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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

To Save a Tree

Going the Extra Mile to Protect an Oak Tree
is Good Business to this Builder

BY NEIL HAVLIK, Ph.D.

Natural Resources Manager,
City of San Luis Obispo

Tract 1259 always was a challenging one. This subdivision, approved by the City Council of San Luis Obispo in 1985, involved a 17 lot subdivision extending San Luis Drive between Highway 101 and the ridge east of the City. It was a challenge because the property had limited flat ground suitable for building and had numerous trees on it, which the City Council wished to see protected. These were mostly coast live oaks, but also a few large old Monterey cypress trees and at least one large sycamore. The Council required an "Agreement to Preserve Trees" to be recorded against each of the eleven affected lots, required dedication of an open space easement on the hillsides (affecting portions of fifteen of the lots), dedication of a stretch of San Luis Obispo Creek to the City, and had strong safeguards built into the subdivision to enforce the conditions.

The project also was challenging because the subdivision was never built out. For twenty years the lots

sat there without any home building on them. Finally, in 2005 the entire subdivision was sold and the new owner began looking at both selling lots for custom homes and building some homes for sale himself.

Well, after twenty years conditions had changed. At least one of the large trees had died and was nothing but a stump. Many others, which had been small when the project began, had become significant trees themselves. Most importantly, however, the trees closest to the logical homesites had grown larger and more significant, and presented greater challenges than ever in accommodating development of the lots. This was likely to create some real challenges when lot owners began to come in with building plans.

This last challenge was the toughest one for John Voisinet. A local architect and builder, John had purchased one of the lots to build a home and was having a hard time making it work with the large tree that would be closest to the house. Putting in a standard foundation

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Coon Creek Steelhead Surveys

STORY AND PHOTO BY
FREDDY OTTE

The surveys to assess the recolonization effort of steelhead trout in Coon Creek has shifted gears from looking for adults spawners ascending the creek, to juveniles smolting and heading to the ocean.

Once the juveniles reach about five inches in length, they have the tendency to head out to the ocean. This process of transformation from being a freshwater fish to being able to live in the ocean is called smolting. It is characterized by a change in body color from varied reds, greens, and black parr



marks on their sides to sleek green backs with silver sides. Scales fall off and are replaced with the new coloration coming back in, helping them blend into the specific surroundings of their new environment and avoid predators.

The smolt survey was to be accomplished by dragging a seine net across the estuary, but due to constant bull kelp and large rocks, snorkeling for visual verification was used instead. Also, in order to seine steelhead for inspection, a "take" permit would have been required from NOAA Fisheries since the fish would be captured and handled. Snorkeling is a much less invasive sampling technique and favored for identification surveys whenever possible. As before, surveys are conducted bi-weekly. To date, several juvenile steelhead smolts have been observed within the estuary. The surveys will continue until the end of June.

The next survey to be conducted will estimate abundance of fish in each of the pools created by the rock weirs. A secondary action will be to visually inspect the structural integrity of the weirs over time. PG&E has underwater video equipment that we are hoping to borrow this summer to record footage of the fish utilizing the new habitat formed since the weirs were installed.

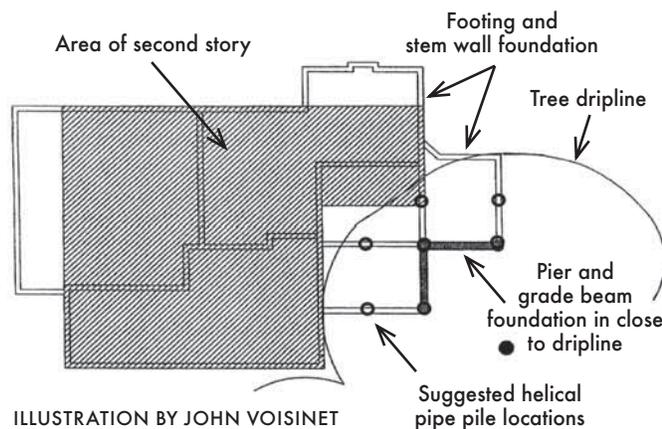
The adult surveys, completed in early April, observed only one small adult in a large redd, or spawning site, that was found within the project area. Snorkel gear was used to see and positively identify the fish holding under a rock in the pool. Many small redds formed by resident fish were discovered all along the creek showing the potential for increased recruitment to the steelhead population. Offspring, even from resident trout, can revert to the anadromous lifecycle and become true steelhead.

To Save a Tree *continued from front page*

was out of the question, since the house "footprint" went well inside the canopy of the tree, and it would result in many cut roots, perhaps more than the tree could withstand. City staff suggested that pier and grade beam construction might be the way to go. This way, only the small cross-sections represented by the piers would be in the ground, and the impact on the tree could be reduced or eliminated.

John agreed and retained the services of a soils engineer to plan the pier layout. But word came back that this would not work because it would require as much as 60 to 80 feet of drilling to reach rock that could support the weight of the house.

What to do? John came back with an idea. What if he did short stretches of standard foundation radiating out from the tree like spokes of a wheel, and then placed a grade beam connecting them? This would minimize any



root damage as the long axis of the foundations would be radiating out from the tree, just like the roots, and the grade beam would avoid the need for any foundation cutting across the root zone. Additional support would be provided by "helical pipe piles" (read "giant screws") drilled into the ground. This is illustrated above.

