



DIABLO

w a t c h

Save Mount Diablo

Preserving the Mountain Since 1971

Fall 2010 No. 50

NO on Measure W in San Ramon: It's the Wrong Direction - Defend the Urban Growth Boundary and Tassajara Valley

by Troy Bristol

Dressed as an environmentally friendly General Plan 2030 Amendment, there is more to Measure W than San Ramon would like voters to know. It is a Trojan horse filled with promises of benefits when what's really hidden deep inside its 2,000 pages is the breaking of the city's Urban Growth Boundary in three places, and thousands of houses.

The Thin Green Line

Standing on top of Tassajara Ridge in Hidden Valley Open Space, on the eastern edge of San Ramon, you are immediately struck by the beauty of the Tassajara Valley. It is, undeniably, a special place and essential to San Ramon's high quality of life.

Scott Hein



Dry Creek's magnificent oaks frame Mount Diablo looking west from its perch near Cowell Ranch State Park in Brentwood.

Tassajara Creek, with its headwaters protected in Mt. Diablo State Park and Morgan Territory Regional Preserve, flows down and cuts through the flat valley bottom, twisting through agricultural lands. Rolling grassland set off by large oaks climbs to ridgelines defining the eastern and western edges of the Valley. Orchards and hay fields frame the Tassajara Creek corridor, and cattle graze the hillsides.

To the north, Mt. Diablo's peaks are dramatic, framed by the dark rugged Blackhills and the grassland knolls above

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Dry Creek: Our Newest Acquisition Project in Brentwood's Beautiful Briones Valley

by Seth Adams

Dry Creek, Save Mount Diablo's most recent acquisition property—we closed escrow in September—is only 5.18 acres but it is a spectacular and strategic purchase, within a half mile of Brentwood subdivisions.

The property is also a half mile from the area threatened by the developer Measure F initiative in Brentwood this past spring. Save Mount Diablo was instrumental in defeating Measure F. Had it been approved, development speculation would have increased.

Named for the alkaline stream which crosses it (and which still is not dry in October), "Dry Creek" is a rectangle of seasonal wetlands,

and grassland rising up a knoll to include a beautiful stand of eight heritage blue oaks. Nice, but so what?

The parcel backs up to the new 3,659 acre Cowell Ranch State Park (aka Los Medanos State Historic Park) and is at the heart of the East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservation Plan's highest priority acquisition zone. It is literally surrounded by high quality endangered species habitat for San Joaquin kit fox, burrowing owls and California tiger salamander, and is a transitional zone from the seasonal

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Founded in 1971, Save Mount Diablo has helped expand preserved natural lands on and around the mountain from 6,788 acres to more than 100,000 acres

Masthead Panorama:

Dragon Oaks 550, Stephen Joseph



From the Executive Director: Defending the Mountain

When Mary Bowerman and Art Bonwell founded Save Mount Diablo in 1971 their goal was to advocate on behalf of Mount Diablo—primarily by lobbying the State to expand the state park. Since then our methods have grown to include land acquisition, land use advocacy, stewardship and public education. In spite of our successes, we still need to diligently defend the mountain.

Several years ago we were successful in requiring every city in Contra Costa County to adopt Urban Growth Boundaries (UGB) as a condition of the County's Transportation Sale Tax. UGB's are designed to encourage "smart growth" inside the UGB, while simultaneously protecting agricultural and natural lands outside the UGB.

In June, greedy speculators, developers, and consultants challenged Brentwood's UGB. These same consultants have joined with developers, and speculators to challenge San Ramon's UGB in November. They try to confuse voters by crafting measures that sound like they protect natural lands, and try to scare people by threatening if the measure doesn't pass, another jurisdiction will develop the land.

Working with our allies and local citizens to inform the public we soundly defeated Brentwood's Measure F. In San Ramon, we—along with the community and allies—are educating the public about the massive growth and negative community impacts that Measure W would include.

Regionally, SMD supports County Measure O, which helps fund transit improvements, bike and pedestrian safety projects, and local street and road maintenance. It helps support our county's growth management plans for transportation—which led to the creation of UGBs.

Statewide, we are working to defend our state parks by assisting the Yes on Prop 21 campaign. For too long, our state legislature has failed to properly support and maintain our state parks, which was once one of the best park systems in the world.

SMD also opposes Prop 23. This attempt to suspend AB32 goals to reduce green house gases poses another threat to our mountain, our community, our state and our planet.

Acting as watchdogs, we oppose those who try to remove or weaken existing protections. On behalf of the public, we advocate for new policies and legislation to further accomplish land preservation. And finally, by informing the public, we defend against deception of self serving interests.

Defending a mountain—is not easy work and often takes vigilance and prolonged battles on many fronts. We are able to do this work due to the loyalty of community members who support us with their voices and their generous contributions.

Defending the mountain—on behalf of you and future generations!

Ron Brown



Four Days Diablo April 27 - 30, 2011

Four Days Diablo is a "Gently Roughing It" backpacking trip that leads you on an adventure through rarely seen Mount Diablo landscapes and epicurian delights. Each day as you tour and examine the majestic wilderness, staff hauls your gear and sets up your new camp while talented local chefs, from restaurants like Forbes Mill, The Peasant and the Pear, and Prima Ristorante, create delectable dishes on the spot. The most luxurious camping experience filled with discovery awaits you closer to home than you ever thought. Limited space available, sign up now.

For more information visit www.SaveMountDiablo.org

Proud Member of





Members of the SRV Bike Team and DiRT enjoying the workout and comradery as they restore Marsh Creek's riparian habitat and oaks on our Marsh Creek IV property.

