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S L O C I T Y ' S N A T U R A L R E S O U R C E S

Collaboration for Conservation

STORY BY
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Natural Resources Manager,
City of San Luis Obispo

The City of San Luis Obispo has teamed up with the county of San Luis Obispo, The Land Conservancy, ECOSLO, Sierra Club, the National Guard and a long-time local farming family in a major project to permanently protect two key properties within the City's Greenbelt.

These are the Union Pacific Railroad Properties on West Cuesta Ridge, and the Ercole and Naomie Brughelli Ranch on Buckley Road. The railroad properties are being purchased by the Land Conservancy, with most of the funding coming from a grant from the National Guard, and an agricultural conservation easement is being purchased on the Brughelli Ranch primarily with funds from the City of San Luis Obispo. Both projects require additional fundraising, and thus a major collaborative effort has gotten underway.

The purchase agreement is a "bargain sale," that is, a below-market transaction. The Brughellis are donating 25% of the approximately \$1,000,000 value of the easement, and the City has agreed to pay \$750,000. Of this amount \$550,000 is on hand now and the City is raising the rest. We are grateful to Ercole and Naomie Brughelli, and to Jim Brabeck, Bob Neal, and Rick Racouillat for their unwavering commitment to this visionary agricultural conservation project.

The Brughelli Ranch

The 390-acre Brughelli Ranch on Buckley Road is one of the largest single properties in the area south of the airport. It consists of prime soils, about 50 acres of which are currently farmed, and rolling hills used for livestock grazing.

Ercole and Naomie Brughelli have repeatedly stated their interest in preservation of the property, which has been in the family for generations, and, together with their advisors Jim Brabeck, Bob Neal, and Rick Racouillat, have participated in lengthy negotiations with the City to develop a concept that will essentially pay the Brughellis to legally restrict the property to uses consistent with agricultural zoning in the County forever.

The Union Pacific Railroad parcels on Cuesta Ridge.

Union Pacific Railroad Company has owned four parcels of land in the West Cuesta Ridge area since it acquired the Southern Pacific Railroad Company in 1998. In 2000, the City of San Luis Obispo purchased one of those parcels, consisting of 49 acres of land in Stenner Canyon from Union Pacific, and has continued to be interested in purchasing the additional parcels since that time. The three remaining parcels—one of 77 acres, one of 86 acres, and the third a 50% undivided interest in 151 acres—lie within the boundaries of Los Padres National Forest. All of the parcels contain features of significant scenic and environmental value (including springs, portions of the cypress forest on Cuesta

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PHOTO BY
ROBERT HILL

www.slocity.org/naturalresources

The South Hills Natural Reserve

STORY AND PHOTO BY
FREDDY OTTE

The South Hills Natural Reserve (SHNR) is bordered by the Woodbridge and Stoneridge developments on the north and the new Margarita Area development will act as a boundary to the south. The elevation ranges between 200 and 575 feet above sea level. Approximately 200 acres of land is encompassed in the Reserve.

The SHNR contains several natural habitat types and 8 sensitive and rare

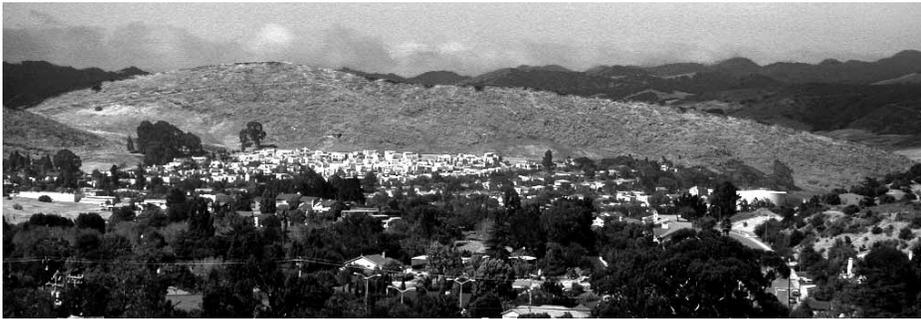
plant species located on the property. Serpentine bunchgrass and rock outcrops, annual grasslands, wetland seeps (both natural and artificial) and an ephemeral drainage are all found on the property.

There are several management issues that need to be addressed once the SHNR Conservation Plan is formally approved. These include: proper level of public access for recreation, erosion

problems associated with the communication site access road, protection and enhancement of sensitive species and habitats located on the property, encroachment of non-native vegetation, and planning for mitigation from new developments around the SHNR. This peninsula of open space has a multitude of resources on it and the City wants to be sure everything is protected.

