

Altadena Foothills



www.altadenafoothills.org

C O N S E R V A T O R

Newsletter of the Altadena Foothills Conservancy

Number 12 August 2008

**Important Altadena
watershed and
wildlife habitat
is up for grabs.**

By Lawren Markle

Save 23 Acres... *And Yourselves*

Take a walk up Chaney Trail. It's absolutely stunning this time of year and I'm grateful to live here. It's easy to forget much of this land is privately owned. These landowners are great stewards of the land, but sometimes when big parcels change hands, housing developments go in, eroding the crucial buffer for wildlife, compromising groundwater recharge, and erasing historic trails and beautiful views.

So, when one of these parcels goes for sale, we're pretty excited about the opportunity to preserve the land for all time. We all have the chance to guarantee the land will remain natural and wild for the public to enjoy, forever. Of all the legacies we leave behind, this is a tangible, real accomplishment that will be here and remain a constant, long after we are gone.

Continued on page 2



PHOTOGRAPH: NANCY STEELE

FROM THE PRESIDENT

IS EXPANSION IN OUR FUTURE? THE ARROYOS AND FOOTHILLS CONSERVANCY

What is the optimal size for a land conservancy? I was once challenged on this question by Dr. Ann Muscat of the Catalina Island Conservancy, who asked me why we needed yet another small conservancy in California (referring to the Altadena Foothills Conservancy). While I bristled at her implied slight, this question has tugged at me off and on for the past several years. At the time, I answered that local land trusts know the on-the-ground conditions, as larger organizations do not, that we act as advocates and we can preserve the smaller unique parcels that larger organizations will not touch.

I still believe what I said, but the question is relevant—how big should a land trust be? Some of the smallest are in the New England region; for example Rhode Island has over 40 land trusts in a state that is only 1,214 square miles in area. In comparison, I know of about ten local conservancies (land trusts) operating in Los Angeles County, at 4,061 square miles large, plus four state conservancies, along with several large U.S. and multi-county conservancies. Altadena, at 8.7 square miles, is pretty small territory for a western land trust.

Coincident with my work in Altadena, I have been working with a group of Pasadenaans fighting for open space, who call themselves Open Space Now. This proud city has done little open space planning in recent years, but was about to adopt a green-space element that focused mostly on planning for active recreation, as part of its General Plan. Open Space Now determined that Pasadena needed a true Open Space Element and has been pushing the City to establish a committee and budget for the needed study.

While I worked with Open Space Now, thoughts about the need for another land trust were swirling around my brain. Should Pasadena have a land trust? What about South Pasadena? Board member Lawren Markle serves on the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Advisory Board, representing not only Altadena but also unincorporated Crescenta Valley. What are Crescenta Valley's needs for conservation? Where are the other conservancies that can advocate for those unique places? Other than Sierra Madre Mountain Conservancy to our east (small at 3 square miles), there are no others in the western San Gabriel Valley.

Our conclusion, the conclusion of the Board of the Altadena Foothills Conservancy, is that the future of AFC includes expansion. We have a name—the Arroyos and Foothills Conservancy—and a study that provides the basis for a regionally significant and environmentally sound open space system (see the article on the Emerald Horseshoe). We have concluded that we can be more effective in achieving our broader mission if we encompass a larger geographic region than only Altadena. In the coming months, we will involve you, our dedicated friends, in the changes that are needed. We will invite you to small group meetings and larger community forums. Please call or email me if you want to talk about what I've written here or elsewhere in this newsletter. Your opinion matters; you are the Conservancy.

In trust,

Nancy

Alzada Canyon: Continued from page 1

Right now, a beautiful 23-acre parcel immediately east of Chaney Trail is on the market. This slice of the foothills—known as Alzada Canyon—is filled with oak woodlands, streams, and native chaparral. Deer, bobcats, Great Horned and Western Screech owls and Cooper's hawks are a few of the animals that call this land home. This land may be useful for completion of the Altadena Crest Trail. And it is important watershed, helping to soak up rainfall and recharge our groundwater. We get about 50% to 60% of our drinking water from aquifers lying underneath these foothills, and these deep canyons with lush vegetation help recharge the water table.

