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# The McKinleyville Land Trust Newsletter

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Spring 2006

Number 20

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## McKinleyville Land Trust Welcomes New Board Members & New President

*By Lindsay Walker*

Hello Everyone! As a new board member of the McKinleyville Land Trust I'm glad to be working with such a hardworking and dedicated group. The commitment of the board and you, the community members, has been a wonderful thing to observe, and I look forward to our future successes in conserving the natural and historical values of the McKinleyville community.

As a relatively recent transplant to Humboldt County from Sacramento, my association with MLT began during my last year at Humboldt State. I was taking a grant writing course, and needed to select a non-profit to write a grant application for. Jeff Dunk, then board president, had mentioned MLT a few times in one of my courses, and seeing as I spent so much of my time in McKinleyville, the land trust seemed like a great organization for which to attempt my first grant application process. Over the following months, attending the board meetings and gathering organizational history for my grant application, I learned all about MLT's successes in preserving and restoring the Mad River Bluffs and Cha-gah-Cho, and more about the creative legal mechanism known as the conservation easement.

After graduating last May, and finding a job that allowed me to stay in area, I decided that I wanted to continue working with the land trust. Since being accepted to the board I've had the opportunity to meet many of you at our Pancake Breakfast and Annual Dinner, and am always impressed at such wonderful community support. Currently I take part in producing the MLT newsletter (yes—the one your reading right now!), and I look forward to working alongside many of you sometime soon on one of our upcoming projects.

*Nancy Correll*

At their April 2nd meeting, I had the honor of being accepted as a member of the Board of Directors of the MLT. I have worked with the land trust, back in the days when Chah-GAH-Cho was being acquired, contributing some articles for the newsletter, and helping with fundraisers. I have always been impressed by the high level of excellence set by the Board.

As a pianist, I served on the staff of the Music Department of HSU as accompanist for 25 years. I continue to teach piano

and perform piano duets and art songs with a local group, PianoVoce. I also am a potter, with work on display at Plaza Design in McKinleyville. Other interests include hiking and backpacking, gardening and writing.

With my husband, Richard Duning, I have lived in McKinleyville for over 30 years, watching it develop from a horse-friendly village sprinkled with patches of forest and daffodil fields to the burgeoning city it has become.

I'm very concerned about McKinleyville's future, particularly the fate of the forested hills that still frame our community to the east, and the few remaining agricultural areas. The McKinleyville Land Trust seems to be a perfect organization to help our town develop into the sort of community that appreciates and protects its natural heritage.

*Allen Bird*

“Good-Bye. Hello”. Well not really good-bye, Jeff Dunk has stepped down from the president position on MLT and Allen Bird has replaced him. Jeff will remain on the board (thank goodness) but, like most of us on the board, has more than enough to keep him busy and has served us very well for a good number of years and needed to reduce his responsibilities. The board is very appreciative of the job Jeff has done for us and is very happy he is remaining on the board, as he has been a key figure in much of what we do.

It's not really hello either I guess as I (Allen) have been on the board for about as long as Jeff I think. Time goes by fast when you're having fun. For those of you who don't know me I have owned and operated Bird's Dental Lab here in McKinleyville for almost 28 years and am a Certified Dental Technician. That means I make teeth, crowns, bridges, dentures etc. I am married and we have two daughters that are both getting married this year! I served in Submarines as a cook and managed to graduate from HSU with a degree in Wildlife Biology.

Currently I also serve on the board of the California Dental laboratory Association and have been for over ten years. This job is relatively easy compared to MLT as we have an executive director that does most of the work. MLT on the other hand

*(Continued on page 2)*

## “This Reminds Me Of Alaska.”

By Jennifer Kalt

My parents had come to visit just after I moved into my new home in McKinleyville, near Mad River Bluffs. My mom recognized salmonberry, skunk cabbage, and Sitka spruce as plants of northern latitudes. In California, many of these plants are found only in a narrow band of coastally influenced areas along the North Coast, where cool, moist weather dominates year-round.

