



Sequoia Riverlands Trust
Conserving California's Heartland

March 30, 2012

Mandy Vance
Grant Administrator
Sierra Nevada Conservancy
5039 Fairgrounds Rd.
Mariposa, CA 95338

Subject: Final Grant Report & Payment Request -- SNC Reference #070270
(Visitor Access & Outdoor Education Plan for the Dry Creek and Homer Ranch Preserves)

Dear Mandy,

Enclosed are the following items:

- Hard copy of the final grant report -- I think I got the performance measures right this time!
- Disc with digital copies of the final grant report and attachments which include:
 - Photographs of the Dry Creek and Homer Ranch Preserves
 - Publicity and outreach materials
 - A sample elementary school field trip itinerary for the Dry Creek Preserve
 - Pdf files of the English and Spanish versions of the visitor use guide (these turned out to be much more user-friendly than the huge digital files we intended to provide via YouSendIt)
- Two hard copies each of the English and Spanish versions of the visitor use guide (to correct my mistake in sending you the first-run printer proofs earlier)
- Hard copy of the final payment request prepared by May Stevens

Let me know if you need anything further, and please convey our thanks to the SNC team for their logistical and moral support during this rewarding project.

Sincerely,

Hilary Dustin
Conservation Director

Sierra Nevada Conservancy-Final Report

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program
Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control
River and Coastal Protection Act of 2008 (Proposition 84)**

Grantee Name: Sequoia Riverlands Trust

Project title: Visitor Access and Outdoor Education Plan for
Dry Creek and Homer Ranch Preserves

SNC Reference Number: SNC 070270

Submittal Date: 3/30/12

Grant Agreement Number: G0764004

Report Preparer: Hilary Dustin

Phone #: (559) 738-0211, Ext. 102

Check one:

6-Month Progress Report

Final Report

6-Month Progress Reports should reflect the previous six months. Final Reports should reflect the entire grant period.

A. Progress Report Summary: (Please provide a general description of work completed during this reporting period.)

During the grant period we:

- *Completed a resource inventory at the Homer Ranch Preserve to determine existing conditions, map existing improvements, identify points of interest and scope out potential locations for future activities and improvements.*
- *Developed a plan and partnerships for outdoor education programs at both the Dry Creek and Homer Ranch Preserves, with highlights from the last two years including –*
 - Developing standards-based lesson plans relevant to the preserves for grades K through 7th, and presenting them to Tulare County teachers in cooperation with Pro Youth HEART, a non-profit organization providing after school programs for disadvantaged youth
 - Visiting the preserves with local elementary school teachers to get ideas for educational programs
 - Identifying educational themes and focal points for an elementary school field trip program at Dry Creek Preserve, and a service learning program for middle school and high school students at both preserves (see Visitor Use & Education Plan)
 - Developing a school field trip itinerary for the Dry Creek Preserve
 - Training volunteer naturalists to help lead elementary school field trips at SRT sites, including the Dry Creek Preserve

- Meeting with the Tulare County Office of Education to plan cooperative grant seeking for field trip transportation funding
- Meeting with representatives of the Farmworker Institute for Education and Leadership Development (FIELD) to develop a partnership for training at-risk youth to help lead Spanish language elementary school field trips and nature hikes at the Dry Creek and Homer Ranch Preserves and other SRT sites
- Completing several service learning projects involving at least 150 middle school and high school students from Three Rivers, Visalia and Tulare; included project-specific lesson plans
- Working with several Eagle Scouts to build and install nest boxes, picnic tables; preserve boundary, trail and safety signs; a nursery shade house, and a work shed for the nursery
- Training several volunteer preserve rangers to monitor resource conditions
- Leading volunteer work days to build a new trail at the Homer Ranch Preserve; and to install native plantings and assist with native plant propagation at the Dry Creek Preserve
- Recruiting and hiring two AmeriCorps members to assist with SRT's field trip and service learning programs in 2012
- Reaching out to Exeter High School and Woodlake School District about upcoming education program opportunities at the two preserves (initial contacts happened during grant period, with follow-up presentations to Woodlake School District representatives during March 2012)
- Spearheading a collaborative, year-round service learning program called the "Peaks & Valleys Institute, involving SRT, the Tulare County Office of Education, Sequoia National Park, Giant Sequoia National Monument, and Wild Places. One of the AmeriCorps members is taking the lead on this in 2012.
- Leading a workshop on water quality testing at the California Science Teachers Association conference (this will be part of the educational curriculum for the Dry Creek and Homer Ranch Preserves)
- Hosting numerous educational events at the preserves, including –
 - star gazing parties with the Tulare County Astronomy Association
 - open house events for this planning process and to unveil new visitor amenities built with California River Parkways funding
 - the field portion of the third annual Kaweah Land & Arts Festival
 - a Wukchumni elder's blessing of Homer Ranch
 - a barbecue and aquatic invertebrate sampling event
 - a dragonfly photography workshop at the Dry Creek Northeast Pond
 - two photography club tours to Homer Ranch, which yielded some beautiful photographs for SRT use
 - a presentation by Cal Earth Homes
 - field trips for middle school and high school students from Three Rivers and Visalia
 - visits by the Fresno County Audubon Society
 - a tour for the regional chapter of the California Construction and Industrial Minerals Association

