



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

President's Message

by Jon Kaufman



OVER THE PAST YEAR, we've had to curtail our group stewardship activities, but our board has been busy on other fronts. Recently, we met with the general manager of the Claremont Resort and Spa and were assured a spacious conference room for our annual meeting in November, if all goes well. While our Zoom meeting last fall was a success, we look forward to seeing

everyone in person. In addition, the hotel, along with PG&E, plans to continue to manage hazardous trees on the back of its property for fire safety and better egress

The Conservancy continues to work with the University of California to further reduce wildfire danger in their Hill Campus, which includes Strawberry and Claremont canyons. As of this writing, we are scheduling meetings with UC to resolve our differences and avoid going to trial over their Vegetative Fuel Management Plan, which was signed off by the Chancellor in February. (Not to be confused with UC's smaller, Evacuation Improvement Project, which was successfully completed last winter, see page 3). We would like UC to recognize the impacts of climate change and therefore expand their vegetation management work beyond what is specified in their Plan and Environmental Impact Report. Wind speeds, temperatures, drought, and dying trees are all greater than recognized by the Plan; therefore, the wildfire danger is higher and requires more work. Our suit became necessary because a group who wants UC to do even less mitigation has brought a lawsuit of its own.

The Conservancy also is working with friends and allies in Oakland and elsewhere in the East Bay Hills. We continue to monitor the City of Oakland's vegetation management plan and are working with City Council members Dan Kalb and Sheng Thao to strengthen it. We continue to play a leadership role in building a Joint Powers Agency for coordinated wildfire prevention in the East Bay Hills.

On that front, we now have a coalition of elected officials in addition to neighborhood organizations. Formal steps to enact a JPA will begin shortly.

In the past year we have welcomed three new board members, Chris Lehman, Michael Mensik and Dillon Hanson, each adding important, complementary skills to our board. I am so proud, as we approach our 20th anniversary, that the Conservancy continues to grow and be supported by so many of you, our members and the readers of this newsletter. Our ability to advance our work depends on both your financial support and your volunteer efforts. Thank you all for everything you do.



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Neighbors retained a local arborist to remove a dozen oversized eucalyptus trees near homes (story on page 6).



The Garber Park Stewards gather on Earth Day at the end of Evergreen Lane, which leads into Garber Park.

An Awesome Earth Month in Garber Park

by Shelagh Brodersen

WALKING IN GARBER PARK just became easier—and safer—thanks to the many volunteers who came to the park during Earth Month. Eager to once again be out in nature, we formed small groups on three consecutive weekends in April to pull weeds and haul them down to a dumpster provided by the City of Oakland. On our official celebration of Earth Day, this year on April 24, 15 volunteers got right to work repairing the wooden steps on switchbacks near Evergreen Lane and continuing the important task of weeding out invasive plants for fire safety. By the end of the day, our dumpster was almost full! Earth Month volunteers logged 117 hours! Thanks to everyone—we couldn't do it without you!

Our work to make Garber Park more beautiful and more fire safe continues. Please join us for our monthly workday, the 3rd Saturday of month, 10AM-Noon. All are welcome, no experience necessary. For questions or more information contact garberparkstewards@gmail.com or visit garberparkstewards.org.

As the CDC relaxes pandemic restrictions, additional stewardship events elsewhere in Claremont Canyon are set to resume soon. Watch your email for announcement. Don't get our emails? Go to claremontcanyon.org/contact-us.

Coastal Cleanup Day coming in September

by Dillon Hanson-Ahumada

THIS PAST YEAR I'VE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY, as many of us have had, to work from home. I feel especially lucky to be living at the doorstep of Claremont Canyon with its many great trails. When I need to take a break, I often step out for a quick tour around the 1.5-mile Loop Trail of Garber Park. I enjoy the beauty and peacefulness there while I gather my thoughts about all the things I need to do for my job at the National Resources Defense Fund.

My work at the NRDC is focused on ocean conservation and protecting ocean habitats. So, I'm already thinking about Coastal Cleanup Day in September, also known as Creek-to-Bay Day in Oakland. Coastal Cleanup is a time when people across the country get together to clean ocean beaches and waterways. This helps prevent pollution and debris from entering our oceans and shows a dedication for protecting our marine ecosystems.

But, we don't have to wait for September. For me, that means bringing along a plastic bag to collect easily removable trash along the trail—and encouraging others to do the same.

As we get closer to Coastal Cleanup Day, watch for information coming from the Conservancy regarding clean-up events in Claremont Canyon. We hope to keep Claremont Canyon a beautiful place and look forward to seeing you out on the trails soon!

UC's Evacuation Support Project

by Marilyn Goldhaber

CLAREMONT AVENUE ABOVE ALVARADO ROAD WAS transformed this past winter as part of an ongoing fire management program carried out by UC's Facilities Services. Eucalyptus and other trees that could fall across the road during an emergency or ignite close to the road were logged along with brushy understory, within 100 feet of edge of the pavement (photo, page 8). The total project area was approximately 18 acres.

