The Mangini Ranch !!!
SMD's Newest Acquisition Project
The Mangini Ranch’s 207 acres, Save Mount Diablo’s newest acquisition project, swirls with importance. It winds sinuously through history, biology and geography much like Galindo Creek, the green-lined, blue thread whose headwaters spring up there.

The Ranch is an oak and grassland bowl rising to Lime Ridge—it is adjacent to Lime Ridge Open Space on one side and through chaparral toward the quarried slopes of Mt. Zion on the other. The creek descends north through Crystyl Ranch open space into Concord, its roots the property’s tributaries. Mangini rises south to the Ginochio Ranch, and nearly to Mt. Diablo State Park.

After two years of negotiations, the Mangini family agreed to sell the property to SMD on February 28. We have two years to raise $1.45 million. The family will retain another 25 acres of the 231 acre property.

Ranchos & Place Names
The five-branched Mangini family has a long history which we’re just beginning to decipher. The Ranch boundaries hint of even older roots. The property appears to have largely been made up of ‘sobrante’, or common lands just outside of two Mexican ranchos granted in 1828 and 1834, Rancho Monte del Diablo and Rancho San Miguel. The property is largely unfenced, but we are surveying it to determine its exact boundaries.

Rancho Monte del Diablo is named for a willow thicket which was later confused with Contra Costa’s highest peak. The two Ranchos developed into Walnut Creek and Concord. R. Monte del Diablo was granted to county supervisors. The deadline allows time for environmental review before the Nov. 2006 election. Failure of the cities and the county to reach agreement would cause each city to adopt their own line, approved by their own voters, or lose their local street and roads funding from Measure J.

The goal of the mutually agreed upon line is to promote rational planning with less traffic congestion. But now, a number of cities are attempting to expand the line to include thousands of acres of undeveloped land. Concord wants the tidal portion of the Naval Weapons Station; Antioch wants Roddy Ranch; and Brentwood and Pittsburg are proposing big additions to the line. Clayton is seeking to add parcels east of the city—including on North Peak’s slopes. Voters are not likely to approve these proposals that will lead to...
From The Executive Director

It has been nearly five years since I became the Executive Director of Save Mount Diablo. It has been a wonderfully enjoyable and exciting, as well as demanding and challenging experience. During my first month on the job, we celebrated the dedication of Turtle Rock Ranch. Since then we have bought the Wright Ranch, the Morgan Red Corral, the Galvin Ranch and now the Mangini Ranch. We also successfully preserved the Gateway parcel with a conservation easement. We successfully influenced dozens of development projects and we have been involved with a number of successful community wide issues that effect the quality of life in our county: tightening the Urban Limit Line in 2000; development of the county-wide Shaping Our Future project; and creation and passage of Measure J - the County’s half-cent transportation sales tax (with associated Growth Management). We also have worked to support two state wide bond measures for protection of watersheds and natural lands. Unfortunately, we also worked on several projects that were not successful; the County’s Open Space Funding Initiative; the Los Vaqueros expansion campaign and the East Bay Park District’s measure to generate maintenance and operating funding.

During the past several years we have increased our community outreach efforts and have developed a number of new relationships. In addition to our continued alliances with environmental groups and park and resource agencies, we have developed associations with unions, developers, home builders and the business community. These new alliances are based upon identifying and then working toward the accomplishment of mutually shared objectives. These synergistic alliances with “strange bed-fellows” have helped accomplish a number of SMD’s objectives while also generating increased volunteer and financial resources.

The next several years will be challenging for SMD. The continued impacts of the urbanization of our growing community (with associated increases in land values) challenge us to increase our land use advocacy efforts while simultaneously increasing our need to develop outreach and educational efforts with land owners. Our need for financial and volunteer support are going to be greater than ever. We hope that as you read this issue of Diablo Watch that you will recognize how important the success our little organization is in ensuring the quality of life in our community.

Our growth and success can be attributed to the support and assistance we have received from our active members. We encourage you to take a more active role by becoming more involved: volunteer for a project; ask friends and neighbors to become members; become a sponsor; help us solicit donations and sponsors. Thanks for your help.

Blackhawk-Nunn commits to Multi-Year Sponsorship

Following their $10,000 sponsorship of SMD’s Mountain Star Awards for the past two years, Blackhawk-Nunn has generously agreed to continue as awards sponsor for the next two years, including an option for two additional years.

This early commitment kicks off our sponsor recruitment effort for our September 17, 2005 “Moonlight On the Mountain” anniversary.

Blackhawk-Nunn are developers of the Summerset adult community and the Vineyards at Marsh Creek, a development associated with the new 4,000 acre Cowell Ranch State Park. Our thanks to Steve and Matt Beinke and Bob and Ron Nunn for their continued generous support of Save Mount Diablo.

Call for 2005 Mountain Star Nominations

SMD will be awarding Mountain Star Awards at its 34rd anniversary celebration - “Moonlight on the Mountain” - on September 17. We are seeking nominations of individuals, organizations or agencies, whose one-time, or ongoing contributions have contributed to the preservation of land surrounding Mount Diablo and the quality of life in our community. Current SMD Board Members and staff are ineligible.

