

Trails Committee Update – Action Requested

A discussion of Open Space issues including changes to trail use and concerns and remedies for overuse and misuse of Walnut Creek’s Open Space is planned for the August 2020 Park, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Commission meeting. A report by Open Space staff will present a process for evaluating requests for changes in use of specific trails. Changes to trail use may affect anyone who uses our Open Space. It is important that you be aware of this upcoming discussion and if possible, give your input. If you can attend, please plan to do so. If you can’t attend, write an email with your concerns using the Parks and Open Space email form at <https://www.walnut-creek.org/about-us/contact-us>.

This meeting is currently planned for early August. However, the meeting might have to be re-scheduled if the current social distancing/stay at home health department order is still in effect then. Please check the City of Walnut Creek calendar of public meetings at <https://www.walnut-creek.org/government/public-meeting-agendas-and-videos> for changes before the proposed date. We will email those of you for whom we have addresses when we know the date and also provide a link to the staff report.

Some background:
 We began the exploration of

(continued on page 3)

How We Spend Your Money

After we presented a check for \$20,000 to the City of Walnut Creek in December as our share of a drainage improvement project for Bayberry Pond (see separate article), we got a note from one of our members saying they would not donate to us further if we gave money to other people. We thought we should take this opportunity to tell our members how we use your money. Our only source of income is your membership donations.

For the first ten years of our existence, we had almost no money. We learned to be frugal and we have never forgotten those lessons. After we began the Oak Habitat Restoration Project, we began to grow and our finances improved as a result. In 2004 we made our first contribution to a project that would improve the Open Space and since then we have made several others:

Year	Amount	Purpose
2004	\$1,000	Diablo Gateway, to preserve the view-shed on Mt. Diablo from the Borges Ranch area
2007	\$10,000	Toward the purchase of Mangini Ranch, to help connect Lime Ridge to other conserved land on Mt. Diablo
2010	\$10,000	Toward the purchase of 23 additional acres at the top of Acalanes Ridge
2015	\$10,000	To help the City of Walnut Creek buy a 5-acre EBMUD inholding at Sugarloaf
2019	\$20,000	To correct an erosion problem that affected our restoration of Bayberry Pond
2019	\$10,000	Fencing to protect a new oak grove at Rock Oak in Lime Ridge North

Today we are fortunate that your generosity provides us enough money to run our day-to-day operations and set aside some money toward our larger goals. There are still land purchases that would better connect the Open Space to other conserved lands, and we want to be ready to help pay for them if the opportunity arises.

—Lesley Hunt

Please Share Your Email

Most of you have already shared your email address with us, but we have no fast way to communicate with the 25% who haven’t. The only times we really need it is to reach you quickly when we have an issue in front of the City government as we do now. If you would consider sharing, you’ll hear from us maybe once a year. To share, please write to contact@wcosf.org with a title like “sharing email” and give us your name (because it isn’t always obvious from the email address).

Restoration Project Updates

Lime Ridge Oak Habitat

We, the oak habitat crew, had an uphill battle this season in serving wildlife. We planted many acorns, buckeye nuts and chaparral seed, but lack of rainfall intervened. We began a desperate effort by February to bring in water. Some germination came, but not the bonanza we had planned for. Is climate change a factor? I think you could almost win a bet on it! Still we will continue to experiment in the future!

—Gary Muerle



Thousands of Poppies – And thousands of other natives adorn Fossil Hill, Shell Ridge. Photo: Phil Johnson

spring wildflowers, the pond was only shallowly ponded for a few weeks this winter. However, the native grasses and monkey flower that were planted this year are doing well. An eagle scout project helped remove a large area of weeds near the pond spillway this year and planted a large number of native grasses and rushes along with several buckeye and elderberry.

We will now turn to weeding and watering these areas to maintain them through the summer!

