



SMACKDOWN ON DEVELOPMENT:

They're Proposing WHAT?

By Brain Schmidt

Committee for Green Foothills Advocates take an almost perverse pride in comparing how frankly terrible some proposed developments have been. While your modern “stupid growth” proposals lack the grandiosity of the fill-the-ENTIRE-South-Bay proposals of yesteryear, they make up for it by concentrating wrong-headedness in somewhat smaller areas.

In San Mateo County, they're trying to revive the “destroy the Bay” spirit of the past (Don't Destroy Wetlands to Build Expensive, Risky Development, Page 6), but for purposes of comparison, Santa Clara County offers the following terrible projects:

Coyote Valley Specific Plan:

it might be somewhat unfair to bring up a now-dead project, but we only woke up from this nightmare a few years ago. An accurate description: a proposal to prevent redevelopment of San Jose, using fiscal incentives that had the effect of encouraging businesses to leave downtown San Jose and relocate to Coyote Valley. The City cherry-picked the developers' own financial and environmental consultants and made them the City's consultants in a no-bid process that guaranteed conflicts of interest and a lack of independence. The unsupported fiscal analysis relied on an unending housing boom that always ex-

ceeded income growth. The environmental analysis was even worse, with literally drive-by biological analysis, easily refuted by student volunteers at De Anza College, and other components done so poorly that it caught the attention of California's Attorney General and national environmental organizations.

The collapse of this wreck three years ago means, sadly, that it can't contend for today's prize for current projects. But it could come back! And we can use it as a baseline, because in some respects, our other contenders are even worse.

Coyote Valley Research Park:

prizefighters contending for championships enter the boxing ring with dozens of wins and almost no losses, but somebody has to be the Other Guy with the opposite record. Enter CVRP, the Other Guy. Wheezing towards its own “I'm Finished” line, but not yet 100% dead, this proposal to convert hundreds of acres of North Coyote farmland and wildlife corridor into a low-density campus development enters a final year before technical expiration. The proposal fails the very low baseline set by the Coyote Valley Specific plan in its low density sprawl, and is only superior due to being smaller. Like Coyote Valley Specific Plan, it concentrates its impact on nearly pristine farmland and the crucial wildlife corridor while calling for the preservation of the less-intact South

Coyote Valley.

There's a reason no one has taken advantage of the existing permission to construct large campus, low-density development, and the reason is that it makes no economic sense. We occasionally hear city planners emphasize the value of sacrificing farmland and natural habitat in order to make large campus developments possible, but CVRP's economic failure stands in strong contrast to that argument.

Morgan Hill Southeast Quadrant (SEQ):

the oft-derided Coyote Valley Specific Plan had far more problems than could be listed here, but one thing could be said in its favor—that the developers paid for 100% of the planning process. The City of Morgan Hill, by contrast, considers that to be far too hard on developers. They've generously offered the City taxpayers' money to pay for a considerable portion of the planning process—over \$170,000. The City uses the public's money based on the claim that the public will benefit from the sprawl, and by blending this proposal with a different, worthwhile proposal to preserve agriculture in other parts of Morgan Hill. Compounding the error, the proposal has a significant likelihood of being rejected by an oversight body (Local Agency Formation Commission, LAFCO). CGF specifically

Continued on page 3



COMMITTEE FOR GREEN FOOTHILLS

Committee for Green Foothills is a grassroots 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization working to establish and maintain land use policies that protect the environment throughout Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties.

Committee for Green Foothills mission is to protect the open space, farmlands, and natural resources of Santa Clara and San Mateo counties through advocacy, education and grassroots action.

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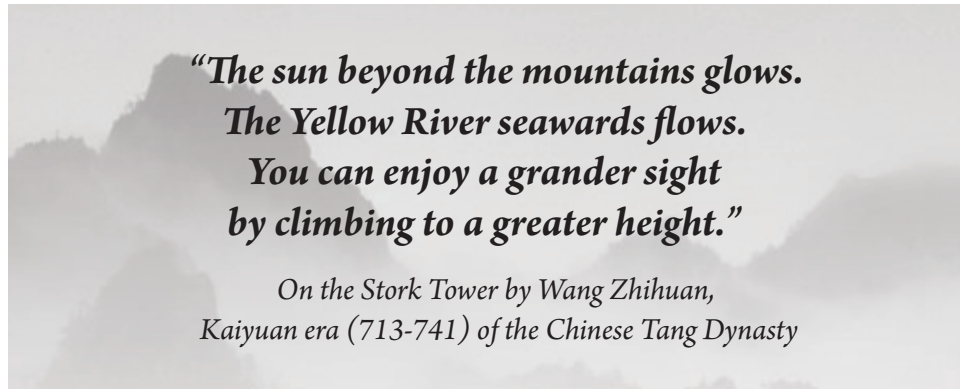
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Pete LaTourrette

LAYOUT

Bill Murray



*“The sun beyond the mountains glows.
The Yellow River seawards flows.
You can enjoy a grander sight
by climbing to a greater height.”*

*On the Stork Tower by Wang Zhihuan,
Kaiyuan era (713-741) of the Chinese Tang Dynasty*

Written on the Stork-bird Tower, which legend says was a three-storied Tower built on a sandbar in the middle of the Yellow River near present-day Yongji County of Shanxi Province, China. The Tower was a famous tourist spot in the Tang Dynasty and was destroyed by the river torrents after the Song Dynasty. Said to be one of the most read poems in Chinese history, it describes the scenery of remote lands beyond the Great Wall, and it has stood as a metaphor for life for generations ever since. (ref: <http://hubpages.com/hub/Aim-the-Star>)



Pete LaTourrette

When I first read this poem I was struck by the simple, yet deeply descriptive, romantic, and meaningful content. I was reminded of the many Wallace Stegner writings on nature of the west. Both authors are passionate in messaging the land as inspiration.

