

# GOOD DIRT

The Newsletter of the Anderson Valley Land Trust, Incorporated  
Fall 2011

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## AN UPDATE: NAVARRO RIVER WATER TRAIL ASSESSMENT By Patrick Miller

It has been a busy spring and summer, thanks to the guidance of the *National Park Service's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program*. With the sponsorship of the *Anderson Valley Community Services District* (thank you CSD!), we were fortunate to secure a small grant from the *California Department of Boating and Waterways*. That grant resulted in a very methodical observational survey conducted between July 1 and September 15, documenting actual summer river recreation use at: Navarro Beach, Iron Bridge, and Dimmick Campground, all within the Navarro River Redwoods State Park; the Greenwood Bridge; and the Hendy Woods State Park day use area. Can you imagine 232 people at one time using the Greenwood Road Bridge area on July 3? Did you realize that you can canoe and kayak the lower Navarro River between Navarro Beach and the Iron Bridge (mile marker 3.6 on SR 128) all summer long? The results of this survey are now being tabulated and will be put on our website.

In cooperation with California State Parks, a written survey was distributed to all campers at Hendy Woods over the summer with questions focusing on how they use the Navarro River and their views about river recreation. We received about 300 completed surveys that, thanks to volunteers Alice Bonner, Janet Snyder, Frank Graham and others, are being tallied. No small task. A summary of these surveys will be put on the web.



Photo By Patrick Miller

By the time you read this, our trusty volunteer work force will have also documented low flow conditions along most portions of the Navarro River. Thanks here goes to the Mendocino Redwood Company for their assistance in facilitating these excursions.

Coming up: internet surveys; boating the entire Navarro River; conducting public workshop(s); and calling together a steering committee to review the data we've collected and help reach some constructive conclusions and recommendations. If you are interested in learning more about the *Navarro River Water Trail Assessment*, or wish to volunteer to help, please contact our Project Manager and Board Member, Patrick Miller, at 895-2597 or Volunteer Coordinator Alice Bonner at 895-2545.

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**President's message:**

Karen Altaras and I had an inspiring experience last month when we went to Filigreen Farm for our annual visit to this protected 87-acre farm on Anderson Valley Way. Chris and Stephanie Tebbutt continue to develop this incredibly beautiful and productive biodynamic sanctuary where the amendments and building materials come from the land itself, working towards a closed resource circuit. The knowledge and inventiveness that has gone into establishing the blueberries, peaches, vegetables, grapes, apples, energized water, livestock, bees, arbors, compost and much, much more is palpable. In sampling and savoring the full, rich flavor of the produce as we walked, we directly understood that planting locally appropriate varieties is key in fruit maturation as well as water usage. As you have read in previous newsletters, Chris and Stephanie have also planted trees along Anderson Creek to stabilize what was 375 feet of open, often dry or flooded, aggraded creek bed so that now it is 75 feet of shaded flow. It is a pleasure to experience the synergy of this conservation easement and its increasing value each year.

One of our office partners, Linda MacElwee, has increased her scope of work and is now the Navarro Watershed Coordinator, carrying out a three-year grant awarded to the Mendocino County Resource Conservation District from the CA Department of Conservation. She will focus primarily on public outreach and project development to further the goals of improving water quality and quantity in the Navarro River. One aspect of her work will be sharing information with landowners on protecting their waterways--one of which is a conservation easement. AVL T looks forward to working with interested landowners who wish to set up a permanent plan to conserve the water resources on their land.

We sincerely appreciate each and every one of our donors and volunteers who have made it possible over the last twenty years for AVL T board members to volunteer their own time and skills to help conserve the natural beauty of Anderson Valley as well as to keep our working ranches/farms, forests, local wildlife, and rural lifestyle intact.

