

Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation



Spring 2007

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

By the time you are reading this, SPRING will officially be here. You have survived the rainy and sometimes dreary days of winter, and it is time to give yourself a treat. Take a walk in your open space! It is also a great way to kick-start that long-promised exercise program. There are four wonderful open space areas in Walnut Creek, and this is a great time to visit any or all four of them.

In addition to the beautiful green hills, it is the best time to see wildflowers and wildlife. If you aren't sure where to go, visit our website at www.wcosf.org and follow the link for recommended walks. While there are just a few walks on the website, it is a place to start. If you would like a more structured walk, visit the City of Walnut Creek's website and follow the links to the open space walking programs led by Walnut Creek's open space rangers. Another option is a wonderful bird

walk led by Murray Stern, described on page two.

Your foundation has been very busy this winter on a series of habitat restoration projects, which are described in more detail in another section of this newsletter. What numbers can't adequately describe are the social benefits of the activities we have undertaken. Most of the nearly 300 volunteers that have contributed their time this winter were high school students. They worked hard and accomplished a lot, while learning about native plants and habitat restoration in the process. We also had the opportunity to interact with this fine group of people, and renewed our hope in the future. We could use some adults to help as project leaders. To find out how you can become involved, please visit our website at www.wcosf.org

Bob Simmons, President

Manager's Report

The city is embarking on a visioning study of the Walnut Creek Open Space system. Since the Open Space was founded over 30 years ago there have been a number of changes, both in the amount of land available to the public and in the many ways we experience it. The first planning guides developed to direct use of the newly acquired land in the 1970s envisioned some uses which never materialized, such as archery. Similarly, in those years no one anticipated the demand for bicycle use which we see today. The objective of this visioning study is to assess our current practices in management of the natural resource and consider what we like and don't like about where we have been and where we should focus for the next 30 years.

The Park, Recreation and Open Space Commission has appointed two of their members, Rick Underwood and Sandra Jacobsen, to guide this study. Five other members will be selected from applications received from Walnut Creek residents. This panel will serve for one year and conduct meetings with the public to gather input. Information on the process will soon be posted in the Open Space and on the City website. I encourage everyone to offer their expertise and experience in this study and help establish a vision for the Walnut Creek open Space for the next 30 years.

*Dan Cather
Public Services Manager*

FOUNDATION RESTORATION PROJECTS



Quail Corridor

Yes, it now looks like the makings of a real corridor are in place in North Lime Ridge. The fencing is finally finished, and after a long wait for the rain to soften the ground enough, all the quail and coyote bush plants are tucked in place. Thanks to a good group of volunteers we also have fifty or sixty willow and cottonwood cuttings in the ground. Some willows have been in long enough to have new sprouts. Thanks to the Cub Scout Pack 44, as they spent one morning putting in willow and cottonwood sticks in the unfenced pond uphill from the big cottonwood tree (*see below*). We hope the cattle will leave them alone long enough to get a good start.

Latest new critters to be added to our list is a pair of jack rabbits. They were jumped out of the original fenced area. Stands to reason I guess, as this area has the densest cover of all of the four fenced areas making up the corridor. It is heart warming to add new critters to our list as the corridor grows and matures.

Heather Farm

In August and September, WCOSF volunteers raked, mowed and applied solarizing plastic to reduce the amount of non native seed in our planting area. In September about 40 volunteers from Wells Fargo Bank and Chevron helped us propagate about 14,000 native

grass seedlings. In October 100 first grade students from Sun Terrace School in Concord propagated poppies and cared for them until mid-December. In early November we flamed the area with our propane torch to kill non-native plants that had sprouted.

