

BUTTERS LAND TRUST

—preserving the headwaters of Peralta Creek

December 2003

Butters Land Trust conserves wild landscapes in Butters Canyon and along Peralta Creek and promotes environmental awareness throughout the watershed, to preserve vital habitat for Bay Area residents to enjoy.

Board of Directors

*Dave Barron, President
Judy Anderson, Secretary
Carol Bernau, Treasurer
Dolores Apton
Ed Campaniello
Marie Jones
Jesse Roseman
Priscilla Stuckey*

Advisory Member

Jacqui Smalley, Golden Gate Audubon Society

Lord the air smells good today,
straight from the mysteries
within the inner courts of God.

A grace like new clothes thrown
across the garden,
free medicine for everybody.

The trees in prayer,
the birds in praise,
the first blue violets kneeling.
Whatever came from Being is caught up
in being, drunkenly
forgetting the way back.

—Rumi

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Layout by Marie Jones*

BLT LAUNCHES CAPITAL CAMPAIGN TO SAVE BUTTERS CANYON [Land Auction Update](#)

The Origin of the Campaign

In early November the board of the Butters Land Trust voted to launch a capital campaign to raise the funds to preserve Butters Canyon. At least four properties are currently for sale in the canyon. These include:

- Two parcels for sale along Butters Drive where Peralta Creek emerges from the culvert (signs are posted).
- The Purrier property at the northern entrance to the canyon, on the upside of Butters, home to exceptional native plants. The owner has indicated interest in our preservation efforts.
- The Kennedy property, the largest parcel available at almost an acre, strategically located in the middle of the canyon spanning Peralta Creek.

We could lose all of these properties to development at any time. Thus we launched a campaign to raise the funds to save these lots from development. We had our fund-raising letter ready to be reproduced and distributed when the surprise news hit.

The Auction Surprise

On Wednesday, November 12, a member of the community told us that a streamside parcel located immediately downstream from the preserved Butters properties was going to be sold at an auction the coming Sunday. This gave us about three days to raise enough money to make a bid. The board swung into high gear, holding an emergency meeting that evening.

Thursday we launched a fund-raising campaign spearheaded by board members Carol Bernau and Judy Anderson. Volunteers dropped approximately one hundred flyers in neighborhood mailboxes and sent out e-mails to everyone on our list. The resulting support from all of you was overwhelming.

By Saturday, when the board gathered again to prepare for the auction, we had deposited almost \$30,000 in donations from over 35 donors. Included in this amount is the generous matching contribution of \$10,000 by an anonymous donor. (See next page.) Even

though we only managed to contact about one-half of our donor base, word is getting out and we are still receiving donations and calls and e-mails.

By any measure, your donations are a tremendous accomplishment, and reflect the depth of support that exists for protecting Butters Canyon.

The pandemonium of the land auction on Sunday was a new experience for the three board members who attended. When the gravel sounded on the Butters Drive lot we didn't have the winning bid. We suffered a severe bout of disappointment and dismay. However, we have introduced ourselves and Butters Land Trust to the new owners. We have notified them of our willingness to make a purchase offer, and of the difficulties of development on the steep slope above Peralta Creek. We continue to work to ensure protection of this lot. Because of the complex nature of land negotiations, we plan to apply your donations to our highest priority purchases based on location, price, and level of development threat.

We Appeal to You for Your Support

Butters Land Trust sincerely appreciates the outpouring of support for the auction parcel; and needless to say we need more of it. By our calculations we will need at least one million dollars to fully protect the undeveloped parcels in the canyon along Butters Drive. This is an enormous amount, but the threat is enormous. If we don't act now, we risk losing the special treasure in our neighborhood.

Although important people in the City want to see the headwaters of Peralta Creek preserved (see Measure DD article), Measure DD funds will not be enough to save the whole canyon. We need your help to reach our goal. If you've ever luxuriated in the peace and natural beauty of Butters Canyon, if you've ever been concerned about what it might become, if you've ever thought "I should do something to help," the time is now. We have a treasure right here before us. And we CAN make a difference!

