

OPEN SPACES

Coordinating A Watershed by OVLC's Ventura River Watershed Coordinator, Lorraine Walter

Blank stares. That's what I get when I tell people I'm a watershed coordinator. The job title even stumped staff at the California Regional Water Quality Control Board this week when I called. The staff person interrogated me for several minutes about what a watershed coordinator does, and then his final question was, "Why?"

It's a fair question. There are two mysteries involved: watershed being one; coordinator the other. Let's start with watershed. It is an unfortunate term, that is, until you realize the next best term is catchment basin. I'd rather not have to describe myself as a catchment basin coordinator—too many syllables, so we'll have to get along with watershed.

What is a watershed? Well, it is a water catchment basin. It is an area wherein all the water that falls is inclined to drain towards a central water body—in our case, the Ventura River and then on towards the Pacific Ocean. Your bathtub is a small watershed, bordered by an enamel rim. The Ventura River Watershed is a large watershed, bordered by high mountains which include Nordhoff Ridge and White Ledge Peak.

We have a term for watersheds because the systems within them are interrelated in basic and important ways. Changes or impacts to one part of a watershed ripple through and affect other parts.

The Matilija Dam offers a good illustration of this interconnectedness. A dam erected to address a water supply concern had the unintended consequence of starving local beaches of sand and eroding beach property. We've learned a lot about how important natural sediment transport is, not just to beaches but to the ecology of the river, to the shape of the river's channel, and to the river's response to floods.

The watershed view is one that pulls back and looks at the whole water system. It is a view that acknowledges how critical water is to our lives, how powerfully it can affect our lives, and thus how careful we must be with alterations to water



Home school group jump starts the new Adopt-A-Meadow Program on the Ojai Meadows Preserve. See page 3 for details. All groups welcome: HOAs, Schools, Bridge Clubs, artists...

systems.

When we established our city boundaries, however, and our water district boundaries, and when we wrote our regulations for flood control, stormwater management, water conservation, clean water protection, habitat protection, and especially land use, we did not have this watershed view in mind.

Here's an example: Paving over pervious soil, say with a large parking lot, results in less recharge of groundwater aquifers, increases storm flows, and increases contaminants in runoff; less groundwater recharge means more surface water (Lake Casitas) withdrawals, making us more vulnerable to water shortfalls, especially in droughts; increased storm flows can increase streambank erosion and cause flood damage; more contaminants in water threatens the quality of water we use for drinking or irrigating our crops. All of these potential impacts to water systems can result from pavement, yet the regulations that dictate where and how much pavement exists in a community are not in the water code; they are in the land use and transportation codes.

continued on page 2...

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VENTURA RIVER WATERSHED COORDINATOR

This brings us to the second mystery of my job title: coordinator. While we have evolved a watershed view, we must somehow figure out how to apply that view to existing jurisdictional boundaries and disjointed regulations, and so watershed coordination was born.

Watershed coordination is about different agencies, organizations, and community members working collaboratively, across their traditional boundaries or service areas or areas of interest, to acknowledge the larger system that connects them—the watershed. Together these entities identify areas of overlap and opportunities to work together toward common goals, and nudge existing organizational structures towards a more holistic watershed view.

Fortunately, state regulators are beginning to acknowledge the importance of watershed-level coordination. In recent years, “integrated, regional watershed management plans” have been adopted by groups up and down the state because the California Department of Water Resources made it a requirement for access to voter-approved water bond funding. Any project seeking funds from Proposition 50 or 84 must already be included in such a plan.

In Ventura County, our three largest watersheds—Santa Clara River, Calleguas Creek, and Ventura River—are included in the county’s Integrated Regional Watershed Management Plan (IRWMP). The Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County (WCVC) is the group that wrote Ventura County’s plan.

The Ventura River Watershed Council was formed to work on the Ventura River Watershed’s contribution to that regional plan, and has been meeting monthly since 2006. The group is composed of local, state and federal agencies, water and sanitation districts, nonprofit organizations, and individuals—anyone with an interest that intersects with water. While the original impetus to get the group together was the obligatory coordination to qualify for grants, the tremendous value of the coordination now keeps participants at the table.

