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DEDICATED TO THE VOLUNTARY PRESERVATION  
OF THE LAND AND ITS ABUNDANT  
NATURAL RESOURCES FOR THE BENEFIT  
OF GENERATIONS TO COME.

# GOOD DIRT

The Newsletter of the Anderson Valley Land Trust  
Spring – Summer 2005

## WHY WOULD SOMEONE WANT A CONSERVATION EASEMENT FOR THEIR PROPERTY?

By Patrick Miller



There is a myth (or maybe it is just a rumor) that people in Anderson Valley place conservation easements on their property only because of certain tax benefits that might be accrued upon the sale of land. While there indeed are some financial reasons for conserving your property's resources, it has been the experience at the AVLT over the past 13 years that the core values that drive Valley property owners to protect their land in perpetuity usually has little to do with financial gain.

The underlying values that seem to motivate Valley property owners to conserve their property is simply a love of the landscape and its resources. Most people who own property in Anderson Valley know their land. They know it because they have lived on it for years, and yes, sometimes generations. They know when the Bay tree in the nearby drainage is in blossom and fills the air with its subtle, delightful scent. They know the history of who, or in many cases, what animals used their land long before they did. They know what areas were logged and what areas were not. They know what nearby ridge the sun rises over and what hill casts shadows on their field or home in the afternoon. They know how the afternoon breezes wind their way up the Valley and how they have to endure them, or be cooled by them. They know of nests in the trees or on the ground. They know how change has occurred in their views. They know when they pass the property along to their children or to a new owner, they want to keep some things the way they are now. They want a little control left as part of their legacy of ownership.

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## A FEW COMMON QUESTIONS

### SO . . . WHAT IS A CONSERVATION EASEMENT?

Short answer: A conservation easement is a voluntary, legal agreement between the property owner and the AVL T to permanently protect land for its inherent natural characteristics while controlling future land uses based on the personal vision of the property owner.

A big question is: what are the uses allowed with a conservation easement?

The big answer is: Anything the property owner wishes as long as such uses are also allowed under current land use designations and zoning as designated by Mendocino County.

How long would a conservation easement with the AVL T last?

Answer: Forever. A conservation easement is recorded in the real property records and therefore *"runs with the title of the land"* and binds all present and future owners of the property to the *specified provisions of the easement*.

Does the conservation easement with the AVL T cover all of a property?

Answer: Not always. Conservation easements can be tailored to protect specific conservation values of all or part of the property. For example, an easement can keep the land in a natural state in its entirety or, if the landowner prefers, allow specified activities on various portions of the property such as farming, timber harvesting, construction of new structures, or development of residences (again based on current zoning).

Does a conservation easement with the AVL T automatically mean the public has the right to enter my property?

Answer: No, unless the property owner wishes it! A conservation easement with the AVL T is an agreement between a private property owner and the AVL T, a private organization. None of our existing easements contains a provision for public access. However, if the property owner were to want to identify, for example, a trail easement, then that could be part of a Conservation easement . . . but that is at the owner's discretion.

How will my wishes for how I see my land being used in the future actually be honored?

Answer: In accepting an easement from a property owner, the AVL T takes on a very serious responsibility. AVL T staff monitors each easement annually to assure that any changes that do occur within a property with a conservation easement are in conformity with that easement. To that end, the AVL T maintains a stewardship fund that will be used, if necessary, to enforce easement provisions. It is the responsibility of the AVL T to assure the current property owner that their wishes will be honored.

Can any land qualify for a conservation easement with the AVL T?

Answer: To be valid as a conservation easement, the AVL T has established criteria to consider in *accepting an easement from a property owner. These criteria include, but are not limited to, such items as: significant natural habitats; productive agricultural, ranching, or timber production areas; historic value; scenic characteristics; or community value as open space.*

SO . . . why do people grant conservation easements on their property?

Answer: People grant conservation easements because they want to protect their property from  
(continued on page 5)



## AVLT WELCOMES A NEW PRESIDENT, KAREN ALTARAS

By Lee Serrie



The Land Trust welcomes Karen Altaras as our new Board President. She succeeds Susan Addison, who has served for the last 4 years. (See article on the outgoing president on page four.)

I asked Karen how she first heard of the Land Trust and the work we do. She remembers reading a copy of 'Good Dirt' in which an article described the easement Todd and Marge Evans had given on their Wellspring property. At the time, it struck her what a precious gift it was to everyone, that they would make the effort to ensure that the land around the Navarro's riverbank going through their parcel, would always be maintained and used in a manner that would never be detrimental to the river. Even though the public does not have any kind of access to their land, everyone benefits by having an owner pledge to maintain the property so that the integrity of the river going through their land is never compromised; by doing so, it fits in one more piece of the puzzle where the river's health and viability is augmented, not diminished, by an owner's land use practice.

