

Watershed

The Escondido Creek Conservancy



FALL/WINTER 2021

30 YEARS!

LOOKING BACK. LOOKING FORWARD.

Then

Watershed Voice Spring 2011

WATERSHED ENEMY: INVASIVE PLANTS

There are many ways to describe the Elfin Forest. It is a magical place, a hidden gem, a secret garden. It is a place where nature has taken its course, and where the human hand has not yet reached. It is a place where the past meets the present, and where the future is being written.

Watershed Voice Spring 2011

WATERSHED ENEMY: Invasive Plants Part VIII - Perennial Peppercod

Perennial peppercod is a highly invasive plant that has been spreading throughout the Elfin Forest. It is a member of the Piperaceae family and is known for its ability to outcompete native plants. It is a fast-growing, woody shrub that can reach up to 10 feet in height. It has small, white flowers and produces small, round fruits.

Watershed Voice Spring 2011

Spread the Word so the Seeds of This Invader Don't ...

At Elfin Forest, we have a lot of work to do. One of the most important things we can do is to spread the word about the invasive plants that are threatening our ecosystem. We need to let everyone know about the dangers of these plants and how we can help to control them. We need to let everyone know that we are not alone in this fight.

Watershed Voice Spring 2011

The Elfin Forest Reserve is Growing!

The Elfin Forest Reserve is a beautiful and unique place. It is a place where nature has taken its course, and where the human hand has not yet reached. It is a place where the past meets the present, and where the future is being written. The reserve is growing, and we are proud to be a part of it.

Watershed Voice Spring 2011

Members Wanted

We are looking for new members to join our team. We need people who are passionate about nature and who want to make a difference. We need people who are willing to get their hands dirty and who are ready to take on any challenge. We need people who are ready to work together and who are ready to make a difference.

Watershed Voice Spring 2011

Let's Count Our Blessings

There are many things to be grateful for. There are many things to be thankful for. There are many things to be proud of. There are many things to be happy about. There are many things to be grateful for. There are many things to be thankful for. There are many things to be proud of. There are many things to be happy about.

Watershed Voice Spring 2012

President's Message

It is a great honor to be the president of The Escondido Creek Conservancy. It is a great honor to be able to lead a team of dedicated and passionate people. It is a great honor to be able to make a difference in the world. It is a great honor to be able to make a difference in the world.

The Escondido Creek Conservancy

2014 Fall Issue

Implementation of Invasive Species Management Plan

Update on the Elfin Forest Reserve

Update on the Elfin Forest Reserve

The Escondido Creek Conservancy

2016 Fall Issue

Implementation of Our Management Plan

Update on the Elfin Forest Reserve

Update on the Elfin Forest Reserve

The Escondido Creek Conservancy

2017 Spring Issue

Elfin Forest Reserve Project

Elfin Forest Reserve Project

Elfin Forest Reserve Project

Watershed Voice The Escondido Creek Conservancy

FALL 2019

THE MISSING LYNX

Life After Quarantine

Watershed Voice The Escondido Creek Conservancy

SPRING 2020

Life After Quarantine

Watershed Voice The Escondido Creek Conservancy

FALL 2020

LIFE IS WILD

Watershed Voice The Escondido Creek Conservancy

ESCONDIDO

¡El Paraíso Ya No Está Oculto!

30 Years in a Blink!

by Leonard Wittwer | Board President of The Escondido Creek Conservancy

From the very beginning in 1991, The Escondido Creek Conservancy had the intent to see natural lands set aside for the benefit of native plants and animals. For the first few years of our existence we focused on advocating for wise land use decisions and physically cleaning up the creek so it could be perceived as *worthy* of protection.

In 1998, we took ownership of our first preserve, a 21-acre parcel in Olivenhain with a short reach of degraded Escondido Creek streambed. After removal of invasive non-native plants and restoration to native species it is now a healthy functioning habitat—home to mule deer, bobcats, coyotes and many other animals. Since that first land acquisition success we have honed our ability to set aside important open space areas and now own or manage over 3,000 acres.

Along the way we realized the importance of outdoor education for our kids. We developed a curriculum that reaches every third grader in the Escondido school system as well as programs for high schoolers and adults. Our commitment to outdoor education remains one of our guiding principles.

