

SWAP Receives \$10,000 Grant for Monuments and Vegetation Restoration

On December 11, the SWAP Board of Directors received the following letter from Bud Laurent, now the past Supervisor of District Two:

"Dear Board Members:

Thank you for your continuing good work in your stewardship role of the Elfin Forest. As I'm sure you are, I am also excited about the completion of the boardwalk project in the first half of 1999. Now that the boardwalk is in view, the time has come to move forward with a related project: the creation of three monuments associated with the boardwalk.

The three monuments will be unobtrusive stone pillars (no higher than 3-1/2 feet) bearing bronze plaques, each not to exceed 4 square feet in area. Two of the monuments will be located at the beginning of the boardwalk, one to either side, and the third will be stationed at the first over-

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look. Of the two at the beginning, one plaque will memorialize the lives of Ann and Jeff Fairbanks, and the contributions they made in preserving the Elfin Forest. The companion plaque is intended to memorialize the work of SWAP and all of the other organizations involved in the public purchase of the Forest (such as SLO County General Services, the Council of Governments, CalTrans, etc.) Besides the Fairbanks, no names of individuals will be listed on the plaques.

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Veldt Grass Removal Project to Begin

By Mark Skinner, the Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County

Along the South Bay Blvd. portion of the Elfin Forest there is a severe invasion of Veldt grass (*Ehrharta calycina*) a fast growing pest plant from South Africa. This weed is presenting a threat to the forest particularly the dune shrub portion. If left unchecked this grass will take over the native shrubs in the Forest and destroy its ecosystem. The South Bay Boulevard site is only one of several infection sites surrounding the forest.

The Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County is receiving a \$28,000 Morro Bay National Estuary Program "Action Plan Demonstration Program" grant to conduct a Veldt grass suppression project along South Bay Blvd. In conjunction with SWAP and San Luis Obispo County. The Land Conservancy has retained the services of Las Pilitas California Native Plants as the project designer and D'Alphonso's Landscapes to implement the weed suppression strategy. SWAP volunteers will help with watering and other tasks. Along with the Veldt grass, another pest plant, the Iceplant (Carpobrotus edulis), will be stopped. In many instances Veldt grass and Iceplant invade together.

It has been estimated that the Veldt grass was first imported to the Santa Maria area decades ago for use either for grazing or erosion control, neither of which were successful. Presently the grass has spread in vast tracts of coastal dune shrub habitats along the Central Coast and is ruining many of the native plant and animal habitats. The grass actually takes water and nutrients that would otherwise feed the native plants.

There are no known pests or diseases to control the grass and fire enhances its spread. The weed control methods the Land Conservancy will utilize involves mowing, her-

Veldt Grass Removal continued on page 3

Outgoing SWAP Board Members Honored at Dinner

A festive dinner in the home of Flo and Karl Appel was a special setting for the SWAP Board of Directors in December. The purpose, after reports and business were attended to, was to thank six outgoing board members for giving their time and energy in support of SWAP and the Elfin Forest. In addition to words of appreciation, each board member was given a framed work of art by a local artist, part of SWAP's "Artists In the Elfin Forest" traveling art show from the 1980s.

Those leaving the Board are:

BETHANY GRIFFITHS, MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR.

Bethany joined the Board in January, 1998, and with the help of her husband Don, a computer whiz, improved our membership file and renewal system. She brought many new and renewing members into SWAP, and willingly took over the tasks of picking up SWAP's mail at the Post Office, and distributing it; and seeing

to it that phone messages left in our voicemail were answered. We will miss Bethany's cheerful energy.

PAT GRIMES, NEWSLETTER EDITOR.

Pat is one of the founding members of the Los Osos/Morro Bay SWAP chapter in 1985. In fact, she was part of a small group of neighbors who began meeting in 1981 to see what they could do to preserve the Elfin Forest. Pat worked on grants for awhile, and then became SWAP's Secretary in 1985. In the 1990s, she took over as editor of the OakLeaves, helping it to grow from a 4-page quarterly to six 8-page issues a year. Working with Katy Budge who does the layout, Pat has consistently produced

a well-wriften, informative and attractive newsletter. After 17 years of dedication to the cause of the Elfin Forest, Pat felt the need to devote her time to other projects. Thank you, Pat, for all of those years given with enthusiasm and love.