From early November through the end of January, our work groups planted about 7,800 native grass seedlings and poppies. We also planted blue and coast live oak, buckeye, big-leaf maple, black walnut, willow and dogwood trees, snowberry bushes, honeysuckle vines, cow parsnip, gum plant (*grindelia*) and several varieties of monkeyflower. We removed dense cattails along a small creek and planted riparian plants. In a total of 13 work days, over 200 students from Walnut Creek, Concord, Lafayette, Alamo, Danville and Union City middle schools and high schools and almost 80 adults worked with us. Foundation volunteers worked on other days to prepare for our group workdays. We are hoping for good winter rains through February and into March to sustain our plants.

Oak Habitat



Our limited acorn harvest last fall also limited our plantings in North Lime Ridge this year. In addition to the new sites, we replanted the many unsuccessful sites from last year. As readers may recall, last year we used three types of fencing

to protect the plantings from grazing cattle. Only the heaviest was successful so this year we replaced the lighter fences which had been severely damaged and replanted the unsuccessful sites. We also planted an additional 35 new fenced sites. Last year most of the plantings themselves, not just the fences, were damaged, partly by cattle, partly by vandals and, we suspect, partly by ground squirrels searching for acorns. So far this year's plantings are holding up well with the heavy fencing and also with the setting of support posts and screen cylinder protection for the acorns deeper. During the fall two more sections of the major drainage were fenced to protect the drainage from trampling. There are now four fenced areas along the drainage. We planted about 15 sites within these new areas. Of course, they didn't need any additional fencing protection. The unusually dry winter has forced us to begin watering in January, rather than waiting until late May as is normal. On Feb 17 we'll work out of the Marshall Drive entrance and on March 17 out of Sutherland, checking tree shelters and the condition of the growing oak saplings. On April 14 and 28 and May 12 we'll be checking sprouting success in North Line Ridge. This includes weeding within the sites and placing four foot plastic tree shelters on the successful sites.

Native Plant Regeneration

We have planted 2300 grass

seedlings of three species in two areas near the Sutherland entrance this year. We never had an event rained out, but we discovered there is another reason not to plant -- cold weather! You just can't do it right when the ground is frozen. The Foundation also has a modest native grass restoration project in a fairly large area out of the Marshall Drive entrance to the Shell Ridge Open Space. We have mowed black mustard in the area for at least 6 years. For the past several years we have been planting native grass and other native plants in the area, including about 400 plants this year.



Weed Control Project

The optimum season for weed control is fast approaching as I write in early February. Mowing and herbicide are the options open to us. Many areas of the Regional Parks use controlled burns, but with housing so near the target areas we are not able to use this method. Our main weed targets are yellow and purple star thistles, bull, milk and Italian thistles, black mustard and vetch. Mowing is usually begun in April and May during the window after weeds reach near full growth but before seed matures. Herbicides are best used earlier, when weeds are smaller so less herbicide is needed and surrounding grass doesn't provide a level of protection. This winter we have had some early success with milk herbicides.



WCOSF board member Tim Ory demonstrates planting at North Lime Ridge to Cub Scout Pack 44



Den 6 wolves from Newark plant willow & cottonwood at North Lime Ridge

DON'T MISS THE FOUNDATION'S ANNUAL BIRDWALK

Mark the date! April 29th, 0800 at the Lime Ridge entry kiosk near the Boundary Oaks clubhouse. Join us for the Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation's Annual Birdwalk which will be held on **Sunday April 29, 2007 on Lime Ridge**. Led by Maury Stern, **the birdwalk will start at 8:00 a.m. and end about Noon**. The route will go from the east end of Valley Vista Road (park across from the Boundary Oak Golf Course Clubhouse) and ascend to the transmission tower atop the ridge. Elevation gain is approximately 700'. Total length approximately 5 miles. Bring water, sunglasses, binoculars and sunblock.

Hope to see you there!

