We are your local land trust, and we want to hear from you.

Brendan Taylor, OVLC Stewardship Director, is in the process of creating a 5-year plan for the stewardship of the preserves. We recently sat down with him to learn more about this plan, and why feedback from the community is so important.

Q: Why are you embarking on a 5-year plan for the preserves?
A: A 5-year plan is a blueprint for the management of the preserves. It sets up our funding priorities and determines where we will focus our limited financial resources and staff time.

Q: Why is it important to hear from OVLC members?
A: As a community-based organization, our land stewardship priorities are guided by what our community finds important. Your input helps us prioritize our goals.

Q: How can members share their input with you?
A: We want to hear from you! You may recently have seen our trailhead hosts on the preserves. OVLC staff and volunteers have been counting preserve users and asking trail users to complete short surveys. If you see us, we want to talk with you! Please feel free to share with us what we are doing well, and what you’d like to see more (or less) of.

In the middle of a leg-burning run and don’t want to stop? Not a problem. Please complete our online survey. It will only take a couple of minutes, and your answers will help guide our 5-year plan: [ovlc.org/survey](ovlc.org/survey)

Q: What can our members do to help?
A: Sign up to volunteer! We are always looking for more people to help host at trailheads. This is a fun way to get involved with the OVLC and meet other preserve users.

We also would not be able to maintain such a high standard on our preserves if not for the hundreds of volunteers who have put in thousands of hours helping on trail and restoration projects. Not only can you help build and maintain the trails that you love, you’ll also find that we have an amazing community of volunteers! Many of our volunteers come back time and again, and have developed specialized trail building skills. In the future, when we launch our Adopt-a-Trail program, we will be counting on these highly skilled volunteers to maintain portions of the trail.
You can also help by encouraging your friends—including the furry ones—to stay on the trail! Unfortunately, we spend a lot of time fixing trails that are made worse by improper use. All the time that we have to spend closing “social trails,” and maintaining switchbacks that are eroding because of “short cuts,” is time not spent stewarding our preserves and building new trails—not to mention these “trails” destroy native vegetation.

**Q: How do you decide where to prioritize trail maintenance?**

**A:** For the past 9 months, volunteers have focused on building the new Allan Jacobs Trail. We prioritized this project for a few reasons. We know how important trails are to the community (this was a key takeaway from the public forums we held last year), and we wanted to open up a new loop trail to replace a trail that we had to close after the fire. This trail is also special because it has been built by the community to memorialize Allan Jacobs, a man who dedicated his life to protecting Ojai’s open spaces with the OVLC. Almost every week, volunteers have been in the field working on this trail. There is momentum from the community, and we are also taking advantage of the minimal vegetation cover post-fire. It is inspiring to see what a motivated community can accomplish.

We are currently taking a break from building this new trail to focus on our existing trails. While we are thankful for all the rain we received this past winter, we need to brush the trails [clear trails of the growing vegetation]. In the upcoming weeks you will see us out on the preserves clearing the trails. We will start clearing the Fox/Lucı’s loop on the Valley View Preserve and address the switchback cutting and drainages on Luci’s Trail to prevent further erosion. From there, we will diligently make our way through the other preserves.

**Q: When is the Wills-Rice Canyon loop going to open again?**

**A:** We get this question a lot, and I can assure you that it is one of our top priorities. It is one of my favorite trails too—not just because it is a beautiful loop, but also because I am proud of the projects that volunteers have completed on this trail. Together, we have rerouted eroded portions of the trail, built culverts, and installed lots of check steps. But back to your question…We are hopeful that the bridge will be completed in October or November of this year. There are a few reasons that this bridge has taken so long to rebuild. Since this bridge crosses a Casitas canal, we have been working closely with them to ensure that the new
bridge meets federal standards. Additionally, we applied for a FEMA grant to help cover the costs of this bridge. We are happy to report that although the OVLC has to front 100% of the costs for this new bridge, a portion of these costs will be reimbursed by FEMA. Unfortunately, FEMA disaster response was delayed because of other fires such as the Woolsey and Paradise fires. But, by paying for the bridge upfront, instead of waiting for FEMA funds, we are speeding up the process by which the bridge gets built!

Donate at ovlc.org/donate today (or return the enclosed envelope) to help get the bridge built and keep the trails in shape so you can get out and play!

**Congratulations, Xena**

For the last three and a half years, Xena has been an important member of the OVLC’s development team. Whenever you receive an email, a newsletter, or read anything from the OVLC, it has either been written or proofread by Xena. As Xena steps into her new role as Development Associate, she will be leading our annual giving program and strengthening our community outreach. Her ability to communicate the OVLC’s message to our community and grantors is an invaluable skill to the organization. She also keeps us well organized and focused, even if her desk appears to be in chaos. All of our office volunteers will attest to her skill at managing mailing parties and organizing thank notes. You can also find Xena at many of our events managing legions of volunteers and keeping everything running smoothly. In her spare time, Xena enjoys hiking the trails with her dog Asha, especially near The Thacher School where she lives with her husband Juan and young daughter Cici. Please join us in congratulating Xena in her new role!

