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Cover photo: Lichen On Rock by Kaila Dettman
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THE LAND CONSERVANCY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

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Local People. Local Land.
The Land Conservancy
OF SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

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The Land
Conservancy
of San Luis Obispo County

ANNUAL REPORT
2013

YOUR LOCAL LAND TRUST



IRISH HILLS © KAILA DETTMAN

MISSION

Through voluntary and collaborative measures, The Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County works to permanently protect and enhance lands having important scenic, agricultural, habitat and cultural values for the benefit of people and wildlife.

VISION

With your support, we will ensure that San Luis Obispo County has wild natural areas, productive family farms and ranches, clean fresh water, and stunning landscapes forever.

IMPACT

We work cooperatively with both landowners and government agencies to find positive, mutually beneficial solutions and to provide choices for the best use of local lands. Together we have permanently protected over 14,500 acres of land in San Luis Obispo County.

Our comprehensive approach prevents poorly planned development, protects drinking water sources, restores wildlife habitat, and promotes working family farms and ranches. This conservation ethic and leadership is essential to preserve the SLO way of life we know and love.

YEAR IN REVIEW

This past year has been an inspiring time in which our Board of Trustees and staff have been diligently preparing The Land Conservancy for future expansion of its mission to Conserve, Care, and Connect.

ALL THESE EFFORTS HAVE LED TO THE LAND CONSERVANCY BEING A STRONGER AND MORE FOCUSED ORGANIZATION.

Over the last year we completed the application process for national accreditation, enrolled in the Terrafirma insurance program to add an additional layer of protection for the lands under our watch, and completed and released our 5-year Strategic Plan. We also grew our membership family and brought more people of all ages out to Land

Conservancy properties than ever before. Not surprisingly, more inspired and capable volunteers have come our way to help us achieve our ambitious goals. In particular, our Board of Trustees has provided

new levels of leadership to The Land Conservancy by serving on committees, leading outings, and increasing their financial support. All these efforts have led to a stronger and more focused Land Conservancy that is better poised to serve the communities of San Luis Obispo County.

As leaders of this land trust, we envision a county that is bustling with economic activity and a high quality of life while fostering meaningful connections to the natural lands that support this way of life. We recognize from San Miguel to Nipomo that we all rely on fertile soil, clean air, and a rich diversity of wildlife to sustain us and inspire us.

This report aims to give you a glimpse of the vast network of dedicated people, including you, who support The Land Conservancy's critical work now and in the future. Every day we are humbled and honored to serve the people and wildlife of this spectacular region.

Thank you for helping us preserve the unmatched beauty of San Luis Obispo County and our local way of life.



© JUDITH HEDINGER

Herb Kandel
President, Board of Trustees

Kaila Dettman
Executive Director



MARTIN PROPERTY-IRISH HILLS © KAILA DETTMAN

PROTECTING LAND IN PERPETUITY IS A GREAT RESPONSIBILITY AND REQUIRES SUSTAINABLE FUNDING SOURCES.

There are wild places in San Luis Obispo County where the “hand of man” is hardly visible and wildlife found nowhere else on Earth take shelter. There are places that hold secrets of ancient peoples and paths that restore downtrodden spirits. By conserving these threatened but critical landscapes The Land Conservancy is providing hope for the future; a future with healthy natural surroundings in San Luis Obispo County.

Nestled between the City of San Luis Obispo and the Pacific Ocean are the Irish Hills, named for their resemblance to the lush, green lands of Ireland. They are steep and rugged, and they include large swaths of wilderness dominated by Coast Live Oak woodlands and coastal chaparral ecosystems. Affectionately known by our staff

as the “steep and deep”, the Irish Hills not only shelter dozens of rare and sensitive wildlife species, but they are also home to some of our county’s most coveted hiking trails including those that spur from Montana de Oro State Park and the San Luis Obispo Greenbelt.

