Letter from Executive Director Brian Stark:

It’s been a busy two months since the Thomas Fire burned through four of our preserves, burning 1,500 acres of land and affecting 20 of our 27 miles of local trails. Our initial response was to ensure the safety of our staff and to offer mutual support during extended evacuations due to both fire and smoke. It would be two weeks before we could send staff out to the preserves to begin assessing damage. During this time, our staff gathered advice from other land trusts that have faced similar damages, researched fire recovery science, and spent countless hours getting accurate information out to the public regarding damages, trail closures and conditions, and anticipated recovery tactics. I couldn’t be more proud of our staff for their flexibility, adaptability, and their commitment to ensuring the safety of our preserve visitors.

To create a disaster response plan, we mapped burned signs, trail blockages, landslides, rock falls, burned culverts, missing bridges, damaged kiosks, and other hazards. Professional arborists assessed hazard trees, which we proactively removed for visitor safety. Within days, our staff and some of our most experienced trail volunteers had re-opened most of the trails. We know that our work has just begun here as there are many signs and two bridges to replace—and we face continuing threats from winter rains and landslides. While almost all of the trails are open, a lot of work is still needed to make them sustainable.

We chose to prioritize trail openings because we know how important these lands are to our community and that many people felt a need to experience the land in its new state. The Thomas Fire is now part of the story of Ojai, and this story will be told for decades to come.

We encourage you to visit the land, create a relationship, and mark this time in your memory. The fact that people care so much for this land is not surprising, and their reasons for seeing it now are the same reasons that the OVLC and our members work so hard to protect it. This land belongs to us all.

I think it is safe to say that the Thomas Fire threw our annual work plan and budget out the window. In a normal year, our restoration crew would be planting new plants on our grant-funded restoration projects. This year, they are working on the trails as most of our active restoration
Protecting your views, trails, water and wildlife
The Ojai Valley Land Conservancy

projects at the Ventura River Preserve have burned. Critical restoration infrastructure, such as our expansive irrigation system, which melted, will need to be re-built before we can once again work on these projects.

So far, the OVLC’s monetary damages total about $140,000. With the outpouring of community support, however, we are picking up the pieces and working on recovery activities. We can’t thank our members enough for coming to our aid with their generous donations. We also welcome 72 new donors that made their first contribution to the OVLC these past two months. You have made it possible for us to allocate so much additional staff time to recovery activities. We are also grateful for those that have offered their time to help. Since the fire, over 200 of you have signed up to volunteer on projects ranging from removing melted irrigation pipe, placing signs to remind people to stay on trails, replacing a melted culvert, cutting and removing over 30 fallen trees from the trails, and stabilizing washed out trails. These activities will continue for some time and we hope to meet all of you on a project soon.

Many are now asking what is next for the preserves. As we recover, we will need your help. There are a few basic ways everyone can help the recovery. First, Weed Don’t Seed! While spreading seed on burned land seems like a good idea, the native plant seeds needed for the recovery are already in the soil. Adding seed adds competition and alters nature’s course. The biggest threats to our native plants are non-native plants (what we call weeds). Removing these is the best way to allow natural recovery. We will organize weeding days in the upcoming months, so please make sure you have signed up on our website as a volunteer if you are interested in helping with the recovery.

Next, please stay on the trails. For nature to recover, it needs to be un-trampled. Please observe all trail closures. Closed trails are closed for a reason and accessing them makes the damage worse and harder to repair. Staying off them shows you care, and nature needs to know you care.

Finally, keep looking after each other and those that lost so much more. This will be a long recovery and we need one another.

As we look back to the fire and how most of our community was spared, it has reminded us of how conservation can be part of our community’s preparation for future fires. While the fire was burning, fire personnel were able to easily access our preserves and use them to stage firefighting efforts and to create defensible areas. Visitors to the Ventura River Preserve will see where bulldozers came through the preserve to create defensible spaces. These impacts can be repaired so much easier than a home. In addition, purchasing the Ventura River Preserve prevented the development of many homes on that land, and reduced the exposure of even more homes to fire loss. A few years ago, the OVLC removed over 3,000 dead orange trees which could have changed the intensity of the burn on the preserve. We will be looking at fire buffer lands with greater interest as a conservation priority in the future.

