



CONSERVATOR

*If we don't protect
our foothills now,
Altadena's glorious
open space
will disappear.*



A New Direction, Same as the Old Direction

IN THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS, the board members of the Conservancy have done some serious internal work to identify how we can best serve you in preserving land and trails. We believe that in order to do this, we need to hire staff. Project management, whether building a park or buying land, requires a level of commitment and expertise that goes beyond what our volunteers can give on a sustained level over time.

We are not the first land trust to discover this, of course. I have read many times that the one characteristic that distinguishes a successful land trust from one that just gets by is full-time staff.

And it is urgent that we be successful. If we don't protect the high priority lands in our conservation plan (http://www.altadenafoothills.org/af_conservationplan.html), within the next five to ten years the Altadena foothills will be built out. The time is now. With land values soaring, property owners are looking to cash in on their long term investments. Developers are in a better situation than they have ever been to pay high land prices and build mansions that will sell for over \$1 million in the Altadena foothills.

Glendale is pretty much built out, Sierra Madre is fighting over their last tracts of open land, and developers rightly are looking here for their next big project. How many mansions can be built in Altadena? And we know they will be gated—people who pay that much money for a house will want to differentiate their property from the lower value houses nearby. Developers sell security and fear when they gate new housing; that is the reality.

In addition, new regulations and a national accreditation program for land trusts require ever increasing time be spent

Continued on page 2

The Sunday Los Angeles Times Business section carries a column called Money Talk, in which Liz Pulliam Weston answers financial questions. One Sunday (2/11/2007), she carried a question from someone who had \$1,000 “extra” cash each month. This person detailed what they have done so far (maxing out their 401(k), paying off the mortgage, buying rental property), and asked what to do with this extra income each month.

Ms. Weston said they should make sure all debt is paid off and their retirement plan is in order and fully funded, and then maybe make more real estate investments.

I have to say I was so shocked by Ms. Weston’s answer that I sent her this e-mail:

Dear Liz,

I was surprised and disappointed that in your answer (2/11/2007) to the person who has “extra” cash you said nothing about charitable giving. If someone asked me for advice about what to do with “extra” cash, I would ask them to think about their values and find a charity that expresses those values in its work. I would also ask them if they wanted to leave a legacy or do good works during their lifetime. Someone with surplus income is in an enviable position to make a difference for good, rather than thinking only of themselves. I consider charitable giving to be an indispensable part of my financial plan.

Liz got letters reacting to her answer, and printed one in her March 25th column. In her response she referred to her “glaring omission” and said that “taking care of others through financial donations” is important. She agreed with my comment that (as she paraphrased) “charitable donations can be and are an indispensable part of many financial plans.”

As Liz says in this column, “you don’t have to be “swimming” in money to give some away.” I used to think that I wasn’t a philanthropist because I didn’t have millions to give away. Kay Sprinkel Grace, a non-profit consultant, defines philanthropy as “all voluntary action for the public good, which is based on your values.” I like this definition because it says that you don’t have to be wealthy to be a philanthropist.

In this issue we thank all of our donors and volunteers. The many philanthropists who have provided us the means to pay our bills; those who have donated materials for our pocket park; and those who have donated time and energy to clear brush, staff the tables at events, and keep the books. If you don’t see your name on our list of donors at the end of the newsletter, please drop me an email or phone call so I can be sure to thank you next time. I want to especially thank Jay Brown and Mountain View Cemetery, which has donated heavy equipment and operators to dig and grade the pocket park site. To the guys who operate the equipment—Brian (on the left) and Willie Roberts (right), and John—Thank you! Without your help, we couldn’t build the park.

And without you, the Conservancy doesn’t exist. Thank you.

Nancy L. C. Steele

Continued from page 1

on accountability measures. We have reviewed the requirements of the Land Trust Alliance’s accreditation program and concluded that becoming accredited will have to wait until we have staff to fill out and manage the immense paperwork required. In the not-to-distant future, land trusts will be required to be accredited to obtain grant funding. Donors will want to know if you are accredited. Land trusts that are not accredited will probably have to merge or go out of business, leaving their lands to another land trust or the state. This is the reality.

The Conservancy is therefore asking you to increase your support and investment in open space preservation. We need to hire staff and establish an office so that we can be more effective at purchasing land for conservation. We have some ongoing expenses—such as insurance and taxes—that will increase when we hire staff. We also have expenses every time we make an offer to purchase land (which we have done more than once in the past year). We need to have cash in the bank to act quickly when a potential deal comes up. Your support enables us to continue to work to preserve these foothills.

