

CALIFORNIA
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A NEW LIFE
FOR AN OLD RANCH

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CALIFORNIA COAST & OCEAN

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Dewey Schwartzenburg



WE GRIEVE FOR THE PASSING of our dear friend and colleague Dewey Schwartzenburg, who died suddenly on May 11th, five days after his 59th birthday. He was managing editor of this magazine from its launching in 1985 and worked with the Coastal Conservancy since 1982. He was a spiritual man of great gifts and abilities, who lived his life fully. He will be sorely missed.

We found among Dewey's papers an essay he wrote around 1992, reflecting on his path since 1980, when he came to California. He had graduated from Harvard College in 1967, with a major in astrophysics, gone on to Episcopal Divinity School, been ordained to the Episcopal priesthood in 1972, and after five more years of liturgical studies at the University of Notre Dame and service in several parishes, in 1980 found himself restless in Milwaukee, where he was associate editor of *Astronomy* magazine. He wrote:

SO I WENT WEST. California called to me, as it has (unfortunately) to all too many. I decided on San Francisco, not just because of its year-round mild climate, but also because the city appealed to me greatly in other ways. In addition to having one of the most beautiful natural settings of any city, San Francisco is exciting, culturally diverse, and politically liberal. And contrary to what some friends have thought, it was the straight rather than the gay community of San Francisco that attracted me. It was important to me to live in a society where one's sexual orientation is a matter of secondary interest, rather than an essential basis of personal judgment, and this is largely the case in San Francisco. Here, friends are made and personal social cultures are created on the basis of more important considerations than one's sexuality.

My work at the Coastal Conservancy is especially satisfying to me, since one of the reasons for my move was that I love the

ocean so much, and the California coast in particular. I also love mountains, and there are plenty of those here as well! Of course I especially love the Big Sur, since it is there where the mountains literally meet the sea, in a sort of Yin-Yang unity of cosmic beauty. But the High Sierra is a close second.

One of my greatest pleasures in recent years has been camping, backpacking, and whitewater rafting trips in the California wilderness, including the North Coast, the Klamath and American Rivers, and Catalina Island as well as the old standbys, Big Sur and Yosemite. And of course my work takes me all along the coast, which is a pleasure as well. Still, there is so much of California I have not yet experienced, so I rarely leave the state at all, although I did go to Baja California Sur for the solar eclipse of July 1991—witnessing a total eclipse of the sun being a lifetime dream.

Closer to home, I revel in attending the San Francisco Symphony and Opera performances, and going to Giants baseball games, college football games, and (on the rare occasions I can get tickets) 49er games. And although secularly employed, as an Episcopal priest I have remained active in the Church, having been an Assisting Priest at All Saints' Episcopal Church in San Francisco since 1983.

In short, I believe I have found my "place" in life, not just geographically but also spiritually, psychologically, personally, and socially, and am very happy with it. The basic shape of my life is very pleasing to me. Of course there are problems in the world that distress me greatly, such as the plague of AIDS, the ever-increasing plight of the poor and disenfranchised, and all the economic and social injustices of American society, but at this point in my life I personally feel highly blessed.

Neal Fishman, one of those who knew him longest at the Coastal Conservancy, reflected:

DEWEY LOVED the Coastal Conservancy. It wasn't just that he loved the Conservancy's coastal protection mission. I believe he loved the place for some of the same reasons that I do. This agency is full of very bright people, a few even approaching Dewey in smarts. We have always appreciated brainy, curmudgeonly, and slightly eccentric people. He could expound on philosophy, religion, astronomy, history, and art. It was like having your own college professor next door to answer your urge for some bit of esoteric knowledge. He was quicker than the Internet and just as authoritative.

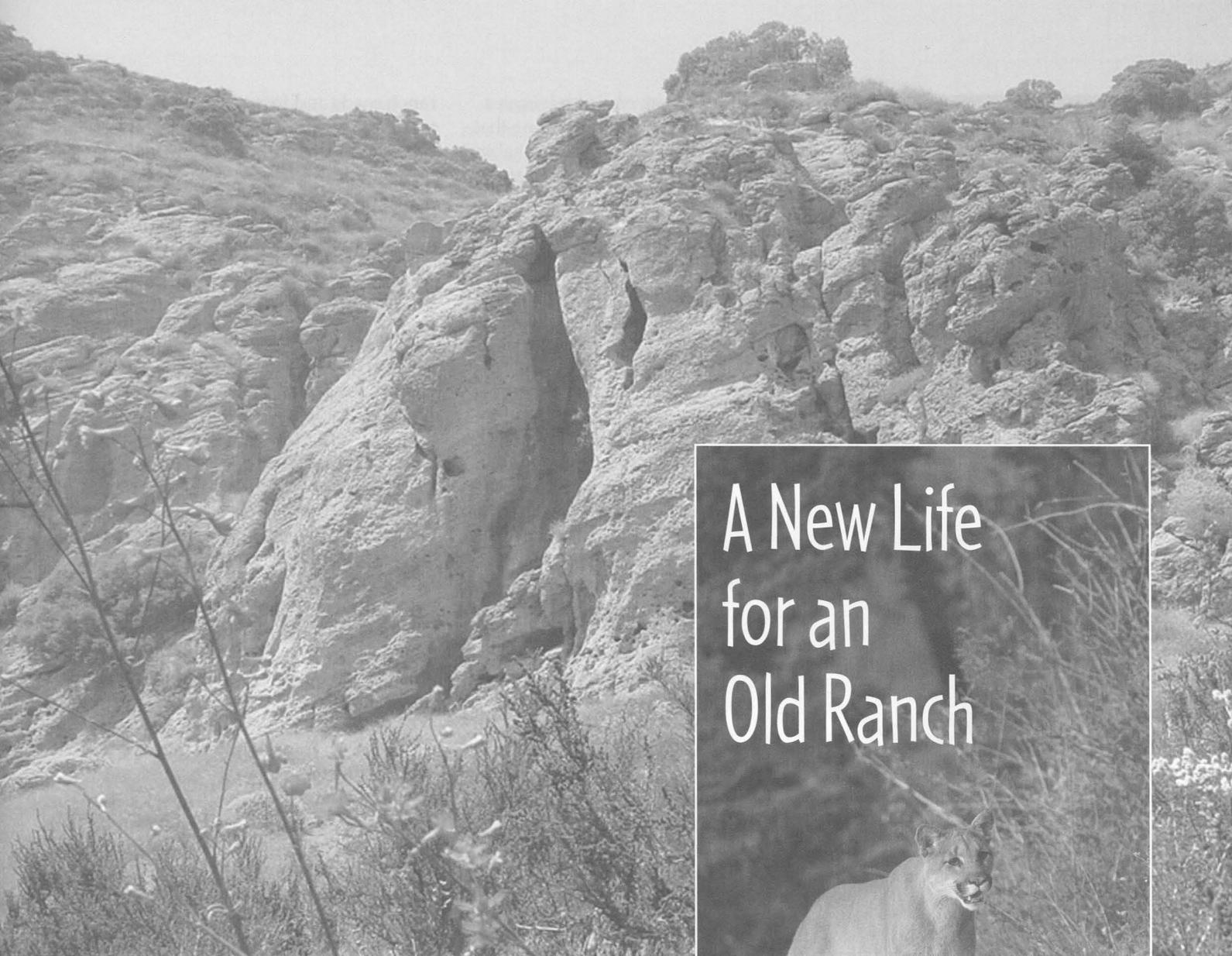
Dewey's life as a gay man was never hidden. He reveled in it and shared his friends, gay and straight, with us at numerous events and parties, and now we are sharing our grief with them.

Finally, I think that Dewey loved the Conservancy because we loved him, in all his glory, in every thing that he was, a priest, an intellectual, a wit, a baseball and opera fan, a bawdy gay man, a computer wizard, our astronomer on camping trips, a very competent editor—a friend.

Dewey's sister, Lilian Prather, requested that we include some of what he said on the celebration of his 25th anniversary as a priest.

REMEMBER the tripod of Prayer, Study, and Action to which we are all called. That is my message to you tonight, and my prayer is that you would respond to my message with the words of the Gradual Song: 'Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord? I have heard you calling in the night. I will go, Lord, if you lead me, I will hold your people in my heart.'

—Rasa Gustaitis



A New Life for an Old Ranch



DON GETTY

FORMER AHMANSON RANCH IS NOW A RESERVE

BY 9 A.M. ON DECEMBER 1, 2003, the first day the former Ahmanson Ranch was opened to the public—only three weeks after the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC) formally acquired it—a crowd of hikers and mountain bikers, along with five television crews, was waiting at the Las Virgenes Canyon Road trailhead.

“Some said they had wanted to walk in those hills for years, others said they had trespassed for years and were looking forward to coming in legally,” said Rorie Skei, who helped to negotiate the final phases of the purchase of the 2,983-acre property. This gorgeous and long-contested chunk of old California on the Ventura–Los Angeles County border is now a wildlife refuge and

natural park, the Upper Las Virgenes Canyon Open Space Reserve.

Until quite recently, it was the designated site of a new town, with 3,050 residences, two golf courses, a commercial and business center, and a 300-room hotel. Ventura County had approved a Specific Plan and an Environmental Impact Report. Then the people who had been fighting for protection of the ranch as a natural area managed to persuade the property owner, Washington Mutual Bank, to sell to the State; and persuaded the State to put up the purchase price: \$150 million in bond money from Proposition 50, the Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Act of 2002.

RASA GUSTAITIS

Top: Rugged bluffs in the scenic landscape

Above: A mountain lion (*Puma concolor*) has been tracked across the reserve.

TOP: MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY



WILLIAM LEONARD



ROBERT POTTS

Top: A coyote pup (*Canis latrans*)

Above: Coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma coronatum*)

Preservation advocates succeeded in showing that the ranch was a core habitat area for wildlife and essential to the health of Malibu Creek and Malibu Lagoon. Neighbors and downstream residents, elected officials, Hollywood celebrities, and environmental groups played major roles. They couldn't have succeeded without the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB), Coastal Conservancy, and other public agencies, as well as a bit of luck and strong political skills. The Mountains Conservancy led the way to a resolution that won the ranch for the people and wildlife of California.

Usually, after new parkland is acquired, the public must wait for months, if not years, to be officially admitted. First come studies, hearings, and meetings to resolve various conflicts of interest, then manage-

ment plans are drawn up and adopted. The planning process can be especially lengthy when endangered species are on the property, as they are here. A lot of people start grumbling about delays.

Not in this case. In approving the use of Proposition 50 money, the WCB stipulated that the new preserve be promptly opened to the public. Joe Edmiston, the SMMC's executive officer, agreed: "The public spent \$150 million so they damn well better be able to get onto the property." Besides, he added, "it's far better to have some degree of controlled access than to have people scrambling all over the place." Formal planning will occur as soon as funds become available, Edmiston said.

Skei explained it this way: "We sat down one day and said: 'Let's open it Monday.'" Skei, in addition to being deputy director of the Mountains Conservancy, is deputy executive officer of the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA), the joint powers agency that is managing the property.

Ever since, people have been visiting on foot, by bicycle, and on horseback. No motorized vehicles are permitted. Old

ranch roads and footpaths already constitute a 15-mile trail network that allows access to rolling hills and deep valleys, willow-shaded streams, and oak savannahs. Trying to keep the public out would have been not only unpolitic, but also difficult, even with rangers in residence.

Top of a Watershed

THE NEW OPEN SPACE preserve is in Ventura County, on the Los Angeles County border, only 20 miles from downtown Los Angeles. It adjoins the 155,000-acre Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. Ranging in elevation from 869 to 1,842 feet, it lies on the southeastern slope of the Simi Hills, in a protected landscape that extends, with few interruptions, from the urbanized San Fernando Valley to the Pacific Ocean. The new preserve expands the wildlife movement corridor between the Santa Monica and Santa Susana Mountains and protects the headwaters of Malibu Creek, the most ecologically significant stream emptying into Santa Monica Bay.

To understand the preserve's relationship to the ocean, you might want to approach it from the bottom of the watershed, starting at Malibu Lagoon off the Pacific Coast Highway and driving up Malibu Canyon Road along Malibu Creek, continuing on Las Virgenes Canyon Road to its northern end at the county line, the property line, and a gate and trailhead.

Until the 1920s, when Rindge Dam was built on lower Malibu Creek, steelhead would swim all the way up into their spawning grounds in Las Virgenes Creek. A few still use the pools below the dam. The Coastal Conservancy, the Southern California Steelhead Coalition, Heal the Bay, the Department of Fish and Game, and others are working to improve the water quality of Malibu Creek and to remove barriers to fish passage, including the dam, which was built to store water for ranching but has silted in completely.

To understand the preserve as a place on the urban edge, however, it may be best to approach it on Highway 101 from metropolitan Los Angeles. The first thing you notice is the thinning of traffic as you near Calabasas. Then the road rises and suddenly you are facing blue mountain ridges, a landscape that greets you like a huge wave of fresh air. You take a deep breath, your senses relax. You feel you have entered the natural world. At Las Virgenes

Canyon Road you turn off, and in another minute, you're at the ranch.

Much More to See

ON THIS PARTICULAR slightly hazy April afternoon, I'm here to meet Rorie Skei, who greets me at the locked gate off Mureau Road. It is presently the only vehicle access, used sparingly because it is a narrow road through a conservation easement. We proceed along Crummer Creek, hidden behind a willow thicket, and continue uphill. To the left is a locked-gate community, Mountain View Estates, quickly lost from view as the road keeps winding upward. We travel across drying grasslands toward Laskey Mesa (1,391 feet) and soon arrive at a low-slung ranch house shaded by a huge olive tree and live oaks. The house, constructed around 1938, looks to be in fine shape except for the "extremely fire-hazardous" shake roof Skei points out. Replacing it with a fireproof roof is a high priority for the MRCA. To raise money for that and other management needs, the agency is renting out the house and grounds for short-term income-producing events such as corporate retreats and conferences. One is going on at this very moment on the lawn. A television crew is filming the rehearsal for a wedding that will take place on the coming Saturday, to be aired sometime this summer on the "For Better For Worse" show on the cable Learning Channel.

Inside the house, two MRCA staff members are discussing upcoming educational and outreach activities, including a retreat for residents of a shelter for abused women and bus trips bringing children and families from Augustus F. Hawkins Park (see *Coast & Ocean*, Spring 2002) and other inner city locations for environmental learning and fun.

Skei and I set out in an MRCA ranger vehicle to tour the ranch along the old dirt roads. "What we'll see is only a fourth of what's here," she says. "The rest isn't accessible even to ranger vehicles." We start behind the house, at a broad flat area—one of the few relatively level places on the ranch—where a public ceremony announcing the purchase took place on October 1, 2003. This spot, the highest point within miles, also offers a 360-degree view. Mountain peaks, ridges, and long deep valleys define the horizon to the west, southwest, and southeast. Only to the east can large clusters of buildings be seen, in the San Fernando Valley.

A northern harrier swoops by. Skei drives slowly, pointing out a Cooper's hawk, a white-tailed kite, horned larks, other birds, and various plant communities. She tells of the young male mountain lion collared in the summer of 2003 and tracked. He fed on coyotes and went off

toward the northwest, to lands once owned by Bob Hope and now protected as habitat.

The ranch supports a full complement of southern California large mammal species, except for black bear, she says. (Later, before this issue went to press, she would happily report that a young bear was spotted just north of the ranch in early May, and likely also roams in the new reserve.) Plant life is in good condition, for there has been no grazing on this land since the late 1980s. Nine miles of streams flow year-round.

This is a paradise for hikers, landscape painters and photographers, birders, and students of native plants. We pass a grove of native black walnut trees, a patch of coastal sage scrub, native bunch grasses. The natural quiet of this place makes it feel so remote from nearby metropolitan areas that it's startling when, at a turn of the road, a huge white terraced mansion comes into view downhill, looming above a scatter of smaller but still substantial houses in Hidden Hills. At Victory Boulevard, a street that ends at a gate to the ranch, homeowners have erected a second gate to keep out off-road vehicles and motorcycles. Eventually there will be a trailhead at this corner of the ranch, with parking just inside and barriers to block further motorized passage.

