OCTAGON BARN
ICONIC LANDMARK OF A LAND TRUST

For nearly two decades The Land Conservancy has labored to keep the Octagon Barn alive as an essential part of our community fabric. For a time, there were plenty of raised eyebrows when the Octagon Barn was mentioned at board meetings or membership events. Why was a county land trust that specialized in restoration and conservation easements even involved with restoring a historic dairy barn, let alone spearheading the effort to revive it? Wasn’t the Barn a prime example of “mission drift”?

Thankfully the current vision of the Octagon Barn Center as a central gathering place that embodies the core elements of The Land Conservancy’s mission: the permanent protection and enhancement of scenic, agricultural, habitat and cultural lands all the while connecting people and the community.

The Barn will provide six acres of open space at the gateway to the City of San Luis Obispo with native plants and outdoor trails surrounding one of the nation’s most unique agricultural landmarks. The site will serve as the trailhead for the long-awaited Bob Jones City-to-Sea Trail and a centralized hub for the entire regional network of bike paths. With thoughtfully designed exhibits, events, and on-site features (nature trail, wetland overlook, demonstration plantings, historic dairy displays, etc.), the Octagon Barn Center will provide an interactive opportunity for The Land Conservancy to educate and inspire visitors like never before.

We see the Octagon Barn Center as essential in making The Land Conservancy a household name in San Luis Obispo County and to sharing our conservation message with the broadest audience possible. The Barn will attract people that otherwise may not have interacted with The Land Conservancy, like wedding guests or film festival attendees.

—B.K. Richard, Board Trustee

With well over a million dollars worth of labor and materials invested in its loving restoration, reconstruction, and revitalization since 1996, the Octagon Barn is poised to open for community use in 2016. We aim to break ground on an updated water system this summer, and our partners at the County of San Luis Obispo have scheduled construction of the required turn lane and parking lot. These efforts are supported in large part by a grant from the California Natural Resources Agency’s Environmental Enhancement
SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THANK YOU
- Our Annual Conservation Reception was made possible by these generous sponsors and inkind donations:
  - Central Coast Brewing for donating and pouring beer.
  - Turley Wine Cellars for donating and pouring wine.
  - J. Dual Wines for donating two cases of wine.
  - Growing Grounds nursery for their donation of plants.
  - Peggy Pennelly, Kathy & Harvey Colton, and Mary Sampson & Rob DeGraff for their generous inkind donations and their helping hands.
  - Amber Cross and her husband James Moore for their musical performance.
  - Wallace Group for all their pro bono services, inspiration, and dedication to our organization.
  - Dr. George Sushina for the 55” HD flat screen tv, Bose speaker system, DVD player, and all media support for our conference room.
  - Judith Hildinger and Eric Meefer for a Samsung Galaxy tablet—great for field work!
  - David and Deborah Abrecht for a brand new Bushnell Scout 1000 ARC Laser Range Finder.
  - Glen Burdette for donating their accounting services.
  - California Conservation Corps members for donating their time and talent on some restoration work.
  - Eric and Terry Moore for a used gas pressure washer.
  - A special thank you for these local businesses who have donated their services towards the Pismo Preserve project:
    - Applied Earthworks, Inc.
    - Cleath-Harris Geologists, Inc.
    - Earth Systems Pacific
    - Specialty Construction
    - Terra Verde Environmental Consulting

CONGRATULATIONS
- Executive Director, Kaila and her husband Terry for the arrival of baby boy Aidan!

FAREWELL
- Good luck to Wesley Meyers, and see you in the fall Judith Hildinger! We appreciated all your hard work, enthusiasm, and camaraderie!

WISHLIST
- Cuddeback Black Flash Model C3 wildlife camera
- Samsung Galaxy tablet with waterproof case
- Wood chipper
- Sliding compound miter saw
- Arc welder
- Santa Maria style BBQ Grill
- 170 square concrete blocks (approximately 12x12x2)
- Gas or electric outboard freshwater motor (2HP)
- Check out our Wishlist on amazon.com and enter “land conservancy” to find us

Donated goods are tax-deductible. Call us at 544-9096 or e-mail LC@LCSLO.org.

OCTAGON BARN FACTS
- Built circa 1906 for dairy farming.
- The Barn is 77’ wide and 80’ tall.
- LCSLO got involved in saving the Barn in 1996.
- Octagon Barn Center will serve as the trailhead for the Bob Jones City-to-Sea Trail.
- Over 8,500 volunteer hours dedicated to the Barn.
- The official Chain of Title begins with Victor and Micaela Linares back in the early 1850s.
- In 2013, the Barn joins the National Registry of Historic Places.
- For more facts about the Barn, to see the latest conceptual site plans, or to donate to the project visit www.octagonbarn.org.