Questions: Please contact Harvey Ceaser at (925) 937-1406

WALNUT CREEK OPEN SPACE EVENTS And HAPPENINGS



ONGOING EVENTS

TRACKS IN THE WILD



**Saturday, March 24
9:00 a.m.**

Want to know more about wildlife in the City's preserve system? Interested in learning techniques and basic nature skills for identifying 'what' has been walking on the same trail as you? Then join Lime Ridge staff for an exciting look into Wild Walnut Creek and learn which animals walk on four toes, five

toes, or just on their toenails. Make your own tracks to the program! Wear hiking shoes, a hat and bring water. Meet at the end of Valley Vista Rd. Please call Lain Beveridge at 930-7731 for more info.

OLD BORGES RANCH HISTORY TOURS

**Fourth Saturday of Each Month
2:00 p.m.**

Meet at the Old Borges Ranch parking lot at 1035 Castle Rock Road. Join Ranger Dan Bylin on a tour of the historic Old Borges Ranch. A visit to this Nationally Registered Historic Site is like taking a step back in time. Learn about the Borges family that arrived in the Walnut Creek area in 1899 and the history of their family.

LIME RIDGE HIKE


**Second Saturday of Each Month
9:00 a.m.**

Put on your good hiking shoes, grab a water bottle, a snack, and a hat, and join

this Ranger-led hike into the incredible Lime Ridge Preserve. This hike will pass through oak woodlands, grasslands, and inland scrub habitats that many animals call "home". **RAIN CANCELS**. Meet at the kiosk staging area located at the corner of Cowell and Ygnacio. Call Ranger Art Janke at 930-7731.

MONTHLY BIRD WALKS

**Third Saturday of Each Month
9 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.**

 As the seasons change, so will the birds. We will see year-round residents and cool season migrants and visitors. These walks are for everyone, including first time birders. Bring binoculars, bird book, water, and wear good hiking shoes. For information on these walks, call Ranger Dan Bylin at 942-0225.

**PETS NOT PERMITTED AT
PROGRAMS OR EVENTS**

LAND ACQUISITION FUND

We would like to thank everyone who has donated to the Foundation's Land Acquisition Fund in addition to their membership contributions. So far in this year's Annual Membership Campaign, 36 individuals or families have donated a total of \$4,668 to the Land Acquisition Fund:

Judy Adler, Joan Anderson, David & Laurie Arbour, Tom & Donna Aswad, Bob & Cindy Brittain, Harmon & Deborah Burstyn, Harvey & Phyllis Ceaser, Stephanie Chaney, Gordon & Kathy Chapple, Kent & Nancy Clancy, Jill & Bruce Dresser, Dudley & Kay Ellis, Donald Emmons, Leslie & Virginia Gallagher, Jerry & Kathy Hicks, Lesley & Bill Hunt, Sally Jasperson, Kathryn Jelter, Larry Johnson, Murray & Amy Joseph, Selma M. King, Lisa Cline & Jon Maienschein, Bruce Moen, Barbara Morse, Darrell Mortensen, Shirley Nootbaar, Robert & Mary-Jo Noth, David Ogden, Susan Santerelli, Gene & Lily Schulting, Bob Simmons & Judy Whelen, Matthew & Arlene Sirott, Jay Stientjes, Steve & Christine Swihart, Curt & Polly Wade and Farid Zainal.

The Land Fund always welcomes contributions. Please send contributions to the Foundation address.

Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation
P.O. Box 309
Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0309

Non-Profit Rate
U.S. Postage
PAID
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Yes, I want to help protect and preserve Walnut Creek's Open Space

We invite all who share this goal to join the Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation. Memberships and contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowable by law. There are numerous areas where you can help. If you are interested, please leave a message at 925-939-6610, drop us a note or email, or visit our website at www.wcosf.org.

I would like to join the Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation

Name _____
Address _____ City _____ Zip _____
Phone _____ Email (*we never share*) _____
Skills I am willing to share _____

I would like to volunteer!

____ Oak Restoration Project
____ Native Grasses
____ Quail Habitat
____ School program

MEMBERSHIPS

Benefactor.....\$250
Sustaining.....\$100
Family.....\$40
Individual.....\$25
Senior.....\$15

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