

# The Escondido Creek Conservancy



The Watershed Voice

Protecting The Escondido Creek Watershed Since 1991



Kevin Barnard | President of TECC

**“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” – Margaret Mead**

In the highlands to the northeast of Elfin Forest, northwest of Harmony Grove, and south of San Marcos, lie two peaks known to locals as Frank’s Peak and Mt. Whitney. Towering over a thousand feet above the valley floor in Harmony Grove, these peaks make up the ridgeline that is commonly referred to as the “Sleeping Lady” because of the image of a silhouetted sultana in repose, a chaperone over all points east as far as the granite hills east of Escondido.

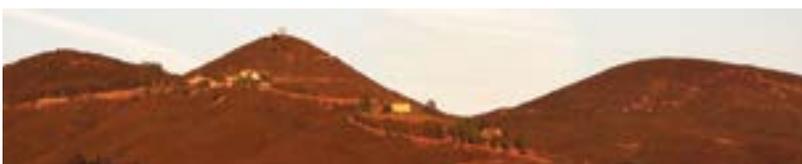
At the beginning of this year The Escondido Creek Conservancy (TECC) took a 12 month option on the 502 acre property on which the Sleeping Lady rests. We refer to this property as University Heights because of the 1200 unit housing project proposed on the site several years ago, an idea that evaporated in the recession of 2008. But at least one major developer has plans for over 300 houses on the site if somehow the open space acquisition plan falls through.

This highland paradise is a true crossroads in the middle section of the Escondido Creek watershed. Once preserved, it will create one of the final pieces of a puzzle that TECC has envisioned for years, an open space/habitat regional park that will connect three north county cities (Encinitas, San Marcos, and Escondido) via open space and an eventual trail system. It will also create a connection to three watersheds via open space and trails, (San Marcos Creek, Escondido Creek, and San Dieguito River).

Considering the recent economic turnaround and sudden increase in development activity, this may be the last chance to save this critical property.

TECC is incurring \$100,000 in carrying costs to maintain the option while we organize the funding to make the final purchase of University Heights. So far, through generous donations (both large and small) of the local community and TECC members, over \$70,000 has been raised. You may live in the immediate area of the Sleeping Lady, Harmony Grove, Eden Valley, Elfin Forest, or you may like to hike or bike in the hills and valleys of the Escondido Creek watershed, you may just find comfort in knowing that there is still nature in our midst. Whatever your motivation is, a donation to help preserve this magnificent expanse of chaparral terrain could not be more critically needed to keep this project moving forward.

Please think about the value you place on preserving the Sleeping Lady and send your check today to TECC at P.O.Box 460791, Escondido, 92046 noting “University Heights” on the check, or give on-line at [www.escondidocreek.org](http://www.escondidocreek.org).



## 2013 Summer Issue



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Vice President of TECC  
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## Upcoming Events at the Interpretive Center for Your Calendar!

First Sunday of Each Month thru the end of the year | 8:30 - 11 a.m.  
Walk with a Tracker

Photo Exhibit | Through August

Macro Photography of the Flora and Fauna in the Reserve

Thursday August 15, 2013 | 5:30 pm - 7:00 pm

Raptor Rap by Sky Hunters

Free Nature Walks with Donna Walker, Interpretive Center Docent

July 14, 21, 28, 2013 | 10:00 am 1 Hour

August 11, 18, 25, 2013 | 10:00 am 1 Hour

September 8, 15, 22, 2013 | 10:00 am 1 Hour

October 13, 20, 27, 2013 | 10:00 am 1 Hour

Native American Uses of Plants Exhibit | September - December

July 20, Aug. 24, Sept. 21 and Oct. 26, 2013 | 10:00 am - Noon

Children's Program: The Amazing Animal Kingdom -

Up Close! With Bill the Bug Guy

The Interpretive Center is located at: [8833 Harmony Grove Road](http://8833 Harmony Grove Road) • Escondido, CA 92029

# Land Stewardship

– TECC in Action on the Ground



Late last year with the help from the Conservation fund, TECC was able to acquire and preserve 240 acres of beautiful open space along Escondido Creek. Since then we have been familiarizing ourselves with the land, now known as the Escondido Creek Conservation Area, and have begun to write a formal Resource Management Plan (RMP) as required by the grant from the Wildlife Conservation Board. Once approved this RMP will guide our ongoing stewardship efforts.