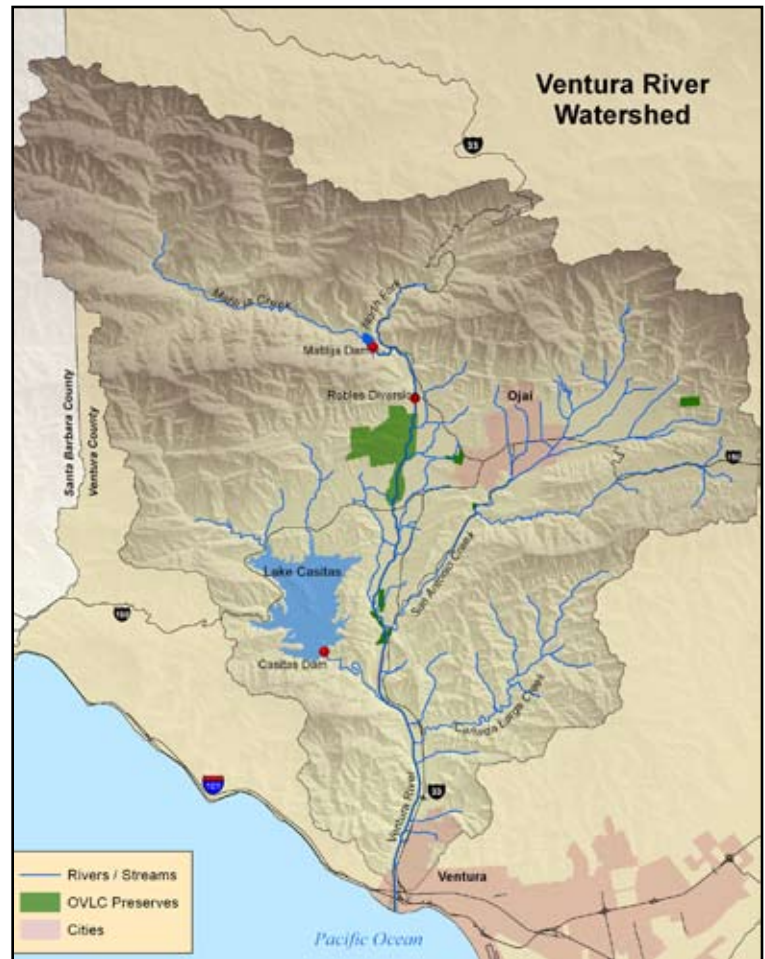
At this October’s meeting, for example, Lynn Rodriguez, program manager for the WCVC, reported that she needs to add a climate change component to the update of the county’s IRWMP; Lynn learned from Norma Camacho, director of the county’s Watershed Protection District, that the district is working on an ArkStorm model that will simulate extreme (think Noah’s Ark) storm events. Extreme weather events are predicted from climate change, so this was useful information.

At the same meeting Rob Orth, executive director of Project Understanding, reported that his organization is pursuing strategies that will help clean up the lower river where so many homeless people live without sanitary facilities. One strategy he is looking into is employing some of the homeless themselves to do river clean-up, with payment offered in food and housing vouchers. Those participants also working on the homeless and related water quality issues, were eager to hear this news.

The state staffer who asked me “Why?” did so because he knew that regulatory jurisdictions are not watershed wide; nobody is “in charge” of a watershed. Despite this, we now understand that the parts of a watershed make up an integrated, connected system. Acknowledging this fact is just smart, and certainly a more efficient and effective use of limited resources. This is “why” we coordinate.

Coordination has been so valuable to the participants of the Ventura River Watershed Council that funding for full-time staff was pursued. The Ojai Valley Land Conservancy, an active member of the council, took the lead in this and recently secured a three-year grant to fund a watershed coordinator. I started as the coordinator in late September.