GORDON HENSLEY, BOARD CHAIRMAN.

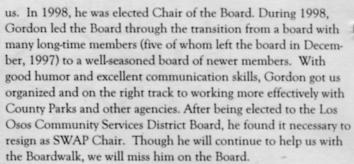
Gordon joined the Board in 1996, and became our grant researcher and writer. He also was a liaison with County Parks for the Boardwalk, and kept contact with the Coastal Commission for

SWAP BOARD MEETINGS

The SWAP Board Meetings have been changed to the second *Monday* of each month at 6 p.m.

The February and March meetings will be held at the Morro Bay NEP Office, at 3rd and El Moro Streets in Baywood Park on

Monday, February 8 and Monday, March 8. Call 528-4540 to see what's on the agenda. See you there! march 8



ROBIN KNAPP, EDUCATION COMMITTEE.

Robin joined the Board in 1997, and has shared her legal knowledge (she is a retired attorney) with us, as well as her enthusiasm for natural history interpretation and education. Concurrently, she has been a member of the Natural History Association

> Board. She has acted as the SWAP host on some of our 3rd Saturday walks, and will continue with the Education Committee although she is leaving the Board.

TERESA LARSON, EDUCATION COMMITTEE.

Teresa joined the Board in January, 1998, and has acted as a liaison with County Parks staff. She has helped to organize and staff our educational booths at the Rancho El Chorro Environmental Fair and the Botanic Garden Festival. Teresa has decided to pursue a master's degree at Cal Poly, but will continue as an active member of the Education Committee.

JANICE VERITY, VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR.

Janice joined the Board in 1995, and in 1996, organized SWAP's first Volunteer Appreciation Party. In 1998, she held the Volunteer Party in the Elfin Forest, in Woodrat Hall. Knowing that she couldn't top that, she decided to retire from the Board (just kidding, Janice!). Janice made every volunteer feel special, with beautiful thank you notes for their help. She also has kept track of statistics for volunteer hours, and sent them in each quarter to County Parks. As is the case with all of SWAP's Board members, she did work that wasn't in her job description, organizing an ad hoc committee of educators in 1997, which later became the Education Committee; she also organized a training session for the new 1998 Board Members. We have all benefited in many ways from Janice's skills in doing things well and beautifully.

The members of SWAP have benefited from the energy, time and skills given in great measure by these board members. They have "done the doing," and must now be replaced by other SWAP members. Some of you will be receiving a phone call asking that you be involved on a committee or on the Board for a while. If you don't receive a call and would like to be involved, please phone 528-4540 and express your interest.

To Bethany, Pat, Gordon, Robin, Teresa and Janice, THANK YOU! We will miss you, but wish you enjoyment in your future activities.



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Monuments continued from page 1

The Overlook plaque will be dedicated to the Fairbanks' daughter, Sienna, and will be entitled "Sienna's View." The wording of the plaques will be left to those most closely affiliated to their purpose. I've invited the Fairbanks's colleagues at the Telegram-Tribune to work with the Fairbanks family members to contribute the wording of that plaque. For Sienna's plaque, it is most appropriate for her close friends, again working with the Fairbanks family, to create the memorial to their lost friend, and I will begin that process. For the SWAP, etc., plaque, I invite your organization to take the lead to insure that it is worded appropriately.

Before I leave office, I will have contacted a local stone mason who can construct the monuments, and I will also begin the process for having the bronze plaques cast (after wording is finalized). All labor and contact information will be left with Pete Jenny, County Parks Manager, and Jan DiLeo, County Parks Planner, who will oversee the monument projects.

Again, my thanks to all SWAP directors for your continuing commitment to making the Elfin Forest accessible to all people, at the same time protecting this jewel from the wear and tear of human visitation. The boardwalk and its accompanying monuments will be something we can all look back on as notable accomplishments and, with you, I look forward to their dedication.