I firmly believe that the Octagon Barn Center will become one of those places that is so ingrained in the function of our community that we cannot imagine life without it. Just like our beloved hiking trails, our renowned Farmers’ Markets, and our iconic movie theaters, the Barn will be another unique and authentic feather in SLO County’s cap.

–Wende David, Major Gifts Officer

Our hope is that the community becomes excited about the project and that individual donors and community service groups will support half of our fundraising goal. The remaining half is expected to come from government funds and grants. The completion of the Octagon Barn Center is one of the top goals in our 2013-2018 Strategic Plan and is a key project of the larger Heart & Soil Campaign. But more than that, the Octagon Barn Center is sure to become one of those places that is so beloved by the SLO County community.

The Octagon Barn story continued from page 1

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T he Land Conservancy of SLO County
Local People, Local Land
www.LCSLO.org
CONSERVATION IN ACTION

RETURN OF NIPOMO LUPINE TO BLACK LAKE ECOLOGICAL AREA BY WESLEY MEYERS

The sand dunes of the Nipomo Mesa are home to a critically endangered annual plant, the Nipomo lupine (Lupinus nipomensis), that exists nowhere else in the world. In fact, every known individual of the species is limited to an area less than two square miles. This beautiful wildflower is recognizable by its small, succulent-like purple to blue-green fuzzy leaves and its tiny size.

The Nipomo lupine was first discovered in 1937 when a botanist stepped off the train at Blake Lake, a property now owned by The Land Conservancy. At that time, tens to hundreds of thousands of the lupine were located across the Nipomo Mesa. Since the 1940s the species has been in decline and was first recognized by California as endangered in 1987 and federally listed as endangered in 2000. The species has been absent for many years from all but one of its former locations, including Black Lake Ecological Area where it was first described.

The Nipomo lupine is so small that surveys for this plant are often conducted, literally, on your hands and knees. —Wesley Meyers, Restoration Specialist

The Land Conservancy has been conducting annual surveys for Nipomo lupine since 2004, when the total population measured 3,196 globally. These surveys tell us to treasure hunting, and the feeling of delight when a lupine is discovered drives our restoration team to scour the sand until they see purple, fuzzy lupine when they close their eyes. Since 2004, the population has fluctuated with a trend of steady decline, leaving strong feelings of concern about the imminent possibility of extinction of the species. It is likely that the recent drought has affected the population. In 2014, only 83 individuals were able to produce seeds for future generations. So far, 2015 has looked more promising, with just over six hundred lupines discovered.

The main threats to Nipomo lupine are habitat loss and veldt grass aggression. Veldt grass aggressively colonizes this open space. Pocket gophers, whose numbers have increased dramatically due to the recent drought has affected the population. In 2014, CCBER has been growing Nipomo lupine in greenhouses in order to obtain a large number of seeds for plantings with the purpose of increasing the distribution and abundance of the species.

This spring, Nipomo lupine returned to Black Lake Ecological Area in the form of 1,440 seeds planted by CCBER. These seeds were planted in an experiment designed to investigate habitat preferences of the species and evaluate the effectiveness of differing planting strategies with the goal of establishing a self-sustaining population. The results of this experiment will inform future planting efforts as we, along with our partners, continue to work to save the Nipomo lupine from extinction.

CONSERVATION IN ACTION

LEADERSHIP GROUP SEES QUICK SUCCESS MONARCH BUTTERFLY WAY STATION

A close look through what was once weedy corner in Santa Margarita reveals signs of new life these days: bright yellow, black, and white caterpillars munching on new sprouted milkweed. These caterpillars hatched from eggs laid just weeks ago and will soon form their chrysalises, which will hatch to reveal the monarch butterflies at the center of an important restoration project by one dedicated group of local leaders.

The Monarch Butterfly Way Station is located just outside of the Santa Margarita Elementary School on Highway 58 and H Street. Eighteen years ago, the site was planted as a Demonstration Forest under the leadership of Beverly Gingg, Learning Among the Oaks program manager coordinator. The site is a well-loved grove each year to see the butterflies overwinter. “But very few people understand the critical role of native milkweed to the monarch’s life cycle and survival as a species,” Miller said.

