



CURRENTS

NEWSLETTER OF SAN DIEGUITO RIVER VALLEY CONSERVANCY

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SAN DIEGUITO RIVER VALLEY



CONSERVANCY

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MAKING CONNECTIONS
RIVER VALLEY FEST 2022

Connecting communities by building trails. *Connecting* habitat and ecosystems by preserving land and allowing wildlife movement. *Connecting* people to nature. *Connecting* kids and adults alike with experts to learn and experience the unique history of the San Dieguito watershed. *Connecting* people to people and partner organizations by offering educational and recreational events and programs. *Connecting* people to local businesses by offering Motivation Destination recommendations after trail and volunteer events. With your support, the San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy makes these connections happen throughout the year and improves the quality of life for those aware of the regional asset and attraction known as the San Dieguito River Park. The Conservancy strives to educate communities about its mission so that more can enjoy the natural and recreational resources of the river park while imparting a passion for environmental stewardship.

On November 6th, more than 150 of the Conservancy's supporters gathered at River Valley Fest to celebrate Making Connections. See pages 6-7 to read more about the celebration.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

What a terrific night we had at our 2022 River Valley Fest 2022. The theme, "Making Connections," was spot-on. In particular, I enjoyed connecting with four of the Conservancy's great partners: Shawna Anderson, Executive Director of the San Dieguito River Park JPA, Dwight Worden, the mayor of Del Mar, Eric Jones, Executive Director of the Volcan Mountain Foundation and Susie Murphy, Executive Director of San Diego Mountain Biking Association.

We celebrated the progress we've made to make trail connections. Forty-nine of 71 miles of the Coast to Crest Trail are finished, with the 50th scheduled to open in 2023. In 2022, our wildly popular recreation program, the Coast to Crest Trail Challenge, included a record 450 participants. In Del Mar, we continue to support the city's planned extension of River Path Del Mar, where construction is expected to begin next winter.

Our education program is making connections. Watershed Explorers, which gets nature-starved kids into the outdoors, has been supercharged with a \$257,000 Outdoor Equity grant. With generous grants from our sponsors, we have published a series of online courses that enables K-12 teachers to integrate instruction on local habitats and wildlife into their lessons. Our Next to Nature Program continues to help homeowners bring native plants into their landscapes.

With the help of hardworking volunteers, our conservation program has brought habitat restoration to San Dieguito Lagoon, Gonzales Canyon, Del Dios, Rancho Santa Fe, Scholder Creek and other locations.

We are excited to continue making connections for our conservation, education and recreation programs in 2023!

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

I am honored to serve as the Conservancy's executive director. It is an exciting time to be a part of the effort to close Coast to Crest Trail gaps and Get-to-71, attend my first River Valley Fest, and plan for outreach, volunteer, educational and recreational events as we find ourselves in a new normal after the COVID pandemic – a time period that highlighted the physical, spiritual, and mental importance of open space and outdoor recreational opportunities. Our efforts to implement the Founders' vision to not only protect open space and water quality but to also share the natural and cultural resources by providing trails and educational programs has truly made San Dieguito River Valley a regional asset and attraction.



In the last six months SDRVC's Board of Directors, its many supporters and volunteers, and the community have made me feel welcome and at home. Of course, I am still in the learning phase, but the path ahead seems clear. Each and every day I have been humbled by the passionate people like you who make our work possible and who are committed to making the areas within the San Dieguito River watershed a better place to live. For this, we want to thank you from the bottom of our hearts. This experience has been nothing short of extraordinary, while also opening my eyes to what is possible here at the Conservancy with the support of passionate donors like you.

I wish you a wonderful end to 2022 and encourage you to take some time and get out on the trails.



Shawna Anderson, Diane Coombs, Cheryl Goddard

CONGRATS, DIANE COOMBS!

Diane Coombs, one of the San Dieguito watershed’s greatest champions, was honored in October with the dedication of a trail on Volcan Mountain. The Diane B. Coombs Watershed Trail begins near Volcan Mountain Foundation’s (VMF) nature center and along Santa Ysabel Creek near Ironside Spring, headwater of the San Dieguito River. During a dedication ceremony, VMF Executive Director Eric Jones, former County Supervisor Dianne Jacob and Del Mar Mayor Dwight Worden led guests in a toast to Coombs. “It was just overwhelming,” Coombs said later.