As the weather gets warmer, Xena wants to remind everyone that the ground can get very hot for paws. She recommends getting out on the trail early in the morning or in the evening, or investing in some shoes for your furry friends. Otherwise, you might end up carrying them on the trail.

*Photo: Xena carrying 60 lb Asha down Luci’s Trail on a hot day!*
In recognition of her critical role in the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy’s growth and success, the OVLC has named Tania Parker as Deputy Director. Tania has been with the OVLC for over five years, and in that time she’s made a sizable impact on our fundraising and community outreach programs, including doubling our membership and expanding our community connections. As Director of Advancement, she was involved in strategic planning and budget preparation and she has built a strong outreach team.

Tania has strong connections to the community of the Ojai Valley, and her personal commitment to local conservation is inspirational. Tania is a trusted partner for me, a valued advisor to our staff, and involved in all of our biggest decisions as an organization. I couldn’t be more confident in her as she takes on a growing leadership role.

More than anything, Tania understands how important our wild lands are to our communities and wildlife, and she works hard to help others identify their own relationships with the lands around them. I hope you will all join me in congratulating Tania for her achievements and supporting her in her new leadership role.

Brian Stark
Executive Director

Photo by Stephen Adams
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.

Future generations can’t thank you enough for leaving a legacy for Ojai. Today, we want to get to know you better and celebrate your commitment to conservation.

In August (details to come), we will be holding our first Pushing Up Poppies party!

Make your commitment known today and then join us for an evening of food and wine, and meet other Pushing Up Poppies members.

Are you interested in becoming a Pushing Up Poppies member or are you unsure if you currently are a member?
Contact Tania Parker at (805) 649-6852 x 6 or tania@ovlc.org.
You may also update your preferences at any time at ovlc.org/pup
Kathy’s Commitment

“Look at all the property we own. I say we because I am a part of it.”

Kathy Bennett loves to look out her window at the mountains that the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy (OVLC) has protected forever. She is “paralyzed by the beauty of it all,” and has included the OVLC in her estate planning because “she wants to make sure that it is there for future generations.”

While Kathy loves the OVLC, you will seldom find her on the trails. Her fear of ticks and snakes keeps her off of the preserves. She tried to volunteer years ago to clean up the Ventura River Preserve, but when the stewardship director said that they needed to look out for ticks and snakes she changed her mind. However, this doesn’t stop her from wanting to make sure that Ojai’s trails and views are available for others.

Community is very important to Kathy. She believes that Ojai “thrives on these mountains and hills” and that her community is richer because “the mountains, streams, trees, and sunsets impact how people think and process information.”

When Kathy retired from teaching, she promised herself that she would focus on the quality of her life. To her, that means being active, compassionate, and loving herself. She is politically active, makes time for movies and dinners with friends, assists other women in her women’s group, and takes long walks around town and on the beach.

These days you can spot Kathy walking around town with her poles. She walks about 12-15 miles a day—something that she finds to be meditative. Her motto for walking is to “walk, look, and just be there.” While she acknowledges that this is hard for many people to do in the digital age, this approach brings her joy and health. She is building up to undertaking the very ambitious goal of walking the Camino de Santiago Trail in Spain. If you have met Kathy, then you know that she will accomplish this goal!

Kathy believes that protecting Ojai’s open spaces should be a part of every estate. While her yearly contributions are modest so she can enjoy retirement now, she knows that she will be making a large impact in the future. She proudly says, “Look at all the property we own. I say we because I am a part of it.” She is correct—the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy relies on donations from individuals and businesses alike, to purchase and maintain these lands. Kathy encourages everyone to look out the window and do their part to ensure the legacy of the Ojai Valley.

A commitment in your estate plan, like Kathy’s, will ensure these lands are protected forever.
Welcome Juniper Jean Lashly!

Please join us in congratulating Jill Lashly (OVLC Conservation Director) and her husband Evan on the birth of their beautiful daughter Juniper Jean Lashly.

We are so excited to have a new member join the OVLC family. Here’s to the next generation of conservationists!

CALIFORNIA NATURALISTS

Congratulations to our 2019 graduating class of the UC California Naturalist Program. Each of these graduates completed a 40+ hour course that combined a rigorous science curriculum with guest lecturers, field trips, and project-based learning to learn about the natural world of the Ventura River Watershed. Lead instructor Don Rodriguez, Ph.D., and other guest speakers, covering topics such as fire ecology, native plants, and animal tracking. Weekly field trips to the preserves led by experts gave students a first-hand look at the ecology and natural history of the Ojai Valley.

