



**TO: PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION**

**FROM: COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

**DATE: APRIL 26, 2011**

**SUBJECT: BAYLANDS NATURE PRESERVE PROJECTS**

**DISCUSSION**

**New Baylands Supervising Ranger—Richard Bicknell**



Rich joined Palo Alto Open Space in January 2000. In his current role as Baylands Supervising Ranger, Rich directs the Baylands Park Rangers, and a seasonally fluctuating staff of Open Space Technicians and Assistant Park Rangers.

Rich has always been interested in the outdoors, but that interest was piqued about 20 years ago while working as a landscaper. He wanted to do more than just water flowers; he wanted to somehow pass on his concern for the outdoors to others and insure there would be generations of concerned stewards to follow.

Rich is responsible planning and coordinating the maintenance projects, field enforcement, Ranger interpretation programs, emergency response, and wildlife/resource management activities at the Baylands. Rich frequently interacts with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, CA Department of Fish and Game, East Palo Alto, and Mountain View/Shoreline Parks on a variety of cooperative projects.

Rich also manages the City's partnerships with numerous volunteer groups that help with restoration and clean up at the Baylands (including Save the Bay, Environmental Volunteers, St. Bede's Church/Youth Community Service, and Palo Alto High School). Rich is an accomplished photographer and often serves as staff photographer for Open Space events and programs. He has had one of his nature photographs published in a nature publication.

### **Save the Bay Greenhouse**



Palo Alto Open Space and Save the Bay have partnered to construct a greenhouse in the maintenance area north of the Baylands Nature Preserve Duck Pond. The building is in the final stages of construction, and is anticipated to be open on May 14, 2011.

The greenhouse will improve seed germination and plant survival and health, provide an extended growing season, and provide a facility in which to apply multiple plant propagation techniques. The 20 feet wide by 30 feet long building has a redwood frame and clear polycarbonate paneling. The project was funded in its entirety by Save the Bay.

Save the Bay will enhance vegetation adjacent to the new greenhouse by planting local native plants. The goals of landscaping are to increase wildlife habitat; screen facilities from public view; and have a native plant demonstration garden on display for educational purposes.

The partnership with Save the Bay has provided financial savings for the City in the form of labor, education, native plants, and technical knowledge, and has helped protect and restore wildlife habitat. Save The Bay has provided extensive educational and stewardship programs at the Baylands for the past eight years. This past winter Save the Bay, with the help of many volunteers, planted 8,000 plants at the Baylands.

Save the Bay will operate and maintain the greenhouse, in addition to the native plant nursery shade-house, which Save the Bay funded in 2004. Our partnership with the Save the Bay has provided financial savings for the City of Palo Alto in the form of labor, education, native plants, and technical knowledge, and has helped protect and restore wildlife habitat.

## **EcoCenter**



Founded in 1972, Environmental Volunteers (EVs) provides hands-on programs in environmental stewardship and explorations in natural science to over 11,000 local children in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties each year.

The City of Palo Alto offered Environmental Volunteers the opportunity to renovate and use the historic boat-shaped building located inside the Palo Alto Baylands Nature Preserve. The building was commissioned by Lucie Stern, one of the premier philanthropists in Northern California, and was designed by local renowned architect Birge Clark in 1941. The iconic building served as a base for the Sea Scouts.

The EcoCenter will be a gathering place for environmental education in Northern California. It will serve as a hub on the peninsula for community connections, a hands-on science center for the next generation of schoolchildren, a starting-off point for Baylands hikers, and a resource for marshland ecology education and the advancement of environmental stewardship in California.

The new EcoCenter combines historic restoration with sustainable green building practices. The building is a model project, inviting the public in to learn about eco-friendly building methods and materials. The EcoCenter will showcase the use of low-profile photovoltaic panels, natural ventilation during most of the year, and an interior finishing palette that will use both recycled and non-toxic materials. Construction and demolition debris will be minimized and recycled as feasible. Energy efficient heating and plumbing fixtures will provide efficient cooling and heating.

Due to the economic slow down, the EVs took an 18 month break from working on the project. That break ended last fall when they launched Phase Two of the capital campaign in November, which has a goal of raising \$1.4 million. They recently raised an additional \$230,000, including a \$146,000 grant to build the front decks for the Eco Center. They expect to finish the project and open the facility in 18-24 months.

Prior to opening the facility, the EVs plan to launch two new educational opportunities for the community associated with the Eco Center.

They are developing a marsh cam that will stream live images to the EV website. Visitors to the site can see the marsh at any time and on the webpage they can explore educational resources about marsh flora and fauna. The EVs are also developing a smart-phone application for a self-guided walking tour of the Baylands Preserve.

### **Phase One Accomplishments**

- Capital Campaign successfully raised \$2.4 million
- 5 years of planning; permits from 15 local, state, federal agencies; construction commenced in October 2008.
- A new foundation was built; for the first time in decades the building no longer floods with each high tide.
- All lead paint safely removed; lead paint no longer harms the sensitive Baylands ecosystem!
- 75% of total project construction completed.

