

The Escondido Creek Conservancy

The Watershed Voice

Protecting The Escondido Creek Watershed Since 1991



Kevin Barnard | President of TECC

We've had a dramatic few months in the watershed. Record heat, devastating fires in May, and a continued drought throughout the summer months have plunged the chaparral into a deep dormancy.

The Escondido Creek Conservancy (TECC) has been anything but dormant. In the last six months, our multi-tasking staff and board have been busy continuing to acquire and protect critical open space and habitat in the watershed. We currently have over \$20 million worth of real estate in various phases of acquisition representing over 700 acres of future permanent preserved lands – see page 2 of this newsletter for exciting updates on University Heights!

Often folks wonder how TECC acquires these lands for preservation with such huge price tags and a seemingly modest pool of donations for such purposes. Well, we've been handed a gift in this watershed of the rarest and most critical habitat in Southern California that gains the attention of many funding sources committed to habitat preservation, both private and governmental. TECC has learned how to effectively leverage privately raised funds and manage these transactions to maximize those funds.

Here is a recent example:

Cielo Del Norte Phase A comprises 240 acres roughly between the western border of the Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve on the east, Via Ambiente on the west, and Harmony Grove Rd. on the north. This parcel was acquired with the help of The Conservation Fund. TECC committed only \$5,000 to this project, and with a purchase price of \$11 million, The Conservation Fund is doing the heavy lifting in this transaction. TECC's leverage was 2,200 to 1. For every dollar we committed to the project, it was multiplied by 2,200. If you donated \$1,000 to TECC toward this project, your dollars purchased about 48 acres.

Some parcels of land have literally been given to TECC through various mechanisms. But there's a catch. In other words, even in the land conservation business, there is no such thing as a free lunch. Every parcel comes with a perpetual commitment to manage, protect, and where appropriate, enhance the habitat on those lands. This is a cost to TECC, and in the past several years, TECC has acquired lands that did not have management funds set aside when the acquisition occurred. This is the situation in which the Cielo Del Norte parcel came to TECC, no funds to manage the property. Unfunded for management properties will continue to be a challenge for TECC in the future.

The point of all this is now you understand how incredibly effective your donation to TECC is in preserving the habitat, watershed, and open spaces in our neighborhoods. The next time you look into the vast acres of chaparral, see a Red Tail Hawk perched in a Sycamore, or catch a glimpse of a bobcat slipping into a thicket, you can say to yourself, "I saved that when I donated to TECC this year."

Please keep in mind the power of your donation to TECC and how we multiply those dollars for open space acquisition.

Wishing you and your family a wonderful holiday season.

2014 Fall Issue



Preservation of University Heights Moves a Step Closer!

by Ann Van Leer
Executive Director
page 2



New Exhibit at the Interpretive Center: Fire & Rebirth

by Jeff Swenerton
Board Member of TECC
page 3



Help TECC Save the Escondido Creek Watershed Without Ever Writing Another Check!

page 4



Join the TECC Legacy Circle and Leave a Lasting Legacy for the Local Environment

Donor Story: Ron Forster and Laura Hunter
page 5

Upcoming Events for Your Calendar!

Film Screening: Living With Fire with Q & A | 3:30 -5:00 pm
December 6, 2014,

Walk With A Tracker | 8:30 -11:30 am
December 7, 2014,
January 4, February 1, March 1, 2015

Interpretive Nature Walks | 10:00 - 11:00 am
December 14, December 21, December 28, 2014
January 11, January 18, January 25
February 8, February 15, February 22, 2015
March 8, March 15, March 22, 2015

Bill the Bug Guy | 10:00 am - Noon
December 20, 2014,
January 17, February 21, March 21, 2015