Praying for Rain: The Diablo Restoration Team

by George Phillips

Save Mount Diablo's Stewardship Committee and Diablo Restoration Team (DiRT) volunteers have worked hard this past spring and summer, on projects improving habitat on a variety of our properties, for wildlife and people alike. Work days have ranged from weeding and watering, to trail building, clean-up, and removal of non-native plants.

At our Marsh Creek IV property volunteers have donated more than a thousand hours of hard, fun work on our project to restore creek-side woodland habitat.

Marsh Creek IV is a three acre property, crossed by a long stretch of Marsh Creek, which connects to SMD's 17 acre Marsh Creek II via a cattle tunnel under Marsh Creek Rd. The properties are at the mouth of Dark Canyon, a mile downstream of the confluence of Curry, Perkins and Dunn Creeks in Mt. Diablo State Park.

In just a couple of months DiRT and the SMD Stewardship Committee installed a 500 foot split rail fence using recycled redwood posts, cleared the property of non-native weeds, moved and renovated a gazebo, and planted over 500 native plants. Rain, snow and shine, DiRT volunteers pitched in; on one occasion they covered all 500 plantings with white

garbage bags to protect them from freezing temperatures and snowfall that blanketed Diablo and the East Bay hills in December of 2009.

Each time we visit Marsh Creek IV, there's a new discovery. One month white cottonwood seeds completely covered the ground like a layer of goose down. The next month fragrant buckeye blossoms drew us all to the creek where we found a pair of mallard ducks floating downstream. Our elderberry plants grew large quickly, but then the deer began cropping them to the stem like they were candy. We had protected valley oaks and grape plants, but not the elderberries. We won't make that mistake again.

DiRT members returned to MC-IV monthly throughout the spring and summer to mow, and remove non-native weeds that compete with natives for sun and water. Every three weeks during the dry season we've watered to help get the plants established during their first year.

In addition to the trees and shrubs that we planted, DiRT created a pilot project bunchgrass planting. In late spring we were surprised to find California poppies growing between large clumps of native bunchgrass that had gone to seed in their first year. When we planted the grass seeds, we expected them to produce seed in year two or three but rain conditions were perfect this past year.

Bunchgrasses can live for hundreds of years and extend their dense root systems thirty feet deep, stabilizing soils and accessing ground water to survive our arid Mediterranean climate. DiRT is refining

its bunchgrass restoration techniques in anticipation of a bigger scale project at SMD's Mangini Ranch this fall.

Mangini Ranch

At 207 acre Mangini, we've already begun removing non-native thistles and grass thatch in a 7.5 acre fenced pond and stream area in preparation for native grassland restoration later this year, in addition to control of three nasty non-native species.

Marsh Creek-I

We've just removed a huge stand of non-native *Arundo* (Giant Reed) from the creek; it looks like bamboo and can easily spread downstream.

Marsh Creek-II

This winter a contractor replaced a gate and fencing along the road frontage. Our volunteers removed the old fencing to save funds.

Irish Canyon

At our 320-acre Irish Canyon property, in addition to trail building, we established 150 valley oak and buckeye plantings which we also have been watering through the dry season. We also removed quite a few invasive artichoke thistle plants.

Joseph Galvin Ranch

At this 62-acre property we're preparing to fence and protect a section of Marsh Creek, to fence a number of tree seedlings, and are investigating whether we can create a seasonal wetland.

Wright Canyon

Our 76 acre property near Curry Canyon has a pond used by many wildlife species, quite a few structures, many fire roads, and a lot of trees leaning over them. Every year several trees fall over the roads and have to be cut up. Our volunteer steward also helps maintain the structures.

Join Diablo Restoration Team

See how you can help restore the mountain and wildlife we love. There are scheduled work days every month. Join us!

Contact George at (925) 947-3535 or gphillips@SaveMountDiablo.org.



George Phillips

View of Mount Diablo from a new trail on Irish Canyon

Unveiling Beauty New Trails at Irish Canyon

SMD's 320-acre Irish Canyon property is nearly hidden, nestled between Keller Ridge and Kreiger Peak just over a mile from downtown Clayton. Marked by three spring-fed branches of Irish Creek, blue oak woodland covers northeast facing slopes and valley oak savannah and grassland climb toward Kreiger Peak. Steep slopes are sculpted by landslide slumps. The property supports more than 400 species of plants and animals.

Purchasing Irish Canyon in 2007 was a bold move since at the time it was landlocked from public open space on all four sides. Nonetheless, it's part of

a key wild-life corridor and has high recreational potential as part of the linkage southeast from Suisun Bay and the Los Medanos Hills to the northern Diablo foothills of Black Diamond Mines.

This property is gorgeous with amazing views but very few living people

have seen them. Access restrictions through the neighboring "Ang" property have meant that for the last three years SMD has been unable to lead public hikes on the property. That has now changed.

On August 9th the East Bay Regional Park District completed acquisition of 462-acre Ang, bridging the gap from City of Clayton Open Space to Irish Canyon and Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve.

This month SMD will also transfer Irish Canyon to the Park District with funding from the East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy. SMD is conducting oak and stream restoration there and will manage the property through 2013.

We built two trails that will make Irish

Canyon much more inviting. After following Irish Creek into the property, you take a fire road up to a pond. Passing through a wonderful grove of huge oaks near the old Atkins homestead site, you access the new "Spine Ridge Trail." It weaves around descending knolls, alternating near views of Mt. Diablo and Kreiger Peak, and more distant ones of Carquinez Strait and Mt. Tamalpais, back to the main canyon fire road.

Near the old Jones homestead site, you can walk a quarter mile southeast along Irish Creek and then rise up onto Keller Ridge on the new "Keller Oaks Trail." It passes through fragrant buckeyes and above an oak restoration area, then into blue oak woodland before dropping back to the main Irish Canyon fire road.