Altadena Foothills Conservancy needs your help to protect this land from development!

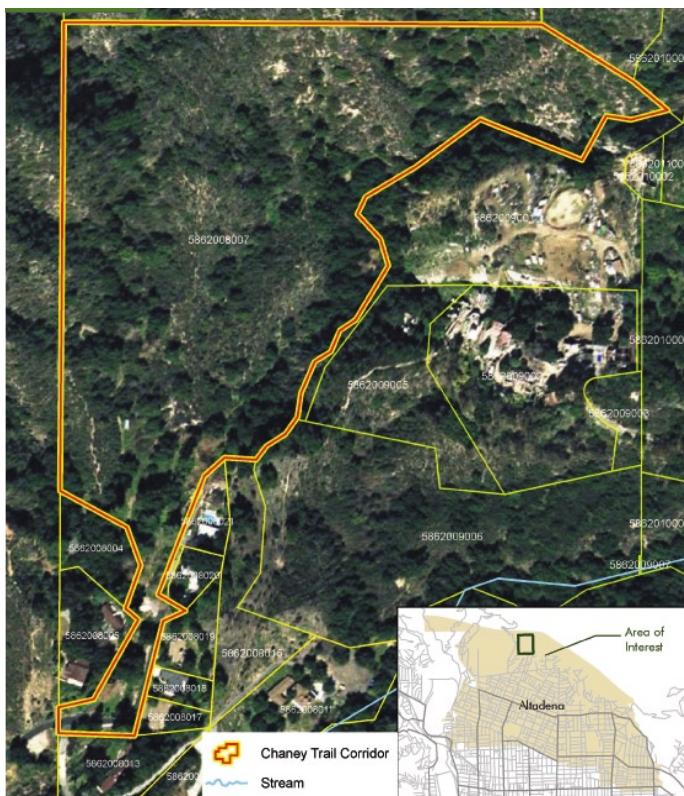
Of course, the challenge is paying for the Alzada Canyon land. We are working with the Trust for Public Land, which helped us protect the 15 acres on Chaney Trail in 2003.

We have spent hundreds of hours writing up an inventory of all the land worthy of protection in the foothills and have submitted a request to the Department of Fish and Game, which is a necessary first step to getting a grant from the Wildlife Conservation Board. We have also secured a promise of Proposition A funding through Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, and we are working to secure a similar pledge from the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy.

Your financial support will tell each of these agencies how important we consider the foothills. Your special tax-deductible contribution will be matched more than dollar for dollar in grants.

As we all work together to preserve open space in the foothills, everyone becomes a part of something much bigger. To illustrate this point, imagine what it must have been like to

Continued on page 3



On the market: Beautiful 23-acre parcel that's perfect for watershed, wildlife habitat, and possible completion of the Altadena Crest Trail.

see the land auction for Cobb Estate at the top of Lake Avenue in 1971. The night before, Virginia Steele Scott, a prominent philanthropist, donated \$150,000 to help the community bid for the land. She "could not bear to see those beautiful San Gabriel Mountains piled high with houses." At the auction, the developer pushed the price higher, and the 800 people at the auction pulled together, throwing money into a hat to raise the bid and stay in the auction. So moved was the developer that he eventually raised his voice, full of emotion and said, "I am with the people, and I will bid no more!"*

My point is it takes everybody—people of means, neighbors, hikers, mountain bikers, birdwatchers, equestrians, nature lovers of all sorts—to join forces if we are to succeed. If you can help us now to purchase Alzada Canyon, please be generous. If you would like to talk about the land, give us a call or an e-mail. Thank you to all the Friends of AFC.