From the Executive Director

Cynthia D'Agosta

In this issue I am equally moved by the writings of President Margaret MacNiven and Vice President Matt Burrows, who have taken their own journeys to greater heights and are stirred by the nature around them. Their expressions carry on the same passion for the land that Zhihuan and Stegner aspire us to. But in extreme contrast to this reflective peacefulness, we have several articles in this edition pointing out the injustices and bad approaches being taken with development proposals in our counties. It leaves me wondering—

how could these project proponents not have been influenced by at least one such writer as Zhihuan or Stegner? — or something similar? How can they continue not to see the natural beauty they destroy, or hear the songbirds they disrupt?

Fortunately there are people like Margaret and Matt who will share their experiences; and Brian, Lennie, Julie, and Alice Kaufman to fight the fights. Fortunately for CGF, someone else who hears the birds' song and chases after it for a photograph, **Pete LaTourrette**, has rejoined the Board of Directors! We are very excited to welcome Pete's return, for with him our legacy continues. You may know Pete both as a previous CGF Director and as Board President. Another inspired artist, Pete's photos provide a beautiful accompaniment to this edition. Thanks Pete and welcome back!

Thanks to everyone for making this a very meaningful and thoughtful edition — we hope you enjoy. 


Continued from page 1

warned the City to seek the oversight body's advice before throwing money at the project, but they rushed in anyway.

Anything that fails to meet Coyote Valley standards for responsible process has little chance of being a responsible proposal, and the Morgan Hill SEQ simply makes no sense. The City has all the land it needs for residential and commercial development within City limits. To evade any restrictions on sprawl based on analysis of available land, the City simply made up an entirely new category of land called "Sports Recreation and Leisure." The City claimed that anything remotely related to this category, like a private school, should be allowed to expand here.

The SEQ process stumbles forward, funded while the rest of the City's funding suffers, but its ultimate fate is unclear.

Other projects: Santa Clara County has other flawed projects. San Jose is reviving a 13-year-old environmental review for a project right next to the Guadalupe River, but it's a relatively small area. The Wastewater Treatment Plan proposal in north San Jose includes questionable development, but may also lead to beneficial environmental restoration. Stanford University consistently pushes up to, and sometimes beyond, the constraints on future development in the Foothills. None of these projects, however, meet the scope of the major ones discussed earlier.

Conclusion for Santa Clara County: weighing factors such as size of the project, its environmental destructiveness, wrongheadedness of the process, and simple waste of taxpayer money, the winner becomes clear: Morgan Hill SEQ takes the title of Worst Project in the County. Readers will have to judge how Santa Clara and San Mateo County projects compare in terribleness, but we hope the prize for the winner and runner-ups is simply cancellation. 


Updates on Ongoing Issues in Santa Clara County

By Brain Schmidt

Committee for Green Foothills has followed many environmental issues over the years and has documented our work in this newsletter. We provide the update below on several of these issues:

Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan: this plan has been promised since 2001, and a public draft version is now available. It primarily concerns endangered species but creates an opportunity to obtain additional funding for buying, preserving, and managing land. The impact fees on developers will also tend to discourage development in natural habitats. There are some concerns about the plan, however, and CGF will continue documenting the issues to submit by the April comment deadline.

Santa Clara County Parks: one issue with the County Habitat Plan is how it relies upon funding to buy new parks. CGF was instrumental in creating and supporting a dedicated funding stream over the years for County Parks, and we have no problem with appropriate Parkland being brought into a Habitat Reserve system to be created in the Habitat Plan. CGF is concerned with the County Roads Department's plan to use new County Parks as a "credit" that makes up for road impacts. The Roads Department should mitigate for the roads it builds, instead of reducing the benefits the public receives from new parks.

Coyote Valley Research Park: this is the old "Cisco" project from back in 2000–2001 time period. After much conflict, it was approved but never built due to it being a terrible project economically. The development permits are nearing expiration, and we are watching to fight against any proposed renewals. Meanwhile, San Jose's General Plan is undergoing revision that promotes economic development and, if we cannot guarantee Coyote Valley's protection, at least we want to push development in Coyote Valley to happen as far in the future as possible. 



San Mateo Coastline Where's the Beach?

The iconic rock formation at Martin's Beach.

