

The ESCONDIDO CREEK Conservancy



The Watershed Voice Protecting & Restoring The Escondido Creek Watershed Since 1991



Kevin Barnard | President of TECC

As 2015 comes to a close and the sun rises and sets further onto the southern horizons, we reminisce on the year that was, and contemplate the opportunities that 2016 presents.

2016 will be the 25th year of The Escondido Creek Conservancy's (TECC) existence and we are proud of the fact that in our 24th year we preserved some properties that were identified as high value open space/habitat acquisitions by the founding members of TECC in 1991. That is a prime example of, "keeping your eye on the ball".

2015 was a year of incredible accomplishments. We finished acquiring a suite of properties

in southern Eflin Forest that completed an 800 acre preserve we have named Los Cielos Preserve. This preserve is bordered by the Rancho Cielo development to the south, the Eflin Forest Recreational Reserve to the east, Harmony Grove Rd. to the north, and preserved parcels on the southern slopes of Paint Mountain.

TECC is not resting on its laurels in the acquisitions department. We now have over 1,000 acres in option in other parts of the watershed. These include Mountain Gate, 740 acres in the Reidy Creek portion of the watershed, east of I-15 and west of North Broadway, the Von Sager 240 acre parcel to the north of Lake Wohlford, and Council Springs Ranch, 90 acres on the western border of Daley Ranch.

TECC also received a multi-million dollar donation structured under the acquisition of Los Cielos Preserve. This is a game-changer for TECC in that it will essentially endow the organization for decades to come. It has essentially stabilized our staff and administrative costs from year to year, and will allow us to leverage that endowment on an annual basis with our dynamic and creative employees. Rather than spending time and effort to ensure continued staffing levels, we can now focus our staff on fund raising, grants, and other sources of income, that will expand our acquisitions, drive our advocacy, and sustainably manage our lands. This will accelerate our ability to identify which lands are suitable to recreation (hiking, biking, equestrian) and which lands need to be limited in access for reasons of rare and sensitive habitat. It will also allow us to accelerate the process of connecting these lands with a system of trails that will allow for the highest and best use for recreation that will be seamless as one treks up and down the watershed, and even into adjacent watersheds.

The family that made this historic donation to TECC recognized that their hopes and dreams for the Escondido Creek will be realized through TECC. We hope that you will too. With that in mind, TECC is announcing a year-end fund raising drive unique to our history in scope and opportunity made possible by yet more donors who have recognized TECC as the vehicle by which their goals will be met.

For first time donors, donations of \$50 or more will be matched from a pool of \$5,000. For existing, or past donors, donations of \$1,000 or more will be matched from a pool of \$20,000.

As you can imagine, TECC's silver anniversary will be a special one filled with new opportunities. I suspect at this time next year we'll take a collective look back and be as proud as ever for what we've accomplished.

2015 Fall Issue



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Upcoming Events for Your Calendar!

Walk With A Tracker | 8:30 - 11:30 am
First Sunday of Every Month

Interpretive Nature Walks | 10:00 - 11:00 am
Second and Fourth Sunday of Every Month

Free Talk on Water Harvesting with Alden Hough
March 17th, 2016 | 6:00 - 7:00 pm

Wildlife Photography Exhibit
September 1 – December 31, 2015

Bill the Bug Guy | 10:00 - 11:30 am
December 12th, 2015, January 9th, February 13th, and March 12th, 2016

Annual Photo Contest Winners
January 1 – April 30th, 2016

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

Keeping Harmony Grove Beautiful

by Ann Hough, Managing Director



When driving down Harmony Grove Road in the last 16 years, you may have noticed local Harmony Grove resident Frank McCulloch and his wife, Pat, picking up litter. I recently met with Frank to find out what inspired him to dedicate so much of his time to cleaning up the roadside.

Frank has always loved nature. Since he was six years old he was collecting arrow heads on White River, Branson, Missouri where he grew up. When he was 17 his family moved to Texas and he joined the Navy, stationed at Miramar. While he was renting a house in Escondido and studying for his masters degree in education, he went to look at a house for sale in Harmony Grove that had the Escondido Creek running through the land. He fell in love with the property and told his wife that he had to have it! Fortunately she agreed and they moved in to the neighborhood in 1972.