* Source: *Altadena: Between Wilderness and City*, by Michele Zack

AFC Awarded \$24,900 for Emerald Horseshoe Study

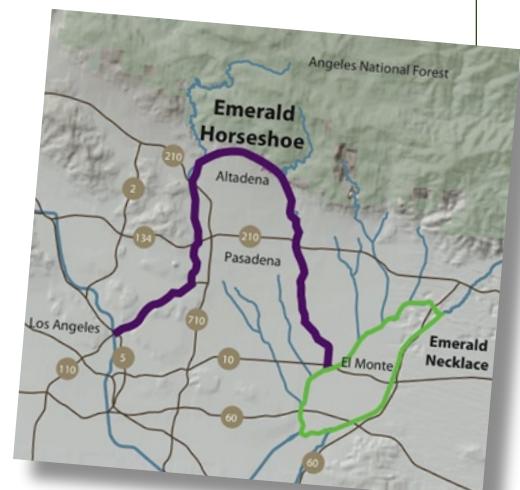
FOR THE PAST YEAR, we have been kicking around a concept called the Emerald Horseshoe. Christle Balvin and John Howell first suggested this name to AFC back in November 2006 when Nancy Steele met them at a Pasadena Rotary while giving a presentation on Eaton's Water, AFC's educational film. This concept encompasses a regional trail and open space system connecting the foothills to the Arroyo Seco on the west and Eaton Wash on the east. The Emerald Horseshoe connects us to the Emerald Necklace Park Network, a project of Amigos de los Rios.

The Emerald Necklace is a park and open space network that connects the Santa Fe Dam Recreation Area down through Rio Hondo and Whittier Narrows to the San Gabriel River. The Emerald Horseshoe connects with the Emerald Necklace through Eaton Wash—we joke that we are adding a horseshoe-shaped charm to the Necklace. But seriously, we are providing landscape-level connections for people as we re-imagine and re-connect land and water to communities.

But back to our story: While thinking of how we could put together a study that would identify the park, open space, and trail opportunities, a student in the Cal Poly Pomona Landscape Architecture Master Program name Holly Thompson contacted us. Suddenly, our imagined study with the over \$150K budget was re-imagined by Holly as a Cal Poly Studio 606 student-led project, with a much more affordable \$30K budget. To make a long story short, Holly and her team, comprising Jennifer Mitamura, Dawn Waldron, and Robin Mark, have focused their considerable talents and analytical skills on developing a plan for the Emerald Horseshoe. The study was presented in June. Once again, AFC has managed to achieve great things at a discount price by leveraging the considerable resources available to us in Los Angeles.

Meantime, we applied to our two state conservancies for funding of the Emerald Horseshoe study. Since Altadena and Pasadena are split by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy to the west and the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy to the east, we asked both for funding.

Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy awarded us \$15,000, and The Rivers and Mountains Conservancy awarded us \$9,900. This fall we will hold community meetings to present the results of the study and get your input on



Emerald Horseshoe and Necklace

implementation. One outcome of this study will be a new way of looking at conservation and connecting trail systems in the western San Gabriel Valley.

Pocket Park Project Update



Above: A triangle of dirt... becomes the new Old Marengo Park.

Community

Plants New

Seeds at

Old Marengo Park

DECEMBER OF 1965, THE CITY OF PASADENA decided to straighten the curves of old Marengo Road. This may have made traffic flow more easily, but, as is often the case with efforts to modernize and square up the old world, there were some areas that just got left out. That was the case with the dirt lot at the corner of Woodbury and the new straightened Marengo Ave. For 42 years this small piece of property was left barren and ugly—an eyesore that added little to the neighborhood or community.

That was the situation until the Altadena Foothills Conservancy and the Altadena Watershed Committee joined together to turn this barren corner into a beautiful new pocket park. First step was the design; we envisioned the 8,000 square-foot parcel as a watershed education center featuring native and drought tolerant plantings that would retain and infiltrate all rainfall onsite to recharge our groundwater. Mark Goldschmidt Design donated conceptual drawings and Michele Zack wrote a proposal, which we used to obtain a Metropolitan Water District City Makeover grant. AFC Board Member Rick Carron worked with engineers at Los Angeles County Public Works on the permit. Money was raised, in-kind contributions were pledged, and corporate sponsorships



and support were secured. Watershed Committee members pledged to help with maintenance when the park was completed.