The work along Claremont Avenue was called the Claremont Canyon Evacuation Support Project (not part of the wider UC vegetative plan mentioned on page 1, which has not yet begun). Claremont Avenue was closed for two months last winter. Similar vegetation removal was performed along Centennial Drive, the Jordan Trail, and Tightwad Hill.

A biologist was on-site for the entirety of the project. "This project took precautions to protect the environment, including protecting woodrat nests, avoiding riparian areas, monitoring for bird nests, and limiting heavy equipment to roadbeds to minimize impacts to soil," said campus communications director Janet Gilmore, according to the Daily Cal.

Claremont Canyon's eucalyptus trees were originally planted in the early 1900s for a variety of beautification and commercial projects. Many were subsequently damaged in a frost in the 1970s. They were logged but resprouted with many smaller stems, posing a greater fire threat.

Recognizing the problem, the Conservancy initiated a eucalyptus removal project in 2006 on Park District land just below UC's current site. We are pleased that 15 years later the landscape is recovering with native plants and trees (photos above, right).



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Above is the site of a 2006 eucalyptus removal project on Park District land, mid-canyon. Yes, it takes a while, but we are happy to see live oaks sprouting at the base of two old eucalyptus stumps (above) and native lupine, phacelia, and native ferns sprouting from another (right).



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Eucalyptus trees are seen over-hanging the north side of Claremont Avenue in the upper canyon prior to UC's Evacuation Support Project.

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:

PO Box 5551, Berkeley CA 94705, 510-843-2226

Email: info@ClaremontCanyon.org

Website: ClaremontCanyon.org

The Board of Directors: Jon Kaufman, President; Marilyn Goldhaber, Vice President; Nancy Mueller, Secretary; Members at Large: Josh Borkowski, Dillon Hanson-Ahumada, Jerry Kent, Chris Lehman, Michael Mensik, Elizabeth Stage, and L. Tim Wallace.



The geological outcropping across Claremont Avenue from Signpost 29 is one of the best exposures anywhere of the Claremont Chert.

The Chert Wall

The story below, is from a longer article by former Conservancy president, Martin Holden. For the full article, search for “Chert Wall” at claremontcanyon.org.

THE CLAREMONT CHERT, named after our own canyon, is a type of marine sedimentary rock. It consists of hard, fine-grained silica, plus more friable shales and mudstones from ancient siliceous skeletons of microscopic creatures. These tiny skeletons and other materials were deposited over millions of years in off-shore basins—when the shoreline of the California coast looked quite different from today.

The now well-known Chert Wall is part of the University of California’s Ecological Study Area. Geology students

can be seen gathered around the wall mid-way up the canyon across from Signpost 29.

According to geologist Martin Holden, chert likely was quarried from this site in the 19th and early 20th centuries and used as roadbed fill under what is now Claremont Avenue. The vertical layers shown in the photo above, now more visible after recent vegetation removal, result from strikeslip and reverse faulting caused by the Hayward and related, smaller faults. Creation of this fascinating geological deformation began in the late Miocene, and is associated with the movement of the North American Plate relative to the Pacific Plate. Needless to say, this process is still occurring.

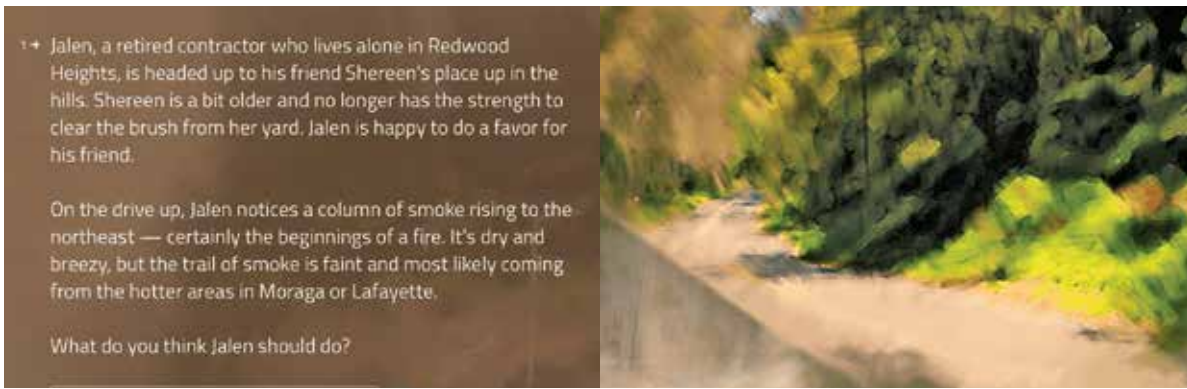
Hermit Thrush—A winter visitor

by Marilyn Goldhaber

The Hermit Thrush is a medium-small brownish bird with spotted breast, white eyering, and pink legs. Although it prefers a dense cover, it can be found in urban settings, especially on the border of forests. The bird pictured to the right was photographed in November by Erica Rutherford in her backyard at Hiller Highlands—the photograph then posted to Kay Loughman’s local wildlife gallery (nhwildlife.net). Kay says, “I have fond memories of Hermit Thrushes from when I was a bird bander—they never struggled when being held for measuring and banding, and often, when I’d open my hand to release the bird, it would just sit there, sometimes for several minutes!” Erica responded, “It’s consistent with my observations... they often appear late in the afternoon after the chaos of the Siskins depart. I am always thrilled to see them.”