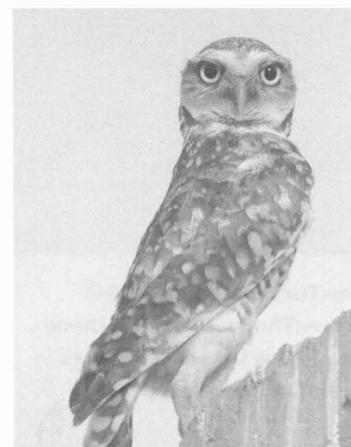
We move westward and then southward into a willow-shaded valley and ford a creek. Nearby, deep hidden pools harbor a healthy colony of endangered red-legged frogs. Before we return to the mesa we also pass a hillside where the San Fernando Valley spineflower, last seen in 1929, was rediscovered in 1999. Flags were planted by Washington Mutual's biology consultants last year to mark its exact locations. At a curve of the road five tired teenage boys are riding bicycles uphill. Skei shows them a shorter way back to the trailhead.



KEVIN MERK



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Top:The San Fernando Valley spineflower (*Chorizanthe parryi* var. *fernandina*) was thought to be extinct.

Middle: Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*)

Above: Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*)



PHOTOS THIS PAGE COURTESY GEORGE BARRETT

Top:The Barrett family, 1946
Above:The beach at Point Dume was among George E. Barrett's extensive landholdings.

History

AMONG EARLY VISITORS to the new preserve were George Barrett and his mother Muriel Barrett. George E. Barrett, Muriel's father-in-law, bought the land in the late 1930s and built the ranch house around 1938. Having money to invest and a keen eye for land values, he also bought Point Dume, Escondido Canyon, Cheeseboro Canyon, and Latigo Canyon in Malibu, and other scenic properties. "Almost all of that is now either movie stars' homes or park-land," says Skei.

Barrett ran cattle and bred horses on the ranch, and made it available to Hollywood

studios for filming big scenes in movies including *Gone With the Wind*, *Duel in the Sun*, and *They Died with Their Boots On*. In 1949 he sold most of his land holdings to R. E. Crummer. In 1963, subsidiaries of the H. F. Ahmanson Company bought the ranch, intending to build a residential subdivision. That plan fizzled, but the purchase led to the creation of the Ahmanson Land Company, charged with devising a new master-planned town. Ownership of this company changed repeatedly. In 1992 the Ventura County Board of Supervisors approved the project, but it immediately ran into opposition from the County of Los Angeles and neighboring communities complaining about traffic and other expected impacts.

To placate opponents, the final private owner of the Ahmanson Land Company and the ranch, Washington Mutual Bank, donated 10,000 acres for preservation. That land is within the area in which the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy is working to create an interlinking system of urban and rural parks and open spaces. To make this donation, the bank purchased land, including Corral Canyon and Runkle Ranch, from Bob Hope's holdings. With these donations to mitigate negative impacts, the development seemed to have a clear road ahead. Ventura County approved the Specific Plan, calling it a "model community." In any other place, it might well have been that, says Skei.

Then in the spring of 1999 a biologist working for Washington Mutual discovered two endangered species: the San Fernando Valley spineflower, thought to be extinct, and the red-legged frog, very rare in the region. Only two frog colonies were previously known to exist, and neither was in great shape. This new one, however, was thriving.

"It's to its credit that Washington Mutual stood up to the challenge," says Skei. "They worked with the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Department of Fish and Game to adjust." But the discoveries opened the way for more lawsuits, joining those already pending by the County and City of Los Angeles, the Cities of Calabasas, Agoura Hills, and Thousand Oaks, Heal the Bay and others.

In 2002 voters passed Proposition 50, providing bond funds for wetlands, wildlife, parks, and water quality projects. Advocates thought Ahmanson Ranch would qualify, and stepped up their campaign.



The Wishtoyo Foundation and the Chumash Tribe pointed to cultural heritage sites. Laskey Mesa had been inhabited for at least 6,000 years. Caves on the ranch are ceremonial sites sacred to the Chumash, Tongva, and Tataviam peoples. The Native Plant Society talked of the health of native plant communities and endangered and sensitive species. Surfrider joined in on behalf of the steelhead, and drew attention to water quality at Surfrider Beach. Some prominent figures from the entertainment industry formed an advocacy group, Rally for Ahmanson Ranch and, with Heal the Bay and others, led a campaign to generate public support. Preservation advocates even trekked by bus to Washington Mutual's headquarters in Seattle, where they demonstrated and held press conferences, as well as at regional offices en route.

"It was an amazing coalition of environmental groups," said Heal the Bay's science and policy director, Shelley Luce. "This was the first time Heal the Bay opposed a development. We're not anti-development. But there was no way to go ahead with this development without destroying an ecosystem and having major impacts down the creek." The project would have buried parts of the Malibu Creek headwaters, she said. "Our take was always from the water-quality perspective—the impact to Malibu Lagoon and Surfrider Beach."

By late June 2003, Washington Mutual was ready to talk about a sale—but only if the State acted quickly. Meanwhile, it continued to press ahead with development plans.

To tap Proposition 50 money for the pur-

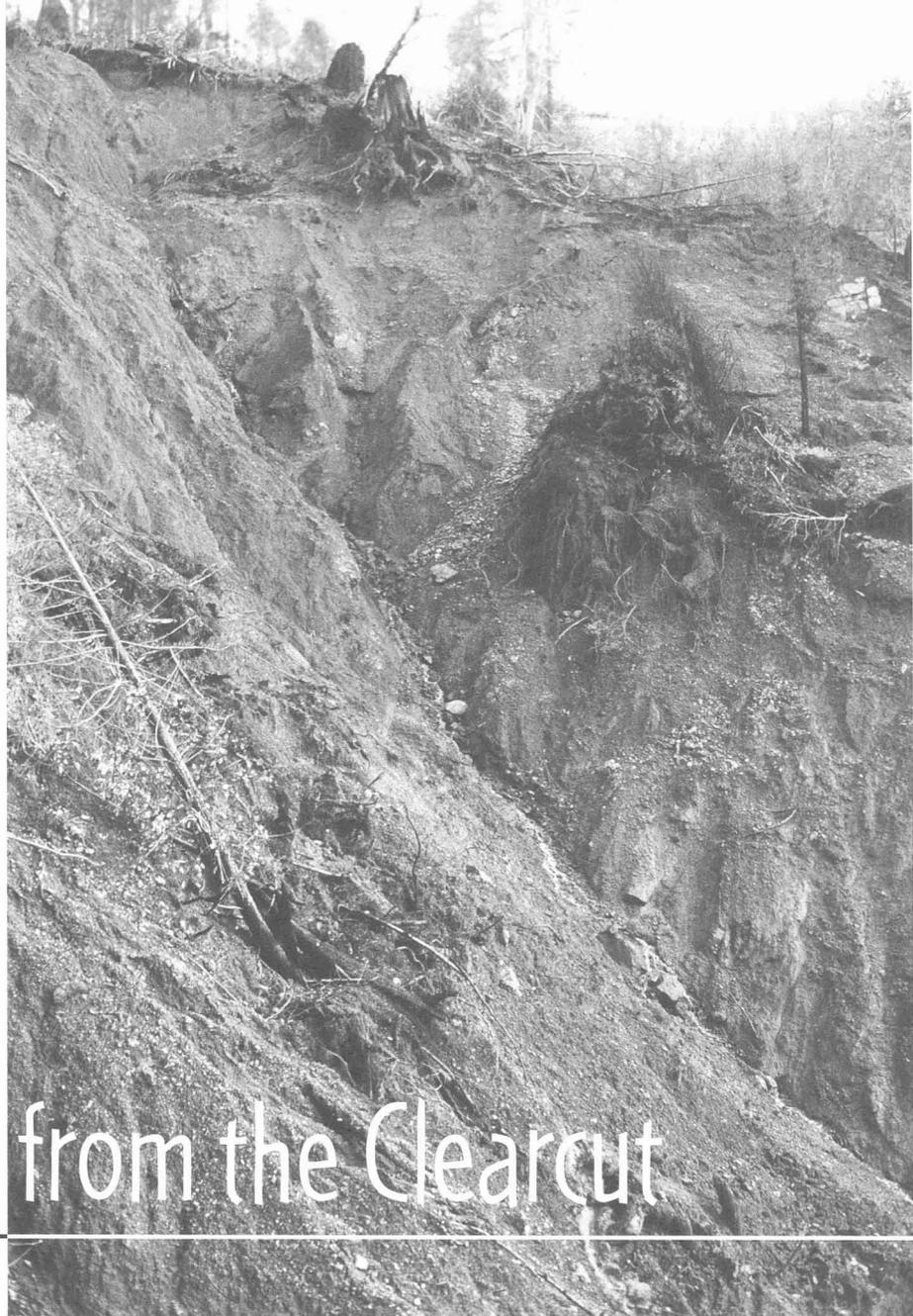
chase, advocates had to persuade the Wildlife Conservation Board, the land preservation arm of the Department of Fish and Game, that Ahmanson Ranch should take priority over other projects awaiting funding. One of the strongest arguments was continuity of core wildlife habitat, and here they had "proof positive," says Skei, in the tracked movements of the tagged mountain lion. Another strong argument was the link to Malibu Creek and Malibu Lagoon. In the end, the WCB considered the wildlife values and agreed to allocate \$135 million of the needed \$150 million, on condition that some other agency complete the purchase price. The Coastal Conservancy stepped up with \$10 million and the Mountains Conservancy contributed \$5 million. "We were glad to participate in this project because of its resource values and strong local and regional support," said WCB Executive Director Al Wright.

Like many conservation purchases, this one happened because many factors came together at one place and time. Agencies make strategic plans, but opportunities come along that must be seized or lost forever. As California's population continues to grow, this preserve will grow in value, for both people and wildlife.

As I headed back toward downtown Los Angeles, I put this place on my mental map. Next time I will take the road along Malibu Creek all the way to Malibu Lagoon, and imagine steelhead returning to the top of the watershed. Right now, however, it is great just to know that this place exists intact. ■

The Upper Las Virgenes Canyon Open Space Preserve (former Ahmanson Ranch) is open to the public daily, sunrise to sunset. Admission is free. From Highway 101, take Las Virgenes Canyon Road north for two miles to the trailhead at the road's end. Parking is streetside. Bring water, none is available. The nearest public restrooms are at Gates Canyon Park, one mile east of Las Virgenes Canyon Road on Thousand Oaks Boulevard. Guided hikes include moonlight outings. For a schedule and more information, visit <http://smmc.ca.gov>, or contact Wendy Langhans at wendy.langhans@mrca.ca.gov or call her at the Mountains Restoration and Conservation Authority: (661) 255-2937.

California red-legged frog (*Rana aurora draytonii*)



JESSE NOELL

Downstream from the Clearcut

KEITH EASTHOUSE

THE ACRONYM FOR the Pacific Lumber Company, PALCO, looms in big green letters on a white “No Trespassing” sign, just past the turnoff for Kristi Wrigley’s house. The main road continues up-slope, but a locked gate blocks further passage. Wrigley’s driveway angles to the right, briefly threads through a patch of dark redwood forest, then comes into the open as it drops down to her house, a two-story gray structure covered with hand-hewn redwood shakes, with a brick chimney.

The home is perched on a hill above an apple orchard. Beyond the orchard, screened from sight by thick vegetation, is the North Fork of the Elk River, which flows from steep slopes that used to be forested,

embraces the Wrigley spread in a 180-degree curve, and empties into Humboldt Bay just south of Eureka. Her grandfather settled here in 1903, her father, youngest of nine children, was born here in 1908, grew up here, and died here in 1995. She grew up here as well. “The farmers came here because that’s where the good land was,” she said. It’s the first floodplain below what is now Pacific Lumber property.

Until recently, the river was a dependable source of drinking and irrigation water, and a delightful place for kids to swim and fish. “It was playland for my kids,” said Wrigley, 57. But that has all changed. Since the 1990s, when Pacific Lumber drastically escalated the rate of logging upstream, the water has been unfit to drink, choked with dirt and

This clearcut hillside on Pacific Lumber land gave way in 1996. A torrent of debris poured into Jordan Creek, an eighth of a mile below.

organic debris for several months of the year, and swimming holes have filled with sediment. The watershed above Wrigley's property, once held in place by an old-growth redwood forest, is literally washing downstream, and in the process wreaking destruction on residents' properties, as well as on water quality and fish habitat.

Wrigley is one of many who live downstream from recent Pacific Lumber clearcuts who have seen their land and buildings flooded in recent years, and their water quality degraded. Some have seen worse. Thirty-three residents of Stafford, a tiny town south of Eureka, had their homes destroyed in 1997 after a debris torrent roared off Pacific Lumber timberlands. They sued and eventually received \$3.3 million from the company.

Pacific Lumber racked up hundreds of violations for illegal logging practices on its 211,000 acres in the 1990s, which led to the suspension of its state timber license twice in the late 1990s. That didn't halt logging, as the company started relying more on contractors to do the cutting. The State sought civil penalties against Pacific Lumber, and in 1998 Judge Marilyn Miles of Humboldt County Superior Court imposed a fine of \$13,000, adding that she wished she could have levied a heavier fine, but was prevented from doing so by statutory restrictions.

Wrigley and others have sued Pacific Lumber for damages, and accepted monetary settlements, but destructive timber operations have continued.

Wrigley relies on the family orchard to supplement her paycheck from the Eureka office of Caltrans, where she is transportation surveyor in the right-of-way engineering department. Today she leads her visitor to the sun deck that wraps around two sides of her house and overlooks the orchard. During two wet winters in the mid-to-late 90s, as well as the winter of 2002–03, which was also unusually rainy, floods washed across the orchard multiple times. "I can only remember three other times when the orchard flooded at all," she said.

The repeated flooding is rotting the trees' roots and at the same time starving them of oxygen by leaving layers of impermeable clay, she said. "It used to be that in a good year we'd have 3,000 25-pound boxes of Waltanas [a local variety] to sell. In a normal bad year, we'd have 900. Last fall, I had less than 150." The orchard—more than seven acres, with several varieties of apples—includes an apple tree that was here when her grandfather bought the place. Only about three acres produce now, she said. Many trees are either dead or lack the necessary vigor.

"I'm just so angry. They've ruined my land and our source of water. That should be a



BOB DORAN

Kristi Wrigley stands near her house on a hill above her apple orchard.



sin, but here it's the norm," said Wrigley. "I'm labeled a fanatic. Well, goshdarn, my property is flooded. No, I'm not a fanatic. I'm aware of the water rights that go with my land. In here," pointing to her head, "is an understanding of what it was like here when I was young and when my kids were young. And in here," tapping her head again, "is an understanding of what happened here in the '90s."

What happened was that Pacific Lumber greatly accelerated the rate at which it was pulling timber off its 14,600 acres upstream. According to a September 2000 study by the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, the company's logging rate

increased sevenfold in a ten-year period. Between 1974 and 1987 it logged an average of 72 acres per year in the area. From 1987 to 1997, the average rose to 504 acres a year.

Massive amounts of sediment poured downstream. From 1990 to 1997, the California Department of Forestry (CDF) issued 64 violation notices to the company regarding its logging operations in the North Fork. According to the water quality board study, between 1994 and 1997 landslides in freshly cut areas bled sediment into the North Fork at an annual rate 13 times greater than landslides in parts of the watershed that hadn't been logged for 15 years or more. The total amount of sediment deposited in the river during that period was 84,000 cubic yards—enough to cover a baseball diamond to the height of a 30-story building—and 95 percent of that came from harvested areas and logging roads. "You don't see any rocks now in the North Fork," Wrigley said. "They're all covered with mud, and we have 45-degree banks with sediment deposition."

Dirty Showers

IT WAS WRIGLEY'S mother who first noticed something wrong with the drinking water, which the family had been pumping directly from the river. "She said the coffee tasted terrible. Then she said the water did, too. We realized she was right. It tasted like dirt. We couldn't believe it because we had always had really good water," said Wrigley. At about that same time, in the early '90s, she and her family started noticing something else—taking a shower didn't make them clean. "The water left us messy. We'd

Top: Floods are common on roads near Wrigley's home.

Bottom: Jerry Gess built a wall to protect his house from floods.



PHOTOS THIS PAGE: BOB DOKAN

have grit on us." In 1999, under a cleanup and abatement order from the water quality board, Pacific Lumber began to truck water in to Wrigley and her neighbors

As a victim of flooding, Wrigley has plenty of company. Just down the road from her place stands the modest cream-colored, green-trimmed home of Miklos Kallo, a 63-year-old Vietnam vet who suffers from post-traumatic stress syndrome. On the night of December 27, 2000, he and his family were trapped by floodwaters and had to be rescued by emergency personnel. The flood did not enter his home, but it did tear away his front porch.