The McKinleyville Land Trust’s Mad River Bluffs preserve features twenty acres of Sitka spruce—shore pine forest. Formerly much more common along the McKinleyville bluffs, this type of forest is now considered a rare vegetation type in California. Historically, McKinleyville was a patchwork of coniferous forest and prairies. Aside from the MLT property, few remnants of this coastal forest habitat remain along this stretch of coast. In the Mad Rivers Bluffs forest, seeps and springs bubbling up from the ground provided year-round moisture for plants more common in wetlands and riparian areas.

Sitka spruce and shore pine both are found from Mendocino County to Alaska. In northern California, both species are found in a narrow strip along the immediate coast, whereas in the northern parts of their range, they occur much further inland.

False lily-of-the-valley (*Maianthemum dilatatum*) is a plant of northern latitudes that only grows as far south as Mendocino County. Its lush heart-shaped leaves blanket the forest floor in the spring. It is a common associate of Sitka spruce, and features small white flowers that develop into red marble-like fruits in late summer.

Oregon crabapple (*Malus fusca*) is a small native tree that usually occurs in wetlands. A beautiful but somewhat inconspicuous relative of the apple, its white blossoms and bright new leaves are a subtle member of our coastal flora. Another northern species found only along the coast in California, the

Oregon crabapple is abundant along Fieldbrook’s year-round spring-fed ditches and streams. Tucked into the dense forest understory at Mad River Bluffs, the crabapple flowers and their attendant bumblebees announce that summer is on its way. Its small yellow fruits will attract flock of birds in late summer.

Slough sedge (*Carex obnupta*) is another species that requires cool, moist conditions. It ranges from the San Francisco Bay area to British Columbia. Slough sedge is considered an obligate wetland species, meaning that it almost always occurs in wetlands. In the forest at Mad River Bluffs, this species survives in what appears to be the dry forest understory all summer, but during the rainy season, these areas become flooded and remain that way most of the winter. The clumps of slough sedge that thrive throughout the Mad River Bluffs are an indicator of the abundance of groundwater in the area.

As anyone who frequents the Mad River Bluffs trails knows, rubber boots are the preferred winter footwear. The next time you find yourself cursing the ankle-deep puddles that soak your socks, remember that all that water is one of the features that makes this forest preserve so unique.

*Jennifer Kalt frequently enjoys the flora and fauna at the Mad River Bluffs with her dog, Violet.*



(Continued from page 1)

is small at this point and the work is carried out by the board, volunteers and others we contract with if funds are available.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of this organization and we can always use more. There is room on the board for more directors and we have standing committees that need members. The one job that we really need some one for is treasurer/accountant as Gina would like to put more energy into our dinners etc. and take a little stress out of her life. If YOU can help give us call we would love to say Hello!

### McKinleyville Land Trust Board of Directors 2006

**Allen Bird – President**  
**Kristin Schmidt – Vice President**  
**Dorothy Klein – Secretary**  
**Gina M. Rimson – Treasurer**  
**Jeff Dunk**  
**Mark Williams**  
**Darci Short**  
**Nancy Correll**  
**Lindsay Walker**

# Pancake Breakfast & Annual Dinner: What A Turn Out!!

*By Lindsay Walker*

Thanks to all who helped to make the January 14th Pancake Breakfast and March 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Dinner such phenomenal successes. These events give the board an opportunity to connect with you and all our enthusiastic volunteers--it's so much more than a fundraising event! We estimate that well over 150 of you attended each of these events, and your continued support means the world to us. For those of you unable to attend, here are some of the highlights from our Annual Dinner:

The dinner featured a keynote address by Jerry Rhode titled, "*Land Without Trust: Alterations of the McKinleyville Landscape*". While our guests dined on Chicken Cacciatore and Pasta, Mr. Rhode delighted us all with his incredible photos of a McKinleyville Past. These images not only reinforced the value of conserving land in our community, but provided a glimpse of a McKinleyville that many of us would never have known about. 90-foot trestles over Strawberry Creek! A Head-On collision between two train engines right in front of the current McKinleyville Middle School! A turkey/lily/potato farm at the current Airport! It was definitely an eye-opening presentation.

Thanks again to all of you who made these events possible, including our hardworking and dedicated volunteers who help set up, cook, serve and clean up!