We welcome your questions and participation. You can be a part of this exciting work as we seek to protect the Altadena foothills.



Eaton's Water a Success

WE WISH TO THANK EVERYONE for helping us get the movie *Eaton's Water* off the ground as a gift to our local schools to supplement environmental and history education. As an organization, we are primarily focused on buying land in the foothills to keep it wild and open in perpetuity. Education initiatives are equally important because our kids will be the next stewards of these beautiful foothills. Pasadena Unified School District teachers are using the film already in their classrooms.

On October 7, 2006, about 200 people attended our premiere at Art Center College of Design, enjoying the film showing, panel presentations by Tim Brick, Arroyo Seco Foundation; Michele Zack, author; Sally Levi, film director; and Felicity Swerdlow, Pasadena Unified School District. Afterwards, we mingled with the actors, producers, cast, and other volunteers in the café, where we were treated to a display of Julie Klima's still photography from the movie. All who attended received a gift bag containing the DVD, commemorative program with Michele Zack's short story, poppy seeds, and information on water conservation.



Since the premiere, the film has been seen by hundreds more adults and youth. We have also distributed over 100 copies, most of them for free to teachers. In November 2006, Michele Zack and Nancy Steele showed the film at a lunchtime Pasadena Rotary meeting. Michele showed the film to the Water and Power Associates in January. On January 22, 2007, we reprised our film showing and panel discussion (minus Tim Brick, but with Nancy Steele standing in to discuss water and the environment) before a standing room only crowd at the Altadena Community Center for the Altadena Historical Society quarterly meeting. In March, Nancy showed the film at the Arcadia Presbyterian Sparks Club meeting and Michele moderated a showing before the Los Angeles Corral of Westerners. The film has been used by Pasadena Unified School District in teaching local history, and copies have been distributed to teachers through the Teaching American History program.

Your support is still needed to ensure we can continue getting copies of this DVD out and in use for watershed education. We will donate a free copy of the DVD to any teacher who requests one; otherwise copies are available for a donation of \$20. For as long as supplies last, we will also include a free copy of the commemorative program with Michele Zack's short story. Contact Nancy at nsteele@altadenafoothills.org if you would like a copy or to schedule a showing the film.

EARTH DAY



AFC Board members Nancy Steele (right) and Lawren Markle (center), and volunteer Tim Callahan (left) staff the Conservancy's booth at the City of Pasadena's Earth Day celebration in Memorial Park. Community member Emina Darakjy stopped by to take our photo.

Conservancy Receives Arroyo Verde Award

On December 19, 2006, the Arroyo Seco Foundation (ASF) and the Council of Arroyo Seco Organizations awarded the Altadena Foothills Conservancy as the winner of the 2006 Arroyo Verde Award in the organization category. Our award recognized our work in developing the film *Eaton's Water* and providing this story as a gift to the community. Mark Goldschmidt, former President of Altadena Heritage (a major donor to the film) made the presentation. We also received certificates of recognition from Assemblyman Anthony Portantino and Los Angeles City Councilman Jose Huizar.



AFC President Nancy Steele (center) receives award from Paula Sirola (left), ASF Watershed Coordinator, and Mark Goldschmidt, ASF board member.

New Hillside Ordinance Proposed

In February, a new Altadena Hillside Ordinance was approved by the Altadena Town Council. The ordinance was drafted by an ad hoc committee of your friends and neighbors, including Conservancy president Nancy Steele. The Town Council submitted the proposed ordinance to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, with the request that it be adopted into law under Altadena's Community Standards District. The ordinance would protect our foothills by increasing permit requirements on development in hillside areas. It doesn't guarantee that the foothills will remain wild and scenic, but it's a good start. We have also heard reasonably positive feedback from some land owners who would be affected.

We encourage you to show your support today, by writing to Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich at his Pasadena District office: 215 North Marengo Avenue, Suite 120, Pasadena, CA 91101. You might also want to send a copy to your census tract representative on the Altadena Town Council. You can find your representative at <http://www.altadenatowncouncil.org/>.

