Community groups and individuals often inquire about educational tours or are interested in renting the Octagon Barn for private events. Bicyclists use the site as a stopping or meet-up place because there is no southbound staging area on that side of the highway. New stories pop up from conversations with oldtimers that help fill in gaps about the Barn’s vibrant history.

These are obvious signs that the future Octagon Barn Center will fulfill important community needs and become a beloved icon of our local character. Yet, funding this ambitious project remains nearly as challenging as the decade-long process of saving the sagging structure from crumbling. Today, The Land Conservancy is one step closer to opening the Octagon Barn Center for community use.

When we first got involved with the historic Barn in 1996, the project was coordinated by all-volunteer efforts and in-kind services from area businesses. Shortly thereafter, smaller private donations from supporters and a Barn Fest fundraiser helped leverage funds for a new roof and structural improvements.

There was a pivotal point in early 2000 where our Board of Trustees struggled with how to handle the Octagon Barn. Somewhat divided, the Board kept the project alive with volunteer leadership from Trustee, Ed Carson, and a group of dedicated restoration volunteers. With widespread input from community stakeholders, The Land Conservancy solidified a vision for the Octagon Barn Center in 2008. Over the last five years, we have leveraged major sponsors and project partners to help advance our goals.

Today, we are thrilled to announce that the Octagon Barn Center was awarded $263,538 in funding from the 2012-2013 Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program (EEMP) administered by the California Natural Resources Agency and the California Transportation Commission.

The grant provides for roadside recreation amenities at the Octagon Barn Center including the installation of 150 trees, over 1,000 shrubs, a ¼-mile walking path, and the associated water system improvements. We are also hopeful that this timeline will encourage our partners at San Luis Obispo County Parks and Recreation to simultaneously develop the site with staging amenities for the Bob Jones Pathway. An additional $150,000 needs to be raised to cover fire sprinklers and electrical infrastructure requirements to make the Barn safe for public use.

With this state-awarded grant for roadside recreation amenities, the future has never looked brighter for the only 8-sided Barn on the Central Coast.

6th Annual Octagon Barn Holiday Lighting
Friday, December 6th at 5:30 pm

Get in the holiday spirit by celebrating with us as we officially flip the switch on thousands of twinkling lights! Join special guest and honorary light flipper, Supervisor Adam Hill and enjoy sweet treats and hot drinks as we kick off the holiday season with our annual tradition. For more events, see page 11.
SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THANK YOU
• ASAP Movers for donating your time and talent in helping us move our entire office to our new location.
• Mattison Law Firm for sponsoring Terra Firma Society Planned Giving seminar luncheon and to Scott Wall of Andre, Morris, and Bucy for your informative presentation.
• Jake Smith and Raven Lukehart of Avila Valley Barn for hosting our apple picking event and allowing our members to pick complimentary apples. Also congratulations to Jake and Raven on their recent nuptials.
• SLO Baked Bakeries for donating 200 cinnamon rolls to get our volunteers fueled up before we sent them out for trash picking during Creek Day.
• Rob DeGraff and Mary Sampson for donating a widescreen monitor.
• San Luis Garbage for donating a 4-yard recycle bin for the Creek Day Cleanup event.
• Hardy Diagnostics for sponsoring the Concerts at the Adobe:Amber Cross event and to Central Coast Brewing for donating delicious beer.

CONGRATULATIONS
• Our Conservation Project Manager, Stacey Smith and her husband Bryan welcomed a new conservationist, baby boy Gavin. Congrats to the new parents.
• Carlos Torres, our former Stewardship Manager, has moved back to Puerto Welcomed a new conservationist, baby boy Gavin. Congrats to the new parents.
• Carlos Torres, our former Stewardship Manager, has moved back to Puerto Rico, where he was born and raised, to work with a local land trust. Happy trails to Carlos and his wife, Lauren!

WISHLIST
• Bushnell Scout 1000 ARC Laser Range Finder
• GoPro Hero Camera
• 170 square concrete blocks (approximately 12x12x2)
• Digital projector and projection screen
• Pressure washer (minimum 2500psi, gas powered)
• Tractor (contact us for specifications)
• 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.

MISSION STATEMENT
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.

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Design: Teresa Tibbstra
Cover Photo: Octagon Barn © Judith Hildinger

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PROGRESS ON THE PATHWAY
BOB JONES CITY-TO-SEA TRAIL

The Land Conservancy has been involved in the creation of the Bob Jones Pathway (also known as the Bob Jones Trail) from the beginning. Bob Jones was our Board President in the late 1980’s and the Pathway is a great way to honor his legacy of protecting San Luis Obispo Creek for the benefit of us all.