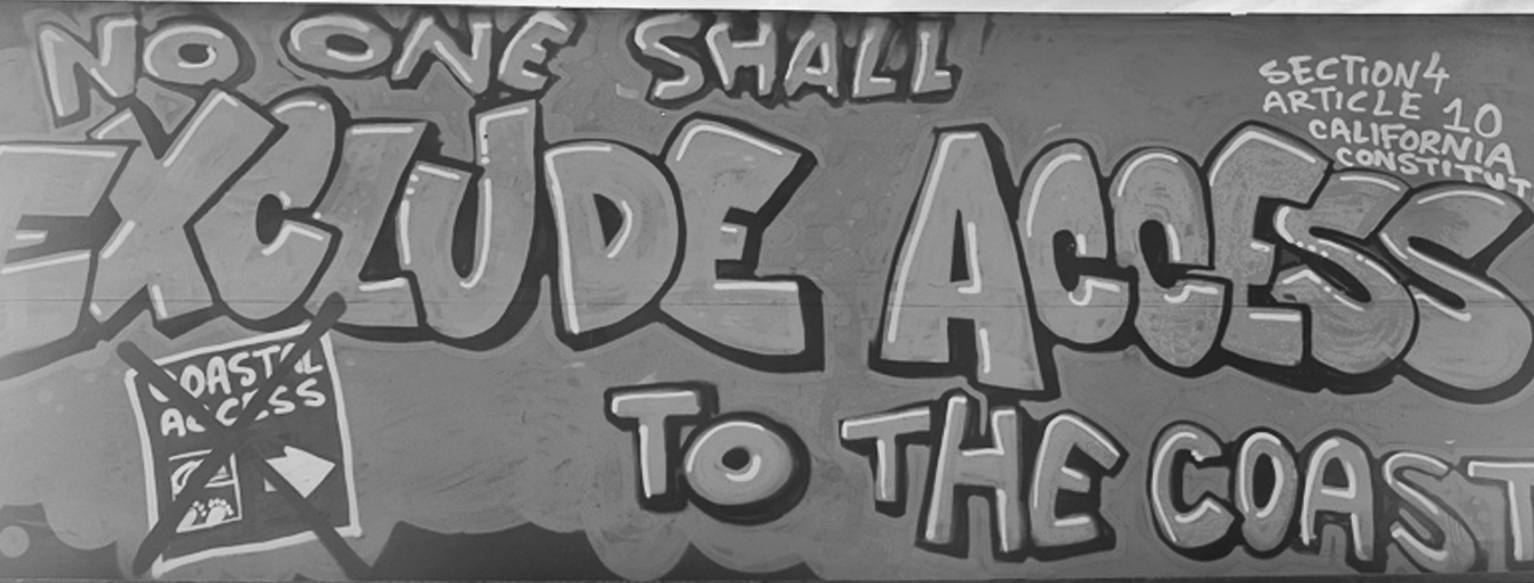
by Lennie Roberts

For many years, Martin's Beach, just south of Half Moon Bay, has been a special destination for beach-bound visitors. Although privately owned, the owners welcomed visitors, charged a modest fee for parking, and ran a convenience store for picnickers, fishermen, and surfers. All this suddenly changed in 2008, when mysterious new owners abruptly posted "Beach Temporarily Closed" and "Do Not Enter" signs and locked the gate. Unfortunately, the "temporary" closure for "repair" has not been temporary.

Public access to the beach is protected under the California State Constitution's public trust doctrine, which can be traced back to English common law. Title to the shore below the high water mark is owned by the people of the state and held in trust for

navigation, commerce, and fishing. Court decisions have expanded the public trust doctrine to include recreation, open space, and habitat protection purposes. The California Coastal Act of 1976 states that one of its main goals is to **"Maximize public access to and along the coast and maximize public recreational opportunities in the coastal zone consistent with sound resources, conservation principles and constitutionally protected rights of private property owners."** Closing Martin's Beach flies in the face of these long-held constitutional guarantees.

The Coastal Commission and San Mateo County Planning, acting upon complaints from the public, have attempted to get the owners to reopen Martin's Beach. Martins Beach LLC, a limited liability corporation, has been less than cooperative so far. They sought relief in court, asserting the county was seeking to deprive them of their constitutional rights by requiring



Activists recently painted the large sign that sits at the entrance to Martin's Beach. The mural was quickly removed.

them to maintain a money losing business against their will. A San Mateo County Superior Court judge dismissed the suit, noting that the owners never applied for the necessary permits to install a locked gate and therefore the case was not “ripe” for consideration by the court.

The action has recently been shifted to the Coastal Commission, where enforcement of long established public access across private property has been successful in a number of cases up and down the coast. The county has formally requested the Commission to assume primary responsibility to issue a Cease and Desist Order.

A second troubling violation by Martins Beach LLC has been the recent planting of 160 Cypress trees along a half-mile stretch of Highway One. The closely-spaced trees would have eventually formed a dense hedge that would have blocked scenic views across open farm fields to the ocean. The county in 2009 informed the owners that this

activity requires a Coastal Development Permit, and the owners agreed to remove the trees. It is not known whether the trees were moved to other view-blocking locations on the property, however.

Surfers and other historic users of the beach remain hopeful that public access will soon be restored at Martin's Beach. To call the public's attention to the problem, on December 30, 2010, some talented midnight artists painted a huge blue and pink message protesting the closure on the blank billboard next to the locked gate.

