



**SAN BERNARDINO
MOUNTAINS
LAND TRUST**

Forest View

December 2016

Dedicated to acquisition of forest open space & wildlife habitat on private land in the San Bernardino National Forest to ensure lasting public benefit of the natural mountain environment

700-acre Pebble Plain Project completed SBMLT acquires another 240 acres with \$2.76 million grant



Ash-grey paintbrush which grows onsite

Project began in 2001

SBMLT's pebble plain project first began 15 years ago by partnering with the Department of Fish & Wildlife, but got derailed in 2002 when purchase offers on both sites were rejected. In 2006 landowners began plans for major subdivisions.

When the economic recession halted all demand for new housing, we phoned the investors again in 2011 to renew our offers to buy. Five years of subsequent negotiations finally paid off last month with this 2nd deal successfully closed. It shows that perseverance can prevail.



A tiny alpine milkvetch amidst pebbles

IN early November the **SAN BERNARDINO MOUNTAINS LAND TRUST** successfully closed escrow on a major 240-acre purchase, creating a 700-acre pebble plain preserve between Moonridge, Bear City and Sugarloaf in the Big Bear Lake area –the most significant achievement yet accomplished by our local Land Trust. When this ambitious concept was first approved by the Department of Fish & Wildlife back in 2001, it was designated the “Sawmill Pebble Plain Ecological Preserve,” for it would include the largest and most outstanding examples of pebble plain habitat in the world. **- Pebble Plain Project --continued on page 4**



SBMLT outing to study miniature plant species that grow on pebble plains

Land Trust transfers 260 acres to Forest Service

SBMLT used its Revolving Land Acquisition Fund to acquire a 260-acre property on Cajon Ridge in 2010. It was a private inholding surrounded by public lands of the San Bernardino National Forest and is located west of Crestline and Cedar Pines Park. This past January SBMLT was finally able to transfer this parcel to the US Forest Service, thereby eliminating a large gap in the public land ownership pattern of an important wildlife area on the western end of the Forest. **- Cajon Ridge --continued on page 4**

Liam Gavigan photo



Veterans Monument at Arrowhead Ridge

***SBMLT** is a community-based charitable nonprofit organization dedicated to buying threatened forestland for greater conservation and long-term protection of the San Bernardino Mountains.*

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The SAN BERNARDINO MOUNTAINS LAND TRUST

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Your Membership is Key to continued Success!

The Land Trust is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Your contributions are tax deductible.

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In Memory of Carol Pedder

SBMLT bids farewell

Members of the Land Trust as well as many mountain friends, who share a deep fondness for our local forest and its heroic wildlife, were saddened by the passing of Carol Pedder on September 28, about a month and a half before her 80th birthday.

Carol was one of the principal founders of the San Bernardino Mountains Land Trust back in 1995 and served as its first president until 1999. Most of the Trust's startup documents bear her official signature.

She was instrumental in enlisting experienced friends in 1996 to prepare the newly-formed organization's bylaws and articles of incorporation and to apply for federal IRS tax-exempt status. She also recruited many of the first board members and came up with funds to hire an expert consultant, who was fully skilled and knowledgeable in all the basic fundamentals and operations of starting a land trust.



Carol visits Arrowhead Ridge in 2014 to support the restoration projects onsite

Karma of Carol, Land Trust & Rob Roy

In January 1997 Peter Jorris and Carol drove to Sacramento in Carol's pickup truck, which had a gun rack in the rear, to participate in a 2-day symposium of California land trusts hosted by the Trust for Public Land. As a result, the new organization obtained a \$5,000 start-up grant plus lots of helpful contacts within the land trust community as well as valuable insights into the workings of the state legislature and key state environmental agencies.

Then in March 97 Carol and Jorris met with Rob Roy at the Blue Jay Villager coffee shop to discuss a possible

purchase of the former USFS property on Grass Valley Road that was now owned by Roy. While not declining, Roy named a quite high price that left the door open just a crack. That meeting subsequently led (a couple years later) to getting a \$2 million grant from the state Wildlife Conservation Board, which, albeit an impressive sum, did not induce Roy to sell.

Ironically he defaulted on his loan payments some seven years later, and the land reverted to the lenders. It then got picked up at a bank sale by SBMLT in 2011.