Where the valley widens out toward Humboldt Bay, Lucindo Souza has been running beef cattle on 10 acres. He can't pasture his herd year-round any more because the grass gets covered in muck from winter floods. During the same storm that marooned Kallo, Souza lost 600 feet of fence, which he had to pay out of his own pocket to replace. Similar stories of damage can be heard in the Freshwater Creek valley to the north, another populated area downstream of Pacific Lumber timberlands.

Jerry Gess, 61, who lives at the confluence of Freshwater and McCreedy Creeks, took drastic action last year, after repeated inundations: he removed his deck and built a dike—a 151-foot-long L-shaped concrete retaining wall, four to six feet high. It cost him over \$15,000. Putting a new deck in will take another \$3,000, he figures. Since 1995, his garage has been flooded three times, he said, and when the big rains came in December 2002, Freshwater Creek came within inches of washing into his home. The wall is meant to protect his home from both Freshwater Creek and McCreedy Creek, whose watershed also has been logged recently. Last winter there were no heavy rains. "We had water against the wall, but that's all," he said.

Gess, a mechanic and long-time resident, stresses that he is not opposed to logging. "I feel almost guilty saying what I feel. Every time I see a logging truck I think, 'There's a guy feeding his family.'" At the same time, when it comes to Freshwater, which like the Elk watershed has been intensively cut over the past 15 years, Gess thinks enough is enough. At the least, he said, Pacific Lumber should be prevented from harvesting during the rainy season, when the risk of flooding is greatest. At the most, he thinks logging in Freshwater should be stopped altogether: "The only way to clean this up is to leave it alone and let 50 years go by," he has concluded.



BOB DORAN



JESSE NOELL

Top: A log loader in the Freshwater basin

Bottom: Extreme sedimentation has raised flood levels in the North Fork of the Elk River. This five-year flood in December, 2002 covered all but the guard rail of a bridge that from 1949 to 1995 could accommodate a 50–100-year flood. Seventy percent of the upstream watershed has been logged in the last 12 years.



From the 1850s to the 1930s, timber was hauled from forests by trains. Tracks were often laid in streambeds. These remnants of an old logging railroad are in Cloney Gulch, a tributary of Freshwater Creek. Damage from current logging practices and logging roads exceeds that caused by using rail transport. These timbers do not impede fish passage.

Pacific Lumber: No Connection

PACIFIC LUMBER has repeatedly denied any linkage between recent cycles of logging and flooding in the Elk and Freshwater basins. For example, in the 2002 watershed analysis of Freshwater, which the company performed as part of the 50-year Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), a set of logging restrictions aimed at protecting endangered species, the company acknowledged the presence of "high levels of fine sediment in many areas," but attributed it to natural erosion and to activities that occurred 40 to 135 years ago, "particularly related to [logging] road construction and use." The flooding in Freshwater in the mid-to-late 1990s was due to heavier rainfall than during the preceding 10- to 15-year period, the company argued.

Bill Trush, adjunct professor in the Fisheries Department at Humboldt State University, adamantly disagrees that so-called "legacy logging" was behind the present-day flooding problems in the Freshwater and Elk basins. He said the proof could be found in the middle reaches of the Elk River basin, up on Pacific Lumber land. Because the terrain there is steep and narrow, the waterways don't store sediment, they flush it out quickly. Nonetheless, these reaches too are now severely clogged by fine particles because of erosion from fresh clearcut, he said.

Fisheries biologist Patrick Higgins, of Arcata, commented that until the late 1980s, the Elk River was "the best coho fishery in the state." Today, coho are federally listed as a threatened species. Because of ideal ocean conditions the last two years, coho runs in Freshwater Creek and the Elk River have been sizeable compared to the recent past, he said, but are still only a fraction of what they once were.

Timber operations slowed in the late 1990s, but picked up again a couple of years ago, and there is plenty of evidence of ongoing damage. In some places, sediment deposition in the Elk watershed is six to eight feet above the river's original gravel bed, according to residents as well as staff scientists with the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board. In a 2003 study, water quality board staff observed "significant channel, bank, and floodplain aggradation" following the major storms of December 2002. They estimated, on the basis of an evaluation of watershed condi-

tions, that "flood severity" in 2001 was 135 percent worse than it was in 1997.

Two major reports by a panel of independent scientists commissioned by the water board—one released in 2002, the other in 2003—found that the rate of cutting is too high in five watersheds that have been declared "sediment impaired" under the Clean Water Act: the Elk River, and Freshwater, Stitz, Jordan, and Bear Creeks, near Humboldt Redwoods State Park. In addition, a 2003 study of nine North Coast streams by hydrologist Randy Klein found that the North Fork of the Elk River was clogged by sediment for longer periods of time than any of the other waterways.

Pacific Lumber does have an ongoing program to rehabilitate logging roads, the single greatest source of sediment deposition over the long term. However, that doesn't do much to prevent landslides, which in any given year account for more than half the total volume of material delivered to stream channels in the basin, according to one of Pacific Lumber's own consultants, Arcata-based Pacific Watersheds Associates.

For years the company resisted demands for compensation for the damage to property values, insisting both in public hearings and in numerous scientific documents that its recent logging and roadbuilding have not been a major cause of increased flooding. "The claim that extensive flooding of homes and structures have [sic] been the result of PALCO's timber harvesting operations in the Freshwater Creek watershed is erroneous," said Jeffrey Barrett, Pacific Lumber's director of science programs, in a December 2000 statement to the regional water quality board. "The claim that PALCO's operations are discharging unacceptable amounts of sediment into Freshwater Creek is erroneous," he added.

In the late 1990s, Wrigley and 21 of her neighbors took the company to court. In 2002, a settlement was reached, the amount of which was not disclosed. Pacific Lumber's response to the litigation was mixed. "Trials are always good to avoid. The resolution was one we think is fair," commented Edgar Washburn, the company's attorney, at the time. Last October, however, in a letter to company employees,

Clearcuts and logging roads





A healthy redwood forest in Bull Creek Flats, Humboldt Redwoods State Park, seen from a treetop over 300 feet high.

Robert Manne, the company's chief executive officer, complained that residents had "extorted money from the company."

Wrigley, who is also a plaintiff in another property damage suit that is working its way through the courts, said that legal settlements, while certainly a solace, don't address the real problem: continued logging by Pacific Lumber in watersheds that are already severely damaged. That's why she directs most of her anger at the California Department of Forestry (CDF), which is charged with regulating logging practices. "My public trust agency said it's okay for them to flood me the way they are. CDF simply licenses the destruction," she said bitterly.

She's not alone in that view. Back in November 1997, people living downstream from Pacific Lumber lands had trekked to a hearing of the Senate Natural Resources Committee to plead for

emergency rules to stop the damaging logging practices. A neighbor of Wrigley's told the legislators: "The Forest Practices Act as administered by the California Department of Forestry does not protect the property of downstream neighbors, nor does it protect the health of our streams, their aquatic life, and the fisheries they once supported."

And in the Third Corner

NOT SURPRISINGLY, the Department of Forestry sees things differently. In 2001 it restricted logging in the Elk River and Freshwater Creek watersheds to levels aimed at ensuring that flood conditions would not worsen. That ceiling, still in effect, is similar in the two watersheds: 500 clearcut equivalent acres in Freshwater and 600 in Elk. Pacific Lumber is not permitted to clearcut any more land than that annually, though it can log more acreage if it uses lighter methods, such as selective harvesting.

Almost as soon as the limits were issued they hit controversy. Most notably, Leslie Reid of the U.S. Forest Service's Redwood Sciences Laboratory in Arcata, a leading expert on the environmental impacts of logging, said that in calculating the limits, CDF had failed to consider the most important factor: the reduced capacity of streams to carry water due to channel shrinkage caused by sediment build-up from harvested areas and logging roads.

John Munn, the CDF hydrologist who made the calculations on which the limits were based, did not dispute Reid's criticism. He said the purpose of his calculation was simply to determine how much logging could take place without increasing peak flows beyond current levels. "Our conclusions haven't changed," he told a reporter at the time. "The (annual acreage) limit was based on not making peak flows worse." Reid has recommended that no more than 39 acres be cut annually in the sub-watershed where Wrigley lives. That would be about one-tenth of what is cut now in an average year.

Muddy Prognosis

IS FLOODING WORSENING in the two basins? Yes, contends Jesse Noell of Salmon Forever, a watershed restoration group. In the Freshwater and Elk basins, "six or seven houses that hadn't been flooded before got flooded" when torrential rains hit the North Coast at the end of December 2002, said Noell, who until recently lived in Elk in a home rented from Wrigley. CDF Deputy Chief John Marshall, however, said the evidence is not yet in on that question and on the role of logging in the upper reaches of the two basins. That "\$64,000 question" is being addressed through the watershed analysis process that Pacific Lumber is conducting under the terms of its

PACIFIC LUMBER SAGA

WHEN LONGTIME HUMBOLDT residents talk about "PL," they're talking about the Pacific Lumber Company (now using the acronym PALCO) before it was seized by Texas financier Charles Hurwitz in a hostile takeover in 1985.

The pre-Hurwitz company was remarkable in that it had a decades-old no-clearcut policy—a policy that stemmed in part from a recognition that the soils in California's North Coast region erode easily. As a result, in the mid-1980s Pacific Lumber still had on its 211,000 acres a large standing inventory of redwood trees—among the most commercially valuable of all conifer species. It was an inviting target for Hurwitz, who, using \$900 million in junk bonds, took control of a company estimated at the time to be worth more than \$2 billion. He reinstated clearcutting and more than doubled the annual cut, single-handedly creating one of the longest-running, most highly publicized environmental controversies in memory.

The "Thanksgiving Day Massacre" of 1992, when marbled murrelet survey documents were forged so the company could log ancient redwoods along Owl Creek; the burying of the town of Stafford, south of Eureka, in a debris torrent on New Year's day 1997; the death of forest activist David "Gypsy" Chain, crushed by a redwood felled by an angry logger in September 1998; the epic battle for a 3,000-acre stand of virgin redwoods known as the Headwaters Grove; Julia Butterfly Hill and her two-year occupancy of a redwood tree named Luna—none of that is likely to have happened without Hurwitz.

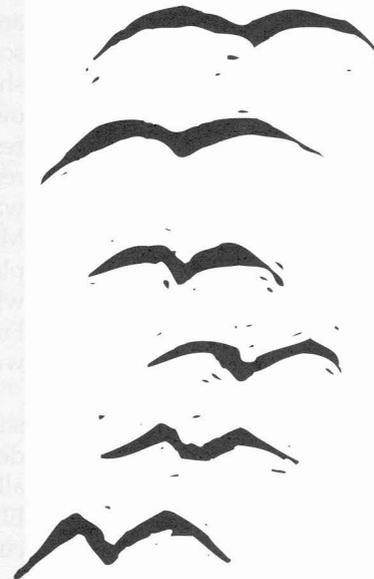
In the most recent big battle, Pacific Lumber bankrolled, to the tune of \$250,000, a recall election against Humboldt County District Attorney Paul Gallegos, who had sued the company for fraud. In March, voters kept Gallegos in office by a 62 percent majority.

"Corporate robber" to critics of the takeover, "Darth Vader" to environmentalists, Hurwitz has changed Humboldt County, the heart of northern California's redwood belt, for decades to come. "It's almost enough to break your heart, what one man's greed can do," said Eureka attorney Bill Bertain, who has represented plaintiffs against the company, including downstream homeowners.

The long battle against Hurwitz seemed to come to a resolution in March 1999, when after more than a decade of protests and lawsuits the federal and state governments nego-

tiated a \$480-million purchase of 7,500 acres of old-growth redwoods, including the Headwaters Grove, southeast of Eureka. The deal rankled many, not least because it was essentially an out-of-court settlement of litigation filed by environmentalists to protect the marbled murrelet, a seabird that nests in old-growth redwood trees. Because the bird was a federal threatened species, the Endangered Species Act was bringing Hurwitz's logging of old-growth redwoods to a screeching halt. "We paid him for redwoods that he couldn't legally cut," lamented Bertain.

Perhaps. But as Senator Dianne Feinstein pointed out at the time, if the Endangered Species Act were to be weakened by Congress, there might be nothing to protect Headwaters and associated groves from the chainsaw. Others also argued that there was value in opening to the public what became the 7,500-acre Headwaters Forest Preserve—which includes the main grove and additional stands—rather than leaving it marooned on Pacific Lumber land. "Fifty years from now, no one will remember how much it cost," said one proponent after the deal was signed.



BOB DORAN

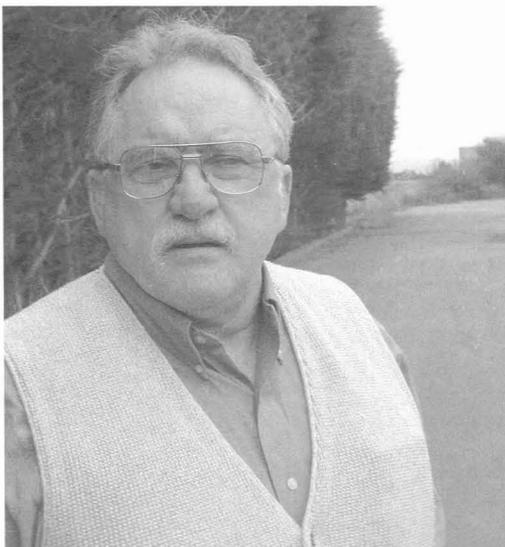
Fifty years from now the damage done to the commercial timberlands north and south of the preserve, all owned by Pacific Lumber, will still be apparent. Such a wound takes a long time to heal, if it can heal at all.

—KE

50-year HCP, which was part of the 1999 deal in which the company sold 7,500 acres, including the 3,000-acre Headwaters grove southeast of Eureka, to the federal government for \$480 million. The watershed analysis will determine the appropriate scale and type of logging for every watershed on Pacific Lumber's 211,000 acres. The outcome could lead to a change in the restrictions under which the company currently operates. The analysis for the Freshwater basin is done and, according to Marshall, the 500-acre limit will remain in place. That's bad news for Pacific Lumber, which had hoped to see it raised, and for Freshwater residents, who'd hoped it would be lowered.

Mark Lovelace of the Humboldt Watershed Council, a citizens' group, said CDF deserves "a huge amount of blame" for the alleged overcutting in the Freshwater and Elk basins. "When you are looking at the cumulative impact of logging in a water-

BOB DORAN



Bill Bertain

shed, you need to look at a lot of things," he said, and "CDF has been very reluctant to look at the rate of harvest."

CDF goes easy on the timber industry, according to Lovelace, because of its political influence in Sacramento and also because of the alliance that develops at the field level, where CDF foresters work constantly with Pacific Lumber foresters on proposed timber harvest plans (THPs)—far more than with scientists from wildlife or water quality agencies, or with members of the public. Consequently, even if a forester starts out as an aggressive watchdog, over time he or she is likely to come to view things more from the company's perspective. It's a problem in many regulatory agencies.

Ken Miller, a physician who moved to Humboldt County from the Bay Area in the '90s, said Pacific Lumber is "much worse" than the two other major timber companies that operate in Humboldt: Simpson Timber Co. and Sierra Pacific Industries. "That's not to say that Sierra Pacific and Simpson are models of good forestry," he added, "but Pacific Lumber is in a class by itself because it practices liquidation logging." In his view, to understand the company one must understand Charles Hurwitz, head of Pacific Lumber's parent company, Houston-based Maxxam Corporation, who, with Michael Milken, was heavily involved in the savings and loan scandals of the 1980s. Hurwitz is not interested in sustainable logging, Miller contends, he is simply trying to squeeze as much profit out of the company as possible.

When asked for a response to this charge, company spokeswoman Erin Dunne declined to comment. Nor did she respond when asked about claims of Freshwater and Elk residents that upstream logging has damaged their properties.

A Desperate Demand

RESIDENTS ARE NOT counting on CDF to protect them. Last fall 64 people living on the Elk River signed a petition urging the regional water quality board to order Pacific Lumber to do something unprecedented: dredge several miles of the Elk River, which has become so clogged by sediment and debris from upstream timberlands that it has lost much of its carrying capacity.

