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DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION  
AND RESTORATION OF OUR UNIQUE  
RURAL LANDSCAPE WITH ITS  
ABUNDANT NATURAL RESOURCES  
FOR THE BENEFIT OF  
FUTURE GENERATIONS.

# GOOD DIRT

The Newsletter of the Anderson Valley Land Trust  
Fall – Winter 2003

## WHAT DOES A LAND TRUST DO?

by Susan Addison

Have you ever wondered what it is that a land trust does? I have been asked this question several times recently and coming up with a concise, understandable answer has kept me thinking. The short answer is that we work with landowners who wish to preserve the natural resources of their land and protect the land from development that might cause harm to these resources. The tool we use is called a conservation easement. A conservation easement permanently protects land for its ecological value, wildlife habitat, watershed quality, agriculture, silviculture, scenic enjoyment, and its historic or archaeological values. We work carefully with landowners to identify those uses that they wish to preserve for themselves and at the same time identify the natural character of the land they wish to preserve into the future. Once we find a shared and compatible set of goals of land use and conservation we are on our way to preserving a valuable asset of our community.

Why, you ask, does this matter to those of us who don't own land or only own a small parcel? It matters because we are preserving relatively large parcels of land that keep this beautiful valley from being developed in ways that will destroy the natural richness and beauty of the landscape. The forests, streams and fields under protection will continue to thrive and be a part of our surroundings without fear of destruction from over-development or extensive timber harvesting.

We currently have 800 acres protected by conservation easements. That doesn't sound like much, but it represents, among other things, the protection of a half mile of Anderson Creek and the headwaters of the Navarro River as well as

reaches of Mill Creek and Honey Creek, both part of the Navarro watershed. We also have several hundred acres of forestland protected from commercial timber harvest or permitting only the maximum sustained yield which will allow them to become old growth forests. These 800 acres provide wildlife habitat for bear, deer, mountain lion and many birds as well as water for fish and various amphibious creatures. They are also home to a wide variety of plants and trees. In short, these are 800 acres that will remain largely in their natural state for generations to come.

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### *Letter From the President*

Dear Friends,

A year ago, almost to the day, I wrote a letter for our fall 2002 newsletter reporting on the Anderson Valley Land Trust and what we had done over the year. It probably won't surprise you to learn that this year has passed in much the same way as last with new conservation easements being developed and old easements being monitored. However, there have been some changes and new initiatives that I think are worth noting.

In October, 2002 we reviewed our finances and realized that we could no longer afford the pay of our part-time staff person, Bruce Longstreet. This change meant that the AVLT Board would have to pick up the work that Bruce had been doing. We reduced our office hours to one day per week and I volunteered to be the office manager. Karen Altaras, our treasurer, agreed to pick up the mail a couple of days a week and maintain our mailing list and Barbara Goodell, our vice president, took on greater responsibility for our newsletter. Bill Chambers has been coordinating our monitoring schedule, while Ed Short has become our development director and invaluable legal consultant. Lee Serrie has continued to be our official photographer and Pete Bates keeps our records in good order. Connie Best and Laurie Wayburn are our conservation easement specialists and they continue with the work on new easements. We also have a cadre of volunteers who help us with our monitoring and the writing of our baseline documentation. This is definitely a team effort and things continue to run smoothly. My heartfelt thanks go to all of these people who keep our organization vital and flourishing.

At our April, 2003 board meeting we adopted a revised mission statement. We had been talking for a couple of years about our organization and what we would like it to accomplish in the coming years. The idea that kept surfacing in these meetings was how committed we are to the preservation of the special beauty of Anderson Valley and its unique rural qualities. We felt that our Mission Statement was missing this sense of singularity that we feel is a part of what we are working to preserve and, in some cases, restore here in the Valley. Here is our new mission statement.

**Dedicated to the preservation and restoration of our unique rural landscape with its abundant natural resources for the benefit of future generations.**

As you read the rest of this issue of *Good Dirt* you will see that we have also been involved with conservation issues in regard to the County General Plan and the reorganization of the Mendocino County Water Agency. Several of us also put our backs into the clean-up of Robinson Creek.

Thanks to the efforts and support of many people it has been a good year and we look forward to many more to come.

Susan Addison, President

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## MENDOCINO COUNTY WATER AGENCY REORGANIZATION

by Barbara Goodell

Who lobbies for the protection and use of the water in Mendocino County? Does your well have diminishing returns? Is the stream flow of the Navarro and its tributaries up or down? These are questions that are currently being addressed by our Supervisors.