Construction of the trails was delayed this spring as a result of landslides. East Bay Trail Dogs, trail building volunteers, leaders of the project, made up for lost time on several occasions by hiking over three miles round trip with tools on their backs so that they could hand cut the trails before soil hardened.

Although Irish Canyon and Ang are closed to the public, SMD will lead public hikes over the coming months. Dates include October 24 and November 14, at 9:30 am, beginning at the carpool lot at Peacock Creek Drive and Marsh Creek Road, Clayton, about six miles roundtrip.

To R.S.V.P. call (925) 947-3535.

Elections: Campaigns to Care About

Yes on Measure O Improve Transportation

Save Mount Diablo supports Measure O on the Nov. 2, 2010 ballot in Contra Costa County. With funding from a \$10 annual vehicle user fee, Measure O will help maintain and improve our transportation system, including repairing local streets and roads, supporting public transit services county wide, and funding important bicycle and pedestrian projects. Improving transit and making our streets and roads safer and more accessible for bicyclists and pedestrians

can help reduce our use of automobiles. An efficient and well-maintained transportation system also helps reduce air and water pollution. Unlike other sources of transportation funding, Measure O funding can not be take away by the state - all the funding remains in Contra Costa County.

Measure O has been endorsed by the Sierra Club and TransForm. Please add your name to Measure O's growing list of supporters by visiting **www.VoteYesOnMeasureO.com**, and whether you vote absentee or in person, remember to **vote YES on Measure O**.





Yes on Proposition 21 Save Our State Parks

Every day millions of hikers, mountain bikers, equestrians, surfers, picnickers, birdwatchers, campers, and many others escape their everyday lives and seek respite in one of California's 238 state parks and beaches. Mount Diablo State Park is a good example; the 20,000 acre state park is our playground.

Our parks need your help. California is in the midst of a financial crisis. For the past two years state parks and beaches have been on the chopping block during state budget negotiations.

Last year, the state budget came dangerously close to completely shutting down 220 of the state's 278 parks, including Mt. Diablo State Park. 150 state parks were closed part time or suffered significant cuts in maintenance and safety.

On November 2, California voters will have the opportunity to solve the parks and beaches' funding issue by voting yes on Proposition 21. It will create a fund that will fully finance the California state park system, ensuring that all 278 parks and beaches remain fully open to the public and have sufficient dollars for maintenance and safety.

An \$18 vehicle license fee would be imposed on most California vehicles and in exchange provide free day-use admission to all of the state parks and beaches—\$1.50 per month. If you visit state parks or beaches three times a year, you'll save money.

Millions of out-of-state tourists visit our state parks; redwoods, deserts, mountains and our spectacular coastline. They spend \$4.32 billion annually in park related expenditures, so every dollar spent on state parks generates \$2.35 for California's general fund. In other words, California's parks make money for the state.

In addition to the 1.5 million acres protected in California's state parks and beaches, funds from Proposition 21 will be used to help the Department of Fish and Game manage 1.1 million acres of wildlife refuges and ecological reserves.

State parks are as important for the state's economic vitality as they are for preserving the most sensitive and important natural and historical resources.

**Please vote YES on Proposition 21
to save California's state parks.**



No on Proposition 23 An Attack on California's Landmark Global Warming Legislation

On November 2, California voters will weigh in on Proposition 23, an attempt to suspend California's Assembly Bill 32, the Global Warming Solutions Act.

We have all seen news footage capturing the dramatic affects of climate change. Huge chunks of ice melt and crumble into the ocean as polar bears stranded at sea, become the poster children of this global issue. We've seen footage of the Gulf oil spill. And we remember when gas passed \$4 a gallon.

The affects of climate change aren't just

being felt in wilderness thousands of miles away. Climate change is impacting our daily lives and stressing the fragile ecosystems of Mount Diablo.

In 2006, California took a proactive step toward addressing climate change by passing AB 32, setting a goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2020. The measure reduces air pollution and has led to huge investments in alternative energy and green jobs.

Opponents of AB 32 have spent millions to place Proposition 23 on the ballot to kill AB 32. If passed, it would freeze AB 32's provisions until California's unemployment rate drops to a fixed rate that is rarely achieved. AB 32 already includes a provision allowing the governor to suspend the law for a year in an economic emergency.

California would lose hundreds of thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in investment. 500,000 employees work in green jobs in 12,000 clean tech companies in California. Those companies received \$9 billion in venture capital investment between 2005- 09, including \$2.1 billion in

2009— five times the investment in our nearest competitor, Massachusetts.

Senate Bill 375, a companion of AB 32, sets policies to achieve AB32 goals, by directing new development to areas with existing infrastructure and public transit while discouraging development of open spaces on the fringes of communities. SB375 gives weight to arguments by Save Mount Diablo that the key to healthy communities is achieving a balance between development and protected open spaces.

Prop. 23 would increase dependence on oil, increase costs to California consumers, and increase the risk of accidents like the one in the Gulf. Added costs would reduce economic output in California by \$80 billion and cost over a half million jobs by 2020.

California would be taking a giant step backwards in how we envision our communities and our environment.

**Please Vote NO on Proposition 23
to maintain California's progress.**

Measure F

FAILED
THE TEST

**BREAKS Brentwood's
Voter-Approved
Urban Limit Line
NO on Measure F**

Holding the Line Brentwood Urban Limit Line Remains Strong

On June 8th Brentwood voters rejected strong arm tactics and threats by Seattle-based consultant Tom Koch and defeated the developer-qualified Measure F by fifteen points. The measure threatened to break and expand Brentwood's voter-approved Urban Limit Line by 740 acres into the city's western hills, while also rewriting the city's General Plan for the developers' benefit. It would have allowed 1300 houses south of Balfour Road.