The mission of the California Naturalist Program is to foster a diverse community of naturalists and promote stewardship of California’s natural resources through education and service.
What’s in bloom?

**Top Left:** Common Fiddleneck (*Amsinckia intermedia*)
**Top Right:** California Poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*)
**Middle Left:** Chinese Houses (*Collinsia heterophylla*)
**Middle Center:** California Peony (*Paeonia californica*)
**Bottom Left:** Fairy Lantern (*Calochortus albus*)
**Bottom Center:** Sticky Monkeyflower (*Mimulus aurantiacus*)
**Bottom Right:** Buck Brush (*Ceanothus cuneatus*)
**Member Celebration**

**SAVE THE DATE**

**SATURDAY, JUNE 22**

You support us all year. It’s time to celebrate your continuous and generous support to protect the Ojai Valley. Join us for an evening of delicious food, drink, and entertainment. Meet OVLC staff and other supporters and enjoy our beautiful Steelhead Preserve!

**Saturday, June 22**
5–8 pm
The Steelhead Preserve

Formal invitations to come.

Want to join the party?
Donate today if your mailing label (back page) is orange.

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**UPCOMING EVENTS**

- **May 11**
  All About Ojai: Spring Bird Walk with Jesse Grantham

- **May 18**
  Full Moon Hike on the Valley View Preserve

- **June 1**
  National Trails Day Celebration: Volunteer projects & after-party at Caravan Outpost with REI & Sierra Nevada

- **June 1 & 2**
  Rattlesnake Avoidance Training for Dogs with High on Kennels

- **June 8**
  All About Ojai: Condor Recovery Project

- **June 18**
  Trail 101: Ventura River Preserve

- **June 22**
  Annual Member Celebration

- **August TBD**
  Movie Night at the Mob Shop

Save the Date:
September 20 & 21
2nd Annual Under the Open Sky
5th Annual Mountainfilm Festival

For the most up-to-date information about OVLC events visit [ovlc.org/events](http://ovlc.org/events)
For the last two years, the OVLC has had the honor of counting Natalie Everton as a member of the field crew. While she will be leaving the OVLC to start her next adventure, she has certainly left her mark on the preserves. We will truly miss this wonderful woman, from her wealth of knowledge about engines and power equipment, to her thirst for thrill seeking experiences, and her unmatched level of energy. Not to mention—we have never met someone so excited to learn how to run a chainsaw!

Natalie, thank you for all of your hard work over the long hours and the hot summers. We are so grateful for your dedication and commitment to preserving Ojai. We wish you all the best on wherever life takes you next!

Thank you and we wish you the best, Natalie!

On May 20, the OVLC will begin routine fire clearance on parts of our preserves that border structures or roads. Thanks to a grant from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire), this work will be completed by the local Concerned Resources and Environmental Workers (the CREW) and an additional contractor. They will be weed whacking or mowing grasses within 100’ of structures and 10’ of roads, and will remove any dead and down woody material that is greater than 4” in diameter. Additionally, any ladder fuels—branches on trees, especially dead ones—which are within 6’ of the ground, will be cut and removed.

We do this work every year, not just because it is required by Ventura County, but because it helps protect our neighbors and the land itself. We also encourage you to practice good fire prevention at your home: make sure that your grass is cut, dead vegetation is removed, and a perimeter around your house is cleared. The Ojai Valley Fire Safe Council has plenty of information on what is required of homeowners for fire prevention, and best practices for defending your own space.

For more information on how to best prepare your home for fire, please visit: https://cafiresafecouncil.org/resources/fire-safe-brochures/
Thank you to everyone that came to our Women in the Wild events in March. We had such a blast hiking, building trails, doing yoga, and watching movies with you. We can’t wait to do it again!

Thank you to all of the women who volunteered their time to lead events. We say it all the time, but we couldn’t do it without you! And thank you to everyone that donated to our raffle. A big round of applause to the Ojai Rancho Inn for hosting the films and making it such a lovely night.
Protecting your views, trails, water and wildlife

WELCOME NEW DONORS!