In order to better protect and manage the water resources in the County, the Board of Supervisors has asked for a year-long study to restructure the Mendocino County Water Agency (MCWA), to hire a permanent director, and to create County policy to support the reorganization of the MCWA. The Supervisors have commissioned the UC Cooperative Extension staff (based in Davis with a local office in Ukiah) to proceed with a year-long study called A Situational Analysis of the Mendocino County Water Agency. The study began in March of 2003 with a web site, a preliminary draft report, eleven geographical area meetings, and a public survey.

MCWA has been directed "...to assume a leadership role in addressing water-related matters in Mendocino County, including the protection and restoration of watersheds, water conservation, reuse and recycling, water quality, the development of impoundment of new water, the protection, restoration and enhancement of habitat, and restoration of fisheries." (Excerpt from BOS Resolution 03-032). UCCE was further directed to network with other Mendocino County, State, and Federal water agencies; collaborate with other Mendocino Water Agencies through granting and technical assistance; create revenue for MCWA; encourage and assist in water resource management consolidation; and develop and maintain a comprehensive database of countywide assets and services.

In 1987 the MCWA became independent from State and County-apportioned tax revenues, also making it independent from other County departments. The agency has recently used available funds for legal services regarding water rights applications and to hire and agency hydrologist. MCWA also began to implement water quality and watershed assessment studies, sediment reduction studies, and fishery enhancement projects with grant funds. The Navarro River Watershed study that the Anderson Valley Land Trust, MCWA and the Coastal Conservancy completed has contributed to the planning of these projects.

Taking a lead role in this new reorganization effort is John Harper, County Director of the UC Cooperative Extension in Mendocino County and the Resources Advisor for Mendocino and Lake Counties with specialties in sheep and range cattle production, rangeland, watershed, water quality, and computer applications. He is joined by David Lewis, UCCE Watershed Management Advisor, and Roland Sanford, the new Director of MCWA.

One MCWA Reorganization meeting has been held in Anderson Valley. Unfortunately very few residents received prior notice of the meeting; because of this, AVLT took the initiative to procure additional copies of the survey and made it more readily available in AV. If you would like more information about MCWA or the reorganization process, call 463-4495, email them at [cemendocino@ucdavis.edu](mailto:cemendocino@ucdavis.edu) or check out the web site at <http://cemendocino.ucdavis.edu> or by clicking on the Farm Advisor's departmental web page on the County's web site at [www.co.mendocino.ca.us](http://www.co.mendocino.ca.us).

John Harper recently reported that they are now reading the surveys, analyzing and crunching the data, and doing a statistical analysis to see what it all means. As of mid-September they had only received about 250 completed surveys. The last page of the survey asks for addition comments on the issues/services that might not have been mentioned and feedback regarding the survey and workshop format. One observation was that the survey itself dealt primarily with the provision of water for existing and

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presumed future development for household and agricultural uses and little on resource conservation. There will be an additional Board of Supervisors meeting in January where the survey results and analysis will be presented. There will be County-wide public notice of this meeting.

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### **KLAMATH RESOURCE INFORMATION SYSTEM – KRIS** by Lee Serrie

For Valley residents concerned about the rivers and creeks in the Navarro watershed, there is a new tool on the web for your perusal.

[www.krisweb.com/krisnavarro/krisdb/html/krisweb/index.htm](http://www.krisweb.com/krisnavarro/krisdb/html/krisweb/index.htm)

This is a comprehensive computer program that integrates data, charts, photos, maps and bibliographic resources on an extensive number of locations along the Navarro and its tributaries. It was completed early this summer by an array of fishery biologists other scientists, and watershed and stream restoration experts working with computer program designers to render this extraordinary data management tool.

The information was gathered in conformance with State and Federal watershed assessment practices, and will give watershed planners a desktop tool to carry out their work.

Look it up. It's interesting for both casual users and hard-core data wonks. Of special visual interest to understanding what is happening in a specific area, are maps and photographs. Of course it's hard to get past the number of times the 'status' column (meaning the condition the watershed is in) lists the word 'impaired'.

Just how long can a coho survive 'impaired' conditions?



