

The McKinleyville Land Trust Newsletter



Fall 2007

Number 22

Big Improvements at Mad River Bluffs

By Darci Short & Lindsay Walker

One of McKinleyville's greatest treasures, the Hammond Trail, has been in the news quite a bit lately. If you haven't yet heard, a missing quarter-mile portion of the multi-use trail – often referred to as the Hole in the Hammond—will be completed this fall, connecting two segments of the trail from Murray Road to Clam Beach. One 10-foot wide multi-use section will be constructed to accommodate bicyclists and other users, while a narrower, gravel paved pedestrian-only trail will take visitors across Widow White Creek. Here at the McKinleyville Land Trust we are excited to see this crucial section of the Hammond Trail completed, but we also have another reason to be happy. The same California Department of Parks and Recreation Rivers and Parkways Grant that is funding the completion of the Hole in the Hammond will also fund several improvements at MLT's Mad River Bluffs!

The Mad River Bluffs are about 74 acres of coastal bluff forest, dunes and river estuary habitat that connect to the Hammond Trail. This MLT property is open the public and offers exceptional recreational and educational opportunities. Through this grant, several improvements will be made that will provide for an enhanced visitor experience as well as protect this unique, invaluable natural resource.

Improvements include upgrading a number of informally developed trails that are causing resource damage due to bluff erosion., a surface-hardened trail leading to an ADA compliant river/ocean overlook, additional benches, a new picnic area, new directional signage, interpretive displays, Dogipot stations, and kiosks.

Specific project elements are:

- Stabilization of bluff face following an existing, popular, eroding social trail at the north end of the



An aerial of Mad River Bluffs marked with the locations of improvements funded with the Rivers and Parkways Grant.

property. This will consist of construction of approximately 68 crib stair steps from the top of the bluff to the base. At the base of the steps will be a short puncheon across a persistently wet area. The adjacent portion of the bluff face at this site that will not be protected by the stairs will be stabilized with a combination of seed-free straw, native grass/herb/sedge seed mix (for erosion control/revegetation) and planting of a small number of native shrubs or trees.

- Other social trails down the face of the bluff will be decommissioned and rehabilitated. Portions of some trails may be locally regraded to minimize channelized water flow and erosion, and encourage successful revegetation. The bluff at the top of decommissioned trails will be fenced off with rail fencing at necessary locations to discourage future access.

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Big Improvements at Mad River Bluffs

By Lindsay Walker

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- An overlook with handicap access and scenic overview will be improved at a currently impacted overlook site near the south end of the property. It will include a surface-hardened trail leading to an ADA compliant river/ocean overlook with benches and picnic table accessible for wheelchairs, and wheelchair turn-around and railing.
- The existing parking area at the south entrance will be upgraded for handicap access.
- Twelve signs will be installed at various locations identifying safety issues and providing directions and acknowledging the grant funding agency.
- Three kiosks will be installed – one at south entrance area, one at east entrance area and one at the north end of the long meadow. These are to help orient visitors and provide area use guidelines.
- Three dogipot stations with disposable bags will be installed to encourage dog owners to keep the area clean of dog waste.
- A new picnic area with tables will be developed at the north end of the long meadow.
- Five benches will be permanently installed at various locations that provide scenic views of the Mad River estuary, coast and forest.
- Four one-sided entry and warning signs will be installed to provide for a safer experience for trail users.
- Three interpretive signs will be installed to interpret local themes (Dynamic Environment, Joshua Gregg, and Beach Pine Ecosystem).

We look forward to seeing these improvements get started and we will be sure to keep you updated as work progresses!



MLT Board members mark the location of improvements at Mad River Bluffs.

First Annual Salon Style Afternoon of Music

By Lindsay Walker

On the afternoon of May 20th, Norman Polston and Tina McKenzie generously opened their home to hold a “Salon Style Afternoon” of classical music in benefit of the McKinleyville Land Trust. PianoVoce presented a recital of piano duets and songs, including music from MLT board member Nancy Correll, Annette Gurnee Hull, and Norman Polston, as well as songs by Kevin Sharkey. Richard Dunning introduced the show.