Photo Contest Exhibit
January 1– April 30, 2015

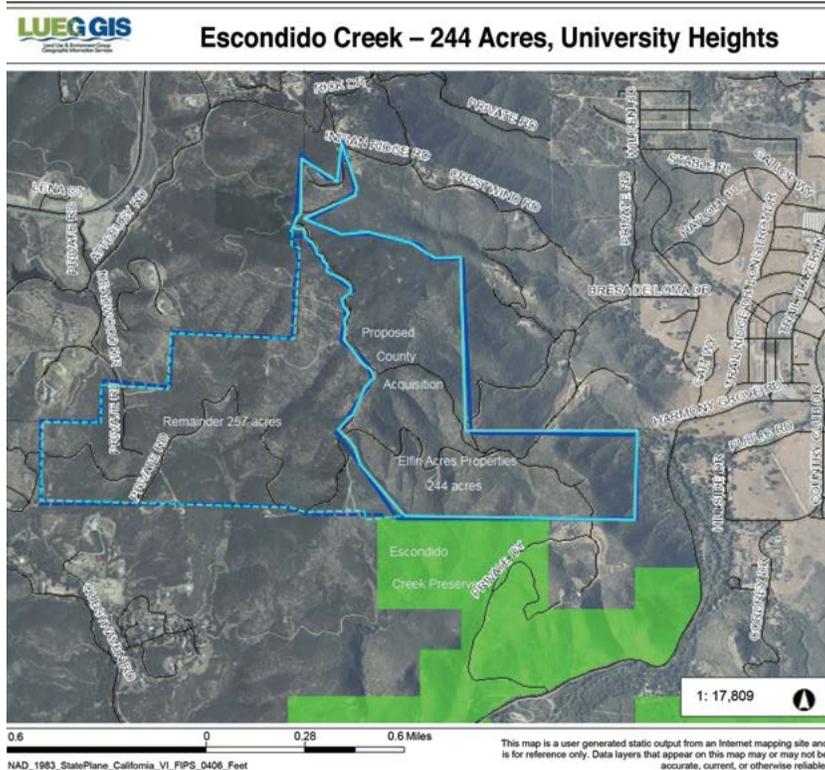
The Interpretive Center is located at:
8833 Harmony Grove Road • Escondido, CA 92029

Preservation of University Heights Moves a Step Closer!

by Ann Van Leer, Executive Director, TECC

Recently the University Heights property, previously proposed to be developed with over 1,000 homes, moved a step closer to long-term preservation when the County Board of Supervisors voted to purchase the eastern one-half of the property. A second (and final) action will still take place on December 3, 2014.

As you may recall, in 2012 TECC had obtained a purchase agreement to acquire the 502-acre University Heights property from its then-bank owner. At the end of 2012 we were working to secure the public and private funding needed to acquire the property, which had appraised for \$10 million, but ran out of time. Fortunately, at the end of 2012 we were able to partner with a sympathetic interim buyer who was willing to purchase the property and hold it privately until TECC could secure conservation acquisition funds. The interim buyer provided TECC with an option to purchase the property in exchange for TECC managing the property and covering all the expenses such as property tax and insurance during the interim holding period; that option was extended through the end of 2014.



During 2013 and 2014, we have been working to secure public and private funding to purchase University Heights from the interim buyer so that it can be conserved in perpetuity. Because of the difficulty in securing large amounts of funding in a still weak economy, we decided it best to facilitate the sale of University Heights in two phases.

Fortunately TECC was able to reach an agreement with the County of San Diego, Department of Parks and Recreation, for the county to purchase the eastern one half of the University Heights property, approximately 244 acres. The land will be added to the multiple species conservation lands managed by County Parks. TECC will release its option to the county at close of escrow, which should occur by the end of 2014.

TECC is currently seeking private and public conservation funding for the remaining acres of the University Heights property, generally the western parcels where most of the coastal sage scrub is located. Earlier this year, TECC paid to have coastal California gnatcatcher surveys done on the property. The California gnatcatcher is a small, blue-grey songbird which is listed as threatened by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service due to loss of its habitat related to development. The biologist located gnatcatchers on the property during these surveys, yielding further evidence of the importance of the University Heights property in preserving local and regional wildlife biodiversity.