Astrid Ellersieck Memorial Fund

By Heinz Ellersieck, PhD

When Astrid Ellersieck died four years ago a significant number of her friends made donations to the Conservancy in her memory, for a total of \$3,370. And you haven't heard of it since. Be assured, however, that neither the money nor the donors have been forgotten. The money has been neither lost, mingled, spent on administration, nor otherwise dissipated. It awaits application to some project that will both remind us of Astrid and promote the conservation that we believe in.

Undoubtedly, in any single project the memorial fund must be joined by larger resources. But like Astrid in most of her endeavors, it will mark in the van—rallying the troops to the cause. Fear not!

Sightings



Local Bobcat Prowls

The foothills of Altadena have long been a wildlife corridor, and recently several residents near Chaney Trail have seen a bobcat on the prowl. Before you get too concerned about

safety, we should let you know that bobcats are only slightly larger than house cats, and they are primarily interested in hunting rodents.

AFC president Nancy Steele spotted the little

guy hunting ground-squirrels successfully behind her house, which was a pleasant surprise. The bobcat species is considered "vulnerable" due to loss of habitat.

Owls and Hawks

There have been a lot of owl and hawk sightings in the Altadena area lately, which is a good sign, and helps keep rodent populations down. One of the goals of Altadena Foothills Conservancy is to protect wild habitat and ecosystems in the foothills so that native animals don't become endangered.



JOHN SLONSKI

How Can You be Water-Wise?



For many years, Los Angeles has lined our creeks and rivers with concrete to funnel rainwater to the sea as quickly as possible. Now we are learning that it is important to let the water soak into the ground to replenish aquifers for our well water. As awareness is raised, the Army Corp of Engineers is studying removal of some of the concrete in riverbeds, where it makes sense.

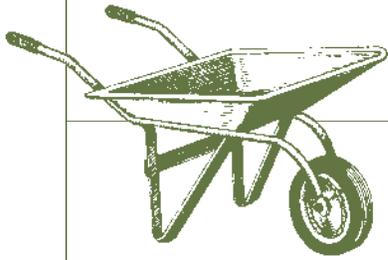
The City of Los Angeles has released the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan to bring back the river. These are long term plans that will cost billions to undo the damage of the past 70 years.

You can make immediate changes, however, to conserve water:

- Help rain soak into the ground by building a berm or swale to retain water.
- If you are going to install a new driveway, patio, or walkway, use permeable concrete or pavers.
- Convert some or all of your landscape to native and drought tolerant plants to use less landscape water.
- If you have a large landscape with automatic sprinklers, change to a "smart" controller that only turns on the water when the plants need to be watered.

For more information, a good site is <http://www.bewaterwise.com>.





Pocket Park Project Update

YOU'RE LIKELY TO NOTICE some changes this month at the corner of Woodbury and Marengo, as the new pocket park is constructed. AFC has sponsored the development of this park, which is largely funded by Metropolitan Water District and the County of Los Angeles, Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich and several corporate sponsors, local businesses and individuals. Mountain View Cemetery in Altadena is a major donor, providing earth work, irrigation installation and assistance with planting trees (see list of donors in this newsletter).

The goal of the park is to help people learn about the watershed, and how our native plants and our geography help absorb rain-water into the watershed. The park project is part of the Conservancy's educational outreach. Thanks to those who have helped this project along and we look forward to seeing the park open later this year.

In March we were awarded a \$15,000 grant from the Los Angeles County Regional Parks and Open Space District from Proposition A to complete construction. We thank Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich and his deputy, Sussy Nemer, for making this grant possible.

Mountain View Cemetery provided labor and heavy equipment (top) to dig the holes for the sumps. Gravel delivered (second from top) back-filled the holes. Project Manager Rick Carron (third from top and bottom) installed the sumps.

Because the pocket park is designed to keep all rainfall on site, the purpose of the sumps is to collect and store rainwater underground while it slowly percolates into the underlying groundwater.