After due consideration, it was agreed that this was a very good idea,

which gave the tree an excellent chance of surviving the nearness of the construction without damage, and was worth pursuing. This was critical to John, who wanted to integrate the tree into the house plan and make it a centerpiece of the site.

We don't know the end to this story as the house construction has not yet been started. The general consensus, however, is that the "radiating spokes" idea is a brilliant one that should work and could be tried in similar situations at much less cost than the pier concept, especially in areas where the piers would have to be very deep.

Kudos to John Voisinet for his concern about this tree, and his willingness to go the extra mile to preserve it and make it an asset and integral part of his home.

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.

Islay Hill	Cerro San Luis	South Hills	Bishop Peak
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👉 July 16	👉 August 13	👉 September 10	👉 October 15
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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.

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

South Hills Open Space. The trailhead is located on Exposition Drive, off of South Street.

Bishop Peak Natural Reserve @ Patricia. To reach the trailhead and meeting place, take Foothill Blvd. to Patricia Dr. Trailhead is on the left, just past Patricia Court.

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.

Bowden Ranch	Lemon Grove	South Hills	Reservoir Canyon
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👉 June 24	👉 July 15	👉 August 12	👉 September 23
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The newest parcel of open space. Neil Havlik will be leading this unique hike. Meet at the end of Lizzie Street. (From Johnson, turn left onto Lizzie, trailhead at end.) Bring lunch or snacks and plenty of water - lasts up to four hours.

Meet at the Cerro San Luis Natural Reserve trailhead. From South Higuera at Marsh Street, get on the southbound 101 Marsh Street onramp, but turn right on Fernandez Road just before the onramp goes onto the freeway.

South Hills hike from the Stoneridge side. Take Broad Street South, turn right on Stoneridge and follow to end. Follow the circle, go left. Park at Pocket Park. Short hike, small elevation gain that leads you to a breathtaking 360 view.

Beautiful, shady September hike! Canyons at the base of Cuesta Grade. Meet at Reservoir Canyon Trailhead: take HWY 101 North out of San Luis Obispo, past City limits one mile and turn right onto Reservoir Canyon Road, which ends at trailhead.

T R A I L W O R K

SLO Stewards Trail Work

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

Irish Hills	Bishop Peak	Cerro San Luis	Irish Hills
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👉 July 15	👉 August 19	👉 September 9	👉 September 23
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PREFUMO CYN
To reach the trailhead and meeting place, take Prefumo Canyon Road one mile off of Los Osos Valley Road (LOVR), and the trailhead will be on the left just past the bridge.

To reach the trailhead and meeting place, take Foothill Blvd. to Patricia Dr. Take Patricia Dr. to Highland Dr. Turn left on Highland Dr. and continue until it dead-ends at trailhead.

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

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.

Central Coast Concerned Mountain Bikers continued from page 4

Irish Hills. 3CMB also works on county, state, and federal levels to build and maintain trails.

They organize at least one workday each month from September through June. Although they are primarily a group of mountain bikers, CCCMB welcomes hikers, equestrians, trail runners and other trail users. The club provides crew leaders who are experienced at offering instruction and direction as well as all necessary tools. Two of our yearly workdays are TrailWerks events, generally held in fall and spring, at which participants receive breakfast, lunch and dinner as well as an event t-shirt and a raffle item.



Take an active role in protecting and enhancing your access to beautiful mountain trails. 3CMB's dues are \$5/calendar year. If you would like to join, please send \$5.00, your name, mailing address, phone number and email address to: CCCMB at 440 D St. Cayucos, CA 93430. Please visit www.cccmb.org for more information.



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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



BY JOE O'DONNELL
PHOTOS BY PAUL REINHARDT

Central Coast Concerned Mountain Bikers

Promoters of Trail Maintenance, Access and Etiquette

3CMB's "TrailWerks" Days – An Extraordinary Success Story!

May 21st brought plenty of rain to SLO County, in the form of a torrential downpour, but that didn't hold back 3CMB from hosting a 70-person TrailWerks event out at Montana de Oro – yes, that is 70 folks who showed up and dedicated themselves to trail maintenance in the rain for 3 hours!

TrailWerks is a work/social event designed to implement 3CMB's mission to encourage low-impact riding and stress the three C's of trail use: Control, Consideration, and Common Sense. And that is exactly what everyone did: folks from 11 years old to way into retirement, men and women, hikers, equestrians and mountain bikers. It was a *great morning*, which set a new standard for future TrailWerks events.

Moving dirt since 1987, 3CMB has at its roots a group of cyclists who came together out of concern about a proposed closing of Montana de Oro State Park to mountain bikes. Since then,

3CMB has expanded its volunteer efforts to include many levels of trail maintenance and construction, totaling several thousand hours of volunteer work to date. As a direct result of our work, trails are still open to cyclists at Montana de Oro State Park.

In 1989, 3CMB decided to formally organize into what is now known as the Central Coast Concerned Mountain Bikers (CCCMB), establishing a cohesive presence here on our Central Coast.

3CMB follows land access issues and tries to prevent problems from developing to the point of closure by

working with land-managers and by offering positive suggestions and ideas. They send out periodic email alerts about issues that affect local access.

3CMB has spent a considerable amount of time establishing valuable trails in the City of San Luis Obispo, such as the King and Mariposa trails in

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