



A COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATION SUPPORTING THE LONG-TERM STEWARDSHIP OF CLAREMONT CANYON

President's Message

by *Jon Kaufman*



After having curtailed our stewardship activities for more than a year, we have resumed them with a bang— with the help of other groups in our community. In August more than forty people (a record turnout) worked to reinforce the Gwin Canyon Trail and clear overgrown vegetation

from the lower Willow Trail. Thanks goes to Boy Scout Troop 202 and Peyton Worthington who made this work his Eagle Scout project. In a few weeks another group of volunteers will join us in the upper canyon, the Strawberry Canyon Track Club. Activities will be led by John Brochu, our new stewardship coordinator. A special thanks goes to John.

In other developments, we were pleased to see the eucalyptus removed from the Claremont Avenue roadside by the University of California, making for a safer evacuation route. In addition, UC, who owns much of the land in the upper canyon, plans to plant appropriate, less flammable vegetation along the roadway, promoting both erosion control and aesthetics.

While we heartily support UC's work along both Claremont Avenue and Centennial Drive, we had hoped that their vegetation management Plan and EIR covering other areas of their Hill Campus would more fully recognize the impact of climate change. The Conservancy filed suit in September to encourage UC to do more than what was specified. We wanted to demonstrate that doing less through a "thinning approach" would not be sustainable in 100-year old plantation areas and would not ultimately reduce danger from wildfire.

It is with great sadness that I note the passing of Tim Wallace, our founding president and a great source of personal inspiration to me as his successor. A tribute to Tim is on page 4 of this newsletter. The Conservancy is placing a bench in Tim's honor near Signpost 27 that will overlook the upper canyon, which Tim worked hard to make more firesafe and more accessible to people. We will be reporting more on Tim's bench in next spring's newsletter.

On a very positive note, we are pleased to announce that Dan Robbins has agreed to join our board. Dan is a pediatrician who lives at the top of Claremont Canyon. We also welcomed two other new board members earlier this year, Michael Mensik and Christopher Lehman, who bring valuable expertise in legal matters and strategic

planning, respectively. All three new members have a great love for the canyon and we very much look forward to their participation.

Conservancy volunteers gather with Boy Scout Troop 202 (see story on page 2)



Stewardship in the Canyon

PLEASE JOIN US FOR STEWARDSHIP EVENTS in Claremont Canyon throughout the fall and winter months: twice a month (first and third Saturdays) in Garber Park led by Wyllie Clayson and Shelagh Brodersen of the Garber Park Stewards and once a month in the upper canyon (fourth Saturday) led by John Brochu. All levels of fitness are welcome. Watch for the monthly emails or check the Conservancy website for added events and to see where to meet. We usually meet at the Evergreen Lane entrance when working in Garber Park and at Signpost 29 for upper canyon events. Events are 9 AM till noon in Garber Park and 10 AM till noon in the upper canyon. When volunteering, please wear long sleeves, long pants, sturdy shoes and a hat. If you have gloves, please bring those too but we'll have extras. Please contact gpstewards@gmail.com for inquiries about Garber Park events and info@ClaremontCanyon.org for all other events.

Claremont Canyon is the largest relatively undeveloped canyon on the western slope of the Oakland/Berkeley Hills. Most of the canyon's watershed is owned by the East Bay Regional Park District, the University of California, the East Bay Municipal Utility District and the City of Oakland, with about one-fifth in private hands.

The Claremont Canyon Conservancy promotes the long-term stewardship of the entire watershed, coordinated among the stakeholders to preserve or restore a healthy native ecosystem, reduce wildfire hazards, and foster education and research.

Join the Conservancy:

Founding Sponsor: \$1,000 over 10 years.
Family Membership: \$50 per year.
Student or Limited Income: \$25 per year.

Contact Us:

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Website: ClaremontCanyon.org

The Board of Directors: Jon Kaufman, President; Marilyn Goldhaber, Vice President; Nancy Mueller, Secretary; Members at Large: Josh Borkowski, Jerry Kent, Chris Lehman, Michael Mensik, Daniel Robbins, and Elizabeth Stage.