Submit written nominations by June 1. Include your name and contact information; the name of your nominee(s), their contact information and several sentences about why you are making the nominations. Mail nominations to SMD Mountain Star Awards, 1196 Boulevard Way, Suite 10, Walnut Creek, 94595 or email smdinfo@savemountdiablo.org

Save the Date: Moonlight On The Mountain - Saturday, Sept. 17, 2005

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The Green Age of Asher Witherow by Mark Allen Cunningham

(Editor’s Note: Martinez resident M. Allen Cunningham has written fiction for numerous literary magazines and is a two-time Pushcart Award nominee for short fiction. His lyrical first novel The Green Age of Asher Witherow, set in Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve’s Nortonville during its 19th century coal mining era, was published in October 2004.

It immediately began collecting accolades—from Publisher’s Weekly, Library Journal, and others including a top Book Sense pick by the American Booksellers Association. Critics have used terms like: ‘richly descriptive, evocative language’; ‘poetic intensity’; ‘strikingly beautiful prose style’; ‘unerring instinct for storytelling’; ‘a startling accomplishment’; and ‘lushly talented’; ‘It’s impossible to adequately review such excellence…’. The work has been compared to that of Annie Dillard, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Wallace Stegner, and John Steinbeck and the first printing immediately sold out, followed by a second printing in December.

“In many ways I was writing a love letter to the area,” Cunningham explains, “I love this land.” “This is the book’s home. It couldn’t have grown out of any soil but this.”

“I had lived in the area for fourteen years before I ever heard of Black Diamond Mines. I went there and was just blown away by the landscape, then went to the Central Library in Pleasant Hill and did research.” One review said “Cunningham shows a knack for picking beautiful, haunting settings: the road to the Nortonville graveyard, air pressure doors in the coalmine, and the East Bay hills most of all. He displays a real love for California geography and climate, the hills green in winter and gold in summer.”

Mark Cunningham’s description of the Green Age of Asher Witherow is below. The book can be found in area book stores, and you can read more about Cunningham and the book at: www.mallencunningham.com

Mark Cunningham: There’s a peculiar human experience that the American writer Wendell Berry beautifully describes as: “the intimacy the mind makes with the place it awakens in.” My own intellectual and creative life began in the great shadow of our Mount Diablo, and for all my fondness toward the mountain and its surrounding country, I never suspected I’d set a book here. Still, Diablo exerted its mythic force in my imagination, and I’ve now published a novel in which the mountain appears as a primary character.

The book is set in the 1860s-70s in the coal-mining village of Nortonville, once the largest community in Contra Costa County, now long vanished from the earth. In the mid 1870s Nortonville was so bustling that its mines were producing more than 1 ton of coal per minute, but within 10 years fortunes changed and the town was virtually vacated. In a scene about halfway through my book, the young hero, Asher, observes a wild cougar “emerging” from the image of the mountain. It’s a mysterious moment, imbued with almost aboriginal wonderment, and to me it’s the heart of the novel, because it faithfully renders the impression of bewildering immensity the mountain stirs in me.

We locals are lucky to enjoy such an eminent daily centerpiece as Diablo. The mountain grants us perspective, constantly reminds us where we are (in more sense than one), and thus serves the indispensable role—the same it served Contra Costa’s first Native Americans—of world-center; one needn’t be at all religious to recognize the strange inner misgivings summoned, on a day of heavy fog or haze, when it’s blanked from sight.

I’ve long been in the habit of gazing upon the mountain from some vista point at Mount Wanda or Briones. While our highways thrum at its foot, I often reflect on the brevity of our human legacy in this region. The transition from pastoral wilderness to today’s commuter gauntlets has occurred in little more than a hundred years—a blink in the eye of a mountain as old as humankind. The original paradise is barely submerged, and Diablo stands above history, evidence of that paradise. As long as we wish for the mountain to remain eminent, wish that it be aproned by expansive open space, we will have held fast to the vital importance of awe and its invigorating source in our local wonders.

In the steep arc of Nortonville I see a historical allegory for us today: an era of immense growth and activity, all of it unsustainable and ultimately swallowed by the greater processes of—first economy, and finally nature (the pristine Black Diamond hills now suggest precious little of the bleak industry they once supported).

The Mount Diablo of my novel stands as a bit of eternity amidst the unstable world of Nortonville. Likewise, the true Mount Diablo continues to bear witness to the flurry of our human presence. I hope my book may inspire a fresh awareness of its continuing role as axis and awe-giver.

Mark Cunningham is a thoughtful, fascinating speaker and will conduct a reading and lead an SMD hike to Nortonville on March 26th. Check the events schedule for info.
Coalfield is protected within the Preserve, an ecological restoration success story. From the 1920s to 1940s, much of the cading waste heaps. Sand mining followed wooded slopes were cut to bare earth for mining towns, two the largest towns in the area; reviews note that Cruikshank went further east and created Somersville. The two towns were abandoned around 1885 and most structures relocated.

Imagine Black Diamond Mines as an industrial wasteland. From the 1850s through the early 1900s the Mount Diablo Coalfield operated. Nine hundred miners labored under the earth in hundreds of miles of tunnels, removing nearly four million tons of “black diamonds.” They lived in five coal mining towns, two the largest towns in the County, south of present day Pittsburg and Antioch.