In addition, the board would like to extend a special thanks to these local businesses for their generous donations:

- Arcata CO-OP
- Wildberries Market
- McKinleyville Starbucks
- The Pantry



## Thank You HSU Students!

The Board of the McKinleyville Land Trust would like to thank Bonnie Cox, Kerri Downing, Greta Nelson, Sara March, and Jodie Pixley for choosing Mad River Bluffs to conduct their habitat restoration project (for a class at HSU). We are thrilled with what's been done and look forward to watching it develop. Thank You! !



## Volunteer Opportunities

Interested in volunteering with MLT? If you'd like to get outdoors and help with our restoration efforts, assist in fundraising events, or apply your professional skills to help out the land trust and your community please give us a call! 839-LAND (1236)



### MLT Newsletter Staff

*TallChief A. Comet* – Desktop Publisher  
*Lindsay Walker* – Coordinator

And the directors of the MLT for their comments and suggestions.

# The Challenges Of Farm Succession

By Deborah Giraud \*

The transfer of a farm or any family business to the succeeding generation is one of the critical stages in the continuation of the business. Due to the demographics of land ownership in America, over the next two decades a large number of farms and ranches will be changing hands. It is becoming more difficult due to a variety of factors. Who will be the next generation of farmers? Where will they farm?

I have been studying succession and am interested in how to help landowners through the Extension service. Agricultural land preservation and helping beginning farmers are topics that are getting some attention. They are one part of the succession issue. An increasing awareness of how difficult it is to enter farming has stimulated programs to assist aspiring farmers as well as working with retiring farmers whose heirs may have difficulties retaining the family farm. Many farm and ranch owners throw up their hands as they feel overwhelmed by the challenges surrounding the future. The results of my countywide survey in 2004 showed 50% of the landowners did not have a succession plan. Succession usually occurs over many years, and it is not a good practice to wait until a death forces the issue.

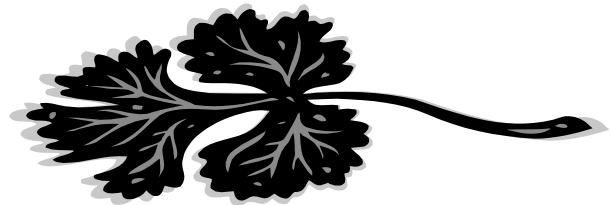
Farm and Ranch business owners in their 40s are encouraged to create a succession plan, as it is part of good risk management. Go to <http://groups.ucanr.org/succession> for some articles to get you started. Goal setting is the first step of a succession plan and is part of estate planning for the retiring farmer. I have been collecting information to share and meeting with couples. Getting organized is an important first step. Many people procrastinate or do not know where to start. Looking at the family structure is one of the first steps. Having a neutral person to talk with about your ideas for the future can be very helpful. I am available to meet with you to discuss the future of your farm or ranch. Our discussion can include new crop ideas, and other new opportunities for entrepreneurship. Rural landowners have always been resourceful and creative. One interesting fact that I have discovered by talking with farmers and ranchers is how many middle-aged people are uncertain about the older generation's plan. There appears to be a lack of communication and commitment that leaves some hard working people with many questions. I have come to see that it is very important for the landowners to start talking with their children and grandchildren about these important issues. Another observation that I have made is the older we humans get, the harder it can be to make decisions, planning and getting the paperwork in order should start well before our 80s!

Estate taxes need to be planned for and a good succession plan includes an estate plan. I created a new directory of local professionals in the county experienced in law, accounting, appraisal, and land management; as many people stated that they

didn't know who to call for assistance after their goals were established. Referrals by friends and family are always an excellent way to find the professional you need. If you want a copy of the directory, please call me.

Linking Retiring and Aspiring Farmers. I am working with California FarmLink to increase services to Humboldt county. FarmLink is a non-profit working with landowners. FarmLink maintains a database to link retiring and aspiring farmers. It is difficult for young people to buy land. Innovative methods are needed to help them become farm owners. At the present time, there are more aspiring farmers than retiring farmers, and we are looking for any farmers or landowners who may want to consider mentoring or creating new farming or ranching business partnerships. A landowner also needs a retirement plan. Transitioning gradually into retirement is often attractive to farmers. There are many possible business relationships that can be established; one example is an installment sale. Programs that link aspiring and retiring farmers are in 17 states. There are many people interested in farming! The future of agriculture depends on it. Visit [www.californiafarmlink.org](http://www.californiafarmlink.org) to see the database.