In 1989, Frank was in touch with the City of Escondido about the amount of trash in the creek. He came to a meeting of The Escondido Creek Conservancy (TECC) and met founding members Leonard Wittwer, Steve Barker and Bruce Hamilton. Following that he started to pick up litter with them along a 2 mile section of Harmony Grove Road near the Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve and then he and Pat adopted the next two-mile section towards Escondido. Since then he gets out to clear trash at least once a month on each section.

Frank observed that when the dump was closed at San Elijo Hills, the amount of trash really escalated, however, during the economic downturn of 2008, the amount of trash dropped. He says that the economy must be on the up because the amount of litter is increasing again! He mostly finds bottles, cans and candy wrappers and he recycles everything he can. He also works with the County of San Diego to remove large items such as mattresses and couches.

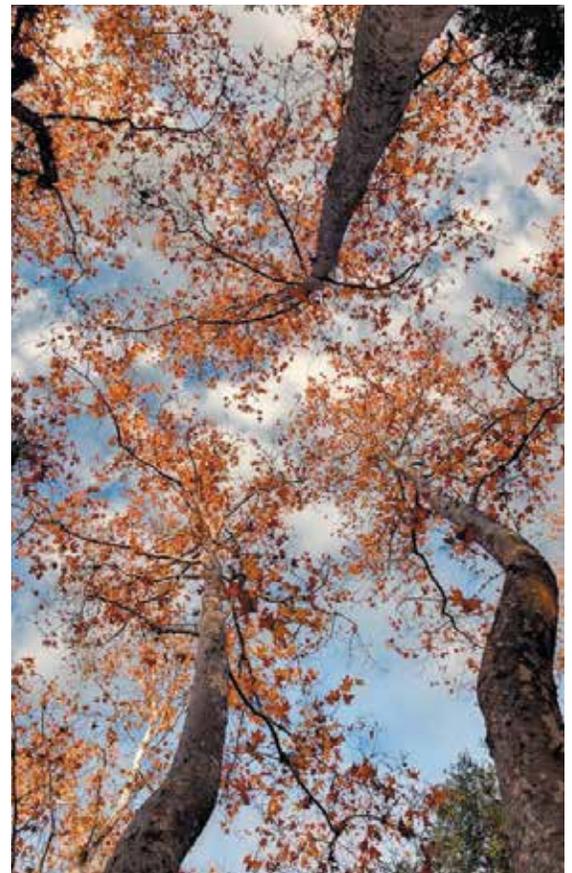
Frank has had some interesting finds amongst the rubbish, including once a gold chain! Being out in nature brings him into contact with wildlife and his most amazing encounter was with three baby bobcats – although they quickly ran off when they saw Frank!

Frank says that one of the best things about cleaning up litter is the appreciation he is shown from passers by who often wave and give him the thumbs up. All of us at the Conservancy would also like to honor Frank for his dedication to keeping the watershed beautiful for the last 16 years.

If you are inspired by Frank and would like to help out on creek clean up days, contact Ann Hough, Managing Director at information@escondidocreek.org.

What Should You do if you See a Potential Problem on TECC Land? Contact Us!

Recently our friends in the local equestrian community drew our attention to low hanging tree limbs on a few TECC trails, and provided us with locations and helpful pictures. TECC staff responded and within days the branches were carefully trimmed back with consideration to both riders and trees. If you notice any issues while walking or riding on TECC trails, please contact information@escondidocreek.org or call 760-471-9354.



A Big Thank You!

We would like to thank the following organizations who have recently made grants to TECC and helped to make our work possible:

The Charles H. Stout Foundation gave \$15,000 for the environmental education program, SDG&E gave \$10,000 for the environmental education program, The County of San Diego gave a \$5,000 community enhancement grant for Escondido Creek Trail improvements, The San Marcos Community Foundation gave \$1,498 to pay for trail docent uniforms.

Matched Giving for Qualified End of Year Donations!

At this time of year many of our supporters choose to give back to nature by supporting The Escondido Creek Conservancy with a year-end gift. These gifts help sustain our organization and provide the staff and resources that enable TECC to continue its vital work preserving and restoring the special places you love in the Escondido Creek Watershed.

