



# SLO STEWARDS

SLO City's Natural Resources

A PUBLICATION OF *EcoSlo* AND THE CITY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO

by **Neil Havlik, Ph.D.**

Natural Resources Manager, City of San Luis Obispo

Photo by Freddy Otte



## FROM ROOM RANCH: WE DID IT!

**F**room Ranch lies in the hills off Los Osos Valley Road, adjacent to Irish Hills Natural Reserve, a city-owned Open Space since 2001 which includes six miles of very popular multiuse trails. The property includes rich wildlife habitat, dense chaparral, oak woodland and open grassland, and one-half mile of Froom Creek, a small perennial stream known to contain populations of steelhead trout. The area is underlain by serpentine soils, which contain many rare wildflowers and other plant species.

In July 2008 the City Council entered into an option agreement with the Madonna family to purchase 310 acres of Froom Ranch, and on July 28, 2010, the City completed the purchase.

The final purchase price was \$635,500, approximately \$2,050/acre. Ancillary expenses (appraisals, hazard studies, title and closing costs, etc.) brought the total expenditure to \$660,000. Of this

amount, \$310,000 came from City Measure Y funds, \$187,000 from Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund monies, and \$100,000 from the Nature Conservancy of California. Local fundraising undertaken with the assistance of the Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County secured the remaining \$63,000.

“This is another high point in the long-time beneficial relationship between the City of San Luis Obispo and Alex and Phyllis Madonna and their family” said Mayor Dave Romero. “I have been proud to work with them since I first came here as City Public Works Director 55 years ago. The Madonnas have always had the best interests of the community in mind and this is just another example of their community spirit.”

The Mayor added that “The City also wishes to thank our funding partners, the Nature Conservancy, the Federal

Land and Water Conservation Fund, and the Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County, who have together generated 50% of the \$635,500 purchase price for the property. And last but not least, the City Council wishes to thank the more than 300 citizens of San Luis Obispo and other cities in California who contributed out of their own pockets to make the project a reality. I want especially to

## THE ADDITIONS ARE EXPECTED TO ADD FIVE MILES TO THE TRAILS AT IRISH HILLS

acknowledge the wonderful donations from Donald and Mary Smith and from the SunPower Corporation, whose gifts made up a sizable portion of the local fundraising total. Their generosity is exemplary.”

*continued on page 2*

# SLO COUNTY CREEK DAY

Story and photos by  
**Freddy Otte**  
City Biologist

**C**reek Day 2010 was held on October 2nd and more than 2,500 pounds of trash was removed from the San Luis Obispo Creek watershed. Couches, clothes, yard clippings and numerous other items were collected by the more than 60 volunteers who came out to help. The City of San Luis Obispo partners with the Land Conservancy and other organizations to host the event every year before the winter rains move the trash all over the creek.

Stormwater pollution is a huge problem and when we talk about pollution, it is not just chemicals that can get into the water. Trash and sediment are some of the biggest kind of pollution we are facing today.

Being enrolled in the Stormwater Management Program through the Regional Water Board, the City has five years to implement more than 250

## WE ARE ATTEMPTING TO KEEP THE HABITAT IN THE CREEK AS NATURE INTENDED IT

Best Management Practices (BMPs) to improve water quality. Street sweeping, cleaning out storm drain inlets, and Creek Day are some of the ways we are trying to reduce the amount of trash and pollution that enters the creek system.

Steelhead trout require clean water to survive and reproduce so these efforts are very important not only to the fish but also to their habitat. By removing the large items like couches and file cabinets before they are picked up by higher winter flows, we are attempting to keep the habitat in the creek as nature intended it.

Cans, bottles, and plastic were separated into a recycle bin so they do not impact the landfill and can be used again in a different form. The 4-yard roll-off recycle bin was almost full.

The other target during creek clean-up is cigarette butts. The harsh chemicals in cigarettes are concentrated in the filters and can slowly release their compounds into the water. The filter itself is made of plastic and will not break down in the environment so it is very important to clean these up before they have a chance to get into the creeks.

The great turnout for Creek Day is a testament to how much the creek is appreciated. The desire to keep the environment clean is why San Luis Obispo is such a special place to be.

### **FROOM RANCH** *continued from page 1*

Through a management agreement signed with the Federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in August 2010 with regard to a 78 acre parcel adjacent to Froom Ranch, the City will assume management responsibilities for that parcel as well.

