



## SANTA LUCIA CONSERVANCY 2018 SEPTEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

### LAND STEWARDSHIP



Jenna Allred, our new Natural Lands Manager, has been mapping and destroying star thistle, finding and removing several stands of Jubata grass, and most recently hand-pulling dozens of new outbreaks of the unacceptable new invasive weed known as ‘Stinkwort.’ She is also working closely with Rodrigo on voluntary Openlands restoration plans with Preserve members, including the Peats and Lewis’ efforts to restore grasslands and combat brush encroachment. In the coming months she will lead the completion of a Preserve-wide weed management plan identifying priority goals and strategies to guide our work.

The Resource Conservation District of Monterey County (RCDMC) has asked Dr. Christy to participate as an advisor for its new Fuel Management Coordination Program. Her broad fire experience with the Conservancy and on The Preserve will help the RCDMC to guide landowners across the county in assessing and applying landscape fire prevention across private lands in systematic ways. In turn, the Conservancy team will continue to build skills and develop the relationships that are so valuable in emergencies.



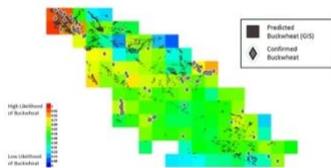
Working with Preserve partners, Zan and Jack Peat, our team is trying a new grazing technique with a group of eight heifers. This ‘strike force’ of yearlings is rapidly and intensively grazing small sequential areas (each the size of the Conservancy office), with a goal of reducing invasive weeds and restoring grassland health. Through this approach, the cows heavily trample the ground as well as graze, increasing nutrient inputs into the soil. Our hope is that by utilizing this method, much of the unpalatable dry plants that the cattle would otherwise ignore will decompose more readily. Kyle is monitoring the effects using a GIS drone, which takes 140 photographs every day and maps them accurately on the landscape. It will take several seasons to determine how effective this technique is, but the cows are responding well, and the Peats are delighted. We will report preliminary results in the coming months.

Christy F. took the lead in completing an ambitious update of the 2013 Preserve-Wide Fuel Management Standards reflecting lessons learned from the Soberanes Fire, and more recent events. The timeline for this effort was tightened up in preparation for anticipated insurance inspections and potential cancelations as a result of extreme fire behaviour elsewhere over the past several summers. Developed in partnership with Forrest Arthur, fuel management expert Carol Rice, Kelly Dyer and Regional Fire Chief Urquides, the new guidelines represent the state-of-the-art for Wildland-Urban Interface fuel management. Monterey County Regional Fire District and the Conservancy have each approved the use of these new Standards for The Preserve. Christy, Forrest and Lindsay have begun member outreach and support for updating Lot Specific Plans for Preserve residences, and are planning an update of the Roadside Fuel Management Plan over the winter months.

## SCIENCE



Karen and Rick Hargrove hosted a presentation from visiting ecologist Dr. Bob Crabtree with the [Yellowstone Ecological Research Center](#) (YERC) and Mike Sutton, who in addition to being a Conservancy Board member is a former Yellowstone Ranger and current YERC board member. Despite Yellowstone's huge size, its wildlife faces real challenges around the park's borders. The YERC is interested in The Preserve as a conservation community model and the Conservancy's role on The Preserve as inspiration and a possible solution to development pressures along the Yellowstone boundaries.



Conservancy 'UROC' Intern Avery Calhoun has received an award for Outstanding Research Presentation from the SACNAS – the Society for Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science. Her impressive mathematical model uses publicly available data to predict the presence of five species of native buckwheat on The Preserve. This model has successfully predicted an undiscovered patch of buckwheat and may become an important tool for the Conservancy to monitor and protect these resources. The endangered Smith's blue butterfly depends on Seacliff buckwheat, one of the five native species, to survive.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



At Dr. Christy's invitation, Professor Beth Shapiro, award-winning author from the University of California Santa Cruz's Paleo-genomics Lab, presented the role genetics plays in conservation and saving endangered species at the Hacienda. Of particular note was her views on the importance of providing wildlife corridors for apex predators like mountain lions, in large areas of mixed protected and privately held land, like The Preserve.

Christy F., Forrest, fire expert Carl Rice and Regional Fire Chief Llewelling presented the 2018 Preserve-Wide Fuel Management Standards to a packed house of Preserve community members and staff on September 6. Through brief presentations and an extended Q&A session, the evening offered opportunities for owners to understand recent the importance of keeping their lot-specific plans updated and properly implemented. The presentations were positive, solutions oriented and well-received. They were also recorded, and are available for viewing on the [Conservancy](#) and Preserve websites.



The Conservancy, [The Trust for Public Land](#), [Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District](#) and [Trout Unlimited](#) co-hosted a well-attended community celebration of the grand opening and land dedication of the new Rancho Cañada unit of Palo Corona Regional Park on September 28. The Conservancy's role overall, and Christy's contributions in particular were highlighted and The Preserve received recognition as a key partner in the project. Later that evening, several Conservancy Board members and Preserve members also attended a reception hosted by The Trust for Public Land.



Early in the month, Christy F. led a steelhead walk up the Williams Canyon fork of San Jose Creek, using underwater cameras to search for fish. Last year, hundreds of fish were spotted in this area, but this year fewer than 20 were found. Also observed was extensive sand deposits in the pools, likely the result of runoff from upper watershed areas, which were highly impacted by the Soberanes fire and suppression activities. The team will monitor the creek over the coming winter season for erosion issues.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH & COMMUNICATIONS

This summer brought new levels of community outreach and coordinated communications to the Conservancy and across The Preserve with the addition of professional communication consultants. Since their arrival, Angela Hains and Adam White have added a great deal of talent and capacity to our team and are working closely with Christy Fischer and Conservation Program Manager Lindsay Cope to complete the launch of our new website, complete a communications plan and take both our 'story telling' and our professional communications to a higher level in terms of reach and engagement.

## OTHER NEWS



We are thrilled to welcome Diana Johr on staff as our office manager (pictured right with Angela Hains). She comes to us from Michigan where she was an administrative assistant at a physician's office for twelve years, before moving to Carmel Valley to be near her sister. Diana is an ardent advocate of the outdoors, passionate about our work and keen to make a difference. She and Christy have started on the annual audit, IRS Form 990 report, year-end budgeting and Board meeting planning.



The transformation of the Conservancy's 5 area 'Carmel River Education Area' at Rancho Cañada has reached a milestone: with a final coat of paint and some fabulous donations of furnishings from Preserve Members, the Bunkhouse, Barn and Cottage are fully refurbished. Over the summer, volunteers planted over 800 trees and native plants in the surrounding area, so the 'rewilding' has also begun. Christy will lead a tour of the facility as part of the upcoming Board meeting, and several Preserve members will also visit the site this fall and early winter.