

# BUTTERS LAND TRUST

—preserving the headwaters of Peralta Creek

March 2005

## ONE MORE SUCCESS STORY

BLT marches on!

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.

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*"Knowing others is intelligence;  
Knowing yourself is true wisdom.  
Mastering others is strength;  
Mastering yourself is true power.  
If you realize that you have enough, you  
are truly rich."*

—Tao te Ching

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Layout and editing by Marie Jones

We have just acquired another property, located at the west (downstream) end of the undeveloped portion of the Canyon. This will place a barrier in the path of development creeping up the Canyon.

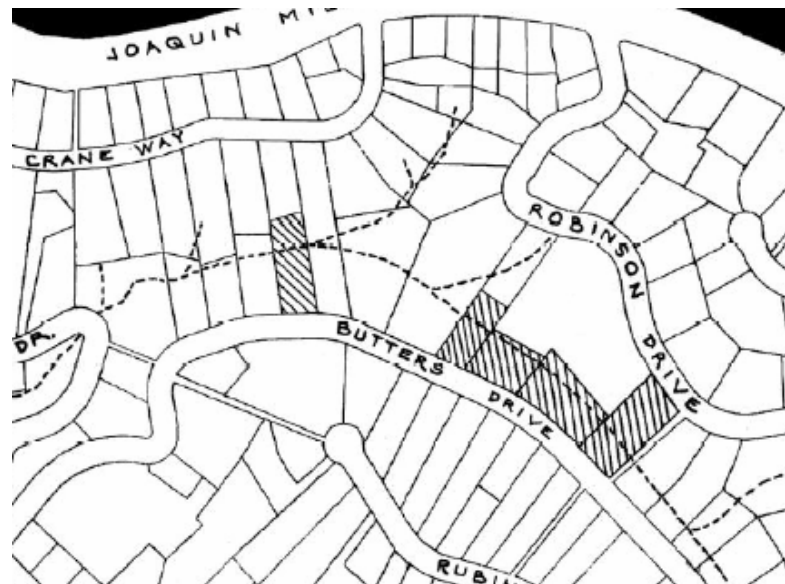
Our thanks go to Mr. Armando Lopez, the seller of the lot. Mr. Lopez, believing in our efforts to preserve the Canyon, graciously agreed to what is probably a bargain price for the property. And your donations in large part made the purchase possible.

The path to closing was not easy, as we had a major title problem to overcome. But Markley Bavinger (with the City of Oakland's Environmental Services Division) steered us to Fidelity Title Company, who agreed to insure title and allow the transaction to happen.

In addition, Fidelity went above and beyond the call of duty to help us get escrow closed. This wouldn't have happened without the assistance of Markley and Fidelity.

This brings the total number of parcels we own to five. That hardly seemed possible just a few short years ago when Butters Land Trust was formed. But we're not stopping there. We hope to acquire a few other properties, and we hope to be able to make more announcements like this in the near future. So stay tuned!

## Map of Butters Land Trust Properties



 BUTTERS LAND TRUST

# Restoration Progress

By Sue Duckles and Cherie Donahue

A little more than a year ago, on a cold drizzly day, a group of dedicated neighbors and friends met in the canyon for two work days to start restoring vegetation on two creekside lots in Butters Canyon which had mistakenly been cleared by a city work crew. A year later, with the benefit of winter rains, this is a wonderful time to take a stroll down Butters Canyon and see the progress that has been made. One caveat: if you do go, please stay on the pavement, as the hill is very wet and emerging plants can easily be damaged.

As you enter the canyon from the South East (Robinson Drive), just after you pass the last home you will see thick vegetation in the creek. Most notable in February are the flowering fruit trees, including cherry plums (*Prunus cerasifira*). These non-natives line creeks all over the hills, the seeds having been transported by the stream or by birds.

Continuing on, the dense foliage stops. The hillside leading down to the creek is the site under restoration. In the fall of 2003, the volunteers laid sterile straw and a jute net to anchor the soil over the steep hillside to prevent erosion and help anchor the plants. In January 2004 hundreds of plants were planted in the ground. These plants and restoration expertise were provided by Friends of Sausal Creek from their native plant nursery in Joaquin Miller Park, with funds from the City of Oakland. Many of these plants are thriving, and, together with plants that survived the original clearance, there is much to see.

Close to the road you can find fringe cups (*Tellima grandiflora*). The attractive fringed leaves of this plant cluster close to the ground. Later in the spring a tall raceme of small flowers will emerge, but, in our experience, deer find this very tasty. Also abundant along the road is bleeding heart (*Dicentra formosa*). The pink bleeding heart flowers hang from short stocks that rise above the bright green

Also growing well close to the road you can find sweet cicely (*Osmorhiza chilensis*) with leaves somewhat akin to those of a carrot. Clusters of hedge nettle (*Stachys ajugoides*) are also abundant. Two types of blackberry, one native and one not, have emerged on their own. The native form (*rubus ursinus*) is distinguished by slender-stemmed vines that lie close to the ground and small thorns. Non-native forms have much larger thorns and coarse-stemmed vines that rise aggressively towards the light.

