



Conservancy Works with Local Residents on "Pocket" Oak Restoration Project

"Think globally, act locally." Just as a small "pocket park" can enrich a neighborhood, so might a "pocket oak restoration" enhance the environment and improve the views here in the Altadena foothills. Native oaks provide a botanical foundation for restoring the dramatic beauty and natural habitat that has often been lost in the foothills because of development. In September, some residents of the Alzada Road/Jaxine Drive community approached AFC about facilitating a small oak restoration project. The landowners, Luke Davis and Efi Latief, were interested in restoring oaks on the lower portion of their property, on the flat, eastern side of Alzada Road. There are few large oaks here because of land clearing that occurred back in the 1960s for residential home construction. Invasive black mustard and foreign grasses have crowded out native wildflowers, leaving poor habitat for birds and other wildlife and an unaesthetic "vacant lot" appearance to the land.



Their neighbor, Robert Chave, decided that he would rather be looking at native oak trees than scrubby annual non-natives, so he made a donation to AFC for the project. The oak restoration entailed planting 15 trees—coast live oaks (*Quercus agrifolia*) and Engelmann oaks (*Quercus engelmannii*)—of mixed sizes (in one-, five- and 15-gallon containers). The landowners are committed to protecting the oak trees as they mature and will provide the young trees with interim care (watering) until they are established and able to survive without human intervention. AFC Vice President, Lori Paul, coordinated the purchase and planting of oaks obtained from the non-profit Theodore Payne Foundation for [California] Wildflowers and Native Plants. A California native plant specialist, Steve Hernandez, conducted the actual excavation and planting of the trees.

Conservancy Producing a Watershed Educational Documentary

In our last newsletter, you read about our developing watershed education program and our plan to produce an educational film based on a script written by local author Michele Zack. AFC contracted with Michele Zack, author of *Altadena: Between Wilderness and City*, to begin developing an educational curriculum relevant to both youth and adults. As part of this educational initiative, Michele wrote a historically accurate, dramatic narrative from the pioneer point of view of Benjamin Eaton's wife, Alice Taylor Eaton, who moved to the site of the future Altadena in 1865. The development of the watershed education plan and initial script was funded by a small grant from the Metropolitan Water District.

(Continued on page 3)

Every year since we acquired the land, AFC volunteers have done the annual brush clearing on the Wilson Triangle. We can't thank them enough for their hard work each year. This year, the work took on added urgency with the extreme fire danger of summer and the forest closure. Today we have all but forgotten the fears of August with the unusual rains we received this fall. Late in the summer, my family purchased two cases of a gel that, if we are home and have time to apply it, promises to save our house from a fire. It's another type of insurance, a kind of self-insurance.

We weren't obligated to purchase the product, which has a shelf life of 3–5 years, we received no discount on our homeowners policy for buying the gel, and we hope we never have to use it. What made me feel good about buying this product, however, was the experience of having neighbors say, "Tell us where you are storing the gel and we'll apply it for you if we can." We said we'd do the same for them. It's that kind of neighborhood that we live in, and those kinds of neighborhoods exist all around Altadena. It's why the Altadena Foothills Conservancy exists, because neighbors looked around and decided to come together to save our open space lands. For all of you who have given time and money to the Altadena Foothills Conservancy, thank you. You are our neighbors and friends.

In April 2005, AFC will be five years old—April 10, 2000, is our official date of incorporation. Every new non-profit gets four years to prove that it is what it says it is—not a political lobbying organization, not a private foundation, but a publicly supported charity. In October of this year, AFC received notice from the Internal Revenue Service that we passed the test to be officially declared a "public charity" and tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3). So now we are official. To celebrate our official status and our five year anniversary, AFC will hold a party in April to thank all of our friends. If you'd like to help plan the party, please let me know (nsteele@altadenafoothills.org). And look for your invitation in early 2005.