Meanwhile, the state funds got used to acquire 120 acres from Bill Gregory, a local pioneer, whose land occupied a plateau west of Grandview Road in Twin Peaks, a wildland parcel with views of Lake Gregory and Silverwood Lake that Carol had learned a couple years earlier also needed to be saved.

Carol loved the San Bernardino Mountains and all the lively critters it supports. Her spirit will long be allied with the tall forest trees, the wildflowers and woodland streams, which her many organizations, projects and causes all helped to protect.

Memorial Contributions

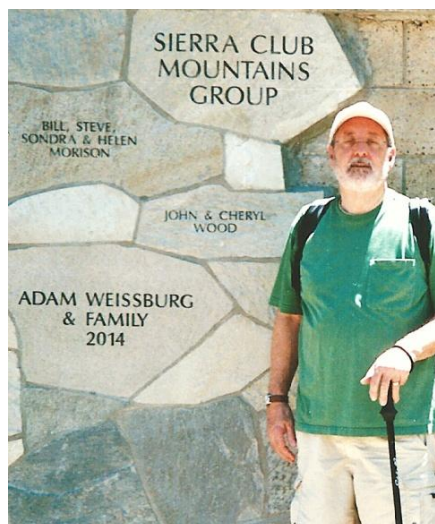
For those who would like to make a lasting gift in remembrance and honor of Carol, SBMLT has set up a commemorative fund for a special engraved plaque on the flagstone wall at Arrowhead Ridge in tribute to her heartfelt conservation work.

The fund is already halfway to its goal of raising \$5,000 --a tiny fraction of the great value that Carol's work has brought to our scenic forest.

Protecting what's now known as Arrowhead Ridge was one of Carol's first projects (way back in 1988). And the Land Trust, which she started, has proved to be the final solution 23 years later (in 2011), ending what was a long, tense and elusive struggle. It is most fitting to now honor Carol's memory in stone at this iconic spot.

To send a donation, please indicate the funds are a gift on behalf of *Carol Pedder*.

Besides funding a stately engraved flagstone plaque on the distinguished commemorative wall, these funds will help to make major landscape improvements at the entrance area of the Arrowhead Ridge site.



Dave Barrie, chair of the Mountains Group of the Sierra Club, stands beside the flagstone wall.

Pebble Plain (continued from page 1)

Purchase of the 240-acre site was funded by grants from the **Inland Empire Resource Conservation District**, the federal **U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service** and the California **Wildlife Conservation Board**. It follows 2½ years after the first acquisition of 166 acres in 2014.

Both properties had been destined for large housing developments –nearly 500 home sites– before the severe real estate downturn made subdivisions economically impractical.

The property was appraised at \$2.76 million, making the overall value of the new preserve slightly less than \$5 million. The two SBMLT properties enclose an isolated 302-acre parcel of US Forest Service land, which formerly had no legal access and would have been condemned to gradual deterioration if not rescued by SBMLT.

It is a great inspiration and reward to become stewards of such a magnificent landscape that not so long ago was fated to be bulldozed for housing tracts.

Cajon Ridge (continued from page 1)

Closing these kinds of ownership gaps throughout the SBNF is one of SBMLT's primary priorities, for which the 50-year-old Land & Water Conservation Fund program has been indispensable. LWCF was the source that enabled the local Forest Service to purchase Cajon Ridge. Unfortunately it is in jeopardy of expiring in two years unless Congress reauthorizes its continuation. (Visit the *LWCF Coalition* website for more detail).

Apart from generous contributions from SBMLT supporters that are essential to keep the organization operating, the Land Trust relies on its special Revolving Land Acquisition Fund to make major land purchases like Cajon Ridge. SBMLT's early successes coordinating with the Forest Service to get large grants from the LWCF program was what attracted major added support from large partner land trusts, like the Wildlands Conservancy and the Trust for Public Land.

These vital partners helped SBMLT build a sizeable acquisition fund that allowed us to make direct offers when key forest properties came on the market. SBMLT is now able to buy critical forest land prior to going to Congress to obtain funds for the USFS. This ability has prevented many scenic wildlife areas from falling into the hands of developers.