She doesn't own enough land herself to give a conservation easement, but she thought it was a selfless and forward-thinking ideal that would move an owner to do that. The easement process is a framework that allows the Evanses to maintain, update, and even expand the developed areas of their parcel in order to keep Wellspring a viable retreat center.

Karen and her former husband, Bob, were among the early 'Back-to-the-Landers' to migrate to the Valley in the early 70's. They settled in Yorkville, got their place organized, stocked it with a menagerie of animals, and soon took advantage of the great location and community in which to raise 2 children. Fifteen years later, they opened Rookie-To, the prominent art gallery in Boonville. From running an art gallery, it's an easy segue to see Karen involved in Anderson Valley Arts, formerly Art in Action, a local organization committed to increasing access to arts education for all Anderson Valley residents, including but not limited to scholarships for high school seniors and art education in the elementary school.

Hiking is a favored way for Karen to appreciate the Valley's unique landscape and beauty. A distant dream of hers would be to see the establishment of a hiking trail from Philo to the Coast along the Navarro, or another along old Indian trails on the ridges from Ukiah to the Coast. Ambitious stuff, this lady is made of, and I am sure she will lead the Land Trust with equal ambition and forward vision.

Karen thinks there's a lot of upside to the Land Trust's work. "I have a great board to work with. We come from varied backgrounds with different skills, but I think I can speak for all of them when I say that we're all living here because we value the unique beauty of Anderson Valley."



## ZYDECO EVENING ART AUCTION BIG SUCCESS

In November last year sixty people enjoyed the fun and excitement of our Zydeco Evening Art Auction at Wellspring Renewal Center. Cajun food, Zydeco music and good wines made the special ingredients for a memorable evening. And of course, the art was the frosting on the cake. Special thanks go to Bud Ledbetter for his generous donation of seven pieces by Paula Gray. We are also most grateful to Paula who also donated one of her prints and to the other local artists who donated their work, Charlie Hochberg, Colleen Schenk, and Alan Thomas. Thanks too to the generous wineries that donated their wines for the occasion: Goldeneye Winery, Greenwood Ridge Vineyards, Handley Cellars, Husch Vineyards Winery, Lazy Creek Vineyards and Navarro Vineyards.

Our auctioneer, Michael Addison, conducted a lively auction with willing bidders who helped us raise a tidy sum for our Pioneer Fund. Then in January, Bud sent us a matching grant. We are pleased to announce that the Fund is now \$15,000. This will be a great help to us as we continue to protect the land here in Anderson Valley.



## A TRIBUTE



In her four-year tenure as president, Susan Addison has exhibited exemplary leadership skill, honing every aspect of AVLT's organization, dedicating thousands of volunteer hours on essentials such as fully establishing all of the baseline records and a monitoring system for all of our easements. On any given day you might find Susan putting out one of the biannual AVLT newsletters; organizing a fundraiser like the Zydeco Evening Art Auction; arranging public workshops; working on easements; or going out to do the annual monitoring of one of our easements.

Our fortune is that Susan will continue to run our office affairs and share her enthusiasm and expertise in helping landowners to protect both their land and Anderson Valley's natural resources for future generations. In Patrick Miller's words, "Susan ... The most friendly, most polite task master one could want to work with." Many, many thanks.



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## THANK YOU FOR ANOTHER YEAR OF GENEROUS SUPPORT!

It is only possible for us to continue our work of preserving the precious landscape and resources of Anderson Valley because of the following loyal donors:

The Aidlin Foundation	Janet Foote	Dave & Helen Papke
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		George & Karen Wolverton

If you would like to join this special group of supporters of the Land Trust please use the enclosed envelope to send your contribution. We would be most grateful.

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unwanted uses and development while they retain ownership of their land. Additionally, by granting a conservation easement, the landowner can assure that the property will be protected forever, regardless of who owns the land in the future.

These questions and answers may have raised more questions for you. For additional information about conservation easements or, if you are interested in how a conservation easement may be applied to your Anderson Valley property, please contact the AVLT at 895-3150, e-mail us at [AVLT@mcn.org](mailto:AVLT@mcn.org), or write us at PO Box 141, Boonville, California, 95415.