- Gathering information on visitor use management and land trust roles in environmental education at the 2011 California Council of Land Trusts conference
- Obtaining the following grants relevant to education programs at the Dry Creek and Homer Ranch Preserves –
 - Sempra Energy Foundation – for SRT’s education program, including field trips, service learning, curriculum development and teacher training
 - Alcoa Foundation – grants to implement a service learning program and advance STEM concepts by preparing teachers for service learning projects on SRT preserves (STEM = Science, Technology, Engineering & Math)
 - City of Visalia -- in part to develop curriculum for an elementary school field trip program at the Dry Creek Preserve
 - National Fish & Wildlife Foundation – for local implementation of the Yellow Starthistle Leading Edge Initiative, including volunteer and student involvement in weed surveys and native plantings in the lower Dry Creek area (Dry Creek and Homer Ranch Preserves and adjoining properties)
- *Completed a visitor use and education plan for both preserves, including –*
 - Reaching out to the community to engage area residents and potential preserve users in planning, and raise awareness of visitor use opportunities. This included:
 - a meeting with influential neighbors
 - an “open house” to raise awareness of the preserves and get feedback on potential visitor and education uses
 - two events to unveil amenities built with California River Parkways funding, as well as expanded visitor access
 - publicity through SRT communications venues (web site, blog, e-newsletter)
 - news releases and resulting media coverage
 - Establishing major goals and strategies
 - Identifying opportunities, challenges and possible management responses related to each goal and strategy
 - Laying out recommended policies, management actions and physical improvements for enhancing visitor and educational uses and resource conditions at both preserves
 - Opening the Dry Creek Preserve to daily, self-guided visitor use as of March 1, 2012 (prior to that the preserve had been open on selected weekends). By April 1st the Homer Ranch Preserve will be open for self-guided use on weekends through the end of the green season.

- *Completed English and Spanish versions of a visitor use guide covering both preserves.*

The guides provide visitors with –

- trail maps and descriptions
- natural and cultural history
- use guidelines
- information on Sequoia Riverlands Trust

B. Deliverables or Outcomes completed during this Reporting Period or Milestones

Achieved: (Include specific information, such as public meetings held, agency participation, partnerships developed, or acres mapped, treated or restored.)

- See Progress Report Summary above for interim deliverables and outcomes
- The primary products of this grant were the *Visitor Use and Education Plan for the Dry Creek and Homer Ranch Preserves* (which includes the Homer Ranch resource inventory report as an appendix), and the *English and Spanish versions of the visitor use guide for both preserves.*
- Other outcomes included:
 - Strengthening of partnerships between Sequoia Riverlands Trust and the schools in Three Rivers, Woodlake and Exeter
 - The prospect of strengthening SRT service to and connections with Latino members of the community through the emerging partnership with FIELD
 - Increased community awareness of visitor access opportunities at the Dry Creek and Homer Ranch Preserves
 - Improved communications with preserve neighbors, leading among other things, to a cooperative weed management project funded by a National Fish & Wildlife Foundation grant that will be implemented jointly by SRT, the Tulare County Weed Management Area and lower Dry Creek landowners.
 - New contacts with gravel mine operators in the area, setting the stage for future cooperative restoration and weed management work
 - A prioritized inventory of restoration and resource enhancement opportunities that provides the basis for future grant proposals and service learning/volunteer projects
 - Improved ability to sustain a variety of compatible uses at the preserves, including protection and enhancement of vital habitats, watershed and cultural resource protection, outdoor recreation and learning, and livestock production

C. Challenges or Opportunities Encountered: (Please describe what has worked and what hasn't; include any solutions you initiated to resolve problems. If your project is not on schedule, please explain why here.)

