

Butters Land Trust

—preserving the headwaters of Peralta Creek

March 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 all Bay Area residents
to enjoy.**

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Carol Bernau, Treasurer
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Leslie Schoenfeld*

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*Jacqui Smalley, Golden Gate
Audubon Society*

***There is nothing more practical
in the end than the preservation
of beauty.***

—Theodore Roosevelt

**Butters Land Trust
6114 LaSalle Avenue #168
Oakland, CA 94611
510. 482. 2496
www.butterslandtrust.org
blt@butterslandtrust.org**

*Written by Dolores Apton, Carol Bernau,
Jesse Roseman, Priscilla Stuckey
Edited by Priscilla Stuckey*

Solidifying Your Trust

It's been a year since our jubilant dedication ceremony for the donated creekside parcels, and in that time the BLT board has been solidifying the land trust and planning for our next acquisitions.

In the spring of 2002 we learned more about the flora and fauna of the canyon through a biological assessment sponsored by the California Coastal Conservancy and a canyon plant walk led by Michael Thilgen of the Friends of Sausal Creek (see related articles).

In the summer we enjoyed a visit from neighbors in the downstream portion of the Peralta Creek watershed (see "Watershed Connections").

On Creek to Bay Day in September we held our third annual canyon cleanup. A couple dozen neighbors and friends dragged the usual trash out of the canyon and chopped down ivy from trees, munching on Judy Anderson's delicious chocolate chip cookies once again.

October saw a neighborhood picnic with the Friends of the Last Wild Canyon (see next article) and a dedication of our new sign.

The land trust closed the year by crossing another big hurdle: Thanks to our treasurer, Carol Bernau, and her fine job with finances and paperwork, the Butters Land Trust received its 501(c)(3) status with the IRS. Now we're fully tax-deductible, and we closed our financial partnership with the Friends of Oakland Parks & Recreation. Thanks to FOPR for being our fiscal sponsor for 18 months!

The board celebrated our new official status by meeting in December to eat Carol's best brownies and write thank-yous to the dozens of special people and groups who assisted us in our first 18 months of operation. Thanks to all, and we're looking forward to growing even stronger in 2003 and beyond.

New Canyon Sign!

On October 19 neighbors gathered for a community picnic at the home of Cherie Donahue and then trooped together to the canyon for a sign dedication at the site of the first preserved BLT parcels. It was a wonderful opportunity for our community to gather and celebrate our unique environment, and it won front-page coverage in the *Montclarion*.

Two musicians led our parade to the canyon with singing and guitars. Once the group arrived at the sign, John Denver's "Country Road" became "Butters Road," and as the canyon reverberated with song everybody appreciated the value of preserving our little slice of "almost Heaven, Butters Canyon."

Thanks to Doug Crayton for your crafting of the sign and donating materials, to Walt Anderson for painting assistance, to a generous neighbor who donated the permit fees, and to Lesley Estes of the City of Oakland, who smoothed the permit process for us.

And yes, the sign *will* have a roof and a Plexiglas cover!

Plants of the Canyon

About 20 neighbors and friends gathered last May 4 on a gorgeous morning in spring to walk along Butters Drive and explore the plants of the canyon. Michael Thilgen, landscape architect and volunteer extraordinaire with the Friends of Sausal Creek, pointed out differences between native plants and exotics and fielded questions. Michael designed the native plant nursery at Joaquin Miller Park and was instrumental in organizing the planting of 20,000 native plants along Sausal Creek in Dimond Canyon in winter 2001–02.

Much of the conversation during the plant walk focused on one question:

Why native plants?

It comes down to **biodiversity**: Exotics, or plants that did not evolve in the local habitat, may like their new surroundings so much that they grow fast enough to choke out native species. Then one species can take over, like the ivy that covers Butters Canyon. And what's so bad about ivy, since it's green and keeps the hillside in place? It crowds out native varieties. In short, it "does not play well with others." And if native plants don't thrive, then the insects that evolved to eat those plants can't thrive either. And so on up the food chain. With one dominant plant, the area loses the diversity of other plants and animals that once made it a rich and varied habitat.