—Sean Micallef



Gary Muerle plants acorns at North Lime Ridge Restoration Project. Photo: Kime Smith

clay soils. Coastal sage continues its expansion into all areas of the project from its original site in the rocks at the top of Fossil Hill. Two plants that showed up last year that had never been recorded as occurring in Shell Ridge, wild carrot and hogwallow starfish (not even known to occur on Mt. Diablo), continue to create new colonies.

—Phil Johnson

Buckwheat Hill

The native grasses {*Stipa cernua*} that the 3rd graders from Lafayette planted in February on Buckwheat Hill are growing well, and some are beginning to send up seed stalks. The blooms of penstamen and poppies are spectacular, and the deerweed bushes are covered with small yellow flowers near the top of the hill. The blue gilia flowers are blooming, but deer are eating many of them. Pink clarkia are just beginning to bloom.

The main activity for volunteers in the Open Space right now is getting the weeds out before they drop their seeds for next year. The weed that is currently most challenging is *Avena fatua*, wild oats. An invasive grass from Eurasia, it grows on a long stem, drops thousands of seeds over a wide area, and can take over a field in a few years if not targeted.

If you visit the Sutherland entrance to Shell Ridge in the late afternoon when the sun is lower in the west, the silvery seed heads of the *Stipa* moving in the breeze is a breathtaking sight and a welcome reward for all the hard work fighting the dastardly weeds!

—Linda Judd

Deer Lake

In the buckeye drainage (the one furthest away from the fire road to Deer Lake), there are 40 individual sites. There are 26 with buckeyes and 8 with oaks. In addition, there is one fenced volunteer. In the drainage next to the fire road with the elderberry, there are 52 sites, with 16 buckeyes and 16 oaks. In the fenced area around Deer Lake, there are 25 sites, with 6 buckeyes and 13 oaks. In addition, there are four fenced volunteers and 2 of the 10 willow stakes I planted this winter are leafing out.

—Bob Simmons

Indian Valley Pond

Indian Valley Pond is doing well this year and is recovering after the goat damage. Some plants did end up coming back with our limited rainfall, but most plants that we thought were lost, were indeed lost. This year has been challenging with our limited rainfall. While the timing of the rainfall has been beneficial for many

Fossil Hill

Isn't it a wonder how much beauty comes from providing the birds and the bees and all their cohorts a habitat? That beauty put smiles on the faces of hundreds of people this year who were able to forget the Corona virus for a short while. We were all surprised by the abundance of flowers this year despite receiving half of our normal rainfall. Particularly successful (besides the inevitable poppies) were the baby blue eyes and the Chinese houses.

As the project matures, we are seeing plants sort themselves out in where they want to grow. In some places, the poppies have almost disappeared while tidy tips have expanded into heavier

Upgrades for Bayberry Pond

One of the first things we did when we began the Bayberry Pond restoration project in 2008 was dredge the pond in hopes that it would retain water long enough (August) to attract red-legged frogs. In 2011 the spillway failed; new engineering standards required that it be rebuilt a foot lower. Then the drought began and we were lucky if the pond had water at the end of June. In 2014 we noticed silt flowing into the pond during a storm and traced it to an outfall from Ygnacio Valley Road near the top of the drainage. The outfall was built in 1996 as part of a landslide repair project. Since then the water had downcut quite a bit and created a deep, narrow gully.

We asked the City if this could be fixed. They agreed, but they didn't have the money. We offered to help and pledged \$20,000 because all our restoration effort was not worth much without a viable pond. It still wasn't enough. The City looked for partners and found an NRCS program that paid about 25% of the cost of such



Bayberry Construction – After the backhoe resculpted the gully to make it wider and shallower, the pipe was placed in it and the gully was filled in.

improvements on land that was ranched. We had a willing rancher. Now we had enough money, but we had to wait for NRCS to design the project and get the permits. Suddenly it all came together in October 2019. After the earth moving was complete, we sprinkled our own local seed on the bare soil and City staff sprayed it with hydroseeding compound (but no seeds) to hold our seeds in place. We got it all done just before the

rain began. We now have a deepened pond that held water for longer than any other pond we saw this spring. We'll have to wait for a better rain year to see if it lasts till August. We've seen a little erosion and have planted juncus to help stabilize the area. As an unexpected bonus, the gully at the top has a large patch of lupine that grew as a result of all the soil disturbance.