The City will add both Froom Ranch and the BLM parcel to the Irish Hills Natural Reserve, creating the City's largest Open Space at 1,090 acres. A short extension of the Froom Creek Trail will allow access to a portion of the Froom Ranch area, but the majority of the new properties will undergo the development of a Conservation Plan under the City's open space planning guidelines prior to their formal opening to the public.

The new property additions are expected to ultimately add five miles to the existing six miles of trails at Irish Hills Natural Reserve, as well as providing several new opportunities for habitat restoration, and the City will be looking to make those opportunities happen.

The property is protected by several deed restrictions and a conservation easement held by the Land Conservancy ensuring that the entire Irish Hills will remain protected forever as open space, as required by the City's funding partners.

## Natural San Luis Docent HIKES

Events are free and take place **SATURDAYS** at 9AM. Please bring water and wear sturdy shoes.

For info call ECOSLO at 544-1777, or SLO City Natural Resources Dept at 781-7211

- 1/15 STENNER SPRINGS**  
Take Highway 1 towards Morro Bay. Less than a mile outside of town, turn right onto Stenner Creek Rd. Follow Stenner Creek Rd for about 2-1/2 miles to the end.
- 2/19 IRISH HILLS @ Madonna**  
Take Higuera St south, take a right on Madonna Rd. Follow Madonna to the very end. Trailhead is at the far side of the roundabout, up walkway.
- 3/19 FELSMAN LOOP**  
From Santa Rosa St, take Foothill towards LOVR. Turn right onto Patricia (or coming from LOVR, take a left). Go past the Highland Drive stop sign to the 800 block of Patricia Dr. Park on the Bishop Peak side of Patricia Dr. at the Trailhead.
- 4/16 GUIDETTI RANCH**  
For the Guidetti Ranch hike meet at the Food for Less/Trader Joe's parking lot on South Higuera. Park towards South Higuera and carpool to the trailhead.

## SLO City Parks & Rec Ranger-Led HIKES

Events are free and take place **SUNDAYS** at 1PM. Duration varies with group. Please bring water and wear sturdy shoes.

For info call: SLO City Parks and Rec at 781-7302. Visit: [www.slocity.org/parksandrecreation](http://www.slocity.org/parksandrecreation)

- 12/12 BOWDEN RANCH**  
Take Johnson Ave South, away from downtown. Turn left on Lizzie St. Bear left at fork in the road. Trailhead is at end of cul-de-sac. Amazing views from Cayucos to Nipomo Dunes.
- 1/23 ISLAY HILL**  
Take Broad St South, turn left on Tank Farm Rd. Make a right onto Wavertree St. Turn left on Spanish Oaks Dr. Right onto Sweetbay Lane. Trailhead is at the end of Sweetbay Lane.
- 2/20 JOHNSON RANCH**  
Take Higuera St until it turns into South Higuera St. Meet at turnout located at the intersection of South Higuera St and Ontario Rd. Trailhead is on the right, just off the freeway.
- 3/13 IRISH HILLS from Madonna**  
Take Higuera St south, take a right on Madonna Rd. Follow Madonna to the very end. Trailhead is at the far side of the roundabout, up walkway.
- 4/10 STENNER SPRINGS**  
Take Highway 1 towards Morro Bay. Less than a mile outside of town, turn right onto Stenner Creek Rd. Follow Stenner Creek Rd for about 2-1/2 miles to the end.
- 5/15 RESERVOIR CANYON**  
Meet at the Reservoir Canyon trailhead. To reach trailhead, take Highway 101 north. Go about a mile past city limits and, right onto Reservoir Canyon Rd. This road ends at trailhead.

## SLO Stewards TRAIL WORK

Workdays are **SATURDAYS** from 9AM-12PM. Please wear long pants and sturdy shoes. Water and snacks provided.