“No One Shall Exclude Access to the Coast” it proclaimed, citing Section 4, Article 10 of the California Constitution. The artwork was obliterated by noon the next day, but a front-page news story in the San Jose Mercury News featured the beautiful sign. Just like the fundamental right to public access, this message can't — and won't — be erased that easily. **CGF**

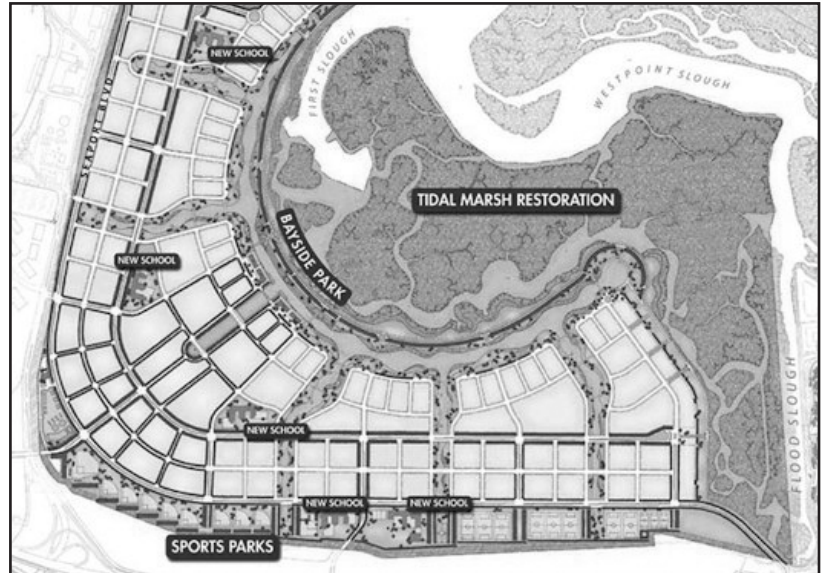
Don't Destroy Wetlands to Build Expensive, Risky Development

(This article was printed in Redwood City Patch on December 16, 2010.)

by Alice Kaufman

Remember that old joke “I’ve got some Florida swampland to sell you?” We used to think swamplands — that is, wetlands — were no good for anything. Nowadays we understand that wetlands provide invaluable benefits, from habitat for endangered species, to filtering water pollution, to protecting coastal areas from storm surges, to combating global climate change by sequestering carbon. But one thing about the old “Florida swampland” joke is still true — wetlands are a bad place for development, and anyone trying to sell you on the idea is selling a scam.

Well, there’s a swampland scam going on right now in Redwood City. Agribusiness giant Cargill and luxury home developer DMB Associates want to sell you on the idea of building a small city on the salt ponds that stretch between Woodside Road and Marsh Road on the east side of



the Bay.

The first problem you run into when you build on former wetlands is the earthquake problem. Landfill is particularly susceptible to earthquakes — we learned that in the Loma Prieta earthquake, when the greatest damage was in the Marina district in San Francisco. But the danger is exacerbated here, because not only the homes but also the levee protecting them would be built on fill. That levee is going to be the only thing holding back the water of the Bay, which scientists predict will rise several feet over the next few decades. One earthquake, one breach of the levee, and the entire development could be underwater. Redwood City would be left with a cleanup effort similar to that faced by New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina — and taxpayers would be footing the bill.

Because the site is on the east side of 101, it’s very isolated and hard to get to. Cargill and DMB propose to build three roads in and out of the development. Two of these would dump their traffic directly onto Woodside Road and Marsh Road, right at the 101 on-ramps. Think about the entire population of San Carlos (plus all the people working in that 1

million square feet of office space) trying to get onto 101 at those interchanges during rush hour. Think about what traffic on 101 is already like, without adding all those new cars. It’s true that Redwood City needs more housing — but we should follow the already-approved plan to redevelop and revitalize the Downtown area, which would benefit all Redwood City residents without creating massive traffic problems.

Cargill and DMB want us to believe that this site is just perfect for development and that it will bring benefits to Redwood City. The only ones to benefit will be Cargill and DMB, who stand to make huge profits from selling and developing the site. Redwood City, on the other hand, will be left with a massive development sitting below sea level in an earthquake zone, creating huge traffic snarls every day just by the residents trying to get in and out of the development — and the Bay will lose one of the few remaining sites that can still be restored to wetlands. We should tell Cargill and DMB that we’re not interested in buying their swampland scam. **CGF**

The only ones to benefit will be Cargill and DMB, who stand to make huge profits from selling and developing the site.

101. Their proposed plan would include housing for 30,000 residents — which is more than the population of San Carlos — plus over 1 million square feet of office and commercial space. Why is this a bad idea? Not only because the saltponds can be restored to their former state as wetlands that are sorely needed for the future health of the Bay ecosystem, or because the salt ponds even in their present state provide valuable habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife. It’s a bad idea because it’s just plain impractical, expensive and dangerous to try to live on “land” that’s actually part of

Coming Back Home

For those of us whose lives have been transformed by recent economic cataclysms, there can be, shall we say, rather jarring feelings of displacement and disconnection from our previous, more comfortable reality. No matter what our economic station in life may be, our thoughts can shift from security mode to survival mode with maddening suddenness.