### **Phase Two Goals**

- Capital Campaign will raise \$1.4 million (Through 3/11 \$230,000 raised towards this goal)
- Construct historically-significant front decks.
- Install mechanical systems.
- Finish interior design.
- Complete Bay Trail segments.
- Landscape.
- Design and install educational displays.
- Move-in!

Allan Berkowitz, Executive Director for the EVs, offered to take the Commissioners on a tour of the Eco Center. For more information please contact Allan Berkowitz, Executive Director 650-961-0545, [allan@EVols.org](mailto:allan@EVols.org).

### **Other Partnerships**

Open Space is fortunate to have a number of excellent partners that help protect and care for the Baylands.

- Kiwanis Club - Twice a year the Kiwanis host volunteer events at the Baylands Duck Pond. They sand and paint benches, pressure wash the walkway, remove litter, remove weeds, and plant native plants and trees. The Kiwanis often fund the cost of the paint, supplies, tools, and trees.
- Bay Area FrontRunners - Every Saturday the group holds a run event at the Baylands. Annually they contribute to staining the trellis at the picnic area

- United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)—The FWS help manage Palo Alto’s Faber Laumeister Marsh. They carry out vital California Clapper Rail surveys, provide patrol and law enforcement for the sensitive area, lead environmental educational programs for East Palo Alto School children
- St. Bedes Church - For two years the St. Bedes Church has brought out a small group of volunteers to care for a section of Harriet Mundy Marsh that they have adopted. Recently the group planted native plants at the site.
- East Palo Alto - Palo Alto Open Space Staff have participated in the planning and development of the East Palo Alto’s Cooley Landing project. We provided advice on park features that will be used at Cooley Landing- sailing dock, picnic tables, and interpretive signs. The City owned Faber-Laumeister marsh borders Cooley Landing.

## **Byxbee Park Phase 2**

### Status:

- Landfill Phase II C is still being used as landfill. Once closed there will be an extended time period for this area to be contoured, capped and approved for closure. Could be open to public (without Park improvements by early 2013).
- “Fast-Fill” landfill closure approved on by Council on November 22, 2010 is proceeding as planned. Signs have been posted this week to notify the public that waste acceptance will cease on July 1, 2011.
- Composting and other closure preparation activities will continue into late 2011. Full closure construction of Phase II C will take place in 2012.
- Landfill Phases II A and B (45.7 acres) are contoured, capped and approved for closure. A contract to underground the leachate and gas piping was approved by Council on April 11, 2011. These areas will be opened to the public as open space by July 1, 2011.
- Plans for trails on Phase II areas are still being discussed. In the interim, the public will be able to access the area via unpaved service roads along the leachate and gas well network.

## **San Francisquito Creek Joint Powers Authority (JPA)**



The JPA is planning and designing a capital project to provide 100-year flood protection from Creek flows and tides with Sea Level Rise, and provide ecosystem and recreational benefits, for areas of Palo Alto and East Palo Alto between the S.F. Bay and Highway 101.

Status:

- Design has been delayed temporarily; decision made to proactively incorporate future sea level rise considerations in project design.
- Anticipated that 100% project design will be completed in October, 2011
- Draft EIR will be released in August 2011. Final EIR adopted February 2012
- JPA and Palo Alto staff will jointly release an RFP for golf course design services by end of May.
- Construction of Phase 1 (levee earthwork, channel excavation and golf course improvements) scheduled to begin in April 2012.
- For more information visit the JPA website <http://www.sfcjpa.org/> or call 650-561-4580

**Anaerobic Digester**

- The City hired Alternative Resources, Inc. (ARI) to conduct a Feasibility Study for locating an Anaerobic Digestion facility on a 9-acre portion of the Palo Alto Landfill (Byxbee Park). Dry anaerobic digestion would produce methane gas and compost. The methane gas would be used to produce some form of energy. Given the complexity of this analysis and the strong interest by multiple stakeholders, Council also requested staff to present its Preliminary Analysis to the Council before completing the final Feasibility Study. Public Works staff has conducted several community meetings on the preliminary analysis and received substantial public comments. Both proponents and opponents of a Palo Alto facility are requesting changes and/or further work on the Preliminary Analysis.

On June 6<sup>th</sup> Public Works staff will return to Council with draft feasibility study. The public and Council will comment on draft, and a final Feasibility Study will be produced late Sept. 2011.

A related citizen initiative, that would undedicate 9 acres of parkland for an energy compost facility, will likely appear on the November 2011 Palo Alto ballot. Following the outcome of that vote, it is anticipated that Council will give staff further direction on next steps.

For more information please contact Phil Bobel ([Phil.bobel@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:Phil.bobel@cityofpaloalto.org)) or visit the City's webpage: Environment in Palo Alto- Energy/Compost Feasibility Study <http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/environment/news/details.asp?NewsID=1586&TargetID=59>

PREPARED BY: \_\_\_\_\_

**Richard Bicknell and Daren Anderson**

Baylands Supervising Ranger; Open Space, Parks, and Golf Manager