Writing a detailed watershed management



plan for the Ventura River Watershed is one of my primary goals. The plan will outline current conditions, identify areas of concern, and prioritize projects to address those concerns. While the final watershed plan will have great value, perhaps of equal value will come from the process of developing it. This is where we learn who is doing what in the watershed, where we identify synergies, where we gain from shared data, where we form partnerships and leverage resources.

The monthly watershed council meetings will be the forum for input into the plan. These meetings are open to all, and every third meeting will be held in the evening to accommodate different schedules.

If you are interested in attending the council meetings, or in lending your expertise or skills (we could use a web designer, GIS technician, graphic designer, and researchers) to our process, we welcome you. Contact me at lorraine@ovlc.org or 805/649-6852 x4, and look for our website (www.venturawatershed.org) to be up soon.



OJAI VALLEY LAND CONSERVANCY

Protecting your views, trails, water and wildlife.

2011 Fiscal Year Annual Report



www.ovlc.org

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The Ojai Valley Land Conservancy is a community-based nonprofit organization working with partners to permanently protect the Ojai Valley for the benefit of current and future generations.

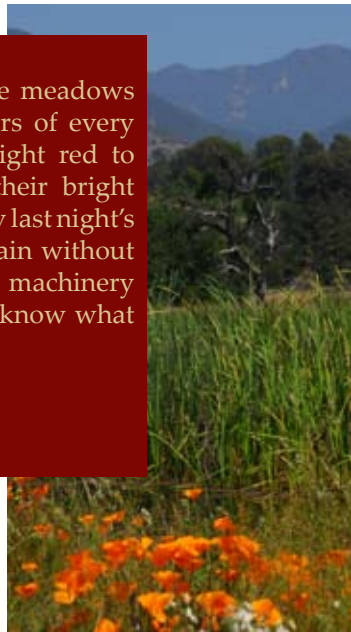
The Ojai Valley Land Conservancy's success will enable future generations to enjoy the Ojai Valley's remarkable views, extensive trails, and abundant water and wildlife forever.

Protecting The Ventura River Basin For The Future Of The Two-leggeds, Four-leggeds, Winged Creatures, And Fish.

One of OVLC's top priorities in 2010, 2011, and in 2012 is protecting the Ventura River so that all creatures who live near and in the river can thrive. The list to the right highlights some of OVLC's recent accomplishments toward this goal.

If you pass on through the meadows with their thousand flowers of every color imaginable, from bright red to yellow and purple, and their bright green grass washed clean by last night's rain, rich and verdant - again without a single movement of the machinery of thought - then you will know what love is.

J. Krishnamurti



2011 Financials

10/1/2010-9/30/2011*

Sources Of Funds

Unrestricted

End of Year Appeal = \$73,646

Membership / other = \$110,811

Subtotal Unrestricted = \$184,457

Restricted = \$1,714,055

Transfers In = \$290,649

Total Sources = \$2,189,161

Uses Of Funds

Programs & Projects = \$2,017,359

Fundraising, General & Admin. = \$90,416

Total Uses = \$2,107,775

* Preliminary

Instigated a \$250,000 Steelhead Preserve fundraising campaign to help open the new Ventura River Steelhead Preserve and the future Conservation Center to the public.

Notably won a significant grant to complete the Ojai Meadows Preserve restoration. OVLC plans to create a destination wild flower display which will increase tourism to the Ojai Valley. OVLC also won the Sprit of Ojai Award by the Chamber of Commerce for giving back to the community.

Started the realignment and restoration project for Rice Creek on the Ventura River Preserve by hiring 2 additional field staff and acquiring money to plant 7,000 native plants.

Permanently protected 1 mile of the Ventura River, bringing to 6 the total number of miles of the 16 mile long river in protected status. The new 65 acre Ventura River Steelhead Preserve contains some of the best Steelhead habitat on the entire river.

Initiated the building of a long needed bridge to solve accessibility and safety issues at the Ojai Meadows Preserve and installed two new benches on the Preserve for your meditative pleasures.

