

Fall 2011

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The Pacifica Land Trust: Celebrating 20 years of Protecting Open Space

Samuel Casillas, President

On the evening of August 25th, 2011 the Pacifica Land Trust held a celebration honoring our founders and all our volunteers who have contributed to preserving our open space -- the one precious asset that is a priceless treasure handed down from generation to generation.

Twenty years ago, the Pacifica Land Trust was founded to protect coastal open space in the Pacifica area and to make Pacifica lands accessible to the public. Our success represents the culmination of a legacy of citizen-based coastal preservation and the hard work of our elected officials that goes back almost four decades and continues up through the present. On August 25th we celebrated the collective accomplishment in realizing these goals, but also recognized that there is still more work to be done. We were honored to be joined by many of our elected officials including Mayor Mary Ann Nihart, City Council Members Sue Digre, Pete Dejarnett, Jim Vreeland and Len Stone, County Supervisor Don Horsley, State Assemblyman Jerry Hill and our Keynote Speaker Congresswoman Jackie Speier.

The evening was an opportunity to reflect on the many compassionate citizens to whom we owe a great debt, including the people of California who voted overwhelmingly to support Proposition 20 (the Coastal Zone Conservation Act) in 1972 which recognized that coastal resources and public access are public trust rights and obligations. One of our city's founders, Grace McCarthy, was on the first regional Coastal Commission. Of equal importance, the California Coastal Conservancy was created to help meet the open space and public access goals.

In the 1970's and 1980's, many battles were fought by a coalition of groups and individuals such as the struggles to preserve Sweeney Ridge from a freeway extension and Mori Point from extensive development. Pacificans were fortunate that we had great leadership from Congressmen Phil Burton, Leo Ryan and Tom Lantos and others who were successful in expanding the GGNRA to include our surrounding ridges.

It was during this time that Pacificans had the foresight to do more to protect open space and make it accessible to the public. The City formed the Open Space Task Force, which recommended the formation of a private non-profit



Congresswoman Jackie Speier with PLT President Samuel Casillas.

land trust to provide a trustworthy intermediary between property owners, funding partners, and the public in open space acquisition projects. And so, with the help of the Trust for Public Land, the Pacifica Land Trust was born.

Over these past twenty years, this small volunteer board, has contributed time and effort to making the preservation of our beautiful coastline a reality. The 20th anniversary dinner was our opportunity to show gratitude to all these individuals, plus representatives from public agencies, private property owners, our elected officials, the City of Pacifica and others who participated in our projects over the years.

The efforts of the Pacifica Land Trust are not possible without the help of all these groups and ultimately, your vital support. Without you, without the critical contributions of our current volunteers in the Pedro Point Headlands, and without the partnership we have established with the Pedro Point Community Association, the City and the Coastal Conservancy, our success would not be possible.

For those who were not able to make our celebration I want to thank you for continuing your generous contributions that further our legacy of coastal open space protection and public access. We hope to have many more celebrations and open space victories in the next twenty years and look forward to forging a continued unified front to preserve our prime open space from destruction. The vision of coastal open space started with volunteers more than twenty years ago. We all need to work together to continue this vision into the future, and the future starts today!

Pedro Point Headland's "Ecological Reserve"

Michael Vasey

On August 28, Jake Sigg joined a small group of Pedro Point Headland site stewards on a visit to our "ecological reserve", one of the most impressive stands of remnant coastal prairie along the central California coast. Jake is a past president of the California Native Plant Society and a pioneer in the ecological stewardship movement. It was Jake's first visit to the site and he was "blown away" by the size of this coastal prairie, by the extent to which it is relatively undisturbed, and by its extraordinary plant diversity. The prairie is dominated by two perennial bunch grasses, Pacific reedgrass (*Calamagrostis nutkaensis*) and California fescue (*Festuca californica*). These grasses are so large (waste high) that they obscure several coastal shrubs, such as coyote brush (*Baccharus pilularis*) and ocean spray (*Holodiscus discolor*). Once upon a time, coastal prairie stands like the one on Pedro Point Headland were widespread along bluffs and coastal terraces near the ocean. Now, however, the vast majority of these distinctive coastal grasslands have disappeared due to agriculture, grazing, and other land use practices. Today, the rich perennial prairies of yesterday have been replaced by grasslands dominated by non-

native annual grasses and a host of introduced exotic forbs, such as cranesbill (e.g., *Erodium* species).

As we sauntered down the slope through the prairie, Jake got ever more excited as wild flower jewels peaked out from between clumps of grasses or clung to rocky outcrops with shallow soils scattered about the site. One of the best finds of the day was Scouler's campion (*Silene scouleri* subsp. *grandis*), a brilliant pink flowering plant in the appropriately named Pink family (Caryophyllaceae). Scouler's campion is another "bluff hugger" that only occurs along the immediate coast from the San Francisco Bay area up to southern Oregon. Several other similar rare wild flowers occur on Pedro Point Headland, such as the magenta colored coast rock-cress (*Arabis blepharophylla*) and Franciscan wall flower (*Erysimum franciscanum*). Liliaceous species such as fairy lantern (*Calochortus albus*) and mission bells (*Fritillaria affinis*) are also found here during the spring. The key to the presence of these species is the space between clumps of grasses that helps to protect them from harsh elements and allows space for them to grow, unlike fields of non-native annual grasses.