This year, thanks to the generosity of some of our board members, if you donate over \$1,000 by the end of 2015, your gift will be matched 1:1, thus doubling your donation!

For new donors who have yet to contribute to TECC, any donation of at least \$50 will be matched at 1:1!

Please donate by the end of this year to take advantage of these opportunities.

TECC is also participating in the fourth annual Giving Tuesday on December 1st. We have a day for giving thanks. We have two for getting deals (Black Friday and Cyber Monday). Now, we have #GivingTuesday: a global day dedicated to giving back. On Tuesday, December 1, 2015, charities, families, businesses, community centers, and students around the world will come together for one common purpose: to celebrate generosity and to give.

It's a simple idea. Support TECC with a donation and then tell everyone you can about how you are giving. Join us and be a part of a global celebration of a new tradition of generosity.



TECC Welcomes Ginger Lamp to the Legacy Circle!

During the 14 years I've lived in Elfin Forest, I've come to realize that it is the most ideal community in San Diego County. With its two-acre minimum lot size and coastal breezes, Elfin Forest is far more comfortable than the sweltering East County. Because our community is a slice of country surrounded by city, we must be ever vigilant to keep it this way. The Elfin Forest / Harmony Grove Town Council and the Escondido Creek Conservancy work diligently to maintain this beautiful paradise, despite constant encroachment by developers.

This is why I've decided to include The Escondido Creek Conservancy in a "Transfer On Death" agreement with my broker. Hopefully this will provide an easier asset distribution process than an ordinary will and add much needed cash to the TECC's fund for purchasing more land. Escondido Creek provides an essential watershed in our drought stricken county, as well as an abundance of plant life to renew the quality of our air. Our slice of open space is essential to the health of our planet.

– Ginger Lamp

It is people like Ginger who will ensure the long term sustainability of The Escondido Creek Conservancy so that we can continue to preserve and restore the local watershed into the future. There are many ways that you can make a gift to TECC and enjoy valuable benefits such as lifetime income and tax savings. If you have any questions, or for more information, please contact Ron Forster, Board Member, at (760) 740-9405 or email information@escondidocreek.org. Ginger joins the following members in the Legacy Circle:

Kevin Barnard
Ron Forster and Laura Hunter
Elizabeth Keithley and John Olsen
Leonard Wittwer and Martha Blane
David Shearer

Please let us know if you have made provision for TECC in your estate planning and would like to be included in the Legacy Circle.

Need a Tax Write Off? Want to Donate a Building to TECC?

We are very happy in our little office in downtown Escondido. However, we don't have a long-term lease so we are always on the lookout for a more permanent home. Ideally we would like to be downtown or in the Escondido historic district. If anyone has any leads for us or—even better—would like to donate a building to the Conservancy, please contact Ann Van Leer, Executive Director at ann@landconserve.com.

What's New at the Interpretive Center

by Simon Breen, Education Manager

Getting Strategic About Inspiring the Next Generation of Watershed Stewards



There's that old adage: "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." Similarly, one incredible person can pick up a lifetime of garbage, but as long as the practice of littering continues this can be an uphill battle; teach people not to litter, and the battle can be won. Sure, it's not as catchy as fish idiom, but it helps underscore the crucial importance of environmental education.

TECC has been preserving habitat within the watershed since 1991. Recognizing the need to engage future generations to value and defend the land TECC supporters have worked so hard to protect, in 2009 the Conservancy established an environmental education program. This program has been operating successfully ever since. To take these efforts a step further, TECC hired an Education Manager in 2014, and this year the Conservancy has been developing its first-ever Education Strategic Plan. The purpose of this plan is to add clarity, focus, and guidance to the program to ensure the educational outcomes are achieved.

This plan will steer all of TECC's education decision-making and programming for the next five years. Its creation involved an exciting collaborative process with representatives from local schools, conservancies, and other relevant stakeholders. The result is a clear education mission: to provide access to environmental education and experiences that foster stewardship of the Escondido Creek watershed and an intrinsic appreciation for nature. Implementation begins in 2016.

