



The Post

News from the Claremont Wildlands Conservancy

Volume 3, Issue 2

December 2003

CWC Still Optimistic About Receiving Funds To Purchase Property

After a topsy-turvy political autumn, representatives of the Claremont Wildlands Conservancy remain hopeful that state funds may soon be awarded to enable the CWC to purchase and preserve land in the Claremont hillsides.

The CWC had applied for \$8 million from the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB), which operates under the state's Department of Fish and Game. The money would be used to acquire hillside parcels above Claremont that are threatened with development.

"We still don't know that we are not getting the money," said CWC Board Member Suzanne Thompson recently. "It just looks much less likely. The Trust for Public Land and the City are both pursuing ways to get some of the requested funds."

In late September the WCB approved allocating \$275 million to purchase Ahmanson Ranch in eastern Ventura County and the Ballona Wetlands in west LA county. That amount took up nearly all the \$300 million from Prop. 50 funds approved by voters in 2002. The California governor recall election occurred October 7.

"We don't know for sure," continued Thompson, "but several people have speculated that there was political pressure from the governor's office to fund the larger, more attention-getting projects."

What was enormously frustrating to CWC officials was the fact that the CWC proposal had been approved and was given a high priority for funding.

"The appraisal we submitted to establish a price for Johnson's Pasture was approved," said Thompson. "All that was necessary was to ask WCB to release the first round of funds."

As a result, the option that the Trust for Public Land (TPL) held for the main Johnson's Pasture parcel has lapsed, and the owners have currently entered into another option with a developer—the length of which is unknown.

It is highly unlikely, however, that any development could take place in the near fu-

(Continued on page 2)

Fire Roars Through Area Foothills



Photo: Margaret Nilsson

The 2003 Grand Prix Fire swept across the hillsides from Lytle Creek to La Verne in late October. In the Claremont hillsides, the fire burned throughout the Wilderness Park and Johnson's Pasture.

A Santa Ana wind-aided firestorm swept rapidly through the Claremont hillsides on the night of October 25. Thousands of acres of hillsides burned, along with over 65 Claremont homes in Palmer Canyon, Padua Hills and Clarbobby neighborhoods.

The 'Grand Prix Fire' moved westward—some reporting the fire moving over 100 miles an hour—from San Bernardino through Alta Loma, Rancho Cucamonga, Upland, and Claremont before finally stopping in La Verne when it ran into the fuel-less boundary of the 2002 Williams Fire.

Thousands of Claremont residents were forced to evacuate during early morning hours, and the effects of the fire touched all of us in town. Our hearts go out to those who lost their homes in the fire.

We at the CWC do question, however, the need for any further development in the hillsides—especially when fire is such a natural part of the hillside landscape.

In our local hillsides, the Johnson's Pasture area and surrounding properties burned, along with the entire 1200-acre Claremont Hills

Wilderness Park. On the south edge, fire burned areas along the Thompson Creek Trail, and up to the edges of The Webb Schools.

Experts, however, predict that within three to five years, most of the animal and plant life will have returned—as long as the area receives somewhat normal rainfall amounts.

Most Southern California ecosystems are specifically adapted to fire, whether that means seeds that sprout profusely in the spring after being heated by flames, or plants that regenerate from a non-affected root system. Furthermore, these plants will draw animals ranging in size from tiny insects to deer, bear, fox and bobcat back into the area.

We are confident that—in the long run—the hillsides will return in their full splendor. Indeed, many signs of life are already evident in the burned areas: sprouts of green grass are pushing up, deer make their way along a ridge-line, coyotes hustle through black manzanita branches, birds are circling overhead, and much more.

Go watch the transformation for yourself, or go to: <http://www.claremontwildlands.org/>

CWC optimistic about receiving funding.....

(Continued from page 1)

ture, since numerous hurdles exist: city regulations and committee approval, environmental impact reports, etc.