Joellen Alflen
Andrew Baksh
Belinha Beatty
Philippe & Betsy Caland
Jessica Cesar
Lee Ann Dawson
Van Doan
Scott Erickson
Cathie Ferro
Michael Finley
Ish Goldstein
Kelly Hahs
Frank Hanson
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Bernhard Reutemann
Dirk Schubert
Jan Scow
Chelsea Sutula
Cynthia Watchorn
Steven & Jacqueline Wegerbauer
1/21/2019 – 4/17/2019

Special Acknowledgments

In honor of my sister, Marti Reid
Art & Margie Coats

In honor of Evita y Sophia Barajas: Su tierra!
Monique Navarro

In honor of Joline: Happy birthday!
Michael Shapiro & Louise Sandhaus

In memory of John G. Bee DVM
Susan Bee

In memory of Lamont Bonham
David Bonham

In memory of Ellen Herbert
Mary Ellen Egleston & Mary Gardon

In memory of Sara Roxanne Schneider
Carol Shore

In memory of my parents, Bob & Silvia Emhardt
Janis Emhardt

In memory of George Appel: To remember a great friend and his love for the outdoors and the beauty of nature.
Bill & Marcia Wakelee

In memory of Harold Glenn
Lisa & Stephen Duncan
Gary & Carmen Glenn
James Henry
The Lundbye Family
Judith & Bennett McCutcheon
Justin & Viki Purvis

In memory of Harold & Patsy Glenn
Barry & Chris Betlock

In memory of Nina Betty Sass
Donna & Ted Miller

In memory of Allan Jacobs
The Vondriska-Brosamle Family Gift

In memory of my husband, Allan Jacobs
Janet Jacobs

Gift membership for Michael Taylor
Edgar Kyle

Gift membership for Andrew Adamson & Family
Barry & Donna Rabe

1/21/2019 – 4/17/2019
It has been another busy season for the field crew! This three-person team installed a recording breaking number of plants this season. While the final count has yet to be tallied, the number is in the thousands.

The primary focus for restoration this season was the 36-acre orange grove project on the Ventura River Preserve that was impacted by the 2017 Thomas Fire. Over 2,000 native plants were installed this season to replace plants that burned in the fire. This included approximately 700 coast live oak saplings and hundreds of acorns that had been collected from the preserve. While the number of plants at the orange grove site is close to where it was before the fire, it will take years of caring for these newly installed plants to bring the area back to its previous state. Even then, there is always more restoration to be done.

Another project the field crew took on this season was restoring areas along a three-mile stretch of San Antonio Creek, from Camp Comfort down to the Confluence Preserve, where Arundo had been removed in previous seasons. Thousands of mule fat and willow cuttings were pegged into the stream bed along with hundreds of plants such as giant wild rye, mugwort, sycamore trees, and several other species that thrive in riparian zones. Regrowth in riparian zones happens much faster than regrowth of an oak savanna; it is so gratifying to see native plants thriving in areas where invasive Arundo had dominated for years.

When the field crew isn’t working on restoration projects, they can be found helping Stewardship Director Brendan Taylor with different preserve management tasks all over the valley. If you see them working on the preserves—building the Allan Jacobs Trail with volunteers, removing downed trees, and installing new signage—please stop by and say hello!
We’ve been doing some spring cleaning lately out at our Ojai Meadows Preserve (OMP). If you walk at the OMP, you may have noticed a steel shipping container that’s tucked into some trees near the eucalyptus grove. We store tools and gear in there, but as you can see from the picture, things were getting a bit cluttered. Our Field Crew cleaned it, recycled and rehomed things we no longer use, including some shelves, and generally reorganized the storage area. We didn’t just do this in the spirit of spring cleaning, rather this is a key step toward launching our new Adopt-A-Trail volunteer program. In the upcoming months, we hope individual volunteers will adopt portions of their favorite trails (on any preserve), and this storage area will supply them with the tools they’ll need. Keep an eye out for more information in the future about our newest volunteer program, and happy spring!

Before

After!

Thank you to all of our Business Sponsors for your generosity!

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- Ojai Quarterly
- Ojai Valley Directory
- Shelter Social Club

Do you want to get more involved with the OVLC and give back to the community? Volunteer with us!
We are always in need of help on the trails, in the office, and at events. Everyone is welcome. Visit ovlc.org/volunteer to fill out an application.
IS YOUR MEMBERSHIP CURRENT?

Check your mailing label...

If the text is green you’re up to date, if it’s orange send in the enclosed envelope, it’s time to renew!

Cover photo by Tylar Harrison
Below: Ventura River Preserve by Summer Dalton of TIGEROWL

It Takes a Valley

Thomas Fire recovery didn’t happen overnight—rather it is just beginning. Recent winter rains transformed these charred hillsides into vibrant landscapes, but also brought with them landslides and trail erosion. With the support of the community behind us, we can easily overcome these challenges.

Ojai is thriving because the community rallied together to rebuild and restore these lands that we all love.

Make your gift today to keep the preserves you love accessible for current and future generations!

Donate now at ovlc.org/donate

HERE TO STAY, SO YOU CAN PLAY