Another native that has re-emerged from its deep root is wild cucumber, also called California man root (*Marah fabaceus*). This member of the gourd family produces long trailing vines (10 to 30 ft long), with curling tendrils, and has soft ivy like leaves and tiny clusters of white flowers. Later in the year, round prickly fruits can be seen. The hidden surprise of the wild cucumber is its enormous root buried deep in the ground.

Closer to the creek the wild ginger (*Asarum caudatum*) is thriving (See picture). Wild ginger is distinguished by its beautiful dark green long stemmed leaves and its unique raisin colored flowers that appear later in the Spring. Other plants to look for on the hill are small buckeye trees (*Aesculus californica*), California honeysuckle (*Lonicera hispidula*), elderberry (*Sambucus mexicana*) and false Solomon's seal (*Smilacina stellata*) and osoberry (*Oemleria cerasiformis*). Osoberry puts forth clusters of small oblong leaves from buds all along its slender twigs. In the middle of these hang short clusters of greenish white flowers. Miner's lettuce (*Montia perfoliata*) with its white bell like flowers rising from the middle of round leaves is another volunteer that is doing well. It is so-called because it became an edible staple for early settlers.



WILD GINGER--*Asarum caudatum*.

As you keep walking, you will start to see that the entire hillside is covered with the very invasive cape ivy (a removal project for another work day). But, promise of beautiful natives still remains. Just in front of and slightly below a large cherry plum, look very closely to see a stand of trillium (*Trillium chloropetalum*). The large dark green leaves rise on long stems in clusters of three; in the middle of this cluster a dark oblong maroon blossom rises regally.

We hope you will enjoy watching the progress of this restoration project and will look forward to meeting you the next time a work party is organized.

## Firewise?

It's time to start thinking about making our homes and neighborhood fire-safe. As we all know, the dangerous wildfire season (late August-October) is just around the corner. Check out the Oakland Wildfire Prevention District at [www.oaklandnet.com/government/cm0/wildfireprevention.com](http://www.oaklandnet.com/government/cm0/wildfireprevention.com).

Oakland Public Works' creek department website lists highly flammable plants that should be eradicated. See [www.oaklandpw.com/creeks/living.htm](http://www.oaklandpw.com/creeks/living.htm).

# Five Easy Ways You Can Help Our Creeks!

## 1. Use natural rather than chemical products in your garden and home.

When chemicals are washed into storm drains by water from hoses or rain, they contaminate creeks and the Bay, harming aquatic and marine life. Here are some tips:

- Choose compost over chemical fertilizers.
- Control pests first with hand-picking, traps, and encouraging predatory insects.
- Avoid any pesticides that contain the following: carbaryl (Sevin), Malathion, diazinon, permethrin, Bifenthrin, chlorpyrifos, cyfluthrin, cypermethrin, deltamethrin, esfenvalerate, lambda-cyhalothrin.

Ask your nursery for information about less toxic chemicals, or contact 1-888-BAYWISE, or [www.birc.org](http://www.birc.org).

## 2. Avoid pouring, or washing, or allowing ANYTHING other than plain water to run into gutters or storm drains.

- They drain directly to creeks or the bay; anything carried by the water can hurt living things there.
- Note that “anything” includes soap, garden clippings, pet feces, paint, pesticides, fertilizer, and concrete slurry and dust.
- Wash cars with water only; or wash on dirt or grass so soapy water soaks in; or use your local car wash (they recycle the water used.)

## 3. Help water to filter into the soil.

- This helps to reduce runoff pollution and sudden storm flows that cause erosion.
- Leave a green median in your driveway, and leave a strip between the sidewalk and street unpaved.
- Use chips, gravel, sand, or permeable paving rather than ordinary concrete or asphalt.
- Direct water from roofs and paved surfaces to areas where it can soak into the ground or filter through vegetation.

## 4. Drive less.

- Debris from tire and brake-pad wear, auto exhaust particles, and leaking fluids are major sources of Bay Area water pollution.
- Plan errands to reduce your driving trips.
- Use public transit, bicycle, carpool, or walk whenever possible.

## 5. If you have a creek on your property, plant to keep it shady and to reduce erosion.

- Cool and unsilted water provides a welcoming environment for the many creatures that depend on the creek for survival.
- Keep native plants already in place. They take a minimum of care, and provide a good habitat for birds, butterflies and beneficial insects as well as erosion control.
- Replace invasive plants such as English ivy, Himalayan blackberry, Cape or German ivy, Pampas grass, and ice plant with natives. (For a good list, see Friends of Five Creeks flyer “Native Creekside Plants for the East Bay” on [www.fivecreeks.org](http://www.fivecreeks.org) ; click on Creek Information).