Following Class XXIII’s graduation, members formed a plan and committees to develop a Monarch Butterfly Way Station where children and adults could visit for an interactive educational experience. Class members have been busy at work since February planting narrow-leaf milkweed and pollinator-friendly plants, weeding, and mulching around the established trees. The team is planning the creation and construction of a “teaching circle” with benches for student lessons and will add interpretive signage to educate visitors about the life cycle of the monarch butterfly.

Class members continue to use their skills in marketing, web development, education, fundraising, and good old hard work to get the job done. The class expects the site will be completed this year.

“In just a few short months, we’ve accomplished so much,” Miller said. “Our biggest thrill was watching a female monarch lay eggs on the milkweed one of our workdays. Two weeks later, those eggs had hatched and we had caterpillars munching on the milkweed. Our motto ‘If you plant it, they will come’ is true.”

If you’re interested in donating to this project, please visit www.firstgiving.com/fundraiser/latomonarchwaystation/donatepage.
When The Land Conservancy announced in January 2014 that we would be pursuing the most ambitious project in our history, raising $12M in just eight months to purchase the Pismo Preserve, we knew that it would take a herculean effort. We have you and our agency funders to thank for your confidence in our ability to see this project come to life.

Building projects are not easy, whether it’s a home, commercial property, or a public park such as the Pismo Preserve. The number one construction rule of thumb is “It’s unlikely to go as scheduled”. There are typically four stages of a building project: anticipation, realization, frustration, and finally excitement. We’ve gone through the first and second stages and now we are moving forWard on to the third.

The Pismo Preserve remains closed to the public. In the meantime, we will continue to have members-only, docent-led hikes and volunteer opportunities. If you see anyone trespassing on the property, you are encouraged to contact us.

Please check www.LCSLO.org or on our Facebook page for updates on any outreach meeting dates and locations or events. Until then, we look forward to the excitement phase of this project with you! 

D espite the absence of the Program Director, we’re releasing the Preserve Update in February to keep you informed of our progress. We will continue to update you monthly and there will be an additional update on April 15th to coincide with Earth Day. For those of you who are part of our email list, you will receive a separate email containing the most recent updates.

The Pismo Preserve is a 172-acre coastal dune region located immediately south of the City of Pismo Beach. The property is held in conservation easement by The Land Conservancy of SLO County (TLCC) and owned by The County of Santa Barbara. The Preserve provides a unique opportunity for the public to connect with nature in a coastal dune environment.

While the designs for the Pismo Preserve are not finalized, we continue to hold the public accountable by sharing our progress and collaborating with stakeholders to create a Preserve that meets the needs of the Preserve and its visitors.

We are currently working with the County to finalize the design and construction of the Preserve. The Preserve is expected to open to the public in the spring of 2023. In the meantime, we will continue to provide updates on the Preserve’s progress and opportunities for public engagement.

If you have a special place where you like to hike and would like to share your experience or insider tips, please contact Teresa at LC@LCSLO.org.
DOCENT LEADERSHIP: LESSONS LEARNED
FROM NIPOMO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Nipomo High School students begin their morning working at Black Lake (below). Students have some fun with Herb Kandel, Board Trustee (right). © Courtesy photos

Toward the end of the year, we were engaged in preparing the draft for our docent manual. We wanted feedback from the students about what would be an engaging activity for the manual. Herb Kandel, Board Trustee, on a field trip to identify points for a docent-led trail at Black Lake Ecological Area.

Besides placing stakes in the ground to mark the trail, Herb had other plans brewing for the captive teen audience. Herb wanted feedback from the students about what would be an engaging interpretive experience to support our emerging docent program, and every time he stopped at a “station” to try to illicit ideas and feedback, the reception was lukewarm.

After finishing the job of trail marking, the students wanted to walk in the open dunes. Feeling a little deflated from the less than enthusiastic responses from the students, Herb felt that some “free play” was warranted. And this is where the highlighted moments we shared could not have been planned, but we emerged with teamwork, trust, play, and the sharing of ideas.

The impromptu conversation took place on the summit of the dune and jumped off the dune and headed back home.

Then, came the most amazing moment of the trip: an intense albeit respectful debate. Herb really wished he had recorded their conversation. One student comes from a religious family with a Republican background, and he is headed into a military career, while the other student comes from a liberal family. Her father protested the Iraq War and subsequently his case went to the U.S. Supreme Court. The liberal freshman held her own with conservative senior and Nipomo High School debate team member. No one interrupted, all were spellbound.

The remarkable thing was that these spontaneous moments were the best possible feedback for the manual. After all, this kind of activity was not planned, but we could not have been more pleased.

The highlighted moments we shared could not have been planned, but we emerged with teamwork, trust, play, and the sharing of ideas.