Earlier this year our land holdings in the Irish Hills grew by 65 acres bringing the total acres owned and managed by the Land Conservancy in the Irish Hills to just shy of 1,500 acres. Reaching this remote 65-acre parcel of land and its tiny turn-of-the-century cabin would likely require a full day’s hike from the nearest road, although it is only five miles as the crow flies from Avila Beach.

At a time when The Land Conservancy is routinely completing conservation projects that include hundreds if not thousands of acres, it may seem strange to celebrate 65 acres of remote land for permanent conservation. What makes this conservation property noteworthy, beyond its spectacular locale in the “steep and deep”, is that it came to The Land Conservancy as a testamentary gift from the estate of Robert Martin who passed away in late 2011. In our history, this is only the second time a planned gift of land was left to The Land Conservancy.

Thoughtful legacy gifts like Robert’s are one way for land trusts like ours to meet the perpetual commitment to care for conservation lands that benefit the community forever. Planned gifts are the primary source of support for our organizational endowment which will ensure that The Land Conservancy is always present and working to steward and conserve the special places in our region.

In addition to supporting the capacity of the land trust, planned gifts offer landowners a way to establish a unique and meaningful conservation legacy by creating an estate plan that keeps their vision alive forever. Many appreciate that their enduring values will be passed on to the next generation through an estate plan that permanently protects the places they loved long after they are gone.

The donation of land, or any planned gift, reflects The Land Conservancy’s reputation as a beloved organization and represents true value to the community. We are honored by the trust Robert Martin and others have placed in our organization, and we remain dedicated to earning this trust.

In an industry that all too often measures its successes in “bucks and acres”, we are proud to celebrate accomplishments of any size that represent the hope of our community for a future San Luis Obispo County with protected lands for people and wildlife.



© LCSIO

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Produced The Land Conservancy’s *2013-2018 Strategic Plan* to guide the organization’s efforts over the next five years.

Coordinated the permanent conservation of the 65-acre Martin Property in the Irish Hills.

Gifted a 15-acre preserve in Los Osos to California State Parks to become a part of Morro Bay State Park.

Completed the rigorous application process to be formally accredited through the national Land Trust Accreditation Commission, which included over 2,000 hours of staff and volunteer time over the last four years.

Adopted and worked on over 15,000 acres of up-and-coming conservation projects.

Coordinated with the County of San Luis Obispo, City of San Luis Obispo, and Bicycle Coalition partners to ensure strategic collaboration for future extensions of the Bob Jones City-to-Sea Trail.

Enrolled in the Terrafirma insurance program to add an additional layer of protection for our 12,200 acres of properties under easement.



ATTIYEH RANCH © KAILA DETTMAN

AFTER THE HEADLINES OF THE “BIG CONSERVATION DEAL” FADE AWAY, WE ARE ENTRUSTED BY THE PUBLIC TO SAFEGUARD THESE PROTECTED LANDSCAPES.

Acquiring land or easements is only the first step of a long journey to protect the natural beauty of San Luis Obispo County. Each conservation success brings permanent responsibilities to steward and protect the conservation restrictions placed on the land. One of the lesser known duties we have as a land trust is to perform annual monitoring of the 14,500 acres that The Land Conservancy has conserved over its 29-year history.

What is annual monitoring and why do we care? Conservation involves a preservation of certain conditions on the land over a passage of time. And time has a way of slipping by and leading to unforeseen and often insidious changes in conditions. These changes can be difficult to perceive day-to-day and year-to-year but would be striking if viewed for the first time after five years. Annual monitoring is our primary opportunity to reconnect with our landowner partners and their properties, as well as review conditions on our own conserved lands.

The process starts when we come together to establish a conservation interest on a

piece of property either as a conservation easement or as the fee-simple owners. We take a tour with the landowner, where stories are shared. This meeting establishes trust between parties as we prepare a baseline report, documenting features of the property like seasonal creeks, important wildlife corridors, sensitive habitat, existing buildings, fences or stock tanks. We design a route through the land establishing photographic reference points which capture one or more important characteristics of the property that will be relevant in five, ten, and twenty years from now, a harder task than it might seem.

