



Where do you want parks, trails, and preserves in your community?

Los Angeles County is updating the Antelope Valley Areawide Plan, a component of the Los Angeles County General Plan, and wants you to identify lands in your community where you would like parks, trails, and preservation. The County project team has held public meetings across northern Los Angeles County, asking community members to map areas they consider town centers, areas where they want commercial development, parks, trails, and preservation lands, and what type of roads and architecture they want in their community. This is a great opportunity!

**Act now to put sites on the map.
Our extension for map inputs
ends December 31.**

Tell Antelope Valley Conservancy the location (road boundaries) of Joshua tree woodlands, wildflower fields, wetlands, trails, and other natural areas that should be preserved, as well as sites in your area that may be appropriate for parks or pocket parks, and we will include your suggestions on our mapping input to the County



project team. You can email avconservancy@yahoo.com or phone (661) 943-9000, or you can submit ideas directly to LA County Regional Planning at tnc@planning.lacounty.gov.

The planning area is shown in red on the map at left. It is a County of Los Angeles planning effort, however, the Regional Planning Department, told attendees at the Quartz Hill workshop that Regional Planning is working closely with the cities, so areas in cities can be identified.

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Help needed to build Sustaining Endowment

Please help us reach the December goal

- **50 contributions of \$100 and**
- **5 contributions of \$1,000**

The Conservancy has established a Sustaining Endowment, a working capital fund that will grow over the decades. The endowment allows us to accept time-limited donations of land, cover interim costs, and reimburse the endowment.

Your help is very important.

While the Conservancy’s earnings cover our operations, and grants cover our programs, only your contributions can build the Sustaining Endowment. AV Conservancy is a 501(c)(3) public benefit corporation and your donations are tax deductible.

Credit card contributions can be made online, at www.avconservancy.org, or use the back page of this newsletter to mail your check. Please call with any questions, (661) 943-9000. Thank you for your much needed support!



Photo Nevel Burke

Poppy Reserve stunned: Racetrack wants to be new neighbor at Fairmont Butte

by Margaret Rhyne

A draft Environmental Impact Report has been submitted to the Los Angeles County Regional Planning Commission, proposing to build a racetrack at Fairmont Butte, and subdividing and rezone some parcels to Commercial. This racetrack would host high performance race vehicles year-round.

The area is home to California State Park's 1,600-acre Antelope Valley Poppy Reserve, and several preserved properties that are owned by conservancies. The area contains a Los Angeles County Significant Ecological Area; in fact, a portion of the project site is in the SEA.

At the Commission hearing on September 2, the staff report recommended approval of this project, but two Commissioners seemed unsure, so another hearing will be held in February.



Photo: Bruce Blackadar

What are the concerns?

Concerns about the project include the change to commercial zoning; noise (Willow Springs Raceway is heard by neighbors five miles away); dust and air pollution; impacts on prehistoric and cultural sites; attraction of illegal off-highway vehicles to remote habitat; impacts on wildlife corridor; and impacts on wildlife from light pollution. The Antelope Valley Astronomy Club meets at the Poppy Reserve for its dark skies, and that would be ended.

How you can help:

- **Attend the hearing Saturday, February 6, in Lancaster.** Los Angeles County Library, 601 West Lancaster Boulevard, 11:00am to 5:00pm. The majority of speakers at the September hearing were in favor of the racetrack. You are needed at this meeting.
- **Write a letter.** Form letters and suggestions are on the web site. Tell Supervisor Antonovich and the Planning Commissioners that State Parks and racetracks don't make good neighbors. Write to Mr. Jodie Sackett, Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning, Room 1382, 320 West Temple Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012 (jsackett@planning.lacounty.gov) and/or Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, 500 West Temple Street, Room 869, Los Angeles, CA 90012 (fifthdistrict@lacbos.org)
- **Visit www.sio2.com/savethepoppyreserve** for information.

Nature needs the night

Artificial lighting disrupts animals' natural processes and food chains. Learn why dark skies are important to nature at www.darksky.org and www.urbanwildlands.org.