Nancy L. C. Steele, D.Env., President

Trails Update

Robert Staehle, ACTRWG Meeting Chairman

During our Board retreat three years ago (funded by a Durfee Foundation grant and hosted by the Catalina Island Conservancy), we identified "trails in Altadena" as a cause worthy of a separate organization that none of us had time to organize. Subsequently, Los Angeles County officials asked for an informal community group of hikers, equestrians, and mountain bikers to help them with the goal of restoring the Altadena Crest Trail (ACT) from Arroyo Seco to Eaton Canyon. While the activity is not part of the official business of the Altadena Foothills Conservancy, several of our Board members volunteer additional hours with the Altadena Crest Trail Restoration Working Group (ACTRWG) Steering Committee, along with numerous other Altadena and nearby residents.

Trails and land protection are closely linked. Thousands of people use Altadena trails, which provide access to protected areas in and outside the Angeles National Forest. California State law affords liability protection for owners of land across which public trails traverse, and trail access usually improves property values when it comes time to sell. Granting of trail easements where none existed before can also provide tax benefits to landowners. The Conservancy is working with some of the local landowners to arrange protection of their land in perpetuity in ways that benefit the community, the environment, our watershed, and the owners themselves.

Significant achievements of the working group thus far have included the opening of a new feeder trail through the Lincoln Avenue Sediment Placement Site on Loma Alta, the Altadena Trails Day on June 12, a new mapped route (not yet built) for reconnection through the "Rubio Gap" between Lake Avenue and Zane Grey, and cooperation from some landowners for reopening or rerouting in a number of locations necessary to reconnect the Altadena Crest Trail.

If you are interested in the trails, check out www.altadenatrails.org, or come to one of the ACTRWG meetings held every second and fourth Tuesdays of each month (except possibly 12/28), 7:00 p.m.–8:30 p.m. at the Altadena Community Center on Altadena Drive, just west of the Altadena Sheriff's Station. All meetings are open to the public. All present are automatically members of the ACTRWG Steering Committee; expect to be 'volunteered' for an action item if you make suggestions.

Conservancy Producing a Watershed Educational Documentary

Michele Taylor Eaton: Remembering Altadena Before It Was

(Continued from page 1)

When AFC decided to make Michele's script into a film, we began looking for a filmmaker and additional funding. We have so far raised enough to make the film and we are very excited to announce that the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena will produce this documentary based on Michele's script. Art Center has selected our project as part of its community outreach program and will devote considerable resources, along with talented staff and students, to the making of the film. The film will awaken its audience to the importance of water through the oldest means known, a good story.

The film will stress the development of local water resources, which was key to settlement of the region, and will be paired with curricula designed to address the California standards for 6th-grade science and 8th-grade history. The next step is to develop the curricula for teachers. We are currently working with the Pasadena Unified School District on this phase of the project. The film will also be appropriate for adult and older youth education.

We see this as a chance to make a wonderful gift of history and watershed education to the community and look forward to having you as a donor. If you make a donation for watershed education, you will receive a copy of the film and be recognized as a donor. For the donor categories, see the donation slip on page four.

SAMPLES OF THE DRAFT BY MICHELE ZACK

"We arrived in the Pueblo de Los Angeles on a sunny May morning, 1861. The Civil War had begun whilst we sailed around the horn of South America from New York to California on a three-month journey. We'd known war was coming...had it not been for that and my new husband's need to get back to his children, Benjamin Smith Eaton and I might not have married in such haste."

"My first impression of Los Angeles was of...dust...low adobe buildings, chickens scratching, and cows lolling about the streets. Fields surrounded living willow trees growing so close together they formed a fence to kept livestock out. Mexicans, or Californios—I didn't know the difference at the time—shouting to each other in the hubbub of unloading cargo and people from bobbing skiffs at Wilmington dock. In the far distance the land rose until it was met by the tallest mountains I'd ever seen."

"I'd fallen in love with Benjamin Smith Eaton just five months before, the winter afternoon he came back in Plainfield, Connecticut, after being away for 15 years. He was 38 and I was 23. No one could talk me out of him."