Sincerely,

Laurence L. Laurent

(Former) Supervisor, District Two

Veldt. Grass Removal continued from page 1

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bicide application, mulching with wood chips and planting mainly Coyote brush (a native plant that grows well in disturbed areas and can compete with the Veldt grass). Great care will be exercised to protect the Oak, Black sage, Deerweed, Ceanothus and Manzanita plants presently growing in the project site. In addition, the project will not proceed until the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is satisfied that the Shoulderband Snail is not present at the site project and therefore will not be harmed. It is hoped that this strategy will succeed in stopping the pest plants and that there will be opportunities in the future to expand the dune shrub community to South Bay Boulevard.

Report on the Boardwalk

By Bob McDougle, Treasurer and Acting Chair of the SWAP Board.

A meeting was called by Jan (Jeanette)
DiLeo for 10:00 A.M. on December 12, 1998
at SLO County offices at 1087 Santa Rosa
(corner of Santa Rosa and Higuera). Jan's office is now in this building. The purpose was to discuss progress and plans for the Boardwalk in the Elfin Forest.

Attending were: Jan DiLeo-County Park Planner, Bruce Boniface-CCC Work Supervisor, Paul Wolff-Architect, Mark Dariz-Architect (in training), Les Bowker, Gordon Hensley, Bob McDougle, and Yolanda Waddell.

We discussed the drawings, construction details, surface inspection and clearing, work plans and group responsibilities. I feel that it was a very constructive meeting. Jan will call a follow-up meeting in a week or so. Several meetings will also be set up to discuss details not yet covered, such as bench and sign design, commemorative monuments and biological issues.

Bob McDougle will attend meetings concerning general work plans, construction details and finances. Les Bowker will attend those involving archaeology, historical and biology issues. Yolanda Waddell will attend those involving interpretive signs, benches, monuments, etc. Gordon Hensley will also attend those that touch upon monuments, etc. of interest to Bud Laurent.

The general plan is for archaeological and biological inspections to be made along the proposed trails, stakes to be set indicating the approved route and width of the walkway, followed by brush clearing and walk construction. CCC will be responsible for trail clearing, walk construction and clean-up. It has not yet been determined how much volunteer effort will be needed or encouraged. The county will select the archaeology and biology experts: CCC will limit their use of construction equipment to hand tools, wheelbarrows, etc.; no mechanized equipment except, possibly, a small cement mixer. Tools and material will be brought to

Boardwalk continued on page 4

Where To Call, Where To Write

If you have questions about SWAP activities or want to volunteer, please call our phone message service at 546-1199.

A recorded message will have information about the Third Saturday Walks and other current events.

If you have questions, concerns or comments about anything that's happening in the Elfin Forest, call or write:

Pete Jenny, SLO County Parks Facilities Manager,
County Government Center, SLO, CA 93408, (805) 781-5930.

Thanks to PG&E...AGAIN!

We were very pleased to receive a check for \$2,000 from PG&E in late October. It was enclosed with a letter from Missie Hobson, Public Affairs Manager for Area 4 which said, "We are pleased to inform you that the PG&E Contributions Committee has allocated \$2,000 to fund your Oakleaves newsletter for recruitment of volunteers for the restoration of the Elfin Forest Natural Area.

This year the number and quality of requests was very high which made the selection process a difficult task. Our sincere appreciation for the valuable contribution your organization makes to the communities we serve."



Oak Leaves is published six times per year beginning in February. Acting Editor is Yolanda Waddell: layout is by Katy Budge. Printed at Hay Printing. Morro Bay on recycled paper. Labeled and mailed at Achievement House.

