

Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation



Winter 2008

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

NO! ON THE PROPOSED MONOPOLE AT NEWHALL RESERVOIR

Sprint-Nextel applied for a permit to place a wireless communications tower on CCWD property which is located inside the Lime Ridge Open Space. This is an 80' tall structure that will be camouflaged to look like a pine tree, set in an area where the habitat is suitable for oak trees, not pine trees.

The Foundation has opposed this proposal, and *Save Mount Diablo* is supporting us in this effort. The Park, Recreation and Open Space Commission voted 6-0 against this project, but the Planning Commission narrowly approved it by a 3-2 vote. After the Planning Commission's decision, the Board of the Foundation unanimously approved appealing this decision to the City Council. We have never before appealed a decision about our open space to the City Council (certainly, those involved in the effort to preserve the open space in the 1970s did file appeals, but that was before we were established).

So, why are we opposed this project? There are several reasons. We believe that the proposed project is an inappropriate use of our open space. The people who worked so hard to preserve these open spaces from residential development would be very unhappy to see them now being used for communication towers or other forms of development. Since the project is not in compliance with the General Plan or with the wireless communication facilities ordinance, and since the PROS Commission, which has oversight over our open space, voted unanimously against this project, the City Council should reverse the decision of the Planning Commission and deny the permit. Another concern is this might not be an isolated situation. City policy is to co-locate communication towers, and there is already another cellular provider interested in the site. Also, there are 8 other reservoirs located within our open space areas. Our open space areas should not become a communication facility farm. If you are interested, we have some information about this on our website. The hearing is set for February 5, 2008. If you agree with us that this tower is an inappropriate use of open space, please consider either speaking at the City Council meeting or writing to the City Council to express your opposition to this project.

Bob Simmons, President

MANAGER'S REPORT

Cattle ranching at the Borges Ranch has been a fixture for over a century. The city has been fortunate to continue this tradition with local rancher John Ginochio who owns the cattle which graze both Shell Ridge and Lime Ridge Open Space areas. Part of conveying the feeling of an operational ranch is maintaining the many unique structures associated with the livestock business. Recently it became time to replace the wooden cattle chute which is used to load and unload cattle from the delivery trailers which still squeeze around the old ranch road. Almost \$9,000 later we have a replacement which meets our safety standards while continuing to provide the authenticity we seek at the Old Borges Ranch. As staff continue working toward the creation of a ranch environment which replicates an historical time period of the early 1900s, we also hope to bury electrical lines and remove other modern distractions from the accurate story of early Walnut Creek.

*Dan Cather
Public Services Manager*

Why So Many Acorns This Year?



That is a question we received from a lot of people this year. The answer is relatively simple. Oak trees are wind pollinators. That means that they require some wind and relatively dry weather during the critical season, which is March. Since we had a very dry March in 2007, we had a huge acorn crop. Conversely, March 2006 was an extremely wet year, and we had very few acorns.

A number of people offered to give us a bucket of acorns. We appreciate the offer, but always decline such offers. We collect the acorns we plant from the open spaces. We label each bag according to the type of oak and the area in which it was collected, so we know exactly what we are planting. Biologists have indicated that the closer the acorns are to the planting site, the more likely the planting will be successful. If you are interested in seeing more oak trees in our open spaces, why not come out with us and gather some acorns with us next fall!

FOUNDATION RESTORATION PROJECTS



Quail Habitat/Nature Area

As you proceed up the drainage from Borges Ranch, there is a thin strip of land that is fenced from grazing. This is the first area in which Bob Wisecarver started to create habitat for the California Quail, the state bird. When he first started, there were only a few quail in the area. Now, the open space staff has indicated that they have seen well over 100 quail in the area. In recognition of this and of his many other contributions to wildlife habitat enhancement in the Walnut Creek open space areas, on November 5, 2007, the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Commission designated the fenced portion of Quail Gully as the Bob Wisecarver Quail Habitat Restoration Area. And, on November 6, the City Council held a public recognition of the designation of this area and of Bob's work. A sign has been made and there will be some interpretation of the work Bob started. We are also planning further habitat enhancements in this special area.

Oak Habitat

As you may know, last year's lack of rain caused us to lose many plantings. This year we are watering sites carefully during the dry periods and expect more success.

Acorn planting began on Nov 17th and continued on Dec 1st. It consisted largely of replanting in last year's failed sites in the grazed area of north Lime Ridge. Rather than waste our efforts by removing failed sites and constructing new fenced sites in this grazed area, we used the failed, empty sites. These are now completely replanted. We also did some planting in the fenced riparian sections of north Lime Ridge.

All sites from both planting dates were watered as the soil is quite firm and dry, awaiting, hopefully, good rain in the week following. We didn't construct any new sites because of the difficulty of driving posts into the dry soil.

We have fencing, posts and rebar ready for planting 30 new sites as soon as we get good rainfall. Ten are near the Bayberry Pond and 20 are closer to the Rock Oak entrance.

We have mowed black mustard from around the pond in the fenced area near the Bayberry entrance. About five sites were planted earlier within the fenced area and five more will be planted on our next date, Dec 15th, barring a rain-out.

This year we are not using the black mulch mats we've used in past years. Ground squirrels have torn out the mulch, we believe to use in their nests. We plan, instead, to put protection around the plantings and spray

RoundUp where the mulch would suppress the weed competition.

Native Plant Regeneration

This fall we have gathered a wider variety of seeds than ever before. We are planting some ourselves and have taken others to be grown at Native Here Nursery to make use of their expertise. The new grass species that we found this spring have germinated well and we have good supplies of poppies, California fuschia, and grindelia – a total of 15,500 seedlings.

Between now and the end of January, we will be planting at Heather Farm and Shell Ridge (Sutherland) and help is always welcome. Check the website for times and dates. This is one of the most rewarding activities of the year.