—Lesley Hunt

Trails Committee Update – Action Requested

(continued from page 1)

whether and how single-track trails could be shared among user groups (cyclists, hikers/dog walkers, equestrians) in January 2018. That first committee reached an impasse shortly before Christmas. In January 2019, the committee was reconstituted under City auspices with two PROS Commissioners as co-chairs and staff support from the Open Space Division. Most of the original members continued on the second committee and a couple of new people were added to balance the representation so each major group had two members.

One primary issue we advocated from early on was that the standards for sharing trails must be agreed upon before any specific trails are evaluated for sharing, and that the criteria should be measurable and objective. We are happy that this idea has been accepted by the committee. Staff will develop the standards. Our other major concern was that protection of the Open Space's natural resources (wildlife, native plants, and the land itself) should come first.

The committee's report is not yet finalized, but we expect it to address the following:

- Education – trail sharing etiquette, caring for the land.
- Enforcement – when education isn't enough
- Changes to trail network – staff has proposed closing some social trails and recognizing others
- A proposal for a new bicycle flow trail (for technical riding) in Lime Ridge

—Lesley Hunt



New Trail Sign – Reminders for trail etiquette soon to be installed.



PO BOX 309
WALNUT CREEK, CA 94597-0309

Non-Profit Org
U.S. Postage
PAID
Concord, CA
Permit No. 8981

RETURN SERVICE
REQUESTED

Inside:

- **How We Spend Your Money**
- **Trails Committee Update**
- **Bayberry Drainage Project**
- **Restoration Project Updates**



Yes, I want to help protect and preserve Walnut Creek's Open Spaces.

We invite you 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. Interested? Drop us an email at volunteer@wcosf.org, visit our website at www.wcosf.org, or fill out the form below and mail it to WCOSF, Box 309, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0309.

I would like to join the Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____ EMAIL (WE NEVER SHARE) _____

PATRON-\$500 BENEFACTOR-\$250 SUSTAINING-\$100 SPONSOR-\$50 FAMILY-\$40 INDIVIDUAL-\$25

I WOULD LIKE TO VOLUNTEER TO: MAINTAIN OAKS PLANT NATIVES CREATE WILDLIFE CORRIDORS HELP WITH OUTREACH

Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation Newsletter

Editorial Team and Contributors:
David Ogden, Lesley Hunt, Kime Smith,
Phil Johnson, Sean Micallef, Gary Muerle,
Bob Simmons, Linda Judd.

Design and Production:
Maryann Chin

Printing: Craig Tanner,
City of Concord Printing Services

Contact us: contact@wcosf.org

Website: www.wcosf.org

Visit us on Facebook



This issue of the WCOSF newsletter has been printed on recycled paper. © Copyright 2020 Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation

WCOSF Governing Board

Lesley Hunt — President, **David Ogden** — Vice President, **Linda Judd** — Secretary, **Elizabeth Hudson** — Treasurer; Earl Bates, Bill Hunt, Phil Johnson, Sean Micallef, Gary Muerle, Brian Murphy, Tim Ory, Kime Smith.

WCOSF Advisory Board

Bill Barnard, Jake Bronson, Harvey Ceaser, Jerry Christopherson, Richard Daniel, Christina Hagelin, JoAnn Hanna, Brad Heckman, Barney Howard, Russ Jones, Tom Lee, Connie Loosli, Carla Ludwig, Stuart Mangini, Bob Moran, Pat Moran, Katrina Nagle, Bob Simmons, Karl Snover, Mike Weiss.