TECC Programs and Events

What: Free guided hike: Interpretive Nature Walk in the Elfin Forest

When: 2nd & 4th Sunday of every month | 10:00-12:00 noon
December 13th, December 27th, January 10th, January 24th, February 14th, February 28th, March 13th, and March 27th

Where: Elfin Forest Interpretive Center | 8833 Harmony Grove Road, Escondido 92029

Description: Follow along as docent, writer, and artist Donna Walker leads a free interpretive nature walk through the Elfin Forest. Enhance your appreciation of this watershed community of native plants and wildlife. Learn about the history and culture of the indigenous people who lived in this area during prehistoric times.

What: Free guided hike: Walk with an Animal Tracker in the Elfin Forest

When: 1st Sunday of every month | 8:30-11:30 a.m.
December 6th, January 3rd, February 7th, and March 6th

Where: Elfin Forest Interpretive Center
8833 Harmony Grove Road, Escondido 92029

Description: Join Mike Gibbs, a former tracker for the San Diego Sheriff's Department, as he leads a leisurely 2-3 hour walk discussing animal signs found along the trails and the animal behaviors associated with those signs.

What: Free talk: The Amazing Insect Kingdom Up Close

When: One Saturday a month | 10:00-12:00 noon.
December 12th, January 9th, February 13th, and March 12th

Where: Elfin Forest Interpretive Center
8833 Harmony Grove Road, Escondido 92029

Description: Join docent Bill "the Bug Guy" Burkhardt in exploring the world of insects. Bill's monthly presentations include an amazing slideshow, microscope viewing, and answers to all your insect-related questions. These presentations are suited for children 4 years old to adults. Your view of bugs will surely change after spending time with Bill the Bug Guy!

What: Orientation for New Docents at the Elfin Forest

When: Wednesday January 6th | 3:30-5:00 p.m.;
Wednesday March 2nd | 4:30-6:00 p.m.

Where: Elfin Forest Interpretive Center
8833 Harmony Grove Road, Escondido 92029

Description: Do you love the outdoors? Would you like to help your community and the environment? If so, we'd love to have you join our wonderful team of volunteer docents at the Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve's extraordinary Interpretive Center. Docents get the opportunity to interact with the public and inform visitors about the park, learn about our local natural resources and how to protect them, facilitate fun environmental education activities, and help foster better stewardship. As perks, we offer our volunteers plenty of extracurricular events, field trips, regular in-service training to expand their knowledge base, and gift cards whenever they log a certain amount of volunteer hours with us. Our goal is to keep the Interpretive Center open seven days a week from 8:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. for all the park's visitors to enjoy. However, we will need many more volunteers than we currently have in order to achieve this goal. We hope you will join us and help make this possible.

What: Become an Elfin Forest Trail Patrol Volunteer

When: Saturday, January 23rd | 1:00-3:00 p.m. (session 1 of 2); January 30th | 1:00-3:00 p.m. (session 2 of 2);

Where: Contact the program coordinator for details

Description: We are now recruiting volunteers for the Trail Patrol program at the Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve. Trail Patrol volunteers work to maintain the 11-mile trail system at the Elfin Forest and serve as ambassadors of the Reserve. Training requires the completion of two 3-hour sessions (January 23rd and 30th). Space is limited to 15 recruits, so RSVP while slots are still available to reserve your place. To sign up, or for more details about the program, please contact program coordinator Simon Breenat: simon@escondidocreek.org

The Los Cielos Preserve Continues to Grow

by Ann Van Leer, Executive Director

Cielo Estates Purchased!

Through a wonderful partnership that teamed TECC with a long-time supporter, the State of California Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) and The Conservation Fund (TCF), TECC was able to take ownership of the 251-acre Cielo Estates property this summer. The property, previously entitled for 77 homes, will now be preserved in perpetuity by TECC and managed as part of the Los Cielos Preserve in the heart of Elfin Forest.

In May TECC received \$4.5 million from the WCB to purchase the Cielo Estates property from TCF. TCF had previously artfully purchased the property from the developer in late 2014 in a "bargain" sale (i.e., below appraised value). The property is located within the Rancho Cielo Estates development, at its western edge with Elfin Forest and the Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve. See our website for watershed maps: <http://escondidocreek.org/the-watershed/maps/>.



Preservation of the Cielo Estates property helps to build the larger system of protected natural lands under the region's Multiple Species Conservation Program. In its grant award, the WCB said of the Cielo Estates property, it will "protect key regional wildlife linkages...increase regional wildlife habitat corridors, and preserve core areas of habitat that support threatened and endangered species..."

