



Vol. 15 #3

Solano Land Trust

VISTAS

www.solanolandtrust.org

Fall
2008

Inside

SLT battles invasive thistles

Aleta George, *Vistas* editor



Helicopter (or is it a giant bug?) takes five

Photo: Sue Wickham

After many months of planning, a helicopter with an aerial applicator flew over King and Eastern Swett Ranches and sprayed an herbicide over 250 acres of dense artichoke thistle. Solano Land Trust has many types of thistle on its properties, including some native thistles that are welcome, but of the invasive thistles, artichoke thistle is the nastiest, says SLT Land Steward Ken Poerner. According to the California Invasive Plant Council, Solano County has some of the worst infestations in California.

After determining the extent of artichoke thistle at King-Swett Ranches, SLT obtained a grant from the Solano County Weed Management Area, a group of landowners and organizations dedicated to controlling weeds in Solano County. Solano Land Trust is a member of the group, as are Solano Resource Conservation District (RCD), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and the UC Cooperative Extension, collaborators in this project.

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President's Message

Ian Anderson, *President*



As the incoming president, I would like to introduce myself. I am a fourth generation agriculturalist from the Montezuma Hills in southeastern Solano County. Montezuma Hills

is a 50 square-mile area that supports dry land grain production and animal grazing. Our farm operation has 3,500 sheep, 100 goats, 3,000 acres of non-irrigated wheat and barley, plus 1,000 acres of hay.

I have been on the SLT board of directors for eight years and have found it to be a rewarding experience. SLT challenges us to value our natural resources through our actions, like recognizing that the land we thrive on and raise our families on today is also an invaluable resource to be maintained for future generations. Land is more than just a bank asset. This is a mindset that we as a society must embrace.

One of the exciting things about Solano Land Trust is that our mission is really about creating actions that work toward making Solano County a better place to live. Solano County is blessed with open spaces and highly productive agricultural lands. Whether we live or work in the country or in an urban setting, our surrounding open spaces both feed us and support our mental well-being.

As president of SLT, my goals are to keep our organization focused on our mission, to improve our financial stability, and to greatly expand our communities' involvement with the organization. Please join in and become involved. We can help make Solano County an even better place to live than it is already.



SLT welcomes new board members

Marilyn Farley, *Executive Director*



Al Lavezzo & Elizabeth Fry at Rush Ranch

Photo: Marilyn Farley

Lifelong Solano County resident Al Lavezzo has given back to his community in many ways, most recently by becoming a Solano Land Trust board member. He believes that preservation of open space—including its availability for recreation—is integral to our quality of life.

Al is an attorney and founding partner with Favaro, Lavezzo, Gill, Caretti, and Heppell. He specializes in real estate, land development and acquisition, and in advising corporate clients. He has served on the Vallejo City Council, as chairman of the board of the Solano Economic Development Corporation, and chairman of the board of the Travis Regional Armed Services Committee. He has been active with many other civic and professional organizations in Solano County, including past president of the Vallejo Navy League and past president of the Solano County Bar Association.

“My legal background should enable me to help Solano Land Trust with future acquisitions and other matters involving land transactions,” Al says. “I also think my experience will enhance SLT’s fundraising abilities.”

When asked about the County’s challenges in maintaining or improving our quality of life, Al responded, “As we continue to grow, we need to maintain balance between providing adequate housing and infrastructure while preserving open space and recreational amenities.”

Al and his wife, Ann, have lived in Green Valley for the past 15 years, and before that, in Vallejo. They have three daughters and four grandchildren. In his spare time, Al enjoys spending time with his grandchildren, fly-fishing and playing golf.

Our newest board member is Elizabeth Fry, president of Showcase Properties International Inc. She joined the board in February 2008, as a

Continued on next page



Executive Director's Perspective

Marilyn Farley, *Executive Director*

I expect this to be my last column as executive director of the Solano Land Trust. It has been a short sojourn but a very rewarding one for me personally. My association with Solano Land Trust started in 2002 after I began serving on the Fairfield City Council and was appointed to SLT's board as a city representative. In May 2005, I moved from the board to become the executive director.

My only regret with regards to the Solano Land Trust is that I didn't start doing this work earlier. The staff here is dedicated, gifted, and self-motivated, and has been a joy to work with. The board of directors is extremely hands-on when needed, and has many members whose commitment has stretched from ten to over twenty years.

I believe Solano Land Trust serves the community in many ways and is doing work important to the future of Solano County. I am confident that future citizens will view our purchase of open space lands as pioneering work. I also expect that our work with agriculturists who voluntarily agree to permanent protection of their land for farming will positively shape the future. As more lands are protected in the area between Dixon and Davis, for example, we will have a permanent greenbelt buffer.