--from a fact sheet sponsored by Alameda Countywide Clean Water Program and Friends of Five Creeks

## IN MEMORIAM

An anonymous generous donation was made in memory of our neighbor Sam Ragent, husband of Leslie Schoenfeld. Sam’s passionate love of the outdoors and nature will always be remembered by those who walk in Butters Canyon.

A generous donation was made by Joan Roberts in memory of George Gray, beloved husband of Dorothy Gray.

## Remember Butters Canyon

Have you considered making BLT a part of your estate plan? Such generous forethought is one excellent way for us to further our commitment to BLT and leave our own legacy of protected land for future generations to experience and enjoy.

Please consider this type of long-term support. It is important to all of us that BLT be able to continue fulfilling its mission of conserving land for people in the decades to come.

Thank you for your generous consideration and ongoing support.

## MEASURE DD FUNDS TO HELP PRESERVE BUTTERS CANYON

The City of Oakland has stepped forward to help preserve Butters Canyon, committing Measure DD funds for the acquisition of Canyon properties!

Measure DD, the Oakland Trust for Clean Water, Safe Parks, is a bond measure passed in 2002, to provide for stream protection and restoration in addition to several large civic improvement projects throughout the City. The City is still in the process of allocating all of the DD funds, but has indicated that funding will be made available to support the Butters Land Trust mission. The funding process will be lengthy, requiring a number of steps (including City Council approval of specific properties), but the reward should be worth the effort.

We have been lucky to have the assistance of several individuals at the City of Oakland who are helping us move towards our goal of preserving all of Butters Canyon. Jean Quan was a key partner in our initial application for Measure DD creekside property acquisition funding and continues to support the activities of BLT.

Based on our urgent need and the several properties that have been listed for sale, Jean helped get us onto an expedited list of projects to be considered for acquisition in this first bond sale. Since our funding application was accepted, Markley Bavinger of the Watershed Improvement Program in the Public Works Agency has been assigned to work closely with Butters Land Trust and to acquire properties on behalf of the City of Oakland. To this end Markley has been regularly attending board meetings and helping to foster our combined preservation efforts.

Our partnership with the City follows a general technique that governments and land trusts use for preserving open space. Land trusts generally move faster than governmental agencies and are more familiar with the local landowners. The City, conversely, can provide funding to finance acquisition of this public resource and develop legislation that permanently protects the open space into the future.

Thus, Butters Land Trust has negotiated the initial purchases of threatened parcels, and continues to work with property owners to identify acceptable terms for donation, purchase, or conservation easement. Together with the City we will develop next steps for protecting the entire canyon through a combination of land trust acquisitions, city purchases, and other appropriate strategies. Our combined action, supported by the community, will allow us to take the critical actions necessary to finally secure preservation of this urban green gem.

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### "It's Not Easy Being Green"...and an All-Volunteer Organization!

For those of you who've ever worked for an all-volunteer non-profit organization, you know that when you look around, there's no one to delegate anything to, you just have to do it yourself. All of the Board members lead busy lives, but spend countless volunteer hours doing the things that have to be done to maintain the organization and move it forward on its mission of preserving Butters Canyon, for all of us, forever.

In short, we are always looking for volunteers to volunteer a little bit of time, or as much time as you can afford to donate, to us. For example, Amy Evans McClure just volunteered an hour a week of her time. It doesn't sound like much, but if we could get ten volunteers like Amy, we could accomplish a lot more. We'd like to be able to communicate with the neighborhood more frequently, for example, but producing and distributing a newsletter takes a lot of time.

In addition, we are looking for one or two additional board members, who could attend monthly meetings and volunteer about 1-2 hours a week of their time. If interested, please contact David Barron at 415 395-4129.

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## About Creeks

By Judy Anderson

In January, a program was hosted by the East Bay Watershed Center and Merritt College called "Conversations about Watersheds." Several of the BLT board members attended this three day conference, each taking in different portions of the program. All of us expressed appreciation of the diverse events we attended.

The program I attended was entitled "Spirit of Place." One of the speakers caused me to think of how fortunate we are, who live near or come to Butters Canyon. That speaker spoke of having to stand over a grate in a culvert to hear the water run, of anger that the culvert couldn't handle the flow of water which caused a backing up of the water into the basement.

We have an open and lovely canyon (headwaters of Peralta Creek) to enjoy. My husband and I have lived here a long time, long enough to have appreciated the many changes brought about by seasons, and by people, both good and bad. (Bad have been dumping for years, excellent have been the neighborhood cleanups which erased that bad.) Always, it has been apparent that the neighbors have appreciated this canyon; from kids playing down at the bottom, horses being ridden on the pathways leading to the park, berry pickers, plum pickers (we made jam a few years), and the many miles so many of us have put on that stretch of road.