They asked the water board to "authorize and direct the commencement of dredging within 30 days, but certainly before winter rains bring additional deposits of sediment or trigger more nuisance flooding." Not only that, they said they wanted the river dredged repeatedly to ensure that it doesn't simply fill in again.

The petition was a desperate measure, and it came at a time when the water quality board had just gained a new power. Thanks to legislation signed by Gray Davis in his last days as governor, the board now has the final say over timber plans that pose unacceptable threats to water quality.

Pacific Lumber went to court with a challenge, contending that the new law subjected it to double regulation. A Humboldt County judge ruled in the company's favor, but his ruling was overturned on March 18 by the

First District Court of Appeal, which found that state water officials can protect rivers threatened by logging operations independent of regulation by the CDF. "The Legislature has established one statutory scheme for the regulation of timber harvesting and another for the maintenance of water quality," wrote Justice Linda M. Gemello.

Miller, of the watershed council, commented that "CDF's hegemony has been eroded," but it remains to be seen to what extent the board will use its new powers. A decision to dredge would not necessarily be a test case, however.

"Dredging is such a destructive process that it's really an admission of the absolute failure of everything else," said Lovelace, of the watershed council. Bill Trush, who is both a fisheries scientist and a hydrologist, said he couldn't "deny that dredging would provide short-term relief from flooding," but that coming in with heavy equipment such as excavators could damage fish habitat and aggravate bank erosion, particularly if heavy flooding follows dredging.

Cynthia Elkins, head of the Garberville-based Environmental Protection Information Center and usually a staunch ally of Elk River residents, said that dredging would be pointless if logging continues upstream. "If you dredge at this point [with continued logging], it will just all fill back in. What we need to do is stop the input of sediment. That needs to be done immediately." Bill Bertain, the Eureka attorney who filed the dredging petition for the residents, said he wants the dredging done without any heavy equipment—very carefully, perhaps with buckets and conveyor belts. But given the large amount of sediment that he said needs to be removed—on the order of 100,000 cubic yards—it would seem highly doubtful that the job could be done in a timely manner.

Catherine Kuhlman, executive director of the regional water quality board, said that her staff is "evaluating potential channel modification alternatives, such as the removal of channel obstructions." But she made clear that the board has no intention of risking "the potential negative consequences of a hasty dredging project." Besides, she said, because of the need "for adequate environmental review and permits, a dredging project may not commence for several years."

To which Bertain retorted in a letter: "Would you advise my clients in the Elk River watershed who are located near the

river that they undertake steps very soon to raise the levels of their residences?" And, will the water board "reimburse my clients for the costs they incur while waiting for the dredging to take place as the sedimentation continues to increase due to Pacific Lumber's unhindered continuation of its policy of watershed devastation?"

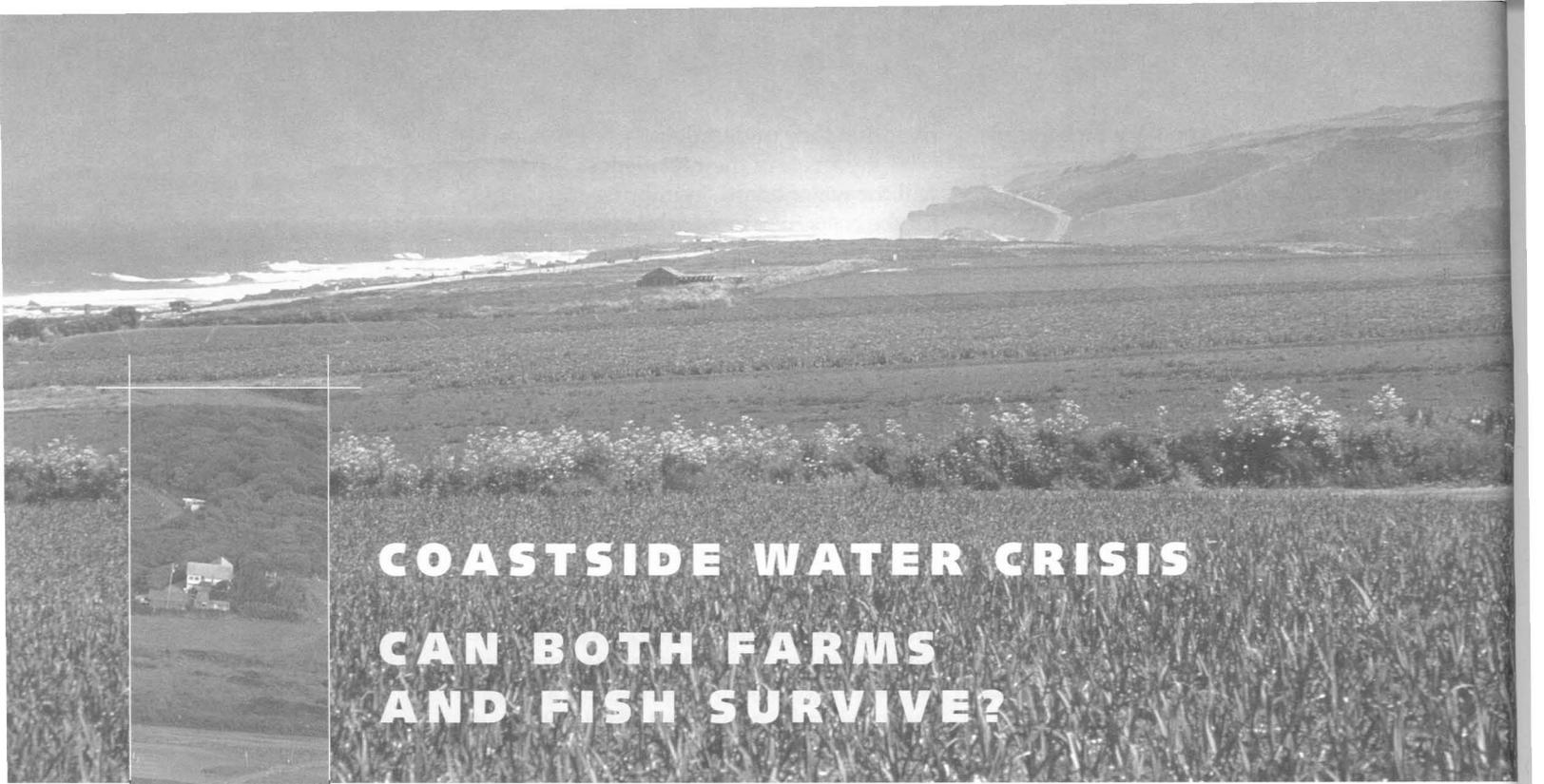
Kristi Wrigley looked out at her orchard, which was just beginning to bloom. "Last year I should have had a minimum of 3,000 pounds of Waltanas alone—150 boxes easily. If one box sells for \$10, okay, figure out what I'm missing." She is considering bringing in bees, but wonders whether it's worth the effort. She had hoped to make most of her living by farming. All winter she watched logging trucks go by. For three weeks or more, helicopters hauled out timber every day. She could see them from the house. Already "65 percent of this 19-square-mile watershed has been logged," she said, "and they're continuing. It's government-sponsored corporate greed."

In April, Pacific Lumber asked state and federal agencies to consider sweeping revisions to its Habitat Conservation Plan. These would give it increased access to wooded areas along streams and on steep slopes, and greater freedom to operate during wet weather. If the proposed revisions are approved, erosion on its timberlands is likely to increase—bad news for residents of Elk and Freshwater. ■

Keith Easthouse is the editor of the North Coast Journal, a Humboldt County weekly newspaper.

Kristi Wrigley sells several varieties of apples, including Gravensteins.





COASTSIDE WATER CRISIS CAN BOTH FARMS AND FISH SURVIVE?

ROBERT BUELTEMAN

A STONE'S THROW south of Half Moon Bay, just past the new fire station, Brussels sprouts and artichokes stand in regimental rows, dark green leaves fluttering in the ocean breeze. An old white clapboard ranchhouse commands the view from a nearby hill.

At first glance, the scene evokes a sense of agricultural bounty. But look more closely and the illusion falters. The century-old house, built by one of the area's first farm families, is now a public historical building. A nearby field lies fallow, hosting only wild grasses.

John Giusti, whose family has leased the 180-acre Johnston Ranch since 1949, when his grandfather Aldo arrived from Italy, smiles ruefully at the idle land. This year, despite plentiful rains, he says, "I didn't have a way to irrigate it."

Like other farms in coastal San Mateo and Santa Cruz Counties, the Giustis' farm depends on streamwater held back during the rainy season for use in the summer months. Artichokes thrive in the coastal climate, but they need a lot of water. To collect and store it, farmers erected dams across creeks. However, when their floodgates were closed, these dams prevented steelhead and coho salmon from swimming upstream to spawn.

Irrigated farming began in the region in the late 19th century, but agricultural water diversions peaked between 1930 and 1970.

In the years since then, farming has faltered, and urbanization and a growing residential population have accelerated the decline of streamwater flow and fish.

Thousands of salmon and steelhead spawned in most local creeks in the early 1900s. By the 1950s, their populations were in freefall. In 1996, with many coho runs extinct and steelhead runs diminished to just a few hundred fish, both were officially listed as threatened. "It's dire—they're at the edge of extinction," NOAA Fisheries biologist Joyce Ambrosius said recently. "We're down to maybe a hundred fish in most waterways." Of the 17 historically documented coho runs in San Mateo and Santa Cruz Counties, only four remain.

With the listing, an unwelcome spotlight fell onto coastal watersheds from Pacifica to Monterey. The California Department of Fish and Game, NOAA Fisheries, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service began scrutinizing dams and water diversions. Farmers suddenly faced regulations that in essence separated them from the water they depended on for their livelihood.

Giusti leads me on a stroll to the steep bank of Arroyo Leon Creek, half-hidden in a thicket of willows. Two dams straddle the deeply incised streambed. One is 25 feet high, the other six feet higher. Cobbled together with slabs of concrete and wood, rusting steel and wire, they still function



KATHLEEN M. WONG

Farmland recently acquired by the Peninsula Open Space Trust. POST has protected more than 2,000 acres of row-crop land and 4,000 acres of ranchland.

perfectly, according to Giusti, after nearly a century of use.

"In spring, we would close that big door in the center and the water would back up and fall down the top," he said pointing to the flapgate. "There's a big screwjack up there, you turn it and the thing would go down." With spring rains, "this whole area would become a lake, maybe for a half mile back."

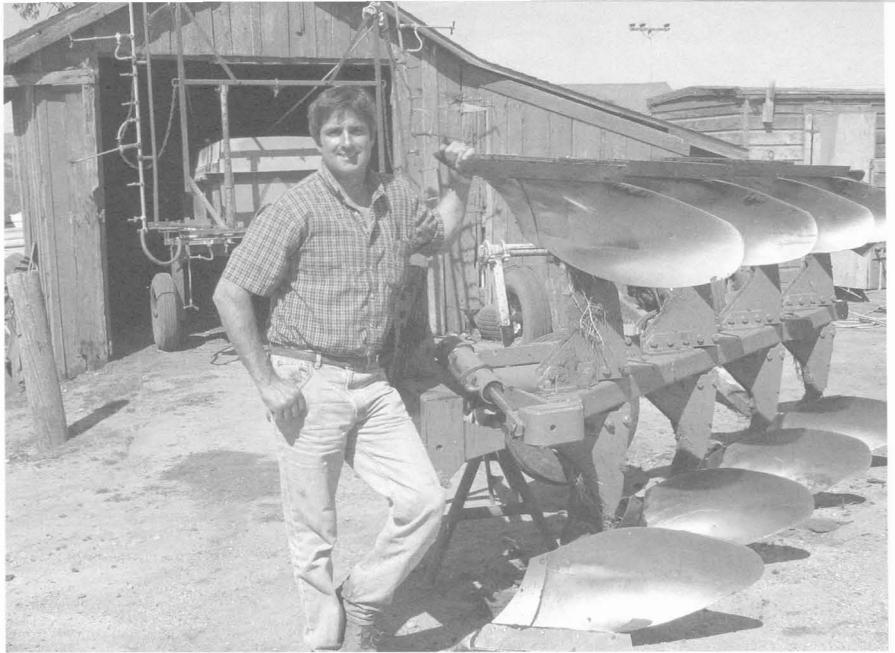
Today, such a scene is hard to imagine. The wooden doors are hoisted high, and the creek trickles by unimpeded. The dams themselves look forlorn, like giant partitions in a huge empty trough.

"Fish and Game didn't say 'you can't use your dam,'" said Giusti, "but they added so many restrictions, such as when I could close them, and how much water I could take from the stream, that it made absolutely no sense for me to close the reservoir anymore. They said that if closing my dam resulted in the loss of even one fish, it would be a 'take' situation, [involving the harm or death of an endangered species] and I would be in violation of the Endangered Species Act." In 2002, Giusti felt compelled to stop using his dams altogether. Consequently, "We had to go from farming 180 acres down to 80 acres."

South of the tiny town of Pescadero is the farm of Joe Muzzi, whose family has farmed in the area since the 1950s. They rely on a reservoir behind a small diversion dam on Gazos Creek. "There are years when the water flow is minimal, and that's where everybody comes down on you because they say we're taking the water from the fish and the [endangered red-legged] frogs," Muzzi said. "It's hard trying to make your plans when you don't know what water you're going to get. They can shut us down completely any time they want—we might as well not take a chance. If they cut the water off just before harvest, you lose the money and time and crop you put in there."

San Mateo County Agricultural Commissioner Gail Raabe estimates that between 2001 and 2002, roughly 240 acres of the county's approximately 3,900 acres of irrigated farmland was fallowed, in large part because of tougher stream restrictions. According to the county's 2002 agricultural survey, six of the large growers curtailed production for lack of irrigation water.

Growers were already being squeezed by economic forces outside their control. Cut flowers and Brussels sprouts, staple crops locally, are now being imported at lower



Top: John Giusti

Above: Dam on Arroyo Leon Creek

Bottom: The James Johnston House, known as the "White House of Half Moon Bay," was built in 1853.

PHOTOS THIS PAGE: DEWEY SCHWARTZENBURG



Joe Muzzi and his father Vincent farm on both sides of Highway 1 near Pigeon Point Lighthouse (top).

prices from South America, where labor costs are lower, and from the European Union. The imports have forced down local prices even as water and air quality regulations and restrictions on pesticide use became more onerous.

The Salmon Side of the Story

COHO AND STEELHEAD split their lives between freshwater streams and ocean waters. After hatching in cool, clear river riffles, the fry mature in their natal streams for a year to several years before swimming

downstream to the ocean. As breeding adults, coho return to their native streams, spawn, and then die. Steelhead may return to the ocean and repeat the cycle for several years. Barriers too high to jump over or impossible to swim around can prevent adults from reaching spawning grounds, and keep fry from entering the ocean. The essential journey between ocean and upstream riffles can also be aborted by insufficient stream flow.

"We're working with landowners and cities to get more water in rivers, make passages for fish, take dams out, and revegetate and plant riparian habitat to get populations back up again," Ambrosius said.

What will work under current conditions is not necessarily obvious. According to a study by fisheries biologist Jerry Smith of San Jose State University, for instance, some reservoirs behind dams actually benefit these threatened fish. He found that Giusti's deep ponds kept water temperatures cool, offered shelter from raccoons and other predators, and produced larger, healthier juveniles than reaches of river further up the watershed. A similar finding was made recently at Coast Dairies. [See sidebar.] Giusti says he opened and closed the doors of his dams in time for migration periods.

But such efforts will be for nothing if there isn't enough water. A growing number of Coastside water users have drawn stream levels down to the point where there may no longer be enough water for farms, fish, and other users in some watersheds.



"A lot of the streams in this area have the potential to bring coho back," says biologist Jon Ambrose of NOAA Fisheries. "The biggest issue I see is the lack of water."

Fish seeking to enter or leave many Central Coast streams today arrive at dry creek mouths. Many waterways that snake through the gullies of the Coast Range now routinely disappear long before they reach the ocean. Among these is Pilarcitos Creek, which meanders down northern slopes of the Santa Cruz Mountains near Highway 92 and reaches the Pacific in Half Moon Bay. Back in the 1890s, the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) installed a dam at the creek's headwaters, which diverts millions of gallons east into Crystal Springs Reservoir for San Francisco and cities along the Peninsula.