Streams ran acid black with coal dust. Wooded slopes were cut to bare earth for firewood and for tunnel supports. Mine openings were everywhere, marked by cascading waste heaps. Sand mining followed from the 1920s to 1940s. Much of the Coalfield is protected within the Preserve, an ecological restoration success story.

M. Allen Cunningham’s first novel, *The Green Age of Asher Withrow*, has focused attention on the area; reviews note that Mount Diablo and the surrounding landscape are main characters. So is the Rose Hill Cemetery. You can visit the underground Mining Museum or make short hikes through the town site of Somersville to the cemetery and to Nortonville. A longer hike loops back through beautiful Coal Canyon. Little is left of Somersville but for groves of non-native trees, ailanthus, pepper trees, and eucalyptus, and coal waste berms. Coal was discovered in 1855 south of Antioch and in 1859 at Nortonville by Francis Somers and James T. Cruikshank.

Noah Norton took up their abandoned first find, Black Diamond Mine and Somers and Cruikshank went further east and created Somersville. The two towns were abandoned around 1885 and most structures relocated.

Rose Hill’s statuesque italian cypress are your beacons near the divide over to Nortonville. Follow the paved road and Markley creek up to the Mining Museum or on the Nortonville Trail (right), the old stagecoach trail from Martinez to the mines and on to Antioch. Before long you rise above the trees to grassland past Manhattan Canyon. Look back at the north facing tree covered slopes. In the 1940s they were nearly bare.

The cemetery was a Protestant burial ground. The earliest known burial was in 1865; many deaths were related to epidemics. The cemetery and 1506’ hill above are named for Emma Rose, daughter of Alvinza Hayward who was president and chief stockholder of the Black Diamond Coal Mining Co. of Nortonville.

Emma, and her husband Andrew Rose, inherited his fortune and in the 1940s Emma deeded the cemetery to Contra Costa County. The road to the cemetery was open until 1973 and the cemetery was vandalized but EBRPD is restoring it now.

A persistent myth of cemeteries is a mysterious “Glowing Lady” or “White Witch” usually reported to have been seen at the cemetery at night. At Rose Hill the “White Witch” is said to be the ghost of midwife Sarah “Granny” Norton, widow of Noah Norton for whom the town was named, who died Oct, 5, 1879 (plot 6).

Continue over the divide to drop to Nortonville or, better yet, go left up the Black Diamond Trail for the longer loop. You’ll pass ghostly buckeyes in winter, leafing out in January above carpets of miner’s lettuce, through woodland groves of blue oak. Detour past the power lines for unimpeded views of Manhattan Canyon, exposed cliffs and points east.

Each new gate signals better scenery. You leave city noises behind. Muddy soils make way for sand, rock and chaparral. Past a dip in the trail, a rose colored grotto appears. Look for several mazanitas including Diablo manzanita, an endemic found only in the Diablo area, cream pink flowers abuzz with bees.

Sparse needled gray pines are shadowed by larger more distinctive pines bearing huge cones, the biggest of any pine—the northernmost stand of Coulter pines in the state. Other than at Diablo you’d have to travel 200 miles south to find them again.

The view opens up east to the Sand Creek drainage past another coal mining town site, Stewartville, to the large hill above the Star Mine. The trail loops west toward 1894’ Kregor Peak above rolling, rumpled hills of velvet green. Reportedly the fastest gust of wind ever recorded in the Bay Area was at Kregor Peak in 1995, 134 mph for 20 seconds. More coulter pines are silhouetted like Christmas trees on rock studded ridges, and palisade cliffs appear above.

Before you reach paved Black Diamond Way you can take a visible but unmarked scenic trail over to Wolf Rock and back.

As you crest the hill, views expand to Honker Bay, Pittsburg and Antioch. Irish Canyon, Clayton’s Peacock Creek neighborhood and Central County spread out before you in one direction, Mt. Tam beyond, and Sierra views in the other. Mt. Diablo comes into view one peak at a time. At the knee-burner paved road you can climb to the peak, or simply descend to the Coal Canyon trail.

Dropping into Coal Canyon is an exercise in sheer joy—steep in a few places but not usually slippery, rolling downhill like a gentle roller coaster.

Don’t miss “Jim’s” Place; what would it rent for today? The canyon’s a great spring wildflower spot and one of the places you can see the area’s other fairy lantern, *Calochortus albus*, a cream colored globe lily with deep rose tints.

When you reach the Nortonville town site, take a right back onto the Nortonville Road and it will take you back to the start.
Friends of Mount Diablo Creek
by Lisa Anich, co-founder

If you’ve rested in the shade of willows and cottonwoods along Mitchell Creek or braved muddy trails to find Donner Creek’s springtime waterfalls, you’re probably already a friend of Mt. Diablo Creek. Mitchell Creek, Donner Creek and Back Creek are tributaries of Mt. Diablo Creek accessible by State Park trails.

Of Contra Costa County’s thirty-one major watersheds, only Mt. Diablo, Walnut and Marsh Creeks boast Mt. Diablo’s summit as their highest point. From the slopes of its namesake mountain, Mt. Diablo Creek flows in a relatively natural state for ninety percent of its length, unencumbered by the concrete channels and underground culverts so prevalent in urban areas.