Treasurer: Kay Loughman

The Claremont Canyon Conservancy News is edited by Marilyn Goldhaber and Kay Loughman.

Eagle Scouts maintain trails

by Michael Mensik

IF YOU HAVEN'T HIKED THE WILLOW OR GWIN CANYON trails lately up at Signpost 29, you are in for a nice surprise! Thanks to Troop 202 of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA), the Willow Trail has been trimmed back, cleaned up, and many of its steps restored. And, some of the steeper sections of the Gwin Canyon Trail have been shored up with foraged logs and rebar pounded into the hillside to help control erosion and make the trail safer for passage. The work was organized and led by Peyton Worthington as part of his goal to attain the highest BSA rank—Eagle Scout! Peyton assembled about 40 members of Troop 202—which is based in Oakland and includes both girls and boys—to join in the Conservancy's August 28, 2021 workday. Work began shortly after 9 am and continued after lunch (pizza!) through mid-afternoon. As Conservancy president Jon Kaufman expressed to the assembled scouts and volunteers before work began, the Claremont Canyon Conservancy strives to heighten public awareness of the beautiful canyon “that is at our back door.” Maintaining and improving the trails is essential to achieving this goal. A special thanks to Peyton and all the scouts of Troop 202 (and their parents) for contributing to our mission!



© 2021 Michael Mensik

The scouts restore steps in August along the Willow Trail in the upper canyon near Signpost 29.

© 2021 Michael Mensik



Scouts from Troop 202 and family members take a break from their work along the Willow and Gwin Canyon trails.

Garber Park Stewards

by Wyllie Clayson

THIS SUMMER WAS A SUCCESS as the Garber Park Stewards welcomed back many new and returning volunteers to the heavily wooded, 14-acre, City of Oakland park at the bottom of Claremont Canyon. Our volunteers showed up full of energy and ready to help out with ongoing efforts during this drought year to make the park more firesafe, especially near residences. On our regular twice-a-month work days (see column to the left) and all through Creek-to-Bay Month in September, we removed invasive plants, poison hemlock, Italian thistle, and Cape ivy. Our hardier volunteers raked and shored up the Loop Trail, replacing deteriorating foot bridge panels to provide safer, more enjoyable hiking and support evacuation readiness. Our work culminated in a wonderful Cape ivy removal workshop spearheaded by one of our long-time volunteers, Mark Seaborn, as we made more areas of

A small group of former Stewards gathers in the rain at Fireplace Plaza and contemplates future restoration of the park (top right photo). Restoration takes a leap forward this summer as Wyllie Clayson and Ricardo Marroquin begin clearing debris from behind the fireplace (bottom right photo).

the park available to native plants. Through all of this work we filled an entire bin with debris to be hauled away by the City of Oakland at the end of Creek-to-Bay Month!

Thanks to the support of the Claremont Canyon Conservancy, we were also able to turn our attention towards Fireplace Plaza, which will be restored in honor of Shelagh Brodersen’s founding of the Garber Park Stewards and her long-time dedication to the Garber Park. The fireplace opening will remain covered with metal mesh, as it is now, and not available for fires, but missing stones will be replaced and the damaged left-side bench, an integral part of the turn-of-the-last-century stone structure, will be restored.

Persons at all levels of fitness are wanted and needed for volunteer work in Garber Park. If you would like to help us outside of volunteering, please consider donating through the Claremont Canyon Conservancy, noting that you would like your donation to go to the Garber Park Stewards. We hope to see you this season in Garber Park!



Marilyn Goldhaber © 2004

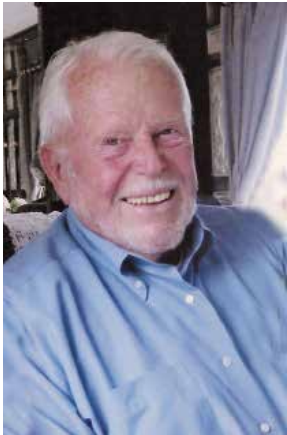


Ruby Soto © 2021

Tim Wallace

by Nancy Mueller

Courtesy of Marye Jayne Wallace © 2011



WE ARE SORRY TO SAY that our dear friend and colleague, Tim Wallace, passed away in May. He was 92. Tim was president of the Conservancy Board of Directors for most of our first 18 years, guiding us with his great “go-get-‘em” attitude and infectious enthusiasm.