The developer initiative in Brentwood was a surprise—we were expecting to face Koch on a similar measure in San Ramon in the fall—and we and residents had just 12 weeks to organize before the June vote. Developers and landowner speculators including Mission Peak Company, Evergreen Management, Lee Hancock, the Strickler Family, Mark Harris and Sean McCauley reported spending over \$280,000 on their initiative.

Koch conducted one of the dirtiest campaigns ever seen in Brentwood, including paid signature gatherers, and paid "grassroots volunteers." He sent out at least eighteen mail pieces, many of them verging on racism—with significant involvement by four Brentwood council members and many of its establishment leaders. Koch denied the actual effects of a development agreement, which would have locked in developer approvals, while promising amenities to the public that were mostly illusions or would have been required in any case by city regulation.

He threatened Brentwood voters that if they didn't approve the measure

that the neighboring city of Antioch would take control of the land, although Antioch had expressed no interest in the area. Koch involved LAFCO appointees—LAFCO regulates agency boundaries—Helen Allen, Rob Schroder, Dwight Meadows and David Piepho in the threat, although there was no application before LAFCO and none of them was authorized to speak for LAFCO. Allen and Schroder were later reprimanded by their appointing body, the Mayors' Conference, and both the Mayors' Conference and LAFCO subsequently tightened policies limiting who could represent them. He accused opponents of sponsoring obnoxious "push polls" that were probably conducted by his own campaign. Koch sub-contractor Dan Lee also sent out last minute e-mails purporting to be from County Assessor Gus Kramer, "by mistake." Kramer denied involvement.

Meanwhile, "Brentwood Residents Opposed to Developer Measure F" was organized by the hero of the day, community activist Kathy Griffin (see Mountain Star Awards) and Save Mount Diablo. Compared to the developers' \$280,000, "Brentwood Residents" spent less than \$10,000, most of it in-kind contributions of Save Mount Diablo staff time and copying. Other major opponents were Greenbelt Alliance, city councilman Brandon Richey, and County Superintendent of Schools Joe Ovick. The Contra Costa Times published a scathing editorial accusing the proponents of "lies."

The "Brentwood Residents" campaign was truly grassroots, involving about 50 volunteers. We sent out just one city-wide mailing, a 4x6" postcard, and one smaller mailing signed by Richey to the gated Summerset retirement community. Although Koch bought weekly full page ads in the Brentwood Press, which endorsed "Yes on F," "Brentwood Residents" otherwise dominated letters to the editor and free media. Volunteers dropped xeroxed flyers on nearly every doorstep in the city over the course of the campaign and attended community events. We sent out regular e-mail

alerts to voters throughout the city, and gathered over 500 Facebook friends, allowing us to quickly alert our supporters to the issues as well as the dirty tricks being used by Koch. Facebook later recognized SMD for its innovative use of social media.

Ultimately it's believed that Koch's tactics and strategy lost the campaign for the developers. He vastly overdid it on literature, his credibility became a major campaign issue, the internet and social media allowed residents to reveal his efforts, and his threats backfired. Equally important were the economy, concerns about property values, and the leadership of Kathy Griffin and SMD.

Koch and the developers spent at least \$66 per "yes" vote. Brentwood Residents spent less than \$2 per "no" vote. On June 8th Brentwood voters rejected Measure F by fifteen points, 5,702 to 4,251. Had the measure passed, other attempts to break Brentwood's Urban Limit Line would have likely followed.

Save Mount Diablo is currently working with San Ramon residents in hopes of defeating Measure W, a similar measure which would break and expand that city's Urban Growth Boundary by over 2,000 acres into the Tassajara Valley and San Ramon's western hills. The proponents' claims about Measure W are equally deceptive. Although San Ramon and Brentwood are of similar size, the contested gubernatorial and senate races will likely result in greater turnout.

See the article "No On Measure W in San Ramon" for ways you can help defend the Urban Growth Boundary.



The single No on Measure F mailer - a 4 x 6 postcard.



Seth Adams, Michael Park, Kathy Griffin, David Gowen and State Assembly member Joan Buchanan.

Scott Hein

an unrecognized *Navarretia*. He later found another unfamiliar plant, an *Eriastrum*, or Woollystar. Both plants are pretty wildflowers which resemble star shaped, flower-studded pin cushions.

Over the next few years, David went to experts to identify the plants, in the process becoming a world expert on *Navarretias* and *Eriastrums*. What was established was that, less than three miles from downtown Walnut Creek in an area quarried for a hundred years, he had discovered two plants new to science and critically endangered.

2010 Mountain Star Awards

Mountain Star Awards recognize individuals and organizations whose contributions have been significant in helping Save Mount Diablo's land preservation programs. The 2010 Mountain Star Awards are sponsored by Dave and Dana Dornsife. Save Mount Diablo thanks them for their support.

David Gowen and Michael Park Mary Bowerman Award for Science and Discovery: *Ground Breaking Research or Important Discoveries*

David Gowen is a self-trained but expert botanist. He stumbled upon Mt. Diablo, on a hike in 1990. Trips to Mt. Diablo often included an elusive target, a pretty little pink wildflower called the Mt. Diablo buckwheat.

