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For Immediate Release

## **PVP Land Conservancy Elects New Board President and Two New Members to the Board of Directors**

PALOS VERDES PENINSULA, April 1, 2022 – The Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy is pleased to announce the election of two new members to the Board of Directors, Cindy Akiyama and Bruce Ross, and a new president of the board, Rob Kautz.

Cindy Akiyama is a former partner of a management consulting firm and prior to that held vice president of operations and operations management roles in telecom equipment and computer companies. Cindy's involvement with the PVP Land Conservancy began nearly 25 years ago when she began going on the Conservancy's guided nature walks with her young daughter. Over the years since, Cindy has become a supporter and has volunteered her time as an Education Docent and member of the Volunteer Trail Watch. More recently, she has become a leader for the nature walks and a member of the Conservancy's Stewardship Committee. For Cindy, *"I have seen the benefits of the Conservancy's work since moving to the South Bay in 1990. As I've been educated about our natural environment, native and invasive flora and fauna, geology, the human history and its impact on our region, I've developed a conviction for responsible stewardship of the land."*

Bruce Ross is the President of Bruce L. Ross & Company, a forensic accounting and consulting firm located in Rancho Palos Verdes. After working for years in aerospace and public accounting, Bruce founded his own firm in 1992 that specializes in damage calculations, fraud investigation, business valuation and large data analysis. He and his wife Randy Ellen Ross have three adult sons. Bruce currently also serves on the Board of the Center Theatre Group where he is former Chair of the Finance Committee. *"Looking over the McBride Trail with magnificent views of the coast and Portuguese Point from my home for the last 26 years helps me appreciate the unique landscape that I want to help protect using my professional expertise as the new Chair of the Finance Committee on the Land Conservancy's Board of Directors."*

Rob Kautz has been elected the new President of the Board of Directors. Rob moved to Rancho Palos Verdes in 2011 and joined the Conservancy's Finance Committee in 2012 and its Board of Directors in 2013. He has worked to help the organization develop its strategic plan and ensure its financial sustainability and has served as Executive Vice President, Treasurer, and as a member of the Audit and Investment committees.

Rob is a Principal of Holloway Kautz Investments LLC with extensive experience in finance, information technology, strategic planning, branding, and real estate and construction. He was EVP, CFO, and CIO for 99c Only Stores from 2005-2012 and previously was CEO for Wolfgang Puck Worldwide, Inc. He volunteered on the board of the Los Angeles Police Foundation from 2003-2012 including as Treasurer and Vice Chair, and previously served as an advisory board member of GE Capital's Restaurant Leadership Forum and Board member of the Harvard Business School Association SoCal. He resides in Rancho Palos Verdes with his wife Danise and has two adult children.

Rob commented on his experience as a board member, *"It has been my honor to work with the Land Conservancy board and staff for the last ten years. During this time passionate volunteers performed*

*over 190,000 hours of work and the staff developed conservation and education programs that reached over 30,000 children through the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Naturalist program. This level of volunteer work and community involvement is a remarkable feat of dedication and talented leadership by a small staff and volunteer board of directors over the years.”*

*He continued with thoughts on the Conservancy’s history, “The Conservancy was founded over 30 years ago under the land trust act by a group of determined conservationists led by Bill Ailor. The group’s potential became evident when the E.K. Zuckerman family donated Lunada Canyon in 1992 and the Chandler family donated the Linden H. Chandler Preserve in 1993. The Conservancy has collaborated with the City of Rancho Palos Verdes on the grant application process and successful acquisition of two major additions to the Palos Verdes Nature Preserve in 2005 and 2009 with funding by California state agencies and LA County funds totaling \$18 million, Land Conservancy donor and grant funds of \$4.3 million, and City of Rancho Palos Verdes funds of \$1.2 million. After three decades, the combined preserves under Land Conservancy habitat management comprise a multi-location, 1,600 acre regional resource nestled throughout the Peninsula. The community has demonstrated tremendous support of the Land Conservancy through matching funds for these acquisitions and consistent donations each year crucial to conserve the open space for education and enjoyment.”*

*He spoke about relations with the five cities that the Conservancy partners with from Rancho Palos Verdes which owns the 1400 acre Palos Verdes Nature Preserve, to Los Angeles at White Point, to Rolling Hills Estates at Linden H. Chandler and George F Canyon, as well as collaborations with Palos Verdes Estates for neighborhood beautification with native plants and Rolling Hills for restoration and fire prevention. “I am grateful for the diligent work of the Conservancy Staff to coordinate with so many public entities as well as our trail watch volunteers, volunteer trail crews, educational docents program, various committees and our business partners including Terranea. This extensive and long-standing community support has enabled the Land Conservancy to implement its mission.”*

*He continued with comments on short term challenges versus the long-term vision for the preserves, “Over the past few years we have seen a dramatic increase in public use of the preserves due to social media posts and the desire to get outdoors during the COVID pandemic. It has been difficult to balance public access with the ultimate goal of endangered species protection. Preserved lands on the Peninsula are a unique asset in the Southern Los Angeles area that are distinct from the function of public parks and recreational facilities given the conservation mandate governing the management of these coastal lands that came with government funding. I feel that all trail users need to recognize that they are part of a journey across generations and are participants in the development of this unique resource. The original vision is still in process, to preserve large blocks of natural open space and restore them from weeds to native coastal sage scrub and other crucial habitats to provide a place where visitors may enjoy the peaceful solitude and health benefits of communing with nature, where children and adults can learn about the natural environment, and where native plants and animals can thrive.”*

*Rob concluded with some thoughts about the future, “The Conservancy has many important milestones still ahead. The Conservancy’s management contract under the Natural Communities Conservation Plan (NCCP) in partnership with the RPV calls for restoring 200 acres of natural habitat over the next 40 years which we estimate will cost about \$30 million in today’s dollars to both restore and maintain. We also plan to improve habitat and reduce invasive plants across all the preserves as well as continue our educational efforts that engage the community. In order to achieve these goals, the Conservancy relies on the combined support of community contributions, grants, and city funding, all elevated by passionate volunteers to get the work done, year by year.”*

*The Conservancy is thrilled to welcome these talented and dedicated Board members to their new roles.*

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*The Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy was founded in 1988 and is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit community-benefit organization dedicated to preserving land and restoring habitat for the education and enjoyment of all. The Conservancy's operations include the Palos Verdes Nature Preserve in Rancho Palos Verdes, Linden H. Chandler and George F Canyon Preserves in Rolling Hills Estates, White Point Nature Preserve in San Pedro, and a native plant nursery on the Defense Fuel Support Point in San Pedro.*