

SLO STEWARDS

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SLO City's Natural Resources

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

FROM PLANNING TO DOING

(PART II)

by
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Natural Resources Manager
City of San Luis Obispo



THE SUMMER/FALL 2004 issue of SLO Stewards featured an article headlined “From Planning to Doing” in which the “Conservation Guidelines for Open Space Lands of the City of San Luis Obispo” accepted by the City Council in 2002 was discussed. Since then, two more conservation plans have been approved, with a third in progress (Stenner Springs Nature Reserve). Johnson Ranch is the most recent completion, opening this May after more than a year of planning and hard work.

The Johnson Ranch differed from all other Conservation Plans undertaken by City Natural Resources staff because Johnson Ranch was private property with no history of any kind of public use. Areas such as Bishop Peak, Cerro San Luis, South Hills, and the Irish Hills had all experienced years of informal public use. Because these spots had public use patterns, conservation plan development was relatively simple. The Johnson Ranch, however, had been a private cattle ranch.

This situation presented City staff with a new issue: what was the appropriate level and character of public use? Some? A lot? Or none at all? Johnson Ranch was kept in a “land bank” until this issue could be answered. Use

consisted of continuing the livestock grazing, and occasional guided walks, but was closed to general public use. In 2007, public input favored caution in opening the property to public use; however, it was also clear that some level of public use—primarily trail use—was desired by the community.

The resulting plan established a trailhead with information about the Johnson Ranch and its natural and cultural history, as well as a trail system to take visitors into several areas of the property. Restoration efforts around the property were called for, including

Dry Creek and Forbes Pond, as well as the adoption of a seasonal grazing program.

Trail construction began in Fall 2008, led by volunteers from Central Coast Concerned Mountain Bikers (CCOMB) and SLO Chamber of Commerce Leadership Class XVII. These groups and others built 2.2 miles of trail.

Members of the Johnson family and SLO native, Herb Filipponi supplied historical photos. Photos of the quarry that operated along Dry Creek in the early 1900's were found and will be added

continued inside on page 2

Bert Forbes and Steve Curtiss join City council members, City staff and volunteers to cut the ribbon and open Johnson Ranch to the public.



PHOTOS BY
LINDSEY COLLINSWORTH
GAIA GRAPHICS & ASSOCIATES

ONLY RAIN DOWN THE DRAIN

by
Freddy Otte
CITY BIOLOGIST

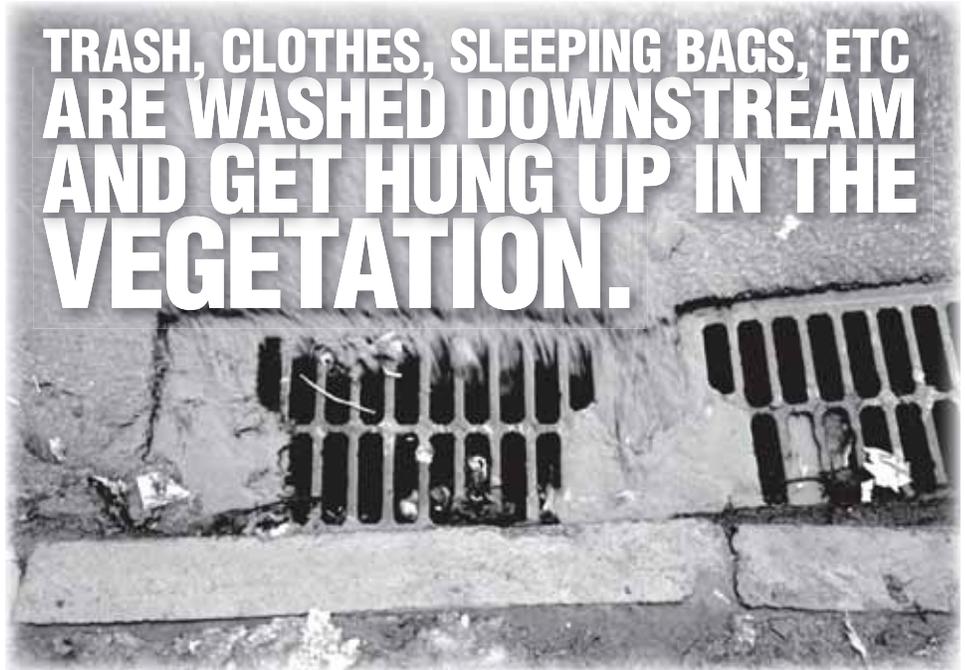
The City Aggressively Confronts Stormwater Pollution To Keep Creeks and Ocean Clean

“ONLY RAIN DOWN THE DRAIN” is going to get more attention in the very near future. The Regional Water Quality Control Board is issuing higher standards for water quality, and the City of San Luis Obispo is preparing for our official enrollment in the statewide program.