The main challenges during the grant period were:

- Temporary freezing of state grant funds
- The sudden and tragic loss of our Finance & Administration Director, which disrupted all aspects of SRT's operations for several months
- Obtaining an "accurate" Spanish translation for the visitor use guide – we worked with four different translators in succession, each of which gave us a slightly different twist on how to express the facts and flavor of guide content. Although this added editing work, we believe the guide became more user-friendly with each iteration.
- Neighbor and grazing lessee concerns about inviting more people out to SRT preserves, with attendant issues of fire, vandalism, poaching and trespassing in the lower Dry Creek area. We have been worried about the same issues and so far have addressed them by –
 - Installing a caretaker residence at the Dry Creek Preserve and recruiting an excellent caretaker to establish a greater on-site presence at both preserves
 - Recruiting and training volunteer preserve rangers
 - Installing preserve boundary signage along Dry Creek Drive
 - Installing a motion sensor camera at the Dry Creek Preserve – which has yielded information on wildlife as well as trespassers
 - Providing guidelines for respectful use of the preserve through signage and the visitor use guide
 - Taking the lead in planning the spring 2012 neighborhood gathering with local fire and law enforcement officials (also be an opportunity to introduce the new Dry Creek Preserve caretaker).

SRT is grateful to the Sierra Nevada Conservancy staff for amending the grant deadline twice to enable completion of a quality project.

A few opportunities stand out among the many benefits already described above:

- The emerging partnership with the Farmworker Institute for Education and Leadership Development, and the prospect of strengthening connections with Latino residents of the area through that partnership.
- Communications with our lower Dry Creek neighbors, leading to the cooperative weed management project which at a minimum will involve Sequoia Riverlands Trust, the local water district, the Tulare County Weed Management Area (which is itself an alliance of a number of public and private entities), and several private landowners.
- The opportunity to learn more about preserve resources and consider ways to integrate education and volunteer programs with land stewardship and resource enhancement.

D. Unanticipated Successes Achieved: (Please describe any additional successes beyond completing scheduled tasks or meeting scheduled milestones.)

- In order to plan for visitor and educational uses of the preserves we needed to understand how these uses would fit with other land uses and conservation values. As a result, the Visitor Use and Education Plan will also serve as an overall management plan for the Dry Creek and Homer Ranch Preserves. This will help SRT meet both long-term conservation objectives and Land Trust Alliance accreditation standards.
- Half the challenge with volunteers is having a clear idea of what you want them to do! The Visitor Use and Education Plan gives us a comprehensive list of projects that can readily be matched to specific partners in the future.

E. Compare Actual Costs to Budgeted Costs: (Please refer to your grant agreement to list your deliverables/budget categories and budgeted costs compared to actual costs incurred during this reporting period in the table below.)

| PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES | Budgeted SNC Dollars | Actual Dollars |
|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Oversight, Stakeholder meetings and Plan preparation | \$14,035 | \$14,283 |
| Resource Inventory | \$5,000 | \$5,089 |
| Development of partnerships with educational institutions | \$5,640 | \$5,298 |
| Visitor Guide for Dry Creek and Homer Ranch Preserves | \$21,075 | \$21,445 |
| | | |
| GRAND TOTAL | \$45,750 | \$46,114 |

Explanation: (if needed)

Although SRT only billed for the allowable amount under the grant, we did incur a small overage on the grant overall of \$364. This is less than 1% of the total amount granted by SNC. We are pleased to have essentially stayed on budget given the staffing changes that occurred during the course of the grant.

F. Do you have information to report on the project-specific Performance Measures for your project? (If so, please list the Performance Measures below and describe your progress.)

See discussion of SNC-approved Performance Measures at the end of this grant report.

G. Were there any other relevant materials produced under the terms of this Agreement that are not a part of the budgeted deliverables? If so, please attach copies. (Include digital photos, maps, media coverage of project, or other work products.)

Attachments include:

- High resolution pdfs of English and Spanish versions of the visitor use guide (on disc only)
- Photos (on disc only) – photographers' full names appear in the file name for at least one of their photos; photographer initials are used thereafter
- Sample elementary school field trip itinerary for Dry Creek Preserve (hard copy and on disc)
- Copies of news releases, articles and other communications about the project (hard copy and on disc)

H. Next Steps: (Work anticipated in the next 6 months, including location and timing of any scheduled events related to the project.)

- Keep Dry Creek Preserve opened for daily, self-guided visitor use until the dry season (probably through April), except that the Northeast Pond will be closed to fishing starting about April 1st. See the Visitor Use and Education Plan for allowable uses.
- Open the Homer Ranch Preserve for self-guided, daytime visitor use on weekends until the dry season (probably through April).
- Allow horseback riding at Homer Ranch Preserve until the dry season by organized groups that carry their own liability insurance, or by groups that are led by an experienced, insured outfitter and guide.
- Install a self-serve dispenser for the new visitor use guides at the Dry Creek Preserve gateway pavilion. Put up a notice at the Homer Ranch Preserve that the visitor use guides are available at the Dry Creek Preserve.
- Make the Existing Conditions & Points of Interest maps available as a supplement to the maps in the visitor use guide.
- Continue to publicize visitor use opportunities at the two preserves.
- Launch the elementary school field trip program at the Dry Creek Preserve, targeting grades 4 to 6.
- Continue outreach to Three Rivers, Woodlake and Exeter schools and initiate contact with the school in Lemon Cove.
- Firm up partnership with FIELD to train participants to assist with SRT's school field trips and public tours.
- Focus service learning and volunteer projects on:
 - Weed surveys in lower Dry Creek area (NFWF project to prevent spread of yellow starthistle)
 - Continued restoration plantings at Dry Creek Northeast Pond
 - Continued plantings at Dry Creek native plant demonstration garden
 - Propagation of locally native plant materials at Dry Creek nursery
- Host three naturalist-led public walks at the preserves