The Land Conservancy continues to direct significant resources towards supporting the project, including owning and managing large land parcels along the future Pathway and partnering to create the Octagon Barn Center as the main staging area. Building the Pathway will likely disturb creekside lands that The Land Conservancy has worked hard to protect and restore, however we see an even greater benefit that will come from daily interaction between people and our natural environment.

We look forward to the day when families can start at the Octagon Barn and walk or bike their way to the ocean at Avila Beach, experiencing the vibrancy of family farms and the wonders of San Luis Obispo Creek along the way.

Our organization is committed to connecting the people of our community to the land that sustains us. We are also committed to caring for San Luis Obispo Creek and the local farmers that support our economy and way of life. In general, we believe that the Bob Jones Pathway Environmental Impact Report (EIR) addresses the potential impacts of this project and balances the needs of all stakeholders through its mitigation measures. During the public comment period, we encouraged the Board of Supervisors to certify the EIR and move the project forward. We did share some concerns and recommendations (see sidebar).

Based on the public comments received, changes will likely be made to the EIR prior to sending a final version to the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors for approval. Interested parties are encouraged to attend the public hearing before the Board of Supervisors that is tentatively scheduled in January 2014. Stay tuned for Bob Jones Pathway updates and other conservation projects by signing up for our e-newsletter at www.LCSLO.org.

OUR COMMENTS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE BOB JONES PATHWAY ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT:

• Prefer the Bob Jones Pathway route would stay on the Octagon Barn side of Higuera (Alternative 2) instead of crossing and re-crossing Higuera in a ½-mile segment.

• Construct a lighted crossing to slow traffic along South Higuera Street at the Octagon Barn Center to provide a safe interim crossing for Pathway users until the Buckley Road extension is complete.

• Avoid impacts to the Filipponi Ecological Preserve if the area gets used for staging when building new trail segments.

• Use extreme caution to minimize disturbance to portions of our Lower SLO Creek Floodplain Preserve which were identified for building a bridge crossing of San Luis Bay Drive and are known to be home to the rare and vulnerable shrimp-endangered south-central California Coast steelhead and endangered California red-legged frog.

• Involve the impacted farmers and landowners in creating a plan to reduce farmland conflicts because the proposed route along our Lower San Luis Obispo Creek Floodplain Preserve will remove some farmland from production and impact operations. Continue conversations with Caltrans and other agencies so that an undercrossing remains as a viable alternative to the proposed overcrossing.
THE FUTURE OF LOCAL LAND CONSERVATION

2013-2018 STRATEGIC PLAN

In the first 30 years of its life, The Land Conservancy grew from a small grassroots volunteer organization to one of the preeminent local land trusts in California. In that time, we have protected special places throughout San Luis Obispo County that contribute to our region’s natural beauty and irresistible allure. The Land Conservancy has been instrumental in creating a vibrant community with a strong local economy and high quality of life; however, there is more work to be done.

Throughout 2012, our leaders deliberated on the overall goals of the organization in the context of the organization’s strengths and weaknesses and the community’s pending needs. Our Board of Trustees and staff agreed that the organization’s mission, vision, and core values are in line with the needs of the community. Recognizing that there are many outstanding opportunities to implement meaningful conservation, our leaders worked to fine-tune where the organization would strategically focus its efforts and resources. As a result, a Strategic Plan was developed and will be implemented in the next five years to maximize benefit to local people and wildlife.

The plan includes these goals over the next thirty years:
• Become a household name;
• Establish a cherished public conservation park and boost the local economy;
• Expand the Bob Jones City-to-Sea Trail;
• Open the Octagon Barn Center;
• Fund voluntary easements on private lands;
• Train a team of docent volunteers to help more youth and families experience protected conservation lands;
• Educate future conservation leaders through a Junior Board of Trustees.

Over the next five years, we will work on Board-approved land conservation projects which totals over 30,000 acres and identifies more than $10 million in restoration projects throughout San Luis Obispo County that Land Conservancy staff and volunteers can implement. These projects will safeguard community drinking water, provide outdoor recreation and therapy opportunities, preserve local food systems, protect native plants and wildlife, and build a strong conservation ethic among residents.