Other landholders in the creek's watershed pump hundreds of acre-feet a year to water lawns, run showers, and fill drinking glasses. "It's just cumulative. Everybody has a straw in it," says Ambrosius.

Still, Pilarcitos Creek used to flow year-round, even if weakly, until the late 1980s, when the Ocean Colony golf course was built and wells were sunk near the creek mouth. Under California water law, it is assumed that wells draw percolating groundwater (i.e., basically, rainwater) unless proven otherwise. Tests that might prove Ocean Colony's wells divert water from the creek have not been done, according to Keith Mangold of the Pilarcitos Creek Advisory Group. "You can walk down there and watch the water go away at night and return during the day," he said. Why is Ocean Colony not required to use recycled wastewater, as other Coastside golf courses will soon be doing? "That's a very good question," said Jack Foley, manager of the Sewer Authority Mid-Coastside, which has a plant on Pilarcitos Creek. "There is no thought about that right now."

The farmers' plight is part of a larger story of excessive drawing on limited water resources. But they may be the hardest hit. NOAA Fisheries is negotiating with the SFPUC to improve downstream flows along Pilarcitos Creek. But because of limited budgets, the agency has not yet discussed the problem with other diverters along the watershed, according to Joyce Ambrosius.

Land Trust Relief

THE DAM TROUBLE arrived at a time when many Coastside farmers had just begun to

see relief from another threat—urban development. In the 1980s, land prices soared with the thriving economy. The sleepy town of Half Moon Bay began sprouting more and more houses whose commuter residents jammed the highways each morning to jobs in the metropolitan Bay Area.



Half Moon Bay Golf Club Links Course at Ocean Colony

Giusti felt vulnerable. The Johnston Ranch fields he was leasing were owned by developers. "Every year they would say, 'figure on this being your last lease on the land.' We fought it for years."

The 1976 Coastal Act enabled farmers and conservationists to thwart development threats, including an effort in the 1990s to turn the Johnston Ranch into a golf course. That proposal violated the county's Local Coastal Program (LCP), which had designated the farm as prime agricultural land. Attempts to amend the plan were shot down by county voters. In 1986, voters passed Measure A, which requires a county-wide vote before coastal agricultural land can be rezoned for development.

Meanwhile, some people concerned with the impacts of development on the public's coast took action by supporting conservation bond measures and nonprofit land trusts. The Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) and the Trust for Public Land (TPL)



ROBERT BUELTEMAN

Cultivating Brussels sprouts at Lighthouse Ranch

bought land or development rights to thousands of acres of farms and open space, using bond funds and privately donated money. Both have since sold or leased some of their farmland back to farmers.

Today, POST is the largest single landowner on the San Mateo County coast. Its holdings include the Johnston Ranch, where John Giusti farms, and Bolsa Point Ranch, formerly owned and now leased by the Muzzi family. Placing conservation and agricultural easements on the land removes its value to developers, enabling farmers to lease from the land trusts at reasonable prices. Thanks to POST, says Giusti, "we're much more secure of our land."

Now POST is caught in the middle between the need to protect both fish and farmers. "We've already done our job on these lands in terms of protecting them from development, and it's really up to the farmer to develop a sustainable method for continuing to cultivate it," said POST's director of stewardship, Paul Ringold. "Our objective is protection of open space and natural resources, and we obviously want to do the best thing for fish habitat, but we are also interested in maintaining agriculture on the coast."

"I can see their point," said Joe Muzzi. "Much of their money is public money, and nowadays people would rather relocate a farmer than a frog."

The Steady Squeeze

IN 2002, AND AGAIN in 2003, local land trusts joined with farmers, natural resource agencies, and others to identify issues diminishing the viability of coastal agriculture. Lack of water available for irrigation emerged as the number one concern. As talks continued, the glimmer of a possible solution emerged: off-stream storage ponds. Instead of damming creeks, farmers could construct off-stream reservoirs and fill them with stream water during the rainy months. The cool, reed-lined ponds would also help to create habitat for red-legged frogs and the endangered San Francisco garter snake, while sparing creek water during low flow periods.

Although it's generally agreed that these ponds are a workable solution, "it's gotten more and more difficult to get the permits," said Tim Frahm of the San Mateo County Farm Bureau. "It takes several years of concerted efforts by the applicant, and several hundred thousand dollars, just to get to the point where you can construct."

Giusti said "That type of investment absolutely doesn't make sense for me because I don't own the land, and I'm a small business owner. It would cost us an astronomical amount—between \$1 and \$2 million."

Therefore, POST began working with Giusti, and has already spent about \$200,000 just collecting the data required to obtain a permit, according to executive

director Audrey Rust. Meanwhile, the Coastal Conservancy provided \$375,000 last year to the nonprofit Sustainable Conservation to develop a proposal to streamline the permitting process for off-stream reservoirs. To meet the requirements of other farmers in the county, some 30 new ponds holding an estimated 1,470 acre-feet of water are needed. Sustainable Conservation, based in San Francisco, specializes in bringing together different interests to promote natural resource stewardship. Aided by Conservancy funding, it recently helped to streamline an environmental review process involving 10 different agencies in an effort to reduce erosion along Elkhorn Slough in Monterey County and in Santa Cruz County.

"We're hoping agencies will approve a standard for constructing a pond, so that each landowner's project will require much less individual review," said Carolyn Remick, project leader for Sustainable Conservation. "Because of the geography of the area and the number of different small watersheds, we must study them all separately and come up with recommendations on a watershed-by-watershed basis for how much we can safely take out of each stream," Conservancy project manager Tim Duff hopes that "Landowners could work together on one watershed to collect data for the agencies."

So far farmers, conservation organizations, and regulatory agencies view the ponds as a potentially viable solution. "I'm optimistic about the possibility of reaching an agreement," said water rights specialist Linda Hanson of Fish and Game. "We've made the commitment to spend staff time on this to make it work." Jon Ambrose of NOAA Fisheries said "It's not going to be easy, but it's certainly doable." At the Farm Bureau, Tim Frahm was encouraging. "It's a way to sustain agriculture, and benefit aquatic habitat at the same time," he said.

The route from idea to implementation, however, is tortuous. Each agency has its own objectives and set of regulations to meet, and it's not yet clear whether everyone will agree on a single standard. The Coastal Conservancy's Dick Wayman, who has worked with the agencies in the past to obtain water for the Conservancy's Cascade Ranch operations, isn't so hopeful. "Regulations governing water diversion are so narrowly constructed and inflexible that they may well preclude any diversions at all. Just applying for the right to divert

FISH TROUBLE AT COAST DAIRIES

IN SEPTEMBER 2002, a NOAA Fisheries biologist found numerous coho salmon and steelhead in a pond storing irrigation water off San Vicente Creek, the southernmost stream in the state for the threatened coho. The fish had slipped under a screen that had been erected to keep them out of the pond, said Catherine Elliott, project manager for the Trust for Public Land (TPL).

San Vicente Creek flows through the 7,000-acre property north of Santa Cruz that TPL had bought from the Coast Dairies and Land Company in 1998 in partnership with Save-the-Redwoods League, the Coastal Conservancy, the Packard Foundation, and many local activists. The property extends along seven miles of coastline, encompasses six major beaches and six watersheds, and includes rangelands and 700 acres of farmlands that were mostly in row crops at the time of the acquisition.

TPL is committed to supporting agriculture at Coast Dairies and has continued to lease to farmers. It will soon transfer agricultural acreage to Agriculture, a local nonprofit organization, for management. The discovery of threatened fish in an irrigation pond, however, triggered action under the Endangered Species Act and jeopardized the continuation of farming. NOAA Fisheries



and the Department of Fish and Game advised that water diversions from streams on the property should cease immediately. Three of four farmers have been compelled to cut back production, Elliott said. A fourth was able to substitute water piped in from the City of Santa Cruz.

In spring 2003, TPL hired biologists to get the fish from the pond to the ocean. Working daily from March through June, they trapped the salmon and steelhead and released them into the stream when judged ready to proceed to the ocean. "We were asked [by NOAA Fisheries] to compare fish in the pond and fish in the creek," Elliott said. "The good news is that we found that the fish in the pond were bigger. The pond might have served as what used to be there—an estuary." A hundred years ago, this and other estuaries were filled in to build a railroad.

TPL, the Coastal Conservancy, Santa Cruz County, and others are now working to resolve the water diversion problem so as to enable both the fish and the farmers to continue. As on the San Mateo coast, the hope is that appropriate water storage reservoirs can be built.

water is likely to require a great deal of time—probably several years—and far more technical research and analysis than a farmer can afford. Costs can easily climb into the hundreds of thousands of dollars, and that's with no guarantee a permit to divert will be granted."

Then there's the issue of the San Francisco garter snakes and red-legged frogs likely to take up residence in constructed ponds. "That will start up a whole regulatory nightmare," said John Wade, a local farming consultant. "There might well be some loss of the species in operating the



CALIFORNIA COASTAL RECORDS PROJECT

Top: The lush riparian meanders of Pilarcitos Creek end before the creek reaches the beach at Half Moon Bay, as does the flow of water. Several wells near the stream tap water for the golf course at Ocean Colony, three miles downcoast.

Bottom: Coastside farmer Louis lacopi, seen here at the San Francisco Ferry Building Farmers Market, grows what he can without an in-stream reservoir.

ponds, but having the habitat would provide a great overall gain in the species, and that should be recognized." And the scientific factors that must be addressed are daunting. "Taking the water during winter is generally held to be better than taking it in summer. But how much, when, and

where remain to be answered," Remick said. "My job is to satisfy all these regulations in a way that fits together like a puzzle."

Sustainable Conservation hopes to complete proposed permitting guidelines by the end of 2005. If these pass muster with regulatory agencies, the first farmers to submit

applications might be able to begin pond construction by summer 2006. By then, Giusti hopes to see crops, instead of untended grass, on the acreage he has had to abandon. "This is one of the best ranches on the coast here, and it's a shame to me to see the land go to waste," he said.

What if agreement proves elusive? "I think we will just continue to see fewer and fewer farmers surviving," said Wade. "It's been this steady squeeze for about 15 years, but if the water isn't there, you don't have a farm anymore."

Time is running out for both fish and farmers. Without access to water, both could ultimately become endangered species along the coasts. And that's an outcome everyone wants to avoid. ■

Kathleen M. Wong is senior editor at California Wild.



RASA GUSTAITIS

Shear Delight

The handspinning tradition continues

SHIRLEY SKEEL

AT AGE 25, GLENN PARKS drove off in his Datsun pickup from his father's Marin County ranch to make a living shearing sheep. With two friends, he traveled from ranch to ranch, getting 75 cents for each sheep he sheared, plus a bunk and three meals a day. It was 1976, and the Sonoma County hills were dotted with thousands of sheep—though their numbers were already well down from the 200,000 or so that grazed the county in the 1950s, when wool was still in demand for military uniforms and chic women's suits.

That first year, says Parks—now 54, bull-shouldered and bespectacled—his crew of three separated 22,000 sheep from their fleece. He pauses, a cigarette, considerably unlit, hanging from his fingers, and frowns.

"In that same area, I go back now and—one person—I shear just 60 head of sheep."

Parks is a rancher himself now, and he doesn't hide his anger that stricter laws on traps and poisons "took away the rancher's tools" to combat the coyote. The dramatic slump in California wool-growing, however, was due to more than just coyote predation, says Stephanie Larson, livestock farm adviser at the University of California Cooperative Extension in Sonoma. Demand for wool slid sharply from the 1970s on, as cheap synthetic fabrics caught the fancy of the consumer, she says. By 1993 wool made up less than two percent of U.S. fiber consumption, according to the American Sheep Industry Association. Nonetheless, California is still the nation's second-biggest sheep grower after Texas. And Glenn Parks is still shearing.

His work these days is far more limited, mostly helping out small ranchers who pay \$5 a head for each sheep he shears. He is "semi-retired," but says he continues to work at the dying trade because he enjoys the social interaction with his neighbors. One of those neighbors is JoAnn Slissman, owner of the Wyammy Ranch near Occidental.

On a recent Sunday in April, Parks arrives at the Wyammy Ranch, along with a dozen of Slissman's friends and neighbors, to help out with shearing day. Slissman, 61, a former schoolteacher, runs the 30-acre ranch alone, raising a flock of about 50 Romney sheep, as well as breeding quarter horses. When she's not out in the stables, she paints, spins, weaves, and knits, helps manage a San Francisco furnace company, and, just for fun, keeps a roving llama in the yard.

She began raising Romney sheep 20 years ago, when she found there were few local supplies of the silky, long-fibered wool that is best for hand-spinning.

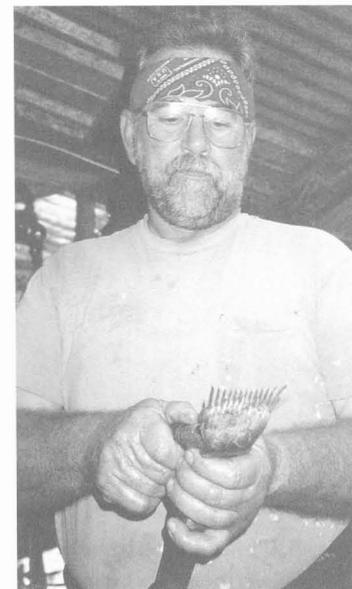
Today, as on every shearing day, the flock is sorted and confined in four separate roofed pens: the noisy lambs go into one pen, the fat woolly ewes into another, which has a chute adjoining the pen where the shearer waits. When he's done, the pink and naked ewes are moved into the fourth pen.

All morning long the air undulates with the "maaa, maaa" of the lambs, the baritone of the ewes, and the harsh percussion of the shears. The process takes a mere five minutes per animal.

"It's a dance between the shearer and the sheep," Parks says, smiling, as Slissman pulls a 160-pound ewe from the chute. Parks takes the ewe by her snout and twists her onto her side. Then he grabs her front legs and drags her back so she's sitting on her tail, leaning trustingly against his legs



PHOTOS THIS PAGE: SHIRLEY SKEEL



Top: Glenn Parks shears a Romney ewe, then clears the lanolin-heavy wool from his clipper.

Bottom: Lee James, Kathy Codiga, Kathy Differding, and Pam Brown "skirt" a fresh fleece, removing dirty edges.





Meanwhile, four glowing helpers are hugging lambs next door. Jill Kjömpedahl is preparing the vaccines for clostridium (a potentially deadly bacteria) and tetanus. Edie and Bob Nelson, both retired, Kathleen Foley, an attorney, and Mary Sellhorn, a hobby rancher, scoop up one lamb after another. Jill pricks each lamb, feeds it worming paste, and marks its nose with pink grease to indicate a job done.

Four hours in, Parks finishes his 30th sheep and straightens up. After 40 years of this back-breaking work, he takes it easier

like a giant doll. He takes the electric clipper with its 13-tooth comb and bends over the sheep to reach her lower belly. He begins there, then shears gently around her udder. As the blade approaches, the ewe raises a rear hoof in worried protest, like a patient frozen in a dentist's chair. The shears skim up a flank to the neck and the fleece falls away like frothing cream. Parks grabs a front leg and rotates the ewe, sweeping in long strokes down her body. When he's finished, the relieved ewe scampers into the next pen, where she is fitted out with one of the nylon jackets the Romneys wear all year to protect their silky wool.

The fleece, a single piece of curdled honey-white, is weighed, labeled, and carried to the skirting barn. There it's unfolded on a wire-mesh table, and three women pull out any matted or dirty edges, reweigh it, and bag it for sale. Slissman notes the weight and quality of each fleece, a means of judging her breeding ewes.

"If the quality of the wool goes down, then out she goes," Slissman says. "I sell her to someone who wants a lawnmower."

Word of Wyammy's shearing day has gotten around, and by noon three members of the El Cerrito-based Spindles and Flyers Spinning Guild have shown up to buy fleeces that they'll wash, card, comb, spin, and dye by hand. For \$45, Nancy Alegria carries off a five-pound bag of white Romney fleece. For \$54, Laura Chinn-Snoot, the zealous owner of ten spinning wheels, takes a six-pound bag of chocolate-brown Targhee-Romney mix. In a shop, they might pay \$200 for a similar weight of factory-spun yarn.