As part of the Los Cielos Preserve, Cielo Estates will be joined with earlier acquisitions, Cielo A, Cielo B, and Onyx Ridge, totaling 800 acres. TECC's goal is to manage the properties as a comprehensive unit to maximize and enhance their natural values. A natural resources management plan for the newly formed Los Cielo Preserve is under development at this time. The plan will determine the uses and restoration needs of the properties to make certain the lands will be preserved in perpetuity. Because the funds used to purchase the properties of the Los Cielos were specifically for wildlife habitat preservation, we are working closely with federal and state wildlife agencies in the development of the plan.

You Will See Signs

Fairly soon you will begin to see new signs on our properties as we organize them into management units. The main sign for the Los Cielos Preserve is located on Via Ambiente; there will also be signs within the preserves. To protect the resources and for public safety, from time to time trails will be closed and/or entire preserves may be closed, such as during Red Flag warning periods or during floods. We know as TECC supporters you will abide by the messages but we hope you will feel free to talk to others to help educate them about TECC's work and its commitment to land preservation in the Escondido Creek watershed. We chose this quote from the Lorax for the Los Cielos sign: "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, Nothing is going to get better. It's not."

Thank you for being that someone that cares to make a difference in the Escondido Creek watershed.

Coastal Cleanup Day – The Results Are In!

We had a great turnout on September 19th for the I Love a Clean San Diego Coastal Cleanup Day. For the second time this year, over 40 TECC volunteers gathered to clean up an area of the Escondido Creek Trail known as Willow Walk, near to Harmony Grove Road - a part of the creek trail not usually open to the public. Our partner, the City of Escondido, arranged for the gates to be opened early and our volunteers were greeted with generous donations of coffee and pastries from Starbucks and Panera.



Coastal Cleanup Day in San Diego is part of a statewide and international clean up effort to restore coastlines across the globe. The effort is coordinated statewide by the California Coastal Commission and internationally by The Ocean Conservancy. While international totals for 2015 are not available yet, in 2014, 560,000 volunteers in 91 countries picked up more than 16 million pounds of trash!

As for the county as a whole, preliminary totals for Coastal Cleanup Day indicate that over 7,500 volunteers cleaned up 105 local creeks, canyons, beaches, and bays as part of this event! While the trash totals are still being compiled, it is anticipated that more than 150,000 pounds of trash were removed from our county.

At our event in Escondido we were joined by a broad cross section of the community including small children with blinged out buckets accompanied by their parents, many students earning service credits, TECC staff and board members, and seniors. Between them we picked up 2780 pounds of trash, mainly comprising cigarette butts and small plastic items. Our most unusual find was a complete BBQ grill!

It's really important to remove trash from the creek before the winter rains so it doesn't wash out to the San Elijo Lagoon. We appreciate all the volunteers who turned out on a hot day to take care of the Escondido Creek.

If you or your company would like to help in our next creek clean up event, please contact us through at information@escondidocreek.org to volunteer or to arrange a work day for a group. We can schedule groups up to 30 or so, depending on the activity and location. If you are an individual volunteer, we can let you know when the next activity will occur.

Become a Supporter!

Join Our Conservation Efforts by Becoming a Supporter or Renewing Your Support

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 Supporter 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 Support Contributed Last Year

- In the aftermath of the Coco's wildfire that damaged many of the oak trees in Harmony Grove, TECC responded by providing the services of an arborist to visit properties affected and advise local residents about tree care. Coy Johnston, President of the Harmony Grove Spiritualist Association commented "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..."
- In partnership with the Olivenhain Water District and the San Diego Zoo, hundreds of grade school children from urban north San Diego County took field-trips to the Elfin Forest Interpretive Center and engaged in hands-on learning and discovery about local wildlife, plants, and natural history. We also launched a volunteer Trail Patrol program in the Elfin Forest to enhance the trail-user experience. Your support will help us continue to deliver our mission to preserve and restore a natural Escondido Creek watershed.

**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

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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: _____

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Monthly Support 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: _____

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Start Date: _____

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Annual Support 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 Other Amount _____

Please Charge My Credit Card:

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

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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