Donations to the University Heights property from the public and TECC members have been essential for getting us to this point in TECC's preservation strategy. Your donations gave us the funds needed to secure an option with the interim owner so we could continue working to preserve the property. Funds are still needed to pay interim management costs to maintain the option on the remainder property until it can be sold for conservation and preserved. Contact Ann Van Leer at ann@landconserve.com or 858-442-0937 if you have any questions or would like to make a donation.

We could not have done it without your help-thank you in advance for your additional donations to finish the job!



This Holiday Season Shop and Donate to TECC

If you shop on Amazon, this message is for you!

This holiday season TECC is partnering with AmazonSmile to help raise money for TECC simply by shopping at Amazon.

Here is a Q&A about this terrific giving opportunity:

What is AmazonSmile?

AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support the Conservancy every time you shop, at no cost to you. When you shop at smile.amazon.com, you'll find the exact same low prices, vast selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to TECC.

How do I shop at AmazonSmile?

To shop at AmazonSmile simply go to smile.amazon.com from the web browser on your computer or mobile device. You may also want to add a bookmark to AmazonSmile to make it even easier to return and start your shopping at AmazonSmile.

Which products on AmazonSmile are eligible for charitable donations?

Tens of millions of products on AmazonSmile are eligible for donations. You will see eligible products marked "Eligible for AmazonSmile donation" on their product detail pages.

Can I use my existing Amazon.com account on AmazonSmile?

Yes, you use the same account on Amazon.com and AmazonSmile. Your shopping cart, Wish List, wedding or baby registry, and other account settings are also the same.

How do I select to support TECC when shopping on AmazonSmile?

On your first visit to AmazonSmile, you need to select The Escondido Creek Conservancy to receive donations from eligible purchases before you begin shopping. AmazonSmile will remember your selection, and then every eligible purchase you make on AmazonSmile will result in a donation.

It's that simple. Thank you for supporting TECC when you shop this Holiday Season!

New Exhibit at the Interpretive Center: Fire & Rebirth

by Simon Breen | Education Manager of TECC



Richard Murphy

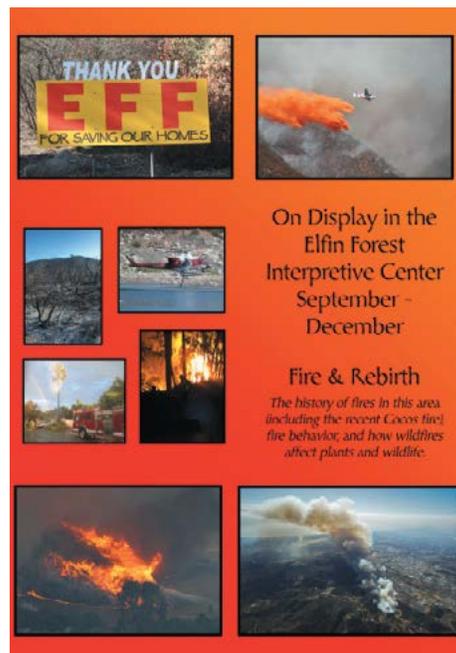
Since 1980, 12 fires have burned more than 212,600 acres within the Elfin Forest and Harmony Grove area. The Cocos Fire in May of this year was the most recent conflagration to blaze through this region. Yet if you drive through Harmony Grove Road now, you can't help but notice some invigorating signs of life in a place that appeared utterly desolate just a few brief months ago. Exactly how is nature able to rebound from such devastation? Why are we seeing an increasing amount of wildfires, and what are the long-term ramifications on San Diego's flora, fauna, and chaparral ecosystem?

A new exhibit—Fire and Rebirth—sheds some light on these questions and more. It is now on display in the Interpretive Center at the Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve, as of Monday, September 8th.

This free exhibit features displays on:

- Fire in the context of the chaparral plant community
- A brief history of fires in the area (including the recent Cocos fire)
- How wildfires behave and spread
- How wildfires affect native plants and wildlife
- The history of the Elfin Forest/Harmony Grove Volunteer Fire Department

The Interpretive Center is located at 8833 Harmony Grove Road, in Escondido. It is open from 8 a.m. until 3 p.m., seven days a week (contingent on volunteer docent availability). Fire and Rebirth will remain on display there until December 31st, so be sure to come by and have a look!



