

Up and Down the Creek

A Day in the Watershed

By Geoffrey D. Smith, Executive Director

The rising sun shines brightly through my bedroom window, its warm glow filtered by the leaves of the Engelmann oak tree outside – one of many trees preserved in my clustered residential development near the



creek. The cheerful calls of wren tit birds greet the day. It is Saturday, and I've got places to go! I don my TECC daypack and walk down to the creek for a brisk walk in the morning air, inhaling the moist freshness of the morning dew.

A mile from my house, I stop at the outdoor bistro for a cup of java and a muffin, and read the *North County Times* while enjoying the view at this reconstructed wetland in Grape Day Park on Escondido Boulevard. Volunteers are gathering for a creek cleanup and walk along the mixed-use hike, bike and equestrian trail, and a group of plein air artists are capturing images of the snowy egrets in the reeds. I move on. I flash my membership card at the bicycle rental stand and hop on board a custom mountain bike for a quick ride along the path to the Bottle Peak recreation area, where I join a group of power hikers just preparing to hike to the top.

The view from Bottle Peak is breathtaking on this spring morning, and views of the San Dieguito watershed are intriguing – but that's another day!

Checking my bike at the rental node and grabbing a veggie burrito at the snack bar there, I board the public transit bus for trip down Harmony Grove to the Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve. I walk down the short interpretive trail to the Interpretive center, where I am greeted by a friendly ranger, who reminds me of

the astronomy talk this evening. I take a moment to renew my TECC membership with a volunteer there, then wander down to the creek to reflect in the shade of the oak and sycamore canopy. An archaeologist from the San Pasqual Kumeyaay reservation is giving a talk inside the center, so I sit in for a half hour – fascinating Native

American history! I purchase the informative book and thank the author.

As I leave the Interpretive Center, I encounter a Boy Scout Troop on a through-hike from San Elijo Lagoon; they are camping overnight at the primitive campground at the Mount Whitney Open Space Preserve and have stopped to fill their water bottles with delicious OMWD water at the drinking fountain. The Elfin Forest/Harmony Grove Volunteer Fire Department is hosting a benefit chili cook-off, and I partake of dinner at the outdoor picnic area. As the sun sets, the ranger signals the start of the evening hike – a moonlight walk up the 'Way Up Trail' for a star-gazing presentation by volunteer astronomers from the Cal State San Marcos physics department, complete with telescopes and constellation maps. The dark-night sky in Elfin Forest is particularly suited to this use, and the stars virtually rain down on us like diamonds.

I reflect on the Conservancy's recent successful campaign to purchase this 100-acre 'Cielo Azul' property from the developer who had planned to build 17 custom homes on this mesa overlooking San Elijo Lagoon. I smile. It was a beautiful day.

That's my vision – what's yours? Send yours to me at information@escondidocreek.org.



Visit the TECC website to subscribe to the free 'e-TECC' electronic bulletin for up-to-the-minute news and activities. Issued monthly.

PAGE 1 BANNER PHOTOS:

In the photograph to the left, Volunteers on Coastal Cleanup Day on Sept. 16 celebrate a successful event on Harmony Grove Road. Six volunteers

working with TECC Board Member Leonard Wittwer filled a 30-yard rol-loff dumpster with trash and debris that had been illegally dumped at TECC's Quarry Property.'

TECC relies on your generous support to further its mission of watershed protection. Here are some ways to give...



Donate your car or boat. Remember to specify 'The Escondido Creek Conservancy' as your beneficiary. Call 1-800-766-CARE or www.cars4causes.net



Dozens of merchant partners (including Major Market, Pep Boys, Claim Jumper and others), have created a system that rewards customer loyalty by contributing a percentage of purchases to TECC. It's simple and convenient, all you need to do is register your grocery club card and debit/credit card(s) at www.escrip.com.



Donate online with your debit or credit card. Conveniently contribute a single gift, or provide ongoing support by establishing automated monthly recurring charges. www.escondidocreek.org

Give less to the IRS by giving more to TECC! That's right – you can deduct your donations to TECC, a 501(c)(3) tax-deductible charity. Please consider a year-end donation for 2006!