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**WILD LILAC**  
*Ceanothus thyrsiflorus*

By: Jane E. Miller, 2M Associates

The wild lilacs put on a glorious show of flowers each spring throughout our state, and we are fortunate to have about a half-dozen species that grow locally in Anderson Valley. Of those, one of the most often-seen, but also most lovely, is *Ceanothus thyrsiflorus*, commonly known as Blue Blossom. Legend has it that many long-time Valley residents call this plant Tickbush due to their belief that one will surely attract some ticks if venturing into an area where these plants are plentiful. However, since ticks also inhabit oaks and grasses, avoiding these *Ceanothus* is no guarantee of avoiding bites!

Blue Blossom is noted for its variability, both in form and flower display. *Ceanothus thyrsiflorus* can become one of the taller members of the genus, although virtually prostrate forms have been observed. This evergreen shrub may achieve heights of twenty feet, and in addition to its stature, boasts showy flower clusters colored light to medium blue during its early to mid-spring blooming. Some plants bear very pale

flowers while others are much deeper blue. There are even some horticultural varieties available that exhibit pure white blooms. The flowers have a mild fragrance that is noticeable in the air when plants are in full blossom. The dense evergreen foliage is made up of dark green, glossy leaves about two inches long and less than half that width that are marked with three prominent linear veins.

This particular *Ceanothus* is one that quickly takes over disturbed landscapes. It rapidly inhabits areas following fires, and was often the pioneer plant in logged coastal redwood forests until the tree seedlings could gain enough height to reach sunlight and become the dominant plants, thus shading out the Blue Blossom. In the early 1900's the common practice of clear-cut logging and then burning the slash resulted in acres and acres of these shrubs blanketing the logged landscapes for many years. It must have been quite a stunning sight March to May when these locales became veritable blankets of blue! Today, *Ceanothus thyrsiflorus* thrives in forest pockets and open areas that allow dappled to ample sunlight.

*Ceanothus thyrsiflorus*, along with other species in the genus, is a bit unusual in that it is one of the few non-legumes to "fix" nitrogen in the soil. In addition to that environmental benefit, these plants provide important deer forage and, when in bloom, are a veritable magnet for bees.

So *Ceanothus thyrsiflorus* engages several of the senses – the beautiful visuals of the abundant clusters of flowers, the fragrance they exude, the sound of buzzing bees, and – for the deer – a tasty meal! Be on the lookout for these floriferous shrubs while you are out and about as a sure indicator that spring has arrived in Anderson Valley.



## AVLT 2004 Financial Statements

The following summary of unaudited financial statements for 2004 was prepared by AVLT Treasurer, Karen Altaras, and bookkeeper, Joel Oberle.

### Statement of Financial Position December 31, 2004

<b>Assets</b>	
Operating Accounts	17,943
Pioneer Stewardship Fund	10,453
Stewardship Endowment	85,398
Furniture/Equipment	821
Timber Rights*	<u>430,400</u>
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>545,015</b>
 <b>Total Liabilities</b>	 <b>-0-</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	
At Beginning of Year	533,087
Change in New Assets	11,928
At End of Year	<u>545,015</u>
<b>Total Liabilities &amp; Net Assets</b>	<b>\$545,015</b>

### Statement of Activities and Changes in Net Assets December 31, 2004

<b>Support &amp; Revenue</b>	
Donations	17,581
Pioneer Stewardship Fund	7,353
Stewardship Endowment	3,000
Interest & Dividends	<u>2,084</u>
<b>Total Support and Revenue</b>	<b>\$30,018</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	
Dues, Maps & Subscriptions	380
Insurance	2,561
Miscellaneous	368
Office Supplies	599
Payroll	0
Postage & Delivery	1,070
Printing & Reproduction	3,103
Professional Fees	705
Rent	2,528
Special Events	1,537
Utilities	<u>512</u>
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>\$13,363</b>

\*Timber Rights: We hold these rights in perpetuity and no logging is allowed.

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### DOUBLE TRACK TRAIL WORKSHOP

Board members Pete Bates and Patrick Miller will host a "double-track trail workshop" on June 11 at 4pm. This event will be a follow-up program to last year's successful trail workshop. But this time we will be looking at ways to transform ranch and logging roads (new, old or abandoned) into double-track trails that can be used for hiking, horseback riding, and mountain biking while still serving the function of providing access for fire suppression and other emergency purposes. We will look at ways double-track trails can be designed and managed to include erosion and sediment control measures that protect the water quality of our streams. The location will be at Pete Bates property in the Holmes Ranch where we will take a walk around his trail system and then come back to his house for a brief discussion about what the Land Trust is doing here in the Anderson Valley. Please meet at the Philo Post office at 4:00. There we will arrange car pools and give everyone directions. Please do call us at 895-3150 to let us know you are coming.