Tim was involved with the natural world all his life, first as a rancher and logger, then later through government, academics, and nonprofit work. Paired with this wide experience, his innate leadership talents shone when conducting meetings and negotiating with landowners to take better care of the land. Joking about his Scottish frugality, Tim watched our treasury like a hawk, spending our grant monies and member contributions wisely.

Tim and Conservancy co-founders Bill McClung, Joe Engbeck, and Dick White, all passed away within a year of each other, but their legacies live on. Tim stepped down as board president in 2018 and was succeeded by Jon Kaufman. We know that Tim was proud of Jon for his own accomplishments and leadership abilities.

While we say goodbye this year to dear friends, our board is strong as ever with the addition of several excellent new board members, as mentioned at the bottom of the President’s Message on page 1.

Thanks to so many who have made contributions to the Conservancy in Tim’s memory. You can still do so. We will be acknowledging memorial donors in our Spring 2022 Newsletter.

Marilyn Goldhaber © 2002



Original board members gather in Tim’s yard in 2002. Tim is in the dark blue shirt. Next to him is Bill McClung (to Tim’s right, from the viewer’s perspective) with Joe Engbeck rightmost in the picture. Rest in peace, gentlemen. Nancy Mueller, in the yellow sweater, is still active on the board. Other board members now retired, pictured left to right, are Klaus Burmeister, Tamia Marg, Joan Collignon, and Barry Miller.

Managing eucs for fire safety

by Marilyn Goldhaber

The community gets on board managing eucalyptus and other overgrown, hazardous trees for fire safety and protection of people from injury.

Recent major tree work in Claremont Canyon took place in September at the Stonewall Trailhead of the Claremont Canyon Regional Preserve. According to Park Supervisor Jim Rutledge, seven large trees that presented significant hazards to hikers, due to falling limbs, were cut to the ground and chipped on site. Additional tree work to manage the grove further up the trail is slated for later.

Other large scale work this past year included removal of hazardous trees in 100-foot-wide buffer zones along roads and trails through UC’s Hills Campus, as we reported last spring. Roads included the upper parts of Claremont Avenue and Centennial Drive near where they cross Grizzly Peak Boulevard. UC promises to monitor those treated roadside areas for weeds, trash, and resprouted stumps, as well as seeding of wildflowers.

PG&E in concert with managers of the Claremont Resort and Spa has taken down some of the overgrown eucalyptus trees behind the hotel—to the relief of homeowners nearby.

Many homeowners in the hills are now better managing their own hazardous trees as the City of Oakland strengthens its fire safety inspections for homes situated in the CalFire-designated Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (VHFHSZ).

It takes a village to assure fire safety for all. In that light, the Conservancy, the Oakland Firesafe Council, our Oakland and Berkeley councilmembers representing the Hills, and other groups (see our blog section on the website) continue to work toward establishing a Joint Powers Agency to guide vegetation management in the VHFHSZ.

Monarch butterflies take flight

by Marilyn Goldhaber

THE BEAUTIFUL PHOTOGRAPH to the right was taken recently by Erica Rutherford in her Hiller Highlands neighborhood. It is always a delight to see a West Coast Monarch as it heads from the mountains across the state and down the coast to winter refuges like Santa Cruz and San Diego. Erica was lucky to come across her butterfly seen resting on a butterfly bush (*Buddleia davidii*). Overwintering habitats are increasingly compromised and fewer individuals of this once common species are observed. Nevertheless, other local residents saw monarchs in their yards in the past few weeks, from Kenilworth Road to Hiller Drive—feeding on coyote brush and white alyssum, respectively—and posted photographs to the community website that documents wildlife in the north Oakland hills (go to nhwildlife.net for more wonderful pictures).