- Barbara Goodell

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## **2<sup>nd</sup> Annual "Sustainable D"**

**By Patrick Miller**

We adventured again and we discovered again. On a beautiful Saturday in August, a very fortunate group participated in the second annual *Anderson Valley Sustainable Landscape Discoveries*. It proved enlightening for the inquiring participants because of the outstanding information about organic, sustainable agricultural practices provided by: Cindy Wilder in her private wonderland of fruits, vegetables, herbs, chickens, and bees; Vicky and Mike Brock at Brock Farms with their row upon row of luscious Early Girl tomatoes and incredible 1,000+ pound pumpkin-in-progress; and Tim and Karen Bates at The Apple Farm in Philo with their beautifully bucolic and bountiful apple orchard. And the piece de resistance of these discoveries was a simply wonderful organic lunch with apple cider prepared by Karen Bates and served in the garden court under the pleached white mulberry trees at the Apple Farm (Thank you Karen! And that corn ice cream was just spectacular!). We thank you all.



Brock Farms –Photo By Patrick Miller

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## INTRODUCING ALICE BONNER – AVLT Volunteer Coordinator

By Patricia Jeffery

Alice Bonner was born in Santa Barbara, California, and she lived there until she moved to northern California to attend U.C. Davis, graduating with a degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Biology. Alice developed her love of nature during college while working summers for the U.S. Forest Service in Sierraville, California, constructing trails and occasionally fighting wildfires. She met her husband, Ric, while both were attending U.C. Davis. They married soon after graduation and moved to Martinez when Ric took a job there with Phillips Petroleum. They lived in Martinez for 35 years, raising two daughters. During her time there, Alice worked as a planner for Contra Costa County and also did private consulting, preparing environmental impact reports.

When her children were young, Alice put her career on hold but was very active with her volunteer work in the community. In 1980 she was appointed to the City of Martinez Planning Commission, where she served for four years. In 1989 she was appointed to fill a vacancy on the Martinez Unified School Board. She ran for election later in the year, was elected, and served for eight years. With her children in high school, Alice went back to work for the Mount Diablo School District. There, for ten years, she ran the Career and College Center at Olympic High School, a large continuation school for at-risk students. In this role she taught job skills and worked closely with the business community.

Alice and Ric knew they wanted to live in the country when they retired, although they could not agree on exactly where. In the 1980s and 1990s, they visited Elk with friends twice a year, diving for abalone and enjoying the coast. Driving through Anderson Valley, they began to consider this beautiful area as a possible home for their retirement. They purchased their property on Mountain View Road in 1999 and moved here full time in 2009.

While living in Martinez, Alice was one of the founders of the Martinez Regional Land Trust (now Muir Heritage Land Trust). So volunteering for the Anderson Valley Land Trust (AVLT) was simply “natural” for Alice, given her commitment to land conservation. With her excellent coordination skills, Alice will be responsible for coordinating AVLT volunteer activities. Alice also volunteers at Anderson Valley School District and as a member of the Unity Club she participates in volunteer activities that support our community.



Anderson Valley Land Trust is very fortunate to have Alice as our volunteer coordinator. If you would like to help us out, please contact Alice 895-2545 or [arbonners@directv.net](mailto:arbonners@directv.net).

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## Redtwig Dogwood

### Cornus sericea

By Jane Miller

*Cornus sericea*, also known as *C. stolonifera*, goes by a few common names including American Dogwood, Creek Dogwood, Red Osier Dogwood and Red Willow. But this author favors the name Redtwig Dogwood, because it so aptly describes this shrub's beautiful winter appearance. This name attests to both the sculptural nature and striking red color of the plant's branches and twigs. *Cornus sericea* is native to much of North America, including parts of Anderson Valley. Reaching heights of twelve feet or more, this deciduous shrub thrives in moist places, growing along stream banks, low meadows, floodplains, and forest openings in the wild, where it readily spreads to form dense thickets covering large areas. During the spring and summer, *Cornus sericea* sports oval, deeply-veined leaves and small, pretty white flowers, though the latter lack the large showy petal-like bracts of its better-known relatives. The blossoms are followed by clusters of small berry-like fruits that mature to white or sometimes bluish, decorating the shrub in late summer and fall. Native Americans found many uses for Redtwig Dogwood: its fruit was consumed both fresh and dried; its branches were fashioned into arrows, stakes, and other tools; its shoots were also made into arrows as well as bows; and the leaves and inner bark were components of smoking mixtures, often used as part of the sacred pipe ceremony. Both twigs and branches were used in basket weaving, often together with willow branches, resulting in a rich, varied hue owing to the different colors of the dogwood and willow stems. California Indians even used peeled twigs of *Cornus sericea* as toothbrushes for their whitening effect! Redtwig Dogwood displays beautiful red to purple autumn foliage color in the colder parts of its native range. But it is especially notable in this coming season, when its bright red leafless twigs stand out against what is often a drab winter backdrop...a true winter beacon!