SLT has many partners who are essential to our success. I am particularly pleased that we have a partnership with Solano County to run our Lynch Canyon Open Space as a public park. This collaboration could become the model for future efforts in Solano County to preserve valuable natural resources and open the land to the public.

Once I retire from SLT, I hope to work towards an expanded County parks operation or a Park and Open Space District funded through a sales or parcel tax. I invite others to join me. Solano is now the only Bay Area County without a district dedicated to parks. Such a funding source might also be used to preserve our privately owned and managed farmland, as it too is an irreplaceable treasure.

Finally, I expect to stay involved with SLT by joining the ranks of over 200 volunteers. ❖

New board members

Continued from previous page

member at large. Elizabeth became more aware of and involved in land conservation since becoming the exclusive territory participant for Cabela's Trophy Properties in California. Cabela's is the foremost outfitter in the world for outdoor recreational activities and has a strong commitment to conservation. Elizabeth specializes in selling farm, ranch, and recreational properties using the exposure she's gained through this affiliation.

A Solano County resident since 1968, Elizabeth lives with her husband Mark Shaw and their three children in the Pleasants Valley where Mark cultivates 38 acres of French prunes and English walnuts.

Elizabeth is deeply committed to Solano Midnight Sun, a nonprofit she co-founded to help women with breast cancer, and has raised over \$250,000 since 2004. A big supporter of the Vacaville Public Education Foundation, she's contributed to them as a board member and financially since 2003.

When asked why she chose to join SLT's board, Elizabeth said, "I appreciate that SLT is conserving land, doing a good job of being stewards, and opening their properties to people for education and outdoor experiences."

As a property rights advocate, Elizabeth notes, "SLT preserves land for the public or in conservation easements in a way that makes sense for the property owner. I think I'll be able to help SLT achieve its mission with my connections in the community, expertise in real estate, and fundraising experience."

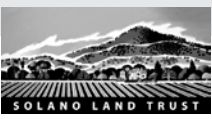
Elizabeth enjoys outdoor activities including golfing, hiking, snow skiing and scuba-diving. ❖

Are you a member of the Solano Land Trust team?

Only if you volunteer or contribute at the \$50 level or more. Benefits include our new speaker series, *Vistas* newsletter, exclusive member's-only hikes, tours, and special events, and a one-time discount for Rush Ranch facilities. Renew today by using the attached envelope or by donating online. Also, you can save paper and postage by reading *Vistas* online. Email jennifer@solanolandtrust.org if you prefer to receive it by email.

Save the date for a SLT volunteer appreciation event!

November 1, 2008 at
Rush Ranch



Science on the Land (third in a series):

Mapping micro-topography at Rush Ranch's tidal marsh

Jessica Olson, Restoration Planner



Hydrographer James Kulpa measuring Suisun Marsh topography.

Photo: Environmental Data Solutions.

At first glance, the tidal marsh at Rush Ranch may appear completely flat. However, the elevation can change quite rapidly within a few inches. Without paying close attention to changes in the micro-topography, an ecologist walking around the marsh collecting data can quickly be up to her ears in water and muck!

Despite the challenges rapid changes in micro-topography may cause the field ecologist, it is an important feature for tidal marsh ecosystems. As elevation changes, so does water availability, plant community composition, and dependent wildlife species. Currently, SLT is in the beginning stages of preparing a Rush Ranch marsh restoration and master plan in order to prioritize restoration and management activities for the next thirty years. The plan will identify the strategies best designed for protecting existing natural resources. But before these decisions can be made, it's crucial to gather accurate micro-topographic measurements. Topographic and environmental data will help to answer these questions: Will re-configuring or filling existing man-made channels improve tidal marsh function? Are there areas that would be suitable for rare plants to grow? Where will physical modifications of the marsh plain contribute to long-term prevention of exotic plants?

To obtain the needed data, SLT is currently making accurate topographic measurements of the landscape and confirming existing topographic data through ground surveys and LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging). LiDAR detects differences in elevation by projecting and capturing scattered light from a picture that is taken from an airplane flown over a survey area, while ground surveys require data gathering in the marsh.