“It should have been a plaque with a whole lot of names on it. No one does it alone. It takes a village. And it was a really big village.” In the late 1980s, as an aide to then-Supervisor George Bailey, Coombs received her boss’ blessing to fill in as executive director of the San Dieguito River Park Joint Powers Authority. The interim posting became permanent and she remained in the position for nine years. During that time, she participated in acquiring land and planning for the San Dieguito Lagoon Restoration Project. Coombs, 91, remains active with the River Park and, in particular, the Watershed Explorers Program. “I’m having so much fun,” Coombs said. “It’s so great to watch the kids have these experiences. Sometimes, those of us working on the program have more fun than the kids do!” With Diane’s leadership and support, the next generation of young people are getting to experience the watershed and are being inspired to become future stewards.

GIFTS AND GRANTS



\$43,300
UNITED STATE FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
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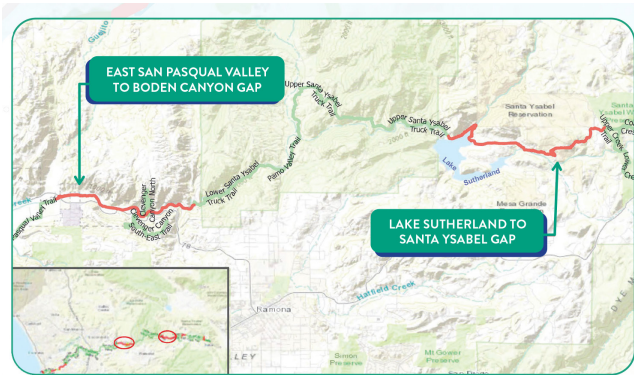
\$10,000
SDG&E
 Watershed Models



\$10,000
REI



Photo credit: Udo Wahn



WE'RE SO CLOSE! CAN YOU HELP US MAKE THE FINAL PUSH TO GET-TO-71?

Get-to-71 is a joint initiative of the Conservancy and the San Dieguito River Park JPA to complete two of the longest, unfinished segments of the 71-mile-long Coast to Crest Trail. One segment is between east San Pasqual Valley and Boden Canyon (5 miles). The other is between Lake Sutherland and Santa Ysabel (8 miles).

Imagine being able to hike or bike uninterrupted from the beach in Del Mar to Volcan Mountain near Julian. That was the vision 40 years ago and today, we're just \$300,000 shy of making it a reality.

So far, we have raised \$1.7 million, or 85%, toward our \$2 million goal.

The funds will allow us to begin environmental and design work so the two segments, both in remote reaches of the backcountry, can be ready for construction. The funds also will provide a necessary, local match to leverage state and federal grants.

As 2022 draws to a close, there could not be a better time to give. To all of our donors, thank you so much!

Please consider donating towards this campaign to make the vision a reality. Your donation can be designated towards the Get-to-71 Campaign by scanning the QR code on the back page of this newsletter.



COAST TO CREST CHALLENGE

The Coast to Crest Challenge is a fun way to explore Coast to Crest Trail segments throughout the San Dieguito River Park. We are entering into Year 6, which runs from July 1, 2022 until June 30,

2023. This year's "best of" series features favorite hikes from the first five years: Volcan Mountain, Bernardo Mountain Summit, Blue Sky Canyon Trail, Santa Ysabel East – West Vista Loop and Raptor Ridge. These treks take you from scrubby foothills to the pine forest with plenty of oaks and grasslands in between.

It's up to you how you want to complete each trail. Some people do one trail at a time, and others combine two trails in a day. Extreme hikers up for the challenge, do all 5 trails in one day! Don't forget to take some creative selfies along the way. Once you've completed all five trails, email the photos to sdrvc@sdrvc.org and we will send a certificate and Coast to Crest iron-on patch designed by Canyon Crest Academy student Joyce Lee. Some are working to collect all 6 patches.

It's a fun challenge and a great excuse to grab some friends, put your hiking shoes on and get outside! Last year, 450 hikers participated. Help us break this record by making it part of your 2023 resolutions to explore the beauty of San Dieguito River Valley. For more information on the trail challenge, visit: www.sdrvc.org/c2c/.