Reached completion on a new trailhead designed for equestrians at the southern part of the 1,560 acre Ventura River Preserve and added miles of additional trails. These trails include the first American with Disabilities Act approved trail in the Ojai Valley.

Educated hundreds of children and adults about the river, conservation, ecosystem restoration, and other topics of interest to the community through our docent led hikes and educational sessions. The new Steelhead Preserve is the future site of a conservation center that will not only serve the valley, but the entire County of Ventura.

THANK YOU OVLC FRIENDS FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS!

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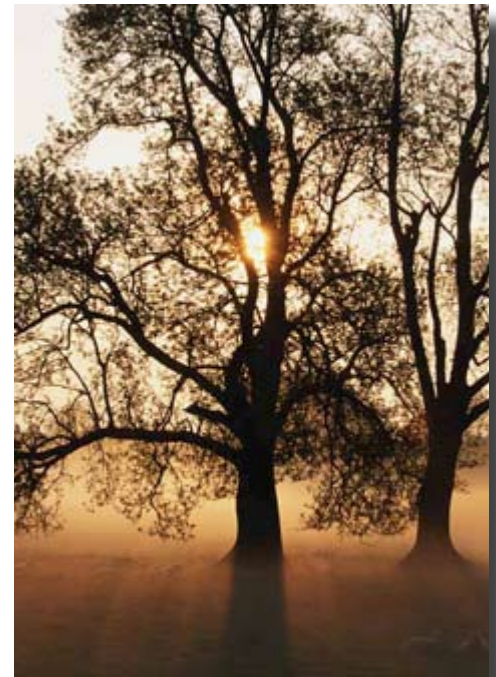
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Have you ever noticed a tree standing naked against the sky, how beautiful it is? All its branches are outlined, and in its nakedness there is a poem, there is a song. Every leaf is gone and it is waiting for the spring. When the spring comes it again fills the tree with the music of many leaves, which in due season fall and are blown away. And that is the way of life.

J. Krishnamurti

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Adopt-A-Meadow Program: At The Ojai Meadows Preserve

Have you ever wondered what it would feel like to be personally responsible for creating a wildflower meadow? I would tell you how great it feels, but it wouldn't be the same as feeling it yourself. For those that would like to find out first hand, the OVLC is offering a chance to do just that through our new Adopt-A-Meadow project at the Ojai Meadows Preserve.

Here's the plan. We are dividing up a section of the Ojai Meadows Preserve into small plots, about the size of a bedroom, and asking volunteers to adopt one as a personal, family, or group project. These plots are currently covered with weeds, but with a consistent effort over a year, can be made into a native grassland / wildflower field. Over the course of a few months or a year, we can achieve something that would take nature years to do...or something that nature simply can't do alone.

The activity starts by clearing the areas down to the soil, so the soil is exposed to the sun. Then we wait for rain, or irrigate. Once wet, the seeds of the weeds will start to grow. While they are still very small, we scrape them away and allow another generation of seeds to sprout. Then we scrape those. When we do this several times, we will have reduced the number of weed seeds in the soil. This is a critical first step. After that (early spring or next fall), we plant small plugs of native grasses and toss out some native grass and wildflower seeds. The key to success is consistency, because as the weeds grow, they are harder to remove. If they are regularly removed, the work is very easy and fast. In ½ hour each week or every other week, we can make big changes.

This worked well for us last season on a plot adopted by a Girl Scout troop, and we are asking for individuals, organizations, groups of friends, etc. to sign up and adopt a meadow. We at the OVLC will track the success of these plots and award prizes for several categories of great stewardship practices, such as "most weed free", "best native grass establishment", "most colorful (at the end)" and such. This is a fun opportunity to change the world and have a little friendly competition at the same time. I can say from experience that concentrated, high quality work is the best way to get results.

If you would like to adopt a plot for yourself, your family, your company, or your group of friends, please contact Brian Stark at brian@ovlc.org.

Make An Important Decision to Change the World!

Whether your business is small or very large you can make a world of difference for the environment in 2012. Become a member business of 1 percent for the planet and give 1 percent of your top-line sales to public benefit companies like the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy. OVLC has recently been approved as a recipient partner.