Essentially, the ground survey consists of a team of two surveyors who carefully navigate the marsh with Global Positioning System (GPS) units that can measure and record the elevation (or height) of each location. One person stays in place with a GPS unit, while the second person takes a smaller, hand-held "rover unit." The rover unit communicates to the base-unit station via radio link, and continually logs points relative to the base station. The surveyor with the mobile unit walks a transect (or straight line) and stops at every major change in elevation, such as ditches, slopes, and other features, in order to capture the extent of elevation changes. The surveyor will walk parallel and perpendicular transects

until the entire area is sufficiently covered. As our hired topographic surveyor James Kulpa says, the ground survey requires "blood, sweat, and tears," especially if you unexpectedly fall into a hole of water and muck (with very expensive equipment)!

The final product of both the ground survey and LiDAR is a map with the 3-D surface represented. On top of this digital elevation model, we overlay soil, plant community, hydrology, and other environmental data to help analyze and answer those important research and restoration questions that are aimed at conserving the rich natural heritage of Rush Ranch. ❖

Join the Coastal Cleanup Day!

Saturday, Sept. 20, 9 a.m.

Help collect garbage at the annual cleanup of Hill Slough, adjacent to Rush Ranch. Meet at the one-lane bridge on Grizzly Island Road. Sponsored by Fairfield Suisun Sewer District. Call Margaret at FSSD, (707) 429-8930.

New native plant garden taking root at Rush Ranch

Sue Wickham, Project Coordinator

The garden outside the Rush Ranch Nature Center is growing thanks to a cooperative effort by the San Francisco Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, volunteers, and staff. Last spring, Tru-Green Landscaping installed a brick patio encircled by stone-faced benches and winding, decomposed granite walkways. Tru-Green also donated the valley oak tree next to the blacksmith shop. The Napa and Willis Jepson Chapters of the California Native Plant Society and the Solano Resource Conservation District donated the plants, and as reported in our last issue, Papyrus staff planted the garden.

The patio includes over 120 personalized bricks purchased by contributors to the Rush Ranch Endowment Fund. We've raised \$650,000 towards our \$2-million goal, and could use your donations to help preserve Rush Ranch for future generations. Go to our website or contact our office to arrange for your donation or brick memento.

All of the plants in the garden are native to California and adapted to low summer water. The walnut hull mulch donated by board member Russ Lester of Dixon Ridge Farms keeps moisture in the soil and doesn't decompose as readily as ordinary bark mulch. Several varieties of native salvia, also called sage, can be distinguished by their aromatic leaves. Blue penstemon surround a Native American grinding stone and small trees will show their height in a few years. Hummingbirds love the California fuchsia, and toyon, coffeeberry, and current add to the plant palette and provide berries for birds.

As with all gardens, it's a work in progress. We invite gardeners, experienced or not, to come out on Saturday, November 1 for our first garden workday. One of our volunteers, Becky Mannion, will be there to assist with any plant questions. Reservations aren't required; just show up with gloves and a smile. Call Sue at 432-0150 x207 with questions. ❖



Winding paths and stone benches provide tranquility in new garden

Photo: Sue Wickham



Invasive thistles

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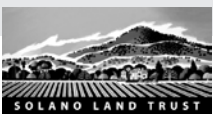
Before any spraying could be done, endangered species' buffer zones were mapped by NRCS and flagged in the field. In conjunction with the aerial spraying, Poerner and Field Steward Nick Meckler spot sprayed 30 acres (spread over 800) with the help of Five Dot Land and Cattle Company. Thistle has a huge seed bank, says SLT Project Coordinator Sue Wickham, who anticipates that control will continue for at least five years, or as long as it is found in the region.

At East Wilcox Ranch in the Greater Jepson Prairie, a different strategy is being used to eradicate purple star thistle, another thorny problem for land restoration managers. SLT Conservation Project Manager Ben Wallace says that in many areas of Wilcox Ranch, purple star thistle has formed dense thickets that crowd out everything else.

Vernal pool consultant Carol Witham and UC Davis weed specialist Joe DiTamaso developed a plan to eradicate the thistle. Wallace says that he was skeptical of the strategy at first, but initial results have been impressive. The typical approach to eradicate purple star thistle is to spray with Transline herbicide in February or March, but that's a very sensitive time for endangered vernal pool shrimp and young native plants. "Transline is a risky proposition if your goal is to protect a vernal pool ecosystem," says Wallace.

The Witham and DiTamaso approach was to spray the thistle with Rodeo after the native plants had died and the pools had dried up, and then go back and mow. "It appears to be getting rid of both the first year rosettes and the second year bolting plants with minimal collateral damage to native species or vernal pools," says Wallace.