With the current financial situation, City staff decided not to fill the Stormwater Manager position and decentralized the program.

Responsibilities will be delegated to individuals, and the Natural Resources Program will be the coordinator and liaison to the Regional Water Board. It is our goal to achieve suitable habitat by ensuring construction debris, human and pet waste, and trash stay out of our waterways.

There are several straightforward solutions to achieve this program's goals. The City purchased two “Vac-trucks” to allow Public Works staff to go around the City and clean out drain inlets before the rainy season flushes the accumulated



debris into the creek and ocean.

General development proposals will go through another level of review to ensure the development will not alter the current water flow pattern across the property. Construction must also follow

appropriate measures so no sediment or debris leaves the site. Steep fines are the result if the measures are not followed, or if stormwater is not properly contained.

The sensitive matter of trash and fecal waste left behind in creek areas by transient people requires a great deal of attention. City staff have escorted service providers to transient encampments to offer help and provide education about their impact on natural resources. The creeks are difficult to patrol because transients move frequently.

Trash, clothes, sleeping bags, etc. are washed downstream and get hung up in the vegetation. Volunteers remove trash once a year on Creek Day, and the City contracts cleanup crews during the year.

This program will be challenging to implement, but the first few years will involve adaptive management to reach the approved objectives; ensuring only rain goes down the drain.

DOING *continued from front*

to the trailhead's permanent display.

All the work resulted in a fantastic ribbon cutting at the Johnson Ranch on May 22, 2009, finally opening it to the public. The event was attended by many excited citizens who took the opportunity to explore the trail. Work on the “North Loop” Trail, and plans for restoration activities continue, and it is hoped that it will be completely open by fall.

The public is invited to visit and enjoy the history, wildlife, interesting vegetation, and scenic beauty of the Johnson Ranch. The City extends its thanks to the



5/22 CCCMB members came to celebrate the opening of Johnson Ranch and became the first to ride the new trail.

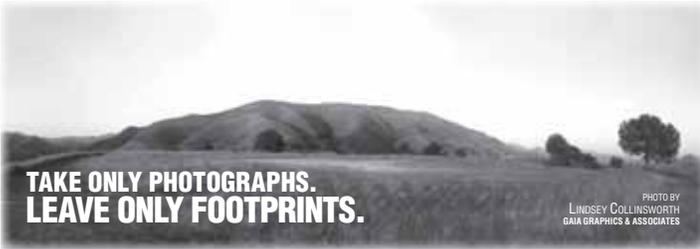
Johnson family, SLO Chamber of Commerce, CCCMB, and the many other parties who were so instrumental in making the opening of the Johnson Ranch such a great success.

Natural San Luis Docent HIKES

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

- 7/18 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.
- 8/15 LEMON GROVE LOOP**
Please meet at the Cerro San Luis Natural Reserve trailhead. To access the trailhead, turn right onto Fernandez Road just before the southbound 101 Marsh St. on-ramp.
- 9/19 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.
- 10/17 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.

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



SLO City Parks & Rec Ranger-Led HIKES

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

- 7/19 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.
- 8/09 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.
- 9/20 CERRO SAN LUIS**
Please meet at the Cerro San Luis Natural Reserve trailhead. To access the trailhead, turn right onto Fernandez Road just before the southbound 101 Marsh St. on-ramp.
- 10/11 STENNER SPRINGS**
Highway 1 towards Morro Bay. Less than a mile out of town turn right on Stenner Creek Rd. Follow road for 2 1/2 miles to the end, or park under the train trestle and carpool to the trail head.