The City is in the planning process right now and the public will have two more chances to comment on the Draft Conservation Plan for the SHNR. The Parks and Recreation Commission on November 1, 2006 at 7:00 PM SLO City Council Chambers, and the City Council meeting on December 5, 2006, 7:00 PM SLO City Council Chambers.

The Draft Conservation Plan is located on our website at www.slocity.org under the Natural Resources Program and click on the Open Space tab.



View of the South Hills Natural Reserve from across the valley upslope from Johnson Street. The Stoneridge development is located in the foreground of the South Hills.

Collaboration for Conservation *continued from front page*

Ridge, and several rare plant species), as well as being important parts of an informal recreational trail network chiefly used by local mountain bike enthusiasts.

The Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo has developed a relationship with Camp San Luis Obispo that led to the Camp and Land Conservancy jointly obtaining a \$350,000 Department of Defense grant from a program known as the ACUB (Army Compatible Use Buffer) program for purchase of the railroad parcels at their appraised price of \$448,000. Additionally, the Morro Bay National Estuary Program has pledged an additional \$49,000 to the project, since a part of the property lies within the Morro Bay watershed. At this time, the City Natural Resources Program and Land Conservancy are collaborating on a joint fundraising effort for the balance of the funds needed on the railroad properties and the Brughelli Ranch easement.

Significance of the Two Projects

Major conservation projects don't just happen... they take patience, perseverance, and lots of hard work. They also take commitment to a goal and a purpose. The Brughellis and their advisers worked with the City of San Luis Obispo for years to craft a mutually beneficial easement transaction. Many times it would have been very easy to just walk away, but no one did. Everyone stuck with the effort and saw it through to its current point on the verge of final success.

Likewise the Union Pacific Railroad could have balked at a conservation deal, or just put the property on the market for the highest bidder. But railroad management liked the idea of working with a single entity, and when the Land Conservancy approached them about completing what the City had begun in 2000, they agreed, and worked together to make another successful project.

Your help in raising \$260,000 to complete these two important acquisitions will be very greatly appreciated. All donations are tax deductible and should be sent to:

**The Land Conservancy
of San Luis Obispo County
743 Pacific Street
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401**

Please feel free to call the Land Conservancy at (805) 544-9096 or the City of San Luis Obispo Natural Resources Program at (805) 781-7211 for more info. We thank you for your help with this significant collaborative land acquisition project!



SLO City Parks & Recreation Ranger-Led Hikes

Ranger-led events are free and held on SUNDAYS starting at 1pm. For more information please call the San Luis Obispo City Parks and Recreation Department at 781-7302.

Irish Hills **Reservoir Canyon** **Bowden Ranch** **Islay Hill**

🦋 November 12 🦋 December 10 🦋 January 14 🦋 February 11

MADONNA
To reach the trailhead and meeting place, take Madonna Road until it dead ends into Irish Hills Natural Reserve, about one-third mile west of L.O.V.R.

Meet at the trailhead. Take Highway 101 north out of San Luis Obispo, past the City limits one mile and turn right onto Reservoir Canyon Road (second road past City limits). Reservoir Canyon Road will end at the trailhead.

Meet at the end of Lizzie Street. (From Johnson, turn left onto Lizzie, trailhead at end.) Our newest open space. The hike is strenuous; rather steep but not too long, stunning views for such a quick (but heart pumping) climb.

To reach the trailhead, take Tank Farm Road to Spanish Oaks Drive. Turn right on Spanish Oaks Drive and continue to Sweet Bay Lane. Turn left onto Sweet Bay Lane, trailhead is at the end of Sweetbay Lane.

Natural San Luis Docent Hikes

All Natural San Luis Docent-led events are free and held on SATURDAYS starting at 9am. For more information please call 544-1777 or 781-7211.

Guidetti Ranch **Johnson Ranch** **Bishop Peak** **Irish Hills**

🦋 November 25 🦋 December 9 🦋 January 20 🦋 February 17

PREFUMO CYN
Meet at the Prefumo Canyon trailhead. From Highway 101, take Los Osos Valley Road north, turn left onto Prefumo Canyon Road and stay on it for one mile. The trailhead is on the left after the bridge crossing.

Johnson Ranch is located off Ontario Road in south SLO. Follow South Higuera to the end. The Ranch gate is to the right before entering the freeway.