Even without an RMP, some initial tasks were obvious and needed to get done ASAP. So on April 18th, a beautiful spring day, TECC hosted a volunteer work day. With help from employees of Eagle Creek, a local manufacturer of outdoor gear and a long time TECC supporter, and students from Outdoor Outreach, a San Diego agency giving underserved youth the opportunity to develop passion and joy in the outdoors, we installed posts, fixed fences, went after some invasive weeds, and painted over graffiti under the bridge, across the creek on Via Ambiente. The posts will support either chain gates or cable barriers. The intent is to protect sensitive habitats by preventing vehicles from leaving Via Ambiente and entering the Conservation Area. Cost of materials was covered by a grant from the Elfin Forest Community Foundation, gratefully acknowledged.

Lots was accomplished, with smiles all around - and what a great place to spend the day! After lunch we all took a stroll along the creek, enjoying wildflowers, bird songs and blue skies. Many thanks to the hard working volunteers of Eagle Creek and Outdoor Outreach.

We plan to have more volunteer days. Still to do is install the cable, eradicate some fennel and remove several small Eucalyptus trees. Check the TECC website for dates [www.escondidocreek.org](http://www.escondidocreek.org) and locations or join us on Face Book to receive notifications <https://www.facebook.com/escondidocreekconservancy?fref=ts>.

# A Hike On University Heights



Recently, a group of enthusiastic, local residents took a hiking tour of University Heights, the last remaining natural hillsides that separate Elfin Forest from the encroaching city sprawl. We saw chaparral in full bloom - alive with the sounds of spring and moist from seasonal rains that provide fresh water to our local valleys. The hike was magical as we crossed valley after valley of untouched open space. As we reached the last ridge and looked east though, we saw the earth scraped bare for the next high-density housing development. It was clear that University Heights is the last large area of undeveloped land to the north of Elfin Forest.

Without your help, the natural hills of University Heights are not safe from the bulldozers. The Escondido Creek Conservancy (TECC) has until the end of this year to secure the purchase and protect this privately held land. To keep this option open TECC needs to raise a total of \$100,000 in private donations. We are asking that each of us in the community consider how important our natural surroundings are and give what you can to support this effort.

TECC has already been approached by developers that are ready to purchase the land, scrape and re-sculpture the hills to build high density housing similar to San Elijo Hills and Harmony Grove Village. If you value having natural open space for walking, biking and hiking in our community, now is the time to get involved. Please join TECC and donate what you can to help preserve our local natural treasures for future generations to enjoy.

## Jennifer Coburn Plasma Cut Steel Art Available for TECC Donation

If you have not been to the EFRR Interpretive Center in the last month, you may not know that local Elfin Forest artist Jennifer Coburn, who with artist and architect, James Hubbell, created our security window screen, our Way Up Trail markers, a variety of signage and the most spectacular Sycamore tree art work which can be seen outside the Interpretive Center, is offering some of her creations for donation to help raise money for TECC.

See the docent on shift to select your art and make a donation from the display inside the Interpretive Center. You may also ask a ranger if you have any questions.



# A Q & A Interview with Jeff Anderson, Park Supervisor for EFRR

by Ron Forster  
Chair of Communications



**Q. What is the Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve and how did it come about?**

**A.** The Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve (EFRR) is a 784-acre open space reserve with 11 miles of family friendly multi-use trails that surrounds the Olivenhain Reservoir and Dam in the community of Elfin Forest. EFRR is operated by Olivenhain Municipal Water District (OMWD) in cooperation with the San Diego County Water Authority and Bureau of Land Management. EFRR officially opened to the public in 1991, and was created as a result of the Olivenhain Water Storage Project and the San Diego County Water Authority's Emergency Storage Project. OMWD originally received approval for a much smaller dam and reservoir

at this site in the 1980s that was meant only for OMWD customers. Soon thereafter, the Water Authority became involved, increased the scale of the project, and made Olivenhain Reservoir a part of our county-wide storage that will provide up to six months of water for San Diego County in the event that aqueducts from Northern California or the Colorado River are damaged. As a result of the project all of the habitat within EFRR is fully protected for everyone to enjoy.