During the annual monitoring, we meet with our landowner partners and get a chance to learn about some of the joys and challenges of the year on the land. We share stories of successes and challenges on our own properties and can offer technical assistance or references.

On a recent monitoring visit in Atascadero, we visited the Franks, who own Hidden Springs Tree Farm. This property is a gem that lies a mere stone’s throw from a busy

highway and a fast-food chain. Thanks to the foresight of the Franks, the farm and creek will never be covered by buildings and concrete. During this visit, despite the short grass and dry land, we caught a glimpse of two beautiful red foxes lounging in the sun.

Another annual stop is a dry-farmed vineyard, a busy working landscape in Templeton better known as Turley Wine Cellars. From atop a large hill a water tank structure was observed along the skyline. A quick glance at prior monitoring photos confirmed this was, indeed, a new feature. Fortunately, this observed change in skyline was on a neighbor’s land.

In great part because of our efforts to maintain open and honest communication with landowners, we have had only a few minor violations on any of our conservation easement properties.

In total, there are twenty-nine properties that need annual monitoring including a few really wild places with miles of untrammled hinterlands as well as some smaller pocket parks that are host to a special spring or critter. Some properties are set aside as wild lands while others are working agricultural landscapes. Each is unique and critically important to San Luis Obispo County’s vitality.

Monitoring visits result in much more than the linking together of yearly snapshots of land. They are the way we show compassion and caring, both for people involved in the daily managing of the land and for the things that cannot speak like the clean springwater and the migratory trails of bobcats. These visits connect us deeply to our conservation lands, which will remain wild and natural, forever.



NICK RANCH © JUDITH HILDINGER

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Restored a pond at the Dunn-Wineman Family ranch near Nipomo and planted 1,300 native shrubs and trees to create wetland habitat.

Monitored 29 conservation easement properties to record annual photo points and assess land uses.

Collaborated with local farmers to produce food on properties we own.

Treated over 80 acres of invasive veldt grass and European beach grass in the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes and removed an acre of Jubata Grass in Cambria.

Constructed over 1/2-mile of fence to protect habitat for Morro shoulderband snail in Los Osos.

Removed Cape Ivy from the Lower San Luis Obispo Creek Floodplain Preserve to improve habitat for threatened steelhead.

Partnered with Central Coast Salmon Enhancement to remove invasive Arundo in Pismo Creek.

Mentored two Americorps Watershed Stewards Project members to map and survey San Luis Obispo Creek for invasive species.

Established formal photomonitoring points for all properties we own.



SANTA MARGARITA RANCH © KAILA DETTMAN

Twenty-four little pairs of sneakers stop at the edge of a trail as a class of 4th grade students eagerly observe leaves from two different native oak trees. While comparing and contrasting the identifying features of the leaves, the call of a red-tailed hawk yanks the group's attention to the sky and the discussion turns momentarily to bird identification. This leads to burning questions (and answers!) about animal adaptation, predator-prey relationships, and food chains until the instructor eventually brings the discussion back to oaks. The Land Conservancy recognizes the imperative need to educate and inspire the next generation of conservation leaders. Through this innovative,

high impact outdoor education program known as Learning Among the Oaks (LATO), we are helping young people appreciate the life-sustaining values and wonders within the oak woodlands of San Luis Obispo County.

The centerpiece of the LATO program is a nature trail that meanders through fifteen acres of oak woodland and savanna just beyond the blacktop at Santa Margarita Elementary School. Through an agreement with the landowners of Santa Margarita Ranch, the trail allows for docent-led educational hikes that are central to a beloved environmental education program in North County. Each K-6 grade

THESE TYPES OF EXPERIENCES INCREASE STUDENTS' SELF-ESTEEM, PROBLEM-SOLVING ABILITIES, AND OVERALL MOTIVATION TO LEARN.

classroom at Santa Margarita Elementary has its own trail study theme and set of learning experiences tied to the curriculum. Studies show that these types of environmental education experiences will increase students' self-esteem, problem-solving abilities, and overall motivation to learn, with strong evidence correlating to improved math and science achievement.