—Herb Kandel, Board Trustee

LEARNING AMONG THE OAKS
A SNAPSHOT OF PLACE-BASED LEARNING
BY JUDITH HILDINGER

The Oak Education Manager

The Learning Among the Oaks (LATO) program is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year. Recently, we had the opportunity to catch a glimpse of the learning, sharing, and excitement that takes place in an oak woodland just off the beaten path.

As Beverly Giigg, founder and program manager, unlocks the gate to the trail, the oak ambassadors are eager to host the visitors and share what they’ve learned. It’s just the beginning of the spring field trips for all the students. The oak ambassadors, who are made up of 5th and 6th grade students from Santa Margarita Elementary School, are trained to serve as nature guides for trail visitors, most often the younger students at school. The LATO nature trail is located on private Santa Margarita Ranch land adjacent to the school; use is restricted to guided educational hikes through a License Agreement with Santa Margarita Ranch owners. Over the last ten years, much has been accomplished, both visible and invisible. Giant log benches set in a circle make the three learning circles—the perfect setting for outdoor learning among the majestic oaks. Tucked among the logs at one site lays a bundle of fossils that must indicate a geology learning station! Though not visible, but palpable, a proud love of land and place is present amongst the students, parents, teachers and the community around the school. From the sunny fields covered in purple, wafts of lupine perfume drift toward us. Blooming owl’s clover makes its own dark purple stripe on the landscape. The highlight of the day included the premiere performance of one of three LATO puppet shows, a senior project created by Cal Poly Liberal Studies student, Kelsey Wellard. This one, “California Oak Woodland Birds,” teaches children about bird adaptations. The kids’ voices rise and fall, matching the swooping flight of their owl, jay and woodpecker puppets. After the show, a student tells us with pride and a little wistfulness that he is a graduate of the Oak Ambassador program. We later learn that there are additional puppet show scripts and an entire lunchbox series of activities for teachers to use as a resource. These tools provide a fun way for kids to discover what happens under all that oak leaf litter in the forest, how food webs work, predator/prey relationships and more.

As the Learning Among the Oaks program grows, my vision is that these learning opportunities and our model can be expanded to other schools and forests beyond Santa Margarita.

—Beverly Giigg, Oak Education Manager

The Land Conservancy is honored to provide the nonprofit home for this stellar program, educating and inspiring tomorrow’s conservation leaders. Thanks to all of the volunteers, partners, donors, and sponsors who make LATO possible.

You’re invited to join LATO and other local partners in celebrating Living Schoolyards in San Luis Obispo County. Visit www.greenschoolyardsamerica.org/2015living-schoolyardsmonthactivityguide.html and http://creec.org/events/event_region=Region%208.

The LATO puppet shows created by Cal Poly student Kelsey Wellard debuted at the Wildflower Festival. Oak Ambassadors Jessianne, Ki-Lin, and Karrie performed the show in front of a captive audience. © Courtesy photos

The LATO puppet shows created by Cal Poly student Kelsey Wellard debuted at the Wildflower Festival (above). Oak Ambassadors Jessianne, Ki-Lin, and Karrie performed the show in front of a captive audience. © Courtesy photos

LEARNIng among tHe oaks
A SNAPSHOT of plaCE-BASED LEARNING
BY JUDITH HILDINGER

The Land Conservancy of SLO County
Local People, Local Land
www.LCSLO.org
Birders take advantage of a morning hike at Black Lake Ecological Area co-led by special guest biologist, Kyle Weichert.

As the restoration season comes to an end, LCSLO staff (l. to r.) Joey Chavez, Michelle Perez, and Dylan Theobald celebrate with a game of cornhole.

Restoration Specialist, Wesley Meyers (l.), takes notes from the master, botanist David Keil (r.).

Kids’ hiking day at the Pismo Preserve with the Hendrickson family.

Kim Wells and Bob Scheulen spend the morning hiking with LCSLO staff for an up-close-personal tour of Pismo Preserve.

Restoration Specialist, Wesley Meyers (l.), takes notes from the master, botanist David Keil (r.).

VINTAGE ORGANICS PHOTO HIKE
Saturday | May 16 | 3:30 am-5:30 pm
Calling all photography enthusiasts (whether amateur or pro)! Please join us for a members-only photography hike at an exclusive private organic farm. This event has limited capacity. Please RSVP at www.LCSLO.org/events to reserve your spot.