**Q. Why is it important to have the Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve?**

**A.** Protecting native habitat for people to enjoy in San Diego County is important considering how desirable land is in our area. Knowing that a park like EFRR is here and has the full support of OMWD's board of directors and management team ensures EFRR will continue to provide a high-quality recreational experience for generations to come. In 20 to 30 years, there will likely be far fewer recreational opportunities for San Diegans to experience, so the fact that EFRR will continue to serve the county's needs well into the future makes it extremely valuable.

**Q. What are children and families experiencing when they come to the Reserve?**

**A.** EFRR offers a unique combination of beauty, ruggedness and seclusion throughout its 784 acres. In just a short 1.5-mile hike, families can learn about the various plants native to this area, walk through multiple habitats, get a healthy workout, and take in some breathtaking views. Hopefully, after a visit to EFRR, families will have a better appreciation of our native flora and fauna, and will be inspired to come back.

**Q. What goes on at the Interpretive Center and how can I hear about it?**

**A.** The Elfin Forest Interpretive Center Honoring Susan J. Varty is four years old now and is becoming a very busy place. All the displays and programs at the center have been developed in partnership with The Escondido Creek Conservancy (TECC) and most of the activities there are facilitated by our docent group. We have a fantastic group of 43 very talented docents of whom I could not be more proud. They currently staff the center Tuesday through Sunday for three to six hours per day, and they offer a wealth of knowledge about the area's biology and geology. They are also instrumental in our ability to handle large field trips that come to EFRR. Items you can always find in the center are: a science lab with powerful video microscope, owl pellet dissection

activity, educational displays, video and book libraries and an animal track activity. TECC also facilitates an annual lecture series at the center beginning each spring. For the most current information about what is going on in the Interpretive Center, you can sign up for our email list at the center or like TECC and EFRR on Facebook (facebook.com/escondidocreekconservancy, facebook.com/elfinforestrecreationalreserve).

**Q. What do you like most about being the ranger for the Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve?**

**A.** There are many things I enjoy about being a park ranger for Olivenhain Municipal Water District, but what feels the best is knowing that I work for an agency that fully supports running EFRR to its full potential and also being able to work with an organization as great as TECC on a daily basis. The unique partnership that has developed between OMWD and TECC is truly special and has proved to be very successful for both entities. I guess my answer to this question is that I enjoy the challenge and support I get in my position to make EFRR the best it can be. I feel fortunate to be in such a good position in my place of work.

**Q. When did you first get interested in nature and what sparked your interest?**

**A.** Growing up, I always enjoyed my experiences in the outdoors. I grew up participating in scouting and always enjoyed the evenings I spent with nothing between me and the stars in the sky. I graduated from SDSU with a geography degree, and during my last semester there, I interned as a park aide at Torrey Pines State Reserve. That is when I got my first taste of working in a park setting. After my internship, I stayed on as a park aide at Torrey Pines for about six months until I was hired as a park ranger at OMWD. Fourteen years later, I feel very fortunate to have ended up here at OMWD.

**Q. What can people do to help support the Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve and the natural areas in our community?**

**A.** There are many opportunities at EFRR to help make a difference in our community. One of those opportunities is to become a member of TECC. TECC is dedicated to preserving land and educating people within the Escondido Creek watershed. EFRR is here to stay for all to enjoy, but TECC offers many more opportunities for people to help protect our watershed. Another way people can make a difference is to become an EFRR docent. As a docent, volunteers have the opportunity to interact with many people, young and old, who are very receptive to learning about the value of open space in our area. I often get feedback from our docents about how rewarding it feels to open a child's eyes to something they have never seen or experienced before. It is those kinds of experiences that make a difference in one's childhood and can affect the way they choose to live their lives. Experiences in nature as a child can create very powerful memories that never go away, and these foster a long-term appreciation and respect for our natural areas. Having the opportunity to be a part of that process is a special thing.