Save Mount Diablo co-founder Mary Bowerman was the last person to record seeing the buckwheat, in 1936. Local botanists referred to it as their "Holy Grail". Gowen researched locations of the plant and visited them all with no luck. He took a trip to a Save Mount Diablo property in 1998 and, although he didn't find the buckwheat, he found

Mary Bowerman had been assigned Mount Diablo, where she saw the wildflower, in 1930, for a graduate student thesis project. Sixty-two years later another graduate student, Michael Park, was given a similar assignment by Barbara Ertter of U.C. Berkeley's Jepson Herbarium, who had helped update Bowerman's book about the plants of Mount Diablo. Michael was assigned a large area and made over 90 visits to Mount Diablo, always with the buckwheat in the back of his mind. On May 10th, 2005 Park took a different route into his study area and re-discovered Mount Diablo buckwheat which had been thought extinct. There were just 15 plants and in searches since 2005 no other locations have been found—there is just one wild population of the wildflower in the entire world. The location was kept secret, but it's on a property that Save Mount Diablo protected.

News of the discovery went around the world in less than 24 hours. Park collected a few hundred seeds from the wild plants and preserved them in seed banks. More areas have been planted on Mount Diablo and the plant is no longer on the brink of extinction. You can see it blooming each spring at the U.C. botanical garden. For five years Park has helped

lead the group which manages the plant and its reintroductions, has conducted research and has become the expert on the Mount Diablo buckwheat.

For their discoveries and dedication to preserving rare native species, Michael and David each receive the Mary Bowerman Award for Science and Discovery.

Kathy Griffin Mountain Star Leadership Award: *Difficult and Visionary Contributions*

The leader of any effort is often the one who works the hardest. In Brentwood this spring, that was Kathy Griffin. She and her family fell in love with Brentwood's agricultural charm near Mt. Diablo and the Delta, and its rolling, oak studded western hills.

There was a very serious attempt to break Brentwood's Urban Limit Line, and to develop into its western hills. Before Save Mount Diablo began formulating a response, Kathy Griffin was already debunking Measure F. We linked up and helped, but over the next thirteen weeks, Kathy was the unquestioned leader of the grassroots effort. She testified at meetings, organized precinct walkers, delivered signs, organized a dominating letters to the editor campaign, and developed a grassroots movement to continue to affect Brentwood's future.

Despite being outspent more than 28 to 1, on June 8th the citizens' "No" campaign won by 15 points and threats to Brentwood's western hills were dramatically decreased. Kathy Griffin is a true conservationist and a leader.

For stepping up to face huge odds and donating countless hours to protect Brentwood and Mt. Diablo's foothills, Kathy Griffin is awarded a Mountain Star Leadership Award.



Lime Ridge *Navarretia* & Lime Ridge Woollystar

Scott Hein



The elusive Mount Diablo buckwheat

Scott Hein



Kathy in front of Brentwood's western hills.

Aubrey Griffin

Diablo C

Four Days Diablo April 28 - May 1, 2010

For four days adventurers “gently rough it” hiking, exploring and learning on Mount Diablo while SMD staff and local chefs prepare a new camp each night.



(Clockwise) The 2010 group of explorers embarking on the fourth day; hiking down into Round Valley with beautiful views of the reservoir and the Delta beyond; kicking up feet and relaxing around the campfire; a Duskywing on an Ookow; fine dining and fun times as the group enjoys the dinner company and view; Bob and Barbara sharing a laugh and a moment; Blue Eyed Grass heating things up as the sun goes down; Ann, Jennifer and Kristen basking in the vistas and beauty.

Diablo Trail Endurance Ride June 26, 2010

All enjoyed cooler weather this year as horses and their rider's endurance were put to the test on the challenging and beautiful trails of Mount Diablo.



(clockwise) Displaying great form above the foggy valley; gearing up for the ride; volunteers served up a great bbq picnic in the shade; a beautiful misty white horse on a beautiful misty morning; a mother walking her excited daughter to hit the trail; three equestrians galloping into the good times; lovely braided manes look good and keep horses and riders cool during their work out; friends soaking in the conversation and the atmosphere.

celebrated

Diablo Restoration Team 2010 Spring & Summer Projects

Volunteers from East Bay Trail Dogs, REI, SRV Bike Team and our own DiRT have been hard at work planting, watering and trail building for all to enjoy.



(Clockwise from left) Volunteers raking at Mangini Ranch; the Stewardship Committee meeting at Dry Creek; Dave Sargent weeding at Irish Canyon surrounded by beams of sunshine; the volunteer work group finishing clean up our Viera-North Peak property; Teen and Parent Service Society team preparing for a bunch grass project; stewards hiking to remote clean up areas; SRV Bike Team volunteers surveying their accomplishments; Bob Busch watering a thirsty young oak.

Moonlight on the Mountain August 28, 2010

We celebrated our 39th anniversary with 500 friends during an evening filled with delicious food, music and the best backdrop of all: Mount Diablo.



(clockwise) Artist John Finger painted live; Chevron's Linda Padon & SMD's Seth Adams; the generous volunteers from SRVFPD; the celebration begins; a picturesque dining hall; SMD's Amara Morrison; Jan Richardson, SMD's Emily Egan, Beth & Roger Hill; Barbie Swenson, Sherry Bennett & Cha Cha Hughes of ConocoPhillips.

Photos on these pages by: Berto Alves, Scott Hein, Ann Kitchin, David Ogden and George Phillips



Measure W (continued from page 1)

Blackhawk, extending east across Riggs Canyon to Highland Ridge. Further east the hills are lower and more sensual, like grassland dunes blown east toward Altamont Pass, with dark-capped Brushy Peak barely visible. To the north and east there's almost nothing but agricultural lands and open space. The views are breathtaking.

Equally astonishing is the view from the exact same location, in the opposite direction. Looking south and west, development fills the Tri-Valley, lapping up the edges of Las Trampas Ridge beyond Highway 680.

The stark difference between the mostly untouched Tassajara Valley and hills to the east and the expansive development of the San Ramon Valley to the west is not a coincidence.