FELSMAN LOOP
Meet at the Patricia Dr. trailhead. To reach the trailhead take Foothill Blvd. west and make a right turn at Patricia Dr. Continue north on Patricia Dr. and the trailhead will be on the left just past Patricia Court.

MADONNA RD
Please meet at the Madonna Road trailhead. To reach the trailhead, take Madonna Road west. Follow this road until it ends at DeVaul Ranch Road. The trailhead is on the left up the path.

SLO Stewards Trail Work

SLO Stewards maintain trails, creeks and open space. Work parties go out on SATURDAYS from 9am to 1pm.

Bishop Peak **Bowden Ranch** **Irish Hills** **Cerro San Luis** **Islay Hill** **Bishop Peak** **Irish Hills** **Reservoir Canyon**

🦋 November 4 🦋 November 18 🦋 December 2 🦋 December 16 🦋 January 13 🦋 January 27 🦋 February 10 🦋 February 24

FELSMAN LOOP
We'll meet at the Patricia Dr. trailhead. To reach the trailhead take Foothill Blvd. west and make a right turn at Patricia Dr. Continue north on Patricia Dr. and the trailhead will be on the left just past Patricia Court.

Meet at the trailhead at the end of Lizzie Street, off Johnson. The trail ascends up the ridge behind San Luis High, and actually connects to the Reservoir Canyon Open Space. Rather steep but not too long. Less than a mile to the top for stunning views.

PREFUMO CYN
Meet at the Prefumo Canyon trailhead. From Highway 101, take Los Osos Valley Road north, turn left onto Prefumo Canyon Road and stay on it for one mile. The trailhead is on the left after the bridge crossing.

Meet at the Cerro San Luis Natural Reserve trailhead. To access the trailhead, turn right onto Fernandez Road just before the southbound 101 Marsh Street on-ramp.

To reach the trailhead, take Tank Farm Road to Spanish Oaks Drive. Turn right on Spanish Oaks Drive and continue to Sweet Bay Lane. Turn left onto Sweet Bay Lane, trailhead is at the end of Sweetbay Lane.

FELSMAN LOOP
We'll meet at the Patricia Dr. trailhead. To reach the trailhead take Foothill Blvd. west and make a right turn at Patricia Dr. Continue north on Patricia Dr. and the trailhead will be on the left just past Patricia Court.

MADONNA RD
Please meet at the Madonna Road trailhead. To reach the trailhead, take Madonna Road west. Follow this road until it ends at DeVaul Ranch Road. The trailhead is on the left up the path.

Meet at the Reservoir Canyon trailhead. Take Highway 101 north out of San Luis Obispo, past the City limits one mile and turn right onto Reservoir Canyon Road (second road past City limits). Reservoir Canyon Road will end at the trailhead.



Slo STEWARDS

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S L O S T E W A R D S S P O R T S

A D V E N T U R E

Pesticide Free Parks

STORY BY MORGAN RAFFERTY
Executive Director, The Environmental Center
of San Luis Obispo County

The use of pesticides in urban areas results in a variety of serious impacts to our community. Many of our City parks are in the watersheds for local creeks and the ocean. Pesticide drift and runoff can lead to harmful levels of pesticides in our rivers, streams and ocean. Serious risks are posed to children, wildlife, and pets from urban pesticide use.

Children face more risks than adults from pesticide exposure. They absorb more pesticides relative to their body weight than adults. Their immature, developing bodies are sensitive to toxins. Because of their elevated respiratory rate, they inhale airborne pesticides at a higher rate than adults. Studies have shown that a child's exposure to pesticides during critical stages of development may have permanent and irreversible effects. One study has found that children exposed to pesticides or herbicides in the first year of life had their risk of developing chronic asthma. Another study found that children who are exposed to garden pesticides are six times more likely than others to suffer from childhood leukemia. Pesticide exposure has also

been linked to many other adverse effects including learning disabilities, nervous system disorders, hyperactivity, immune deficiency, and many forms of cancer.

It is time to protect our children from the risks of pesticide exposure.

ECOSLO successfully worked with the City to eliminate pesticide use at Johnson Park. This park is being managed using Integrated Pest Management Practices (IPM). Following the success of this program, we are asking for community support for the use of IPM practices at all of our City parks. According to the EPA, Integrated Pest Management is both an effective and environmentally sensitive means to control pests. It is also a way to manage pests with the least risk to humans and the environment. IPM relies on prevention and knowledge of pest ecology to manage pests. Several cities and park districts around our state have successfully converted to IPM practices. We hope you will all join us to bring pesticide free parks to our city.