# The Eighth Annual Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve Amateur Photo Contest



**Grab your camera and come out to Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve!**



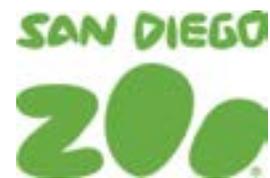
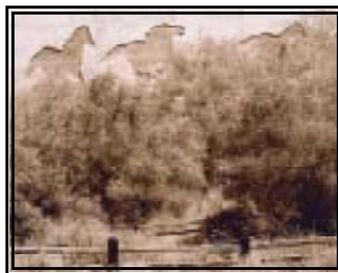
Join Olivenhain Municipal Water District and The Escondido Creek Conservancy at Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve for our Eighth Annual Amateur Photo Contest. Located at 8833 Harmony Grove Road in the community of Elfin Forest, EFRR is full of wonderful photographic opportunities for photographers of all skill levels. Winners will be selected from the categories of **Water Scenery**, **Scenic View**, **Plants & Animals**, **Black & White**, and **Youth**; photos will also be selected for the coveted **Best in Show** award, and new for 2013, the **People's Choice** award! Photos should be submitted by September 27, 2013. There is no fee to enter. Winners will be awarded at OMWD's November 6, 2013 Board of Directors meeting, and are eligible for prizes from our sponsors including **\$100 cash**, **REI gear**, a "Shutterbug Session" from the **San Diego Zoo**, an 18" x 12" metal print from **PC Photo**, and dinner at **Stone World Bistro and Gardens**! Select winning submissions will be displayed at the Elfin Forest Interpretive Center Honoring Susan J. Varty in 2013.



Thanks to our sponsors:



Upload your entries and view official contest rules at [www.olivenhain.com/photo](http://www.olivenhain.com/photo).



The 784-acre Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve is located at 8833 Harmony Grove Road in the heart of North County. The Reserve features 11 miles of trails for hiking, biking, and equestrians, and features views of Olivenhain Reservoir and the Pacific Ocean. For more information, contact our park rangers at 760-632-4212 or [efrrfriends@olivenhain.com](mailto:efrrfriends@olivenhain.com).



# News from the Elfin Forest Interpretive Center Honoring Susan J. Varty

## A Unique Partnership of TECC and the Olivenhain Municipal Water District

by Jeff Swenerton



We can report another successful year for our Interpretive Center School Education Program with over 1000 students coming to the Elfin Forest Recreation Interpretive Center and Reserve for field trips.

This program, developed in collaboration with the San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy and the San Diego Zoo, was recently nominated for the 2013 Eco Ambassador Award sponsored by San Diego Gas and Electric, KFMB San Diego, and the San Diego River Park Foundation. Many of you supported our efforts by voting on-line in a bid to win the \$25,000 first place award. We were very proud that we were able to generate over 4,800 votes. Even though we placed fourth, we were able to spread the word about the great work being done by TECC, OMWD, and our Interpretive Center docents. We sincerely thank you for all your support.

This year our docents presented discovery-based activities that challenged students' thinking. By leading students to the answer through skillful questions, students feel the excitement of taking on the role of scientists investigating important environmental questions. A veteran teacher said that this was the best field trip program she had been on in her 15 years of teaching. We believe that our students leave our program being stewards of the watershed able to educate their families in practices that will improve our watershed.

Through August the Center is featuring an exhibit entitled "Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve: Up-Close," featuring a number of photographs that give visitors a unique perspective of the environment of the Reserve. The photographs were taken by the docents and Ranger staff. In September we will be featuring a very interesting exhibit on the Native American uses of plants, developed in collaboration with California State University San Marcos. We encourage you to visit the Reserve this summer and see both these exhibits.

The Interpretive Center is open most Tuesdays – Sundays from 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM, but is dependent on docent availability. If you have a group, or want to verify the center will be, open call the ranger staff at (760) 632-4212. Thank you.

## Support TECC and the Community by Becoming a Volunteer!

As a not-for-profit organization, TECC relies on volunteers to help accomplish its mission, keeping our effectiveness high and our costs low. Whether you want to help take care of protected lands, raise money to save more land, or educate communities about the importance of land conservation, there are many opportunities to make a difference right here in the Escondido Creek watershed, depending on your interest. Read on to learn more about getting involved!



### Land Stewards

A Land Stewardship Work Day is a great way to get involved with the Conservancy and to meet other people with an interest in conservation. Throughout the year, Conservancy staff and volunteers participate in work days at locations around the Escondido Creek watershed to remove invasive species, clean up trash, maintain trails, and help with a variety of other hands-on tasks. TECC maintains an email list to notify people about work days and other public events – we always welcome extra hands!

