

# Open Spaces

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## Plein Aire Exhibit Benefits Conservancy

Over 800 people attended the Conservancy-sponsored Palos Verdes Peninsula: An Artistic Interpretation show at the Malaga Cove Library in April. The show featured plein aire paintings by artists Rick Humphrey (left in photo), Daniel Pinkham, and Amy Sidrane.



The paintings depicted scenes from several Peninsula locations and highlighted the open space and natural beauty of the hillsides and bluffs in the Portuguese Bend area, Malaga Cove, and the Palos Verdes coastline. The artists painted their work on location out doors under various lighting conditions, both day and night.

"We are most pleased with the response," said Humphrey, who developed the concept for the show. "We had close to 400 people at the opening reception on April 6, and there was a steady stream of visitors for the entire month."

The Conservancy received a percentage of the sales of paintings, with total sales to date approaching \$10,000. A portion of the sales also went to the Palos Verdes Library District.

The show closed on April 30, but photographs of the paintings will be made available on the Conservancy's Home Page web site, [www.pvplc.org](http://www.pvplc.org). Please call the Conservancy's office at (310) 541-7613 for more information about the paintings.

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## Ailor Receives Community Appreciation Award

Conservancy President Bill Ailor, left in photo, received the Community Association of the Peninsula's 1997 Community Appreciation Award "in appreciation of outstanding contribution and service to the residents of the Palos Verdes Peninsula community."



The award was presented by CAP president Tom McFadden, who congratulated Ailor for his "commitment and accomplishments in the preservation of natural open space on the Palos Verdes Peninsula."

Ailor received certificates of commendation and appreciation from Senator Barbara Boxer, Representative Jane Harman, State Senator Betty Karnette, Assemblyman Steve Kuykendall, Supervisor Don Knabe, the Palos Verdes Library District, and City Councils of Palos Verdes Estates, Rolling Hills, and Rolling Hills Estates.

Former Conservancy Board member and vice president David Bence received CAP's Agnes Moss Volunteer Award, which is presented yearly to the person who has been most instrumental in assisting CAP to fulfil its goals. We extend our congratulations to David for his award.

The award ceremony was held on April 30 at a banquet held at the Meridian 1050 Restaurant in San Pedro.

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## **Barbara Dye Departs Conservancy Board**

Longtime Board member Barbara Dye has resigned from the Board to assume a position with the Ocean Trails development in Rancho Palos Verdes.

Dye joined the Conservancy's Board in 1989, and served as secretary for two years.

Dye was our first Nature Walk leader, and chaired the committee which developed the idea into the successful program we offer today. Our first Nature Walk attracted over 300 participants, and we've been going strong ever since. Dye has also been a frequent presenter of our televised walks, which are shown Friday on channel 3 (see the Reader Board for the program schedule).

She also chaired the committee which developed our Third Grade Nature Walk program, working with the Palos Verdes School District to pilot the program, and then helping to structure the program for more general use. Based on the success of the pilot, Deena Sheridan was hired to complete the program's development and organize the in-class and nature walk segments at each school. Approximately 850 third grade students have participated to date, and the program is on-going.

Dye has been a key player in a number of PVPLC initiatives and has helped make us what we are today. We will miss her on the Board, but look forward to her continued help with our nature walks.

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## **Eric Randall Joins Board**



Rancho Palos Verdes resident Eric Randall was appointed to the Board to fill the unexpired term of Barbara Dye. Randall served on RPV's Recreation and Parks Committee from 1988 to 1992, and chaired the committee for three years.

"I'm pleased to join the Conservancy's Board because I agree with the philosophy of retaining as much open space as possible on the Peninsula," said Randall. "It is truly a treasure, and I'm pleased to be able to help the Conservancy with its preservation efforts."

Randall, a real estate professional, has been a Conservancy Nature Walk Leader for five years. He was also active with Boy Scout Troop 276, serving on the group's executive committee for eight years, and was on his homeowner's' association Board of Directors for four years.