The Hermit Thrush is a winter visitor to our area, arriving by October and departing by May to the forests of the Sierras to breed.



A sample question from OCP&R's evacuation training module to get participants thinking "what would I do?"

Firestorm 30: Evacuation on my mind

by Sue Piper, Chair Oakland Firesafe Council

ONE OF THE STRONGEST MEMORIES I have of the 1991 Firestorm is evacuating my home—with my 9-year-old daughter and me in one car and my husband and the dog in another. I tried to leave my driveway, but traffic coming down Hiller Drive was backed up to the top of the hill. If it hadn't been for a friend letting me in, I may well have been stuck there in my driveway as the fire rolled over the hill.

Heading down Tunnel Road in a long line of cars, I recall making a split-second decision to veer onto Roble Road, only to realize that I was facing a second wall of flames. I couldn't turn around on such a narrow street with cars stacked behind me. It wasn't until I passed Chabot Elementary School and away from the flames that I began to feel safe.

Now, 30 years after the 1991 Firestorm and three years after the Camp Fire, which killed 85 people on the one road out of Paradise, evacuation is on many people's minds. The problem, as I learned in 1991, is that in a crisis, you think with your gut. Oh, if we only had opportunities to practice evacuation many times over so that when the real threat appears, our minds know exactly what to do.

This spring, the Oakland Firesafe Council and its Oakland Community Preparedness & Response program (OCP&R) will be offering evacuation practice to neighborhood groups in the form of a "Choose Your Own Adventure" scenario developed in collaboration with researchers from UC Berkeley and UC Davis. Our team will focus on a number of evacuation scenarios hand-tailored to Oakland.

Concurrently, the City of Oakland and Alameda County are detailing evacuation plans as well. All of Alameda County is now organized into evacuation zones using a cloud-based Evacuation Management

Platform (EMP) under a program called Zonehaven. Oakland will introduce residents soon to the system with a "know your zone" campaign. Instructions on warnings, mandatory evacuation orders, and where to go will be available for cell phones and tablets and on radio and television.

Our team is currently applying for part 2 of a National Science Foundation grant to create a video game version of an evacuation using feedback from the community and input from the Oakland Fire Department. We will incorporate real data about potential traffic flow, fire behavior on individual streets, and individual neighborhood situations (elderly neighbors with mobility issues, children home alone, pets running loose, etc.). This will give participating groups a realistic opportunity to practice evacuation—so that when faced with the real thing, residents will leave more readily with greater knowledge and confidence.

Is your Go-Bag ready?

Here is how to . . .

Organize your own neighborhood session with the new evacuation simulation by contacting Doug@oaklandcpandr.org.

Find easy-to-read 2-page guides on what to do before, during and after an evacuation on the OCP&R website (www.oaklandcpandr.org)

Find Oakland Firesafe Council programs, including videos of previous Savvy Homeowner sessions, go to www.oaklandfiresafecouncil.org.



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M&M tree Service takes down an oversized euc, limb by limb.

Trees of Eucalyptus Path

by Jo-Anne Ting

LAST FALL, A GROUP OF NEIGHBORS banded together to remove two groves of tall eucalyptus trees off Eucalyptus Path. The trees posed a hazard to houses and people around them from fire and falling limbs.

The groves were at least eight stories high (with some trees up to 120 feet tall). There was no road access to the trees, which hovered above houses, making their removal quite a challenge.

The neighborhood project, involving eleven families, took months of planning but was finally carried out starting in October 2020. Spanning over a period of two months, the work was executed by M&M Tree

Service and was completed on budget, on time and—most importantly—safely, with no incidents.

There were some jaw dropping feats by the crew, armed with their chainsaws, harnesses, and ropes. Pending continued state funding, a small grant from the Diablo Firesafe Council may provide extra financial help to the neighbors.

Some amazing views were opened up, the smaller trees and plants can now enjoy some new found sunlight, and the neighbors can breathe a sigh of relief on windy and red flag days.

“All’s well that ends well”

~ William Shakespeare, published 1623



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Evergreen Path, a public path leading from the rear of the Claremont Resort and Spa and frequented by neighbors, is often laden with eucalyptus debris and slippery seed pods. Volunteers, including the resort’s Sustainability Group, clean up the path in conjunction with the Conservancy. Stay tuned for the next event.



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Thank you to friends and members who donated this past year

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P.O. Box 5551
Berkeley CA 94705
www.ClaremontCanyon.org

THE CLAREMONT CANYON CONSERVANCY

SUPPORTING THE LONG-TERM STEWARDSHIP OF CLAREMONT CANYON



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Over the winter, an evacuation safety corridor was created on land owned by UC by removing trees and brush along the north side of Claremont Avenue. Story inside on page 3.