In addition to trail hikes, students look at photographs taken by wildlife cameras capturing movements of animals in the oak study area. These images show shy or nocturnal species that would otherwise remain unseen, such as badgers, bears, bobcats and mountain lions. A team of trained volunteers manages six wildlife camera

sites each month and shares the best captures in the school library and online. One of the wildlife camera volunteers is Nathan Sharon, a former graduate of the LATO program and an Oak Ambassador alumnus.

Nathan first participated in the LATO program as a 1st grade student at Santa Margarita. His interest in science and nature studies grew, and he eagerly applied and successfully earned the role of Oak Ambassador as a 5th grade student. LATO Oak Ambassadors combine their years spent as students on the trail with special training to transform them into trail guides for the younger classes.

While describing his experiences as an Oak Ambassador, Nathan noted, "Most of all, I've enjoyed learning how to be a trail guide and teaching others about our local history and wildlife. The joy of teaching others is the most rewarding thing I have done. Participating with my friends and classmates is extremely fun, and I loved how we worked together on the hikes."

When asked to present to the Wildlife Conservation Board at the State Capitol in 2012, Nathan was one of the Oak Ambassadors nominated to speak about his experience with LATO.

"All of the time I spent talking in front of my peers and friends gave me more confidence with my public speaking skills. Having the experience of teaching and presenting to others changes how you view your teachers and lessons," he reflected.

Now a middle school student, Nathan is already planning to develop his science and public relations skills in college while pursuing a career as a pharmacist or doctor. "I was always interested in science, but now I know that it is more than just doing cool experiments. It is the process of asking questions, finding answers,

and solving problems."

Those same little sneakers that are encouraged to get dirty along the trail will one day be replaced by grown-up shoes worn by our future leaders—teachers, doctors, farmers and scientists who will eventually inherit this world. Through place-based learning and environmental youth leadership training, Learning Among the Oaks is helping to ensure that the adults who fill those shoes have the knowledge, understanding and the passion to help solve environmental challenges with us today and into the future.



NATHAN SHARON © KAILA DETTMAN

Hosted 12 conservation events, led 10 hikes on local lands, and coordinated 15 volunteer work days in our community including the county-wide Creek Day Clean-up.

Recruited 219 new members for a total of 708 household and business members.

Achieved recognition by listing the Peirera Octagon Barn on the National Register of Historic Places and received a \$265,000 state grant for site improvements at the Octagon Barn Center.

Educated more than 800 school children and families through various hands-on oak activities of the LATO program.

Engaged over two-thirds of all Santa Margarita Elementary students in the monthly LATO Nature Challenge.

Increased support for planned giving by expanding the Terra Firma Society to 39 members (34% annual increase).

Honored Judith Hildinger with the 2013 Barbara Baltimore Volunteer Award for outstanding service in stewardship of our conservation properties.

Earned community kudos as the "Best Nonprofit in SLO County" by the New Times Reader's Poll.

LAND TRUST MOVEMENT



PSMO PRESERVE © KAILA DETTMAN

There are moments in life when a person or community can feel alone in their effort to protect what they most cherish; moments when one feels like a grain of sand resisting the surge of a churning wave. Those of us in San Luis Obispo County who are focused on protecting the land beneath our feet can feel quite small when facing societal changes that threaten the sustainability of our community and the wildlands that nourish us.

The reality is that we are one land trust among many others that are working to conserve special places in communities like ours across the United States and beyond. The Land Conservancy and our members are part of a thriving network of 1,700 land trusts representing 5 million members and 350,000 active volunteers. Our community of land trusts has collectively protected 47 million acres of land, roughly half the land area of California.

Similar to our efforts to restore native grasses and dune scrub in the world-class Guadalupe Nipomo Dunes, the Kansas Land Trust is working to protect the once abundant tall-grass prairie of Flint Hills which now only covers 4% of its historic range.

Just as we see the myriad benefits of teaching science concepts to Santa Margarita Elementary students along the learning trail at the neighboring Santa Margarita Ranch, the Lookout Mountain Conservancy in Chattanooga, Tennessee is helping inner-city youth escape violence and crime by involving them in a native plant restoration project at a nearby nature preserve.