Eight miles of Mt. Diablo Creek (which begins on SMD’s Chaparral Spring property) wind through the inland area of the Concord Naval Weapons Station (CNWS) – one of the county’s most significant stretches of undeveloped creek channel. Wetlands at the mouth of Mt. Diablo Creek support threatened species including an endangered plant called soft bird’s beak, salt marsh harvest mouse, and black rail. This area is called Seal Creek.

As in many parts of Contra Costa County, change is coming to the Mt. Diablo Creek Watershed. Proposed urban development of the inland CNWS land could bring another 36,000 residents to this currently undeveloped area of Concord in the next 25 years, contingent on the Navy making the land available for civilian use [see Triple Threat!!! and Claretian Seminary: Preserving Mt. Diablo Creek articles].

Anticipating changes and opportunities for Mt. Diablo Creek Watershed, Mary Malko and Lisa Anich started Friends of Mt. Diablo Creek (FoMDC) in May 2004. Its mission is to increase awareness of Mt. Diablo Creek and its watershed, to preserve and restore the creek’s habitats, and to add to the quality of life for residents of Clayton, Concord, and Clyde.

In September, seventeen FoMDC volunteers surveyed about 2000 feet of the creek near Clayton Library as part of Contra Costa County’s volunteer stream monitoring program. GPS equipment allowed observers to link the creek’s physical characteristics to an exact location. Wading downstream, volunteers noted streambed materials, channel shape, locations of culverts, bridges, outfalls, vegetative coverage and tree canopy, and invasive plants. Surveys will be organized again in 2005.

FoMDC’s latest project builds on Clayton Library’s environmental education programs. FoMDC won a technical assistance grant from the Watershed Project, a local non-profit with expertise in watershed stewardship and education. Project staff will help plan improvements to the library’s creek-side presentation area. FoMDC will organize work days to implement the Project’s designs. The Watershed Project will also help FoMDC and the Library create a pilot program for 4th and 7th grade students from Clayton schools.

Change may be inevitable as cities grow, but the character of that change is determined by our imagination and our commitment to nature and community. Watersheds give us a different way to define community - a definition based on nature. Watersheds include diverse neighborhoods and challenge us to find common interests.

FoMDC meets monthly, alternating evening meetings with afternoon hikes. Contact Lisa Anich at (925) 689-2642, glanich@california.com or visit us at www.alexnice.com/creek.htm
Scapes and to expand recreational opportunities. Attempting to preserve the mountain's land-use and wildlife is critical. SMD's whole focus is on the mountain, and SMD's anniversary event, guests celebrated under the full moon and a spectacular array of lights. It was a technical achievement given that there was nothing at the site before the event but expansive views. We can all thank Dana Dornsife, a professional Lighting Designer and new member of SMD's Board of Directors, for setting it up.

A member of SMD's Development Committee, Dana got involved with SMD in 2001 through personal trainer Greg Francisco of Healthwise Fitness. Seth Adams, SMD's Director of Land Programs leads a hike for Healthwise clients and friends of Dana and Dave Dornsife once a year. In April 2002 the Dornsifes participated in Four Days Diablo, SMD's four day trip on the 30-mile Diablo Trail, and became strong supporters of Moonlight on the Mountain.

“The turning point for us was Four Days Diablo,” said Dornsife. “It really made an impression, the vastness and diversity of the mountain, and SMD’s whole focus in attempting to preserve the mountain’s landscapes and to expand recreational opportunities. Mt. Diablo is very important to us from an aesthetic standpoint, something we feel very strongly about supporting.”

“We’re in lock step with SMD, we believe in everything that the group is trying to accomplish. The numbers speak for themselves—when you look at the acres that have been preserved, development projects that have been improved or stopped, newly accessible areas, increasing public awareness of the mountain, and the ways SMD educates developers about how their projects affect the mountain, wildlife and habitat corridors—it’s all a very positive effort. I’m looking forward to working with the board and exploring my role. I can bring a lot of energy to the organization, to help make it even more successful.”

Dana received degrees in Business and Marketing from Drexel Univ. and Interior Design from JFK Univ. She’s active in the Yosemite Fund and cancer patient advocacy. Dana and Dave live in Danville with sons Ryan and Brendan.

REI & the Diablo Trail Map Project

Each year SMD presents slideshows at local REI stores. REI is a sponsor of SMD’s Mt. Diablo Trail Adventure, a half-marathon and 10k run and hike on the mountain held each November.

In 2004, SMD received a $5,000 REI grant to produce a trail map highlighting the 30-mile Diablo Trail—from Walnut Creek to Brentwood—which we created in 1994. The map will show the proposed route of the Diablo Grand Loop Trail which could circle north from Brentwood to the mountain if two gaps are protected.

“Since REI is an outdoor store and a lot of our employees and members use Mt. Diablo we thought we should do something to preserve the land and let them know about Save Mount Diablo,” said Doug Tracey, Store Manager for REI – Concord. “SMD does a great job and we’re really pleased to support the organization, its Map project and to be a sponsor of the Trail Adventure.”

In 1938, mountain climbers founded Recreational Equipment, Inc. (REI), as a consumer cooperative to purchase high-quality equipment. REI has grown to include 70 retail stores in the U.S., including 8 stores in the Bay Area, and direct sales via the Internet, telephone and mail. In 2003 REI provided nearly $2 million in donations in support of the outdoors and recreation.