"All is definitely not lost!" promised Thompson. "TPL is working to get some of the Prop. 50 funds to buy more pieces of the foothills. It won't be as much as we originally thought we were getting, but it will help us get started.

"The recent fires have made it more difficult to develop in the hillsides because of concerns about fire risks and the difficulty of getting insurance coverage. We will continue to work on ways to work with property owners to save the land."



Photo: Beverly Speak

© Beverly Speak

The Post is the newsletter of the Claremont Wildlands Conservancy.

Board of Directors:

Georgeann Andrus, Karen Chapman Lenz, Sam Pedroza, Lissa Petersen, Kirk Reynolds, Jerry Taylor, Suzanne Thompson, Nancy J. Wing

Advisory Board:

Suzan Smith, Mark von Wodtke, Judy Wright
Editor: Kirk Reynolds

Masthead design: Ellen Perry

Interested in volunteering? Please call Jayne at 909/621-2666 or email jarobertson@aol.com

For more information:

(909) 624-8869
 459 Baughman Avenue
 Claremont CA 91711

Suzanne Thompson: sthompson@pomona.edu

Nancy J. Wing: nanwyn@earthlink.net

Or visit our website at:

www.claremontwildlands.org

[CWC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, tax exempt corp. #95-4777423]

City Given Grant to Complete Wilderness Park Loop

The City of Claremont received a \$1,073,000 grant to purchase 240 acres of open space adjacent to the existing 1200-acre Wilderness Park, city officials announced recently.

The city was awarded the grant after partnering with the Claremont Wildlands Conservancy during the application process. The money—made available through Prop. 40, which was approved by state voters in March 2002—was awarded by the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC).

Prop. 40 funds were intended to be used for the expansion of public open space, improvement of natural habitat, and increased connectivity of trails between urban areas and open space.

The land has been added to the existing Wilderness Park, and enables the completion of the 'loop trail' that winds through the park. Park users can also access Marshall Canyon Regional Park from the Wilderness Park loop.

According to the city's website, "Securing this property for the Park ensures that vital watershed area will be permanently protected from development, thus protecting a variety

Use all your senses as you walk the hillsides

Our sense of smell is closely linked to the primitive memory-processing centers in our brain. Even a slight whiff of scent on the breeze can evoke a powerful emotional response...

Next time you walk in the hillsides, take a few minutes, close your eyes if you wish, and breathe mindfully. Gently rub a leaf and sniff your fingers (be sure it's not poison oak!). Perhaps you'll enjoy a wave of nostalgia when you inhale one of these smells: White sage – strong and pungent, burned by indigenous Californians in purifying ceremonies; California sagebrush – similar but sweeter and lighter.

Or maybe you'll recognize the sour exudation of a defensive stinkbug...dry pine needles baking in the hot sun...spicy eucalyptus and horehound (both used in medicinal preparations)...wet dirt as the first raindrops begin to wash away the summer's dust...vinegar weed – you can tell where that name came from! ...the musky odor left by a passing skunk ...that familiar smell of chaparral, with laurel sumac's dry and distinctive signature scent... the delicate fruity scent of purple silver lupine...

How many of these distinctive aromas can you imagine? Perhaps a few of them have been conjured up just by reading about them...

- Beverly Speak

of sensitive animal and plant life. Additionally, money from the grant will be used to install signs promoting the Park's biological, cultural, and historical significance."

The CWC applauds the city's acquisition and preservation of valuable hillside land, and looks forward to future partnerships endeavoring to preserve hillside land in the foothills above Claremont.

Save the Date.....

On January 26th, 2004 at 7pm at UCC Kingman Chapel in Claremont (NW corner of Harrison & Harvard) there will be a community-wide open meeting on hillside acquisition as open space.

The Claremont Wildlands Conservancy and the Claremont Area League of Women Voters are sponsoring the meeting. The Trust for Public Land and the City of Claremont will participate in the discussion and provide historical perspective and updates.