SLT will continue to look for safe ways to control thistle so that people, wildlife, and livestock can use the land too. ❖



Business Partner in Conservation: Anheuser-Busch

Marilyn Farley, Executive Director



It's not immediately apparent what a beer company and a land trust have in common. Yes, employees and visitors of Anheuser-Busch's Fairfield brewery can see Solano Land Trust's new nature center at Rush Ranch. And visitors to the ranch can spy the brewery off in the distance. But the connection is far more powerful than geographic proximity. At a breakfast sponsored by Solano Land Trust for our Business Partners in Conservation, plant manager Kevin Finger offered an explanation.

"Solano Land Trust is well-managed and is preserving land we can all enjoy," he told a crowd of fellow corporate executives, SLT board members and staff. He recalled visiting Rush Ranch a few years ago and enjoying the marsh while his daughter worked on her high school science project. The Anheuser-Busch Foundation is a corporate sponsor at the benefactor, or \$25,000, level. The

Ian Anderson, SLT president; Kevin Finger, Anheuser-Busch plant manager; Marilyn Farley, SLT executive director at August 6 breakfast at Rush Ranch honoring SLT's Business Partners in Conservation. Learn more at www.solanolandtrust.org/partners

company has historically shared many of SLT's values of being good stewards of our environmental resources. Kevin, representing Anheuser-Busch's perspective, makes a compelling case that it is also good business.

For example, Anheuser-Busch has had a tradition of operating with care and concern for the environment since the late 1800s when the company began recycling used brewer's grain into cattle feed. At the Fairfield brewery, Kevin is proud that 99.1 percent of their solid waste is recycled, from office paper to the famous Budweiser beechwood chips.

Anheuser-Busch has a very deliberate approach to environmental sustainability, even recycling steam coming off the brewing process to pre-heat water for the next batch. The Fairfield plant is beginning to install solar arrays and is actively studying use of wind energy.

In sum, their approach is very compatible with SLT's efforts to be good stewards of the land for future generations to enjoy. ❖

Lynch Canyon trail event outruns expectations!

Teri Engbring, Volunteer and Education Coordinator



*Runner at the top of Prairie Ridge
Photo: Ed Gallagher*

The first Lynch Canyon Trail Run and Community Hike was an overwhelming success thanks to nearly 300 participants, 22 sponsors, and 60 volunteers. The event drew the largest crowd to the park since it opened in May 2007. Race director Chris Abess led a dedicated organizing team of Eric Simoni, Todd Rewick, Jim Reikowsky, Buzz Higgins, and Ann Grove, who gave hundreds of hours to achieve success.

"The positive experience of participants was due to our great organizing team and vast network of sponsors," said Chris. The event raised awareness and appreciation of open space and outdoor recreation opportunities in Solano County, created a competitive event for serious athletes, netted over \$8,000 for improvements at Lynch Canyon, and promoted exercise in a natural setting for a wide range of ages and abilities.

County Supervisor and SLT Board Member John Vasquez helped set up at 6 a.m. on race day. He then handed out water, encouragement and awards at the aid station atop Tower Trail. Representing both sides of the partnership that operates Lynch Canyon, he thanked everyone for all their effort and hard work.

"I was excited to see the number of older runners taking on the challenging trail runs," said Vasquez. "I don't know if I could do that, but we clearly need places like Lynch where constituents of all ages can get physically active, be they runners, bikers, hikers or equestrians." He's quick to remind everyone that County funding to keep Lynch open to the public will only continue beyond the current three-year trial period if the park is actively used.

"It's important to visit often and sign in every time you do," he said.

May 30 has been chosen for the 2009 Lynch Canyon Trail Run and Community Hike, and many participants are already looking forward to next year!



Thanks to all our recent contributors

We want to thank all those who have recently contributed to help SLT preserve, manage, and open our lands to the public as well as educate the public about agricultural lands, wetlands, and open space in Solano County.

Members

Lynn Abess
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 Agricola Flora et Fauna
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 Ursula Anderson
 Ian & Margaret Anderson
 Burt Anderson
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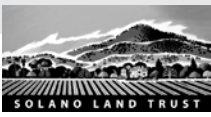
Foundations

Stewardship Council
 The Foothills Foundation
 Gordon & Betty Moore Foundation
 Syar Foundation
 Thomas & Eva Fong Foundation

Government Agencies

Bay Area Ridge Trail Council
 CA Dept of Conservation (CA Farmland Conservancy Program)
 CA Dept of Fish and Game Ecosystem Restoration Program
 City of Benicia
 City of Fairfield
 Fairfield Suisun Sewer District
 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
 SF Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve
 San Francisco Foundation Bay Fund
 Solano County
 Solano County Water Agency
 Tri-City & County Joint Powers Authority
 USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program, EQIP Program, WHIP Program)
 U.S. Dept of Defense
 U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service
 Vallejo Sanitation & Flood Control District

* Please contact Executive Director Marilyn Farley to learn about levels and benefits of partnerships at (707) 432-0150 x201 or marilyn@solanolandtrust.org.