Three Grants Awarded to BLT

In addition to the community's support, we have also pursued a series of government and foundation grants. Thanks to the hard work of board members Jesse Roseman and Marie Jones, we have been awarded three grants.

We recently received two regional assistance grants from the Aquatic Outreach Institute (AOI). One is helping us put together a fundraising plan. This will provide a clearer vision of the path forward for a land trust with our unique mission-- protection of an urban creek.

The second grant from the Alameda County Cleanwater Fund will help us organize a workshop for community members on how to protect and augment wildlife through gardening with native plants and removing invasive species. We will take this opportunity to educate attendees about tax benefits to landowners who donate land parcels or conservation easements to BLT.

Just a week ago, we were pleased to be awarded yet another grant from AOI to help pay for the cost of the community workshop and production of associated materials.

We are proud of our ability to attract grant money; it attests to the regional appeal of our mission to preserve the headwaters of Peralta Creek and helps other funding sources realize that we are successful in pursuing our goals. It appears that land acquisition funding is scarce and hard to come by. However, in the meantime we are moving forward on our concurrent goals of educating people about our mission, and restoring Peralta Creek to its pristine natural beauty.

**Only through
community effort
have we come
this far, and
accomplishing
our goals will
require your
sustained
attention and
support.**

Measure DD Funds

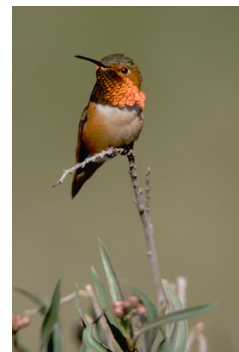
Perhaps our best opportunity for property acquisition funding comes from Oakland's recently passed Measure DD bond measure. With the support of City Councilmember Jean Quan and other staff from the City of Oakland, we are working hard to become eligible for funding. We have had several meetings with Richard Cowan, Councilmember Jean Quan's chief of staff. These meetings, combined with research and correspondence with appropriate city officials, have helped ensure our high placement on the list of projects eligible for funding.

Because the allocation Measure DD funds is not yet secure, and in any case will take place at an undetermined point in the future, we continue to rely on our generous supporters to provide the money we need for urgent acquisitions like the auction parcel. Any funds we raise have the potential to be leveraged for matching funds from other state and federal grants we are pursuing.

It's in the Bag!

A great big thank-you goes to all who, walking their dogs in Butters Canyon, faithfully use their pickup bags. Before Denise Craig moved into the neighborhood and posted bags on the telephone poles for picking up after dogs, the canyon would get pretty smelly and a little treacherous for foot traffic.

Thank you, Denise, for starting the bags!
Thank you, neighbors, for using the bags!



Six Ways You Can Help Save Butters Canyon

1. Make a tax deductible donation to Butters Land Trust today (see enclosed donation form and envelope)
2. Remember the land trust in your estate planning
3. Donate miscellaneous stocks that you were planning to sell; there are excellent tax advantages to doing so
4. Consider setting a conservation easement on the undeveloped portion of your property
5. Consider making a land donation or a "bargain sale" to Butters Land Trust
6. If you want to help protect Butters Canyon with your time as well, we need YOU to get involved as a volunteer or board member. Volunteers are needed:
 - To help in canyon and creek clean up and restoration efforts
 - To help organize meetings
 - To write grant proposals for funding
 - To network with other creek and conservation organizations in the Bay Area
 - And as the auction tip shows, we welcome any information you can provide about threats to or opportunities for preservation in the Canyon.

Board members are available for personal meetings to help you make a decision about your giving level.

If you would like to arrange a meeting to discuss your donation, please contact: David Barron, President, at 339-7330, or Carol Bernau, Treasurer, at 530-2746.

VOLUNTEERS TAKE THE FIRST EXCITING STEP IN THE RESTORATION OF UPPER PERALTA CREEK

One blustery weekend in December, the Friends of Sausal Creek restoration program teamed up with the Butters Canyon Land Trust and Friends of the Last Wild Canyon folks to do a holiday wrapping job on a denuded slope in Butters Canyon. The restoration area is the two creekside lots purchased by a neighbor to save them from development, and border the three lots currently owned by the Butters Land Trust.