San Ramon's Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) and Contra Costa County's Urban Limit Line (ULL) are voter-approved planning tools that draw a line in the dirt as to which lands are appropriate for urban and suburban development, and which lands should be protected for agriculture and open space.

Voters in San Ramon have recognized that Tassajara Valley is a special place with important agricultural, biological and scenic resources. They have voted three times in the past eleven years to protect the valley and its resources by keeping it outside of growth boundaries, most recently in 2006. On November 2, San Ramon voters will be asked once again whether

they want to keep the Tassajara Valley protected—and the beautiful hills west of Highway 680—when they cast their ballot on Measure W. But they might not realize it.

Measure W

Measure W is written and titled as though it protects motherhood and apple pie. It is a deceptive attempt by the City of San Ramon to break and expand the Urban Growth Boundary in three places, for the benefit of developers. It expands the UGB by 2,227 acres to include 1,624 acres of the Tassajara Valley and 603 acres of San Ramon's Western Hills, an addition of about 3.5 square miles, a 20% expansion of the city.

Luckily, any adjustment of the UGB greater than 30 acres must be approved by San Ramon voters. But the city wrote the measure to hide their true intent, including in Measure W major policy updates, approvals for a new redevelopment Specific Plan, and the UGB expansions. Including the city's entire General Plan and an Environmental Impact Report that did not say a word about the city's plans for the Tassajara Valley—Measure W clocks in at almost 2,000 pages. It is six inches thick and weighs ten and a half pounds. They call it the "General Plan 2030 Amendment."

The City claims that no development is planned for the Tassajara Valley and has refused to estimate the level of development that might potentially occur if Measure W passes and the UGB is expanded. They also refused to include protections for the area.

The only reason to expand a UGB is to allow development. Moving the UGB to include half of the Tassajara Valley and significant acreage in the western hills removes the most substantial hurdle to development in these areas.

Based on development patterns in adjacent Dougherty Valley and a project that was proposed for these same parcels in the 1990s, we estimate that between

2,370 and 4,227 new residential units could be built in the Tassajara Valley if Measure W passes. Measure W would open the floodgates for development and have significant and irreparable impacts on beautiful and sensitive open space areas.

Our estimate doesn't include Measure W's development in the Western Hills, or a redevelopment plan the city has also included in Measure W – the North Camino Ramon Specific Plan, with an additional 1,500 residences and a net increase of 4.3 million square feet of commercial. San Francisco's Transamerica Pyramid is 530,000 square feet. San Ramon is proposing the equivalent of eight Transamerica Pyramids between Fostoria and Bollinger.

Approximately 4,600 residential units have already been approved but not yet built in San Ramon and Dougherty Valley, more than enough to satisfy housing needs for several decades. Combined with the 4,227 new units that could be built in the Tassajara Valley, and 1500 more at North Camino Ramon, a total of over 10,300 new residential units could be coming down the pike for San Ramon if Measure W is approved.

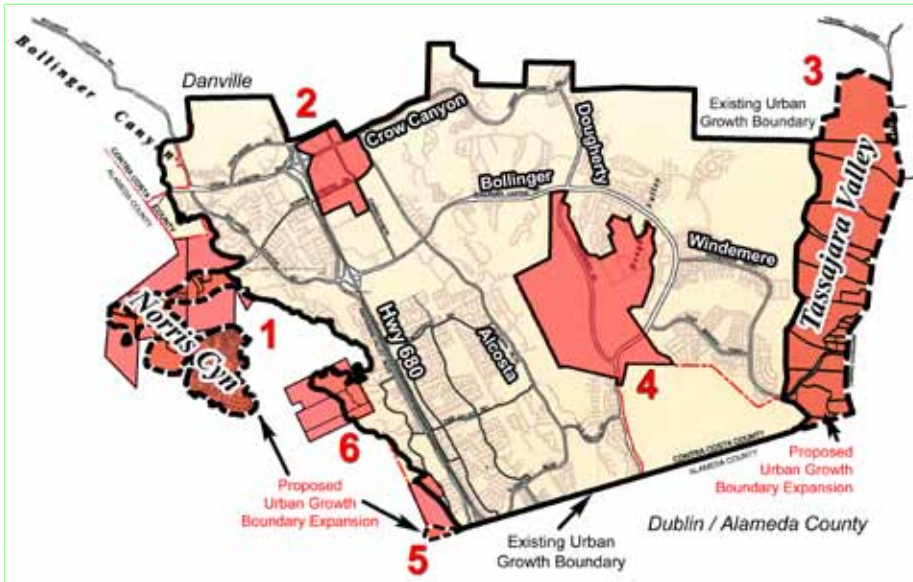
Thousands of new units built will result in a substantial population increase—at a time when housing needs are minimal; water and utility rates are increasing rapidly; schools are already overcrowded; and traffic is intense, despite the recession's slowdown, driving down property values in a struggling market.

Measure W (continued on next page)



The Measure W-threatened Tassajara Valley.

George Phillips



Map of San Ramon's Measure W area and what is at risk.

“Green-Washing”

According to the ballot language written by the City, Measure W would “extend Ordinance 197 policies and procedures to 2015 to protect ridgelines, creeks, and open space” and “extend the Urban Growth Boundary to enhance local control while preserving our quality of life.”

The City is trying to “green-wash” Measure W to make it appear environmentally friendly. However, the two central components of Measure W that the City are using to paint the General Plan Amendment with a shade of green are flimsy and dishonest.

First, City officials have consistently made the argument that San Ramon must move its Urban Growth Boundary into the Tassajara Valley to prevent Contra Costa County from approving development there. This is a scare tactic to convince voters to support the measure.