What's next? We will continue to set aside natural open space, continue to provide high quality outdoor educational experiences, and continue to operate the Conservancy to the highest business standards. We are looking into ways to provide more access to our preserves, recognizing the many benefits to humans of interacting with the natural world. And we hope to bring a bit of that natural world to the urban areas of the watershed by advocating for the re-greening of Escondido Creek through the City of Escondido.

Please join us in helping to create a healthy, thriving watershed—for both the native plants and animals that live here, and the human residents that share the same region.

Conservancy Earns National Recognition!

For sound finances, ethical conduct, responsible governance, and lasting stewardship.



What does that mean?

The accreditation seal is awarded to land trusts meeting the highest national standards for excellence and conservation permanence.

Including:

Sound Finances • Ethical Conduct

Responsible Governance

Lasting Stewardship

One thing that unites our Nation is land: Americans strongly support saving the wild lands they love. Since 1991, The Escondido Creek Conservancy has been doing just that in North San Diego County. The Conservancy recently achieved national recognition for its work for demonstrating their commitment to professional excellence and to maintaining the public's trust while pursuing our land conservation efforts.

"It is exciting to recognize The Escondido Creek Conservancy with this national mark of distinction," said Melissa Kalvestrand, executive director of the Commission. "Donors and partners can trust the more than 450 accredited land trusts across the country are united behind strong standards and have demonstrated sound finances, ethical conduct, responsible governance, and lasting stewardship."

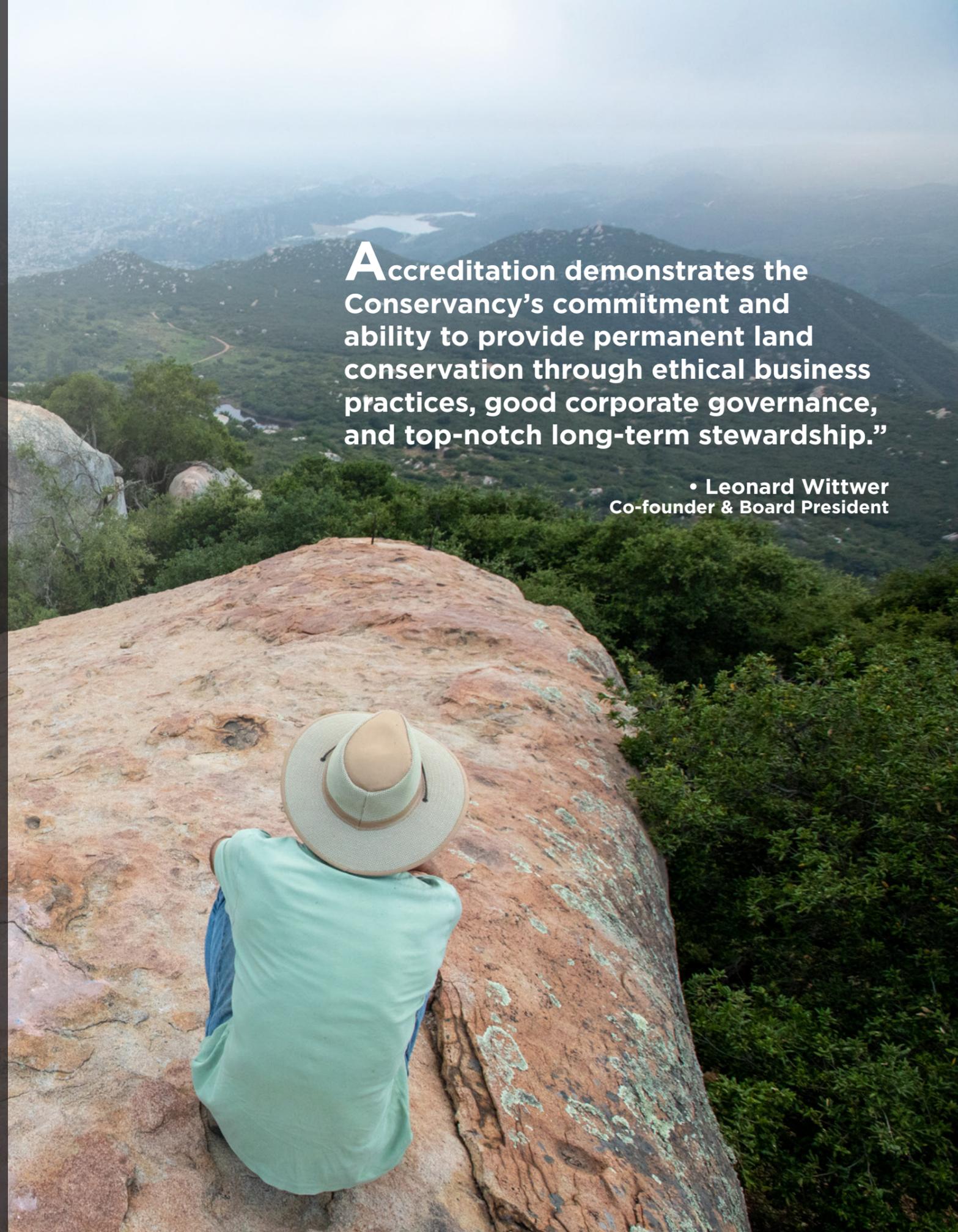
Accredited land trusts and more information about the process and benefits can be found at:

www.landtrustaccreditation.org.

Photo Credit: Board Member Richard Murphy

Accreditation demonstrates the Conservancy's commitment and ability to provide permanent land conservation through ethical business practices, good corporate governance, and top-notch long-term stewardship."

• Leonard Wittwer
Co-founder & Board President



Seed the Future.

A new campaign to sustain our outdoor education efforts.

by Marilyn Gallegos Ramirez | Chair of the Seed the Future Committee

One of the things The Escondido Creek Conservancy realized early on is that it's difficult for people to value what they don't know. Sadly, the current generation of children spend less time in nature than any previous generation. How can we expect them to care about wildlife and habitats when they've never been exposed to these things?

To address this problem, they've been providing transformative outdoor programming for children and adults alike, to spark and sustain a passion for nature. These programs have become indispensable for the students, teachers, and families who receive them, but funding these programs has always been a challenge.

This past spring, the Conservancy contracted Jacqueline Rossow Consulting to launch an exciting new fundraising campaign—**Seed the Future**—to sustain their education work. With a goal to raise \$1.9 million, Seed the Future will allow them to continue providing their existing flagship programs, like the Habitats program for all Escondido Union School District 3rd graders, Trout in the Classroom, and Conservation Fellows. It will also enable them to establish a new educational space at their beautiful Sardina Preserve, so they can expand their programming and their reach by converting an old agricultural building on their Mountain Meadow Preserve into a spectacular field station where high school and college students can conduct real-world conservation research. They will also be able to grow their California Statewide Outdoor Learning (CalSOL) coalition, so they can continue advocating for equitable access to outdoor education for all of California's K-12 public school students.

Nature affords us a wealth of benefits, including physical and mental well-being. Outdoor education connects us with nature and fosters stewardship for a better planet. Please give the gift of nature to children and help Seed the Future and cultivate a passionate new generation who values nature as much as you do!



Education for the Next Generation!

Reflection on the evolution of our education efforts.

by Simon Breen | Education Director

From our modest beginnings as an all-volunteer crew providing outdoor education programming to approximately 250 students a year, the Conservancy now has two full-time and four seasonal, part-time staff, and serves more than 5,000 students annually with a variety of dynamic, transformative programs to help children and adults appreciate nature and become stewards of it.

2018 was a turning point in how we approached outdoor education. Prior to that, we primarily worked with teachers who sought us out looking for programs. This resulted in inequitable access to programming. To address this issue, we partnered with other organizations in the region to create a conservation consortium that provides outdoor education in a more strategic way. During the 2020-21 school year we jointly served all students at every grade level in all 23 schools in the Escondido Union School District!

The regional success we've had in Escondido is something we believe can be scaled up. In 2020, we launched the California Statewide Outdoor Learning (CalSOL) movement.



CalSOL aims to secure state funding so that outdoor education becomes a fundamental part of California's educational system, and all public school students throughout the state equitably receive outdoor learning opportunities.

It's a big goal, but we believe in dreaming big. We believe outdoor education should be a right for all children. We believe California can and should take up this initiative and lead by example, and we're leading the charge to make it happen.