"I've lived in the same house for 26 years," Randall noted. "The Peninsula is very special to me. I'm pleased with what the

Conservancy has accomplished over the years. It's a good group, and I'm pleased to be a part of it."

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## Conservancy Option on Forrestral Management Presented

*The Conservancy-led efforts to preserve the 160-acre Forrestral property concluded in December, 1996, with the Rancho Palos Verdes City Council's approval of the acquisition using funds from LA County and the State Wildlife Conservation Board. At their April 1, 1997, meeting, the City Council began consideration of options for managing the recently-acquired Forrestral property. The following is Bill Ailor's testimony to the Council that evening.*

Mayor McTaggart and Members of the City Council:

I'm here this evening representing the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy. As you are aware, we are a nonprofit, nonpolitical public benefit corporation established in 1988 to preserve open space areas.

We were pleased to be involved in bringing the option to preserve the Forrestral property before the Council in 1996. Future generations will applaud this Council's action preserving this beautiful natural area. Congratulations again.

While the 160-acre Forrestral property is a significant natural area, it needs active care both to insure preservation of the area's habitat and to increase its habitat value. The site has some magnificent trails, which at present are unmaintained. Habitat in several sensitive areas has been severely damaged by mountain bikes and other activities, as is typical for unmanaged open space.

This Council has an opportunity to create something truly special on this property- a natural area renown for its habitat, home to stable and growing populations of threatened species, and used by individuals who wish to hike and enjoy well-maintained trails. The adjacent Ladera Linda Community Center, perhaps with enhanced exhibits and trail maps, can continue to serve as an interpretive center to help adults and children appreciate the history and special nature of this area.

The Council has an opportunity to achieve this vision by letting members of our community do most of the work. Volunteers such as Boy Scouts, high school students, and many others have been enthusiastic in their willingness to donate time for projects such as these. Their work on the Linden H. Chandler Preserve in Rolling Hills Estates is showing dramatic results.

The Council has an opportunity to achieve this vision at little to no cost to City taxpayers by letting a local organization manage the work and assume responsibility for costs of regular maintenance, habitat restoration, trail maintenance, and the like.

I'm here this evening to offer the services of our organization toward this end. We would like to begin discussions with the City on an agreement to grant the Conservancy responsibility for long term care and restoration of this area.

Since we must raise our funds from donations and we rely heavily on volunteer labor, we need an agreement with the City that guarantees the natural features of the property. We simply cannot spend volunteer time and donated dollars restoring an area which is subject to modification or damage at some future time.

There are two options for guaranteeing the future of this property: (1) a conservation easement held by the Conservancy, or (2) outright ownership of the property by the Conservancy. Our vice president, Douglas Stern, will outline the pros and cons of these options.

For the record, the Conservancy currently manages the Linden H. Chandler Preserve in Rolling Hills Estates. We own a portion of the property, and will hold a conservation easement over the remaining City-owned portion once the lot split has been completed. The easement assures us that the property will remain a natural area and grants us management rights. Volunteers have spent many hours working on the Chandler Preserve, secure in the knowledge that their work will remain in perpetuity.

The Conservancy also owns the 20-acre Lunada Canyon Preserve in Rancho Palos Verdes, and we are in the first stages of

restoration activities on that property.

Our Executive Director, Wendy Millet, will talk briefly about our stewardship activities.

Once again, our congratulations for the addition of this natural area to the open space preserved in your City.

We hope the Council will seize this opportunity and work with us to develop an agreement for the long term management and restoration of this beautiful area.

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## **Grants Help PVPLC Build Trail, Membership, Education**

The Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy has received four grants totaling \$15,100 to help us build a trail, build our membership base, and expand our education program.

The first, a \$1,200 grant from the Conservation Fund's American Greenways Program located in Arlington, VA, will help the Conservancy build a path in the Lunada Canyon Preserve that will protect habitat while providing an educational and recreational opportunity.