“The Trail Adventure is a great family event,” said Tracey. “It’s a good way for people in the community to get together, do something active on the mountain and also get to know what SMD is all about. Diablo’s a great resource. I went to high school in Walnut Creek then moved away; I’ve been with REI for 15 years, traveled around and lived on the East Coast and moved back here four years ago. Coming back here, what is so nice is to have so much open space close to where people live.” We appreciate REI’s support.

Dana Dornsife & Mike Hitchcock
New SMD Board of Directors

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Michael Hitchcock is Owner and Principal of Michael Hitchcock AICP in Walnut Creek, a land use and community planning consultant firm. For five years he was Project Manager for the Mountain House New Town near Tracy. “SMD is a great organization with tremendous dedication,” said Hitchcock. “We’ve been supporters for more than twenty years. I consider Mt. Diablo to be one of the most important landmarks in the state and one of our metropolitan area’s most important open spaces—for the habitat, recreational facilities, and as a buffer against urban development.”

Mike has brought substantial expertise to SMD’s Land Committee and now to the Board, in City and Regional Planning, Resource Management, Development Feasibility, and in review of individual development projects. He has coordinated preparation of dozens of General Plans, Specific Plans, ordinances and EIRs for projects throughout California.

“I’m a proponent of good planning in the urban rural fringes of the East Bay and I think my planning experience can be useful to SMD. I’ve worked on open space programs for many agencies and I have a dedication toward preserving open space and habitat here locally.”

Mike has degrees in Sociology from the University of Michigan, in City and Regional Planning from U.C. Berkeley, and a J.D. from Golden Gate University. He lives in Walnut Creek with his wife Nadine, coordinator of the SF Bay Program at the California Coastal Conservancy, and their son Philip. Their daughter Alana attends U.C. San Diego.
Gary Bogue and His Readers Come Through
Gateway Property Fundraising Complete

Last Fall fundraising for preservation of the Gateway property was almost complete. Of $1.56 million necessary to purchase a conservation easement, all but $15,000 had been raised. We asked Contra Costa Times columnist Gary Bogue to help and he agreed to ask his readers to help raise the funds by donating in honor of Gateway Alliance member JoAnn Hanna’s October 21st birthday - a deadline that was just weeks away. The goal amount of $15,000 was raised in just two weeks. By the October 21 deadline, 900 families contributed more than $49,000 to help save more of Mt. Diablo. Thanks to Gary and his readers!


Supporters - $500+: Sgambati Painting, AlG Matching Grants, Ralph Cotter, Jr., Oscar Fernandez & Patricia Galindo, Clint & Sue Phalen, Monica Sheridan, Jay & Jasmin Mumford


Diablo Celebrated

Jones Property Dedication
October 24, 2004

Under threatening skies, Mark & Shannon Jones opened their home and property to SMD members to celebrate the preservation of the last parcel in Riggs Canyon, the canyon mouth. The Jones protected their 232 acres with conservation easements involving Braddock & Logan, East Bay Regional Park District & Lennar. As the event took place both the sun and Mt. Diablo joined us. Thanks to our Sponsors: Mark & Shannon Jones, Braddock & Logan Services, Sycamore Associates LLC.

Save the Date

“Moonlight on the Mountain”
Saturday evening, September 17, 2005

An elegant evening under the light of the full moon, at the China Wall on Mt Diablo. Celebrate SMD’s 34th anniversary and acknowledge recipients of Mountain Star Awards.

Catered reception with hosted bar, sumptuous dinner, jazz quartet, silent & live auctions.

- Sign up as an event sponsor
- Join the planning committee
- Be a table host
- Donate silent or live auction items
- Call 925-947-3535

Cowell Ranch State Park
Special Donor Preview
December 5, 2004

4000 acre Cowell Ranch State Park, newly created in 2003, isn’t yet open to the public but SMD donors got a special preview during a hike led by Ken Dyleski (pointing). The Park’s sensual grasslands support one of the area’s largest concentrations of eagles and other raptors; it is an important new link in the proposed 60 mile “Diablo Grand Loop” Trail which Dyleski has mapped. Another preview is scheduled for May 15th.
The 3rd annual Trail Adventure included record numbers of participants in a half marathon & 10K run & interpretive hike, as well as a BBQ and family expo featuring a variety of non-profits. Adam Rhoads was half marathon winner in 1:24:53; Marianne Baldetti first woman in 1:52:17; Justin Coffeen 10K winner in 39:46; Jenny Wong first place woman in 47:53. Thanks to our Sponsors: the Contra Costa Times, Forward Motion, Jamba Juice, New Balance, Pacific Coast Trail Runs, REI.
Threats

Despite creation of the new open space, during the 1970s development pressure accelerated. Between 1988 and 1990 four proposals threatened Lime Ridge’s very slopes on both sides. Applications for Crystyl Ranch—just north of Mangini—and a State College campus in Concord included more than 900 acres and 921 units, an 18-hole golf course and a college site. Rancho Paraíso and the Portofino projects in Walnut Creek included more than 500 units on 500 acres.

SMD began organizing opposition and leading hikes to show the public what was at stake. Ultimately we were neutral on the college proposal (most of which was open space), and brokered a compromise at Rancho Paraíso that preserved almost half the site. We opposed the Portofino project (also known as Newhall North & South) outright since it was surrounded on 80% of its border by Lime Ridge Open Space. In 1993 it was acquired and added to the Open Space in a cooperative effort by Walnut Creek and the East Bay Regional Park District.