JULY 1, 2006 to
APRIL 30, 2007

*The best way to protect
our local foothills is
for the land or an
easement to be owned
by a land conservancy.*

*By donating to the
Conservancy, you
allow us to work
towards our mission
of keeping natural
lands open and wild in
perpetuity. Protecting
our foothills also
protects the trails and
scenic views.*

*As always, we are
very thankful for your
donations and support,
as are the many people
who enjoy the views,
trails, and nature
in these special hills.*

*Without you, our
work to preserve the
Altadena foothills for
all to enjoy would not
be possible.*

Thank You

THE CONSERVANCY THANKS ALL OF OUR DONORS AND VOLUNTEERS

Donors

Phil and Barbara Auzenne
Jane Baggott
Ron and Lucy Baker
Mary Barrie and Ted Stork
Anthony Portantino
Dennis Bridwell
Norman and Frederika Brooks
Robert and Antoinette
Buckner
Charlotte Cantrell
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Rick Carron and George
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Dave Doody
Anne Dove
Harold Eaton
Annmarie Eldering
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Michael Eschger
Jacqueline Fennessy
Sylvia Ford
Steve and Mei Frautschi
Sid Gally
Jeffrey George
Mark Goldschmidt and
Michele Zack
Tim Gregory
James Griffith and Susanna
Dadd
Brantley and Susan Haigh
Richard and Linda Hansen
Bob and Lisa Harrison

Mrs. Steve and Lisa Haussler
Lynn Hodge and Associates
Michelle Huneven and Jim
Potter
Terry and Bev Huntsberger
Rosa Johnson
Joan Kaplan and Rex Mayreis
Kim Kenne and Richard
Webster
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Susan Kochevar
Charles Kohlhase
Carol Kopf
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Gregory La Borde and Kristan
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Cross
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Peter and Doreen Mason
Peter Maunu and
Irmi Maunu-Kocian
Ninarose Mayer
Matthew McQueen
Herb and Karin Meiselman
Kenneth Meyer
Ralph Miles
Susana Miller
Adolfo and Maria Miralles
Mario and Brenda Miralles
Andrew Mishkin and
Dr. Sharon Laubach
Laura Monteros
Diane O'Toole
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Marianna Rivinus
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Callae Walcott-Rounds
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John Zoraster

Anza-Borrego Desert Natural
History Association
California Wildlands
Grassroots Fund
Foothill Municipal Water
District
Land Trust Alliance
Metropolitan Water District
Pasadena Museum of History
Sierra Club, Angeles Chapter,
Pasadena Group
Southern California Gas
Company
Southland Publishing

Contributions of Goods and Services for the Pocket Park

Mark Goldschmidt Design
Mountain View Cemetery
City of Pasadena,
Department of Water
and Power
Lincoln Avenue Water
Company
Rain Bird Corporation
J. Harold Mitchell Co.
Mr. and Mrs. Jim Oesterling
(pledged)

Volunteers

Ronnie Ballister
Jocelyn Borys
Tim Callahan
Mary Cross
Susan Dimotakis
Sameer Etman
Joe Futerman
Jeffrey George (webmaster
through October 2006)
Michelle Markman
Nami Olgin
Kris Topaz
Carlos Uribe
Suzanne Uribe
George Widman

Donating to AFC

If you have read this far, we know you love the open space lands of the foothills and would like to see them preserved for hiking and sports. It takes work, but we can protect the beautiful vistas we have all come to know. Can you point to a scenic winding canyon, and say that you protected it? Does it remain wild because of you?

That's why people donate to AFC. The Conservancy puts your donations to work by protecting trails, buying and preserving important Altadena wild land that is in danger of overdevelopment, and preserving natural vistas and special places in the Altadena Foothills as much as possible.

Preserve Altadena as you remember it—the tranquil place between wilderness and city.

Easy Ways to Donate to AFC

Donate On-Line at www.altadenafoothills.org and select **Support the AFC**. Click **Make a Donation** for convenient payment options.

Send a Check using the form below.

Donate Appreciated Assets such as real estate, stocks, bonds, or securities and receive a tax benefit.

Donate Your Car to **Cars for Causes** in our name. Call 1-800-766-CARE (1-800-766-2273) or visit www.cars4causes.net for info.

Donate Your Property if your real estate is near the border of the wild lands to help protect the area. Or donate real estate in the city that can be transformed into mountain wild lands if AFC applies the proceeds to buying foothill wild areas.

Leave a Legacy by protecting our natural canyons, a lovely legacy to leave behind. If you agree, please consider planning now. Your gift now can spring to action later by naming AFC in your will or living trust; or list AFC as a beneficiary of a policy or retirement fund. Your attorney will have helpful suggestions. AFC has planning tools as well and welcomes your call.