Greenways are another name for trails or paths - publicly and privately owned open space corridors. Greenways often border rivers, streams, and wetlands, or run along abandoned rail corridors, ridge lines, and other linear features. They link recreational, cultural, and natural features, serve as pathways for wildlife and people, and protect aesthetic and natural community features.

According to The Conservation Fund's President, Patrick F. Noonan, "The projects selected this year represent some of the best grassroots conservation and greenway development efforts in the United States." In addition to the grant award, the Conservancy will be showcased as a national model for its innovative efforts to develop a greenway.

The American Greenways Awards are made possible through the generous support of DuPont-a Fortune 100 Company committed to innovation in product development, safety, and environmental protection.

The second, a \$3,500 grant from the California and Hawaii Land Trust Grant Program is earmarked for a Peninsula-wide mailing to help build our membership.

This award will be used for a direct mail campaign to solicit support for our land preservation and stewardship efforts. The membership drive will be designed to build additional community support for natural land preservation on the Peninsula and to bring in financial and volunteer resources to make future educational and land stewardship projects possible.

The grant will be supplemented by a local mailing house, which has offered to donate a Peninsula-wide mailing list and mailing capabilities towards our efforts. We are now in the planning phase and will be sending a general information/solicitation brochure to the roughly 23,000 households on the Peninsula later this year.

The final two grants, a \$7,700 matching grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and a \$2,700 grant from Las Candelistas, will be used to help us expand our children's education programs.

Our children's programs consist of a Third Grade Nature Walk program and a K-5 curriculum development project. The Third Grade Walk program has been a big success, providing both an in-class session and a nature walk for Third Grade classes for the last two years. The K-5 Program is developing a local habitat segment for the Palos Verdes Unified School District's hand-on science program. The local habitat segment, which includes a nature walk, is available for each of the K-5 classes on the Peninsula, totaling nearly 3,000 children.

Individuals who would like to assist with any of these projects should call our office at (310) 541-7613.

## Interns Spend Summer With Conservancy

This summer the Conservancy is very lucky to have several interns working with us. They are making it possible for us to tackle some important projects that we wondered if we would ever get to!



Anjali Iyer moved to the Peninsula nine years ago and spent her high school years in PV. She is now a biology major at UC/Berkeley and will be a senior when she heads north in the fall. She is interested in plant biogenetics and remembers even at age 14 being fascinated with DNA.

She is spending her summer working with the Land Stewardship Committee to expand the coastal sage scrub restoration effort on the Chandler Preserve. She also will be taking the lead on the arundo eradication project and the establishment of a grassland restoration plot on the Chandler Preserve. Iyer views her summer with the Land Conservancy as "excellent hands-on experience in working with and applying environmental concepts."

Valerie Chan is a junior at Peninsula High. Last year she took environmental studies and became interested in the work of the Conservancy. She has participated in several Sunday Stewardship meetings during the school year, and this summer she hopes to learn more about working in an environmental office and about plant restoration at the Chandler Preserve.



Alicia Sanchez is also a senior at Peninsula High. She became interested in the Conservancy when she picked up one of our walk flyers at the library. She is interested in conservation and looks forward to increasing her knowledge about this field during her summer internship. She hopes to continue volunteering at the Conservancy when she returns to school in the fall.

We want to thank Anjali, Valerie, and Alicia for the hours that they are putting in and for all of their help.

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## A Successful First Year for The George F Canyon Nature Center

The George F Canyon Nature Center recently celebrated its first anniversary with ceremonies and activities to commemorate the Center's accomplishments during its maiden year of operation.

The City of Rolling Hills Estates opened the Nature Center in June, 1996 and contracted with the Conservancy to provide staffing under the direction of PVPLC naturalist Aileen Bevan. The Nature Center has received a tremendous response from the public and is enjoying an increasing role in providing environmental education programs for the community.

Improvements made to the Center this past year include a retractable shade structure for the teaching deck and completion of the interpretive program for the trail. This self-guided interpretive program includes an entrance kiosk and drinking fountain (which is much appreciated at the end of a hike), two wildlife viewing decks, a tracking station and interactive educational signage.