What best remedy is readily available to quell such nasty emotions? An antidote that many folks seem to be picking up on is a re-connection with our wonderful local open spaces and natural wonders, which in many cases have been brought to you thanks in part to the work of your friends at Committee for Green Foothills. While one hesitates to prescribe that a good hike will cure your ills, it is undeniable that prolonged therapy of such nature (and in nature) has enduring curative effects superior to that of the pharmaceutical variety.

In this writer's case, as with many others, complications do arise, however. While fortunate enough to have attained gainful employment, this has entailed intensive weekly travel to far off destinations. This not only creates a certain time vacuum effect to home life, but also requires a more disciplined mental regimen in order to "re-set" for the maximum enjoyment of the limited domestic moments. A key factor is a "coming back home" mindset the moment the plane takes off back to home. Sitting back and reflecting on people and issues on the home front, whose memory is sometimes lost in the work load and geographical upheaval of regular travel, starts the process.

The true welcome home moments occur during approach to the local airport, with the best viewing opportunities coming during arrival into our own Norman Mineta International Airport in San Jose. Myriad green foothills viewing opportunities during the plane's descent provide both enlightenment and fulfillment.

Arriving from the north, the sights unfold as we enter northern San Mateo County. Montara Mountain ... Pilarcitos Lake (note to self: must make reservation for the guided hike there) ... the lush unfolding of the Open Space areas that saturate the Skyline area ... numerous unidentifiable small lakes and ponds to try to figure out how to locate and access (legally, of course) ... an eagle's eye view of the Lehigh Quarry (that's one humungous pit just behind the ridge) ... a fresh and up close reminder of the immensity of the Loma Prieta mountain range as the plane circles into the Santa Clara Valley.

Arriving at Mineta Airport from the east and south, further welcome and delightful sights emerge. The lonely and glorious San Antonio Valley Road as it winds its way up the spine of Mount Hamilton ... the mysterious eastern Santa Clara Valley mountains, whose rounded blue oak studded terrain is far steeper and more

demanding than at first glance ... more of those darned unidentified lakes and ponds for future adventure and

discovery... a swing through southern Santa Clara Valley, with still ample (albeit threatened) farmland gracing the landscape ... a look west over Mount Umunhum to see the sun dropping into the shimmering Pacific Ocean. By the time the plane makes its final approach, "coming back home" immersion is nearly complete.

On the drive back home from the airport, further re-set opportunities await. Time and family obligations allowing, consider breaking out of the corporate mind tunnel. Coming back home from San Francisco International in a southerly direction on Hwy. 280, for instance, invites a quick pop off at the Hwy. 92 west exit for a 5 minute jaunt down Canada Road to admire the pristine beauty of Crystal Springs Reservoir before re-connecting on Edgewood Road to 280. If returning in a northerly direction on 280 from Mineta International, consider a short detour at El Monte Road in order to wind up Moody Road for a quick, affirming inspection of Hidden Villa Ranch. If traveling north or south on Highway 101, escape rush hour traffic near Embarcadero and San Antonio Roads to East Bayshore Road, pull your beleaguered mind into a small dirt parking area, and walk no more than 100 yards into the marsh at Baylands Nature Preserve. You will be transported into a wholly different world of solitude and nature that was unimaginable just moments ago. Is traffic getting you down on Highway 101 going into South Santa Clara County? Make your escape on Bailey Road west to Santa Teresa Boulevard through the soothing farmlands of southern Coyote Valley. These and many other of your favorite getaways await for those who allow themselves a quick medicinal shot of green foothills therapy.

Naturally, once back at home, the lure of the foothills should be heeded as soon as possible. All who live in San Mateo or Santa Clara Counties are no more than a 20 minute drive (or bike, or walk) away from a secluded Redwood grove or shady oak trail. Commit a 2 hour block of time for a hike, bike, ride or run through the green foothills and the payoff of a replenished mind, heart and soul will be yours. Through a combination of mindset, awareness and a small time commitment, the "coming back home" immersion process will be complete.

The connection to our beautiful landscapes and heritage is a key core element to the enjoyment of our lifestyle in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties. We are blessed to be living in an area of incredible natural splendor, mere footsteps away, preserved in perpetuity and free of charge in many cases. If you look at life as an adventure, every day a literal one awaits in the green foothills. When you come back home, experience it and thrive. **CGF**



From the Vice President

Matt Burrows



The author setting off on the Sierra Azul Trail.

A Trail of Surprises

I've always enjoyed walking in the countryside, but it wasn't until I became an empty nester that I elevated my status from recreational stroller/saunterer to serious all day hiker/backpacker. Not only could I now experience the spectacular high Sierras, but I could also take in such views as the 360 degree panorama from the top of Mt. Whitney and the walls of the Grand Canyon from the banks of the muddy Colorado. More

recently I completed an equally amazing journey much closer to home—I hiked the Bay Area Ridge Trail.