Invasive Plant Control Project

The early rains sprouted many weed seeds which are now quite visible. In January we will begin careful herbicide treatment of selected areas. Last year's effort on black mustard while it was less than a foot tall was quite successful and we plan to continue the program. Young thistles are also evident and we will apply Transline on them. It targets the thistle family of which we have large areas in both Shell Ridge and Lime Ridge.

Late sprouting thistle varieties will be worked in February and March. In April and May we will mow black mustard when the bloom starts. Mowing too early causes low shoots and flower and resulting seeds re-supply the seed bank for the following years.

VISION WORKSHOPS OFFER VALUABLE INPUT TOWARDS THE FUTURE OF THE OPEN SPACE

On November 12, The City of Walnut Creek hosted an Open Space Vision Workshop to hear from Walnut Creek residents about our open space. This workshop was organized by a task force chosen by the Walnut Creek Parks, Recreation and Open Space Commission which included a representative from the Open Space Foundation. Almost 30 residents including 11 Foundation members and friends contributed their ideas to the discussions at the workshop. The goal of the workshops is to give Walnut Creek Open Space staff much needed input on how to improve future operations and guide future capital investments in the open space.

The next workshop session will be held on Thursday, January 17 from 7:00 until 9:00 PM at the Civic Park Community Center. The final session will be on Saturday, February 9 from 9:00 until 11:00 AM at the Heather Farm Park Community Center. If you attended the first workshop, you don't need to attend the other sessions. If you did not attend the first session, please try to attend one of the next sessions. This is your opportunity to show your interest in and support for our open space. Walnut Creek residents can also contribute by filling out an online survey. Our home page at www.wcosf.org has a link to the survey.

A "SEPTEMBER OF CARING" ABOUT THE WALNUT CREEK OPEN SPACE

It was a busy September for the Open Space Foundation with several events taking place.

Foundation volunteers visited Sun Terrace Elementary School in Concord on September 8th to work with three third grade classes propagating native plant seeds. The students will care for these plans until we are ready to plant them in December.

On September 10th volunteers from Chevron Corporation helped Foundation volunteers start over 9,000 containers of native grass and wildflower seed. And on September 12th volunteers from Wells Fargo Bank started another 5,000 containers, gathered up sheets of solarizing plastic and collected acorns. The event was part of the Week of Caring program organized by the Volunteer Center of the East Bay and was an invaluable service for our projects.

Also in September, Foundation board members Ralph Kraetsch and Bob Simmons toured the Mangini Ranch property with David Ogden of Save Mount Diablo to discuss planting oaks and riparian plants. Foundation members also collected acorns for that project.



Wells Fargo volunteers gathering acorns



Chevron volunteers propagating seeds.



Sun Terrace students with a tray of native plants

WALNUT CREEK OPEN SPACE EVENTS And HAPPENINGS



EDUCATIONAL BIRDING SERIES: Winter Sparrows and those LBBs (Little Brown Birds)

Fri., January 18/Old Borges Ranch

Sat., January 19/Lime Ridge Open Space

Winter can be cold and dreary, but that's only if you don't enjoy watching birds. Join us as we explore the world of sparrows and their allies that spend the winter in our Open Space Preserves. Friday evening will be spent in the classroom looking at slides and learning identification tips. Saturday morning we will take our newly learned skills into the field as we search for these masters of camouflage. The two-day program will include a two-hour classroom session at Borges Ranch on Friday night from 6:00 to 8:00pm, and a four-hour field session in Lime Ridge Open Space on Saturday from 9:00am to 1:00pm. The cost is \$15.00 and class size is limited to 15

people. Reservations required – contact Ranger Dan Bylin at (925) 942-0225.

PRE-SUPER BOWL BIRD WALK

Saturday, February 2

8:00 am / Sugarloaf Preserve

Join us for this Annual Rite of the Pig Skin. We will hike along Sans Crainte Creek searching for our avian friends. Maybe we'll even spot the Phoenix. Bring binoculars if you have them. Meet at the Ranger station rain or shine. Reservations are not required. For more information call Ranger Bruce Weidman at (925) 944-5766.

LIME RIDGE MONTHLY HIKE

2nd Sunday at 9:00 am, Lime Ridge Open Space, December 9, January 13, February 10 and March 9

Put on your good hiking boots, grab a water bottle, a snack and a hat. It's time to join the Ranger on a guided hike into incredible Lime Ridge Preserve. The trails pass through oak woodlands, grasslands, and inland scrub habitats that are the homes of a great variety of animals. No reservations are necessary and rain cancels. Meet at the parking lot at the corner of Cowell and Ygnacio Valley Roads. Call Ranger Art Janke at (925) 930-7731 for additional information.

BIRD WALKS WITH RANGER DAN

Saturday, December 15, 9:00 to 11:00 am, Shell Ridge Open Space

We will wander around Borges Ranch and then head up towards Shell Ridge exploring the riparian and chaparral habitats near the ranch. Meet in the parking lot at Borges Ranch.

Saturday, February 16, 9:00 to 11:00 am, Lime Ridge Open Space

We will be hiking the Paradise Valley Trail watching for raptors and birds of the oak woodlands. Meet in the parking lot at the corner of Cowell and Ygnacio Valley Roads.

Saturday March 15, 9:00 to 11:00 am, Acalanes Open Space

Join in a stroll along the Souza Trail and search the woodlands around Putnam Creek for spring migrants. We will meet at the end of Souza Dr.

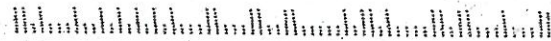
For more information please contact Ranger Dan Bylin at (925) 942-0225

PETS NOT PERMITTED AT PROGRAMS OR EVENTS

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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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