There was a lucky parting in the storm clouds, and the volunteers worked diligently to get the erosion-prone slope neatly covered: first in a layer of sterile rice straw; then by pinning an erosion control blanket on top of the straw. This practice, as Karen Paulsell of Sausal Creek so eloquently explained to the work crew, creates thousands of tiny check dams where the straw and blanket fibers come into contact with the soil. The idea is to prevent more siltation in Peralta Creek and to provide a bit of stability for the under story vegetation that will be installed at work parties in January.

Crew members hacked away at the non-native invaders, including English ivy, cape ivy, and blackberries. They also removed an old rusting wire fence, and, of course, hauled out the usual heaps of bottles and trash.

We then rewarded ourselves by beginning the revegetation process. We planted a handsome selection of native plants, including two big leaf maples, four buckeyes, eleven lady ferns, and two elderberries. Next time you're walking along Butters Canyon, look for the flagged babies.

COME JOIN US to complete the task of laying the erosion control, stripping non-native vegetation, and planting these wonderful new denizens of the canyon. Please contact Cherie Donahue (531-7410) or Dolores Apton (530-4248) or e-mail Carol Bernau (cebernau@msn.com) if you are able to join us. We'll be setting up work crews for two weekend mornings in January. We also need volunteers to water the new babes once a month or so during the dry season, until they become established.

More work remains to be done: we want to finish up the erosion blanket installations and get additional plants into the ground. The ideal time is early January. There's a fine line between planting too soon (soil not wet enough) and planting too late (plants need as much time as possible to establish before the rain stops). Here is a partial list of what additional plants are available for planting:

- Baneberry (*Actea rubra*)
- Wild ginger (*Asarum caudatum*)
- Woodland strawberry (*Fragaria vesca*)
- Ocean spray (*Holodiscus discolor*)
- Cow parsnip (*Heraclium lanatum*)
- California honeysuckle
- Sweet sycily (*Osmeriza chilensis*)
- Ninebark (*Physocarpus capitata*)
- Small deciduous fern (*Polypodium sp.*)
- Scraggly gooseberry (*Ribes divaricatum*)
- Elderberry (*Sambucus mexicana*)
- False solomon's seal (*Smilacina stellata*)
- Hedge nettle (*Stachys ajugoides*)
- Snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*)

News from the Watershed Creek to Bay Day, September '03

On Creek to Bay Day the Butters Land Trust sent a team to Fruitvale, to help clean up and restore Peralta Creek in the Peralta Hacienda Historical Park. A portion of the creek has been diverted aboveground here to create a pleasant riparian area.

We cleared ivy along the banks of the restored creek—yes, there is ivy there too! We also planted yarrow and ferns near the water.

Over the course of the day we met many Peralta Creek neighbors, including a Laotian man who harvested watercress from the channel for his heart. We worked with teenage members of the East Bay Conservation Corps, who provided expertise for the project. Neighborhood children showed us domestic rabbits that had been released into the park and described catching creek fish. The diverse participation mirrored Oakland's diversity along Peralta Creek as it flows from Butters Canyon to San Leandro Bay. No matter where we are in the Peralta Creek watershed, we all have something in common—we love Oakland's creeks.



Anonymous Donor Provides \$10,000 Matching Grant

Like many of us who decided to live here, our anonymous donor fell in love with the natural beauty of our neighborhood. Like many of us, she too was shocked to find out that Butters Canyon's tranquility is not necessarily a stable part of the neighborhood. Unless we join together to do something to preserve it, this natural treasure right here before us could be gone. And we all know that once it's gone, it's gone forever.

Our matching donor is not new to preservation. She believes in continuing the stewardship of precious natural land that is her family's tradition. She wants you to know that her donation is to support her lifelong philosophy that "we are all stewards of the earth." That is why our donor decided to put up a matching donation of \$10,000 to our auction donations.

Yes, you, donors, neighbors, and friends, are stewards of Butters Canyon.

