2021 ANNUAL REPORT

“IF YOU CARE ABOUT SOMETHING ENOUGH, YOU’LL FIND A WAY TO MAKE IT HAPPEN.”
— ROY T. BENNETT
In 2021, as we begin our fourth decade of conservation, the Conservancy met the standards for accreditation by the national Land Trust Alliance. The accreditation seal is awarded to land trusts meeting the highest standards for excellence and conservation permanence, including: Sound Finances, Ethical Conduct, Responsible Governance and Lasting Stewardship.

Accreditation is a commitment to the land we protect and the people that support the Conservancy and its programs, that we will continuously improve and uphold the highest standards and practices.

We are thankful to our supporters and our hardworking staff and board for making this happen.
30-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

From the beginning in 1991, The Escondido Creek Conservancy sought to protect natural lands for the benefit of native plants and animals and the human residents that share North County.

For the first few years we were advocates for wise land use decisions and worked with hundreds of volunteers to clean up the then-neglected creek.

In 1998, we took ownership of our first preserve, a 21-acre parcel in Olivenhain.

Since that first success, we honed our skills, and began taking bigger steps in our efforts to protect important natural areas. With those risks came greater rewards. As a result, the Conservancy now owns or manages over 3,000 acres of important conservation land in North San Diego County.

Along the way, we realized the importance of outdoor education for youth and families. We also expanded our vision through California Statewide Outdoor Learning, www.Californiasol.org, so more students could experience the outdoors.

In 2021, we updated our strategic plan so the Conservancy will be prepared for future success. Additionally, our board and staff underwent Diversity, Equity and Inclusion training, and made a commitment to both improve our DEI awareness and take proactive measures to be more inclusive moving forward.

The Conservancy continues to evolve and grow, and, with your help, looks forward to more decades of continued conservation success.

Come join us!

Sincerely,

Leonard Wittwer
Conservancy Board President
It’s been a big, big year for the land team. Here is just some of what we’ve accomplished:

- Grew the LeoMar Preserve in Olivenhain (274 acres to date and expanding)
- Planted 100 native plants and removed 1,000 non-native flammable eucalyptus trees at the Sardina Preserve
- Helped 16 Harmony Grove neighbors make their homes more fire-safe by removing invasive plants with funds from CA Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Thanks to retailer Patagonia, our native plant nursery construction completed at the Mountain Meadow Preserve and is now growing 10 species of plants
- With the City of Escondido, removed 6 acres of invasive plants and trash from Reidy Creek with funds from CA Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Hosted a group of researchers from across the region to study Gold Spotted Oak Borer (an invasive species) detection methods using drones and remote sensing
Thanks to the Troussel Family for donating this awesome water trailer to the Land Team!

Shrub Club volunteer events returned in 2021.

2022 GOALS

- Bring at least 250 more conservation acres under Conservancy stewardship
- Continue restoration efforts, including planting home-grown native plants from our Patagonia-funded nursery, with help from volunteers
- Improve compliance with responsible trail use on Conservancy preserves
- Standardize processes following Land Trust Alliance guidelines
- Finish the Reidy Creek restoration project with the planting of nearly an acre of native riparian species
- Apply for grant funding for restoration projects in at least 3 Preserves
- Conduct wildlife surveys, boundary surveys, vegetation mapping, and other in-depth monitoring to guarantee Preserve health
- Refine the Conservation Blueprint to reflect our strategic planning goals

Leonard and Juan look out over Mountain Meadow.
Began the Seed the Future outdoor education fundraising campaign to provide opportunities for more people to experience nature and learn in the outdoors

Continued the CalSOL (www.californiasol.org) initiative—advocating for outdoor education opportunities for 6.2 million California public school students

Launched the Conservancy’s first-ever summer camp—free to children from Escondido thanks to funding from The San Diego Foundation

Continued the Trout in the Classroom program in a virtual format thanks to funding from SDG&E

Resumed in-person field trips serving third graders from 18 schools in the Escondido Union School District thanks to funding from the Malk Nature Fund and SDG&E

Moved the Conservation Conversations presentation series to a virtual platform

Created an interactive virtual tour of the Interpretive Center at the Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve (https://vr360.escondidocreek.org/interpretivecenter) with funding from the Elfin Forest Community Foundation

Created the Conservancy’s first-ever research committee

Our Education Director, Simon Breen, received the OMWD Educator of the Year award!
2022 GOALS

Continue Seed the Future, with a goal to raise $2 million, to be used to:

- sustain and enhance existing programs for the next several years
- establish a new outdoor field trip destination location to serve even more children in the watershed
- create a spectacular field station where students can conduct real-world conservation research
- grow our California Statewide Outdoor Learning (CaSOL) coalition, so more students have equitable access to outdoor education programs

Devise a Conservancy education blueprint with meaningful input from the community and other stakeholders that will fit within our new Strategic Plan and elevate our efforts to new heights

Continue providing and improving the high quality of our programs
Boulder Outlook office remodel well underway

We continued to survive the pandemic, receiving two PPP loans and a county stimulus grant and two loans were successfully forgiven

Second audit successfully completed

New Five-Year Strategic Plan completed

All staff trained in CPR

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion training completed
**2022 GOALS**

- Complete the Boulder Outlook fundraiser campaign to reimburse the Land Fund associated with the creation of the Conservancy’s new offices on the Mountain Meadow Preserve.

- Complete the remodel of the Boulder Outlook building and move Conservancy operations into the building.

- Continue transitioning Conservancy operations and governance consistent with Land Trust Alliance standards and practices.

- Begin implementation of updated five-year strategic plan, utilizing tracking tools to chart progress.

- Engage more volunteers in the Conservancy’s work, consistent with www.cdc.gov guidelines to ensure public safety.

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**2021 SNAPSHOT**

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CBS News 8 covering the LeoMar Preserve

Board Member Lisa helping plant at Quarry
Jeff Swenerton (pictured on the right) was a Conservancy board member for 17 years.

While he has resigned from the Board of Directors, we’re excited to welcome him in a new (old) role, helping the Conservancy raise funds for outdoor education.

His contributions as a board member are many, including leading the establishment of the Conservancy’s outdoor education department, helping to facilitate the building of the remarkable Interpretive Center at the Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve, and being a part of ongoing fundraising efforts to sustain the great work of the Conservancy.

Jeff is leaving the Board to co-chair the new Seed the Future campaign, which will help sustain and grow the Conservancy’s outdoor education programs.

Though he stepped down from the board, Jeff will continue his membership on the Elfin Forest Interpretive Center Advisory Committee, volunteering with kids in our outdoor education programs, and his Sunday morning weekly mountain bike volunteer trail patrols in the Keithley Preserve.

We hope he and his wife, Carolyn have many adventures together in the years to come.
“Jeff is an extraordinary mentor and an inspiration to me. He’s a renaissance man of many talents, and he channels his boundless passion, energy, and skills into action. Whether it’s engaging a student, appealing to a donor, or mobilizing a volunteer crew, he always brings out the best in people.”

Simon Breen, Escondido Creek Conservancy Education Director

www.escondidocreek.org/education/
Donor Highlight: Bill Kuni

The Escondido Creek Conservancy relies on the support of hundreds of donors to conserve land and run its outdoor education programs for local youth. Bill Kuni is a long-time supporter of local and regional land conservation initiatives and we are proud he also supports The Escondido Creek Conservancy.

“For over 40 years as a conservationist living in San Diego County, I’ve worked to support like-minded organizations who have a proven track record of preserving our open spaces and critical species habitats, defending them against exploitation when necessary, and educating future generations about the treasure of San Diego’s stunning geography and biodiversity. The Escondido Creek Conservancy’s leadership, staff and volunteers do all that and much more to preserve and protect North County’s natural heritage. I am delighted to be a continuing donor.”
HELP US GROW!

Our goal is sustainability in perpetuity. Please help us by donating to:

Operations Fund – The Land Can’t Save Itself! Operations and Administration are the heart of the Conservancy. In 2022, we will begin a campaign to raise just under $8 million dollars to endow operations so the Conservancy will thrive into the future.

Missing Lynx (Land Fund) – This fund helps us acquire land and care for land we own. Our goal is to grow the fund by $4 million in the years ahead.

Boulder Outlook capital campaign - we are $250,000 away from hitting our goal! Naming rights are still available. All donations to Boulder Outlook replenish the Land Fund.

Seed the Future (Education Fund) - To make certain we can deliver outdoor education programs we need to raise $2 million dollars over the next 3 years.

Other ways to give:

- Volunteer
- Become a monthly donor "Keeper of the Creek"
- Become a member of our Land Legacy Society

To learn more about how you can help, please email us information@escondidocreek.org

www.escondidocreek.org/donate
Animals Sighted on the Preserves

Allen’s Hummingbird. Taken by Ron Forster.

Bobcat cub in a wildlife corridor. Taken by Ron Forster.
Flowery Finds Around the Conservancy
Thank you FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT!!

Scan to donate:

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