- Host the annual lower Dry Creek neighborhood gathering at the Dry Creek Preserve
- Allow feral pig hunts during green season; coordinate with other preserve uses
- Control invasive exotic plants, with emphasis on thistle species and tamarisk
- Initiate discussions with landowner south of Homer Ranch regarding a trail right-of-way to enable visitor access on the existing road to the southeast part of the preserve
- Complete third of three riparian fence segments along Dry Creek at Homer Ranch. Work with grazing lessee to develop strategy for systematically comparing different grazing regimes in the three areas.
- Survey yellow star thistle and associated invasive species along lower Dry Creek. Implement control measures at the preserves, and facilitate weed control on cooperating landowners' property through the Tulare County WMA landowner cost-share spray program.
- Refine SRT procedures for permitting and managing special uses on the preserves.
- Have an attorney review and update indemnification clause of Homer Ranch grazing lease and existing SRT liability waivers in light of new visitor and educational uses
- Review SRT insurance and workers compensation coverage in light of new visitor and educational uses and associated improvements
- Prepare a Property Analysis Record (PAR) to estimate initial and ongoing costs of programs, operations and maintenance at the two preserves
- Seek funding and in-kind contributions for highest priority programs and physical improvements, including –
 - Continuation of school field trip and service learning programs at the two preserves, including cooperation with Tulare County Office of Education to obtain funding for field trip transportation
 - Bike racks for Dry Creek Preserve parking lot
 - New trails at both preserves (see list in Plan)
 - Additional shade structures at Dry Creek Preserve
 - Benches and picnic tables for existing loop road at Dry Creek Preserve
 - Replacement of west and north boundary fences at Dry Creek Preserve
 - Firebreak maintenance along Dry Creek Drive at both preserves
 - Additional motion sensor cameras to gather wildlife observations and aid in preventing unauthorized uses (e.g. poaching)
 - Replacement data loggers for Dry Creek Preserve groundwater monitoring wells
 - Nursery improvements and supplies
 - Updated preserve orientation signs to reflect map revisions
 - Additional trail directional signs at both preserves
- Maintain existing facilities and signs at both preserves
- Post the west boundaries of both preserves with “no hunting” signs
- Install horse tie rails at Homer Ranch north parking area
- Provide portable toilets at Homer Ranch main parking area during period that the preserve is open for self-guided use, and for events.

ADDITIONAL CATEGORIES FOR FINAL REPORT

I. Capacity-building Results and Collaboration and Cooperation with Stakeholders

Please see items A-D of this report, as well as discussion of Goal #3 in Chapter II of the Visitor Use & Education Plan.

J. Most Significant Accomplishment

SRT has been working to expand visitor access and enhance visitor and outdoor education experiences at the Dry Creek and Homer Ranch Preserves since acquiring the properties in 2004. Although we've had a general vision of success, our ability to implement that vision has been dictated by available funding and associated grant requirements. Hence our efforts have been opportunistic, and accomplishments somewhat out of sequence. Notably, we obtained funding for and completed new visitor amenities at the preserves before we were able to complete the Visitor Use & Education Plan or install the Dry Creek Preserve caretaker residence. This could make the SNC-funded planning effort seem superfluous, but in fact it gave us the opportunity to refine the vision, learn more about the preserves' assets, develop coherent strategies for enhancing resource management and visitor and educational uses, and measure success to date.

K. Wow Factor

Opening the Dry Creek Preserve for daily, self-guided visitor use on the last day of the SNC grant period was a pinch-me moment for SRT staff and board members who have "held the vision" since 2004.

L. Design and Implementation

The planning process and plan structure we used for the Blue Oak Ranch Visitor Use and Education Plan translated well to the planning effort for the Dry Creek and Homer Ranch preserves. We hope these examples will be useful to other SNC grantees in the future.

SRT also applied lessons learned during development of a visitor use guide for the Kaweah Oaks Preserve in 2008. For the Dry Creek and Homer Ranch visitor use guide we streamlined content, improved trail maps and descriptions, and generally made the guide more appealing and user-friendly. Content developed for interpretive signs with California River Parkways funding informed the content of the visitor use guide.