While we host clients of Transitions Mental Health Association to collect seeds at our conservation properties and grow native plants for our restoration projects, the Androscoggin Land Trust in Maine is helping young Somali refugee immigrants adapt to their new life in the United States by taking them fishing and camping along conservation lands.

Like the 14,500 acres of local lands under our protection, the Methow Conservancy in Washington has worked with local farmers and ranchers to conserve 7,900 acres of farm fields, rangeland, and wild lands for the benefit of their community.

The land conservation movement has become a powerful force of positive change all over the world. The Land Conservancy is proud to be a part of this national movement, and we are grateful to our members and volunteers who make it possible.

LAND TRUSTS
THROUGHOUT
THE NATION HAVE
ENRICHED OUR WORLD
BY PROTECTING
AND CARING FOR
SPECIAL PLACES AND
CONNECTING PEOPLE
TO THOSE AMAZING
LANDSCAPES.

FUTURE OUTLOOK



SLO GREENBELT © KAILA DETTMAN

WE LIVE IN A
LANDSCAPE FILLED
WITH HOPE AND
PROMISE.

We live in a landscape filled with hope and promise—the grin on a child’s face after picking a bucket of apples; the color and vibrancy of our farmer’s markets filled with fruits and vegetables from nearby fields; the diverse network of parks, trails, and open spaces that link neighborhoods to natural landscapes; the burrow that houses a critter found nowhere else in the world; and the beaches, universities, bustling towns, and outstanding events that attract visitors who support our livelihoods.

As we embark on a major conservation campaign to raise \$30 million in the next five years, we do so with the goal of realizing our community’s promise. By purchasing a phenomenal property that serves as the backdrop of Pismo Beach we will inspire people to get outside, stay healthy, and connect with the natural world. By protecting the upper reaches of the Nacimiento River we will safeguard a regionally significant

source of drinking water. By continuing to conserve agricultural land in Los Osos Valley we will sustain some of the most productive soil in Coastal California. By opening the Octagon Barn Center and Kathleen’s Canyon Overlook for public use, we will provide community centers for people to gather, learn, and play. By expanding our education efforts we will encourage new and diverse voices to strengthen public support for land conservation.

Together we will realize a future San Luis Obispo County with a community grounded in the natural beauty and rural character of the region, with farming as way of life, and with places where people and wildlife flourish. Join us for the next step, a once-in-a-lifetime step along a path filled with hope for a bright future for our home.

PLEDGES AND GIFTS

July 1, 2012-June 30, 2013



ALAMO CREEK RANCH ©JUDITH HILDINGER

IF YOU WANT TO GO
QUICKLY, GO ALONE.
IF YOU WANT TO GO FAR,
GO TOGETHER.
THANK YOU FOR GOING
THE DISTANCE WITH US.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

July 1, 2012-June 30, 2013

IN MEMORY OF

Fred Barenchi
 Mary Cierczak
 Helen and Norman Cruikshanks
 Sam Cunningham
 Everett Draper
 Rebekah Filippello
 Jane Bennett Garver
 Keith Girard
 Joe Glowa
 Anna, Thomas, and Vernon Grady
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 Kaila Dettman
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 Eagle Creek Ranch
 Beverly and Bryan Gingg
 Judith Hildinger
 Bob Hill
 Herb Kandel

LCSLO staff
 Los Ranchos Rm 2 Parent Volunteers
 Mother Earth
 Charlotte Smith
 Penelope Tibstra

VOLUNTEERS

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 Americorps Watershed Stewards
 Judie Anders
 Mary Bettencourt
 Kara Blakeslee
 Jim Buenostro
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ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF SERVICE

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 Jaclyn Lim
 Raven Lukehart

MAJOR PROJECT FUNDERS & PARTNERS

American Land Conservancy
 California Conservation Corps
 California Department of Conservation-
 California Farmland Conservancy Program
 California Department of Fish and Wildlife
 California Department of Fish and Wildlife-
 Office of Spill Prevention and Response



SLO CREEK FLOODPLAIN PRESERVE © ROB DEGRAFF

OUTDOOR
 PLACES
 ARE WHERE
 MEMORIES
 LIVE AND
 POSSIBILITIES
 BLOOM.