Coalition for Concord’s Future

Eighteen groups organized by SMD opposed Crystyl Ranch, including a number of nearby homeowner associations. Ignoring overwhelming public opposition, the Concord City Council approved the project in June of 1989. The city revised its General Plan, which had called for 454 homes and 300 acres of open space on the 512 acre site - instead approving 725 units (down from 900), an 18-hole golf course, and just 30 acres of open space.

Over the next 30 days the coalition collected nearly 11,000 signatures to qualify a referendum, with major funding from SMD. When the developers attacked the petitions in court, SMD funded the legal defense. We prevailed and won the referendum vote in November 1989 with 81%, thereby reversing the project approval.

The developers began working with SMD and neighbors instead of against us. Four years later a new Crystyl Ranch proposal adhering to the Concord General Plan—454 units, no golf course, and 333 acres of open space—was approved. SMD supported the proposal.

Duchi, Mangini & Sproul

Developers had also begun showing interest in the Mangini Ranch but in 1990 the citizens of Contra Costa County voted to create an Urban Limit Line. Mangini is outside of the line. No more than a minor subdivision of five lots could be approved. Still, over the next thirteen years, one developer or realtor after another floated plans for Mangini. Each one fell through.

Finally Bob Duchi, an engineer and partner in DK Associates, an engineering firm which represents developers, approached SMD’s president Malcolm Sproul, a biotic consultant at LSA Associates, which also represents developers. SMD has worked with Duchi in the past on developer mitigations resulting in significant land preservation. Duchi was honored last year with SMD’s Mountain Star Leadership Award.

Jim Mangini, a son of one of the five owners of the Mangini Ranch, works for DK and because of Duchi’s involvement with the organization over the years, had become increasingly aware of SMD’s work. Bob and Jim recognized the unlikely chances of development at Mangini and thought SMD might be pragmatic enough to negotiate a deal with the family. Two years later agreement was reached, and we have 2 years to complete the purchase.

continued on page 11
Above Galindo Creek. The buckwheat, if it weren't for the Mangini Ranch project to protect and restore a section of creek—the same creek whose headwaters are around the mountain and most are privately owned, off limits to botanists. I spoke to a 6th grade class today. By coincidence, the class is working on a project to protect and restore a section of creek—the same creek whose headwaters I had climbed.

We haven’t found the Mt. Diablo buckwheat but we were at the Mangini Ranch above Galindo Creek. The buckwheat, if it survives, is just one of the property’s rare species. It also includes one of the northernmost patches of desert olive along with Hospital Canyon larkspur. Its chaparral almost certainly supports threatened Alameda whipsnake and rare horned lizards.

Whether we find the buckwheat or not, Mangini’s diverse habitat—grassland, stream canyons, two springs, oak woodland, chaparral, oak savannah—supports high diversity. Its huge oaks are centuries old. Mangini’s preservation will build on our work at Lime Ridge and Crystyl Ranch, and protect another section of Galindo Creek.

California Riding & Hiking Trail
A walk onto the Mangini Ranch is a study in contrasts. As you walk along Galindo Creek up the California Riding and Hiking Trail, which ends at the Ranch’s gate, you leave dense new development behind.

In 1944 a California Riding and Hiking Trails Project Committee was established to initiate development of a statewide trail system. One of the system’s visionaries was Clayton resident George Cardinet, perhaps California’s most famous equestrian and the “Father of the trail system in California,” according to the California State Horseman’s Association.

The 1945 Legislature and Gov. Earl Warren approved the California Riding and Hiking Trail Bill, to be overseen by the State Park Commission. The plan called for a 3,000 mile trail, extending from San Diego County to the Oregon Border and returning southward through the Coast Range.

As much as possible, the route was established over pre-existing trails and dirt roads on public lands. State funds provided for construction and helped to create jobs for returning war veterans. Subsequent legislation provided for feeder trails extending from communities and connecting public lands. Portions of the trail have been incorporated into local and regional systems. After sixty years only half of the continuous trail has been completed.

Cars and radios fade into birdsong as you cross through Crystyl Ranch’s open space. Stretching up to the ridgeline you are transported more than 60 years back into the area’s cattle ranching history. The purchase of Mangini adds a new link in the Riding and Hiking Trail, which continues within Mt. Diablo State Park.

Come See Mangini
We’re just beginning to explore the Mangini Ranch ourselves. Future issues of Diablo Watch will describe its recent history. We didn’t have to visit at all to know this: the property is historically interesting and extremely important for its strategic location, for its diverse wildlife habitat and rare species, for regional trail connections, because of the needs of adjacent residents, and given development threat. If we had not acted the property would be developed.

When we did visit the property, we found even more. The property has high ridge-line views to Marin, Sonoma and Solano Counties. It also has intimate views within the property’s narrow canyons. This property could function as a stand alone park. Its fire road system already provides several beautiful loop trails of varying length and difficulty. A short walk allows you to leave development behind.

It’s spectacularly beautiful. But don’t take our word for it. Come see for yourself. We need your support to raise the property’s $1.45 million price and we’ll be leading preview hikes this spring.