Here are ways that you can be involved in our future planning:
• Help us conserve land by becoming a member, or continuing to renew your membership annually. The higher our membership numbers, the more competitive we can be in pursuing grants;
• Help us care for local lands by volunteering in the office or getting your hands dirty in restoration projects;
• Help us connect to other people by spreading the word about the work we do and being our ambassador.

The short-term future holds both exciting opportunities and considerable challenges for us. The Land Conservancy must support ongoing projects and commitments while allocating resources to develop and pursue new conservation opportunities.

The Land Conservancy will lead the charge to protect the diversity and vibrancy of San Luis Obispo County for the benefit of all who call this place home. To read the 2013-2018 Strategic Plan in its entirety, visit www.LCSLO.org.

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

PLANNED GIVING

When 89-year old Jan Mracek of Cambria passed away, she forever changed the future of San Luis Obispo County’s spectacular landscapes. A modest Land Conservancy member for the last eight years of her life, Jan regularly gave a $50 annual donation. And she probably gave similar gifts to other community nonprofits. Like many of us, Jan wanted to continue doing good even after she was gone. But unlike many of us, Jane actually did something about it.

It is quite natural to desire that our lives continue to count for good even after we are gone. We don’t want our values and influence to evaporate into thin air. One of the reasons parents and grandparents seek to instill their values into the younger generation is so their influence will stretch into the future, through these family members, to help shape the world of tomorrow.

The Land Conservancy is preparing for the future because our nonprofit mission is to protect land in perpetuity. Caring for land forever is a great responsibility, and it’s critical to ensure that The Land Conservancy is permanently capable of taking care of the special places that you help us protect in your lifetime.

And that is why some of our friends and supporters have helped us establish endowment funds by including The Land Conservancy in their estate plans. They want their names and some of their hard-earned dollars attached to an organization that will communicate their values to future generations.

Your own estate gift to our endowment will continue protecting beloved places in San Luis Obispo County long after you are gone…and will ensure that you will not be forgotten.

Endowment funds exist to support the operating needs of The Land Conservancy and to underwrite the essential program services that contribute to our exceptional quality of life here in San Luis Obispo County. You can strengthen these endowments by adding your own estate gift, or by establishing a new endowment through your will or trust.

To honor this thoughtful gesture, we established the Terra Firma Society. By including the organization in their estate plans, our Terra Firma Society donors ensure that we will be able to protect and restore lands for all future generations to enjoy.

Jan Mracek took action to do good after she was gone by including The Land Conservancy as a 2.5% beneficiary of her estate. This unexpected gift was used to establish our Core Conservation Endowment Fund in 2007, currently held at the San Luis Obispo County Community Foundation. Another estate gift, generously donated by longtime volunteer Barbara Baltimore, listed The Land Conservancy as the primary beneficiary to multiple bank accounts. These gifts were used to establish our Healthy Lands Forever Endowment Fund which covers the annual expenses of caring for lands we own.

Consider your own role in helping ensure that our county’s natural landscapes remain vibrant, healthy, and accessible for community enjoyment. To learn more about our planned giving program, please contact Wende David, Director of Development at (805) 544-9096. You will be surprised how easily you can create a permanent legacy that keeps your values alive and protects local lands in perpetuity.
SPECIAL PLACES

HERE TODAY, CHANGED TOMORROW

WETLANDS RESTORED

Wetlands are celebrated worldwide for the many services they provide. They help to regulate climate, control pollution and flooding, and provide valuable habitat for fish and wildlife. They are an essential component in the early life cycle of a large number of species and many of the state’s rare and endangered wildlife that are found only in wetland habitats. When all California’s wetlands types are considered together, they support more species of plants and animals than any other type of habitat in the state. They are considered an important part of California’s natural heritage and their health is a legacy we pass on to future generations. Unfortunately, the value of these wetlands was not always understood and as a result, California has lost more than 90% of its historic wetland acreage that existed at the time of European settlement.

Using funds allocated for the restoration of natural resources from a 1998 settlement against Union Oil Company of California (Unocal), The Land Conservancy together with our partners the Dunn-Wineman Family, California Department of Fish and Wildlife/Office of Spill Prevention & Response, California Coastal Conservancy, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service have recently completed a project creating important wetland habitat.

