



# Volunteer News

## Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

### Quarterly Update

of

## All District Volunteer Programs

### ***Conservation Easement Monitoring Program Resumes***

The District has reestablished the Conservation Easement Monitoring (CEM) Volunteer Program. Volunteers, including current District Trail Patrol members and recent recruits from Peninsula Open Space Trust's CEM Program, will begin inspections in January 2007.

A Conservation Easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and an eligible organization (MROSD) that restricts future activities on the land to protect its conservation values.<sup>1</sup> The District views conservation easements as an important part of the Bay Area land protection puzzle and has entered into 17 conservation easements with neighboring landowners.

To ensure compliance with the terms of these easements, it is important that the properties are monitored each year by District representatives. Under the direction of Land Protection Specialist Michael Reeves, CEM teams will meet with landowners to tour and inspect the easement properties. Following each monitoring trip, a report, which includes photos of the property, will be completed and submitted to Michael for review.

Many thanks to the CEM volunteer team for assisting the District in responsibly managing our conservation easements.

<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Byers & Karin Marchetti Ponte, *The Conservation Easement Handbook*

### **Volunteers Fight Sudden Oak Death by Assisting with Tanoak Acorn Study**

In August 2006, the USDA Forest Service (USDA-FS) chose the District and three other statewide agencies to participate in an important study researching the potential resistance of tanoak trees (*Lithocarpus densiflorus*) to the Sudden Oak Death pathogen (*Phytophthora ramorum*).

Sudden Oak Death (SOD) is a disease that has killed over 1 million native oak and tanoak trees and infests many other forest species in one Oregon and 14 coastal California counties. To date, it has been confirmed on 17 District preserves. Continued high mortality of tanoaks could substantially alter ecosystems and associated wildlife habitat, increase fire hazard, and have a visual impact on preserves.

In 2005, the District Board of Directors adopted a ten-year work plan to support research and collaborative efforts with other agencies in the race to control SOD. Since then, a number of protective measures have been implemented on District preserves. Examples include volunteers and staff installing boot and mountain bike tire brushes at various preserves; field staff members receiving annual SOD training and taking protective measures to clean equipment when working in infested areas; and

providing public outreach and education. The invitation to participate in the USDA-FS study fell right in line with the District's goals, and staff and volunteers jumped at the opportunity to get involved.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate tanoak resistance to the SOD pathogen and gain a greater understanding of the role that genetic variability plays in a tree's susceptibility to the disease. This will aid in understanding pathogen distribution and long-term impacts.

The District's role was to collect a representative number of tanoak acorns from the Santa Cruz Mountain region. GIS mapping was used to determine potential collection sites and requests for assistance were immediately sent to District volunteers. Dozens were quick to respond, a Friday night training was scheduled, and the rest is acorn history!

From mid-August through early October, 54 District staff, volunteers and staff from other park agencies (State Parks, San Mateo County, Santa Clara County, San Francisco Watershed, Caltrans) searched 37 preserves, parks, and some private properties for acorn-laden tanoak

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## February 2007 Outdoor Service Projects Calendar

2/03/07	9:30 - 2:30	La Honda Creek	Habitat Restoration
2/10/07	10:00 - 2:30	Sierra Azul	Habitat Restoration
2/15/07	9:30 - 2:30	Rancho San Antonio	Area Restoration
2/24/07	9:30 - 2:30	Pulgask Ridge	Resource Mgmt

To sign up or receive more information, contact:  
**Paul McKowan, Volunteer Programs Coordinator**  
(650) 691-1200      [volunteer@openspace.org](mailto:volunteer@openspace.org)

## SOD Study (continued from page 1)

trees. Last year, the acorn crop overall was low throughout the state, however, the dedicated crew located enough suitable tanoak trees and collected 2,962 acorns from Purisima Creek Redwoods Preserve in the north to Loma Prieta Road in the east and all the way down to Mount Madonna County Park in the extreme southerly reach of the Santa Cruz Mountains. The wide range of these trees is likely to provide greater genetic diversity among the collected acorns and thus provide a better chance of finding resistant trees. The project had a very limited time frame for completion - as the acorns were ripening - and would not have been successfully completed without the volunteers' extensive search efforts.

The USDA-FS researchers were very impressed with the District's ability to coordinate so many volunteers and organize the collaborative efforts of multiple agencies in such a short period of time. Staff thought you might like to know that your volunteer efforts and dedication have now been recognized on a *federal* level - nice job! We will keep you updated on this important study.

## Volunteer Trail Patrol Companion Dog Update

The District's Volunteer Trail Patrol - Companion Dog (VTP-CD) division was upgraded in 2006. New VTP member Nathalie Mosbach-Smith and District Ranger Jeff Smith worked with Volunteer Programs Coordinator Paul McKowan in creating new program guidelines and an ongoing evaluation system.

Nathalie and Jeff donated tons of time last spring, summer, and fall smoothing out the 'ruff' edges, developing and implementing a new checkout system, and setting up



outreach booths at preserves with dog access. The Companion Dog Teams (dog & handler) are now evaluated once every 2 years, and those who need work before heading out on patrol receive training recommendations and re-testing when ready.