Did you know... After your lifetime, remaining retirement assets will be heavily taxed if left to family but will have full value if left to TECC? We invite you to join others who are making a difference through TECC and Endow San Diego. Call our Executive Director at 760.471.9354 for details about this important endowment program that can derive personal benefits for you NOW.

In the smaller photograph, volunteer Frank McCulloch tackles a dusty dumpster full of debris.

Photos/Geoffrey Smith

WATERSHED NEWS

The Del Dios Highlands Preserve (formerly known as the 'Derbas' property) has been the focus of recent attention by the County Parks and Recreation Dept, OMWD and TECC. Work will commence in October on trail engineering and eucalyptus tree removal. TECC is funding the work, with the good support of staff from the two agencies and the California Conservation Corps. We look forward to trails connectors to the Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve, Harmony Grove and San Dieguito in the months ahead. Stay tuned... **State Senator Chris Kehoe's Conservation Easement Registry** legislation was signed by the Governor in October. "The registry will serve as an important planning tool that will help ensure a more coordinated allocation of our limited conservation dollars, help keep track of these easements for the future and provide the public with a better understanding of what they're getting for their money," said Senator Kehoe. Thank you, Senator Kehoe!... **The proposed Lennar Bridges Units 6&7 EIR** has been released. County DPLU staff has recommended denial of this project. On Aug. 25, the Planning Commission granted a 120-day continuance as requested by Lennar. This proposed development would substantially impact the core nesting area of the California Gnatcatcher bird, a federally listed threatened species. It is the view of TECC that there would be no way to mitigate the impact of 29 homes on 87 acres, and we are therefore strongly advocating for an acquisition alternative (no development.). We'll keep you posted!... **The Harmony Grove Village draft EIR** has been released, and TECC has provided comments. TECC has concerns about the

significant housing density of 742 dwelling units on 468 acres, traffic impacts and sewage infrastructure, all of which would affect Escondido Creek. The proposed development is on the site of existing chicken ranches at County Club Drive and Harmony Grove Road... **The TECC Board of Directors wishes to express their appreciation** over the recent approval of TECC bylaw revisions and looks forward to the launch of the new

Membership Drive in January... **The TECC Traveling Road Show** is ready to come to your community! Contact the office to schedule an informative presentation by our Executive Director about the Escondido Creek Watershed and TECC's programs. Your Rotary, Kiwanis, school, church, town council or professional association will love what they see and hear! Call today: 760.471.9354.

THE ESCONDIDO CREEK CONSERVANCY

YES! I support TECC's efforts. Please send the *Watershed Voice* newsletter. Enclosed is my tax-deductible donation. I want to be a member at this level:

Basic Membership

- \$ 15 Student
 - \$ 50 Individual or Family
- Includes quarterly newsletter & TECC window sticker

Friends of the Creek

- \$ 100 Includes basic premiums plus TECC baseball cap
- \$ 300 Includes basic premiums plus Eagle Creek Day pack
- \$ 500 Includes basic premiums plus invitation to Spring Celebration

Protectors of the Creek

- \$ 1,000
 - \$ 2,500
 - \$ 5,000
 - OTHER _____
- These levels of membership include basic premiums, plus additional recognition as appropriate

I am interested in donating regularly.
Please send reminders
___ Monthly ___ Quarterly

Please make your check payable to 'The Escondido Creek Conservancy' OR

Please charge my credit card: ___ One Time ___ Monthly ___ Quarterly

- Visa MasterCard Discover American Express

Credit Card No. _____

Exp. Date: _____ Security Code on back of card: _____

Authorized Signature: _____

Name on Card: _____

(Note: For your protection, your credit card number information in our files is destroyed after being processed.)

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

Email Address: _____

Name of Company that will match my gift: _____

BE A VOLUNTEER.

Yes, I would like to volunteer to work with TECC. Please contact me with opportunities to serve.

Your Contributions are tax deductible.

You can support TECC with the click of a mouse! Click the 'DONATE NOW' symbol on the www.escondidocreek.org website for secure and efficient donations by credit card.



The visitor on the left, who represents a key constituency in the watershed, stops by our booth at Escondido's Grape Day on Sept. 9 to learn more about the Escondido Creek Conservancy.