You will hear more about this important meeting as the time approaches! Please check our website at: <http://www.claremontwildlands.org/>



Photo: Beverly Speak

© Beverly Speak

Trail Access Leads to Increased Physical Activity

Studies show that easy access to attractive open spaces increases physical activity levels of community members.

A couple of years ago, exciting research began looking at how the environment influences physical activity. The results from this research are beginning to appear in academic journals dedicated to health and health outcomes. In fact, virtually the entire September 2003 issue of the American Journal of Public Health is dedicated to this topic.

Given that over half of the US population does not meet the minimum recommendations for physical activity, it is imperative that we identify factors that increase daily physical activity. Why? Numerous studies show that meeting just the minimum recommended amount of weekly physical activity is associated with better health and reduced incidence of many diseases. In fact, increasing levels of physical activity in the US population has been called "today's best buy in public health."

The Center for Disease Control recommends 30 minutes of activity 5 times per week at a moderate level, or 20 minutes 3 times a week at a vigorous level.

How does this relate to the CWC and

saving Johnson's Pasture? A study conducted in North Carolina indicated that having access to trails was positively associated with meeting the recommended levels of physical activity. Another study conducted in Australia showed that people who had access to attractive open spaces were more likely to meet the minimum recommended levels of daily walking. And a study in Georgia showed that people who had a safe and convenient recreational area within 10 minutes of their home were more likely to be physically active than those who did not.

Johnson's Pasture provides residents of Claremont and the surrounding areas with a beautiful, safe, and convenient place to exercise. Its close proximity to the city and existing housing allows residents to access the area in a short amount of time, making it more likely that they will exercise. The fact that it is aesthetically pleasing and removed from traffic makes it an ideal place for walkers, hikers, joggers, bikers and dog walkers to get outdoors and get some exercise.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/trails.html> on the web.

- Carla Jackson, M.P.H.

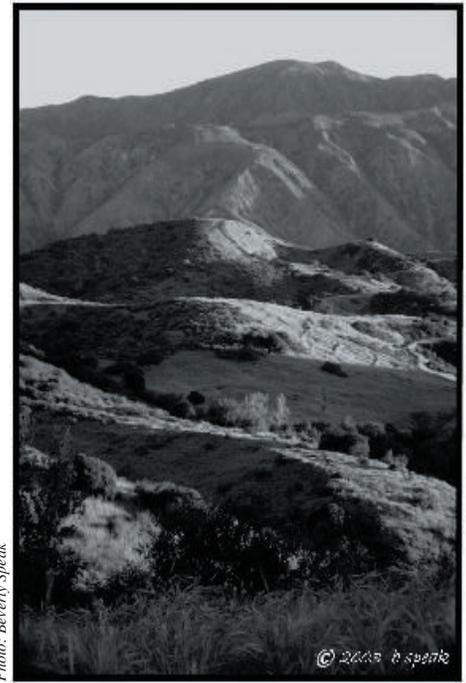


Photo: Beverly Sprak

Claremont Activist Janet Johnson Gives \$25,000 Donation to CWC

A gift of \$25,000 has recently been given to CWC from the estate of Claremont activist Janet Johnson, who died in March 2002 at 90 years of age.

Ms. Johnson was known for keeping a close eye on this city. I remember her active concern for the landscaping of the Von's parking lot with berms and trees. Former Claremont resident Dale Gaynor who now lives in Mendocino, California confirms that Janet was a "very determined woman and a dear friend."

"She was very alive and vivacious – and extremely involved in community affairs," says Marie Searles of Claremont. Attorney and City Councilmember Sandra Baldonado also remembers Janet's activism as a regular observer at meetings and as a visitor in her office.

CWC deeply appreciates the gift and the effort on the part of Dale Gaynor as Trustee of the estate. We are also grateful for Ms. Baldonado's legal help and for Ms. Searles' support of the goals of CWC.