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU

to New and Renewing Members: Eileen Bowen, Elizabeth Caldwell, Petty Childers, John Dunn, Ernest & Barbara Eddy, Frank & Gail Freiler, Elizabeth Frye, Betty Haines, James & Karen Havlena, Mike & Joyce Heller, Aya Kimura, Penny McCaulay, Frank & Lois Martinez, Morro Coast Audobon Society, Annette Owens, Anne & Bob Phillips, Conrad & Jean Pickett, John & Betty Pierce, Joan Powell, Joan Radabaugh, Barbara Rosenthal, Bob & Barbara Schwenoa, Shirley Sparling, John & Leslie Steinbeck, Roger & Janice Verity, Dirk & Bonnie Walters, Peter & Norma Wightman, Richard & Cecilia Riggins, Daniel & Frances Villa, Ruth Zank

Boardwalk continued from page 1

the site as needed; no construction yard to be set up. They

appear to be well aware of the need to cause minimum disruption to the neighbors.

Construction details were a major issue. It seems clear that use of recycled plastic "lumber" is not acceptable for most of the project. Costs would nearly double and there are serious problems with malformation over time and with slippery walking surfaces. We, reluctantly, accepted redwood as the best material. It will require immediate and periodic treatment to ensure long life and continued good appearance but will meet all requirements. I will pursue the possible use of cedar and other materials where applicable.

SWAP accepted the duty of coordination with the neighbors in order to keep them informed and answer any

concerns that will come up. We also will be deeply involved in the selection of interpretive signs, benches and monuments. In general, the County will be responsible for the cost of construction while SWAP will pay for the services of archaeological and biological consultants and some other supportive functions not yet identified. Responsibility for the cost of interpretive signs and commemorative monuments will, most likely, be

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borne by SWAP. Some financial details are yet to be identified and settled but I am satisfied that our budget is probably adequate to cover all the costs for which SWAP will be responsible.

Another major issue was the parking area at the end of 16th Street. The first plan was for it to be an asphalt surface. This was quickly changed to a decomposed granite surface for better appearance, better drainage and much improved acceptance by neighbors.

Schedule:

The County must have the job completed by the end of May so that invoices can be presented to the accounting department in June. CCC is estimating 31/2 months for construction. This sets mid-Feb as the latest construction start date. Allowing a month for final route approval and staking means that mid-Jan is a preferable time to start. The Coastal Commission hearing is scheduled for the week of 11 Jan. The meetings to come must be very productive to make it all come together.

THIRD SATURDAY WALKS

February 20-9:30 a.m.

Take a literary stroll through the Elfin Forest with historian Robert Pavlik. As you follow paths established by wildlife, Chumash and settlers of European extraction from the distant past to the present, Bob will introduce you to a variety of literary viewpoints and perceptions of the Central Coast's natural history. He will select passages from journals of early travelers, and authors such as William Henry Brewer and Robinson Jeffers.

March 20-9:30 a.m.

Learn about native plants, how they grow and thrive with little rain, and which plants that you see in the Elfin Forest would be suitable for your garden. Horticulturist and landscaper John Nowak has coordinated the weed control and revegetation projects at Sweet Springs Preserve for several years. As he guides walk participants through the Elfin Forest, he will share what he has learned about the benefits of native plants and the challenges in growing them.

April 17-9:30 a.m.

Wildflowers are at their peak in the Elfin Forest during April. Join Mary Coffeen, author of Central Coast Wildflowers, for a joyous exploration through the forest's dune scrub, chaparral and groves to find and identify the blooms of its native plants.

Walks in the Elfin Forest begin at the north end of 15th Street off Santa Ysabel in Los Osos.

Wear comfortable shoes, long sleeves and pants to avoid poison oak and mosquitoes.

Please park carefully, avoiding driveways and mailboxes.

We ask that you not bring dogs or other pets.

The easy paced walks last 1-1/2 to 2 hours.

For more information call 528-4540 evenings.

SWAP Presents Holiday Tree



Beth Wimer, Flo Appel, and Bethany Griffiths admire SWAP's Holiday Tree at The Inn at Morro Bay

In December SWAP participated in a special holiday event — a "Presentation of the Trees" sponsored by The Inn at Morro Bay. Non-profit organizations were invited to decorate trees provided by the Inn to help celebrate the holidays. Our tree was beautifully festooned with garlands and ornaments hand made by Flo Appel and Beth Wimer and decorated with the help of Bethany and Don Griffiths. In addition to being beautiful, the ornaments cleverly incorporated some of our local endangered species including a few elves.