"Water, usually its lack but at other times floods, was a constant theme of conversation my first years in California...and indeed, the theme of our lives. When it was wanting, people would steal it from one another to water crops and for livestock. There

were constant fights, and even murders, over water. Soon all of Ben's work involved engineering projects to get more of, or lawsuits over water rights."

"Ben had built a water system running from Precipice canyon sufficient for our household and crop needs. He surely had a smart head on him when it came to figuring water. We had 60,000 vines and quite an operation going by then. After Griffin and Wilson's fancy plantation with all its San Francisco money turned into a bust, Dr. Griffin was crying poor all over Los Angeles. Oh, he was on the verge of financial ruin, I'm sure. It was at this time that he engaged Ben as his agent to sell off the rest of his San Pasqual land. Ben brought out all sorts of greenhorns to visit, but for a few years nothing came of it. Finally he interested a group from Indiana through a consumptive fellow named Mr. Berry. They didn't have anywhere near the money and started falling out among themselves, but Ben found them new investors in Los Angeles so that Griffin could get his sale. First Ben had to promise he could build them a water system, and before we knew it Ben was president of the newly formed San Gabriel Valley Orange Grove Association. The Association bought a strip of land along the arroyo in the southwest of the old rancho. And Don Benito threw in a 1,400 acre swath of desert land across the top of the rancho to the west of our place to sweeten the deal. This land became Altadena."

AFC Donors 2004

We would like to thank the individuals and businesses who helped AFC in the past year.



GENERAL FUND DONATIONS

(The following gave unrestricted gifts to AFC)

Mr. and Mrs. Tom Apostol	Kenneth Meyer
Barbara Bair	Mario and Brenda Miralles
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WATERSHED EDUCATION

(The following specified their donations were for watershed education)

Guardian of the Watershed—\$5,000 and up
Altadena Heritage
Doris Pankow

Millard Canyon—\$1,000 to \$2,499
Sierra Club Angeles Chapter and Pasadena Group
Dorn-Platz
LA County Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

Rubio Canyon—\$250 to \$999
Nancy and Bruce Steele

Las Flores Canyon—up to \$249
Marie and Donald Adamson
Shari and Nils Asplund
Sara Carnahan
Mary Copperud
William Kraft
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Diane O'Toole
Arlene Pace
Edna Smith
Audrey Vaughan
Paula Walker

Altadena Foothills Conservancy's 2004 Annual Contribution

Please renew your membership as a Friend of the Altadena Foothills Conservancy or become a new Friend.

- I am renewing I am a new Friend
- \$10 \$30 \$50 \$100 Other \$ _____
- Please contact me about a larger gift to AFC.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone(s) _____

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Watershed Education and the Eaton Documentary DONOR CATEGORIES

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| <i>Las Flores Canyon</i>
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| <i>Rubio Canyon</i>
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Mail with your check to:
Altadena Foothills Conservancy
P.O. Box 3
Altadena, CA 91003-0003
626-798-3235

The Altadena Foothills Conservancy is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization; all donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

Thank you for your support.

Chaney Trail Corridor Update

Robert Staehle, Project Leader

Because of its proximity to houses, the Andrea Wilson Triangle on Chaney Trail requires annual brush clearance and clean-up. Thank you to everyone who volunteers for brush clearance and trash removal. A big thank you to Heinz Ellersieck, AFC Board member, who methodically removed poison oak from the brush clearance zone last winter so that the wholesale removal was safer when the rest of us joined him. We also want to thank our brush clearance volunteers in 2004: Ann Evhard and Domi, Bonnie and Tim Callahan, Bruce Steele, Ching Lee, Cici Koenig, Elliot Gold, Elmer Griffin, Frank Colcord, Heinz Ellersieck, Jennifer Kutner, Joan Kaplan, Joe Futerman, Lori Paul, Marie Slonski, Michelle Markman, Nolan King, Peter Schroeder, Rex Mayreis, Rick Carron, and Stuart Clark. Some others have helped as well; please let us know if we missed you in our records. And thanks to whomever anonymously removed all the brush we piled along the west side of Chaney Trail. Before I had a chance to arrange for its removal or chipping, it was gone!