The Altadena Foothills Conservancy is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization; all donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Altadena Foothills Conservancy, P.O. Box 3, Altadena, CA 91003-0003; Telephone 626-798-3235

As you consider a donation, you might wish to know about *changes to the tax laws that may improve your tax deductions*. Of course, any donation to the Conservancy is tax deductible because of our Conservancy's status as a nonprofit. Additionally, the Pension Protection Act of 2006 is giving you a limited-time opportunity for increased deductions. This law is in effect *only for the remainder of 2007* (although Congress is proposing to extend some of these deductions), so it's best to act fast to take advantage of its benefits. The new law favors conservation easements and also allows you to make a charitable deduction from an IRA distribution. Here are some details:

Conservation Easements

Simply, an easement allows you keep your land while guaranteeing that future owners can't spoil the beauty of it. You retain ownership of the land, but by placing a conservation easement on the land you prevent development forever. A conservation easement can be step one in an eventual sale of the property. Establishing a conservation easement can *lower heirs' estate taxes* on land in several ways. For example, the easement value is excluded from the taxable value of the estate.

The new law:

- *Raises the deduction* a landowner can take for donating a conservation easement from 30% of their adjusted gross income in any year *to 50%*.
- *Extends* the carry-forward period for a donor to take tax deductions for a voluntary conservation agreement *to 15 years*. (previously only 5 years)
- *Allows* qualifying nurseries, ranches, and farmers to *deduct up to 100% of income* for a conservation easement.

Individual Retirement Accounts

Americans over age 70½ will no longer pay federal income tax on individual retirement account (IRA) funds, if they are given directly to qualified charities, such as land trusts—up to \$100,000 per person, per year. Some people are forced to take IRA distributions, and that can adversely impact taxes on their social security benefits, so this is a great new way to solve that problem and help out Altadena Foothills Conservancy.

You can learn more about the Pension Protection Act tax advantages by contacting the Conservancy directly, or visit http://www.lta.org/publicpolicy/factsheet_tax_planning.htm and http://www.lta.org/publicpolicy/tax_incentives_qa.htm.

Free Tax Advice—July 21st Meeting

The conservancy is hosting a Brunch-and-Learn meeting with a professional CPA familiar with these tax advantages on Saturday, July 21, at 10:00 am. If you would like to ask questions, get advice and explore ideas on these topics, please attend because you might find some great new tax deductions. Contact board member Lawren Markle at Lawren@altadenafoothills.org or call 626-388-7570 for location information and directions.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO ALTADENA FOOTHILLS CONSERVANCY

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.

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.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone(s) _____

Email _____

Thank you for your support.

ALTADENA FOOTHILLS CONSERVANCY
WWW.ALTADENAFOOTHILLS.ORG
P.O. Box 3
ALTADENA, CALIFORNIA 91003-0003



Volunteer Corner

Thank you 2006 Brush Clearance Volunteers!

From Robert Staehle

All y'all helped a great deal and we are much obliged. Thank you for the cutting, sawing, snipping, snapping, hauling, stacking, bundling and all the rest. You made short work of meeting our fire abatement obligations to clear the brush near houses along Chaney Trail in the Andrea Wilson Triangle. The biggest thank you goes to Heinz Ellersieck for spending portions of many days cutting back the poison oak, so the rest of us could do our work without worries.

Volunteers in 2006 and 2007 included: Jocelyn Borys, Bonnie Callahan, Bruce Steele, Cici Koenig, Edwin Finney, Heinz Ellersieck, Joe Dean, John Slonski, John Sweeney, Lori Paul, Marie Slonski, Mike Russell, Nancy Steele, Quintin Anderson, Rachel Wing, Tim Callahan. Carlos Uribe, Joe Futerman, Kris Topaz, Michelle Markman, Ronnie Ballister, Sameer Etman, Susan Dimotakis, and Suzanne Mitus.

(If your name isn't here, please let us know—we may have missed a couple on the sign-in sheet.) Thanks to Lori Paul, Suzanne Mitus, and Nancy

Steele for the coffee, donuts, and pan dulce! Thanks to Lori for the raffle gifts to the volunteers (a new item in 2007).

Exercise, meeting new neighbors, and reducing neighborhood fire danger; that's what you get for helping the Conservancy clear brush on the land we protect. It also saves us from needing to spend money that can otherwise go toward land purchase, appraisals, surveys, and other land protection measures. This conserves cash that you donate or we raise through grants.

Thank you!

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nsteele@altadenafoothills.org

Altadena Foothills Conservator

Newsletter of the
Altadena Foothills Conservancy