According to a recent article by Mary Ellen Hannibal, author of *Citizen Scientist: Searching for Heroes and Hope in an Age of Extinction*, climate change likely has something to do with the disappearance of monarchs by disrupting seasonal signals that prompt the butterfly's annual migration: "They come and go at the wrong time," she says, and "out of sync with their larval food source," which are blossoms of the California milkweed (*Asclepias californica*). The milkweed itself is declining from overuse of



Erica Rutherford © 2021

pesticides especially in Central Valley agricultural areas. Ms. Hannibal adds, "When numbers get low enough, there is only one direction in which a species is headed."

Fortunately some local scientists have "hatched" a program called Monarch Head Start that proposes to redress the situation. The scientists will be "collecting and housing butterflies in ideal conditions for mating, egg laying, and the first several phases of caterpillar development, replicated at multiple locations in California."

What we as citizens can do to help the butterfly along in its journey is to plant native milkweed in our gardens. Read more about this hopeful project at BayNature.org and search for "monarch."



© 2021 Courtesy of the California Department of Water Resources

Find your weather in real time

NOW THAT YOU'VE REPACKED YOUR GO BAG and supplies in your vehicle—that's off-street, if possible, and pointing towards the street—you can follow, in real time, local weather in and around Claremont Canyon, including windspeed, temperature, and humidity, from a state-sponsored sensor located at the top of Claremont Canyon near the intersection of Fish Ranch Rd and Claremont Ave (labeled ONO on the map to the left). You can also find local air quality from maps at PurpleAir.com that use privately-placed sensors. Find links and more in the blog section of the Conservancy's website, claremontcanyon.org.

~ Elizabeth Stage
For the North Hills Community Association



A small grass fire reignited north of the Caldecott Tunnel on a sweltering hot day with Diablo winds gusting to 50+ miles per hour. Cars approaching the tunnel's eastern entrance backed up (photo to the left) to a plume of gray smoke as the fire spread in all directions. Within thirty minutes the conflagration traveled down Claremont Canyon's south ridge and leaped across both Highway 24 and Highway 13, igniting hundreds of houses in the Forest Park, Montclair and upper Rockridge neighborhoods.

The 1991 Oakland Tunnel Fire

THIS FALL MARKED THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY of the 1991 Tunnel Fire, also known as the Oakland Hills Firestorm. This devastating wildfire began on October 19, 1991 as a small brush fire that was quickly put out, only to revive again the next morning with a surge of strong Diablo wind. Embers still hot from the previous day flared into flames that whipped through dry brush into pines and other dry vegetation and then to homes surrounded by eucalyptus groves at the wildland-urban edge, completely overwhelming fire personnel tending the scene. Flaming debris blew across the hills and canyons into many neighborhoods for the next two days, igniting anything flammable, eventually destroying over 3,000 homes and killing 25 people. What started out as an apparently manageable fire was combined with extreme weather—an estimated 20 mile-per-hour down slope wind that eventually gusted up to 50 miles per hour—and extraordinary amounts of flammable material, including the homes themselves. It was the ‘perfect storm,’ in this case, the perfect firestorm.

A Thirtieth Anniversary

COMMEMORATIVE EVENTS WERE HELD in remembrance of the fire: gatherings at the Rockridge BART station with Oakland community leaders, a hike out of the hills and down designated evacuation routes led by the Berkeley Pathwanderers, and a picnic at Lake Temescal organized by the North Hills Community Association (NHCA) with uniformed police and firefighters—and fire engines—live music, food

trucks, and a dog parade. A great way to heal and not to forget fire safety. Activities were topped off by neighbors Russ and Annette Aubry lighting their Tree of Hope remembering those who had perished and those who suffered loss. Please view Community Comeback Stories on the NHCA website as told by neighbors affected by the fire and a slideshow of wonderful quilts and other artistic expressions related to the fire. Good job, neighbors!