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

SLO Stewards TRAIL WORK

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

- 7/18 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.
- 8/08 IRISH HILLS from MADONNA**
Highway 101, take Los Osos Valley Rd north towards Los Osos. Turn left on Madonna Rd. Follow to the end. Parking on street. Walk up the dirt road to the trailhead.
- 8/22 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.
- 9/12 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.
- 9/26 CERRO SAN LUIS**
Please meet at the Cerro San Luis Natural Reserve trailhead. To access the trailhead, turn right onto Fernandez Road just before the southbound 101 Marsh St. on-ramp.
- 10/10 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.
- 10/17 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.

For info call: City Ranger Desk at 781-7302. Visit: www.slocity.org/parksandrecreation.

This summer check out the Jr. Ranger Activity Camp

GET OUTSIDE AND PLAY!
Learn more about the world you live in!

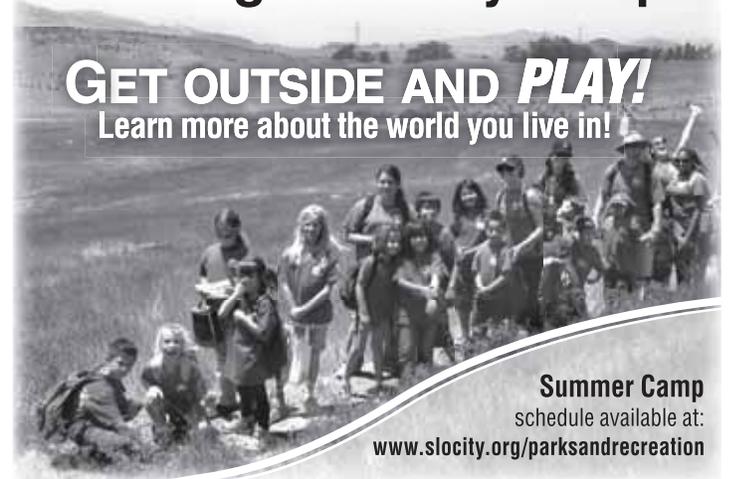


Photo courtesy of San Luis Obispo Parks and Recreation



ATTACK OF THE INVASIVE WEEDS!

by **Holly Sletteland**
Volunteer Coordinator
ECOSLO

IT SEEMS THAT THERE IS AN “awareness week” for just about everything these days. And while there may be a lot of awareness weeks clamoring for our attention, I feel it is an indication that we live in an increasingly complex world. The issue of invasive weeds is often overlooked, but it is a problem that is in great need of heightened awareness.

We generally have no idea how much havoc weeds wreck on our landscapes, both cultivated and wild. Invasive weeds cost us billions of dollars each year in crop losses, and more in herbicides and other control measures. Invasive species are also a tremendous threat to our cherished parks and open spaces. They crowd out native plants and animals, fuel wildfires, and guzzle up scarce water supplies.

WE GENERALLY HAVE NO IDEA HOW MUCH HAVOC WEEDS WRECK ON OUR LANDSCAPES

In 2004, the State Legislature decided to make invasive weeds a priority to us all, making the third Monday in July the start of California Invasive Weeds Awareness Week (CIWAW).

Marc Lea, Coordinator of the SLO County Weed Management Area (WMA) states, “Invasive, nonnative weeds have a profound impact on our states resources, causing lost crop

productivity, millions of dollars in control costs, and the degradation of our natural habitats... the invasive thistle has infested more than 22% of the state, choking out native plants and poisoning horses who eat too much of its toxic foliage. Giant reeds have form[ed]

monocultures with little habitat value for local wildlife, consuming millions of gallons of freshwater, and increasing the risks of both fire and flooding.”

California Weed Awareness Week was established to educate the public about the severe impacts caused by invasive weeds. CIWAW was also created to support the work of local groups that are trying very hard to curb the spread. SLO

Stewards is one example of a group doing their part to subdue and conquer these menacing weeds.

To do your part to help control invasive weeds and restore native vegetation at

your favorite Open Space, volunteer at one of the SLO Stewards trail workdays. Dates for trail work found inside.

Or learn more at:

http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/agcomm/Weed_Control.htm

Photo by Lindsey Collinsworth of Gaia Graphics & Associates.