City Council members and staff invoke threats of “Danville and the County want it” and the “New Farm” project as evidence that the County is contemplating development in Tassajara Valley. It appears land speculator Samir Kavar and his development consultant Tom Koch submitted the “New Farm” application to the County simply to use it as an empty threat to coerce San Ramon voters to support Measure W. San Ramon residents

frightened about County development would rush to support the City’s claims that they want to move the UGB to take control and protect the Valley.

In reality, the “New Farm” application at the county is illegal and at its worst would include 186 residential units. Measure W would lead to thousands of units, netting a much higher payout for Kavar and Koch (*Diablo Watch* included an article about “New Farm” in Fall 2009).

The Tassajara Valley is also outside of both the voter-approved Contra Costa County and Danville Urban Limit Lines. In 2006, Contra Costa County voters – including a majority in San Ramon and Danville – voted to maintain the ULL in its existing location.

A legal review conducted by Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger – one of the most respected environmental law firms in California – concluded that it would be illegal for the County to approve the “New Farm” project outside of the ULL. The City has also been using the Dougherty Valley development as an example of what the County is capable of and might do in the Tassajara Valley—another scare tactic. Dougherty Valley was approved over two decades ago with San Ramon’s full support, and is inside the Urban Limit Line and Urban Growth Boundary.

Since voters approved a County-wide ULL in 1990, no major subdivisions or urban development projects have been

approved by the County outside of the ULL. The County has shown no interest in developing the Tassajara Valley.

Second, the City manipulated the General Plan amendment in such a way that voters supporting the current position of the UGB would be voting against San Ramon’s Hillside Protection Ordinance. Ordinance 197, which limits development on ridgelines and hillsides, is due to expire in 2010.

The City would have voters believe that a vote in favor of Measure W is a vote to continue protection of the City’s ridgelines and hillsides—but it would only extend the ordinance for five years, leaving newly added areas vulnerable. Voting no on Measure W maintains the existing UGB in place.

Defending Tassajara & Western Hills

Measure W is intentionally misleading to confuse voters into thinking they are supporting environmentally friendly land use policies—but conservation groups are opposed. Save Mount Diablo is working with our environmental allies and a community group “San Ramon Residents Opposed to Measure W” to defeat this misguided proposal.

In order to win the campaign against Measure W and protect the beautiful and sensitive resources of the Tassajara Valley and the Western Hills, we need to get the truth about Measure W out to the public. Join us!



Campaign office is located at
2100 San Ramon Valley Blvd.

Check out www.NoOnMeasureW.org, and Facebook page, “People Opposed to Measure W Breaking San Ramon’s Urban Growth Boundary 2010”.

Volunteers are walking neighborhoods.

To help defeat Measure W call
Brenda de la Ossa at (925) 286-8242.



Seth Adams

Along with an amazing grove of oaks, Dry Creek possesses a not so dry creek and views of Morgan Territory and Mount Diablo.

Dry Creek (continued from page 1)

wetlands of Briones Valley to the state park's oak savannah. Unusual alkaline and silica soils onsite support many rare species of plants nearby, too.

While there are a few houses nearby, additional development would have direct impacts on the new park and its wildlife—at the very least on limited surface waters where numerous rare species reproduce. In addition, the property's views of Mount Diablo are incredible and the purchase will focus more attention on an important wildlife corridor.

But here's the kicker. The property had just started to attract our interest when it was pulled from the market and placed up for auction. If we made the purchase we would have to buy it "as is" with little chance for further investigations, and pay in cash. There were several other interested bidders.

The auction was conducted in Santa Clara and also online, where SMD participated—a first for us. Valued at \$582,000, threatened by a house or other development, Save Mount Diablo completed our research in record time and in just twelve days won the auction and signed papers to purchase Dry Creek. The auction price? \$80,000 plus a \$4,000 auction fee... just 14% of assessed value.

Stewardship

At SMD's most recent Land Committee meeting, member and botanist Heath Bartosh brought a clipping of one of the rare plants found near Dry Creek,

Big Tarplant *Blepharizonia plumosa ssp. plumosa*, from a large population a half mile from the property. It's a large, pretty, and pungent white wildflower, smelling something like turpentine. According to the East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservation Plan, "Big tarplant is endemic to the Mount Diablo foothills and is found primarily in eastern Contra Costa, eastern Alameda, and western San Joaquin Counties.

"There were just 36 locations recorded for big tarplant from 1916 to 2001, and twenty-nine of the occurrences were documented within the last 10 years. Four of them are close to Dry Creek. Seven of the occurrences have not been observed for over 60 years... because they grow in grasslands, non-native grasses may out-compete them. We haven't yet found the plant at Dry Creek, but it may be an ideal location for reintroduction."



Big Tarplant.

John Game, jgame@stanford.edu

We've also seen another unusual species near the property. In March I photographed a Greater Roadrunner in the Measure F area a mile north of Dry Creek. According to local birding expert Steve Glover, "this is the first one documented with a photo (or specimen) in over a half century in the county. The last verified sighting I know of was 25 years ago in the Morgan Territory area." On August 18 George Phillips, SMD's Land Conservation Associate and Stewardship Manager, photographed another one northeast of Dry Creek—the second photographic confirmation in a half century.

The SMD Stewardship Committee met on the property recently to discuss cleanup,

fencing and restoration opportunities. Among the interesting things you notice on the property are that the alkaline area in the flats has much greater botanical diversity than the grassland slopes above. You also notice a network of worn paths, miniature trails that have been created on the property. It turns out that in addition to healthy ground squirrel populations there are many jack rabbits at Dry Creek, and they have created these beaten paths.

We will probably build a small gravel parking area and a short trail to aid in monitoring the parcel. The creek area has the potential to allow expanded seasonal wetlands and native grassland.