### The Escondido Creek Conservancy Standing Committees

The TECC Board of Directors has established several standing committees to assist with setting goals and planning projects to carry out the mission of conserving land in the Escondido Creek watershed. Committee members have a background or involvement in the topic the committee works on. If you have relevant experience and are interested in being considered for committee membership, please let us know. The TECC standing committees are:

Land Acquisition	Finance	Education
Water Quality	Development	Land Use
Communications	Land Stewardship	

### Office Administration

TECC is always looking for enthusiastic volunteers with administration experience to help out in the Escondido office.

For more information about TECC Committees, please contact Ann Hough, Managing Director at [information@escondidocreek.org](mailto:information@escondidocreek.org) or phone (760) 471 9354.

# Become a Member!

## Join Our Conservation Efforts by Becoming a Member or Renewing Your Membership

The Escondido Creek Conservancy (TECC) is a non-profit public benefit corporation dedicated to the preservation, enhancement, and protection of the natural open space within the Escondido Creek watershed. We support educational programs and compatible outdoor recreation within the watershed.

### Not a Member of The Escondido Creek Conservancy?

Join today and add your voice to the hundreds of local people who already look to the Conservancy to protect and preserve the natural open space within the Escondido Creek watershed!

### Here's How Your Membership Contributed Last Year

- We continued our advocacy for the growing regional open space park now totaling over 2,000 contiguous acres in the Elfin Forest/Harmony Grove area alone. We hosted numerous watershed tours for Federal, State, and County Land Agencies, showcasing available tracts of land for possible future purchase as open space native habitat.
- We provided continued stewardship of over 800 acres of valuable coastal sage scrub and chaparral habitat in the Escondido Creek watershed. This includes controlling exotic plants, installing fences to protect sensitive areas from off road vehicle traffic, and planting many native oaks, toyon, and sumac to further restoration efforts on the preserved lands.
- At the Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve Interpretive Center we hosted 6,500 visitors, sponsored educational programs for 1000 children and presented three art exhibits.

**Donate Online At: [www.escondidocreek.org](http://www.escondidocreek.org)  
or Detach & Mail the Form on the Right to:  
TECC | PO Box 460791 | Escondido, CA 92046**

### The Escondido Creek Conservancy Board of Directors & Staff

Kevin Barnard | President

Jeff Swenerton | Vice President

Ron Forester | Secretary

Jon Dummer | Treasurer

Steve Barker | Director

Greg McBain | Director

Leonard Wittwer | Director

Brent Alspach | Director

Tim Costanzo | Director

Jerry Harmon | Director

Laura Mitchell Ph.D. | Director

Richard Murphy | Director

Betsy Keithley Ph.D | Director

Ann Hough | Staff Member

Managing Director

Graphic Design | Frantic Graphics

**YES!** I want to support TECC's mission of watershed protection. Here's my gift!

Thank you for your gift. Donations are tax deductible to the extent provided by law. TECC's tax identification is 33-0497525.

Please Make Checks Payable To: The Escondido Creek Conservancy

Mail This Form To: TECC PO Box 460791, Escondido, CA 92046

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### Monthly Membership Options:

I (we) authorize The Escondido Creek Conservancy to initiate debit entries to my (our) Checking Account/Savings Account (select one) indicated below and debit the same to their account.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Bank Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Branch: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Account Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Routing Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount (Minimum \$10): \_\_\_\_\_

Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

### Annual Membership Options:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student   \$10           | <input type="checkbox"/> Creek Protector   \$500   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Limited Income   \$25    | <input type="checkbox"/> Creek Advocate   \$1,000  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual   \$35        | <input type="checkbox"/> Creek Defender   \$5,000  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Joint/Family   \$50      | <input type="checkbox"/> Creek Guardian   \$10,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creek Benefactor   \$100 |  |

### Please Charge My Credit Card:

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Exp Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Sec. Code on Back of Card: \_\_\_\_\_

Name on Card: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

For gifts of stock or land, please contact Ann Hough, Managing Director at (760) 471-9354 or [information@escondidocreek.org](mailto:information@escondidocreek.org).

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