Combined with a wine and hors d’oeuvres reception, it was a wonderful opportunity for the MLT Board to catch up with our longtime volunteers as well as introduce many new faces to the work of the Land Trust. We’d like to thank all of you who attended and the many people who worked tirelessly to make this event possible.

Thank You Gina!

Gina Rimson has been a member of the McKinleyville Land Trust Board of Directors for years— and her contribution to the Land Trust has been tremendous. Gina recently left the Board and we wish to express our heartfelt thanks for all of the hard work she has given to the Land Trust over the years, as well as share our appreciation for the opportunity to work shoulder to shoulder with such a fun, fabulous woman.

Gina joined the Board in the fall of 2000, where she quickly and capably assumed the responsibilities of Treasurer for the Board. Despite an already cramped calendar filled with her other numerous volunteer activities, including acting as Treasurer at Temple Beth El, and the multitude of other activities associated with raising two teenage children, Gina extended herself as the lead organizer for several of the Land Trust's fundraising events.

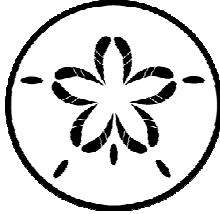
At the MLT Annual Dinners, it's Gina's Chicken Cacciatore you've been asking for a second serving of. She's the Captain of the Kitchen at the MLT Gyro stand at the North Country Fair (this next fair will be the first without her—yikes!). She purchases the supplies and food, makes certain all of our required application and permits are in proper order, and is one of the last to leave when the event comes to an end. And that's just the beginning! She is often joined at MLT events by her daughter and mother, and has even convinced her kids to label the MLT newsletters from time to time!

Gina, your "donation" of time and energy to the McKinleyville Land Trust over the years has been invaluable. We wish you well in all your future endeavors. Thank you for everything!

The McKinleyville Land Trust Board

Email

Email the MLT
at
mlt@asis.com



Help!!!

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

Why Should I Support the McKinleyville Land Trust?

By Jeff Dunk

Land Trusts are interesting and unique entities. Unique in the sense that they are empowered to do things that other public and private organizations do not usually do. When one hears of land trusts, we often hear the word "conservation" as in "conservation easement". However, the word conservation to a land trust is a sweeping term. Conservation, relative to land trusts, can mean: 1) conservation of habitat for wildlife and plants, 2) conservation of productive lands for production of food and fiber, 3) conservation of historic lands for the historic and cultural value, and 4) some combination of the above.

The most inspiring and beautiful (to me) aspect of land trusts is their flexibility. This flexibility allows the landowners' wishes to manifest themselves in a conservation easement. The landowner, not the land trust, government or anyone else, determines why and how the conservation easement is made.

To help potential easement donors understand the process better, most land trusts have "model" conservation easements that can be shown to easement-interested landowners. The only must in an easement is that it must be consis-

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tent with the goals of the land trust. The McKinleyville Land Trust, like most land trusts, has a goal to conserve lands with ecological, agricultural, timber, historic, and educational values. However, no easement has to meet all of these. In fact, as long as one of these has been met, and easement with the land trust is possible. Thus, maintaining productive timber and agricultural lands are goals of most land trusts.

Another attractive feature of land trusts is that they are apolitical. Land trusts are not liberal or conservative, left or right. In fact, because they are about conservation in the broad sense, they are really about common ground; the common ground beneath our feet. Supporters of land trusts are from all parts of the political spectrum. Many people like the idea of a customized, place-specific easement to protect a local parcel, rather than suffering under a one-size-fits-all type mandate that is likely to come from extremely large organizations like governments and large businesses. In addition to holding conservation easements, a land trust can become the best entity to actually own a parcel, such as in the case of Chah-GAH-Cho or the Mad River Bluffs.

