



LAND NEWS

Fall 2005

Vol. 4, No. 1

Sneath Lane Gateway to Sweeney Ridge

Protected as Open Space

The Pacifica Land Trust congratulates the City of Pacifica, Pacific Gas & Electric, and the National Park Service for negotiating a “win-win” contract, which will result in the protection and preservation of the Sneath Lane Gateway Sweeney Ridge Property formerly owned by the City of Pacifica. The property is being purchased by PG&E as partial mitigation for environmental impacts from the Jefferson-Martin Transmission Project along the western margin of Skyline Drive in San Bruno.

The PLT has been involved with the Sneath Lane project since March of 2001 when a San Bruno citizen’s grass roots organization, the Friends of Sweeney Ridge (FOSR), asked for our help in keeping the land in its natural state. PLT was instrumental in obtaining broad public support from many organizations including the Bay Area Ridge Trail, Committee for Green Foothills, California Coastal Conservancy, GGNRA, and San Francisco Water Department.

The Friends of Sweeney Ridge, the City of San Bruno, and many others have long awaited the preservation of this key property, which is located within the hydrological boundaries of the San Andreas Lake watershed. Preservation of this land will provide substantial protection to the hydrological integrity of the watershed that serves up the drinking water to San Francisco and much of the north Peninsula. Any plan to develop this property would have been met with intense opposition by the San Francisco Water Department and the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, who have long opposed any development on this steeply sloped property, which drains into San Andreas Lake.

This agreement is truly a Win for all the citizens of Pacifica, and a Win for all those who value the quality of our drinking water and the protection of our precious open space!

Access through the parcel is vital to a proposed north eastern link between the Bay Area Ridge Trail at Sweeney Ridge and the San Andreas Trail. Furthermore, this land provides valuable habitat to several endangered species including the San Francisco Garter Snake, Red-Legged Frog, and the Mission Blue butterfly.

From our President

Bernard Halloran, outgoing President

What is a land trust? Land trusts, of which there are more than 1,500 across the U.S., are locally organized groups of community members whose goals are the preservation, protection and enhancement of open space. According to the Land Trust Alliance, land trusts are protecting more than 800,000 acres per year. The Pacifica Land Trust, a community nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation, is made up of a board of directors that meet once a month. One of our goals is to locally preserve the natural, scenic, recreational, cultural and historical beauty and resources of the region in and around Pacifica. The Trust works to acquire open space through donation or purchase of land, to preserve lands through conservation easements and habitat restoration, and to promote programs that increase awareness of the values of conservation and open space. Funding for the Trust comes from local donations and grants from federal, state and private institutions. We have been blessed with generous contributions from members of our community including especially generous donations from Pacificans for Mori Point and Petra Schullman. Local contributions are particularly important to sustain the Trust and to provide matching funds for land acquisition.

The year 2005 has been busy. Our 3+ year effort to permanently protect important watershed property in San Bruno succeeded, with the cooperation of the City of Pacifica, PG&E and the National Park Service (see front page "Sneath Lane Gateway" article). We also carry on our habitat restoration program for Pedro Point and await its transfer to the GGNRA. In partnership with the City of Pacifica, we have begun working to insure public beach access at the RV park on Palmetto Ave. Importantly, we have also begun communications with the National Park Service to help in the maintenance and preservation of Mori Point. Suggestions from community members for preservation of other lands are always welcome.

The Land Trust has been unusually fortunate to have the help of many community leaders as members of our Board of Directors. We regret the departure this year of Board members Timothy Cowan, Margaret Goodale, William Schwegler and Robert VanSyoc and wish them well in their future endeavors. These members have generously given of their time and energy to help insure the success of our Trust. We also thank Michelle Rashleger for her administrative support and encouragement.

PLT Preserves Beach Access at RV Park

Dinah Verby, President-Elect

Most people know of our successes in preserving significant open spaces such as Mori Point, Pedro Point Headlands and lands along Pacifica State Beach with land purchases. There are other less obvious ways the Pacifica Land Trust acts to fulfill our mission of preserving, protecting and enhancing the natural, scenic, recreational, cultural, historic and open space environment of the community.

One example is through public easements. In December 2004, the PLT stepped in at the request of the California Coastal Conservancy and accepted an Offer to Dedicate a Public Easement ("OTD") that was about to expire for the beach access trail at the RV Park at 700 Palmetto Avenue. The blufftop trail has been neglected over the years and the stairs to the beach were washed away, despite a permit condition requiring the public access to be maintained.

By accepting the OTD, the Pacifica Land Trust enabled the City of Pacifica to continue its negotiations with the property owner and the state Coastal Conservancy, which resulted in a \$350,000 grant from the Conservancy for the City to improve the trail and rebuild the stairs. Had the PLT not stepped in, this vital beach access might have been lost forever. Now, the public access will be preserved in perpetuity.

PLT will continue to monitor the site until the negotiations are completed, at which point the public easement will be transferred to the city and trail reconstruction will begin.

Land Trust Funding

We reside within a stone's throw of some of the most beautiful property in the world. Although much of the Bay Area's landscape has been developed, there still remain significant areas of pristine open space that provide a visual escape from urban sprawl.

Land trusts, such as the Pacifica Land Trust ("PLT"), work tirelessly to preserve and protect scenic coastal lands such as San Pedro Mountain, Mori Point and Sweeney Ridge, to name a few. Our continued success depends upon your generosity and your desire to preserve our quality of life.

Public contributions may take many forms, the most obvious being lump sums or scheduled cash gifts. Inter vivos gifts of land

Our Beautiful Commemorative Poster is available for you to purchase today!