If you had a chance to visit The Inn during the holidays, we hope you enjoyed the trees as much as we enjoyed being a part of this festive community project.

We stand now where two roads diverge.

But unlike the roads in Robert Frost's familiar poem, they are not equally fair.

The road we have long been traveling is deceptively easy,
a smooth superhighway on which we progress with great speed,
but at its end lies disaster.

The other fork of the road — the "one less traveled by"—
offers our last, our only chance to reach a destination that assures the preservation of the earth.

- Rachel Carson

Morro Manzanita Offers Reason for Preservation

By Dirk Walters, Ph.D.

The presence of the Elfin Forest plant drawn by Bonnie this time is, in my mind, sufficient cause for preserving the Elfin Forest. It is the endemic rare plant commonly known as the Morro manzanita or Arctostaphylos morroensis. It is on the California Native Plant Society's list 1B. Plants that make list 1B are those that are considered by the Society as being rare, threatened, and/or endangered in California and elsewhere.

The Morro manzanita made the list because it has a very small worldwide range. It is essentially limited to the decomposing sandstone derived from the fossil dunes that developed against the hills that make up the northern end of the San Luis Range. It is found from Chorro Creek in the north to just south of Hazard Canyon in Montaña de Oro State Park. Although fairly common within this limited

range, it has recently seen its range decreased by considerable residential development within Los Osos.

The plant does have two safe havens. The southern end of its range is protected by Montaña de Oro State Park and a small part of the northern extent of the range is protected by the Elfin Forest. In the Elfin Forest, it is fairly common on the middle third of the north facing slope.

A few small, straggly plants can be found scattered along the flat top of the hill. Unfortunately, the rest of its range, where the largest and most healthy individuals would be expected to grow, is privately owned and is

The Morro manzanita is a species that is quite happy in our gardens. Homeowners in Los Osos should be encouraged to use it in their landscaping. Not only is its compact, rounded form elegant, its foliage is full and of an interesting gray-green color from a distance. It bears beautiful white. urn-shaped flowers and bright red fruits in season. The fruits are eaten by many species of local birds. Please note that I am recommending this manzanita as a garden plant solely on its merits as a garden plant, not as a way to protect it from destruction from development... I strongly believe that, except as a final, Jast resort, plant species should never be sold to gardeners as a means to save them from extinction, but only because they have traits that a gardener might find useful.

already in residential houses or primed to become so. The only thing that has kept it from becoming even rarer so far is the building moratorium caused by compromised water quality that results from too many septic tanks. When the sewer situation is solved, the Morro manzanita will certainly become much more endangered than it currently is. A recent effort to give the Morro manzanita protection as a state listed rare plant failed for political and not scientific reasons.

The manzanitas are one of the larger genera in California and San Luis Obispo County. The Jepson Manual lists 54 species within the state and Hoover's Vascular Plants of San Luis Obispo County lists 15 for the county. Of all the manzanitas, the Morro manzanita is one of the more distinctive. It does belong to the largest group of manzanitas: the ones bearing a distinct leaf stalk (petiole) that is topped by a leaf blade base that is merely rounded and not resembling the top of a valentine heart (cordate). But within this group, it differs in having bark that is not the typical smooth, dark red to brown color associated with manzanitas. Its bark is loose and tends to hang on in gray stringy sheets.

Again, it is unusual in that its upper and lower leaf surfaces are clearly different in color. The upper surface is bright green and shiny while the lower surface is gray and covered with short matted trichomes or "hairs." I have had trouble calling this pubesence, "hairs," ever since one of my botany instructors corrected me rather derisively. He said,

Monday Morning Mind Walks Continue at Museum

February 1 – An update of the status and distribution of endangered falcons and condor of SLO County by Steve Schubert.

February 8 – A slide program that includes a visual tour of the universe by Lee Coombs, chemistry professor at Cal Poly and co-founder of the Central Coast Astronomical Society

February 15 – A discussion regarding the evolution of the improbable reptiles that ruled the planet for more than one hundred million years by geologist George Mason.