Update: After the Fire

Many of the oak trees in Harmony Grove were badly damaged by the wildfire, and TECC provided the services of an arborist to visit properties affected and advise local residents about tree care. Here's some feedback from Coy Johnston, President of the Harmony Grove Spiritualist Association:

"When the arborist from Dudek came to the Grove, we had many fire-damaged trees on our site. While I had attended the workshop Dudek presented at the Interpretive Center, I wasn't sure how to relate this information to the trees on-site. Looking at the trees from the perspective of the consultant gave me another glimpse at a different way of viewing them.

In lawns or near roads and houses, some of the damaged trees would never be tree-like again. So, from an esthetic point of view, one might automatically cut them down. With the advice from the arborist, I began to distinguish between tree placements so that viable trees which would be bushes after regrowth could be left in more open spots.

This was probably the best advice (from my perspective). The durability of the oaks and sycamores may allow them to be left to grow as they could. Their value to the life cycle of many small creatures was still important; they could still be a habitat for wildlife. Their form might be bushy rather than tree-like, but creatures could use them in any form.

Likewise for the downed trees; in open land not otherwise used by humans, they were not to be taken away. Leaving them to the natural process of decay also provided homes and food for many of the smallest creatures necessary for the health of the entire biosphere.

Without this arborist visit, I may not have had the knowledge to stand up for the trees we left to regrow and recover. Too many people view a fire-damaged tree as needing to be cut down. I learned about the process of natural cycles and how beneficial it was."

Photo Transect Project

TECC is monitoring the ecological recovery process in the wake of the Cocos Fire. To do this, we will be visiting several different burn sites representative of key habitat types and documenting what we see over a five-year period via photo transects. This will help give us a sense of the plants that are rebounding on their own, and the ones that may require extra assistance. We'll keep you updated on this project by posting before and after photos in upcoming newsletters, and on our website, so stay tuned. We're looking forward to sharing dramatic timelapse videos with you upon the project's completion.

artists wanted!

Are you a whizz at powerpoint presentations and graphic design and want to support the TECC mission to preserve and restore the Escondido Creek Watershed? We also need people to help decoratively clean up graffiti on rocks. If that sounds like you then please contact Ann Hough at information@escondidocreek.org to find out more!

Member-Only Sunset Hikes to Bottle Peak

by Leonard Wittwer, Board Member



On a very hot Saturday afternoon in September, 16 intrepid TECC members left Escondido for an excursion to the summit of Bottle Peak. After a few stops to catch our breath, drink some water, and enjoy the expanding view, all of us clambered up the giant boulder which forms the high point of Bottle peak. There we enjoyed a fine sunset and a delicious snack of cheese, crusty bread,

grapes, and chocolate. Under a rising full moon we hiked down, cooled by evening breezes. We arrived back at the cars by flashlight, glad to have made the effort and contemplating a return in at a cooler time of year.

Flash forward to spring 2015 - our next members only hike to Bottle Peak will take place on Saturday, February 7th at 4 p.m. Bottle Peak is not open to the public, so this is a great opportunity to visit this iconic landscape east of Escondido with wonderful views over the whole region. RSVP to information@escondidocreek.org. Spaces are limited, so reply early! To become a member complete and return the form on page 6 of this newsletter or go to www.escondidocreek.org and click the donate button.

Something to Write Home About: TECC Cards Now Available

Sure, we all love the convenience of e-mail. But there's something extra special about sending and receiving a piece of snail mail the old fashioned way.

The Escondido Creek Conservancy is now offering a beautiful assortment of cards featuring the striking nature photography of TECC Board Member Richard Murphy. These cards feature images that capture the elegant majesty of the Elfin Forest, Escondido Creek, and the surrounding watershed.

We have an assortment of 16 different stunning cards to choose from. The suggested donation price for a single card is \$2 for TECC members and \$3 for non-members. But for double the price, you can pick any four cards and receive a discount (\$4 for members/\$6 for non-members).