If you missed the fun, we'll do it again in 2005, but the job will be made easier by all the 2003–2004 work that has dramatically reduced the fire hazard to nearby residences.

On the Edge: People and Wildlife

About 60 people came to the Altadena Community Center on June 24th to see native animals and hear tips about living “on the edge” with wildlife. “On the Edge” is a consortium of environmental organizations, including the Mountain Lion Foundation, Nature of Wild Works, California Wildlife Center, and Mountains Restoration



Trust, whose sole purpose is to teach residents how to coexist with their fellow wild neighbors. In 2003 and 2004, the group made several presentations in communities in the Santa Monica Mountains and San Gabriel Mountains. AFC was the local sponsor for this presentation at the Altadena Community Center. The highlights of the show were animal presentations of native opossums, raccoons, a skunk, an owl, and red-tailed hawk, with the finale being a young mountain lion who shredded an entire role of paper towels as his handler talked about habits and habitats of mountain lions.

Biodiversity Survey of Altadena Canyons

AFC contracted with Rick Fisher of Toyon Design this year, using part of the Metropolitan Water District grant, to conduct a biological survey of selected riparian foothill canyon watershed areas. The purposes of the study were to assess extant species diversity, habitat, and watershed quality; to identify potential threats and strategies with regard to invasive non-native species; and to create a baseline for further study and monitoring. The areas of study included the lower elevation/urban interface portions of Millard, Alzada, Chiquita, Las Flores, and Rubio canyons from the urban edge to approximately 2500' in elevation, primarily in the undeveloped wildland areas below the Angeles National Forest. Where needed, we obtained specific permission from private landowners to gain access to their properties.

The study was completed in the summer. As a result of this survey, the AFC now has a baseline (for 2004) analysis of the biological communities, and Mr. Fisher's recommendations regarding the potential for habitat restoration where invasive non-natives have taken over, particularly in riparian areas. We hope to follow-up on this study to restore and protect native species where appropriate.

EDITORIAL

*by Heinz Ellersieck,
AFC Board member and
Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy
Advisory Committee member*

During the last decade or so a generous flow of public monies made it possible for the conservancies of this state to acquire and manage thousands of acres of land—saving a significant amount of our remaining open space from development. The voters of California authorized the expenditures of billions of dollars for that purpose—and it was good. Now, however, those good times are not rollin' anymore. The deep financial problems in Sacramento have put that flow of State funds on hold. And the likelihood is that in the near future the Conservancy cause (like many good causes) will receive much less public money than we would wish for.

This is not good, but it is not a disaster. The Conservancy Movement in this country was not just the gift of Washington and Sacramento. It was, and is, driven by concerned individuals and small groups that agitate for public money but at the same time donate their own land, money, talent, and energy to save our open space, environment, and wildlife. And we can still do that. We may be in for some lean years. We may be thrown on our own resources. But Americans are supposed to be resourceful when managing the affairs they believe in. It might even be a good thing, for a while at least, to be less dependent upon Big Brother.

ALTADENA FOOTHILLS
CONSERVANCY MISSION

*The Altadena Foothills
Conservancy was founded
to preserve and restore
open, undeveloped lands
and associated historic trails
and structures located in the
foothills of Altadena.*

The AFC exists:

- *For people all ages*
- *For both people and wildlife*
- *For ecological, scenic, and cultural opportunities*
- *To protect natural resources and watersheds*
- *To ensure access to trails for recreation*

**Environment Now! Funds
Hardware and Software
Purchases**

A generous \$2,000 grant from Environment Now! enabled AFC to purchase a scanner, printer, software, and other computer equipment. With the software and hardware, we've been able to produce brochures, flyers, and other display items in-house and numerous photos have been scanned so we can use them in presentations and on our web site. Thank you!

Join Our E-Mail List

To receive updates and occasional communications from the AFC, send an e-mail to:
nsteele@altadenafoothills.org

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