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## Thank You To Grace Good Shepherd Church

For several years the MLT board has been holding our monthly meetings at Grace Good Shepherd Church on Hiller Road in McKinleyville. However, as the Land Trust has grown we decided we needed a formal office to work from. Luckily, a local business came to our rescue and generously offered an office space that we could meet at, work from, and store our stuff (*other than Gina's house!*). We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to the congregation of Grace Good Shepherd for their donation of this space over these past years. Thank You!

## A Little Land Trust History

By Lindsay Walker

While the McKinleyville Land Trust was formed in 1994, the idea of conserving the values of land through trusts is nothing new. Land trusts currently operate in all 50 states, as well as other countries, and their number has increased steadily over the past 25 years as more communities have become aware of the flexible and creative conservation options that land trusts offer. But did you ever wonder how this all began?

According to Wikipedia, way back in 1891 the first land trust in the entire world was founded by the Trustees of Reservations in Massachusetts. Like many of today's trusts, this non-profit organization, was the first to, "acquire, hold, protect and administer, for the benefit of the public, beautiful and historic places" and to "preserve, for public use and enjoyment, properties of exceptional scenic, historic, and ecological value in Massachusetts".



According to the Trust's website, the origin of The Trustees of Reservations can be traced to March 5, 1890, when the New England periodical *Garden and Forest* carried a letter entitled "The Waverly Oaks." Its author was Charles Eliot, a young landscape architect then practicing in Boston, who proposed the establishment of what would become The Trustees of Reservations, the first private nonprofit conservation organization of its kind in the country.

In this letter, Eliot argued for the immediate preservation of "special bits of scenery" still remaining "within ten miles of the State House which possess uncommon beauty and more than usual refreshing power" and proposed to legislate a non-profit corporation holding land free of taxes for the public to enjoy "just as a Public Library holds books and an Art Museum holds pictures". Lucky for us all, his proposal was accepted!

While individual land trusts have changed much over the last 115 years, the McKinleyville Land Trust looks forward to continuing this tradition of preserving and conserving those "special bits" of land in McKinleyville.

# Common Questions About Land Trusts

*By Jeff Dunk*

Q: What is the organizational structure of a land trust?

A: As with many types of non-profit organizations, land trusts vary widely in their organizational structures. Many, such as the McKinleyville Land Trust, are completely run by a volunteer board of directors and are totally reliant on donations, grants and general fundraising activities. Other land trusts have enough money to hire an executive director and possibly other staff whose job it is to carry out the day-to-day activities of the land trust.

Q: What are the “day-to-day” activities of a land trust?

A: These vary, but generally include interacting with landowners who are interested in learning about conservation easements or donations to the land trust. Fundraising and public relations (grant writing, soliciting donations from community members, writing newsletter or newspaper articles, etc.). For large land trusts, offices may be as busy as a typical for-profit business. For smaller land trusts, volunteers generally conduct these activities between working full-time jobs and raising their families. Consequently, they must limit the number of projects that they work on simultaneously. An additional activity that all land trusts with conservation easements must undertake is the periodic monitoring of the lands with easements—to ensure compliance with the conditions of the easement.

Q: I understand much of what you said, but the only easements I’m aware of are utility and right-of-way easements. What is a “Conservation Easement”?

A: A conservation easement is a voluntary agreement between a private landowner (it could also be a corporation or other entity) and a land trust. In order to engage in an easement, land trusts require that the land have natural resource, agricultural, educational, historic or scenic value. The land trust works with the landowner by formalizing the landowner’s conservation goals in the form of a legally binding document—the conservation easement. The easement could be as simple as not allowing further home building on a property that would otherwise be developable. It can also be as complicated as having multiple discrete zones throughout the property with specifically allowed and disallowed activities in each. For instance, it could say that no timber harvesting occur in floodplain forests, but that cattle may graze in those areas during summer and early fall (it could even specify the maximum number of livestock allowed per acre). It could further restrict the type of timber harvesting allowed and the volume of timber removed as well as the harvest rotation. It all depends on what the landowner wants.

Q: You said that the land trust would ensure compliance with the easement. What does that mean?