KAREN BERGER, RICK GULLEY, RACHEL AND KARL BERGER



To all who attended and supported 2022 River Valley Fest, thank you so much.

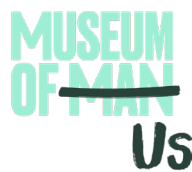
In one interaction after another, the evening lived up to its theme of Making Connections. What a fine way to catch up, meet new friends, exchange ideas and celebrate our shared love of nature.

We appreciate Hilton Del Mar's gracious staffing and delicious catering; the quick-witted commentary of our auctioneer, Mike Hogan; the lovely music by Beatrice & Adam.

To our sponsors and donors, a very special thanks to you. Your generosity, at all levels, translates directly into conservation, education and recreation.

Photos by Jon Clark/Del Mar Times. For more photos of the event go to: bit.ly/Del-Mar-Times-RVF-2022

RIVER VALLEY FEST 2022 AUCTION DONORS



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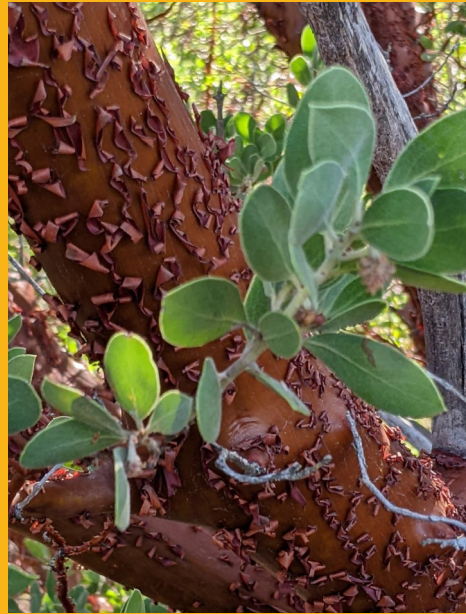


CHRIS KHOURY, FELICIA AND WAYNE BRECHTEL

EDUCATION: WATERSHED EXPLORERS PROGRAM



The Watershed Explorers Program takes children and their families to locations up and down the San Dieguito River watershed. In recent months, 11th graders from High Tech High North County explored the Sky Island Trail on Volcan Mountain, Sikes Adobe Historic Farmstead, San Diego Archaeological Center and the campus of Ilan Lael near Julian. Another outing brought third-grade students from High Tech Elementary North County to San Dieguito Lagoon. Photos: Chris Blake



EXPLORING OUR SENSE OF PLACE

Exploring Our Sense of Place, or ESP, is a program of excursions that dives deeply into the watershed's natural history and reinforces the connections of participants to the nature that surrounds them.

Enrollment is capped at 25 participants to offer a highly-personalized experience and easy access to the experts who join seven guided hikes. On some of them, arrangements are made to venture into areas that are not accessible to the public. Expert guides lead rich conversations on the wildlife, geology and native inhabitants of each area. To lock in the participants' own connections with nature, each hike includes a special "reflection time."

If you would like to be placed on the interest list for a future year, go to:
bit.ly/ESP-INTEREST-LIST

CONSERVATION: LAGOON RESTORATION PHASE II

By Shawna Anderson



Have you noticed the tall crane on the east side of Interstate 5 as you drive past the lagoon? No, the freeway isn't being widened and condos are not being constructed there. The crane is driving sheet piles into the ground to support a small bridge needed to cross a future tidal creek. The area east of the freeway where agricultural fields used to be looks barren now but after grading is completed wetland and upland plants will be installed to restore a lagoon habitat.

All of this is part of Phase II of the San Dieguito Wetland Restoration Project to restore 64 acres of tidal wetlands and 20 acres of brackish wetlands and riparian habitat. The ground elevation is being lowered to restore tidal flow. New tidal creeks will be added to support the new

wetlands. The 1.2 million cubic yards of excavated soil is being trucked to a disposal site on a nearby slope that eventually will be restored to native coastal sage scrub. A public trail overlooking the new wetlands also will be added. Construction is expected to be completed by spring 2024.