Robinson Creek near Boonville – Photos by Rixanne Wehren 1/2003 – KRIS web site

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## GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

by Barbara Goodell

When we moved to Anderson Valley in the late 70's, a building moratorium was in place in Mendocino County; the County was out of compliance with California State law because it had not completed its General Plan. Every county and city is required to have a General Plan to serve as a 'constitution' for land use and development to be used as a "...guide to planners, decision-makers, and the general public prescribing the ultimate pattern of development for the County over the planning period." (GP Update, pg. 2-1)

Before the adoption of the 1981 General Plan, Citizen Advisory Committees were formed to represent the major geographic areas of the County to give public input. The CAC in Anderson Valley was composed of a diverse group of local community members who worked together diligently for a long period of time to produce a document that would represent AV policy recommendations for the seven required components. For the 2005 PG Update, the County has hired a Sonoma County business firm, Pacific Municipal Consultants (PMC), to research, organize and produce the whole '05-'25 plan. Public input so far has been solicited in three local presentations by planning staff and PMC and to groups by request. In Anderson Valley the initial presentation was given in both English and Spanish with a subsequent follow-up presentation focusing only on the housing element. The AVLT Board requested a session in April to focus on how the Board could provide input on the Conservation and Open Space elements. We are currently in the process of preparing a document for presentation to the planning staff.

In January of 2003, a background report was prepared by PMC with an historical overview of the land use and development patterns in the major communities and growth areas of the County since 1981. It also includes an overview of the General Plans of surrounding counties and the incorporated cities in Mendocino County. It is both descriptive and graphic, outlining the existing setting and the historical patterns of population demographics/housing, land use, economic development, storm water drainage, recreation, open space, scenic resources, community facilities/services, noise, air quality, historic/cultural/archeological resources, biological resources, agricultural resources, mineral resources, surface/ground water resources, geologic resources, forest resources and hazards they felt were needed to write the GP Update. Some of the graphs, for example, feature information on building permits issued over a ten-year period, parcels subdivided, vacant parcels, description of zoning, list of special status species, wildlife corridors or the status of impaired rivers. You can access this and ample information about the General Plan Update at [www.co.mendocino.ca.us](http://www.co.mendocino.ca.us).

There are six steps in the General Plan Update:

- Start-up – communities are informed about the process. Comments are elicited from individuals, organizations, communities, and agencies
- Identify Issues and Alternatives – including the Background Report
- Select preferred alternative – community meetings and reports of findings
- Prepare Draft General Plan and EIR – with preferred goals, policies and implementation procedures
- Conducting public review and adopting the plan
- Implementing the plan

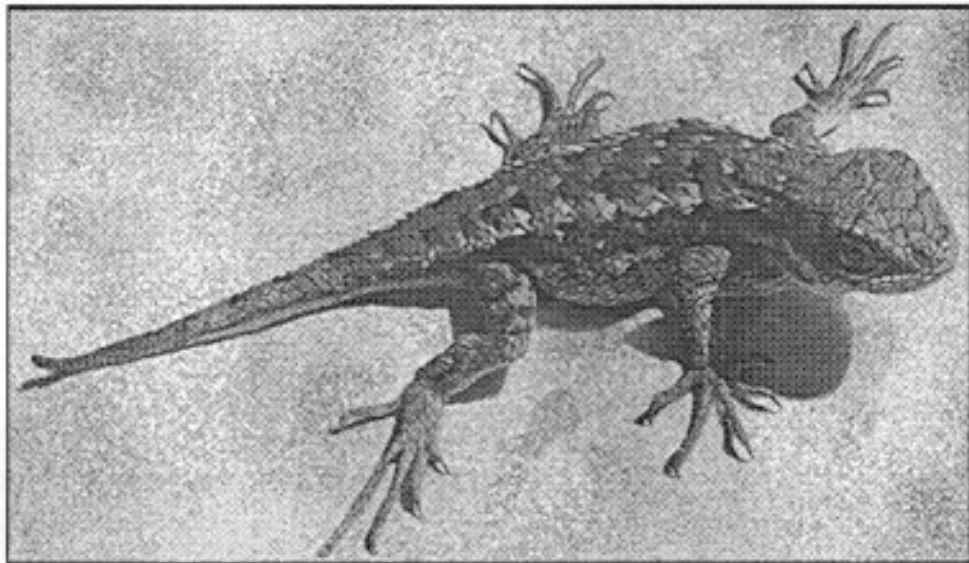
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## THE WESTERN FENCE LIZARD

by Bon Goodell



Western Fence Lizard – 2000 aquatint by Steve McMillan – Courtesy of Karen Altaras of Rookie-To

The western fence lizard (*Sceloporus Occidentalis*), more commonly known as the "blue belly lizard", is an important and unique member of our local fauna. Seen basking in morning sunlight on woodpiles, rock outcroppings or structures, these reptiles are adaptable to nearly any rural environment so long as there are plentiful arthropods to feed on and solar exposure to thermoregulate their cold-blooded bodies. Around homesteads and cleared areas lizard populations tend to be higher due to increased habitat.