This flexibility is key to the success of land trusts. For example, a landowner could put an easement on their property primarily for the maintenance of its agricultural and wildlife values (such as a working farm with some valuable wetlands on it). However, the owner may also wish to have the flexibility to add on an additional house or mother-in-law unit on the property at some point in the future. In most cases, this would be very easy to facilitate with a site-specific easement. Perhaps the majority of the farm future development would not be allowed and the wetlands could not be drained. However, on a smaller portion of the property (say 5 acres around the existing home) another 2 or 3 dwelling units could be built (as long as it conformed to County building ordinances). The easement would allow flexibility to help preserve the wetlands permanently while giving the owner what he or she needed. Another benefit to the landowner, of course is tax savings.

Over time many landowners have come to regard their property with some sense of obligation, affection, care, etc. It doesn't take much imagination to realize that even a relatively large piece of property (say more than 100 acres) could be

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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 President Allen Bird on the trail at the Mad River Bluffs

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modified beyond recognition within a short period of time. For smaller properties (1 to 20 acres) this period of time could be one day or less. Some landowners believe that some future scenarios for their properties are unacceptable to them (e.g., a parking lot, subdivision, strip mall), and thus engage in conservation easements. Land trusts facilitate maintenance of property in a use consistent with the wishes of the landowners – even after the current landowner has died, bequeathed, or sold the property.

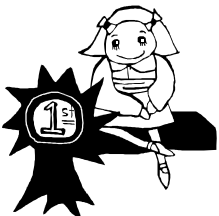
So, do you like the idea of landowners controlling the future of their lands? Do you like the idea of lands with values important to land trusts being maintained? Do you like the idea that these things can occur with a bureaucratic-free environment in which the actual people engaging in an agreement sit down and talk together? (You will not hear on the other end of the phone: “for agricultural conservation easements press 4, for timberland easements press 5...”.) Do you like the idea of a non-profit group in you local community facilitating these things? If you answered yes to these questions you are, at least in mind and heart, a land trust supporter. Your moral support is greatly appreciated. In addition, we would greatly appreciate whatever financial support you can contribute.

The effectiveness of the McKinleyville Land Trust is directly related to the donations and support we receive. The MLT is an entirely a volunteer-run organization. Please consider helping the land trust in whatever way you can. We have been humbled by the generous donations we receive during our many events each year. We are equally humbled by the generous financial donations that are made to our organizations outside these events.

If you have yet to contribute to the McKinleyville Land Trust, we would love for you to begin today. If you are already a contributor, we would appreciate your continued support, and some kind words to friends, family, neighbors and acquaintances that you believe would also be interested in supporting our goals. Lastly, if you are a landowner or know of any who would be interested in speaking with us about conservation easements please call us at 839-LAND, email us at mlt@mckinleyville.net, or write us at P.O. Box 2723, McKinleyville, CA 95519.



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. The mugs can be ordered by calling MLT at 839-LAND or purchased at Blake's Books in McKinleyville.



Donate Your Time to the McKinleyville Land Trust!

MLT needs volunteers to help out at this year's North Country Fair on September 22nd and 23rd. Give us a call at 839-LAND if you can lend a hand setting up, breaking down, or working in the MLT Gyro Booth!



The McKinleyville Land Trust

MLT

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For Everyone Forever***



McKinleyville Land Trust Board of Directors 2007

*Allen Bird—President
Kristin Schmidt—Vice President
Dorothy Klein— Secretary
Wayne Sutherland— Treasurer*

*Jeff Dunk
Darci Short
Nancy Correll
Lindsay Walker*

Thank You Shay Sutherland: Conservation Committee Member and Easement Monitoring Coordinator

By Kristen Schmidt

This past year the MLT has done something it hasn't been able to do in years past: we completed easement monitoring on all of our conservation easements. In a nutshell, monitoring involves walking around the property as assessing whether or not the original conditions of the easement are in place. Thanks to the work of Shay Sutherland, we were able to get caught up in our monitoring. Shay took the time to learn about the easements, make contact with the landowners, scheduled visits, and developed a monitoring checklist and reporting system to document the site visits.

We thank Shay for her willingness to work with the MLT and appreciate her organizational skills, motivation, and perseverance. We couldn't have done it without her!