Michael and enthusiasts identified more than 50 native plants close to Butters Drive, especially on the uphill-side rock face and road cuts near the west end of the canyon. Here are a few of the more picturesque names of the native flowers and plants identified that day:

Hedge nettle (*Stachys bullata*)

Ocean spray (*Holodiscus*)

Cow parsnip (*Heracleum lanatum*)

Snowberry (*Symphoricarpos*)

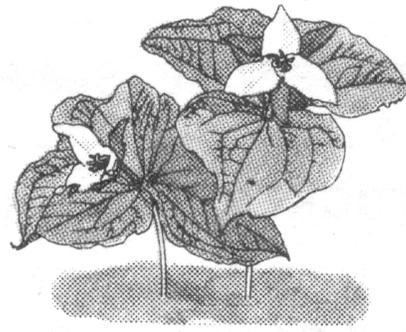
Osoberry (*Oemleria cerasiformis*)

Beeplant (*Scrophularia californica*)

Sticky monkeyflower (*Mimulus*)

Miner's lettuce (*Claytonia perfoliata*)

Focus on



Trillium ovatum

Western Trillium

Western Trillium, or *Trillium ovatum*, gets its name from the Latin word for "three," because all parts are in threes.

Sometimes it's called "Trillium Wake-Robin," to indicate that it blooms early in the spring, about the time robins are nesting.

It's native to western North America. The canyon is ideal for it because it likes shady, cool areas.

8 Ways You Can Help Save Butters Canyon

- 1. Become an annual donor.** Make a contribution now! (Envelope enclosed.)
- 2. Get a matching donation from your company.** Double the impact of your donation! Some companies will make regular payroll deductions for you.
- 3. Save your loose change** (pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters) for several months, then send it to the land trust! Call 530-2746 for pickup.
- 4. Donate your time.** Volunteers always needed for canyon cleanups, board of directors, distributing flyers, organizing events, etc. We have a surprising amount of talent in our neighborhood Let us know yours!
- 5. Recruit someone else.** Know anyone of influence? We're looking for:
 - A president for the land trust
 - Legal advice
 - Accountant / tax accountant
 - Grant writers
 - Networkers
- 6. WE NEED A MILLION DOLLARS! Call us with your ideas.** Let us know who you know who might be able to act as a corporate sponsor, a star who could provide us with publicity, etc.
- 7. Donate unwanted items.** The land trust will find a way to auction them off for a charitable donation!
- 8. Contact City Council member Jean Quan** to urge continued support of a strong Oakland Creeks Ordinance. Call 238-7004 or write her at 1 Frank Ogawa Plaza, 2nd Floor, Oakland, CA 94612.

More ideas in our next newsletter!

Watershed Connections . . .

Eleven friends of Peralta Creek who are doing creek restoration in Cesar Chavez Park in the Fruitvale area visited Butters Canyon in August 2002, accompanied by Kristin Hathaway from Oakland's Watershed Improvement Program. The group included members of Spanish-Speaking Unity Council, a community organizing nonprofit.

The visitors were surprised to find out that the canyon is plagued by dumping. "We can't believe you have the same problem we do!" they said.

They discussed restoration now in progress on Peralta Creek. The City of Oakland, the Urban Creeks Council, and the Unity Council have partnered to restore a section of the creek near Foothill and 38th Ave., where the creek bed is full of

concrete rubble and littered with hypodermic needles.

A bypass culvert will be removed to allow normal water flows to the creek. The creek banks will be graded back to eliminate hiding places and allow safe access for park users. Native bushes and trees will be planted to improve habitat for

wildlife and anchor the creek banks against erosion.

Community meetings are being held, and students are learning to monitor water quality. Another group is propagating native plants at Joaquin Miller Nursery.

With ongoing support of the Fruitvale neighborhood, the waters beginning in Butters Canyon will be able to bubble tranquilly along one more stretch of open land

What a Dump?

To report dumping in progress, call 911. (Yes, it's an emergency!)

To report dumping that has already taken place:

On the street, call 434-5101.
Down the canyon, call 238-6600.

Request an inspector when you call, to look at the dump and retrieve any evidence, like addresses, that could be used in court. It takes 3 pieces of evidence to prosecute.

