Nancy L.C. Steele

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AFC's Key Accomplishments, First Year:

- AFC nominates the Altadena Foothills as an LA County Significant Ecological Area (SEA). When the County's consultant recommends denial of SEA status, AFC supports enlarging a proposed SEA, San Gabriel Canyon, to include the entire San Gabriel Mountains front range foothills and resubmits supporting information. The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC) sends a letter to LA County that includes support for this concept. A final decision is pending.
- AFC nominates four projects for inclusion in the SMMC's WorkProgram 2000. The

nomination is successful and Lower Millard Canyon is ranked in the top 25 of projects in the East Rim of the Valley corridor.

- At AFC's request, then-Senator Adam Schiff sponsors SB 1455 to add a member to the SMMC Advisory Committee to represent eastern unincorporated LA County; the bill is signed into law by Governor Gray Davis.
- AFC President, Nancy Steele, is appointed by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to the SMMC Advisory Committee, February 2000.
- Congressman Schiff invites the AFC to be one of three community organizations highlighted at his Altadena Town Hall meeting.

Did You Know?

Owen Brown was the son of John Brown, the abolitionist, and a participant in the raid on Harper's Ferry in October 1859. Owen escaped to Pasadena, and settled in Altadena, above El Prieto Canyon. His grave marker is located on Round Top Hill, above Rising Hill Road, and reads: "Owen Brown, son of John Brown, the Liberator, died Jan. 9, 1880, aged 64 years." The grave marker lies on privately-owned land, a situation AFC would like to remedy through acquisition and preservation.

Status of Projects

Chaney Trail Corridor

AFC was contacted in late 2000 by the owner of a 40-acre parcel who is interested in donating land she inherited from her grandparents. Nancy spent two hours walking the property, and then put the owner in touch with a good land appraiser. The owner will make a final decision later this year on the disposition of the land

This spring, a For Sale sign went up on Chaney Trail for two parcels, totaling 15 acres. Asking price is currently \$960,000 for both parcels. AFC has had several conversations with the owners, who have owned the parcels for over twenty years. Local property owners are concerned about the possibility of additional housing being built in Chaney Trail and Alzada, and are discussing raising matching funds for the purchase. AFC is working on several fronts to raise the money, including contacting the Angeles National Forest to determine if they would be interested in acquiring part of the property, which is within the Forest boundary. Our initial fundraising goal is \$200,000, to serve as matching funds. We are seeking to raise additional funds through private, state, and federal sources.

Rubio Canyon

The Rubio Canyon parcels recently changed ownership,

despite AFC's efforts to acquire the land. We've met with the new owner, and he has offered to sell AFC the 32-acre open space parcel. Alternately, the owner would like to build 4-5 houses on the hilltop, involving building a road and extensive grading for building pads. He might then donate the remaining open space for preservation. Our fundraising goal is \$250,000 to preserve the entire 32 acres.

Lower Millard Canyon and Upland Properties

Last spring, AFC took Joe Edmiston, SMMC Executive Director, Rorie Skei, SMMC Deputy Director, and Paul Hubler, aide to then-Senator Schiff, on a tour of lower Millard Canyon. As a result, the SMMC is interested in acquiring the 11.5 acre parcel in the canyon that is currently on the market. The asking price is \$500,000, and the SMMC is in the process of getting an appraisal. SMMC has submitted this parcel for acquisition through state funding. AFC is encouraging and monitoring this process. Our fundraising goal, assuming that SMMC comes through with the purchase, is \$35,000 for assessment, debris removal, and trail development, including signage and a bench.

AFC is also interested in preserving the Owen Brown gravesite, which includes the lovely upland area overlooking El Prieto Canyon, through acquisition. We've contacted the current owner, and our fundraising goal is \$60,000 for acquisition, signage, and site preservation.

The Last Word: Visions

The AFC has reached the stage where it is ready to do land deals. Our first goal is to preserve land through acquisition. Once the land is preserved, however, our job is not over. We must monitor the land to ensure habitat is not being degraded; remove non-native plants if necessary; establish and maintain trails, install signage, and amenities such as benches and picnic tables; and pay property taxes and insurance premiums. This all takes money, volunteers, and a vision.

We envision an Altadena where everyone treasures our local foothill environment. We want to educate Altadenans and others, of all ages, about the natural habitat. For example, did you realize that when our local school children go on field trips to see nature they usually go somewhere else? Our own children do not know or appreciate the mountains in their own backyard. AFC would like to remedy this sad situation through nature walks for all ages and providing materials for teachers.

Another of our visions is an expanded Altadena Crest Trail system. Our goal is an ACT that stretches continuously from Eaton Canyon to El Prieto Canyon.

Do you share any of these visions? Your donation will be put to good use in Altadena. And volunteers are welcome to join with our Fundraising, Natural Resources, and Finance Committees. Soon we hope to have an Education Committee, and, once we acquire land, we will need a group of land stewards. Contact us if you are interested.