"People are starting to call knitting the new yoga," says Kathy Codiga, one of the day's helpers, laughing. "It's so meditative."

these days, but he can't quite see quitting altogether. He turns down the potluck lunch of corn chowder, rye bread, chili jam, potato salad, and lemon Shaker pie. Nobody else declines. Chilled and tired, they dig in, seated under the eye of a stuffed moose amid a litter of horse photos, wool pelts, prize ribbons, rifles, an old wood stove, and two large dog kennels in a corner of the living room.

JoAnn Slissman sits quietly while the others talk. She has the sharp, sparkling eyes you expect in a horse trader; a smile that hesitates and then comes readily. She's made \$644 selling fleeces today and picked four to show at the county fair. With luck, she'll sell the rest to knitters, fabric artists, and saddle blanket makers, who order from Arizona, Florida, and New York. Add in the sale of a few sheep, she says, and it might just cover the cost of the flock's feed for the year . . . and maybe even leave a little to keep her accountant satisfied.

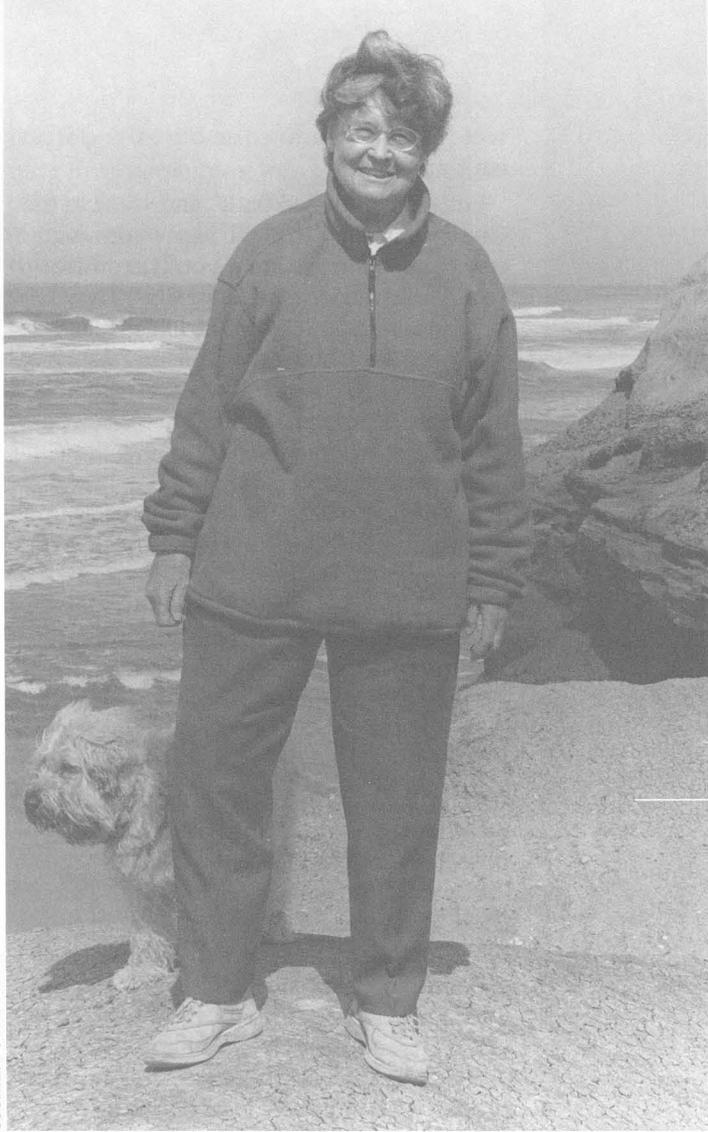
Next year, Glenn Parks will be back again, but even when he finally decides to chuck the shearing, the 100-year tradition of his ranching family will not die. His 19-year-old daughter is learning to shear between her shifts selling fancy lingerie at Victoria's Secret.

"An interesting combination," Parks says with a wince. But clearly he is pleased. ■

Top: Jill Kjömpedahl vaccinates a lamb; Edie Wilson hugs the next patient.

Bottom: JoAnn Slissman with a ewe ready for shearing





COURTESY OLIVE MAYER

Ollie Mayer

and the Danish Hikers Hut

RASA GUSTAITIS

WOULDNT IT BE delightful to hike for several days in the coastal hills, far from automobile traffic, stopping overnight in trailside cottages equipped with running water, kitchen, and a woodstove? You can do that in Scandinavian countries, New Zealand, and on the Appalachian Trail, so why not on the California coast?

Olive "Ollie" Mayer asked herself that question while visiting Denmark. The only answer was that nobody had made it possible yet. She took it upon herself to try to do so. Many years later, in 1977, the Hikers Hut was opened to the public on a ridge in San Mateo County. Built by Sierra Club volunteers, it has been managed by the Loma Prieta Chapter and enjoyed by more than 28,000 people, including many school groups, in the past 26 years. It was meant to be the first of several such cottages along a trail network linking San Francisco to Santa Cruz through the beautiful coastal landscape. So far, however, it remains unique.

"I would like to see at least one more built," Ollie Mayer said on a recent spring afternoon. "The smart thing would be to raise the money for six, of course, but at least one. I have one all picked out in Denmark. The manufacturer will ship it—it's in boxes, all ready to assemble—and send carpenters to put it together. We need a place to put it."

We were sitting in the Mayer family living room on a hilltop west of Woodside. I had come to hear the story of the hut, as well as the bigger story of Ollie Mayer, who has been a leader and catalyst for coastal conservation for more than 50 years, and has inspired many others to defend the natural places they love. That story helps to explain why this coastline, so easily accessible from the San Francisco and San Jose metropolitan areas, has remained open and green to this day. She can tell, with zest and humor, how hiking and friendship turned women and children into activists and built

Top: Ollie Mayer at age 80-plus, 1999

a movement that defeated a proposed six-lane freeway over Montara Mountain, stopped a housing development for up to 160,000 new residents, and shaped a very different future. At age 85, Ollie Mayer continues to be deeply engaged in conservation issues.

Coast & Ocean: What launched you on this trajectory?

Ollie Mayer: Back in the 1960s, I decided that I was going to spend part of my time doing something constructive, and part of my time fighting against the bastards who were destructive. I'm a mechanical engineer. I had worked in engineering at least 25 years and I had had my fill. So I retired from the business I had, making science materials for schools, and I went walking.

I explored the county from one end to the other, on foot. I just walked everywhere, and I had a wonderful time. There weren't many trails in those days, there were farm roads, old logging roads, and animal trails. After I had learned the county pretty well, I hiked with two Stanford students, and we mapped all the trails existing at the time. Then I went to a high school and said: "Why do you have these kids on the asphalt playing basketball all summer long when they've got this beautiful county? Let's take them out hiking!"

Several playground leaders thought that was a great idea and took it to the school system, which said: "Absolutely not. We don't have the insurance for that, you can't take them out in private cars, we

would need insurance on buses, and it just isn't practical."

So I said, "Ok, too bad," and went to the Girl Scouts and said: "I'll show your leaders where the trails are if you'll promise you'll take the kids on the trails." They said: "Wonderful!" Four Girl Scout leaders appeared on a Thursday morning and we went for a hike. We all liked each other, and they wanted to do it again. The next week they brought some friends, and as time went on, the group expanded. We hiked almost every week from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., so parents could get kids to school and out of school. And soon we had three groups and then four—I didn't want the groups larger than 15 or 20 people—and we all became friends. I didn't know them all after a while, there were so many.

C&O: All Girl Scout leaders?

OM: I don't know who they were. They were mostly women, and they were supposed to take the kids out—and they did. We went to the coast, we went to the mountains, and we explored the county. In those days you didn't have to get permission to go everywhere, so we just went. We'd run into ranchers and farmers and they'd stop and chat, and they'd tell us to go this way or that way. They didn't say "Get off my property." Eventually we decided we had to get insurance, so we became an official Sierra Club group.

C&O: There were big development plans for most of San Mateo County at that time.

Ollie Mayer was honored at the 25th anniversary celebration of the Hikers Hut.



KASA GUSTAITIS

OM: Sure were. But I didn't get into planning until something was going to happen on a piece of property that we hiked on and loved. In the '70s I realized that to save this area you had to get into politics. When we found out a place was going to be logged we'd all get together—it was very informal, no real organization. We'd talk, and those who wanted to would go on a hike to see where they were going to log. Then we'd go after they logged, and we'd say: "Oh my God, what's happening here?" So we began to look at the plans the county had. When we learned Purissima Canyon was going to be logged—a beautiful canyon with big trees—we put up quite a big battle; but it was slaughtered. Now—more than 20 years later—there's regrowth and it has become a county park. People think it's just wonderful, but I remember the big trees that were there.

C&O: How did you try to save them?

OM: By attending a thousand and one meetings, making calls on the county supervisors, and a letter-writing campaign, and all the things you know we do. We measured the size of the trees they had cut and of course a lot of it was illegal. We took pictures of logging debris that had washed into the streams and made a terrible mess. Terrible erosion.

I've been following that forest and others since then, it's the most discouraging thing I've done in my life. I mapped landslides, I read all the laws, appeared before a million government bodies, organized women to go to hearings. And I appeared before the State Forestry Board with some of my hikers and our pictures and stories. At one hearing—I'll never forget it, the representatives of the Department of Forestry, with their uniforms, were sitting at the back of the room, and we were up at the front and I was speaking and they laughed at me. They just laughed at me. They didn't care about anything I said. The representatives from forestry department . . . I showed photos of all this debris pushed into the stream . . . they couldn't care less. This land should be protected for parks, for exercise and health. You get people out in the open air, they become new people.

C&O: You had that vision; other people didn't. Where did you grow up?

OM: In the suburbs of New York City, Maplewood New Jersey. When I was at Swarthmore College [1939], I was president of the Outing Club and we used to go on



COURTESY OLIVE MAYER

weekend trips. I hiked the length of the long trail in Vermont. In the fall, outing clubs from various colleges would gather in the Adirondacks for college week. We would hike in to different shelters. We'd put six to ten people in a shelter.

"I just loved being out of doors."

C&O: So that was where it all started?

OM: Well, when I was a child I used to go out with a little friend of mine named Bugs Miller and we'd collect insects and bugs. My bedroom was filled with cocoons and chrysalises and things that I found. In high school I was pretty much a loner, and I'd go out walking on these trips by myself. I just loved being out of doors.

C&O: And then, after Swarthmore, you married and had children and moved out here?

OM: I did my graduate work at the University of Michigan. After I got my license as a mechanical engineer I found a job with the

Henry and Olive Mayer honeymooning on the highest peak in the Tetons



PHOTOS THIS SPREAD COURTESY OLIVE MAYER

Sperry Gyroscope Company in Brooklyn—and the war came along. The head of the company said that if I wanted a vacation I had to take one immediately. Where to go? Some draftsmen suggested Colorado. So I took a plane to Colorado, telephoned the Colorado Mountain Club, and they suggested Bear Lake. I went to Bear Lake Lodge, and the next morning at six o'clock I was up, in my patched blue jeans—I was very proud of all my patches—and asked the guy at the desk where a good place to hike was. He said, "I don't know of any good place to hike around here."

Two young men were sitting in the lobby. One of them came up to me and said, "We'll tell you." I followed their advice, and when I returned, one of them was waiting for me in the lobby. And that was the man I married [1942]. For our honeymoon we climbed the highest peak in the Tetons.

C&O: What a great story!

OLIVE AND HENRY, who was then doing a residency at Lenox Hospital in New York as internist, moved to Seattle because of the mountains, then to California for job-related reasons. They hiked together, shared many other interests, and had two children—a son who is now an

architect, and a daughter who became a lawyer. They have four grandchildren.

OM: I loved all the women who came hiking with me. We'd have lunch in the woods and talk. Some became good birders, some became interested in wildflowers. Some fought for a piece of land, some fought for the beach.

C&O: All this grew out of those walks.

OM: I ran the Sierra Club hiking trips for teenagers for seven summers. We took them out to explore our county. We'd always end up at my house in Woodside. We'd have a picnic, we'd make ice cream, the kids would throw their leaders into the swimming pool—all had a great time. These were the children of the women who hiked.

C&O: I bet some of them are activists now?

OM: Yes they are. They all showed up at one hearing, I think it was when Caltrans was trying to put in the six-lane freeway down the coast—all the way from San Francisco to Santa Cruz.

C&O: Hard to imagine now. What else was in store for this area?

OM: A city with a population of 110,000–160,000. Westinghouse Corpora-

tion and Dean and Dean, developers, owned more than 10 square miles in and around Montara, El Granada, and Half Moon Bay.

I want to show you some of the stuff I have over here.

OLLIE MAYER WALKS to the dining room table, where several thick albums are stacked, each documenting a chapter of a long struggle. She opens a big black one, prepared for the chairman of the board of directors of Westinghouse Corporation. Page by page, clearly and succinctly, it presents several good business reasons for abandoning development plans.

The album opens with a dramatic photograph of eroding ocean bluffs, seen from offshore, then moves to an open landscape with no built structures in sight, and a snapshot of three teenagers with backpacks walking up a dirt road. Next come large aerial photographs overlaid with hand-drawn, numbered parcel maps and, below each, a sentence or two about the land use constraints. "Is the board of directors aware that much of their land is very steep, with severe erosion hazards, geological and seismic problems?" asks the book.

Parcel by parcel, the hazards are pointed out. Some parcels are developable but most pose natural, legal, economic, and political problems. Much research went into this book. There are documents and newspaper clippings, to be scanned quickly or read carefully. The conclusion: "This makes the coast a poor place for Westinghouse to try

to build a new community. . . . Perhaps you understand this situation all too well and intend to extricate Westinghouse from this tangle. . . . Would you consider that it might be good business to donate your land for preservation?"

The proposal for the Coast Range Hike & Hut Trail is enclosed. In the final pages, we see surf, the beach, and the three teenagers, arms around each other's shoulders, on a hilltop.

Ollie Mayer chuckles as she recalls how she took the album to Westinghouse offices in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and presented it to the chairman of the board. "He and his wife took me out to dinner," she says. "He didn't say anything, but the next day he allowed me to talk to some of his staff. Then I listened for 45 minutes to Westinghouse plans. A short time later the company started selling off its properties."

C&O: Fighting off that one took years—and the freeway bypass over Montara Mountain took more than a decade.

OM: It's not over yet. The other side is dying off slowly. They're trying to make a comeback now.

C&O: Did you manage to split your time the way you decided you would—part to fight the bastards, as you said, part for what you loved?

OM: Yes I did. You can't be against something all the time. People want to be *for* something. We wanted to have a hike and



Young hikers on the former Westinghouse property

At right and on opposite page:
Photographs from the album
prepared for the chairman of the
board of Westinghouse



PHOTOS THIS SPREAD COURTESY OLIVE MAYER

hut trail to connect Point Reyes to Santa Cruz with forest and coast trails, a total of 120 miles. We mapped the Peninsula network, went to Sacramento, brought State Parks people down to hike part of it, and they said it was a wonderful idea, they made maps, so we went for \$500,000 from the State and we got it. It wasn't going to be too difficult to accomplish, connecting these bits of trail, mostly on public land. We figured that \$500,000 would buy the easements or land we needed on private property. It was a Sierra Club project.

As we were leaving the state offices [after one meeting] we were just so thrilled. But a couple of men from Parks and Recreation looked at us in a sour way and I knew there was going to be trouble. I didn't realize what kind of trouble until suddenly the State, instead of proceeding with the trail, decided to turn it over to the County. The County didn't want it. So instead of buying land for the trail network, they spent almost all the money on paving a dirt road along Crystal Springs Lake and called it a trail. We never did get the real trails connected.

We had raised \$15,000 for the hike and hut trail, so we decided to spend it on a hikers hut. The county parks director liked the idea, and we got permission to build one at Sam MacDonald Park. We never would have accomplished it without a wonderful man named Bob Coppock.

One day there was a knock on my door, and there stood Bob Coppock. He said: "I understand that you want to build a youth hostel up in the hills for kids to stay in when they're hiking." I said: "I sure do."

And he said: "Well, I'm retiring (he was director of recreation in San Bruno), and so is my wife (she was a teacher). We'd love to help you."

I'd been to Denmark—they have beautiful huts. So I picked one out of a catalog, a pre-fab summer cottage, and placed an order. The American system of building a thing like this just isn't practical. Many different trades are involved. You have to make a million and one trips out of the forest for this and that. The Danish cottage came in boxes, complete, everything marked and ready, even the plumbing and the furniture. We found volunteers and support from the Sierra Club, and with Bob Coppock's leadership, we went to work. He got along with everybody, knew how to get people to do things. He was a fine loving man, very intelligent, and he had a lot of skills.