Trench by trench the park began to take shape. Jay Brown of Mountain View Cemetery provided help in the form of Brian and Willie Roberts, who were instrumental in clearing the land, grading, trenching and moving boulders. J. Harold Mitchell Co. of Altadena and Rain Bird Corporation supplied the high-tech irrigation system. AFC Board Member Michelle Markman signed on to help Rick Carron manage the park project. Dr. Joe Futerma completed the irrigation details and oversaw the rock-cladding of the planting pods. Watershed Committee chair Michele Zack kept the neighborhood updated on our progress...

Thirty months later. It's planting day at the park. And what a day it was. Just look at the photos. Neighbors and Friends of the AFC— young and not-so-young alike— turned up to move dirt, dig holes and plant at this most amazing and heart-warming community event.

And voilá! A park is born! Stay tuned for the ribbon-cutting ceremony!

Below: Volunteers turn up for planting day at the Park.



PARK FUNDING

Supervisor Michael D. Antonovitch,
5th District

Los Angeles County Regional Park
and Open Space District

Metropolitan Water District
of Southern California

Neighborhood Unitarian
Universalist Church

Foothill Metropolitan
Water District

BUSINESS and UTILITY PARTNERS

Mountain View Cemetery

Rain Bird Corporation

J. Harold Mitchell Co.

County of Los Angeles
Department of Public Works

City of Pasadena

Department of Water and Power

Lincoln Avenue Water Company

Mark Goldschmidt Design

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Altadena Foothills Conservancy

Altadena Watershed Committee

Altadena Heritage

Los Angeles and San Gabriel
Rivers Watershed Council

The Neighbors at
Marengo Ave. and Woodbury

Friends of AFC

CONTRACTORS

PB Construction

Galvan and Sons

El Nativo Growers

AO Richardson

Toby MacElroy

Notes from the Foothills

Update on Hillside Ordinance

When we last reported on the Altadena Hillside Ordinance May 2007, the Altadena Town Council had voted to support the proposed ordinance drafted by the ad hoc Hillside Ordinance committee of Altadena citizens. The ad hoc committee recently met with a supervising regional planner, Mitch Glaser, and the County is now ready to consider our proposal.

Mr. Glaser explained that they will review the draft language, map the proposed significant ridgelines, and then hold a community meeting in Altadena. Next the proposal will go to the County Regional Planning Commission and then to the Board of Supervisors. If you want to keep track of the process and read the documents, go to <http://www.altadenahills.org>. Nancy Steele represents the Altadena Foothills Conservancy on the committee.

AFC Board of Directors

Nancy L. Steele, D.Env., President

Lori L. Paul, RVT, Vice-President

Robert Staehle, Treasurer

Michelle Markman, Secretary

Rick Carron

Heinz Ellersiek, Ph.D.

Lawren Markle

Nami Olgin,
Administrative Assistant

Join Our Email List

To receive updates from the AFC, send an email to:
nsteele@altadenafoothills.org

Altadena Foothills Conservator

Newsletter of the
Altadena Foothills Conservancy
www.altadenafoothills.org

Friends of AFC

Thanks to our many donors.

You responded when we asked for contributions to help us with education and land preservation.

Your contributions keep us going and will help us acquire land to preserve as open space.

We look forward to your continuing generosity.

Donors

CALENDAR YEAR 2007

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Matthew and Mahvash Bryant
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Audrey Vaughan
Cameron West
Harriet Whelan
Robin Williams
Rachel Wing
Phillip Wolf
Sharon and David Yanashiro
Linda Zinn

JANUARY 1 to JUNE 30, 2008

Rick Carron and George Widman
Robert Chave
Michael Choban
Heinz Ellersiek
Bruce and Carolyn Hancock
Philip Lefcourt
Suzanne Mitus and Carlos Uribe
Kirk and Nomi Olgin
Jim and Scarlett Osterling
Ed Rounds and Callae Walcott-Rounds
Rob Staehle and Lori Paul
Nancy and Bruce Steele

Natives

IN YOUR GARDEN

Barbara Eisenstein, (right), Horticulture Outreach Coordinator at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, gave a lively presentation on gardening with California native species for Friends of the Altadena Foothills Conservancy. Here she demystifies the difficulties and shares secrets of keeping California natives happy in your garden.