A large mural of the canyon, painted by docent Molly Collins, was unveiled during the anniversary ceremonies and features hand painted butterfly plaques recognizing major donors. Also unveiled was a plaque honoring PVPLC Board Member Loren DeRoy for her role in the preservation of the canyon and conceptualization of the Nature Center and its continued development.

The Nature Center provides the community with changing exhibits displaying various aspects of the canyon's natural habitat and wildlife. Special features include a carpeted mural with changing visual displays, a learning tree exhibit, a hands-on discovery area, live animal exhibits, a large teaching deck, and a gift shop.

If you haven't had the opportunity to visit the center yet, it is well worth the trip. Regular hours are 10:00 AM through 4:00 PM Saturday and Sunday and by appointment during the week. Special tours, guided trail walks or nature safari birthday parties can be arranged by calling the Center at 547-0862.

We wish to congratulate the City of Rolling Hills Estates for its foresight and continued dedication to preserving remaining natural wildlife resources in their city and for their cooperative efforts with the PVPLC to offer the community

## **First Class Completes Walk Leader Training**

Five individuals have completed the Conservancy's first formal training program for new Nature Walk leaders.

The training program consisted of eight classes totaling over 25 hours of training. Highlights of the program included a 5-hour presentation and field trip led by Dr. Tom Henyey of the Southern California Earthquake Center on local geology, and classes on: tidepools and sea life by Larry Fukahawa of the Cabrillo Marine Museum; Peninsula plant life by Angelika Brinkmann-Busi and Tony Baker; "animals insects, and adaptations" by Jess Morton; bird life by Martin Byhower; history of the Palos Verdes Peninsula by Barbara Dye, Mike Kilroy, and Dr. Allen Franz; and land use, stewardship, and open space by Bill Ailor. All classes were videotaped and copies may be checked out at the Conservancy's office (numbers are limited, so call in your reservation).

The program, organized by Dick Rankin and Tony Baker with help from Barbara Ailor, was established to increase the number of trained leaders for our popular Nature Walks. "We would have as many as 30 to 40 people in some of our walk groups," said Ailor, "and it was sometimes difficult for participants to hear the leader. We want to bring the size of the groups down to 10 to 20 people each."

The Conservancy's monthly Nature Walks, begun in 1991, regularly attract over 150 participants. Please call our office for a schedule.

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## **Peninsula History: The Years of the Ranchos**

**By Tony Baker**

In 1784 a land grant was bestowed on Juan Jose Dominguez by the Governor of Alta California Pedro Fages. Both men had been a part of the first overland Spanish expedition led by Gaspar de Portola fifteen years earlier. Dominguez was a soldier and Fages his officer, so it is not a surprise that when Fages became Governor, he would approve the request of a land grant by his friend.

Rancho San Pedro was immense, covering approximately 76,000 acres, stretching from Redondo to Long Beach and inland to Compton. The local Indians were soon pressed into service as ranch hands or forced into servitude at the Mission San Gabriel.

Over 9,000 cattle ranged freely over the Rancho, which turned a healthy profit under the management of Manuel Gutierrez. When Dominguez died in 1809, Gutierrez gained control of Rancho San Pedro because the heirs did not step forward.

Jose Dolores Sepulveda asked for and received permission from Gutierrez to graze cattle on a portion of the Rancho, which included San Pedro and the Peninsula, naming it Rancho de los Palos Verdes. A few years later the heirs of Dominguez tried to lay claim to the properties leading to years of legal wrangling between the Dominguez and Sepulveda families.

The Sepulvedas were ultimately successful in retaining title to the property, after the death of Jose Sepulveda. His widow Dona Sepulveda later married Antonio Machado, another local rancher, for whom Lake Machado at the Ken Malloy County Regional Park is named.