Bill Croy had a tractor, and hauled the boxes up to a storage shed near the site. But we couldn't read the blueprints! They were in Danish! Luckily a Sierra Club member spoke Danish, and he was a contractor. We laid out the base, arranged for the concrete to come in, built the forms. We poured the foundation and luckily we did it right.

We put in a water line to the horse camp a half-mile away. Horsemen had political contacts, so the county had put water in for them and we pumped it uphill from there. We put Danish composting toilets outside. They worked fine in summer, but as soon as it got cold they didn't. In Scandinavia they're inside the house and work very well. So we have flush toilets, running water, and electricity, but still it's a sufficiently simple, great little place. It accomodates 15.

Two Danish carpenters came and put up the cottage in three weeks. When they were done, Bob Coppock took them on a tour all over the country. And later some of our volunteers went to Denmark.

C&O: So as with your hikes, one thing led to another, and always to something bigger, and new connections evolved.

OM: That's right. The man who manufactures these buildings came to California and Bob Coppock took him around. They stayed in the homes of Sierra Clubbers. Everything just sort of happened. I've never believed in telling people what to do. They decide what they want to do. It's amazing how the hut functions.

C&O: Your vision was for a trail along the whole coast, with a chain of huts?

OM: Right. And also loops. You come down here and stay at this one, then go down the coast, come back, hit the main trail again.

C&O: There are some hostels along the coast now, and an official Coastal Trail Plan exists.

OM: It doesn't include the loops, it doesn't go up in the hills, but that's marvelous.

The only thing I don't want is automobiles coming to any of these huts, or near any of these trails. No way.

C&O: Does a trailside hut have less impact on the land than camping?

OM: Absolutely! Campgrounds turn into a mass of dust in the summer. And people run all over with their pots of water, and





Ollie Mayer at the Hikers Hut, 2003

getting firewood, and there's the garbage, the toilets—all this has to be taken care of. In our little hut, people who come to stay just do what has to be done. There are explicit rules and instructions, but there's no caretaker. If the hut is not left in perfect condition, the visitors will never be allowed to return. That is the system, and it works.

C&O: Maybe one day we'll have a government that will take this on.

OM: I don't trust the government. The government will take it on and build a nice house for 100 people to stay overnight, and a paved trail to it for cars. I don't think it's good to put more than 15 people together. In a trailside hut they get to know one another, they cook meals together and sit around outside, enjoy their meals and make friends. For the children it's wonderful. You can have a good time with very little. They sleep on the floor in their own sleeping bags. Did you see our mattresses? We have good mattresses. We stack them in the corner and you can put them in the loft or on the deck for sleeping, wherever you want, then put them back.

Building a hut also builds people, it builds friendships, it builds community, it's just the way to go. I'd be glad to contribute enough money to build another hut. In fact, when I was in Denmark I picked out another hut. They send these out all over the world, and they send their carpenters to construct them now.

C&O: Other Sierra Club chapters haven't picked up this idea?

OM: No. We could put a hut up on Montara Mountain.

C&O: Some people would object.

OM: There are always people who object. Not until automobiles don't have any gasoline will they change their minds.

C&O: You always made sure young people were along.

OM: Right. If you get the young people along, you get to their mothers and fathers. Our hike groups had their picnics here at the Mayer home, and the mothers and fathers would come to pick up their kids. And they'd get to know one another.

The Hikers Hut is available for youth activities. I want to get the kids out on the trails so they learn something about their environment, about where they live. They don't know anything about the geography of their county. They don't know the names of the streams or the hills or the trees. Since the [Mid-Peninsula] Open Space District is acquiring land, it's very important that we acquaint people with it and show them how to care for it and use it, or they'll want to drive in it and continue to do the things they do at home.

C&O: Some projects take more than a generation. That fight at Devil's Slide, [against a freeway bypass and for a tunnel through Montara Mountain] began in 1970, and by the mid-1990s people were getting old and tired, they were running out of health and money—and then lo and behold! Young people stepped in and put through a countywide initiative that requires a tunnel through the mountain, instead of a coastal freeway. It passed overwhelmingly.

OM: Wasn't it great? I was pretty tired, I couldn't hold out much longer, and they came. And they're wonderful. ■

Hikers Hut Information

For information on the Hikers Hut in Sam MacDonald Park, see <http://lomapieta.sierraclub.org> or call (650) 390-8411 (ext. 8 for reservations). Fees are \$10 per person per night for Sierra Club members, \$15 for non-members, free for children under age 10. There is a one-time \$5 fee per car for parking.



FARMING AND THE COASTAL ENVIRONMENT

IN OUR BUSINESS erosion is usually a bad thing, but there is one kind of erosion I like to see: breaks in the levee separating farmers from environmentalists.

There is clearly much common ground between these groups. Farmers work in the natural environment, depend on natural resources for their livelihood, and affect the quality of those resources. Most coastal farmland accommodates wildlife habitat on its borders, and irrigation ponds frequently serve as refuges for fish, amphibians, and birds. Farmland is not covered with buildings and asphalt.

Although many farmers might spurn the title “environmentalist,” you’d be hard pressed to find a farmer who doesn’t like his or her work precisely because it means working outdoors with plants and animals, and depends on weather and other conditions outside of human control. Farmers *have to* respect the environment, but they also have to make a living. It’s hardly surprising that they resent principled outsiders with little knowledge of farming who tell them how to do their jobs.

On the other hand, farmers use water and land that could otherwise support wildlife, and farming practices often pollute the environment, sometimes with devastating consequences. Regulations are needed to protect the environment, but they can be so severe or inflexible that they needlessly harm an industry that is essential to the public good.

Is balance possible? It had better be—besides protecting vast amounts of open space, farmers produce the food and fiber on which we all depend. California’s coastal agriculture is some of the most productive anywhere. Although most of California’s coastal crops and livestock can be grown or raised in other

parts of the world, those areas face similar environmental constraints. Simply exporting our problems is clearly immoral, and as we learn more about the world, we see that local environmental problems can have global impacts.

Recent coastal history offers proof that cooperation between farmers and environmental advocates can work to their mutual advantage. A few examples:

- In the 1970s, western Marin County farmers and environmentalists joined to combat widespread development proposals and to address the effects of the 1976–77 drought. This led to the formation of the Marin Agricultural Land Trust (MALT), which has protected 32,000 acres of farmland through purchases of agricultural conservation easements. Coastal Conservancy funding was instrumental to MALT’s establishment, and we continue to support MALT’s efforts to preserve the agricultural heritage of West Marin.
- Late last year, the Bay Foundation of Morro Bay purchased a conservation easement on the 1,860-acre Maino Ranch, using a \$1.5-million grant from the Coastal Conservancy and an additional \$500,000 from the Nature Conservancy. The ranch has long been grazed by cattle, while also supporting eagles, falcons, burrowing owls, steelhead trout, red-legged frogs, and other wildlife. The Maino family has worked with conservation organizations and public agencies for over ten years to minimize erosion and water pollution in ways that also improved ranching operations, and the easement ensures that the “best



management practices” developed in that time will continue. It secures a future for ranching, wildlife habitat, and unspoiled scenery in the heart of the Morro Bay watershed.

• As told in “Coastside Water Crisis,” in this issue of *Coast & Ocean*, environmental regulations can effectively shut down farming operations in some

instances. Public agencies can help to prevent such losses—witness the Coastal Conservancy’s support for efforts to streamline permitting processes in San Mateo and Santa Cruz Counties, and to resolve the conflicts over stream water use. Research and studies that may be required for permits to use the coast’s scarce water are beyond the means of most farmers. Public agencies are better equipped to do such research, assist farmers with permit applications, and guide regulatory agencies in their reviews.

The future of California’s coastal agriculture is under threat from development pressures, expanding regulations, and overseas competition for markets. It may be overly optimistic to think that environmentalists will save coastal agriculture in California, or that farmers will one day be considered stalwarts of environmental protection on the coast, but without optimism, both farmers and environmentalists would have a hard time doing their work. We must continue to build alliances between these two groups on common ground, for the protection of farmland is a key to sustaining the environment on much of the coast. ■

—Sam Schuchat



COASTAL CONSERVANCY NEWS

PROJECTS APPROVED in February and March will expand trails and parks, protect scenic views, open space, and agricultural lands, and make possible the restoration of degraded wetlands and streams along the California coast and on San Francisco Bay. Voters provided most of the funding for these projects by passing Propositions 12, 40, and 50.

a tidal basin, island habitats, and pedestrian bridges. The Conservancy-approved funds complete estimated funding needs for the project. The ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach provided \$80 million to mitigate impacts of development in San Pedro Harbor.

An additional strip of degraded wetlands, between the mouth of the Santa Ana River and Beach Boulevard, will be restored by the Huntington Beach Wetlands Conservancy with a grant of



Top and center: Viewing Bolsa Chica

Bottom: This barrier will be removed from Malibu Creek to allow steelhead to pass.

SOUTH COAST

Bolsa Chica Restoration

THE 566-ACRE, \$90-million wetland restoration project at Bolsa Chica in Huntington Beach, one of the largest such projects ever attempted, will move forward with the approval of \$10 million in Proposition 40 funds to the State Lands Commission. Ground-breaking on October 1 will at last get this major effort underway. The project will improve nursery habitat for California halibut and nesting habitat for endangered California least tern, light-footed clapper rail, snowy plover, and Belding's savannah sparrow. A new ocean channel will be constructed; also

\$300,000. This small local land trust owns and manages 93 acres of wetlands inland of the Pacific Coast Highway, and hopes to add 66 more.

Laguna Coast Park Expanded

THE CITY OF LAGUNA BEACH will add 70 acres to Laguna Coast Wilderness Park by acquiring two properties with the help of \$800,000 in Proposition 12 funds approved by the Conservancy. The Trinity and Wainwright properties have coastal sage scrub and wildlife habitat as well as informal trails that will connect to those in the adjacent South Coast Wilderness system. The dramatic cliffs



COURTESY CALIFORNIA STATE LANDS COMMISSION

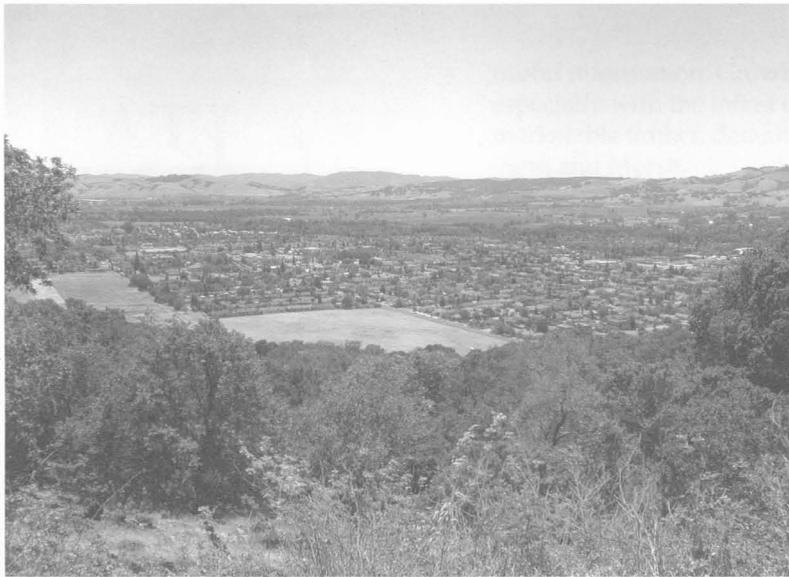
and vistas of the Wainwright property have long been popular subjects for painters. The purchase was made possible, in part, by the Irvine Corporation's gift of the 173-acre Laguna Laurel property, which freed up funds for other parcels. The Conservancy also approved \$100,000 to the nonprofit Laguna Canyon Foundation to assist with future acquisitions.

Malibu Habitat and Beach Improvements

WITH THE CONSERVANCY'S approval of \$400,000 in Proposition 40 funds to Heal the Bay, a project to enable steelhead to reach upstream habitat on Malibu Creek will go forward. A dilapidated stream crossing and a small dam will be removed above Rindge Dam. Invasive weeds and debris will be cleared from the creek and replaced with native plants that will help to stabilize collapsing stream banks.



HEAL THE BAY'S STREAM TEAM



The Montini property overlooks the city of Sonoma.



Also thanks to Proposition 40, \$700,000 was granted to Los Angeles County for improvements to Dan Blocker Beach in Malibu. This money, plus \$500,000 from the County, will be spent to build a parking area and beach stairway, add picnic tables, restrooms, and drinking fountains, and remove old pavement and fences.

Ventura Steelhead Too

THE OJAI VALLEY Land Conservancy received \$450,000 in Proposition 50 funds to purchase 14 acres at the confluence of San Antonio Creek and the Ventura River, plus a conservation easement on 16 adjacent acres, to ensure that two miles of southern steelhead spawning and rearing habitat will remain undeveloped. The property also contains woodland habitat for the endangered least Bell's vireo.

SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA

Sonoma Ranch Land Purchased

THE SONOMA COUNTY Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District will buy 63 acres of oak-covered hills and grazing lands adjacent to Sonoma State Historical Park with \$1.25 million in Conservancy-approved Proposition 40 funds. The purchase will preserve a scenic backdrop for the historic downtown plaza in the city of Sonoma, expand outdoor recreation opportunities, and protect one of the few remaining agricultural properties in Sonoma

Valley, as it will continue to be used for grazing.

Petaluma Marsh Expansion

THE MARIN AUDUBON Society will receive almost \$1.7 million in Proposition 50 funds from the Conservancy for restoring 102 acres of diked wetlands on a 184-acre property to be added to the 2,000-acre Petaluma Marsh. After a flood-control levee is built to protect a railroad right-of-way, old levees will be breached to enable the tide to return. When the project is completed, the tidal marsh will serve as a nursery for salmon, steelhead, and other fish, and will provide habitat for California clapper rails and migratory birds. The property, which includes 82 acres of wetlands that will not be altered, will go to the Department of Fish and Game. Petaluma Marsh is the largest tidal marsh in the state.

Marin Audubon will receive an additional \$90,000 for restoration work in the 33-acre Triangle Marsh in Corte Madera, where 10,700 cubic yards of landfill will be removed to bring elevated areas down to tidal levels. Some of this soil will go to build levees in Petaluma Marsh.

Marsh Creek Outreach

THE CONTRA COSTA COUNTY Resource Conservation District will receive \$70,000 and the Delta Science Center \$60,000 of California Bay-Delta Authority grant funds to implement a public outreach program for Marsh

Creek. The program will include water-quality monitoring, creek stewardship, public education, and technical support for planning staff of the City of Brentwood. The Marsh Creek watershed extends from Mount Diablo to the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta.

NORTH COAST

Sonoma Coastal Trails

WITH \$455,000 in Proposition 12 funds, the State Parks Department will plan and construct trails at four coastal sites: Salt Point State Park, Fort Ross State Park, the Red Hill facility of Willow Creek State Park, and Carrington Ranch. This project is the first coordinated trail planning effort to be funded in a single region. It represents a significant step in the process of linking up major pieces of the California Coastal Trail.

Plugging the "Hole in Hammond"

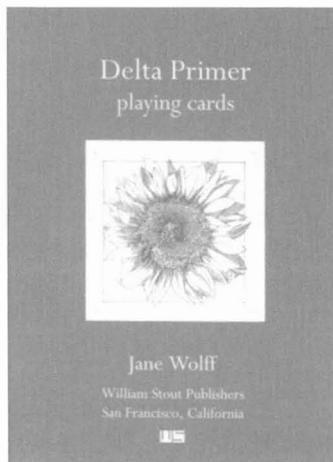
THE HAMMOND TRAIL in Humboldt County has long consisted of two segments separated by a gap of about a half-mile. The Redwood Community Action Agency will plan and build trail links on an abandoned Little River and Hammond Railroad property, thus providing for 5.5 continuous miles for hiking or bicycling, with \$100,000 in Proposition 40 funds approved in March. An unpaved trail will run along Widow White Creek for use in low-water season, and a paved year-round stretch will bypass the creek.



DELTA PRIMER

Delta Primer: A Field Guide to the California Delta, by Jane Wolff. William Stout Publishers, 530 Greenwich Street, San Francisco, 94133, 2003. 196 pp. (hard cover) plus 56-card deck, \$50.