Antelope Valley Conservancy applauds the work of Los Angeles County Regional Planning, Rural Town Councils, and Palmdale, to acknowledge the importance of Antelope Valley's dark skies in policy, to help keep our skies dark.

Please help the Los Angeles County Planning Commission to understand: **FAIRMONT BUTTE IS NOT THE PLACE FOR A RACETRACK.**



© Elizabeth De Lyser

PRESERVING GORMAN HILLS

by Wendy Reed

One of Antelope Valley Conservancy's preservation projects is the Gorman Hills. At the western corner of the Antelope Valley, these mountains offer reasonably pristine forblands, unique habitat for sensitive species, and critical wildlife corridor connectivity. Since 95% of California's native forblands are gone, preservation of the remnants that still exist are a high priority.

The Gorman Hills have been the subject of an award-winning UCLA research project, award-winning photography, and several scientific studies. Over 1,000 vascular plant taxa have been recorded in this area; this represents nearly 14% of the state's vascular plant species.

The site provides habitat for the federally listed threatened coastal California gnatcatcher, and focal species under the Green Visions Plan *Terrestrial Target Species for Habitat Conservation Planning*, including tricolored blackbird, Tehachapi pocket mouse, and coyote. The site contains Southern Cottonwood Willow Riparian Forest, Valley Oak Woodland, Valley Needlegrass Grassland, and Wildflower Field, providing habitat for golden eagle, ferruginous hawk, grasshopper sparrow, pallid bat, yellow-blotched salamander, coastal western whiptail, coast horned lizard, and many more species. There are over 30 sensitive plant species, including narrow endemics, and about 30 sensitive wildlife species, including several recently discovered and yet unstudied invertebrates.



Used with permission from Richard Dickey

The Gorman Hills are documented by the South Coast Missing Linkages Project as being in the Least Cost Union wildlife corridor for mountain lion, mule deer, western gray squirrel, Tehachapi pocket mouse, and California spotted owl. The site is also part of the Patch Configuration for Bright blue copper butterfly. The uniqueness of the habitats and corridor is primarily due to its location at the convergence of several floristic bioregions and geomorphic regions.

The Gorman Hills preservation will ensure, for future generations, wildlife connectivity under the freeway to the 19,000-acre, wildlife-rich Hungry Valley State Vehicle Recreation Area, as well as connectivity to Tejon Ranch, Wind Wolves Preserve, the Los Padres National Forest, the Tehachapi and Sequoia Mountain Ranges, and the

Angeles National Forest. It is a unique and critical are for preservation.

These are lands with statewide significance. The Gorman Hills preservation has garnered support from Senator George Runner; Assemblywoman Audra Strickland; Paul Beier, Ph.D., of South Coast Missing Linkages; California Department of

Fish and Game; Center for Biological Diversity; Defenders of Wildlife; Endangered Species Coalition; Endangered Habitats League; Los Angeles Audubon Society; Antelope Valley Environmental Group; Tri-County Watchdogs; and many more. The Conservancy is very grateful for the support for this project.



Desert Cymopterus: Rare and Unusual

by Ricardo Montijo

During better rainfall years in the western Mojave, springtime results in an enchanting carpet of annual flowers. At the very core of these pleasing floral displays is a competition for pollinators, and it is a competition for survival.

Each flower species produces powerful visual and sometimes chemical attractants to ensure successful pollination. At times, these pollinator-to-flower relationships are specialized, but the species that have the broadest strategies to ensure pollination are generally more successful and often more widely distributed.



I still admire the lovely common flowers that bejewel our desert floor. Shown in the photos below, these include desert dandelion (*Malacothrix glabrata*, left), Bigelow's tickseed (*Coreopsis bigelovii*, center), and goldfields (*Lasthenia californica*, right).



But the prize for many followers of the spectacle are the rare and occasionally less than dazzling. Undoubtedly fueled by human curiosity and a natural predisposition

toward the rare and unusual, these are the species that preoccupy naturalists' attention.