The OVLC is constantly evaluating our land management methods to make our preserve boundaries and restoration project sites safer for fire responders and the public. Already, the OVLC completes annual brush management wherever our preserve lands lie within the defensible space areas around buildings—even those that are not on our property. Approximately

Before and after images photographed by Nathan Wickstrum.
Top row: looking down Luci’s Trail on the Valley View Preserve. Bottom row: the Rice Creek restoration area on the Ventura River Preserve.

Volunteers worked tirelessly to clear and repair the trails at the Valley View Preserve. The worst slides were along the Foothill Trail, although there was plenty of debris on Luci’s and Fox Canyon trails as well. Photographs by Nathan Wickstrum and Tania Parker.
$25,000 is budgeted annually for this work and we coordinate closely with fire department officials in ensuring safety. The OVLC’s Arundo donax removal project also proved helpful in reducing the spread of fire along Creek Road and San Antonio Creek. Streams normally provide fire buffers as the vegetation is less flammable, but plants like Arundo carry volatile oils that are known to burn quite severely. An inspection after the fire revealed that stream corridors proved to be much more resilient to fire damage, and in most cases stopped the spread of the fire across the creek, where the Arundo had been removed. In contrast, the greatest damage to the native stream-side vegetation was where Arundo was not removed. Managing lands for fire resiliency is a benefit for the entire community.

As we continue our work in the coming months and years, we hope to remain engaged with everyone in our community on this effort. We welcome your questions and concerns and hope you will feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

Brian Stark
Executive Director

Photographs by Nathan Wickstrum and Tania Parker.
Thank you to all of our Business Sponsors for your generosity!

OVLC Welcomes New Stewardship Director Brendan Taylor

Hello Ojai Valley! I’m excited to be the new Stewardship Director of the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy, and I am grateful that my path led me to Ojai. Immediately prior to joining the OVLC, I completed an 8-month bicycle tour through Asia, Australia, and Africa—all of this before traveling to Argentina to teach trail-building techniques for a month.

I have vast experience working on trails and with volunteers. Most recently, I worked as the North Country Trails Volunteer Programs Supervisor for the Appalachian Mountain Club, based in New Hampshire. As part of my duties, I developed a strategic plan and an Adopt-A-Trail program for maintaining 500 miles of trail throughout New England, acted as staff liaison for 12 volunteer trail committees throughout the northeast, coordinated with local, state, and national agencies on regional management strategies, and supervised a staff of 18. Prior to this, I served with both the Pacific Crest Trail Association and Student Conservation Association and earned a Master of Science degree in Parks and Recreation Resource Management. In addition, I am certified as a “Leave No Trace” Master Educator and a Wilderness First Responder.

While I have always worked in national forests and parks, this is my first time working for a land trust. I look forward to managing the lands that are loved by so many in the community. And, I am excited to work with both the established volunteers, and the hundreds of volunteers who recently signed up to rebuild the trails after the Thomas Fire. We have our work cut out for us, but with the support, enthusiasm, and passion of the community we will restore the preserves and ensure that they are safe for everyone who wishes to use them.

In the few short weeks I’ve been around, we’ve had so many volunteers offer their help, and I have been impressed with the breadth of activities in town that have been organized to support our preserves. My goal is to build a strong and sustainable volunteer program for the OVLC so that everyone who wants to give back has that opportunity—and yes—there will also be many weekend opportunities!

The Ojai Valley is full of natural wonders, and I am excited to explore all that the valley has to offer. See you on the trails!

Brendan Taylor, Stewardship Director

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Protecting your views, trails, water and wildlife

The Ojai Valley Land Conservancy

This page: a section of the Rice Creek restoration area where the fire burned; one of many piles of burned irrigation pipe and hose collected by volunteers; giant wild rye (middle) and coast live oak (bottom) sprouting in the restoration area.