If you want to help the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy and its partners make the Ventura River Parkway project come to fruition for your benefit and that of the people who come after you, make this important commitment today! For more information visit onepercentfortheplanet.org.



Land Conservation Watershed Powerhouse

By Watershed Coordinator, Lorraine Walter

When it comes to bang-for-your-watershed-protection-buck, the OVLC is an indisputable leader in the Ventura Watershed.

Buying streamside property and locking in its conservation in perpetuity, as the OVLC has done on several Ventura River properties, ensures that the property will not be developed, which includes not being covered with impervious surfaces; it ensures that on that property storm water still has the opportunity to slow down and sink into aquifers rather than contributing that water to storm flows; it offers areas where, if the river does need to temporarily overflow its banks, it can do so without causing extensive damage to homes or flood control structures; it offers a place for native vegetation, which does so much "work" for us, including cleaning contaminants from runoff, as well as shading and cooling the water, something fish like and algae does not. On top of all that, we get beautiful wild places to visit to refresh our spirits and sense of wonder.

It would be difficult to put a price tag on all the services - flood control, storm water treatment, groundwater recharge, wildlife protection, recreation, psychological therapy - that are provided by protected streamside parcels. The economic value of this "natural capital" and of the power and effectiveness of nimble, non-bureaucratic organizations like OVLC is increasingly recognized and supported by those in charge of water quality, water supply and flood management.

**REMEMBER
TO SEND IN YOUR
END OF YEAR GIFT!**

**This fund drive is
critical to the Ojai Valley
Land Conservancy's
ability to do great work
for you, the animals,
and the future.**

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

NEW MEMBERS

Alan & Jan Peter
Carol Wade & Bill Hak
Dawn Blauer
Tony & Susie Bonett
Don & Carrie Sanders
Janis Emhardt
Judy Benjamin &
Eric De Jong
Judy Oberlander
Laszlo Engelman &
MaryAnn Hill
Lorraine Walter
Mike & Joanne Caldwell
Otis Bradley
Pamela J Huckins
Peter & Marilyn Cambier

Robert Landau
Shirlene Folk
Tania Al-Awar &
Tobias Parker

GIFTS IN HONOR OF

MEMORY
From Gail Furillo In Honor
of Ben Brucker's Birthday

IN KIND

bitVision
Bostrom & Associates
Ojai Madrigali Singers
Ojai Valley Directory
Ojai Phone Book
Ojai Valley News
The Ojai Vineyard

Mark Your Calendars For Upcoming OVLC Events

February 11 -

10 AM to 12, *About Plants and the Chumash People* by ethnobotanist Jan Timbrook. Cost \$10; no-charge for members.

April 8 -

10 AM to 2 PM, trail guide author Craig Carey and OVLC Preserve Manager lead a *hike up Kennedy Ridge Trail* at the Ventura River Preserve. Bring your own picnic lunch. Cost \$10, no-charge for members.

April 22 -

10 AM to 4 PM, *EarthPlay: Ojai's Community Earth Day* celebration at Oak Grove School's campus. Co-hosted by OVLC, Ojai Valley Green Coalition, Food for Thought, and Oak Grove School, no-charge.

May 11 -

7 PM, *Birds of the Ojai Valley* presented by local naturalist Allen Bertke, at OVLC headquarters. Cost is \$10 per person to attend both the May 11 and 12th sessions. If you attend one session it is still \$10. Members are free.

May 12 -

8 AM, *Birds of the Ojai Valley* walk at the Ojai Meadows Preserve, led by naturalist Allen Bertke. See description of costs above. Members are always no-charge.

Date or Time To Be Determined

Predicting Wildfire Behavior presented by fire expert Doug Campbell

September 8th, Ojai Valley Land Conservancy's 25th Birthday Party. Give OVLC memberships this year for birthday presents. Your friends and family will thank you. The person who gives the most in membership gifts wins!

More events will be added to calendar in the future. Happy New Year to everyone who reads this newsletter.