Meanwhile, back in the watershed, we're seeking to grow the number of people we connect to nature by establishing two new sites: **(1)** a new field trip destination at our Sardina Preserve, where middle school students can engage with restoration projects; and **(2)** a conservation field station on our Mountain Meadow Preserve, where high school and college students can conduct hands-on ecological research.

As we continue to expand our reach, we're also being mindful of the need to sustain our efforts, which is why we've launched the Seed the Future fundraising campaign. And we're working on a new Strategic Plan to help keep us on task and propel us forward as we continue cultivating nature stewards.

Our education efforts are ambitious, but it takes ambition to build a brighter future for the next generation.



EVENTS

Upcoming events to support the Education Fund.

• Run •

Keepin' It Rural 5k/10k
December 5th, 7:00AM
At Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve

• Hike •

Escondido Trails N' Ales
December 11th, 10:30-1:00PM
Location to be determined.

• Explore •

Stargazing Event
January 31st, 6:00-8:00PM
Location to be determined.

Find details:
[escondidocreek.org/events](https://www.escondidocreek.org/events)

Adventure Camp

How Adventure Camp impacted youth this summer.

by Jennifer Imm | Education Manager

This summer, with funding from the San Diego Foundation's Opening the Outdoors grant, The Escondido Creek Conservancy launched its first-ever summer camp. The camp gave 7 to 10-year-olds from Escondido—many of whom had never been to summer camp before—the opportunity to spend a week exploring and learning about nature, at no cost to their families.

When we first wrote the grant to launch a summer camp program, we had no idea just how impactful it would be. Last school year, many children had limited in-person interactions with their peers, and camp offered them an opportunity to interact in-person with children their own age. It also offered them an opportunity to catch up on learning opportunities they may have missed out on during the last year.

"I am so glad to be here," one camper said after an exciting day of camp, "I am learning new things and it is fun."



www.californiasol.org

SEED THE FUTURE!

Donations received between now and January 15th 2022 will be matched!

• \$2-for-\$1 •

From new donors!
(those who have not donated in the past 18 months)

• \$2-for-\$1 •

From businesses & corporate donors!

• \$1-for-\$1 •

From existing donors!

donate online:

[escondidocreek.org/education-fund](https://www.escondidocreek.org/education-fund)

Now Is The Time!

The Parker Foundation matches donations until January 15th, 2022.

by Meghan Williams | Development Associate



As we celebrate our 30-year anniversary, the Conservancy is moving into a new home that will enable our staff to maximize the work we do including:

- Protecting the watershed
- Conserving the land
- Providing for outdoor education
- Restoring & preserving the creek

A challenge has been made! We have received a matching \$75,000 grant from the Parker Foundation, and are thrilled to accept the challenge to match it. In order to receive the full grant, at least one-for-one, we must reach the goal threshold of \$75,000 by January 15th, 2022.

We are sweetening the pot! An anonymous donor has agreed to provide an additional match, so new donations to the Conservancy between now and January 15, 2022 will be matched 2:1, one dollar from the Parker Foundation and one dollar from the anonymous donor.

The conditional grant was awarded from the Gerald T. Inez Grant Parker Foundation to support the renovation of an old building on the Mountain Meadow Preserve into the Conservancy's new office, called Boulder Outlook. Repurposing the dilapidated building will help the Conservancy become more sustainable as it will no longer pay rent, and help the Conservancy preserve more land. The Conservancy currently cares for 3,000 acres of wildlife habitat and annually provides outdoor education opportunities to thousands of youth and adults.

Help us reach our \$75,000 goal

by January 15th by providing a tax-deductible philanthropic gift.

Want to make a corporate donation or have a question: Contact meghan@escondidocreek.org.

Where it started:



Where it is going:



Artist Rendering by Schmidt Design Group.

Donations matched at:

escondidocreek.org/boulder-outlook

2021 Highlights.

LeoMar Preserve takes shape.

by Ann Van Leer | Executive Director

2021 marked the Conservancy's third decade of conservation! 2021 is not only the Conservancy's 30-year anniversary, but it is also the year we earned recognition for sound finances, ethical conduct, responsible governance, and lasting stewardship by the national Land Trust Alliance Accreditation Commission. Each accredited land trust must complete a rigorous multi-year review and, once accredited, joins a network of land trusts united by strong ethical practices and commitment to responsible stewardship in perpetuity.