CREATING A WILDFLOWER DISPLAY in your home garden begins in the spring, with viewing wildflowers in nature, preferably as close to home as possible. Follow this up with visits to botanic gardens and parks. Start to learn the names of the wildflowers you love. Take pictures so that when you are ready to sow the seeds—in late fall through winter, right before it rains is best—you will have a clear image of nature at its finest. For more information on starting an annual wildflower garden, consult *California Native Plants for the Garden* by Carol Bornstein, David Fross and Bart O'Brien.

If you already have a wildflower display in your garden, there are ways to extend the exuberant colors well into the summer. Remove spent flowers (deadhead) and

irrigate occasionally in the spring to keep your annuals going.

Remember to allow some flowers to go to seed to feed the birds and provide you with next year's crop of wildflowers. Seeds collected in the spring and summer can be sown during the rainy season, or left in the garden to seed themselves. Seeds will rot in gardens that receive summer irrigation, so be sure to save a bunch if you plan to continue watering.

Cut back poppies (nearly to the ground) and clarkias (below the lowest flower) to extend the bloom period. Poppies, clarkias, and phacelias will often continue performing if they get enough water to germinate and grow. Select some late bloomers. Tarweed (*Madia elegans* ssp. *elegans*), grand linanthus (*Linanthus grandiflorus*), sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*), farewell to

spring (*Clarkia amoena*)—pictured just below, and elegant clarkia (*Clarkia unguiculata*) start late, but continue into summer.

Home gardens, being small and contained, will never replace the splendor of the massive floral displays of California's hillsides and valleys, but seeing the wildflowers every day when leaving for work and returning has its own special rewards.

Call or email *Gilia tricolor* (bird's eye gilia) Barbara Eisenstein with questions about your native plant garden at Native Plant Garden Hotline: (909) 624-0838, or email: rsabg.hortinfo@cgu.edu.



PHOTOGRAPH: BARBARA EISENSTEIN



Gilia tricolor
(bird's eye gilia)

Land Owners— Tax Incentives for Land Conservation!

Significant tax advantages became available to landowners when the Farm Bill passed into law in May of 2008. Land owners who dedicate part or all of their property as a "conservation easement" can deduct as much as 50% of their federal adjusted gross income over a period of 15 years. A conservation easement means that you still own the land, but it can't be developed. The great thing is that the land will remain beautiful open space for future genera-

tions to enjoy. Landowners now have until 12/31/2009 to take advantage of the tax break for conservation easements. Last year we conducted a lunch-and-learn about conservation easements with CPA Nick Batch of Liberty Tax (626-852-0321). AFC is happy to provide you with more information, although we cannot serve as an advisor in matters regarding taxes nor do we endorse any specific CPA. If you are interested in donating an easement on your land, we encourage you to consult a tax advisor of your choice to learn more about what this tax incentive could mean to you.

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.



Volunteer Corner

One Hot Morning of Good Dirty Fun

May ran hot and cold. The morning of our appointed brush clearance day, May 3rd, was in between. A dozen eager volunteers, including a walk-in from the street, made great progress as they worked together for a great cause.

Here we'd like to extend our thanks to everyone who turned up with gloves and gear to clear the brush along Chaney Trail in the Andrea Wilson Triangle. Bonnie Callahan, Lawren Markle, Leslie Lowes, Lori Paul, Michelle Markman, Nancy Steele, Randy Hall, Richard Olson, Rob Staehle, Sara Coodin, Tim Callahan. Thanks also to Bruce Steele and John Sweeney for weed abatement in the neighborhood. To the Neighborhood Church

for ample refreshments and referring volunteers. To Suzanne Mitus for contributing to hauling the brush away. And finally thanks to octogenarian Heinz Ellersiek for his tireless poison oak control since January!

(If your name isn't here, please let us know—we may have missed a couple on the sign-in sheet.) 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.

Thank you again.



Left: Bonnie Callahan with a load of brush. Below: Rich Olson (left) and Lawren Markle on break. Bottom: Volunteers rest in the shade.



PHOTOGRAPHY: LORI PAUL