We are all in agreement that Janet Johnson would be pleased with her gift and urge us on to protect the hills.

- Nancy J. Wing

after the fire...

A Late Afternoon Walk in the Hillside

This afternoon, I walked up into Johnson's Pasture with my friend, Nancy Wing.

The land is completely scorched and beautiful in its severity. Our first sight above this burnt place was a circling hawk. Nancy tells me of a Native American belief that if you open your heart to the bird, it will come over you and carry your prayers up on its wings as it circles the heavens.

We saw two different groups of coyotes...a set of three and a pair, respectively—out looking for a morsel in sparse land.

In the hollows of the pasture and on the hillsides, green grass shoots were backlit against the afternoon sun. Small red ants moved busily among the dry grasses of the narrow path on which we walked.

Where my daughter once gathered White Sage (Salvia apiana), now is black earth. The entire pasture has been smudged and cleansed.

Between the burned brush...barbed wire remnants and charred fence posts define the land as it was parceled out—boundaries the fire has eradicated.

Chaparral has need of fire. Some shrubs and trees will stump sprout. There are seeds that depend upon flame and heat to germinate. Spring will bring bounty. The pasture will revive.

We came down the road just at sunset...the clouds and fog against the mountains—soft-focus and muted pastel colors in contrast to the stark black of ash and the dry golden leaves on the hillsides. Very magical.

- Linda Lee Worlow

Claremont Wildlands Conservancy
459 Baughman Avenue
Claremont, CA 91711

Presorted Std.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #144
Claremont, CA



www.claremontwildlands.org

The Claremont Wildlands Conservancy (CWC) is a non-profit, grassroots organization dedicated to keeping the foothills wild and free for all.

Cal Poly Professor Establishes ACORN plan to Regenerate Area's Hillside Oaks

Following the hillside fires in October, Mark von Wodtke, a Cal Poly Pomona professor emeritus and Claremont resident, has begun an oak regeneration project in the Claremont Wilderness Park.

The project is named ACORN: Achievable Claremont Oak Regeneration.

According to von Wodtke, the community-based project seeks to re-establish oak woodlands in the Wilderness Park to enhance fire protection and biodiversity. In addition, von Wodtke lists the additional following benefits that oaks could bring: improvement of air- and watershed quality, erosion control, enhancement of visual quality, environmental education.

Years ago, the Claremont foothills—especially the canyon areas—boasted numerous oak trees, which provided animal habitat plus a natural firebreak between the hillsides and the valley floor. Through time many oaks have vanished—whether falling victim to development, grazing or artificially-altered drainage patterns. In their place, fire-prone chaparral and sage scrub have grown instead, presenting a high fire danger to foothill communities such as Claremont.

In the Claremont area, the dominant oak is the Coast Live Oak (*Quercus agrifolia* Nee), and it is remarkably fire resistant due to its ever-

green leaves, thick bark (with little dead outer tissue), and lively sprouting ability.

Von Wodtke believes there is a fortuitous window of opportunity because of the hillside fires both last year and this year; the area probably won't burn as drastically again for a number of years. Thus, oak seedlings will have ample opportunity to become well established.

A group of area citizens began the regeneration process on November 22 by collecting fallen acorns in Palmer and Cobal canyons.

Von Wodtke hopes that in the next 5-7 years, community volunteers can plant thousands of acorns and get oak woodlands re-established in the Wilderness Park before there is another major fire in the area.

Community planting parties will be held in January to plant the acorns gathered each season, and the first planting party will be Saturday, January 24, 2004 in lower Palmer Canyon (in the Wilderness Park below Padua Hills).

The project will progress in phases, such as staggered planting and maintenance, so that areas can be monitored to ensure the

best sustainability for the oaks.

For further information and highly detailed instructions on the project, view the ACORN website at: <http://www.csupomona.edu/~mjvonwodtke/>