Right page: an aerial photograph of the Rice Creek restoration area and the Ventura River taken by volunteer Evan Jackson (airojai.com); students from Nordhoff High School and Meiners Oaks Elementary School at the Ojai Meadows Preserve.

The native vegetation that covered the preserves before the Thomas Fire is adapted to fire—meaning many of the plants will grow back. We are already seeing shoots emerge from the base of laurel sumac, yucca, wild cucumber, and soap plant; oak trees that lost their leaves have already begun to leaf out and are now blooming. And if you look closely, the soil is filled with a native seed bank that has begun to germinate. In the upcoming months and years we will watch to see the ecosystem that emerges from the fire. For the majority of our preserves, our motto will be Weed Don’t Seed (#weeddontseed). We are confident that native seeds, which are adapted to fire, will sprout from the burned soil and cover the char. We will be helping nature’s recovery by weeding non-native plants, thereby giving natives a better chance of establishing. We have selected dozens of locations where we will be photographing the changes and creating time-lapse videos to document nature’s recovery. We look forward to sharing these with you in the future.

There are a few areas on the preserves which will require aggressive intervention. Just over two years ago (October 2015), we removed a 36-acre orange orchard from the Ventura River Preserve, and have been actively restoring this area. Before the Thomas Fire, we planted 3,488 plants, including 1,308 coast live oak trees. The blaze of the Thomas Fire burned through 29 acres of this restoration area. The plantings, ranging from one to two years old, were completely scorched. Because these plants were so young, we don’t expect to see many of them grow back. We have however, seen a few dozen white sage, mugwort, coast live oaks, giant wild rye (grass), and bush mallow growing back since our rain storm in January.

We have had two volunteer events to clean up the burned and melted irrigation system at the site. Thank you to our amazing volunteers that made it out and helped us clean up the char and put acorns in the ground (see next page)! New pipe and hoses have been purchased and they will be delivered in this month. We hope to start replanting about 6 acres of the site with coast live oaks and native shrubs this spring. The long-term goal is to replant the entire burned area of the restoration site, but new funding sources are needed to get this project up and running once again.

Running down the middle of the oak restoration area is the Rice Creek Realignment and Restoration Project. This project also burned, however the plantings here are approximately six years old so we are hopeful that more of those plants will recover.

On the Ojai Meadows Preserve restoration continues. Thankfully this area was not affected by the fire. School groups from Nordhoff High School have been coming out to help plant the restoration areas. This winter, the high school students brought their little buddies from Meiners Oaks Elementary School to spend a morning on the meadow learning to plant native plants together.
With help from OVLC volunteers and students from the Thacher School, the OVLC cleared 27 acres of melted irrigation pipe and planted hundreds of acorns to start replacing the thousands of young oak trees that burned in the restoration area along Rice Creek.

Volunteers dug out and replaced a burned out culvert on the Wills Canyon Trail. On a second workday they replaced a spillway and gabion to retain the tread. The trail crew worked tirelessly in dry and dirty conditions to get the trails open again as quickly as possible. We are grateful to this dedicated group for all their hard work.
AN ODE TO OFFICE VOLUNTEERS
A heartfelt thank you to our office volunteers. You are our unsung heroes. We never have fun pictures to share of your work parties, you often come in alone, at odd hours and last minute, and piles of mail are usually our big accomplishments—but without you the OVLC would not be the same. You send out these newsletters and our mailings, you write thank you cards and address envelopes, you stuff, seal, staple, and stamp thousands of papers a year. You welcome our new members, lovingly put together their packets, and send them out to show that you, too, care about our open space and that you are grateful they joined. Without you none of this would be possible. For this, and more, we thank you.

Together, our community will help protect Ojai’s open space for everyone to enjoy, forever.

Thank you to our Wild About Ojai partners who help make this possible. Visit a participating business today and take part.