One day last March, PLT board member and Pacifica photographer, Stephen Johnson, saw this Great Blue Heron feeding in the mouth of San Pedro Creek, near the beach. In honor of this heron and the countless other waterfowl who now have their "watering-rights" restored, we've produced this handsome commemorative poster. It is available from us, or you can purchase it from Stephen at his studio. The 18x24 inch full color poster is \$20 (plus tax and shipping of \$7.65), proceeds to benefit the Land Trust and our continuing projects.

Purchase from: **Pacifica Land Trust**, P.O. Box 988, Pacifica, CA 94044, www.pacifica-landtrust.org or **Stephen Johnson Photography**, 1220-C Linda Mar Blvd., Suites 5-7, Pacifica, CA 94044, www.sjphoto.com, 650 355-7507.

or other assets may qualify for federal and/or state deductions, thereby saving donors from capital gain or other taxes to which they would otherwise be subjected. Further, by using various types of trusts, including charitable trusts that qualify for beneficial tax treatment, an estate plan can be tailored to provide one with tax incentives to reward commitment and generosity. We recommend that you consult with your financial advisors about making charitable gifts and welcome outright bequests and other estate plans that provide a source of funds to continue the mission of the PLT. Additionally, we invite you to contact us if you have questions. PLT is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit corporation and all donations are tax deductible.

Pedro Point Headlands Trail Walk

John Murphy

Now that the multi-purpose trail from a point behind the Ace hardware store up into the Headlands is open and unimpeded, you can get into the headlands without scrambling over trees or risking poison oak. The entire area, from the highway to the cliffs is accessible by side trails. The peace and quiet to be found just a few minutes from the hurry of the city life is profound.

Leave your car on the street near the hardware store or Ristorante Mare and walk into the shade of the hillside and up the hill behind the Hardware store. The multipurpose trail is still in construction, but it is open, smoothed and signed to exclude motorcycles. It is not quite ready for strollers, but it should be soon. The plan is for the trail to accommodate a water pipeline from Pacifica to the Devil's Slide tunnel site, for fire fighting. The eucalyptus forest on both sides of the trail is deep in shadow and debris. The trail is somewhat steep but soon levels off.

A walk of about 1 1/4 mile up a gentle slope brings you to a side trail that can be taken up a valley to the top of the ridge overlooking the cliffs of the slide area. From there you can see all of the point and the Gulf of the Farallones.

At various points on the hike you emerge from the Eucalyptus and Monterey Pine forest into a Coastal Scrub habitat. The Pines and the Eucalyptus are, of course, not native to the area and encroach on the natural Coastal Scrub. There is an on-going debate about the wisdom of removing these trees, to restore the native flora. During the mid-nineties, when the Pacifica Land Trust managed the first phase of the restoration work, the plans were to slow the growth of this forest by removing outlying trees and new margin growth. Now some have called for a more aggressive Eucalyptus and Pine removal. I would urge all to make their views known on this issue. Some value the forest for its shade and habitat, while some feel that the native plants need a chance to re-grow.

Continuing up the hill you soon get to the old parking lot site, and to the entrance from Highway 1. This is the place where the motorcycle clubhouse was built and the site of the deeply eroded trails up the hillsides. The years have allowed the re-growth of much of the plant cover, and the scars, though still present, are very much reduced. Some of the deep ruts will remain for many, many years, however.

At this point, a walk up the old road to the top brings you to a really peaceful ridge that extends about 1/2 mile out into the ocean and leaves behind all of the sounds of the highway and

of the town. The fog swirls in and time seems to stand still. The sounds of the seals and birds are all that are heard. Views up the coast and down to the Slide from the top are superb. This is our own little slice of heaven. Enjoy it.

PLT welcomes New Board Member

Dr. Curtis Kiest

Chief, Department of Orthopedics and Podiatry, Kaiser Permanente, San Francisco

I have been interested in preserving our natural heritage since I grew up in the NorthWest, camping, hiking, and backpacking. I did my first political activity as a 14 year old volunteer for Oregon's "Beaches Are Forever" Initiative Campaign, which permanently secured all of Oregon's beaches for public use.

We moved to Pacifica in 1989 because of its natural beauty and the preserved Open Spaces. My years as a volunteer for the Laguna Salada Alternative School, leading many nature hikes for the school kids on Pacifica's own Sweeney Ridge, Milagra Ridge, Mori Point and Pedro Point, showed me how important it is to preserve and share the wonders of Nature right where we live. One of my biggest thrills was when I was able to help our community save Mori Point, and see it transferred to the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, and see how the public has used it and aided in its restoration and preservation. I also have become a Docent/Trail Leader for the Fifield-Cahill Ridge Trail, which has opened up to the public the fantastic 10 mile trail through the SF Watershed lands leading from Pacifica's Bay Area Discovery Site on Sweeney Ridge all the way to Crystal Springs Reservoir at Hwy 92 which had been locked up for 100 years. For me, this is truly "Think Globally, Act Locally": if we can preserve the Natural Beauty right where we live, and get the public to experience it, the citizens will support with votes, tax and private dollars, and personal action (reduce/reuse/recycle) the global preservation of Nature. I'm quoting fellow PLT Board Member Bob Van Syoc: "We all deserve a few wild places near where we live to experience the real world, filled with native animals and plants. Pacifica Land Trust is "walking the talk", conserving open space as a refuge for people to see, hear and feel the natural world."

I look forward to the challenges of both securing nature for public use and the stewardship of those entrusted lands. I hope to help develop more trails and access points so that the entire community can share in the wonder, and that stewardship. After all, my online name is CurtHiker!