Five new members are already up and running with more testing scheduled for January. The new program packet is available by contacting Volunteer Programs Coordinator Paul McKowan (see contact info to the upper left).

## Strappin' on the Gloves A Recap of the 2006 Outdoor Service Projects

Last year, District staff and Volunteer Crew Leaders coordinated and facilitated 60 outdoor service projects in 19 different preserves. Over 300 District Preserve Partner and Special Group volunteers unselfishly gave up their hike and ride days to participate in group maintenance and restoration projects.

These hard working volunteers overcame occasional bouts of harsh weather and poison oak to successfully tackle and complete trail construction and repairs, habitat restoration, area clean-up, and fence construction projects.

This program offers constituents a real hands-on approach to giving back to the preserves and trails they enjoy so much. Volunteers learn the many aspects of resource management,

trade stories with other trail enthusiasts, and enjoy the rewarding feeling of a job well done at the end of the day.

A few new projects were added to the mix in 2006. Volunteers spread mulch and helped prepare the garden area for annual tours of the historic Fremont Older house, repaired and upgraded the observation deck in the northern section of Russian Ridge, and searched for and collected tan oak acorns as part of an important Sudden Oak Death study (see front page). Two large-scale thistle removal projects (involving nearly 60 volunteers) were successfully conducted at Skyline Ridge and Los Trancos Preserves.

A hearty 'CHEERS' to the many people who participated in these 2006 projects -- press on!

# Annual Fremont Older House & Garden Tours Scheduled for April 29, 2007



District docents will lead free tours of the historic “Woodhills” home on Sunday, April 29, 2007. The home is located on the Fremont Older Preserve in the foothills, near Cupertino and Saratoga. In 1914, Fremont Older, an unconventional local newspaper editor and his wife Cora, an author and historian, moved into their “Woodhills” home. Designed and built by architect Frank Delos Wolfe, the home was quite unusual for the time. The Olders hosted many literary, artistic, and political guests during their years in the home.

In 1975, the District purchased the Fremont Older property and the house was scheduled for demolition. Mort and Elaine Levine, local newspaper publishers, wanted to see the journalistic legacy of Fremont Older and “Woodhills” preserved. The District Board voted and approved a long-term lease with the Levines who absorbed the cost of the home’s restoration, which was completed in 1979. The Levines still live at “Woodhills” and make this beautifully restored landmark available for annual public tours.

If you desire to find out more about the “Woodhills” home and garden, and learn about the fascinating history of

Fremont and Cora Older consider, volunteering to train to be a tour docent. Volunteers from all programs are encouraged to train. A one-day training conducted by the Levines is provided on Saturday, April 28. Trainees receive a comprehensive guide booklet and work in pairs to host/lead tours.

For more information, contact Renée Fitzsimons, Docent Programs Coordinator at (650) 625-6536 or [docent@openspace.org](mailto:docent@openspace.org).

If you would rather visit “Woodhills” as a tour participant, you can call in on a first call – first reserve basis on **Friday, March 30, 2007 after 10:00 a.m. by calling the District office at (650) 691-1200. Reservations will not be accepted before this date and time. Tours usually fill within the first few hours.** Please do not call the regular activity reservation phone number for this event.

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## Docents Assist with Master Planning and Use & Mgmt Projects

A master planning process is used by the District to evaluate public access opportunities, resource management, and other issues associated with new land purchases. One aspect of the process is gathering input from the community before such properties are open to the public. In October 2006, four separate tours were provided for the public to visit the Driscoll Ranch addition to La Honda Creek Preserve with the help of District docents. Docents made information available to tour participants about the area’s natural and cultural history and discussed general approaches to land management challenges the District will face, including the District’s first foray into a comprehensive grazing program. A total of 40 people participated in the tours over two days.

Feedback was positive overall with a strong interest expressed in getting the property open for hiking and horseback riding as soon as possible. Driscoll Ranch is seen as providing an important connection to the coast and other publicly owned lands.

In November, the first ever docent-led hike was offered at Miramontes Ridge, a coastside addition to the Mills Creek Preserve. Hike participants enjoyed sweeping vistas to the coast while learning about the historic home site of Gilcrest Ranch, and the importance of the surrounding watershed. As part of the grant agreement that led to the purchase of Miramontes Ridge, a public access and trail plan was instituted as an element of the preliminary Use and Management Plan

that provides for two docent-led hikes to occur annually until such time as the entire preserve is open. Hikes at Miramontes Ridge are advertised in the District’s quarterly newsletter/outdoor activity schedule and on the Web site. Reservations are required.

The District greatly values the involvement of volunteers in providing public visitation to these limited access areas — the docents serve as critical conduits to provide information for the public and back to staff. Docents who get involved with these special activities feel privileged to engage the public in new places by sharing their interpretation skills and natural history knowledge. It is a win-win experience!

## What Do You Call a Group Of...?

Match the animals with a correct group name

Owls

Hummingbirds

Ravens

Hawks

Squirrels

Snipes

Foxes

Badgers

Frogs

Hérons

Earth

Army

Charm

Parliament

Dray

Unkindness

Cete

Siege

Wisp

Flight