Twentieth Anniversary of the Conservancy

SPURRED ON BY THE EXPERIENCE OF THE TUNNEL FIRE and the need for public engagement, 12 people who had operated as a task force, founded the Claremont Canyon Conservancy in 2001 as a 501c3 public charity. From the beginning, the group embraced wildfire safety in the 500-acre, mostly wildland canyon as a major concern, but also advocated for modest trail improvements and best practices land preservation through concern for native plants and other vegetation suitable for our Mediterranean climate.

With the firestorm still fresh in people's mind, membership in the Conservancy grew quickly. In the first two years more than 200 families joined us as Founding Sponsors and later more than 600 other families joined at various times and at various levels of commitment. We wanted to educate our members and work cooperatively with the managers of our public lands as the face of the public.

Our Founding Sponsor program began with a pledge of \$100 per year for ten years to help the organization get established and supplement initial capacity building grants. The Conservancy is now

recognized as a community leader in caring for and stewarding precious wildlands close to homes.

At our upcoming Annual Meeting, we will be capping our Founding Sponsor program to members who have already pledged their support of \$100 per year over 10-years. If you would like to be part of this esteemed founding group and have not yet joined, we ask that you make a full donation of \$1,000 by December 31, 2021.

Please know that all our members, at any level of donation, along with all our steadfast volunteers, are greatly valued and appreciated.

Annual Meeting, November 21

OUR ANNUAL MEETING WILL BE HELD ONCE AGAIN in the Skyline Room on the second floor of the Claremont Hotel. Members, colleagues and friends are invited to attend free of charge (details on the back page). Please wear your mask and bring proof of vaccination.

We will be commemorating both the 30th anniversary of the 1991 Tunnel Fire and celebrating our own 20th anniversary. After light refreshments and brief updates from the Conservancy board, we will hear from our invited speaker, Keith Gilles, Dean Emeritus of the Rausser College of Natural Resources who will speak on “Wildfire in the Wildland-Urban Interface.”

Professor Gilles will address the current and likely future of the wildland-urban interface as we face the challenges of a changing climate. What is the best path forward for researchers, policymakers, firefighters, and residents?

After serving as a forester, Dr. Gilles earned his PhD at the University of Wisconsin and joined the faculty at the University of California, Berkeley in 1983. He served as professor of forest economics, department chair, and dean of the Rausser College of Natural Resources until he became an Emeritus Professor and Emeritus Dean in 2020.



Professor Keith Gilles

Professor Gilles was a regular at Forestry Field Camp in the Sierras and earned awards from his colleagues for teaching, advising, and faculty service. His campus leadership as an advocate for students, faculty, and sensible governance was informed by his personal trajectory navigating both natural and political environments.

As he was increasing student research opportunities, he served on policy boards at every level, notably the US Department of Agriculture’s Forest Research Advisory Council and the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, which he still chairs. These opportunities have given him the platform to leverage his research on forest management, focused on wildfire prevention and climate change, and to develop practical solutions to the challenges we face in the wildland urban interface where we live.

Near the end of the day, on October 20, 1991, the house pictured to the right was surrounded by burning pines and eucalyptus. This house was one of the few overlooking Gwin Canyon (Claremont Canyon’s side branch) that did not burn. Jerry Kent, Assistant General Manager of Operations of the East Bay Regional Park District at the time, said, “They were lucky. The house was brand new with a good roof and tight construction.” The homeowner added, “We inadvertently had good defensible space due to the recent construction, but most important was the presence of firefighters.” Other homes nearby were not so lucky.



Archives of the EBRPD © 1991



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THE CLAREMONT CANYON CONSERVANCY

Dear Friends and Neighbors

Please join us on

Sunday, November 21, 2021, 4-6 PM

The Claremont Hotel

Upstairs in the Skyline Room

A 20th Anniversary!

Reception	4:00 PM
Presentations	4:30 PM
Open Forum	5:30 PM

Keynote Address by J. Keith Gilles, Dean Emeritus
of the Rausser College of Natural Resources

“Wildfire in the Wildland-Urban Interface”

Refreshments and wine bar

RSVP: info@ClaremontCanyon.org * **Bring:** masks and vax cards