SMD has scheduled a public hike at the Mangini Ranch on April 3rd. Check “Galindo Creek” in the Spring on Diablo schedule for hike information.
**Not The Ordinary Table Variety**

**Native Olives At The Mangini Ranch**

By Sue Bainbridge

SMD’s new project, the Mangini Ranch, includes a mosaic of plant communities, including a unique and rare scrub community, desert olive scrub. Desert olive, *Forestiera pubescens*, is a deciduous shrub that grows up to 9 feet tall. It is in the same plant family, but distantly related to, the commercial table olive (*Olea europaea*). The fruits of the desert olive are small (5-8 mm) relative to the table olive, and don’t have commercial value.

It grows in sometimes impenetrable thickets in the East Bay, and its bright green foliage is a sharp contrast to adjacent scrub types. Its branches are dense and stiff, and its twigs are like spines. The branches and twigs are so dense that very little light penetrates the canopy and reaches the soil. As a result, many of the associated plant species are those found in mesic, north slope vegetation types. Desert olive also sometimes grows in association with the rare Hospital Canyon larkspur and at the Mangini site, a coyote thistle that is nearly endemic (restricted to) to the East Bay Region. Entomologists at UC Davis are interested in a moth that uses the Coast Range populations of desert olive as their host plant, as it might be different from the one that occurs in the desert region, and thus a species new to science.

The desert olive grows in the southwestern U.S., and in northern Mexico, in association with rivers and springs—at Mangini the olive stand surrounds a spring. In California, it occurs in the deserts, the Transverse and Peninsular Ranges, the East slope of the Sierra Nevada, and in scattered occurrences in the South Coast Range. The Mangini Ranch is the northernmost occurrence of desert olive in California. How did it get there?

Paleobiologists believe that 8,000-5,000 years ago, after the last glacial period, there was an exceptionally warm dry period in the southwest. In California, that meant that a climate more representative of the deserts may have occurred in southern and central portions of California. Temperatures in the southern San Joaquin Valley would have increased by 5-6 degrees Fahrenheit and precipitation may have decreased by 4-5 inches, allowing desert taxa to invade the San Joaquin Valley and south Coast Ranges via the Tejon, Tehachapi, and Walker Passes.

As conditions became milder, desert taxa would have been extirpated (wiped out) in the valley areas but a few remnant species persists in the Coast Range and are indicators of the preceding dry period. They include the desert night lizard, desert scaly lizard, leopard lizard, California juniper, goldenbush, and desert olive. Evidence for this scenario is largely based on modern day presence of these species rather than paleontological records. Additional evidence is needed to test this hypothesis.

The modern day distribution of desert olive scrub in California, although widespread is scattered and rare enough that the Dept. of Fish and Game considers desert olive scrub a community that is worthy of consideration when evaluating environmental impacts. In addition, potentially important differences may exist between the ecology of desert and Coast Range stands. A few stands of desert olive scrub are known from the East Bay outside the Mangini Ranch. Two stands in Corral Hollow (Alameda County) are threatened by expansion of the Carnegie Off-Highway Vehicular Park. Given threats to these other stands, protection of desert olive scrub at Mangini is an important conservation objective.

Sue Bainbridge is a Museum Scientist at U.C. Berkeley’s Jepson Herbarium & Vegetation Ecologist for the East Bay Chapter of the California Native Plant Society.

**SF Foundation Awards $15,000 New Member Matching Grant**

The San Francisco Foundation has awarded Save Mount Diablo a $15,000 grant to assist us with the expansion of our membership program. The grant will match the $35 membership donation for each new membership that we receive.

We will only receive the full amount of the grant if we obtain enough new members by November of 2005. You can help us achieve our goal by asking your friends, family members and business associates to become members.

**PeopleSoft Develops Direct Mail Campaign for SMD**

Prior to being acquired by Oracle, PeopleSoft’s Creative Services team donated their time to develop a direct mail brochure for SMD. The brochure is designed to assist SMD in obtaining new members to qualify for a SF Foundation matching grant. It was recently mailed to 20,000 households surrounding Mt. Diablo. Call SMD if you would like to receive copies of the brochure to distribute to potential new members. Special thanks to the entire PeopleSoft Creative team for their great creative effort. We wish them good luck in their future endeavors!

**Special Events for SMD’s Special Donors**

Donors to SMD above the $250 level receive invitations to special events—expert guided tours of unique and newly preserved areas, as well as lectures, book signings, dedications, etc.

Wouldn’t you like to help preserve more of your mountain? Call 925-947-3535 for membership information or see www.savemountdiablo.org

**United Way Donor Option**

Designate Save Mount Diablo as the recipient of your United Way Pledge. When asked to make your annual workplace donation, please remember SMD. Our tax ID number is 94-2681735.

**Business Contributions**

Many companies match charitable contributions. Ask your employer if they have a matching gift program. Also let us know if your employer has a foundation or corporate donation program.
Membership Matters

Who Is A Member of Save Mount Diablo?

Historically, only those donors who specifically earmarked their donation for “membership” were actually counted as SMD members. The problem was that this definition failed to recognize that there are many different financial contributions that individuals make in supporting Save Mount Diablo.