M. Indirect Impact

Increased neighbor communications during the planning process led to a cooperative project to prevent the spread of yellow starthistle and other invasive plants in the lower Dry Creek area. The NFWF Pulling Together Initiative-funded demonstration project will begin in April 2012.

The SNC grant, combined with funding from the Alcoa Foundation, Sempra Energy Foundation and City of Visalia grants, enabled SRT to play a strong role in educational partnerships that extend beyond the Dry Creek and Homer Ranch preserves.

N. Collaboration and Conflict Resolution

No conflicts were encountered during the project. The stakeholder outreach gave us and our preserve neighbors a chance to work together on common concerns, which should enhance future collaboration and help prevent future conflicts.

O. Capacity-Building

Sequoia Riverlands Trust is a fundamentally strong organization whose growth has been arrested somewhat by the tough economic environment of the last three years. We recently re-filled key positions in land protection, development and communications, and obtained two talented AmeriCorps members for 2012. We hope to add capacity in land stewardship (including visitor use management), farmland protection and book keeping in the near future. SRT also intends to apply for Land Trust Alliance accreditation in May 2012, which will entail a significant time investment for the entire staff, but will aid organizational effectiveness and continuity in the future. SRT continues to participate in major regional collaborations such as the Southern Sierra Partnership.

The SNC grant boosted SRT and community capacity by:

- Underwriting education outreach and partnership development by SRT's Education & Volunteer Director – not only for the Dry Creek and Homer Ranch Preserves, but for broader outdoor education efforts (e.g. the Peaks & Valleys Institute and the FIELD partnership) that will ultimately affect youth throughout SRT's service area. The SNC grant enabled SRT to step in and take a stronger role when the capacity of some other organizations declined.
- Enabling SRT to develop outdoor education programs for the Dry Creek and Homer Ranch Preserves that complement and reinforce the science curriculum offered by the Tulare County schools and youth service organizations like Pro Youth HEART.
- Enhancing SRT's knowledge of resource management needs at two preserves, and our ability to engage volunteers in projects with meaningful conservation outcomes.
- Reinforcing SRT's ability to open two south Sierra foothill properties to conservation-compatible recreation use – a direct community benefit in an area where most lands are privately owned and posted "no trespassing." The two preserves offer access to nature close to home.

P. Challenges

Please see Item C above for a discussion of challenges and how they were addressed. We did not have to change any of our key objectives.

Q. Photographs

A selection of digital photographs is included on the disc enclosed with this report.

R. Post-Grant Plans

Please see Item H above for a discussion of next steps, including new programmatic and operational actions, use of findings, other organizations involved, financing of plan implementation, and communications. These are also addressed in the Recommendations chapter of the Visitor Use & Education Plan.

S. Post-Grant Contact

For the foreseeable future contact:

Hilary Dustin
Conservation Director
Sequoia Riverlands Trust
(559) 738-0211, Ext. 102

T. SNC-Approved Performance Measures

1) Resources Leveraged

a. Resources leveraged to complete this Project –

Matching funds –

Alcoa Foundation, Sempra Energy Foundation and City of Visalia support to SRT's education program, including service learning, education collaborations, school field trips, after school programs and teacher trainings - \$64,500

California River Parkway grants for visitor amenities (including interpretive signs) completed at both preserves in 2011 - \$315,647

SRT and AmeriCorps program share of two AmeriCorps positions during January and February of 2012 – \$10,000

Donations and SRT contribution -- toward installation of Dry Creek Preserve caretaker residence (enabling on-site presence needed to expand visitor access at both preserves) -- \$30,000

In-kind contributions and volunteers (estimated using standard rate of \$23.42/hr) –

Estimated value of service learning projects - \$14,000

Estimated value of Eagle Scout projects - \$12,950

Estimated value of other volunteer efforts, including preserve rangers, naturalists, participants in work days - \$9,850

Donated graphic design and Spanish translation services for visitor use guide - \$1,150

Estimated in-kind donations to obtain and install Dry Creek Preserve caretaker residence - \$115,000

b. Resources leveraged as a result of this Project

Existing and future education partnerships –

Partnerships with Pro Youth HEART and the Farmworker Institute for Education and Leadership Development (FIELD) – for school field trips after school programs, and teacher trainings that benefit disadvantaged youth, especially in Tulare County

Partnerships with the Exeter, Woodlake and Three Rivers school districts, as well as other schools in the County – for school field trips and service learning projects

Peaks & Valleys Institute – a collaboration with the federal land management agencies and Tulare County Office of Education to develop a year-round service learning program that provides Tulare County youth with multiple outdoor experiences at various elevations and in various environments within Tulare County

Future grant funding and donations – see comments above about the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation grant for local implementation of the state Yellow Starthistle Leading Edge Initiative (including a cooperative demonstration project in the lower Dry Creek area).