Jose Sepulveda's sons, Juan and Jose, along with Machado continued to raise cattle on the rancho. Juan built a house directly above the five-corners intersection, while Jose built his down the dirt road that is now Gaffey Street near its present intersection with Channel Street.

As in the time of the Gabrielino villages, this area became an important hub of trade [legal as well as illegal], because of the growing town of Los Angeles. Although a natural harbor did not exist, and ships had to anchor far off shore, San Pedro Bay

was the best place to off-load and take on cargo, a daunting procedure described by Richard Henry Dana in *Two Years Before the Mast*.

The Sepulveda family prospered as they profited from the increased trade and rises in prices for cattle hides. But in 1855 prices began to decline, culminating in a devastating drought lasting from 1862 to 1864. Unpaid taxes and mortgages, deaths and family squabbles finally led to the acquisition of much of the rancho by Jotham Bixby in 1882.

Machado Lake was known as "Bixby Slough" for many years. Bixby had made a fortune as a cattle and sheep rancher and viewed this acquisition simply as more grazing territory. In 1894, George Bixby inherited his father's holdings in this area and hired Harry Phillips, a mining engineer, to manage the ranch. Phillips began farming on some of the properties and also renting land to other farmers. The "Gaffey Street" valley became truck farms, while the hills above continued to be intensively grazed by sheep and cattle.

Through the years of the ranchos, the land was systematically altered by the cutting of the riparian forest, and the diking and draining of the wetlands. Major changes occurred as the rivers, which yearly replenished the wetlands, were transformed into concrete drainage channels.

Land no longer subject to seasonal flooding was now open to development. The rich silty loam was excellently suited to row crop agriculture, fruit orchards and dairy farms. An oil boom and proximity to the L.A. Harbor were responsible for eventually transforming the farms into an industrial complex of refineries, ship yards and warehouses.

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## **Peninsula Open Space: Why Should We Care?**

**By Wendy Millet, PVPLC Executive Director**

The most commonly heard justification for preserving open space in growing communities is philosophical and spiritual in nature. Advocates believe that undeveloped open spaces contribute to the aesthetics of the area by creating a natural sense of place - a recognition of the unique physical and cultural landscape of a particular area. If open space is valued as an integral part of the community, it often provides a focal point for community identity and a sense of pride for where we live.

Preservation of ecological resources is also increasingly being recognized as a rationale for preserving open space. Many people believe that the environment has an essential value and an inherent right to exist. Such arguments are particularly worth considering where there are distinctive natural communities containing rare species. The Palos Verdes Peninsula, with its offshore kelp forests, varied tidal zone features, scenic bluffs, coastal sage scrub, riparian habitats, and unique combination of flora and fauna, enjoys a wealth of distinctive, and increasingly rare, ecological resources. Preservation protects a natural heritage that, while appreciated today, may have even more significant value in the future.

Open space also provides health and safety benefits that enhance our quality of life in many unrecognized ways. Fundamental ecological processes related to plants, for example, not only reduce noise pollution by providing buffers that absorb sound, but they also help mitigate pollution by absorbing airborne particulate, ozone, and oxides of carbon, sulfur, and nitrogen. Plants also facilitate the absorption and decomposition of pollutants and toxic substances in soil and groundwater, thereby helping to improve water quality.

Of more tangible day-to-day benefit, open space provides recreational opportunities for all of us. The Peninsula offers superb recreation sites for walking, hiking, running, biking, bird watching, and otherwise enjoying the open space and scenic vistas. These opportunities are rare in L.A. County. Think about it: if these areas were developed, where would you go?

Recreation also provides economic benefits. In 1988, Californians spent an impressive \$30 billion--12% of total personal consumption dollars--on recreation and leisure expenditures such as footwear, apparel, film, and other services and supplies. Recreation and leisure has grown to become the third largest industry in the state.

Additionally, open space creates several economic benefits related to property values and real estate. Studies suggest that proximity to open space enhances property value and marketability. Scenic views and convenient recreational opportunities enhance property values, thus contributing to revenue enhancement. Open space can also provide benefits to the community by generating revenues to support local government services through sales, property, and other taxes.