Our new neighbor urges all supporters to step up and take ownership of meeting our goal to preserve Butters Canyon, forever. She offers the following challenge:

PLEDGE A MATCHING DONATION!

A MESSAGE FROM DAVID BARRON, OUR NEW PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD

There's no way to sugarcoat this, so let's just get it out of the way.

- I'm not Priscilla.
- And no amount of botanical education, motivational training, or plastic surgery is ever going to change that fact.
- She's made one of life's moves, stepped down, leaving me to try to succeed her.

So who am I, anyway, to presume to fill such shoes?

Well, I don't live in the neighborhood. I live a few canyons over, in Montclair. I discovered Butters Canyon awhile back in a purely serendipitous fashion, the result of a fortuitous mishap, a chance encounter with the mystical. (OK, so I took a wrong turn. It happens.) I thought I'd gone through a time warp, back to an era when canyons were wild and people were few. When I found my way back to civilization, the vision of that green-canopied bit of serenity (and the feeling that I might fall off the road) stayed with me.

Not long after, I saw a posting for a "Butters Land Trust" on the VolunteerMatch website. I'm a real estate attorney, and I've long believed that if people want to preserve open space they should acquire it. Now here was a land trust, dedicated to that very proposition, right in my own backyard. So I called and talked to Priscilla and soon realized Butters Canyon was that timeless stretch of greenery I had recently discovered. It was a perfect fit. I became a member of the board, and now here I am.

I occasionally consider the enormity of our task--the number of parcels, the cost of acquisition, the recalcitrant sellers and outrageous asking prices--and think the job is impossible. But then I look back on what the founders have accomplished in less than three years, and I have to shake my head in wonder. What Priscilla, Carol, Judy, Dolores, Jesse, Marie, and others have done is amazing. With no prior experience, they built a land trust from the ground up and now own three parcels, with two others protected. It can be done.

Of course, they didn't do it alone. They had help from many of you. And we will continue to need that help. Several parcels are at active risk right now, and more could become threatened at any time. We're aggressively pursuing outside sources of funding, at least one of which looks very promising, but in the final analysis, we can't do it without you.

So yes, Priscilla has stepped down, but the dream is very much alive. And as long as you continue to care about the Canyon, and continue to help us follow that dream, there is no one who can tell us it can't be done.

Cheers,

David Barron

Farewell from the Founder

It's December in the canyon, and overnight ferns of a startling green spring from rock crevices, and a velvet green skin grows on newly wet soil. The rainy season brings growth and change—in personal lives too.

After twenty years in the Bay Area (nine of them in the Butters Canyon neighborhood), I am moving to Grass Valley, CA. The past few years have been a wonderful adventure for me in helping the Butters Land Trust grow. From a small group of canyon hikers and bikers with little else but enthusiasm and a corporate seal to our name (in 2001) we became a nonprofit land trust with a quarter-million dollars in holdings (2002—thanks again to our donors!). Now we are a seasoned group of dedicated professionals more enthusiastic than ever about preserving this creekside oasis for critters and people alike.

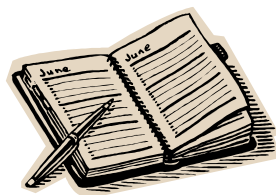
All of you who enjoy the woods know that a quiet green haven in the paved-over urban climate can help restore a sense of peace

and wonder to life. You, the users and supporters of the canyon, are the only ones who can keep it the green treasure it is.

So give our new president, Dave Barron, and the hardworking board your continued support. Your dollars and your commitment will help preserve a nature haven at the headwaters of Oakland's Peralta Creek.

Thanks,

Priscilla



Note to myself: Make an end-of-the-year donation to Butters Land Trust!



Holodiscus discolor

Ocean spray or cream bush or *Holodiscus* is a deciduous shrub related to *Spiraea* and similar in appearance. It's native to the California coast ranges and the Sierra, north to British Columbia. In moist soil and partial shade it may grow to twenty feet. From May through July you'll see nodding clusters of small creamy white flowers, which fade to tannish-gold and brown in winter. Check out the splendid bushes in the canyon uphill from Butters Drive.