"Rare and unusual" is description attributed to desert cymopterus (*Cymopterus deserticola*) by, among others, Townshend Stith Brandegee, who first discovered desert cymopterus near Kramer Junction, in 1915. The rarity of the species is a function of its natural distribution, which is limited to several disjunct patches in the Mojave Desert that extend west from Apple Valley to Edwards AFB (Charlton et al. 2004; Bagley 1995; Charlton 1993). It is generally restricted to well-drained fine to coarse sandy soils such as those found in drainages and slopes.

Desert cymopterus is unusual in both appearance and biology. It deceptively appears to grow early in the spring as many annual plants do, but is in fact a perennial herb in the Parsley Family (Apiaceae). The bluish-gray leaves, which grow from the crown of a long taproot, emerge from below ground, giving desert cymopterus a stemless appearance. A long stem-like structure called a peduncle bears the rounded inflorescence that upon close inspection is a collection of tiny purple flowers subtended by small chaffy leaf-like structures called bractlets (Sun and Downie 2003; Mathias 1930; Brandegee 1915).

Since desert cymopterus prefers cool and wet weather, its growing season is normally from February to May. The plants will desiccate quickly if exposed to warm weather and if such conditions occur early within the normal growing season, the plants may also be eaten by small mammals and insects (Pacheco pers. comm.). Although several

sources indicate that the flowering season is from April to May (Constance 1993, Munz 1974, Abrams 1951), we have recorded flowers as early as March and as late as June.

Small beetles and other insects feed on the desert cymopterus flowers, partially exposing the developing seeds. As the flower matures the purple petals dry, or are consumed by insects, exposing the seeds which are generally round or oblong and tan to off-white in color. The seeds of desert cymopterus somewhat resemble those of other members of the Parsley Family such as anise and fennel.



Most of the known populations of this species occur on federal lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management or the Department of Defense. Elsewhere, land use conversion for development or recreation has taken a toll on desert cymopterus populations, causing the federal government to deem it a Federal Species of Concern. The California Native Plant Society considers it as extremely rare.

Efforts to better understand and to preserve populations of this species are underway, renewing hope that this rare and unusual species will be around for future generations to enjoy.

Article and photographs © R. Montijo 2009.

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The Conservancy's commitment to trails

by Elaine Macdonald

There are many notable trails in the Antelope Valley area. These trails offer access to rich historical sites, scenic glories, natural wonders, a means to enjoy the great outdoors, and even a means of transportation.

Many Antelope Valley trails were trade routes used by Native Americans to travel from Arizona and New Mexico to the ocean and Tehachapi Mountains: the Chumash, Piute, Serrano, Kitanemuk, Tatavian, and Shoshonean. The trails were later used by pioneers.

The Barrel Springs area in south Palmdale, for example, was a stagecoach stop, including the Fort Tejon run and Butterfield Stage line. Jedediah Smith (1842) and William Manley (1850) are among many famous travelers to stop at Barrel Springs. By the early 1900s, the area was favored by Los Angeles notables for picnics. Antelope Valley Conservancy is working to preserve Barrel Springs for its biological, hydrologic, historic and cultural significance.

The most well known trails in the Antelope Valley are at the Prime Desert Woodland Preserve in Lancaster, Warnack Nature Park in Palmdale, Los Angeles County Devils Punchbowl, and California State Parks Poppy Reserve, Saddleback Butte, and the Ripley Woodland.

The National Scenic Pacific Crest Trail passes through Antelope Valley.

There are hundreds of miles of other trails through our hills and valleys that can be protected and preserved

for future generations. Trail maps are posted on our web site at <http://avconservancy.org/Trails.htm>.



The Manzanita Trail

Trails must be preserved and planned; they cannot be created once a town has been built. Trails are important for our quality of life and our economy.

The **Antelope Valley Conservancy Trails Recreation Committee (AVTREC)** evolved from two noteworthy environmental nonprofits that joined with each other and then joined Antelope Valley Conservancy: the Antelope Valley Trails Council and Antelope Valley Heritage Foundation.