A Taste of Ojai
Awhai Pottery
Axxssu Ventura
BeCalm of Ojai
California Solar Electric
Chamber on the Mountain
Char Man Brand Hot Sauce
Dogs Fly Design
Gabriela Cejcha, Berkshire Hathaway
The Glass Man Professional Window Washing Company
GoOjai.com
Greyfox Investors
Jennifer Keeler, Hair Stylist
Lorraine Lim Catering
Mary Nelson Skincare & Massage Studio
Mooney Creative
Noah Crowe, Sunrun Solar Consultant
Ojai Food Taxi
Ojai Quarterly
Parker Jellison Realtor
Rawtie Vain
Sal Haus Design
The Southern Los Padres Trekking Company
Susan K Guy Art
Tobias Parker, General Contractor
Tonya Peralta Real Estate Services, Inc
Watercolors by Patty Van Dyke

Valley View Kiosk Rebuilt

In memory of Allan Jacobs
Bobbie & Bob Boschan
Mary Ann, Chuck & Eleanor Burright
Louisa Hagen & Terry Thompson
Susan Bee
Janet Campbell

In memory of my friend and neighbor George Wymer
Marqui Bury

In memory of my parents - Bob and Silvia Emhardt
Janis Emhardt

In memory of Ann Elizabeth Finley
Daniel Finley

In memory of John Resnik
Christie Mattuull

In memory of Frank Real
Maruja Real

In memory of Sara Roxanne Schneider
The Schneider Foundation by Amy Schneider

In memory of Thomas Day Thacher II
Elana Thacher

In memory of Douglas Theriault
April Themault & Ken Eros

In memory of Paul Guilbert
Deborah Whorf

In appreciation of Dennis Shives sharing his artistic creations and outdoor adventure stories to the Boy Scouts of America
Waboles Den 3502
John & Kathy Broesamle and the Vondriska Family

A gift membership for Anne Richardson, Tom Bryant, and Benjamin
Elizabeth Richardson

A gift membership for Juli Farley
Jenny Song

In honor of the birthday of David Willis
Alize Barnwell

In honor of Sandy Buechley’s OVLC presidential leadership
Bill Brothers & Susie Ault

In honor of 2017 firefighters
Nancy E. Dreier

In honor of the Long Family
Michelaina Johnson

In honor of Mary Clare Molina
Mario & Therese Molina

In honor of Isaac Malitz - Happy Birthday
Isaac Osher, Ben Osher, and Jake Osher - Happy Hanukkah
James & Wendy Osher

In honor of Jamie and Carolyn Bennett
George Powell III

In honor of Stephanie Ann Powell
Hope-Carolyn Quentzel

In honor of Ollie Wilson and Kaarina Tienhaara
Lucy & Peter Read

In honor of John and Kathy Broesamle
The Vondriska Family

Archer Wann supervised his Eagle Scout project for Troop 505 on the Valley View Preserve in January. Archer and his many volunteers replaced the roof on the kiosk at the Fox Canyon Trailhead that was crushed by a sycamore during the fire. Thank you to everyone who came out to help on this project and to Ojai Lumber for donating materials for Archer’s project. Congratulations Archer on earning your Eagle Scout rank!
Protecting your views, trails, water and wildlife

The Ojai Valley Land Conservancy

FY 2017 FY 2016

Thank you to our FY 2017 Donors

2017 Fiscal Year* Annual Report

**This balance sheet is pre-audit. Our audit has been delayed until April due to the Thomas Fire.

**

**

Total Liabilities and Net Assets $8,226,124 $8,150,675

Net Income $54,730 ($57,633)

Permanently Restricted $26,782 $26,782

Temporarily Restricted $321,843 $280,115

Unrestricted $7,354,935 $7,411,991

Net Income $54,730 ($57,633)

Net Profit = $54,730

Top Facebook Post of 2017

Taking in the sunset from Lucy’s Trail last night.