Cards can be purchased at two locations in Escondido:

- The TECC office, located at 111 North Broadway
- The Interpretive Center at the Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve, located at 8833 Harmony Grove Road



Help TECC Save the The Escondido Creek Watershed Without Ever Writing Another Check!

Many of our members are now choosing to make monthly donations automatically from their bank accounts, credit cards or other accounts to support TECC's mission of preserving and restoring the Escondido Creek watershed.

Increase the Value of Your Gift!

Becoming a sustaining member provides reliable support for TECC's programs and reduces the cost of renewal mailings, reminders, and staff time. When you become a sustaining member, your donation will renew year after year and your credit, debit card, or bank account will automatically be billed. You'll save time, money, and trees!

When you become a sustaining member and make your donation in installments you will receive the following benefits to thank you for your additional commitment to TECC:

Level	Benefit
\$5 per month	A welcome pack of greeting cards featuring photos shot in the Escondido Creek watershed by local nature photographer Richard Murphy
\$10 per month	Greeting cards and invitations to members-only guided hikes
\$25 per month	Greeting cards and invitation to members-only tours of TECC properties
\$50 per month	Greeting cards and invitations to special events

To make a monthly donation through an automatic withdrawal from your personal account, please complete the donation form on page 6 of this newsletter, and return it to the TECC office in the envelope provided. Monthly giving from your debit or credit card can be arranged by visiting our website www.escondidocreek.org and selecting the 'donate now' button.

We thank you for your support which is critical to the success of our mission. Our commitment to protect the land, water, and life of the area where we live, work, and play could not continue without the generous support of people like you, who care about the natural world. With your monthly donation, you will receive the satisfaction of knowing you are helping to preserve the Escondido Creek and watershed for future generations.

go green!

Conserve precious resources by opting for e-delivery of The Watershed Voice. Same great news, less paper. Simply send an email to information@escondidocreek.org with "Subscribe" in the subject line. You will then receive all future editions directly to your inbox, wherever you are.

Thanks for helping save paper!

Join the TECC Legacy Circle and Leave a Lasting Legacy for the Local Environment

Donor Story: Ron Forster and Laura Hunter



Love of nature is a core value that drew my wife and I to each other. From the time that each of us played in our local creeks as small children we have always taken comfort and inspiration from the natural beauty of life. We want future generations to have the same chance for life-changing connections with nature.

My wife and I have taken a simple but important step to give back to nature – we have added The Escondido Creek Conservancy (TECC) as a beneficiary in our will. It just took a few minutes to complete and sign a one page codicil as an addendum to our will. It's satisfying to know that our action today can leave a legacy for the local environment.

Saving natural areas is important on a world scale – but if we don't also save local natural areas then future generations will not have the childhood experiences needed to value and protect nature. Please join us in adding The Escondido Creek Conservancy to your legacy.

Become a Member of the TECC Legacy Circle

Planned gifts, unless otherwise indicated, become part of our operating endowment. TECC has established an operating endowment fund to ensure the perpetual protection of the natural open spaces the Conservancy owns and manages in the Escondido Creek watershed. The fund assets are maintained at the San Diego Foundation, where they are professionally managed and invested. Planned gifts may be made in many forms. Examples include:

Gifts by Will of Trust Agreement

Donors can make a gift of cash or property by naming TECC as a beneficiary in their will or trust. This technique can reduce estate tax upon the death of the donor.

Charitable Remainder Trust

Appreciated assets can be placed in a Charitable Remainder Trust, sold, and the proceeds reinvested without realizing capital gains. The donor receives a payment for their lifetime or a specific term, after which the assets are donated to TECC. Benefits can include an income tax deduction and an estate tax deduction.

Charitable Gift Annuity

A charitable gift annuity creates an annuity payment to the donor and a remainder payment to the Conservancy.

If you have already made a provision for TECC in your estate plans or if you are interested in finding out more about planned giving, please contact Ron Forster, Board Member at ronforstersd@gmail.com.

Have You Seen a Badger?

by Ann Van Leer, Executive Director, TECC

Have you seen a badger?

Please help us find out more about badgers in San Diego!