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- Marilyn Farley, *Executive Director*
- Teri Engbring, *Volunteer and Education Coordinator*
- Jennifer Fernandez, *Administrative Assistant*
- Rob Goldstein, *Land Transaction Specialist*
- Nick Meckler, *Field Steward*
- Jane Moody, *Bookkeeper*
- Cathy O'Connor, *Finance Officer*
- Jessie Olson, *Restoration Planner*
- Ken Poerner, *Land Steward*
- Ben Wallace, *Conservation Project Manager*
- Sue Wickham, *Project Coordinator*

Aleta George, *Editor, SLT Vistas*
 Logo design based on original art by Don Birrell

Our Mission Statement

Solano Land Trust is a private, nonprofit organization whose mission is the preservation of agricultural lands, open space, and resources through the acquisition of land and conservation easements, education, and land management.

Activities & Events

For latest news on events and directions to our lands go to www.solanolandtrust.org

Unless otherwise noted, all events are free and require no advance registration. Workday groups should call ahead. For more information on events (unless noted otherwise) contact Teri Engbring at (707) 432.0150 x200, teri@solanolandtrust.org. With the exception of Suisun Hill Trail across from Rush Ranch, dogs are not allowed on SLT properties.

Jepson Prairie Preserve

Shhh...Vernal pool creatures and wildflowers are dormant for summer, but you can still take a self-guided tour in the "Docent Triangle" seven days a week during daylight hours.

King and Swett Ranches

The King and Swett Ranches are currently open to the public only during staff or docent led activities.

Scenic Hikes and Birding

First Saturday of the month:

Oct. 4, Nov. 1, Dec. 6. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Moderate pace. Meet at the Park-and-Ride lot at the Hiddenbrooke Parkway/American Canyon Road exit at I-80.

Seed Collecting and Bio-monitoring

Saturday, Oct. 18

Vigorous hike with Sue. To sign-up contact Sue at (707) 432-0150 x207 or sue@solanolandtrust.org.

Lynch Canyon Open Space

Lynch Canyon is open to the public Wed. through Sun. from 8 a.m. to posted closing time. Trail maps at parking lot kiosk. Carry your own water. As a Solano County Park, there is a \$5 per-day, per-vehicle parking fee. Meet at parking lot unless otherwise noted.

Light Hike with Docent Doris

Sunday, Sep. 21 & Oct. 12, 9 a.m. to noon.

Guided Birding Hike with Docent Earl

Sunday, Oct. 19, 9 a.m. to noon

Scenic Hikes with Docent Dave

Fourth Saturday of the month:

Sep. 27, Nov. 22, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Moderate difficulty.

New! Human History Tour of Lynch Canyon

Saturday, Oct. 26, 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Celebrate Adventure: Walk with Rock!
Sunday, September 27. 9:30 a.m. (must pre-register)
 Participate in this fundraiser for Access Adventure. Go to www.accessadventure.org or call (707) 432-0152 for more information.

Volunteer Workdays

Second Saturday of the month:

Oct. 11, Nov. 8, Dec. 13. 9 a.m.

Bring gloves and a favorite planting tool. Water, snacks and parking free for volunteers.

Rush Ranch Open Space

Rush Ranch is open 7 days a week from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. until 10/31, and until 5 p.m. from 11/1 to 2/28. The Suisun Hill Trail is open from dawn to dusk.

Rush Ranch Speaker Series (New!)

1. Raptor Identification Workshop with Larry Broderick

Thursday, Oct. 2, 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

2. The Amazing Suisun Marsh with Steve Chappell,

Suisun Resource Conservation District

Thursday, Nov. 6, 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Limited seating. SLT volunteers, members, and their guests must RSVP to Teri at (707) 432-0150 x200.

Volunteer Workdays

First Saturday of the month:

Sep. 6, Oct. 4, Nov. 1. 9 a.m.

Get some fresh air while helping with ranch, trail, or native garden maintenance. Meet at the Kit House.

Blacksmith Shop Demonstration & Access

Adventure Carriage Rides

Third Saturday of the month:

Sep. 20, Oct. 18, Nov. 15. 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Watch or participate in the art of blacksmithing and explore Rush Ranch on a horse-drawn carriage.

Solano Land Trust
 1001 Texas Street, Suite C
 Fairfield, CA 94533
 (707) 432-0150

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