A: Land trust only engage in easements that are “in perpetuity” (forever). This means that once the land has an easement, it can still be sold and bought or bequeathed, but the limitations on land use imposed by the easement will stay with the property, regardless of owner. The land trust is legally obligated to ensure that the conditions of the easement are being met. This is accomplished through site visits to the property. These may take as little as 30 minutes, or as long as weeks or even months. For example, an easement on 5 acres of forest that restricts any tree cutting is easy to evaluate in 30 minutes with a simple stroll through the forest. In contrast, an easement on a 5,000 acre ranch with many specific (riparian, forest, rangeland) allowances and disallowances would take much longer to evaluate.

Q: Wait a minute, do you mean that if I have an easement on my land that the local land trust can just drive up and start walking around?

A: No. Most easements are monitored annually and the landowners are contacted so that the visit will not conflict with family activities or otherwise disrupt the landowner’s schedule.

Q: What about the public, if I have an easement on my property (say restricting the number of homes I can develop on my 80 acres), is the public allowed on my property?

A: Absolutely not. The easement simply places (voluntarily) some restrictions on the property. It does not in any other way further reduce your private property rights. The property does not become some sort of park or public reserve.

*(Continued on page 7)*

*(Continued from page 6)*

Q: Does the land trust bill the landowner for these site visits—it sounds like the larger ones might need some professional foresters, fisheries biologists, range managers, etc.?

A: No, the land trust does not bill the landowner. However, an endowment fund is required with nearly every easement. This fund will be used to pay for site visits or other costs associated with the easement (such as legal fees should the subsequent landowner do something in violation of the easement). By the way, the endowment fund is also tax deductible.

Q: Why would anyone ever voluntarily restrict their future options on their land (why would they place an easement on it)?

A: Wow, there are so many reasons that people have. The one I see the most often is that people feel a strong connection to their land. They want it to be taken care of after they can no longer take care of it or sell it. Other times people see their land has tremendous development potential and that when they die their heirs will inherit the land that is valued at its “highest and best use” regardless of what the heirs plan to do with it. Thus, a 1,000 acre ranch that is worth \$750/acre as ranchland may be appraised by



the government as worth \$5,000/acre because it could legally be subdivided into 5 acre “ranchettes”. If the heirs had planned on ranching, they would have inherited \$5 million, not \$750,000. The inheritance tax on \$5 million would likely have forced the heirs to subdivide the property. There is no inheritance tax on \$750,000, in fact, inheritance tax does not start until \$3 million.

Q: OK, now I’m curious, how can I find out more about conservation easements and land trusts?

A: You can email the McKinleyville Land Trust at [mlt@asis.com](mailto:mlt@asis.com), call us at 707-839-LAND, or write to us at P.O. Box 2723, McKinleyville, CA 95519. We will be happy to speak with you and to give you information about what we do.

## Mission Statement

The McKinleyville Land Trust is a non-profit, public benefit corporation. The McKinleyville Land Trust promotes voluntary conservation of land for nature, timber, agriculture, education, recreation, history, and scenery. The Trust is a way for people to donate land or conservation easements in perpetuity as a means of accomplishing their personal conservation goals. Often these donations have a tax saving advantage as well.



MLT COFFEE MUGS designed by Dorothy Klein are available! Tastefully done in cobalt blue or green glass with silver trilliums, they are \$8.00 (including tax) and would make a great gift. Call Javan @ 839-1202, or purchase at Blake's Books in McKinleyville.

### Help!!!

The MLT needs **fundraising** help. If you have any experience or some good ideas please call us at 839-LAND.



The McKinleyville Land Trust accepts bequests. For information on making bequests to MLT, simply fill in your name, address, and phone number on the enclosed donation slip, and write "bequest information" and send it in.

### Email

The email address for the MLT is: [mlt@asis.com](mailto:mlt@asis.com)

## The McKinleyville Land Trust

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*The McKinleyville Land Trust  
For Everyone Forever*

*Inside This Issue:*  
*New Board Members and President*  
*"This Reminds Me of Alaska"*  
*Farm Succession*  
*A Little Land Trust History*  
*Thank You GGS and Students*  
*Q & A On Land Trusts*