The Avila view preserve is the best place to find spring wildflowers right now. #ojai #ojaitrails #ovlc

#cawildflowers spring wildflowers right now. #ojai #ojaitrails #ovlc

Photo by @nathan_wickstrum (March 2017)
In FY17, nearly 200 volunteers donated 5,078 hours of their time to the OVLC—and those dedicated efforts were vital to the health of our lands. Thank you to all of our dedicated volunteers who helped us achieve our most recent conservation milestones.

Sustaining Members $500+

Deborah Whorf
Catherine Williams
Sharon Van Ripper
Ventura Land Trust
Kendall & Rose-Venning
The Vick Family
Bruce Vincent
Maureen Volstad
Carole Wade & Bill Hak
Sharon Van Riper
Katie van Horne Rissel
Marcia & Tyler Barrell

Sustaining Members $250–$499

Debra Zuniga
Carolyn & Phil Hardy
Cathy Dorio
Grethel L. Lovejoy
Jeffrey K. Furguson
Libby & Aaron Zweig
Michael Zierhut
Janice & Dan Lang
Debby Hopper
Michele Murdoch & Paul DeGioia
Tom & Dorothy Luster
Jan L. Gentry
Pamela Phillips
Debbie & Frank Parisi
Steve & Sue Leist
Tina Pukonen

Sustaining Members $100–$249

Deborah & Paul Weber
John & Andrea Nelson
Sue & Mike Runyan
Kim Boardman
Dr. Ian & Ginny MacLean
Diana Syvertson

Sustaining Members $50–$99

Karen & Josiah Jenkins
Ty Jeffery
Leslie Elliott
Margaret Magnus & Sam From
KathiePoint
Leslie Waggoner
Lori A. Brown
Patricia Power
Sally & James True

Sustaining Members $25–$49

Karen & Ryan Stump
Leslie Gillman
Robert & Linda Long
Mary J. Young
Weston Miller
Mary & Les Baker
Mary E. Mancini
Louis V. Hahn

Sustaining Members $10–$24

Karen & Ryan Stump
June & Michael Kmetz
Eli DeBoer
June & Michael Kmetz
Mary Aderhold
Jan L. Gentry
Megan Lee
Pamela Phillips

Sustaining Members $5–$9

Sharon Van Riper
Katie van Horne Rissel
Marcia & Tyler Barrell

Sustaining Members $1–$4

William & Ada Kilbury
Wendy & Jerry Cary
Traci & Todd Mills
Abby & Kris Sowa

Sustaining Members $0.50–$1

The Gorey Family
Nancy染
Shea’s Savvy

Sustaining Members $0.25–$0.50

Karen & Josiah Jenkins
Ty Jeffery

Sustaining Members $0.10–$0.25

Karen & Josiah Jenkins
Ty Jeffery

Sustaining Members $0.05–$0.10

Karen & Josiah Jenkins
Ty Jeffery

Sustaining Members $0.01–$0.05

Karen & Josiah Jenkins
Ty Jeffery

Sustaining Members $0.00–$0.01

Karen & Josiah Jenkins
Ty Jeffery

Restoration Field Crew Member Niko Georgiou breaks out of a tree clearing on a fallen oak on Will’s Canyon on the Ventura River Preserve.
In FY17, over 500 people attended our All About Ojai programs and docent-led hikes and tours, 25 California Naturalists graduated, and over 1,500 people attended Mountainfilm on Tour—we are grateful to connect with so many in the community!