Nestled within the Nipomo Creek watershed, an area marked by commercial agriculture and open space, lies the Dunn-Wineman Family Ranch. The Ranch contains creeks that act as important migration corridors and habitat for wildlife. In the 1950’s the Ranch created a pond for watering livestock which also created a watering hole for wildlife, important resting areas for birds and breeding habitat for the threatened California red-legged frog (Rana draytonii). Over the years, the pond filled in with silt to the point that it was no longer functional. This restoration project is considered a win-win as it helps control erosion, increases wildlife habitat, recharges groundwater, and assists the family’s agriculture operations over the long-term.

The new pond received some significant upgrades which should allow it to be maintained in perpetuity by the landowner. Through NRCS engineering, the new pond now features a revamped primary spillway to transfer stream flows on typical years and a reinforced emergency spillway engineered to handle flows up to the 100-year storm event. A special retaining wall made of articulated concrete blocks was installed to provide stable entry for cattle or machinery needed for longterm maintenance. Further work was done to stabilize areas of the creek surrounding the pond which were suffering from severe erosion. A technique called “bio-engineering” was used where Land Conservancy Restoration Specialists turn willow branches into living, growing structures that help stabilize stream banks.

In addition to the engineered improvements to the pond, The Land Conservancy has added a number of special modifications to the landscape to enhance its use for wildlife. A three-foot wide bench has been designed into the pond to promote use by red-legged frogs. A number of rock and brush pile structures were created throughout the site, to provide important cover for wildlife and important micro-climates which promote native plant biodiversity. To top it all off, the entire site was covered in seeds from native plants known to thrive in the Nipomo watershed. The end result will be diverse habitat for both people and wildlife to share.

The future health of our land, water, and wildlife is up to private landowners such as the Dunn-Wineman Family. We salute them for establishing a legacy of habitat protection that will hopefully be passed down to future generations.

“This project has been in the works for over ten years and throughout this time, The Land Conservancy worked to bring together support and resources for a project that has multiple benefits for wildlife, livestock, and the land. Our family is very excited to see its completion.”

– Liz Dunn-Wineman, Landowner

The site of the Dunn-Wineman stock pond in the early stages of construction. © Kaitie DeBman

It took a heavy duty crane to lift the massive ArmorFlex, which is used for erosion control (top). Liz Dunn-Wineman stands in front of the restored wetland (bottom). © Jon Hall

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A Legacy of Leadership

Valerie Endres

The Land Conservancy has undergone many changes throughout its almost 30-year history, but there has been one constant throughout the decades. That one constant has been Board of Trustee, Valerie Endres. Valerie has served on the organization’s Board of Trustees for the past 25 years and recently stepped down. Valerie has had the privilege of working with all five of the organization’s directors (John Ashbaugh, Ray Belknap, Brian Stark, Bob Hill, and Kaila Dettman) since its establishment in 1984. Valerie held various Board positions including Treasurer and served on numerous committees. She has enjoyed the company of many fine fellow Board Trustees throughout her 25-year history.

Some of the most legible questions that Valerie has encountered over the years include, “What does the organization do, and is it the same as The Nature Conservancy?” Fortunately, enough progress has been made over time that she rarely hears such questions nowadays. The land trust movement has made great strides nationally, with the number of acres of private land protected by state and local land trusts exploding over the last 25 years from 2 million acres to more than 18 million acres (according to the Land Trust Alliance), with a proportional growth in staff, board members, and the membership of any non-profit organization—in this case, the Land Trust Conservancy.

Valerie has witnessed, overall, a phenomenal and extremely welcome growth of the land trust movement nationwide along with much greater awareness and acceptance of our own local conservancy as the years have passed.

-Valerie Endres, LCSLO Board Trustee

Despite recession and huge government cutbacks in recent years, I witnessed, overall, a phenomenal and extremely welcome growth of the land trust movement nationwide along with much greater awareness and acceptance of our own local conservancy as the years have passed.

The common response to Valerie’s being on the Board has changed from “What’s a land conservancy?” to “Oh, that’s a great organization.”

Growth is a prominent topic of conversation in our community and certainly among Land Conservancy members. Growth, of course, includes water shortages, increased traffic and pressure on resources; but for our organization, as for many other non-profits in the community, Valerie has noticed that many of our new neighbors are eager to put down roots among us and to share their various talents, thereby enhancing their new environment. These people are not only our new friends but also our volunteers, Board members, donors and worker bees. Valerie notes that we should welcome them all.

The other important change Valerie has witnessed, through time serving on the Board, has been the increased acceptance by and cooperation with the local business community. It is without a doubt that a welcoming environment, with open spaces, trails and clean water, attracts travelers, who spend money, which helps our community prosper and contributes greatly to our being part of the “Happiest Town in America.”