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## Toll House/Bell Valley Farm Sunset Hike

By Barbara Goodell

Jon Rubenstein, Karin Swann, and Jeff Burroughs treated us to a mid-summer AVLT interpretive hike to learn the history of Bell Valley and appreciate its spectacular 360 degree views that take in Anderson Valley, the coast, the hills leading to Ukiah, and the expanse towards Cloverdale. Jeff brought



memorabilia and photos from his family's history. His aunt and her husband built the Toll House to live in and to collect the tolls from the cars on the new road to Ukiah. Jon and Karin, who are the current owners, hosted a tour of the newly restored Toll

House and led us on a ridge top trail pointing out previous homesteads, displaying their own focus on restoration of the oak woodlands, and sharing their plans to create an educational center for sustainable living. We enjoyed the brilliance of the summer evening light and the setting of the sun at a cabin on top of the world. Thank you Jon, Karin, and Jeff!



Photos By Patrick Miller

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## Spotlight on Easement Holders Dan Dodt and Linda Blacketer

### Interviewed by volunteer Marilyn Davin

Most property owners get their conservation easements after they've had their property awhile – sometimes for generations. Not so Dan Dodt and Linda Blacketer. They bought their 40 acres midway through the easement process, a contingency of the sale. “The easement didn’t deter us,” Dan said. “We recognized that it was really a potential enhancement to the property instead of any kind of restriction. Wouldn’t you rather buy a piece of land that someone had the foresight to protect?”



Dan and Linda say their easement negotiations were straightforward, easy and cordial – pretty much an informal exercise of give-and-take that followed a fairly smooth timetable. “It wasn’t costly to evaluate the restrictions of the easement,” Dan explains. “You either agree with those values or you don’t.”

Today the property’s highest point accommodates the couple’s dramatic open-space steel home, with ultra-modern floor-to-ceiling windows and polished concrete floors. A solar energy system provides electricity, and gardens around the house create a riot of color. An oasis comes to mind.

The couple says their chosen easement restrictions aren’t onerous and are basically what they would have done as responsible land stewards anyway. Those restrictions include: no subdivision of the property; no excavating or drilling for minerals; no diverting water from natural watercourses; and no commercial logging. Also, no hunting. “Unless an animal attacks us,” Dan laughs. There are also provisions to preserve some specific elements on the property - like a 300-year-old madrone and some unusual hybrids that have grown into one another over the years.

Dan and Linda say they love their new adopted home and plan to live here at least three-fourths of the time. “We needed quiet in our lives,” says Linda. “We had just retired and needed a different lifestyle. I love to lie in bed in the morning, have my coffee, and watch the trees sway in the breeze.”

And with the easement, they say the peace and quiet of their property will long outlive them. “This easement will travel with the next buyer,” said Dan. “We’ve protected it, preserved it, and we’ll pass it on.”

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### Sustainable D – *continued from page 2*

Believe it or not, we are planning next year's event right now, and it promises to continue the journey of learning about how soils, water, microclimate, timing, wildlife management, cloning, hybridizing, procurement, recycling, and experimentation all are included in the Anderson Valley recipe of sustainability. Next year's program will include, among other events, a special visit to Filigreen Farms, a property that includes a conservation easement that AVLT holds in the heart of the Anderson Valley. All of our discoveries and their dates will be highlighted in the Spring issue of Good Dirt. But for the most current information, please check our web page periodically at [www.andersonvalleylandtrust.org](http://www.andersonvalleylandtrust.org).

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Navarro River Trail Assessment  
Photo By Patrick Miller