The Natural Resources Conservation Service also just notified us that we will be receiving funds to complete the final segment of Dry Creek riparian fencing at Homer Ranch.

The Visitor Use & Education Plan will provide a sound basis for grant proposals and funding appeals for future programs and resource enhancements.

Future in-kind and volunteer contributions – the grant enabled SRT to build a prioritized list of projects, and develop relationships with potential contributors and volunteers.

No value has been assigned to the items listed above, as they are all future items.

2. Impact on collaboration and cooperation among stakeholders

a. Number of people/entities involved in Project

Approx. 100 people involved during outreach to stakeholders and potential education partners

Specific, plan-related outreach to the following entities:

Exeter, Three Rivers and Woodlake School Districts

Pro Youth HEART

FIELD

Influential neighbors in the lower Dry Creek area

Approx. 10 volunteers directly involved in the Homer Ranch resource inventory, and graphics and Spanish translations for the visitor use guide

6 SRT staff – Conservation Director, Education & Volunteer Director, Conservation Project Manager, Communications Director, Finance & Administration Director, one AmeriCorps member

5 consultants for plan maps, the resource inventory, and the visitor use guide

1 printing firm to produce the visitor use guide

b. Increased cooperation/decreased conflict among stakeholders.

Increased communication with our neighbors in the lower Dry Creek area during the project has fostered cooperation on weed management and prevention of wildfires, poaching and vandalism.

3. Capacity building within region:

- a. Description of how completion of this Project improved capabilities of grant recipients, partners, or larger community.

Please see Item O above.

4. One-page description of Project accomplishments:

- a. Description of how the project succeeded in accomplishing its intent and the direct benefits that resulted from the Project.

The intent of the project was to learn more about the conservation, educational and recreational assets of the preserves (especially at Homer Ranch); develop a plan and partnerships for enhancing visitor and educational uses; and develop a visitor use guide that would enrich the visitor's experience of the preserves.

The planning effort yielded these direct benefits:

- A prioritized list of program and resource enhancement projects that has already served as the basis for three successful grant proposals (City of Visalia, NFWF and NRCS-EQIP), and that provides a focal point for the emerging partnership with FIELD
 - Stronger ties to the Three Rivers, Woodlake and Exeter school districts
 - The ability to expand SRT's elementary school field trip program to the Dry Creek Preserve, making this program more accessible to students in eastern Tulare County
 - A stronger policy framework for visitor use at the two preserves, raising our comfort level for allowing increased use
 - A plan and visitor use guide that can serve as training guides for volunteer naturalists and preserve rangers, and as a story-telling resource for SRT staff and Board members reaching out to potential visitors, partners and the media
 - High quality maps of the two preserves
- b. Description of the follow-on or indirect benefits of the Project
- Increased community awareness of the two preserves and the recreational opportunities they provide
 - More active cooperation between SRT and neighboring landowners

- The ability to meet LTA accreditation standards for management plans on two more preserves
 - A prioritized inventory of resource enhancement opportunities that provides the basis for future grant proposals and service learning/ volunteer projects
 - Improved ability to sustain a variety of compatible uses at the Dry Creek and Homer Ranch preserves, including protection and enhancement of habitat, cultural and watershed resource protection; outdoor recreation, environmental education, and livestock production.
 - The ability to play a strong role in educational partnerships that involve, but also extend beyond, the Dry Creek and Homer Ranch Preserves.
- c. Description of any significant positive experiences and unanticipated occurrences, or other noteworthy events that happened during the Project and anything about the project that gives you “goose bumps.”

The grant enabled these unanticipated successes –

- The original proposal was to do a resource inventory and visitor use plan for Homer Ranch only, with the education planning and visitor use guide covering both preserves. It proved almost as easy to include past resource inventory data and develop management recommendations for the Dry Creek Preserve, so the resulting Visitor Use & Education Plan fully covers both preserves.
 - In order to plan for visitor and educational uses of the two preserves we needed to understand how these uses would fit with other land uses and conservation values. As a result, the Visitor Use & Education Plan will serve SRT well as an overall management plan for both preserves. The plan will also help us meet LTA standards when we apply for accreditation later this spring.
 - The visitor use and education plan also serves as a “volunteer involvement plan”, including a comprehensive list of projects that can readily be matched to specific partners.
- d. Description of lessons learned during the course of completing the Project.

This project was an opportunity to apply lessons learned from the Blue Oak Ranch visitor use and education planning process, development of interpretive signs for the Dry Creek and Homer Ranch Preserves (under the California River Parkways grants), and previous development of a visitor use guide for the Kaweah Oaks Preserve. In general this allowed us to produce documents that were more concise and user-friendly than earlier versions.