Therefore, beginning with this issue of Diablo Watch, we will be counting an individual’s combined contributions (totaling $35 or more) received in the previous 365 days to determine that individual’s “membership level.” Donations that will count toward membership include: appeals, general donations, memorial and honoraria gifts, Heritage Tree donations, land acquisition donations, United Way donor option contributions, event sponsorships, as well as all other purely charitable donations. (All of these contributions will continue to be 100% tax deductible as allowed by law.) Previously these contributions, while equally appreciated, were not counted toward an individual’s membership level. Instead, they classified the individual as an SMD supporter. This new method of defining membership levels will remove confusion that has arisen in the past and will allow us to more appropriately acknowledge the generous support we receive from our many donors.

The members listed in the following sections reflect all of our membership qualifying donors since January 1, 2004. We thank and appreciate each and every one of them.

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(* Donors who make a 10 year annual donation pledge to Save Mount Diablo of at least $1,000, qualify as Founder’s Circle members)

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($350 or more)
307 donors have made membership contributions in this category

Friends
($355 or more)
219 donors have made membership contributions in this category
Concord Naval Weapons Station

Concord has been the spoiler in discussions over a County Urban Limit Line—in part because it’s interested in massive development at the 13,000 acre Concord Naval Weapons Station. It’s amending its General Plan to allow for as many as 33,000 new residents. Ask the city council to “Hold The Line” on the current Urban Limit Line, and when they update their General Plan to:

1) protect the Naval Weapons Station east of Mt. Diablo creek,
2) protect Mt. Diablo creek, and
3) protect sensitive cultural areas.

Concord City Council (Laura M. Hoffmeister, Mayor; Susan Bonilla, Vice Mayor; Helen M. Allen, Mark Peterson, Bill Shinn, Councilmembers): City of Concord, 1950 Parkside Dr., Concord, CA 94519, Fax: (925) 671-3375, citycouncil@ci.concord.ca.us

Please send copies to our congressional representatives:

Congresswoman Ellen Tauscher

Congressman George Miller
2205 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515, (202) 225-2095 George.Miller@mail.house.gov

Endangered Species Act

After 30 years of serving as one of our country’s last defenses against the destruction of our natural world, the Endangered Species Act is under attack from powerful corporate interests and their allies in Congress. Opponents of endangered species have announced their intent to devastate the ESA, which protects our wolves, bald eagles, sea otters, kit fox, and so many more.

Congressman Richard Pombo, as chairman of the House Resources Committee, has the authority to maintain or weaken the ESA but has been attempting to make it unenforceable and meaningless. For this reason we are asking our supporters to support a campaign coordinated by Defenders of Wildlife. If you’re interested in getting involved, please send your name, address, telephone number and e-mail address to: sgerron@greencorps.org or contact Claudia Riley at: c Riley@defenders.org

Let our representatives know that you support a strong Endangered Species Act.


Congresswoman Ellen Tauscher & Congressman George Miller (See contact information above)
Adopt a Heritage Tree at Chaparral Spring

The Heritage Tree Program was established in 1994 after SMD acquired the 333-acre Chaparral Spring as the first link in the Mt. Diablo to Black Diamond Mines Corridor.

Tree adoptions range from $250 to $1,000 and groves range from $2,500 to $20,000. The process of choosing a tree or grove is very personal. Some choose a tree where their family will be able to gather and picnic. Other supporters have chosen groves that remind them of a loved one's favorite view or favorite type of habitat.

The journey to find the perfect tree or grove is just as enjoyable as the moment when it is found. The tree or grove becomes a living memory of loved ones or a joyous tribute to honor friends or family.

Those who adopt a tree or grove can visit on scheduled visitation days, or by personal appointment. If you are interested in a tree or grove, call the SMD office at 925-947-3535

Four Days Diablo: April 27 - 30, 2005

An elegant experience

Each April Save Mount Diablo leads its Four Days Diablo backpack trip on the 30-mile Diablo Trail. The four day-three night adventure takes participants across six parks from Shell Ridge Open Space in Walnut Creek to Round Valley Regional Preserve in Brentwood.

The route is on permanently protected open space and crosses just two narrow roads during the four days.

Participants carry just a daypack, enjoy beautiful and lush landscapes and thousands of wildflowers, and stroll into camp to gourmet meals prepared by area chefs. Experts are along to identify flora and fauna, and you will learn about the natural and cultural history of the mountain.

As of mid-February registration is already at 12. Space is limited to 20 participants at $750 per person. Don’t miss out - call 925-947-3535 to reserve your spot.

Save Mount Diablo's Mission . .

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

In support of our mission, we:
- Protect open space through purchases, gifts and cooperative efforts with public and private entities
- Educate the public regarding threats to the mountain's flora, fauna and rugged beauty, as well as the history and heritage of the mountain and its surrounding foothills
- Work with landowners to preserve their property and to ensure that they receive fair value in any transaction aimed at preserving open space
- Work in partnership with Mt. Diablo State Park, East Bay Regional Park District, and other public and private entities to increase and manage open space and to identify mitigation opportunities
- Participate in the land use planning process for projects that could impact Mount Diablo and its surrounding foothills
- Aid in the restoration of habitat and the protection of rare species
- Offer technical advice to community and neighborhood groups regarding preservation of open space
- Raise funds and sponsor events to build public awareness and to carry out our programs
- Temporarily own and responsibly manage lands prior to their transfer to a public agency for permanent preservation
- Encourage recreation and public enjoyment of Mount Diablo's parklands consistent with the protection of their natural resources