While we continue to manage through the pandemic, we were thrilled in 2021 to begin the new LeoMar Preserve in Olivenhain, completing multiple acquisitions. Currently 274 acres, in 2022 we will continue to build the LeoMar Preserve, acquiring critical habitat for endangered, threatened, and sensitive species including the coastal California gnatcatcher.

As part of our Missing Lynx campaign, we are targeting land for acquisition that links the LeoMar preserve to already protected lands in Elfin Forest and Carlsbad. Additionally, we are continuing to target lands for preservation that connect landscapes elsewhere.

This year the Conservancy staff, board, and partners also took time to dream about the future, in a strategic planning process that will help guide us forward boldly, and with clear intention. We want to hear your thoughts on the draft strategic plan and will post it on our website shortly.

HELP US GROW

The Conservancy has launched a new fundraising **Seed the Future** campaign to sustain our outdoor education programming and efforts to expand outdoor education for people of all ages.

Our goal: **\$1,900,000**

TEXT 2GROW TO 44-321 TO DONATE



VOLUNTEER

Give back to nature with our flexible volunteer programs.

- *Shrub Club* •

Monthly land work crew meeting to help rejuvenate the land in the Conservancy Preserves.

- *Conservation Crew* •

Weekly land work crew taking on the big challenges.

- *Trail Patrol* •

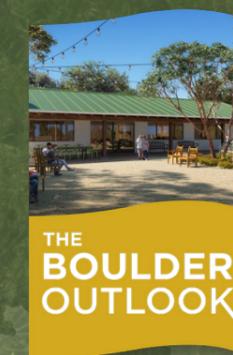
Explore & monitor preserve trail systems, take part in land surveys of plant and animal species, report on trail conditions.

- *Education* •

Connect children with nature by supporting field trips at the Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve. Volunteers are paired with our staff and help co-facilitate lessons.

Learn more at:

escondidocreek.org/volunteer



The Conservancy inherited two structures on Mountain Meadow Preserve. We are restoring them into our new Headquarters to support conservation in North San Diego County. We are calling the rejuvenated property Boulder Outlook.

Our Goal: **\$650,000**

TEXT BOULDER TO 44-321 TO DONATE

www.escondidocreek.org/donate

The Escondido Creek Conservancy

Staff

Ann Van Leer | Executive Director
Rita Petrekova | Director of Finance & Operations
Simon Breen | Education Director
Hannah Walchak | Conservation Director
Jennifer Imm | Education Manager
Juan Troncoso | Land Manager
Aida Rodriguez | Outreach Associate
Donna Leon | Land Management Assistant
Meghan Williams | Development Associate
Steffani Jijon | Education Facilitator
Melissa Reyes | Education Facilitator
Gaby Rubio | Education Facilitator
Sherry Brady | Education Facilitator
Ryan Woldt | Marketing & Communications Associate
Jamison Lauria | Conservation Land Management Assistant

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Krystle Miller | Director
Christina Simokat | Director



P.O. Box 460791 Escondido, CA 92046



Photo taken August 1896, "Escondido Gang." Photo from: Escondido History Center Photo Collection.

Leave A Legacy!

by Meghan Williams | Development Associate

A gift to The Escondido Creek Conservancy in your will, trust, or other plans will ensure our watershed's open spaces and wildlife are enjoyed and protected for years to come. In the act of giving, we receive more than we thought imaginable. U.S. tax laws take this reality one step further and provide tangible evidence that a charitable gift changes much more than the charity on the receiving end. It is with this purpose in mind that our laws embrace planning strategies like the *Charitable Gift Annuity*, offering many incentives that nurture a philanthropic society.

The Conservancy is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, our tax ID is 33-0497525. There are many ways you can arrange a meaningful gift to the Conservancy. We always recommend you work with your advisors to determine which gift is most appropriate for you. We send many thanks to our community and our supporters. We could not do all that we do without you!

For details creating a Land & Wildlife Legacy contact:

Meghan Williams | meghan@escondidocreek.org | 760.471.9354

*When we were young,
we would ride horses to play,
fish, hunt for crawdads
and pollywogs.*

*We would find huge frogs!
We would be gone for hours
playing in the creek.*

It was our natural playground.

• CeCi Luskey
Lifelong Escondido Resident



To help save resources, please pass this publication on to a nature loving friend, or recycle after use.