We labored over the layout and content of the visitor use guide to convey some fairly complex topics in a direct, appealing way. When it came time to translate the English

version to Spanish, we had to cope with varying colloquialisms used by the four people who provided assistance. Each review triggered another round of edits that rippled throughout the text and maps. Feedback from our bilingual visitors will be the true measure of the final product.

We hope that the Visitor Use & Education Plan and the visitor use guide will be useful examples for other land trusts who seek to enhance visitor and educational uses of their fee title lands.

5. Number of visitors for educational, recreational, or tourism purposes to the Dry Creek and Homer Ranch preserves:

Estimated during grant period:

Self-guided visitor use – 100 people
School field trips – 180 students, 10 teachers and parents
Nature hikes and other educational events – 350 people
Service learning days – at least 150 youth

The total is expected to increase to between 7,500 and 10,000 people per year at the combined preserves within five years.

6. Define the number and type of sensitive species identified in the resource inventory and the number of acres of sensitive habitat preserved.

a. Sensitive species identified in the resource inventory or from previous observations

141 total plant species

Sensitive plant species – Spiny-sepaed button celery

95 total confirmed animal species

Sensitive animal species –

Western pond turtle
Southwestern willow flycatcher
Bald eagle
Golden eagle
Cooper's hawk
Northern harrier
White-tailed kite
Peregrine falcon
Prairie falcon
Tricolored blackbird

b. Acres of sensitive habitat preserved

This grant did not involve direct land protection or restoration. However, the Visitor Use and Education Plan will promote protection and enhancement of the following sensitive habitats at the Dry Creek and Homer Ranch preserves:

Blue oak woodland (roughly 825 acres)

Sycamore alluvial woodland (roughly 65 acres)

Other riparian (roughly 85 acres)

Wetlands (roughly 10 acres)

Please see enclosures (as listed in Item G above).

SAMPLE ITINERARY

Elementary School Field Trip
at Dry Creek Preserve

Dry Creek Field Trip Itinerary

9:00 Bus Arrives

9:15 Kids in groups and ready to go. Walk to overlook.

9:15-10:00 Overlook Activities

- Trash bag Mountain (15 min)
 - Discuss that a watershed is an area of land that water drains into. (From mountain top to mountain top, it's the land in between).
 - Crumple trash bag filled with crumpled newspaper, etc. Have kids point out where are the watersheds in the trash bag mountain. Make it rain!
 - What happened to the water? Can anyone point out the watershed that we are in right now?

- Sound Mapping (5 min)
 - Sit kids separately around a meadow. Silently for a few min, have them mark on a paper what they hear and where they hear it. Discuss.

- Binocular Scavenger hunt (15 min)
 - Can you find..... snow, water, bird, house, animal, dam, mountain

10:10 Rainbow Walk to river (try to find all the colors of the rainbow!)

10:10 - 10:30 Just Passing Through (Project Wet, pg 163)

- Ask students where water flowed in our Trash bag mountain. How does that affect our landscape? Also, does water flow only above ground?
- Part I (talk about groundwater). Did water in round 2 go faster or slower?
- Part II (talk about sedimentation/erosion). What happened? What affect did trees have in both scenarios? What else does water do?

10:30-1100 Ponding at the creek!

- Water also provides a habitat
 - What lives in the creek? Have id cards!

1100 - 11:10 Meadow Reflection (pick one)

Hula Hoop Activity (10 min)

How many different flowers/bugs do you see in this space?

Drawing (10 min)

Make a pastel art of the hills. Tell a Native American story relating to nature. Draw the story

11:10-11:15 Owl and Mouse walk to nursery

11:15-11:45 Plants at Dry Creek

- Person Plant (5 min)
 - What are the parts of a plant? Place labels on kid/counselor to make a person plant!
 - Roots=legs; stem=abdomen; seed=feet; leaf=shoulder; flower=arm; fruit=hand
- Soil Kitchen (5 min)
 - What are the ingredients for soil? Students name them, we add "materials" (dirt, rocks, fake bugs, leaves, sticks...) to my cooking pot. Kids help me mix it. (Be really dramatic with this activity). Why isn't it soil yet? What's the missing ingredient? TIME!!!!
 - Point: it takes a long time to create topsoil (100 years per inch!). What happens to ecology when topsoil is removed? What happened to Dry Creek? How can we help soil form again?
- Plant wildflower seeds in nursery (10 min)

11:45-12:15 Lunch, word search, activities....