From the President

Margaret McNiven

In the 1960s William Penn Mott Jr., general manager of the East Bay Regional Park District,

envisioned a trail around the ridges of the San Francisco Bay. By 1987 a group of activists for the organization now known as Greenbelt Alliance had furthered his vision and worked to form the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council. Now an independent nonprofit, the Council works with a coalition of volunteers and agencies that plan, promote, build, acquire and maintain the Bay Area Ridge Trail. When completed, the 550 mile trail will connect through some 75 parks and open spaces on the ridgeline that surrounds the Bay Area.

In researching our adventure, the first thing we did was to become members of the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council, a group

I proudly support. A "Trail Tracker" can be downloaded from their website ridgetrail.org if you are interested in recording detailed statistics of your journey. We discovered that we would be hiking approximately 320 miles of currently completed trails in some 50 segments, as well as some 150 additional miles on connector trails or trails which end at a gap and require you to backtrack. We also discovered that our total elevation gain with all the ups and downs would be some 40,000 feet, more than hiking up Mt. Everest!

Undaunted, and armed with the newly released 3rd edition of Jean Rusmore's Bay Area Ridge Trail: The Official Guide for Hikers, Mountain Bikers, and Equestrians, we set off along the trail through Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserve one cold and wet February day, and got a taste of the incredible views, experiences and surprises that lay ahead. On that foggy, early February day we saw a lone lupine already in bloom.

One of the early surprises we encountered was the discovery that the Ridge Trail is not just a single trail on the ridgeline, but rather one of a network of trails that crisscross the hills. Furthermore, Jean Rusmore's book follows the trail in a clockwise direction, and we had set off counter-clockwise. Reading her directions backwards taxed our navigational skills and we often got lost. We soon learned the joy of coming across the familiar blue circular Ridge Trail markers and finally turned around to complete the trail in the more understandable clockwise direction.

Another surprise: the trail doesn't only traverse dense forests and open meadows with sweeping views, it also makes its way

through several urban and suburban settings. One day we hiked through the streets of Daly City, past Lake Merced, over Twin Peaks, through the Panhandle to the Presidio and on to the Golden Gate, stopping at the Magnolia for a sip of their local brew. Another urban hike took us through Yountville, right past Bistro Jeanty where, despite our attire or lack thereof, we had to stop for a bowl of their famous tomato soup. The trail runs alongside vineyards in Napa, under buzzing power lines on PG&E easements in Rockville Hills, along the waterfront in Benicia, and past oil storage refineries in historic Martinez.

And we got an education, not only in geography and botany. History, art and literature all played their part as we moved around the bay.

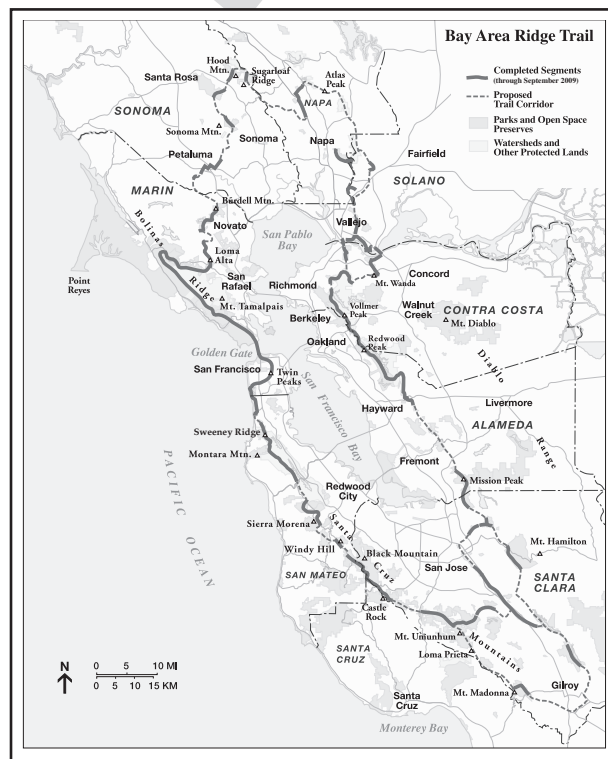
We learned about the early California ranchos, huge land grants given by the Spanish government, and how they have shaped the Bay Area landscape. Prior to the Gold Rush the California economy depended on the export of tanned hides, and large cattle ranches dominated the area. Today part of Rancho Sausalito is within the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, and hiking those windswept hills you can still get a sense of the magnificent vistas those early settlers encountered. Remnants of North Bay ranchos such as Rancho Soscol awarded to General Vallejo in 1844, and Rancho Sobrante awarded to Juan Jose Castro in 1841 are harder to find as houses now cover many hillsides, but saved from development and quite lovely are Lynch Canyon Park, parts of the Hiddenbrook Trail, and the Vallejo-Benicia Buffer.

Art showed up in unsuspecting places. In the Presidio we hiked past Andy Goldsworthy's magnificent sculpture *The Spire*; we hiked under Brown Bridge on Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, and discovered not only that this is the longest single span bridge west of the Mississippi, but it has become a palette for wildly colorful and imaginative graffiti; the patients at Napa State Hospital have attached large ironwork cutouts of wild animals to the hospital fence alongside the trail; while biking the abandoned paved road along the Carquinez Strait Regional Shoreline we saw street art with uplifting messages: In Memory of George Best Dog Ever said one, Real Joy said another, and Mojitos another!