For info call City Ranger Desk at 781-7302. Visit: [www.slocity.org/parksandrecreation](http://www.slocity.org/parksandrecreation)

- 12/11 ISLAY HILL**  
Take Broad St south, turn left on Tank Farm Rd. Make a right onto Wavertree St. Turn left on Spanish Oaks Dr. Right onto Sweetbay Lane. Trailhead is at the end of Sweetbay Lane.
- 1/15 JOHNSON RANCH**  
Take Higuera St until it turns into South Higuera St. Meet at turnout located at the intersection of South Higuera St and Ontario Rd. Trailhead is on the right, just off the freeway.
- 1/22 STENNER SPRINGS**  
Take Highway 1 towards Morro Bay. Less than a mile outside of town, turn right onto Stenner Creek Rd. Follow Stenner Creek Rd for about 2-1/2 miles to the end.
- 2/12 CERRO SAN LUIS**  
Meet at the Cerro San Luis Natural Reserve trailhead. To access the trailhead, turn right onto Fernandez Rd just before the southbound 101 Marsh St. on-ramp.
- 2/26 BISHOP PEAK from Patricia**  
To reach the trailhead, take Foothill Blvd west and make a right turn at Patricia Dr. Continue north on Patricia Dr. The trailhead will be on the left, just past Patricia Ct.
- 3/12 IRISH HILLS from Prefumo Canyon**  
Take Los Osos Valley Rd north and turn left on Prefumo Canyon Rd. Follow for 1 mile. Trailhead is on the left after bridge crossing.
- 3/26 RESERVOIR CANYON**  
Meet at the Reservoir Canyon trailhead. To reach trailhead, take highway 101 north. Go about a mile past city limits and right onto Reservoir Canyon Rd. This road ends at trailhead.
- 4/9 JOHNSON RANCH**  
Take Higuera St until it turns into South Higuera St. Meet at turnout located at the intersection of South Higuera St and Ontario Rd. Trailhead is on the right, just off the freeway.
- 4/23 CERRO SAN LUIS**  
Meet at the Cerro San Luis Natural Reserve trailhead. To access the trailhead, turn right onto Fernandez Rd just before the southbound 101 Marsh St. on-ramp.
- 5/7 IRISH HILLS from Madonna**  
Take Higuera St south, take a right on Madonna Rd. Follow Madonna to the very end. Trailhead is at the far side of the roundabout, up walkway.
- 5/21 BISHOP PEAK from Highland**  
To reach the trailhead, take Foothill Blvd west and turn right at Patricia Dr. Continue on Patricia Dr and make a left on Highland Dr. The Trailhead is at the end of Highland Dr.



# SLO STEWARDS

ECOSLO 1204 Nipomo Street  
San Luis Obispo, California 93401  
(805) 544-1777 www.ECOSLO.org

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

NONPROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
US POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
SAN LUIS OBISPO,  
CALIFORNIA  
93401 PERMIT #40

Printed with soy ink on 100% post consumer, non-bleached recycled paper by Poor Richard's Press.  
Save our resources and subscribe to SLO Stewards e-newsletter. Contact us at: [info@ecoslo.org](mailto:info@ecoslo.org)



by **Maria M. Kelly**  
ECOSLO Office Coordinator

ECOSLO is 100% reliant on and appreciative of the people who support our program through their direct work efforts and their memberships.

## ULTIMATELY WHAT SHINES THROUGH IS THE AMAZING AMOUNT OF WORK THAT GETS DONE

In my humble opinion, we cannot thank you enough. It is difficult being on the end of the line that is always asking for volunteers, asking for money, asking for other donations, asking for feedback and then starting all over again.

As difficult as it may be at times, the outcome is worth the discomfort.

Ultimately what shines through is the amazing amount of work that gets done due to the combined time and efforts of the askers and the responders.

It may not be glamorous or high profile but what we all provide our community

is invaluable and we all benefit. Our calls for volunteers have been answered repeatedly throughout the year and we hope that they continue to be answered.

In a rough numbers recap of the year, ECOSLO has provided a docent for a hike or recruited volunteers for or has

participated directly in approximately 53 events since January 2010, and with two months left, we will most definitely make it to 55.

A few of these events include the following projects: National Trail Days, trail maintenance with the City of San Luis Obispo, County of San Luis Obispo Parks trail and facilities work, California Coastal Cleanup Day and a variety of other cleanups and maintenance projects. At a minimum, approximately 1,500 volunteers made it all possible. All I can humbly say is wow, you are amazing and can we do it all again?

For up-to-date schedules of ECOSLO projects and programs and other community events, please visit our calendar on our website at [www.ecoslo.org](http://www.ecoslo.org).