So, where is this "hidden jewel" of Pedro Point Headland? Why, in plain view of everyone in Pacifica, of course, on the northern flanks of "Pedro Mountain", the local name for the northern summit of Pedro Point Headland above Shelter Cove which then drops precipitously westward towards San Pedro Rock. Oh yes, I should mention that if you can lift your gaze for a moment from all those wild flowers and sumptuous grasses, a visit to this site offers stunning views of Pacifica and the coast sweeping up towards Mount Tamalpais. There is no formal trail through the prairie which is probably just as well until the site is formerly managed. But, for now, it awaits those with a taste for adventure (and hopefully a resistance to poison oak). In September, our stewardship volunteers spent a good part of our day removing exotic invasive species from the site (not many) and encroaching young Monterey pines. Jake loves it!

The 2012 Pedro Point Headlands Restoration Workday Calendar

January 8th-	Oct 28th
January 29th	November 25th
February 26th	
March 25th	
April 21st *	
<i>(With Pacifica's Earth Day of Action Event)</i>	
May 27th	
June 24th	*These events will be on Saturdays from
July 29th	9-11:30am and coincide with Pacifica's
August 26th	City-Wide Day of Action Events.
Sept 15th *	

(with CA Coastal Cleanup Day)

New Board Members:

Bruce Ferry

Bruce is a Certified Public Accountant practicing in San Francisco for 20 years, partner in the firm DZH Phillips, LLP specializing in taxation of individuals and closely held businesses. Very active in the Pacifica community including treasurer and member of the board of the Pedro Point Community Association; founder and organizer of the Pacifica Chili Cook-Off, benefiting the Pedro Point Firehouse; committed volunteer for the Pedro Point Headlands Project - known as "Pampas Grass Ferry" for vigorous removal of that invasive species.



He is also a member of the Guardsmen, a charity organization in San Francisco that raises money to send underprivileged children to residential summer camps and provides educational scholarships to underprivileged children.

Bruce recently moved to Pacifica in December 2008, primarily for the easy access to open space and great hiking and mountain biking in Pacifica and surrounding areas. An avid outdoorsman, he was raised in Marin County, an area well known for open space protection and preservation. He seeks to continue that theme in Pacifica and educate the general population about the outdoor beauty that Pacifica has to offer.

Breck Hitz

Breck Hitz and his wife, Anne, moved to Pacifica from San Francisco more than 20 years ago. Both are active in the Pedro Point Community Association, and Breck is a past board member of the Pacifica Library Foundation. The couple has two children, Emily, who graduated from the University of British Columbia this year and is now working in Vancouver, and Will, who is in his second year at UBC.



Professionally, Breck is the author of a textbook on laser engineering that will be published in its fourth edition early next year. He's the former executive director of the Laser and Electro-Optics Manufacturers' Association and former editor of Photonics Spectra magazine. Now "retired," he has several consulting clients and is working on a book about the history of the U.S. laser industry.

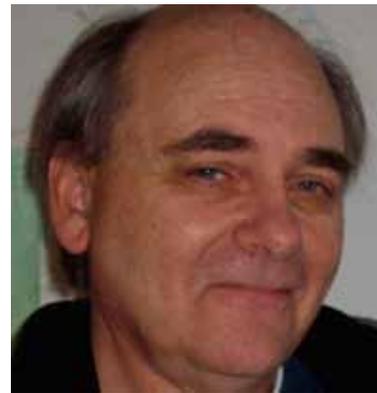
Alison Sanders

Alison Sanders has lived in Pacifica since 1998. She is the co-owner of Ocean Yoga, a local yoga and massage business. Alison has also been active in various non-profit efforts including the Pacifica Ocean Discovery Center and the Marine Mammal Center.



Alison is the Director of the Office and Research and Sponsored Programs at San Francisco State University, where she has worked for the last 11 years. She also obtained her B.S. in Biology and M.A. in Marine Biology from SF State, while working with the Oceanic Society on the Belize Dolphin Project.

Alison is excited to be a part of the Pacifica Land Trust, and looks forward to working with a great organization.



Michael Crabtree

Michael recently retired after working in the City of Pacifica Planning Department for over 20 years. He served as Planning Director from 1997 to 2010, where he oversaw all aspects of the City's planning function. When Michael first joined the Planning Department

in 1985, one of his tasks was to work with the Open Space Task Force and help complete the Open Space Task Force Report, which contained a number of recommendations for preserving open space in Pacifica, including the establishment of an Open Space Committee and creation of the Pacifica Land Trust. Michael provided assistance in setting up both these organizations.

Michael's other duties with the City of Pacifica included working with citizen groups such as the Golden Gate National Recreation Area Liaison Committee and the Climate Change Task Force. He also helped initiate the current General Plan Update process.

Michael was drawn to Pacifica by its scenic beauty and flourishing coastal environment. He strongly believes in environmental protection, and that a balance can be found between open space preservation and reasonable economic growth. Michael currently lives in the Sunset District of San Francisco. He obtained his Master of Arts degree in Geography from San Francisco State University in 1987.

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Send check made payable to : Pacifica Land Trust P.O. Box 988, Pacifica, CA 94044 (650) 438-0894

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Keep up the good work!

Please use my donation below to continue the work of protecting our precious Pacifica resources.

Your generous donations allow us to continue working to preserve our open spaces and protect our lands for generations to come. Please be as generous as your budget allows so the Pacifica Land Trust can keep serving our community.

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