We listened to *The Cry of the Wild* as we were driving up to Beauty Ranch, Jack London's Sonoma estate, on a crystal clear December day. Now a State Historic Park, we could see why London fell in love with his land in the magnificent Valley of the Moon. We re-read Wallace Stegner's *Angle of Repose* to prepare us for our hike through Almaden Quicksilver County Park, where we saw evidence of the once productive but now abandoned mines in the form of disused shafts and tunnels. Descriptive plaques are all that remain of the once dynamic villages where the miners lived.

We hiked from Martinez over to John Muir's house and continued over Highway 4 along the route that was once in his backyard and where he would walk with his daughters. He named the hill Mt. Wanda after his eldest daughter, and when her younger sister felt left out he named the second nub Mt. Helen.

Many of the trails are multi-use trails, accommodating horses and bicyclists as well as hikers, and we did end up biking some 50 miles of the trail. We biked over Helen Putnam Regional Park to the Petaluma Adobe. We biked the Coyote Creek Trail,



which follows the creek next to Highway 101 from roughly 680 in San Jose to Cochrane Avenue in Morgan Hill. On a couple of occasions this trail passes under 101 which roars overhead, but suddenly you will find yourself in total quiet beside the creek as you pass a beautiful stand of white sycamores, with views of old dairy farms and the Santa Cruz Mountains in the distance. And we pedaled the bike path on the Benicia-Martinez Bridge next to the heavy Interstate 680 traffic, then all the way along the Bay Trail (not to be confused with the Bay Area Ridge Trail) to re-join the Ridge Trail in Crockett.

The Bay Area Ridge Trail traverses state, county and city parks in the seven bay area counties, as well as lands purchased by public agencies and private open space organizations. Every day on the trail I was reminded of the good work done by organizations such as ours. The Committee for Green Foothills played a major role in the successful voter approved effort to create the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MROSD) in Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties. Five lengthy Ridge Trail segments pass through MROSD lands. The biggest surprise came one day as we were hiking in Skyline Wilderness Park just east of Napa. We passed through a gate with a sign informing us that we were now hiking on private property. It turns out that some 50 miles of the trail pass through private property. We are grateful to these hospitable citizens who welcome adventurers like us on their land.

Segment by segment, the Ridge Trail is heading towards completion. In 2010 the Council dedicated the 1.5 mile Fernandez Ridge Trail (done!), furthered the trail through Crockett city streets (done!), and added the 3.1 mile Dias Ridge connector trail in Marin (on our calendars to do!). Hiking the entire Bay Area Ridge Trail is an adventure hard to top; I totally recommend you take up the challenge. **CGF**



OPINION:

Farms should be the New New Thing for Silicon Valley

(An earlier version of this article was printed as an Op-Ed in the San Jose Mercury News, February 10, 2011)

By Liz Snyder and Hank Herrera

Once known as the Valley of Heart's Delight, Silicon Valley is home to some of the most fertile soil in the nation. The high-tech industry that grew in inverse proportion to our farms and orchards has come to symbolize the triumph of invention and IPOs, but it also represents something else entirely: the tragedy of farmland lost to development and contamination.

Until recently, our region's prevailing attitude has been that

Land is precious. It feeds us, sustains our wildlife, keeps floods at bay and gives our kids places to taste fresh food and be wild and free.

land is only as good as its resale value as it's turned into strip malls and expensive homes. Julia Scott's recent profile of two Bay Area farms — one valiantly squeaking by, the other closing down — is symbolic of the biggest problem facing a

new generation of urban farmers: lack of affordable land.

Land is precious. It feeds us, sustains our wildlife, keeps floods at bay and gives our kids places to taste fresh food and be wild and free. Yet the bulldozers have continued to roll right down to the last remaining tracts of fertile land.

The recent growth of farms and gardens in greater Silicon Valley is phenomenal. From Veggielution in East San Jose to Full Circle Farm in Sunnyvale to Dig Deep Farms in Oakland, urban farmers are eking out their vegetable dreams across the Bay Area. Acres of cultivated land, interest from families and schools, and support from cities and counties are at an all-time high.

Some families long for simpler, more meaningful lives while others struggle to put food on the table. Both benefit from the growth of urban farms and farmers' markets. Urban farmland can provide value to both affluent and impoverished communities, making

fresh food accessible in more places, helping kids eat better, cultivating a diverse and passionate new generation of environmental leaders, creating green jobs and strengthening our economy.

But all this growth is protected by a levee of sand. The land agreements of most farms and gardens are tenuous at best, and farms like TLC Ranch in Aromas can never break even, thanks to inflated land values. All that sweat equity — all the hard work that so many people have put into everything from laying irrigation to creating education programs — can be wiped away in an instant. Farmers' livelihoods and the jobs they create are at risk.

It's time to preserve our urban community's access to growing land, whether it's abandoned lots, pockets of fallow farmland or critically endangered farms at our urban edges.

Sacred Community Land Trust is a newly formed coalition that seeks to do just that. Its mission is to preserve land for agricultural use, connecting the dots between food access, our children's health and our community's economic and cultural resilience. Working together, we can secure land for new urban farmers while saving our last remaining working farms.