February 22 – An illustrated talk about backyard fungi by naturalist Shirley Sparling. Via colored slides and demonstrations, the audience will see mushrooms, puffballs, shelf fungi, lichens, mycorrhizas and plant pathogens such as powdery mildews and rusts.

Museum Mind Walks start at 10:15 in the museum auditorium and last about two hours. Admission to the museum is \$3.00. Docents and members of the Central Coast Natural History Association are admitted free. For more information, call the Museum of Natural History at 805-772-2694.

Manzanita continued from page 6

"Only animals have hair, plants have trichomes!" The twigs are also covered with short trichomes as well as scattered ong white bristles.

Morro manzanitas belong to what I call "tree" manzanitas. These are large shrubs that produce only a single central trunk. The trunk extends only a few inches above the ground before it begins to branch many times to form the rounded crown typical of this manzanita. This means that Morro manzanitas do not form a thickening at the top of their roots called a burl or more correctly a ligno-tuber. Burls contain thousands of buds and a few of these buds commence to grow if fire or other hazards kill the top of the plant. The Morro manzanita reproduces naturally only from seed.

The Morro manzanita is a species that is quite happy in our gardens. Homeowners in Los Osos should be encouraged to use it in their landscaping. Not only is its compact, rounded form elegant, its foliage is full and of an interesting gray-green color from a distance. It bears beautiful white, urn-shaped flowers and bright red fruits in season. The fruits are eaten by many species of local birds. Please note that I am recommending this manzanita as a garden plant solely on its merits as a garden plant, not as a way to protect it from destruction from development. I strongly believe that, except as a final, last resort, plant species should never e sold to gardeners as a means to save them from extinction, but only because they have traits that a gardener might find useful.

Friends Bestow Man- and Woman-of-the-Year Honors



At their last general meeting, the Friends of the Estuary at Morro Bay named Jim Kroll as 1998 Man-of-the-Year and Maria Singleton as 1998 Woman-of-the-Year.

Now an independent public affairs consultant and key person in the Foundation for Community Design, Singleton served as Public Affairs officer for PG&E for the last

nine years. In that position, she served as PG&E's main liaison with Friends of the Estuary during the efforts to get Morro Bay named both a State and National Estuary. "Without all this help, such progress toward State and National Estuary status would not have been possible," noted Bill Newman, former Friends president.

Singleton headed the PG&E grants committee that funded a variety of projects, including the State-of-the-Bay Conference, the Friends membership brochure, a computer network for sharing information among all who work on the bay's management plan, and providing used office furniture for the National Estuary Program office. The committee also provided major financial support for "The Living Estuary at Morro Bay" ~ a video about the ecology of the bay produced by Friends of the Estuary that can be seen and purchased at the Museum of Natural History in Morro Bay State Park. When the Friends did not have a specific project, money was provided to the Bay Foundation for their research efforts.

Los Osos resident Jim Kroll has lived near the waters of Morro Bay since 1970, and has been a Morro Bay Harbor Patrol Officer since 1981. "He's been a leader of the water recreation community for as long as he's lived here," said Rick Algert, director of the Morro Bay Harbor Department, and "he might be the most knowledgeable person about bay issues around."

Kroll uses both his position with the Harbor Department and his personal interest in the bay to share that knowledge, and emphasizes the importance of education in preserving the resources of the bay. He presents lectures on marine biology issues, pollution control, and public safety to a wide audience, and notes that some of the people he taught as kids are now young adults making their own decisions about using the bay.

The Friends of the Estuary Bay hopes you will join them in saluting these two community leaders who have done so much to help maintain, preserve, and protect the rich natural resources of the Morro Bay Estuary and its watershed. For information on how you or your organization can get involved, contact the Friends of the Estuary at 528-8126.

Pacific Gas and Electric Company

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maintain the Elfin Forest for future generations. are an important partner in helping to preserve and expires and we have to send a reminder letter. You Please renew your membership BEFORE it

10 THE ELFIN FOREST TODAY! **BENEM YOUR COMMITMENT**

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