Margaret Berry & Mark Silbernagel
Brosig
Susan Swart &ekt:Jhawk Caldwell
Foggenberger
Cindy & Douglas Bowser
Philip Bradley
Mike & Joanne Caldwell
Anne & Chad Cargier
Caryl Hedin & Family
Ray Castello & Charlotte Janus
Clark/Thomas Foundation
John & Harriet Cline
Chip & Lori Collins
Dana & Jon Johnston
Stephen & Sheila Cox
Robert & Liz Deich
Mark Silbernagel
Mary Ann O’Connor
Stuart Meiklejohn & Craig Marcus
Judith Kelly
David & Deborah Junod
Kitty & Johnny Johnston
Richard & Vicki Holgate
Gay & Kathlyn Hendricks
Chris Hacker & Will Thomas
Margot Griswold
Scott Bevans & Gary & Michele Douglas
Karen Courington & Alan & Leslie Connell
Chevron Humankind
Maurice Chasse
Chesner HumanKind
Matching Program
Alan & Leslie Cornell
Karen Courington & Dan Lukasiewicz
Judith & Donald Dyer
Gary & Michele Douglas
Scott Beavers & Valere Dykeman
Carmen Eaton & William Hart
Susan Foster
David & Cindy Garber
Margot Griswold
Chris Hacker & Will Thomas
Wyatt & Claudia Harris
Gay & Kathlyn Hendricks
Bruce & Virginia Hibbard
Gary & Dominique Hirschorn
Gerben & Jill Hoekstra
Richard & Viki Holgate
Rachel & Brent Jacobs
Kitty & Johnny Johnston
David & Deborah Jurosz
Judith Kelly
Leila Family Fund
Craig Marcus
Bruce Mason
Stuart Melkeshige & Mary Ann O’Connor
Donna & Ted Miller
Susan Moll

The John J. Moller Family Foundation
Shawn Musuell
Michael Newkirk & Olivia Garfield
Nels & Robin Nyberg
Ann & (George E. Berg & Gail Topping
Bruce & Marilyn
Wallace Foundation
Allen & Marilyn Camp
Andrew & Judith Gustafson
Jerry James*

Just by including the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy in your estate plans, you can help protect the beauty of Ojai for generations to come. A bequest is a simple way to support the OVLC in the future while retaining control of your assets during your lifetime. By making the OVLC a beneficiary of your will, trust, retirement plan, life insurance policy, or financial accounts, you ensure your values will be passed on after you.

The real beneficiary, of course, is Ojai.

The OVLC Giving Club

Your legacy gift, with many others like it, will keep the OVLC on your planned gift today. You can join or update your preferences online at ovlc.org/pup

Protection of your views, trails, water and wildlife

Your legacy gift, with many others like it, will keep the OVLC on your planned gift today. You can join or update your preferences online at ovlc.org/pup

Your legacy gift, with many others like it, will keep the OVLC on your planned gift today. You can join or update your preferences online at ovlc.org/pup

Your legacy gift, with many others like it, will keep the OVLC on your planned gift today. You can join or update your preferences online at ovlc.org/pup
UPCOMING EVENTS

February 24
All About Ojai: Dirt time with the Ventura County Wildlife Trackers

March 10
All About Ojai: Matilija Dam Removal Project by Paul Jenkin from the Matilija Coalition

March 31
Free Guided Bird and Native Plant Walk with John Pavelko and Art Vander

April 7
Free Guided Wildflower Walk at the Ojai Meadows Preserve with Stuart Niebel

April 13 - May 12
California Naturalist Certification class
Pre-registration required

April 14
Free Guided Nature Hike at Valley View Preserve with Bettyanne Sessing

April (TBD)
Stewardship Director Hike & Picnic with Brendan Taylor, limit 12, $15 fee

April 21
Native Plant Sale at Ojai Meadows Preserve

April 21
Earth Day Celebration at Libbey Park

May 5
All About Ojai: Birdwalk with Jesse Grantham at the Ojai Meadows Preserve

Save the Date!
September 22, 2018
4th Annual Mountainfilm on Tour

Double Your Impact

TAKE ADVANTAGE of your employer’s matching gift program.

A matching gift means your contribution will go twice as far. Many companies will double (or sometimes triple) the value of their employees’ gifts to the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy. These matching gifts provide valuable funds as we work to protect the views, trails, water, and wildlife of the Ojai Valley. Some companies will even match your gifts after you retire.

To see if your company will match a gift to the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy, contact your company’s human resources department.