The state of our economy means that the bulldozers have shut down — for now. But even the tiniest real estate bubble could threaten our region's burgeoning food movement or even destroy it.

We are in a now-or-never moment that is about more than just capitalizing on our economic woes. It's about making the transition to a new economy that prioritizes green jobs, community resilience and a strong local food system.

Farming needs to be a re-imagined, re-legitimized occupation. If Silicon Valley, a region known best for our inventive spirit, makes farming a priority, it could become a keystone of job creation in a country with 15 million people out of work. We could inspire the nation — again — and secure a permanent place for food production in urban life. **CGF**

Liz Snyder (liz@ieatreal.com) is an Oxford-educated nutritional anthropologist and co-founder of Full Circle Farm in Sunnyvale. Hank Herrera is general manager of Dig Deep Farms & Produce in Oakland and founder of the Sacred Community Land Trust.



The Committee is watching ...

All 36 cities and both Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties — to see if they will meet San Jose's ban on plastic bags and if they will start focusing on Styrofoam containers.

The Wastewater Pollution Control Plant — serving San Jose and surrounding cities, where an environmental alternative to sprawl development needs to be considered.

Palo Alto — which is considering Stanford latest proposal for the massive expansion of the Medical Center.

Santa Clara County rural solar facilities — where a new County ordinance facilitates small-scale, rural commercial projects and is acceptable only if it does not radically alter the rural environment.

Caltrans — which is considering solar power arrays in the onramp cloverleaves throughout the state, and has selected the Coyote Valley area for a pilot project; the project needs to carefully consider fencing impacts to wildlife, among other concerns.

Lehigh Hanson Quarry — where County Supervisors made a controversial decision regarding rights to continue quarrying, and where impacts on the environment need to be closely monitored.

Santa Clara County Open Space Authority — which has begun a Strategic Visioning process, the purpose of which is to establish the future role of the Authority within the region and among other open space agencies, and what major steps it must take to achieve it. The outcome of the process is of great importance to the future preservation of open space and agricultural lands within the county.

Morgan Hill's Southeast Quadrant — the City of Morgan Hill continues to march forth with its ill-devised plan to incorporate and develop 760 acres of farmland despite the abundance of commercial lands available within its Urban Growth Boundary. The plan would cut through a 1300 acre area now serving as the greenbelt between Morgan Hill and San Martin. In addition to creating unnecessary sprawl, the plan would set a precedent further jeopardizing efforts to save the remaining farmland in South County.

American Institute of Mathematics (Fry's) Golf Course — which has not filed a Monitoring and Reporting Plan since February 25, 2009 despite significant outstanding mitigation measures that have yet to be completed.

All Peninsula jurisdictions — which may be considering deep cuts in environmental programs and parks budgets as a result of the state budget crisis.

The Committee Applauds:



*Assemblymember
Rich Gordon*

San Mateo County Board of Supervisors (including now-Assemblyman Rich Gordon) — for its November 30th decision to reaffirm its rejection of Stanford's destructive sidewalk proposal along San Francisquito and Los Trancos Creeks, and for the Supervisor's support of a meaningful trail and recreation alternative.

San Jose — for its ban of single-use takeout bags, with appropriate exceptions, and its comprehensive environmental review showing that the ban has no adverse environmental impacts.

Former CGF board member, David Bomberger — who has completed 12 years of exemplary service on the San Mateo County Planning Commission, and CGF welcomes his replacement, Fred Hansson, former City of San Mateo Planning Commission member.

San Mateo County Counsel Michael Murphy — who has retired after 28 years of public service, noting his proudest achievements have included the successful defense of the County's Local Coastal Program and Measure A, the Coastal Protection Initiative, the defense of Measure T, the Devil's Slide Tunnel Initiative, and helping stop the proposed disposal of dredging spoils off the San Mateo County coast, and to which CGF adds its gratitude for the successful defense of timber harvest regulations in the Skyline area.



**COMMITTEE FOR
GREEN FOOTHILLS**

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Palo Alto, CA 94303

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Save the Dates

Please join Committee for Green Foothills and Greenbelt Alliance for our investigative series as we explore the issues facing South Santa Clara County and plan for a future where farms, natural resources and attractive towns thrive side by side.

April 15, 6:00pm

Food of Life: Agricultural Panel

Join us for a panel discussion on the opportunities and challenges facing South Santa Clara County agriculture at the Lizarran Tapas Restaurant, a fantastic Gilroy restaurant.

April 16, 9:45am

Quality of Life: Urban Tour

A walking tour of Downtown Morgan Hill that will highlight the elements of a vibrant community designed around people, including a visit to a community garden and an opportunity to envision a creek walk.

May 14, 11:00am

Combining the Components of Life: Community Design Day

Bring your ideas to this community design day! Led by professional designers and land use planners; through the use of maps and visual imagery, participants will help create designs to inspire decision makers of this region.

October 2nd

Nature's Inspiration: Honoring Peter Douglas

Longtime Executive Director of the California Coastal Commission and co-author of California's Coastal Zone Conservation Act.

**For more information about
these events please visit
www.greenfoothills.org**

Please RSVP

info@greenfoothills.org or
(650) 968-7243 x314