SANDAG, Caltrans, and the San Dieguito River Park JPA are overseeing the project, which expands and complements a previous lagoon restoration project completed by Southern California Edison in 2012. Phase II will cost \$87 million. It is made possible by SANDAG's TransNet Environmental Mitigation Program and federal funding. We are proud to partner with SANDAG on this landmark project to restore more of the region's precious lagoon ecosystems and add a new recreational amenity to the San Dieguito River Park.

Shawna Anderson is Executive Director of the San Dieguito River Park JPA.

SWORD WAY RESTORATION

Throughout the year, SDRVC organizes restoration projects that have volunteers getting sweaty and putting their hands in the dirt. In Carmel Valley, at the Sword Way trailhead to Gonzales Canyon, volunteers restore a chaparral community with native California wild rose, California buckwheat and lemonade berry.





RECREATION: WALK-N-TALK AT SAN DIEGUITO LAGOON

By Ilene J. Klein



A deactivated World War II Navy airfield once used for anti-submarine surveillance transformed into nesting sites for endangered least terns. Coastal wetlands reclaimed from a former Del Mar Fairgrounds parking lot. A neglected patch of roadside land turned vibrant pollinator garden by passionate volunteers and a partnership with a local restaurant. These are just a few stories about the San Dieguito Lagoon's interesting — and sometimes surprising — history told during the Conservancy's first Walk-N-Talk event.

On the second Tuesday of October, 13 participants — from first-time visitors to seasoned Coast to Crest Trail Challenge finishers — gathered under slightly-overcast skies at the Old Grand Avenue Bridge. They came to experience the San Dieguito Lagoon with SDRVC staff,

board members and a restoration ecologist. Along the easy, five-mile round trip hike, the educational team stopped to highlight the Conservancy's current and planned restoration efforts. Short talks about invasive plant removal, the fine art of micro-grading soil, and preventing salt shock to newly-introduced native wetland plants were interspersed with fun facts about the Lagoon's past by group historians.

Walk-N-Talk attendees left with new insights about the San Dieguito Lagoon and the importance of SDRVC's work, and a copy of the New York Times Bestseller, "Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation that Starts in Your Yard," by Douglas W. Tallamy.

The Conservancy hosts Walk-N-Talk hikes on the second Tuesday of every month.

YOGA AT THE BIRDWING

Have you tried Yoga at the Birdwing? Instructor Susan A. McCrea leads the free class at 10 a.m. on the third Sunday of every month. You can find your bird pose among the many birds of the San Dieguito Lagoon, which spreads across the viewscape in a vibrant wash of greens and blues. Connect mind and body while filling your lungs with salt-tinged air.

We can't wait to see you at this all-ages, all-levels class! Bring water and a mat. Park at the San Dieguito Lagoon Ranger Station, and take a short easy walk to the Birdwing.



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MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

SEE WWW.SDRVC.ORG FOR MORE DETAILS

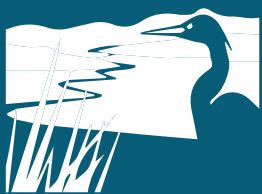
| EVENT | DATE | TIME | LOCATION |
|---------------------------------------|----------|------------|----------------------------|
| VOLUNTEER EVENT – HABITAT RESTORATION | 01/07/23 | 1PM to 4PM | GONZALEZ CANYON |
| WALK-N-TALK | 01/10/23 | 9AM | MULE HILL |
| FREE YOGA | 01/15/23 | 10AM | BIRDWING OUTDOOR CLASSROOM |
| PRE-VALENTINE’S DAY STROLL | 02/13/23 | 9AM | CREST CANYON TRAIL LOOP |
| FREE YOGA | 02/19/23 | 10AM | BIRDWING OUTDOOR CLASSROOM |
| WALK-N-TALK | 03/14/23 | 9AM | NORTH SHORE LAKE HODGES |
| FREE YOGA | 03/19/23 | 9AM | BIRDWING OUTDOOR CLASSROOM |

SUPPORTING THE PILLARS

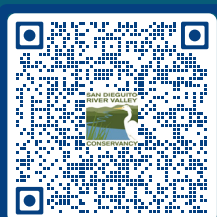


San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy is on a mission to advance conservation, education and recreation. As 2022 draws to a close, we remind nature lovers that every gift of every size directly supports our mission. Thank you!

**SAN DIEGUITO
RIVER VALLEY**



CONSERVANCY



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Land Conservancy**
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