The males have iridescent deep blue bellies that shimmer brilliantly when they do "push-ups". This act is both a courtship ritual and marks their territory. Females have opaque, lighter blue undersides and do not exhibit aggressive behavior.

Belonging to the Iguanid family, the western fence lizard has the ability to change its basic color to blend in with its surroundings, similar, but to a lesser extent, than its cousin, the chameleon. Although this camouflage works well for preying on flies, the lizards' showmanship behavior and inclination to sit in high places and prominent points make them easy targets for raptors, snakes and predatory mammals.

Gardeners, hikers, hunters and any outdoor enthusiast living in northern California will be pleased to know that these animals play a role in decreasing the incidence of the debilitating Lyme disease. Recent studies conclude that when infected, nymphal ticks attach to a lizard they are "cleansed" of the spirochete, at which point they can no longer spread the disease. Lizards also do their part in controlling the balance of insect populations.

Aside from what we can learn and benefit from these friendly reptiles they will always be interesting to simply observe - and they will be watching back, most likely with their head cocked with a curious prehistoric grin.

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## THANK YOU!

We are most grateful to the following new supporters and loyal friends for their generous gifts in response to our spring newsletter.

Mary Stuart Alvord	Robert L. Jones
James T. Ball	George & Kit Lee
Rod & Judy Basehore	Christopher & Martina Mann
Maureen & Michael Bowman	Marshall Newman
Bruce Cakebread	Michael O'Halloran
Mark Carpenter	Jed Pogran & Gary McGregor
Kevin Coughlin	Ronald J. Rice
Brian Davis	Al & Lynn Roman
Jean & Anne DuVigneaud	Barbara Scott
East Bay Community Foundation	Sylvia Swearingen
Fetzer Vineyards	Ray & Susan Triplett
Phil & Sue Frame	Nikki & Jay Tureen
Peg Frankel	Leona Walden
Joan & Larry Garlington	Clare Rolph Wheeler
Heidi & Henry Gundling	Bryant & Penny Whittaker
Mr. & Mrs Morris Hirsch	Nancy Witstine
Charles & Muriel Kittel	George Wolverton

### What Land Trusts Do - *continued from page 1*

Those of us who live in Anderson Valley will benefit from their protection as will those who come after us.

We hope in the years to come that we will be able to protect more and more of our valuable resources by placing conservation easements on privately owned lands. This will take not only the cooperation of generous and public-spirited landowners, but it will also take the interest and support of the local community. The Anderson Valley Land Trust continues to grow and thrive because the people who live in the Valley have supported our work generously and consistently. We will continue to work with and for the community as we all strive to conserve the rural qualities that we all love about this place where we live.

If you are interested in learning more about conservation easements and how they work please give us a call at 895-3150 and we will be happy to talk with you and mail you information.

### General Plan Update - *continued from page 5*

The first element to be reviewed and put up for adoption was the Housing Element; public hearings have been held by the Planning Commission and a draft negative declaration has been prepared. It is up for adoption at the Board of Supervisors meeting on October 7<sup>th</sup>. You can relate your ideas on any part of the plan to the Planning and Building Department (463-4281) or email [gupdate@co.mendocino.ca.us](mailto:gupdate@co.mendocino.ca.us) and attend future GP Update meetings to relate your suggestions or concerns.

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## **ROBINSON CREEK CLEANED-UP!**

It took the efforts of a dozen people on Sunday May 18<sup>th</sup> to make another significant dent in the collection of debris in Robinson Creek, but we took another 1,500 pounds of trash to the dump that day. Working together, volunteers from the Anderson Valley Land Trust and the Navarro Watershed Working Group filled plastic bags with heavy, wet rags, pieces of metal and a wide variety of other flotsam and jetsam and hefted them up to the road. From there Patty Madigan and helpers loaded it all into a pick-up truck and deposited it in the Boonville Dump. It was dirty and back-wrenching work, but we all had grins on our muddy faces when the task was done for that day. Of course, there is more to be done, but the efforts of the high school students on Community Action Day combined with this clean-up day certainly went a long way toward moving Robinson Creek back toward a clean and healthy waterway. The Land Trust is very pleased that Patty, the Navarro Watershed Coordinator, was given a grant by the Department of Water Resource's Urban Streams Restoration Program to help restore Robinson Creek and we look forward to continuing to work with her on this project.

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