We have already scheduled a day to collect acorns from the heritage blue oaks. Blue oaks are usually found in woodland groves but the area around Cowell Ranch has been heavily grazed and wood cut for over 200 years. The remaining trees are all large but there are no young oaks on the property. When the older trees die it would be very difficult for trees to re-establish, without human help, given hot dry and windy conditions, south and west facing slopes, and those healthy jack rabbit and squirrel populations. Once the rainy season begins we will plant and protect acorns around the existing grove, and stretching toward the state park boundary.

Dry Creek's purchase is another example of Save Mount Diablo's ability to move quickly in times of opportunity, with cash on hand from our supporters like you. Thank you.

Greater Roadrunners

are known from the Central Valley in addition to deserts but they are very rare in the Bay Area. They're large cuckoos that can fly but usually run, and eat lizards, snakes, and other birds. A group of roadrunners is known as a "marathon" or a "race" of roadrunners.



Greater Roadrunner.

George Phillips

PG&E Donates Truck to Save Mount Diablo

George Phillips



Save Mount Diablo Executive Director Ron Brown receiving the keys from PG&E's Brian Pepper.

Almost immediately after putting the request out to our membership, we received a response from Brian Pepper and Tom Guarino of PG&E. Ron Brown explained the need for a truck that could haul debris like old fence-posts and barbed wire out of remote areas, as well as take equipment for trail building and maintenance onto Save Mount Diablo's properties.

Within a couple of weeks a three-quarter ton truck with four wheel drive was at Save Mount Diablo's door step. PG&E has been a long time supporter of both Save Mount Diablo and Mount Diablo State Park.

We couldn't be happier about receiving the generous donation. The staff and dedicated volunteers participating in the DiRT stewardship program had been doing the hauling by hand or, when possible, using their own vehicles to move tools and trash on rough terrain for years.

The first weekend we had the truck, Brown humorously noted, "It was filled with hay and manure from our Diablo Trail Endurance Ride equestrian event on Saturday and used for major site clean up on one of the properties on Sunday." We thank PG&E for their support.

Check out the wish list – perhaps you or your business can help our land preservation work with one of the items too!

Wish List

- box truck or moving van
- 5 gallon water coolers for events (less bottled water waste)
- coffee maker (100 cup urn)
- gas gift cards (for SMD vehicles & power tools)
- heavy duty riding mower

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Moonlight on the Mountain



Diablo Trail Endurance Ride



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Spotlight on Staff & Sponsors



Frank Varenchik

Frank Varenchik retired after nineteen years as a member of Save Mount Diablo's Board of Directors. When asked about how he first became involved with SMD Frank reflected back to 1991, when his office received a call from Suzy Watson, representing SMD, seeking help to resolve a problem with the State Treasurer's office about delinquent payroll tax filings. At that time, there was only one employee and no office.

Now, Save Mount Diablo has ten staff members and taxes are filed and paid on time each year. Save Mount Diablo is very grateful for the time Frank has spent with SMD providing his CPA expertise and experience as the chairman of our Finance Committee and as a land conservationist.



Allan Prager

Allan Prager retired after more than seventeen years as a member of Save Mount Diablo's Board of Directors. During those years the organization has grown and matured tremendously – from one part-time staff member and few assets to a mature organization holding 10 properties. Allan's help in establishing the organization's growing administrative infrastructure, its by-laws and governance procedures as well as his input to the Finance Committee has been invaluable.

Allan will continue to be involved in environmental causes and as the President of the Board of the Yosemite Institute he will be very involved in helping to inspire the next generation of conservationists. We thank Allan for his commitment all those years to land preservation on Diablo.



Troy Bristol

After three years, Troy Bristol, Save Mount Diablo's Land Conservation Associate, is heading back to school. He has been accepted at Saint Mary's College teaching credential program for English and History. Troy will continue to work with SMD on defeating San Ramon's Measure W until after the election in November.

Troy hopes to inspire his students and give them every opportunity for success: "I love coming to work at SMD each day knowing that I am making a difference in the community. I hope to share that with my students and show them how they can shape their communities too." Troy is thankful for the privilege of working with SMD's staff, Board, committee members and volunteers. We will miss seeing him daily and wish Troy all the best.

Thanks to Our Auction Item Donors

Please patronize these businesses and let them know that you appreciate their support of Save Mount Diablo. Thanks!

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Sunset at Moonlight on the Mountain 2010.

Berto Alves



Stephen Joseph

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We deeply appreciate all of our members and list them in our Annual Report. We especially thank our donors that generously donate by payroll pledge. Payroll Giving lets you make donations straight from your gross salary (before tax has been deducted). This means you get immediate tax relief on the value of your donation. Payments may be taken from your salary either as regular monthly payments or as a one time gift. We thank the many employers who support payroll pledge giving and those who also match their employees' donations to Save Mount Diablo.

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Our Mission To preserve Mount Diablo's peaks, surrounding foothills, and watersheds through land acquisition and preservation strategies designed to protect the mountain's natural beauty, biological diversity, and historic and agricultural heritage; enhance our area's quality of life; and provide recreational opportunities consistent with the protection of natural resources.

What We Do **Preserve** natural lands through acquisition and cooperative efforts.
Defend Mount Diablo and its foothills from threats of development through land use planning and public education.
Restore habitat prior to transfer to a public agency for permanent preservation and public use.
Enjoy Diablo's parks through events & recreational opportunities.

Why We Care This is our home. Preserving natural land forever means safeguarding our quality of life, including our air, water and views. Only half of Mount Diablo has been preserved. The other half of the mountain, over 80,000 acres, is privately owned and still threatened by development. That means risking the loss of wildlife corridors, ecosystems and recreational opportunities.