Biological Assessment of Upper Peralta Creek

In March 2002 biologists from the Romberg Tiburon Center of SF State University walked in Butters Canyon to evaluate the potential for restoring special status species habitat in the canyon. Special status species are animals or plants that have been listed as endangered or threatened or are candidates for such listing under federal or state Endangered Species Acts.

The biological assessment was sponsored by California Coastal Conservancy and was the fruit of contacts initiated by the Friends of the Last Wild Canyon neighborhood association in 2001. The survey team included a wildlife biologist, a botanist, and a wetland ecologist.

The team found two special status species: the San Francisco dusky-footed woodrat and Allen's hummingbird. Four other special status species are expected to occur along the creek: the Cooper's and sharp-shinned hawks, the Pacific-slope flycatcher, and Bewick's wren. And although no special status plants were observed, suitable habitat occurs for five of them to occur: western leatherwood, robust monardella, Presidio clarkia, San Francisco popcorn-flower, and the uncommon jewelflower.

The canyon/creek area is ripe for restoration, and though joint efforts between the land trust and FOLWC, the neighborhood should be able to move in the next few years toward restoring the creekside properties now owned by the trust.

A Big Thank-You to Our Donors

We were cheered and gratified by your response to the year-end flyer that volunteers distributed throughout the neighborhood. We received responses from 35 neighbors and friends. The total number of our contributors to date is 115 (excluding repeat donors). Thank you for your generosity and support!

As with all nonprofits, we still have a long way to go to raise enough funds to buy properties in Butters Canyon when they become available. All of the work we accomplish is through volunteers. We have been blessed with getting pro bono advice from accountants and attorneys, but now that we are up and fully running, we need more extensive professional help.

Our operating expenses alone (insurance, tax filings, title and other real estate fees, flyers and newsletters, mailbox fees, etc.) amount to over \$5,000 a year. Thanks to your generous contributions, we meeting these expenses and are now able to focus our energies on fund-raising for the long term.

Some of our donors have been especially generous, and we really appreciate and need your help. However, you can show your support by making even a small contribution of \$10 to \$25. (Also, see box on previous page for more ideas on how you can help.)

Welcome, New Board Members!

The land trust board is thrilled to welcome several new members and active participants:

Dave Barron, a real estate attorney, was looking for volunteer opportunities on VolunteerMatch.org when he saw a posting by the Butters Land Trust. He likes the voluntary preservation methods used by a land trust, and he was excited to find a land trust so close to his home in Montclair. Dave brings his legal expertise in real estate to the board, along with his experience in forming and working with other nonprofits. In his spare time he cycles, swims, and skis, especially with his two children.

By the Way . . .

Butters Land Trust believes we can meet our goals ethically through using legal resources within our means. There has been some vandalism to “For Sale” signs in Butters Canyon, which we do not condone. Please do not harm or deface private property! It does our cause no good and could even create animosity when we hope to purchase or acquire property. There are many constructive ways for you to help out (see box on second page).

Jesse Roseman was cycling up Butters Drive en route to Joaquin Miller Park when he noticed a “Save Our Last Wild Canyon” sign in Judy and Walt Anderson’s living room window. Jesse knocked on the door and explained he was an intern with the Greenbelt Alliance and was looking for some preservation opportunities close to his home in the Grand Lake area. He ended up at a board meeting, and then he put together a fund-raising concert for the BLT in Berkeley and sang and played guitar for the sign dedication in October. Jesse brings his background in environmental studies and experience in and passion for preserving urban open space to the board.

Leslie Schoenfeld, a neighbor on Robinson Drive, co-owns a health care consulting firm and brings to the board her considerable experience with nonprofit organizations. She is currently president of Friends of Alameda County CASA, which advocates on behalf of neglected and abused children by fund-raising and training citizen volunteers. She is excited about fund-raising possibilities for Butters Canyon.

Heather Jones is an active participant, although schedule conflicts keep her from board meetings. She also found the land trust through VolunteerMatch.org, where she noticed an ad for a grant writer. Heather is a copyeditor with the *San Francisco Chronicle* and has been taking classes in grant writing. She brings her extensive writing and editing skills to the land trust and is currently churning out grant proposals.

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