An entirely different set of benefits in terms of public budget consideration derives from the reduced local government costs of open space. New residential and commercial developments often constitute a net drain on the public sector, since the cost of mandated services may be as much as twice the level of local tax revenues generated by the developments. Since open space does not require most of these expenditures, the public costs of managing open space may be as little as 3% or less of the cost for developed acreage.

In summary, open space preservation provides significant benefits to a community. Our desire to preserve open space on the Peninsula is not unique. There are approximately 1,100 organizations like ours nationwide seeking to protect the natural features that make their communities special. If you are interested in finding out what you can do to help, call the PVPLC at 310-541-7613.

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## Flowers in Antiquity

by Joseph K. Slap

Within paleontology, current thinking is that the first land plants appeared during the Paleozoic Era's Silurian Period (approximately 438 million to 408 million years ago).

Seed-producing plants, within taxonomy's plant kingdom, are categorized within the taxon (division) Spermatophyta (and you can see the first syllable's relationship to seeds). Within that taxon, there are two lower level taxons containing the two categories of seed-producing plants. The Gymnospermae (or gymnosperms) were the earlier of the two to appear. Present fossil evidence tells us that they evolved during the Paleozoic's Carboniferous Period, a period which lasted from about 360 million to about 286 million years ago. (The name Carboniferous derives from the fact that extensive coal deposits began to form during that period.)

The gymnosperms were the world's dominant plant group until the Mesozoic Era's Cretaceous Period (approximately 144 million through 65 million years ago). About 130 million to 90 million years ago the other seed-producing group, the Angiospermae (or angiosperms), the flowering plants, finally appeared and began to diversify. Once the angiosperms had begun, they steadily spread, both in number of species and in geographic distribution.

A gymnosperm's seeds are usually found on cones (yes, conifers are the most well-known of the gymnosperms). However, an angiosperm's seeds are borne within a closed seed cover which can be one of numerous different forms: an oak tree's acorn, the cover on a seed found within an apple or a lemon, a peach pit, any of the many types seen on flowers; etc. Angiosperms now dominate the flora of most of our planet's ecosystems. In addition, the number of extant angiosperm species, presently estimated at about 250,000 to 300,000, exceeds the number of species of all other land plants combined.

During the Cretaceous, there were large numbers of herbivorous dinosaurs, such as the so-called duck-billed dinosaurs (named hadrosaurs) and the horned dinosaurs (e.g., triceratops). These plant eaters were grazers that obtained food at or near ground level, in contrast to many of the Jurassic plant eaters, which had long necks and browsed for food at or near treetop level. When some of the dinosaur grazers ate angiosperms, the seeds would pass through their bodies undigested, as with some modern animals. When the seeds were excreted, they fell to the ground in one or more piles of fertilizer, and subsequently sprouted and rooted. The travels of those dinosaurs therefore helped to spread the angiosperms.

One adaptive advantage that the early angiosperms had was that they were much faster-growing than the conifers, cyclads and other contemporaneous plants. Thus, they could reach flowering size fairly rapidly, and could generate seeds before becoming a meal for grazers. Angiosperm diversification has also been associated with the species increase and geographic spread of insects which sought and utilized nectar and pollen. So, the coevolution of flowering plants and insects began a long time ago.

The use of flowers as funeral symbols of admiration goes back a long way. Let's stay in antiquity, but come forward many millions of years, and stop at the time of the Neanderthals. In Iraq, flowers have been found with buried Neanderthal remains. Millennia later, during the Bronze Age (2,000-500 B.C.), flowers were often used in graves and in coffins,

especially in Northern European sites such as Jutland where yarrow flowers and bracken fronds have been found in a girl's oaken coffin of that time period. The tomb of Tutankhamen (circa 1370-1352 B.C.) was found to contain many floral garlands.

Flowers have long been special, and still are. So, let's preserve them and their habitats!