Over the last 25 years, AVTREC has worked with communities and regional agencies to preserve trails and their connections to historic and scenic areas. AVTREC was instrumental in creating a staging area and a 4½ mile trail at Saddleback Butte State Park, Palmdale's 1½ mile Barrel Springs Trail, US Forest Service installation of a retaining wall along the Manzanita Trail, and securing 100 miles of Los Angeles County trails through the Antelope Valley.

Despite AVTREC's advocacy for inclusion of trail systems in City General Plans, many approved trails have not been retained through development.

It is critically important that local cities understand the importance not only of bike lanes along roads, but of a network of multi-use trails within the city, connecting points of interest and offering places to walk and ride bicycles.

In addition to securing land acquisitions that may offer opportunities for trails, many volunteers are working to secure the future of our regional trail system through easements, landowner negotiations, GPS mapping, advocacy in regional planning, trail maintenance, and work with communities. Please continue to support our local Conservancy.

Thank you,
Elaine



Photo: Jeremy & Suzanne

What's happening ...

@ SHAMBALA

Learn about new legislation Tippi Hedren is working to enact, the Federal Ban on Breeding Exotic Felines for Personal Possession Act. See information and videos at http://www.shambala.org/education_legislation.htm

@ CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

Desert Information Center: (661) 942-0662

Saturday Night Campfire Programs at Red Rock Canyon State Park and Sunday Morning Nature Walks. Call for information. Also, the **Antelope Valley Indian Museum seeks volunteers.** The museum is closed for repairs, but hopes to re-open by summer. Tours of the State Historic Park around the museum and school programs have resumed. Volunteers are needed to assist with, and be trained to lead, nature walks and hands-on activities. Contact Curator Peggy Ronning at (661) 946-6900 or pronning@parks.ca.gov.

@ THEODORE PAYNE CENTER

First Saturdays. Saturday, December 5, 9:00 a.m.-noon
Join the Theodore Payne Foundation family of volunteers on the first Saturday of each month to improve and care for our gardens.. Bring hat, gloves, knee pads and tools for personal use. TPF provides shovels, trowels, rakes, loppers, hoes, pruners and refreshments.

TPC presents Saturday morning and afternoon workshops. See web site for cost and times:

www.theodorepayne.org

- 12/5:** Native Plant Garden Maintenance with Jan Scow
Design Fundamentals for Native Plant Gardens
- 12/12:** Native Plant Horticulture with Lili Singer
Waterwise Irrigation for Native Plants
- 12/19:** A Bird's Eye View of Native Plants
Ethical Tree Pruning & Management Workshop

@ MEEC

ATTENTION K-12 TEACHERS:

The Mojave Environmental Education Consortium (MEEC) reminds teachers that National Environmental Education Week increases the educational impact of Earth Day with a full week of educational preparation, learning, and activities for K-12 at regional facilities. Sign up at www.eeweek.org.

@ KIDS FOR SAVING EARTH

Links to green shopping, posters, activities, and great information at www.kidsforsavingearth.org. KSE reminds you to use LED lights to save energy, and has a list of holiday light recycling centers.

THANK YOU, AUTUMN VOLUNTEERS!

Robert Large	Michael Powell
Susan Zahntner	Ilyse Klavir
Deborah Stevens	Cindy Breor
Marcy Watton	Nate Krumm
Clint Matkovich	

THANK YOU, DONORS!

David Erickson
Ann Gregg
Kirsten Williams Larson
Richard Dickey

Happy Holidays!

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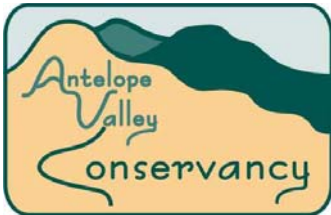
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YES! I want to preserve habitats, watershed, and trails.

My contribution in the amount of \$ _____ is enclosed.

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 The Sustaining Endowment
 Burrowing Owl Sanctuary

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Wendy Reed, Editor

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TIME REMAINING: 17 YEARS

According to the Land Trust Alliance,
lands preserved in the next 17 years will
be the last lands preserved on earth.
This work is critically important to our
future and our community, and your
involvement is critically important.