- Black and white facial markings.
- White vertical stripes on face (not horizontal like raccoons).
- Stocky, flattened body with short legs and gray-yellow fur.
- Dig large, oval-shaped burrows, with claw marks 1" apart often apparent.
- Often dig out squirrel burrows for prey



Because badgers are constantly on the move, we depend on citizen sightings to identify usage areas where the species still occur. Also, road-killed badgers provide vital genetic and movement information. Please provide date seen, detailed location, and photos if possible.

If you have recently seen a badger, fresh burrows, or a dead badger, please call USGS scientists at: 619-225-6458

You can also e-mail us your sightings to: SDBadgers@usgs.gov



For more information on badgers and our wildlife study go to www.werc.usgs.gov/sdbadgers



The American Badger is a rarely-seen, small, and wide-ranging predator, often moving over 10 kilometers per day, through grasslands and open areas. Badgers weigh between 15 and 20 pounds and eat mice, rats, squirrels, and other small animals. Badgers are a species that is covered under the San Diego Multiple Species Conservation Plan (MSCP) and have been identified as a target species for monitoring regional habitat connectivity of upland and grassland areas.

But badgers present a dilemma for researchers, as they are difficult to find.

Enter the 40-pound dynamic bundle of ball-obsessed energy known as 'Pips,' a cross of Australian cattle dog and blue heeler rescued from an animal shelter in Washington state. Pips now has a new important job, Conservation Canine with the University of Washington, and an impressive resume that indicates his expertise includes sniffing out badgers plus wolverines, mink, shot-tailed weasel, fisher, cougars, and the "saw-whet" owl. In exchange for positively identifying the scent of one of his target species, Pips gets to play ball. That is it – plus room and board at Conservation Canines.

Pips was a key participant in an initial study done in 2012 by the U.S. Geologic Survey, Western Ecological Research Center, to learn more about badger distribution, movement or habitat use within western San Diego County. Pips identified badgers at 12 sites in the region, including a site at the Daley Ranch. (Pips wasn't given author credit, which really doesn't seem fair...) The study recommended further follow-up focused surveys to identify target areas for future live trapping and radio telemetry to better define areas with higher densities of badgers.

That follow-up work is now underway and researchers were recently in the Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve looking for badgers. Scientists are expanding on the 2011 data to better identify the areas that badgers are using within the County--as well as to get a better understanding of seasonal patterns of use. Pips, sadly, is not a part of current studies.

Researchers would like your help. If you see a badger, fresh burrows, or even a dead badger, please contact USGS at 619-225-6458 or e-mail to SDBadgers@usgs.gov.

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

- Secured preliminary funding for the 501-acre University Heights property. A former owner had previously proposed to build over 1,000 houses on this property. We will complete the preservation of the property in 2014.
- In partnership with the Olivenhain Municipal Water District and the San Diego Zoo, sent 800 grade school children from urban north San Diego County to the Elfin Forest Interpretive Center for hands-on learning and discovery about local wildlife and natural history. For every \$30 we raise, another grade school child can have a life-changing experience in the outdoors.
- In partnership with the Conservation Fund, secured an agreement to purchase 256 acres known as Cielo Estates. The County had previously approved the construction of 79 houses on this property. You will be hearing more from us about this property in 2014.

Donate Online At: 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	Leonard Wittwer Director
Jon Dummer Vice President	Brent Alspach Director
Ron Forster Secretary	Tim Costanzo Director
Richard Murphy Treasurer	Jerry Harmon Director
Steve Barker Director	Betsy Keithley Ph.D Director
Greg McBain Director	Simon Breen Education Manager
Ann Van Leer Executive Director	Ann Hough 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:

Student | \$10 Creek Protector | \$500

Limited Income | \$25 Creek Advocate | \$1,000

Individual | \$35 Creek Defender | \$5,000

Joint/Family | \$50 Creek Guardian | \$10,000

Creek Benefactor | \$100

Please Charge My Credit Card:

One time Monthly Other Amount _____

Visa MasterCard Amex

Credit Card #: _____

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.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

P.O. Box 460791 • Escondido, CA 92046