California Polytechnic State University,
 San Luis Obispo
 California State Coastal Conservancy
 California State Parks
 California Wildlife Conservation Board
 Caltrans
 Central Coast Salmon Enhancement
 Chevron
 City of Atascadero
 City of Paso Robles
 City of San Luis Obispo
 County of San Luis Obispo

County of Santa Barbara
 Department of Defense-Readiness and
 Environmental Protection Integration
 Dunes Center
 Dunes Collaborative
 Guadalupe Natural Resources Restoration Trust
 Land Trust Alliance
 Morro Coast Audubon Society
 Morro Bay National Estuary Program
 National Guard Bureau-Camp San Luis Obispo
 National Oceanic and Atmospheric
 Administration-Coastal and Estuarine

Land Conservation Program
 Pacific Gas & Electric
 Santa Barbara Foundation
 San Luis Obispo County Community
 Foundation
 Transitions Mental Health Association-
 Growing Grounds Farm
 Vandenberg Air Force Base
 Westland Engineering

FINANCIALS



ATTIYEH RANCH © KAILA DETTMAN

WE SEE SOUND
 FINANCIAL
 MANAGEMENT
 AS THE
 FOUNDATION
 OF OUR WORK.

BALANCE SHEET

July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013

ASSETS

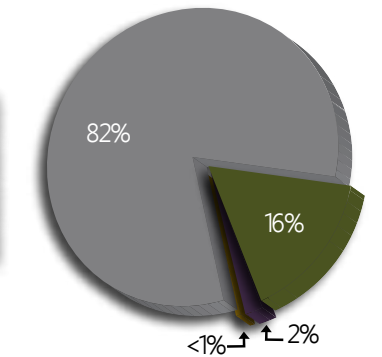
| | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Cash & Cash Equivalents | \$723,558 |
| Receivables | \$46,746 |
| Inventory | \$391,287 |
| Land Assets & Prepaids | \$4,518,557 |
| Investments | \$599,618 |
| Fixed Assets | \$292,495 |
| Total Assets | \$6,572,241 |

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

| | |
|---|--------------------|
| Accounts Payable | \$98,357 |
| Accruals & Other Liabilities | \$90,254 |
| Deferred Income | \$56,081 |
| Total Liabilities | \$244,692 |
| Total Net Assets | \$6,327,549 |
| Total Liabilities and Net Assets | \$6,572,241 |

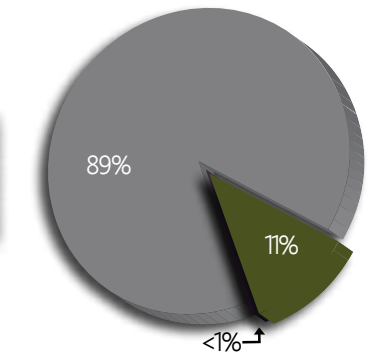
SUPPORT AND REVENUE

| | |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| Grants | \$2,024,975 |
| Contributions | \$391,366 |
| Lease Income | \$52,554 |
| Interest | \$6,921 |
| Total Income | \$2,475,816 |



EXPENSES

| | |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| Program Services | \$2,327,413 |
| Administrative General | \$293,240 |
| Fundraising & Outreach | \$7,496 |
| Total Expenses | \$2,628,149 |



Over the last year, The Land Conservancy received over \$390,000 in contributions from local donors and brought over \$2 million into our community from state and federal grant programs.

We take pride in the way that we manage our funds, and we voluntarily go through a full audit each year to ensure that our organization is always in compliance with accounting standards and not-for-profit regulations.

Please feel free to contact us at any time for more information about our finances, and please visit www.LCSLO.org for a copy of our IRS 990 Form.