BIKE BREAKFAST AT THE OCTAGON BARN
Wednesday | May 27 | 7:00-9:00 am
Empower your ride with breakfast at the Octagon Barn in honor of Bike Month. Park your car at the future hub of the Bob Jones Trail Pathway and fuel up before starting your ride. Or stop off for coffee and a selection of baked goods, fruit and more during your ride around beautiful SLO. For more info about Bike Month, visit www.rideshare.org/program/bike-month.

OPEN HOUSE AT THE OCTAGON BARN
Saturday | July 4 | 1:00-4:00 pm
Join us for an Open House at the Octagon Barn. Hear the latest updates about the Octagon Barn Center and the Bob Jones Pathway. View displays of our plans and listen to local barn historian Lynne Landwehr and her engaging history tales. Come celebrate our progress and enjoy a refreshing beverage and tasty treats! The location is 4400 Octagon Way, off of South Higuera, south of Los Osos Valley Road in San Luis Obispo. For info about the Octagon Barn, visit www.octagonbarn.org.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MEMBERS-ONLY HIKE AT PISMO PRESERVE
Wednesday | June 10 | 3:00 -5:00 pm
Exclusive opportunity for current Land Conservancy members. Get a sneak preview of the Pismo Preserve and join Board Trustees Rob DeGraff and Randy Knight on a hike up to the ridgetop at Pismo Preserve. Space is very limited. First-come, first serve reservation. RSVP online at www.LCSLO.org/events.

CONNECTING KIDS TO NATURE

SOIL STORIES

What kid doesn’t like to get his or her hands dirty? The next time your child decides to dig up some dirt, turn it into an educational opportunity. In this activity below, kids can explore differences in soil types and composition.

Describe to children that you will conduct an experiment to analyze the soil sample they have just collected. As you dig and collect soil samples, ask:

• What do trees and other plants get from soil?
• Do different plants have different soil needs?
• Describe the soil: What color is it? How does it smell? Can you see small flecks of rock?
• Get the soil wet and rub it between your fingers. Is it smooth or gritty?

Have children make a “soil shake” by placing one half cup of soil into a jar with a lid and adding two cups of water. Ask them to predict what will happen if they shake the closed jar and let it settle for a few hours. Then, try it. Over time, soil layers will become visible. Gravel will fall first; then sand, silt, and clay; organic matter (leaves, twigs, stems) will remain floating in the water. Have children draw a picture of the layers formed by their soil shake, or collect and test soil samples from other areas (forest, field, yard) for comparison.

As follow-up activities, you can try this experiment with soils from different areas and compare the results to see how soils vary. Try it also with the soils you get in bags from garden centers for growing seeds and see how that varies from your garden soil.

Get permission before taking soil samples. Use plastic jars, if possible, as a safety precaution. Lesson adapted from Project Learning Tree.
1% Percent for the Planet was founded in 2003 by Yvon Chouinard and Craig Mathews, who aimed to create a model for environmental responsibility among business owners. The notion is simple: member businesses donate at least 1% of their gross annual sales to nonprofit organizations whose work protects and preserves the environment.

To learn more about how your business can participate in 1% for the Planet or to find a list of participating businesses, visit www.onepercentfortheplanet.org. The Land Conservancy is a registered partner of 1% for the Planet. Let’s make big, positive changes together!

Suntoucher Software, a local business in San Luis Obispo recently blogged about their involvement with 1% for the Planet. Kristen Hazard, owner of Suntoucher, recently shared her thoughts on why she chooses to participate. Organizations like The Land Conservancy benefit from her company’s generosity.

I LOVE WHERE I LIVE
Why do you live here? It’s certainly not affordable. Why do you work here? It’s not hard to find jobs that pay better just four hours away. If you’re like me, you live here because–almost everywhere you look–it’s simply beautiful.

1% IS A TINY NUMBER
If you raised your prices 1%, would anyone notice? If you had to pay a 1% eco-tax, would it really be that painful? When you consider your annual expenses—what you pay for coffee, or for electricity, or for a new cell phone—suddenly 1% of your annual sales is not very much money at all, especially when you consider the impact that 1% can have.

1% IS A HUGE NUMBER
Many of us enjoy and appreciate our natural environment, but don’t have the time to make a difference. Directing a small fraction of our revenues to environmental groups enables them to do what they do best.

FOR THE PLANET, FOR US

Today’s Sermon
I don’t like to preach. And I don’t like to be preached to. But I believe our health and wellness is affected by the environment. I believe that businesses are responsible for positive change. I believe we owe respect to the people who came before us and protected the environment we enjoy today. I believe we owe our children the legacy of a clean, safe, and healthy planet for them to raise children of their own. And I believe, even as a small business owner in a small town, that I can make a difference that matters.