So, yes, Valerie has been around for a long time, but she is very thankful for all those who have demonstrated their love for our community by being part of The Land Conservancy family. We are grateful for Valerie’s years of service and would like to honor her commitment and distinction with a Board of Trustee Emeritus status.

With regards to Valerie’s love of hiking and open spaces, it’s fitting that her parting words are, “See you on the mountain!”

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Local People, Local Land
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LEARNING AMONG THE OAKS TALK & TOUR  
Tuesday | November 12 | 11:00 am-12:30 pm

“If these oaks could talk” is the theme for this outdoor history walk and tour of the Santa Margarita Ranch. Guests will enjoy a historical overview of the ranch and a guided hike by the Learning Among the Oaks’ Ambassadors and docents. RSVP required to the History Center’s jfletcher@historycenterslo.org or (805) 543-0638 ext. 10.

SAGE ECO GARDENS & NURSERY COMMUNITY FUNDRAISER  
Saturday & Sunday | November 16 & 17 | all day

Spruce up your gardens and take advantage of the nice weather to gear up for late fall and early winter! Visit Sage Eco Gardens and Nursery for some inspiration and while you’re there, do some shopping! Sage Eco Gardens and Nursery will donate a portion of the weekend’s proceeds to The Land Conservancy. The Nursery is located at 1188 Los Osos Valley Road in Los Osos.

ORGANIC SQUASH BOX BENEFIT  
Friday | November 22 and Tuesday | November 26 | 3:30 - 5:00 pm

Exclusive offer for Land Conservancy members only! Branch Mill Organic Farm is offering a 30-lb organic variety of produce for $35. Each box will contain a variety of squashes and pumpkins. For every $35 box purchased, the Farm will donate $10 to LCSLO. To purchase a box, simply e-mail rmadocks@gmail.com or contact Ruth at (805) 481-9205. Boxes can be picked up at The Land Conservancy office on one of the two dates you reserve.

OCTAGON BARN ANNUAL HOLIDAY LIGHTING  
Friday | December 6 | 5:30-6:30 pm

Get in the holiday spirit by celebrating with us as we officially flip the switch on thousands of twinkling lights. Enjoy sweet treats and hot drinks as we kick off the holiday season. Join special guest and honorary light flipper, Supervisor Adam Hill. RSVP required.

OPEN HOUSE  
Thursday | December 12 | 5:00 pm-6:30 pm

You are invited to check out our new office space and meet the entire Land Conservancy staff. Put a face to our names, ask us questions, nibble on snacks, and sip some local wine. We are conveniently located close to the downtown area so you can easily head on over to the SLO Farmers’ Market afterwards.

To RSVP for an event, visit our events page at www.LCSLO.org to register. For volunteer opportunities, contact volunteer@LCSLO.org. Questions or more info, call Teresa at (805) 544-9096. For an updated list of events, visit www.LCSLO.org or “LIKE US” on Facebook.
EXCLUSIVE OFFER!

ORGANIC SQUASH BOX $35

Branch Mill Organic Farm is partnering with us to offer our members a 30-pound produce box. Each box will contain squash and pumpkin varieties such as Butternut, French Rouge Vif D’Etampes (Cinderella) baking pumpkins, Delicata, Kabocha, Butternut, Acorn, and Red Kuri Hubbard. For each $35 box purchased, $10 will be donated to LCSLO. Look inside on page 11 for details.

Looking For the Perfect Gift Idea?

Not sure what to get that special someone who has everything? Why not give a gift that has lasting impact? Get a jumpstart on your holiday gifting and give a gift membership to The Land Conservancy.

What better gift to give the outdoor enthusiasts and wildlife-lovers in your life than an annual membership supporting the permanent protection of local lands?

Your gift recipients will enjoy the same member benefits that you have such as hikes on private lands, inside information about conservation projects, 4 issues of Landlines, and two tickets to our Annual Conservation Reception.

The process is easy. Simply make your donation and you can download a gift notification letter (www.lcslo.org/gifts-tributes) to present to your special someone. No box required!

Changes to Online Giving

For those of you who donate online, please note that we will no longer be using Network For Good as our online giving portal. We will be using FirstGiving starting in late November. Despite the inconvenience, the good news is that we will be saving money since FirstGiving is free, and we will save an additional 2.5% per donation, a win-win situation for all! We appreciate your patience, and most importantly, we appreciate your support. Thank you!