THE HIGH ARCH of the Antioch Bridge is one of the few places where you get a view across the expanse of islands, channels, and open water of the Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta. Across the bridge, you enter another world, the multi-lane highway turns into a narrow levee road, the landscape flattens and the sky gets bigger. I've driven that road hundreds of times, and I know that Jane Wolff is right. To most Californians, the Delta is invisible. Few people know where it is and fewer still understand the complexity, fragility, and importance of its landscape.



The *Delta Primer* creates a portrait of the region, its entangled natural and human history, through a series of brief studies: some photographs, an essay, and a deck of cards. Yes, a deck of cards.

The book is an innovative, intellectual project. Wolff uses a deck of cards as both a metaphor and a vehicle to tell the story of this place. She deconstructs the Delta into four themes: garden, wilderness, machine, and toy. These themes are the suits and each is explored through thirteen little stories, told on the face of each card. There is

some text, but most stories are told graphically through her wonderful maps and drawings.

The deck of cards is also a metaphor for the competing visions of what the Delta is and the uncertainty about what it will become. Wolff writes that the book is intended as a political tool, but it is presented without a specific agenda. As she writes, "there is no end game for the Delta." No one really knows how the cards will fall, how the themes will play out.

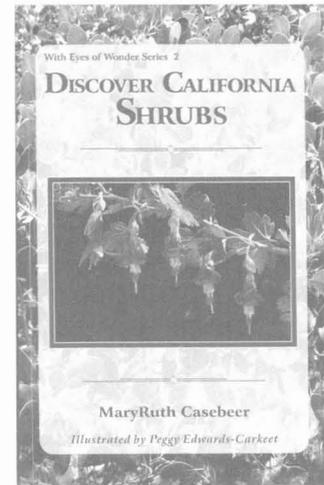
The subtitle, *A Field Guide to the California Delta*, is perhaps a little misleading. The fishing map from the local bait shop is a better guide. But if you want to experience the feel and flavor of the place, to think about the connections between people, place, and natural processes, then I recommend sitting down and examining these beautiful, thoughtful drawings—or at least playing a hand of cards.

—Mary Small

DISCOVER CALIFORNIA SHRUBS

Discover California Shrubs (2004, 120 pp., \$17.95 (paper)) and *Discover California Wildflowers* (1999, 69 pp., \$14.95 (paper)), by MaryRuth Casebeer, illustrated by Peggy Edwards-Carkeet. Hooker Press, P.O. Box 3957, Sonoma, CA 95370.

THESE TWO LITTLE books are exceptionally appealing to those of us who keep meaning to look up wild plants we encounter but usually forget until we come across them again. In *Discover California Shrubs* we are introduced to 48 California natives, most of them found throughout the state, with common names, scientific identities, geographic distributions, and favorite habitats, as well as something on uses by indigenous people and some history. They are arranged more or less according to blooming time, moving from sea level to higher elevations. For the reader who has forgotten the basics of botany, flower parts, growth patterns, leaf shapes, and such are right in front. Line drawings accompany each plant.



This book is the second in a series, "With Eyes of Wonder," intended for science teachers and students. The first, *Discover California Wildflowers*, is charmingly informal, with each of 47 flowers presented the way a loving aunt might introduce her favorite niece. Distinctive characteristics are skillfully described in plain English, a story or two is told about the lives of particular plants or their relationships with bees and butterflies. MaryRuth Casebeer's skill in vivid visual appreciation of wildflowers is infectious. She writes: "It is my hope that even one small fact about each wildflower, lodged in a student's memory, may allow him or her to identify those flowers growing in the wild; and, of course, I want the students to love the wildflowers as I do."

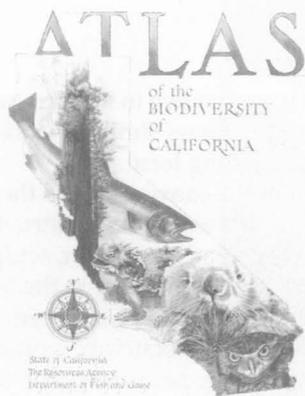
I myself plan to keep these two little volumes close at hand until I know something of every one of the plants described. Just 95 of them—that's not too many.

—RG

ATLAS OF BIODIVERSITY

Atlas of the Biodiversity of California, edited by Monica Parisi. California Department of Fish and Game, 2003. 104 pp., \$20 (paper).

THIS BEAUTIFUL BOOK nearly escaped our notice. Though far from the exhaustive survey implied by the title, it does provide a comprehensive overview of the plant and animal species and habitats of the state, along



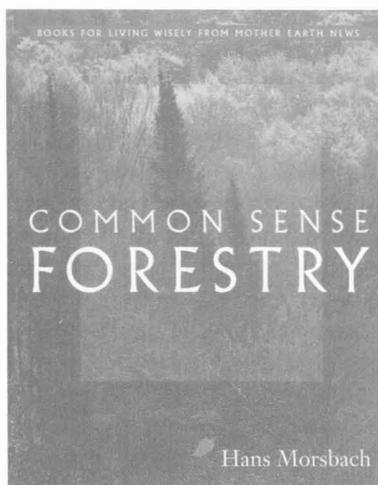
with discussions of the importance of biodiversity, the forces that threaten it, and programs that work to maintain it. The many maps and photographs are exceptionally fine, and the accompanying illustrations by Dugald Stermer alone may be worth the price of the book. It can be ordered at: <http://atlas.dfg.ca.gov/>.

—HMH

COMMON SENSE FORESTRY

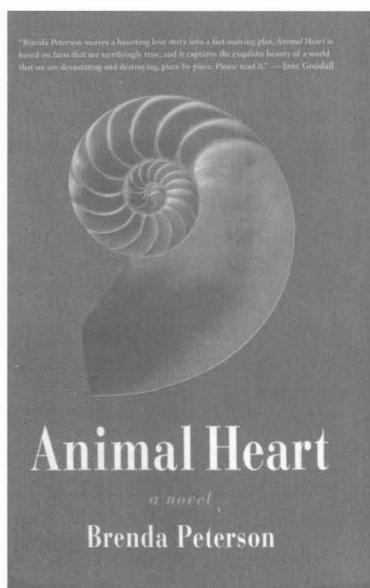
Common Sense Forestry, by Hans Morsbach. Chelsea Green, White River Junction, VT, 2002. 230 pp., \$29.95 (paper).

FORESTRY, in this case, means cultivating and managing small woodlands—tree farming, rather than husbanding wilderness forests. Morsbach's approach to the subject is based in experience and experiment—this book was written because he could not find a good how-to book on the subject. As a gardener with an interest in botany, I found it fascinating and full of interesting insights as well as lots of



useful information. Growing trees, especially with the intent of producing marketable timber, demands a long view, and Morsbach's vision encompasses breadth as well. He sees tree cultivation in relation to both nature and business, and his personal work has given him understanding of trees and forestry practices that often goes beyond conventional wisdom. This book is not only a thorough and practical manual, but also offers much to readers who may never plant a tree. [We received this book more than a year after its publication, but thought it would be of interest.]

—HMH



ANIMAL HEART

Animal Heart, by Brenda Peterson. Sierra Club Books—University of California Press, Berkeley, 2004. 292 pp., \$24.95 (hard cover).

STORIES HAVE BEEN vehicles for transmitting important cultural information as far back as anyone can figure. In our day we tend to look to newspapers, magazines, scientific papers, and documentaries to understand what goes on in the world and to find our place in it. After a while we're overwhelmed. There's so much pain and destruction that we shut off, wanting no more facts. We just want to go on with our lives.

A good story dramatically told, however, can slip right through a mental and emotional screen and summon attention to what must not be ignored if humanity is to shift away from its suicidal

course. And Brenda Peterson's *Animal Heart* is a good—as well as a terrible—story, with a refreshing perspective. The protagonists include a forensic wildlife biologist, a Native Hawaiian underwater photographer, an Animal Liberation activist, a wildlife biologist on a military mission that is devastating to whales, and a baboon. Weaving facts with imagination, slipping from the realm of science to that of the almost possible, she has written a fast-moving novel that's hard to put down.

—RG

HIDDEN TREASURES

Hidden Treasures of San Francisco Bay, photographs by Dennis Anderson, text by Jerry George. Heyday Books, Berkeley, 2004. 176 pp., \$49.95 (hard cover), \$29.95 (paper).

THE BEAUTY of San Francisco Bay and its surroundings is a boundless source of inspiration for photographers. Both Dennis Anderson and Jerry George live at least part-time on boats in the bay, and share an uncommon intimacy with their subject. This book has a lot less text than the book by John Hart and David Sanger reviewed in the last issue of *Coast & Ocean*, but is no less inventive in its approach. Photos range from aerials to underwater, moody landscapes to casual portraits, exploring both familiar vistas and little-known crannies of the Bay. The processing of the photos renders them with highly saturated colors, which may not be to everyone's taste.

—HMH

A Wheelchair Rider's Guide: Los Angeles & Orange County Coast is still available FREE.

This easy-to-use guidebook will help you plan your coastal trip. To request a free print copy of the book, write Coastal Conservancy Publications, 1330 Broadway, 11th Floor, Oakland, CA 94612; phone (510) 286-0933; or e-mail calcoast@igc.org; or contact Marina del Rey Visitors Information Center, 4701 Admiralty Way, Marina del Rey, CA 90292; (310) 305-9545. Interactive and downloadable PDF versions of the book are available at www.coastalconservancy.ca.gov/Publications/pubs.htm.



CALIFORNIA COASTAL RECORDS PROJECT

On the Other Side of the Fence

A PARK IS PROPOSED AT LAS PLAYAS DE TIJUANA

WHILE UNITED STATES authorities struggle with designs to fortify the coastal reach of the San Diego–Tijuana border (see *Coast & Ocean*, Winter 2004), a very different vision has been articulated for the Mexican side of the international boundary. Estela Castillo Chavez, a landscape architect with the company Green art Baja, has developed an ambitious conceptual plan: a linear park, Parque de los Sauces, on the Mexican side of the U.S. fence that will link the seashore with a natural ravine that runs north through the community of Las Playas and across the border. Cañada de los Sauces (Canyon of the Willows) is a willowy vale similar to the small urban canyons in San Diego. It extends into the saltmarsh at Border Field State Park in the U.S. People in Tijuana’s beachfront district have come to appreciate the Cañada as a quiet natural place within the densely populated city.

The plan is being evaluated in relation to a proposal by a Mexico City developer to construct high-rises in the canyon. The Las Playas community, including its former municipal delegate, now mayoral candidate, Raul Soria, has advocated reserving the canyon for park and open space. Tijuana’s city government, led by mayor Jesús Gonzales, has supported the current dialog and a careful review of alternatives.

While the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers proceeds with its triple-fence border fortification project, local officials on the Mexican side are considering a border park.

This process is innovative in Mexico, where local planning processes similar to those in the U.S. are just taking form.

At the head of the canyon, where the first phase of the project would be constructed, the plan calls for an amphitheater, sculpture, trails and gardens. Closer to the border, native habitats would be restored. At the U.S. border fence, a stairway would be constructed up the slope and an esplanade (a flat open stretch of pavement) would lead to the bluff overlooking the beach. The border fence cuts across the natural beach and extends into the surf.

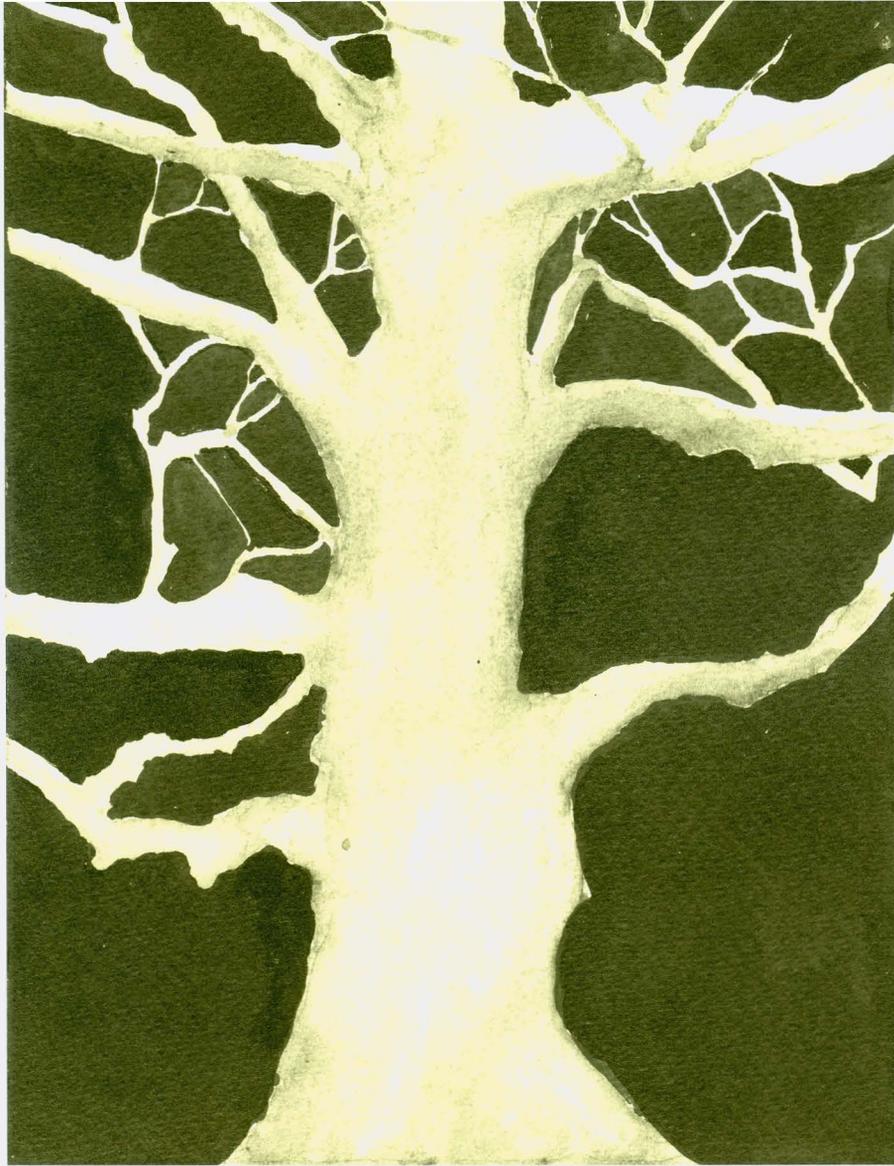
On March 24, when Castillo presented the concept to an American audience at the Chula Vista Nature Center, she said it is intended to provide much-needed parkland, and “lend dignity to this highly symbolic site.” Las Playas is the most accessible beachfront community for a metropolitan population estimated at two million.

As part of the project, the Mexican half of the cross-border Friendship Circle would be restored. This concrete ring surrounds the 152-year-old Border Monument, which is currently trapped and divided by the border fence. Although it may mean little to visitors today, the monument evokes historic sentiments for long-term residents of southern San Diego and Tijuana. Here in the fresh breezes off the ocean, Mexicans and U.S. residents have congregated for generations. Estela Castillo described how, at a World AIDS Day event December 1, 2003, the eight-foot chain link border fence was used as a “net” for an impromptu volleyball game.

To complete the circle on the United States side of the fence, collaboration with California State Parks and the federal government would be required. With such cooperation, another idea, supported by both U.S. and Mexican citizens, might be brought to fruition: replacing the two “friendship trees” (*Myoporum* spp.), planted in 1974 on either side of the border monument. Both have since died.

The second phase of the proposed Parque de los Sauces would take an even bolder step to manifest the special nature of the site. Estela Castillo’s plan calls for a monument to honor Mexican migrants and a Speaker’s Corner celebrating Mexico’s democracy.

—Jim King



AUGUSTA TALBOT

In the law a tree has no rights. It is taken for granted.
We assume it will always be there

- ... to provide a canopy which shades and cools the forest plants
- ... to make soil with its leaves and residues
- ... to grip the rock with its network of roots and hold the soil in place
- ... to furnish a home for birds and food for animals
- ... to provide channels along its roots for water to seep into the underground water table where it can be stored
- ... to provide shade for cows and picnickers and a place to hang a swing

Yet the life of a tree depends on our mercy.

—*Olive Mayer, from Coastside/San Mateo County, California, 1971*



Coastal Conservancy

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