With the sale of Cajon Ridge to the Forest Service, SBMLT was able to pay off a longstanding special loan from the Wildlands Conservancy that helped facilitate and finance several key land protection projects over the past 10 years, including Cajon Ridge, Sugar Pine Mountain and Arrowhead Ridge. As the funds got rolled over from one project to another, hundreds of acres of permanent conservation was achieved.

Drive-in Movie Screen Removed

After the SAN BERNARDINO MOUNTAINS LAND TRUST acquired the Metcalf Meadow property in 2015, we learned the City of Big Bear Lake considered the old movie screen to be a hazard, and SBMLT was issued a demolition order.

The screen was made of corrugated metal panels (painted white) overlaid on an old plywood backing. The plywood was rotting, and some of the metal panels had blown loose. One ended up in the adjacent highway.

SBMLT's projects manager, Kevin Kellems, supervised the removal, assisted by Lyn Dessaux. In the photos below, you get an idea of the difficulty of this demolition project. But as challenging as the dismantling of the 50-year-old outdoor movie screen proved to be, cleanup of the large pile of leftover wreckage and debris was a much more time-consuming, arduous and far less exciting project.

Scott Seccombe



A member of SBMLT's demolition team rappels down the face of the movie screen as part of a survey to determine how best to dismantle the large structure. It was decided to cut the screen in segments, then chainsaw the round support posts (the size of telephone poles) while using a steel cable to pull sections down, similar to felling a tree.



Part of the movie screen falls, after support posts are cut



VETERANS MONUMENT DEDICATED



Liam pays honor to veterans

On November 11, a major Veterans Day ceremony was hosted by the Land Trust at Arrowhead Ridge, SBMLT's scenic 80-acre forest preserve. It marked the official dedication of the colorful flag monument created by Boy Scout Liam Gavigan. The flag

project is a tribute to veterans and was undertaken by Liam as an epic Eagle Scout project.

The monument features a circle of flagpoles around Old Glory. The banners of all five branches of the military form the outer ring around the center. Marble benches are set at the base of each flagpole with identifying inscriptions.

On Veterans Day all of the flags were hoisted by members of each of the service branches in full uniform, accompanied by an honor guard. An admiring crowd of 300 attendees was on hand to watch the event. Patriotic anthems, tributes, quilts and awards highlighted the occasion.



The monument is elevated atop a retaining wall above Grass Valley Road and occupies an alcove set apart from the adjacent turnaround. Across a narrow avenue is the Land Trust's flagstone Donor Wall on a level plateau above a small hill.

Young Liam envisioned his project at age 13 and searched in vain around Lake Arrowhead to find a suitable location for his ambitious project. After being turned away from other potential sites, he attended a



Rhea-Frances Tetley

Observers at the Veterans Day event at Arrowhead Ridge

Land Trust directors meeting in 2013 to present his proposed plan. As a result he was invited to scope out a prospective site at Arrowhead Ridge.

It proved to be the ideal spot for Liam's grand vision of uplifting homage to veterans. Without SBMLT's help, the monument might not have found a true home. It certainly could not have found a more idyllic and inspired setting.



Flags raised at the ceremony

PROGRESS REPORT on SBMLT PROJECTS

The Land Trust again made more progress in 2016 on several ongoing projects. One multi-year project is the consolidation of about 100 substandard-size lots in the rugged stream basin of **Deep Creek** that runs through the community of Arrowbear. This past year SBMLT acquired two more lots from the County's delinquent tax sale auction. Six more were bought from an out-of-town investor, who realized the lots were not worth the cost of the property taxes. In the **Coyote Rock** section of Running Springs, SBMLT bought a one-acre parcel from a former real estate broker, who now lives out of the area. Last month SBMLT bid on a **Shay Pond** parcel in bankruptcy court. The site, now in escrow, is habitat for the *unarmored three-spine stickleback*, an endangered fish --one of the rarest species in the SBNF. Much work continues at the now 700-acre **Sawmill Pebble Plain Ecological Preserve**, such as reverting Jeep roads back to nature, improving trails, adding signs and putting up post & cable fence where needed. With 240 new acres, greater boundary control is necessary to stop illegal vehicle trespass in the north quadrant.



SBMLT volunteer Jim Baugh points to updated information at the trailhead of the Villa Grove Pebble Plain in Big Bear



Jim Sims and friends hike the SBMLT Trail named after him and his wife, Kathie, at Coyote Rock

Photo by Scott Secombe



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