12:15 Go home ☺

PUBLICITY & OUTREACH EXAMPLES

(in chronological order)



Sequoia Riverlands Trust
Conserving California's Heartland

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

January 24, 2009

Contact: Niki Woodard, Communications Coordinator 559.738.0211 x 108

Winter bird walk led by Audubon, Dry Creek Preserve, native plant sale *Discover which birds visit the Lake Kaweah region during the winter months*

When: Saturday, January 24, 8:30 a.m. through the afternoon (see below for details)

What: Sequoia Riverlands Trust joins up with the Tulare County Audubon Society for an exciting and informative day of bird watching in the area of Lake Kaweah and Dry Creek. And, don't forget your wallet – the native plant nursery will be open at Dry Creek Preserve from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Why: Whether you're a seasoned birder or eager to know more about those familiar feathered aviators, this is a must-do event. Not only will you catch a glimpse of the diversity of spectacular winter birds in the Lake Kaweah area such as Lewis's Woodpecker, the Bald Eagle, Wood Duck, Goldeneye, Rock and Canyon Wren and American Dipper, but also you will have a unique opportunity to explore Sequoia Riverlands Trust's Dry Creek Preserve, a beautiful and rare sycamore alluvial woodland that was once a granite quarry. AND, stop by the native plant nursery at Dry Creek Preserve before the tour to fill your home's garden with native perennials, grasses, trees and shrubs that thrive in our region. The nursery will be open from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Who: John Lockhart, Field Trip Coordinator of the Tulare County Audubon Society will lead birders on the walk.

Where:

7:15 a.m. – Meet in the Sears parking lot (on the south side of the building) located at the corner of Mooney and Caldwell in Visalia

7:30 a.m. – Leave for Lake Kaweah

8:30 a.m. – Arrive to Lake Kaweah (meeting spot at the upper Marina)

12:00 p.m. (approximately) – Lunch at Horse Creek campground (bring a sack lunch)

1:30 p.m. – Meet at Dry Creek Preserve (if traveling directly there from Visalia, go east on Highway 198 to Highway 216. Follow Highway 216 west toward Woodlake one-half mile and turn right on Dry Creek Road. The preserve is located two miles down on your right).

Bring: Water, bird book (optional), binoculars and a friend. Warm clothes and rain gear recommended; wear sturdy shoes, sunglasses and a hat. Please, no dogs.

About Dry Creek Preserve: Since California Portland Cement Company donated this 152-acre quarry north of Lemon Cove in 2004, Sequoia Riverlands Trust has been restoring natural stream flows, re-contouring disturbed areas, seeding native grasses and planting oak and sycamore trees. Once accomplished, this project will provide the first example of an ecologically-based aggregate mine reclamation in Tulare County. The preserve offers a place to enjoy natural river environments

while learning how retired gravel mines can again provide wildlife habitat, scenic beauty and an opportunity for community stewardship.

About Sequoia Riverlands Trust: Sequoia Riverlands Trust is a 501(c)(3) community-based, non-profit dedicated to conserving the natural and agricultural legacy of the southern Sierra Nevada and San Joaquin Valley.

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Sequoia Riverlands Trust
Conserving California's Heartland

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

February 17, 2009

Contact: Niki Woodard, Communications Coordinator, 559.738.0211 ext. 108

“An Artful Salutation to Spring”

Merging the beauty of art and the splendor of the great outdoors

When: Sunday, March 22, 10 a.m.– 3p.m. at Battle Mountain Ranch in Springville

AND/OR...

Monday, March 23, 10 a.m.– 3 p.m. at Homer Ranch in Lemon Cove.

What: An elite group of fine artists from the historic California Art Club is bringing its talent and paintbrushes to the Southern San Joaquin Valley in order to paint the vibrant spring beauty of several Sequoia Riverlands Trust conservation properties “*en plein air*.”

En plein air is a French term that literally means “in the open air,” but is generally regarded as the act of painting outdoors. French Impressionist painters such as Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro, and Pierre-Auguste Renoir advocated *en plein air* painting and did much of their work outdoors by the natural light of the early morning and late afternoon sun.

Sequoia Riverlands Trust is pleased to offer the public the unique experience of observing renowned artists from all over California at work *en plein air* on Sunday, March 22, and Monday, March 23. The ticket price of \$75 includes:

- The rare opportunity to observe painters capturing the spring landscape’s luster and the artistic process of emergent spring itself
- A *plein air* art lecture given by a California Art Club artist
- A guided nature walk with Rob Hansen, local biologist, College of the Sequoias biology instructor, and Sequoia Riverlands Trust board member, on conservation properties typically closed to the public
- An excuse to have an unhurried picnic among a rainbow of stunning California wildflowers

For tickets, call Sequoia Riverlands Trust at 559-738-0211, ext. 100.

Where: Battle Mountain Ranch in Springville and Homer Ranch in Lemon Cove. Driving directions will be provided upon ticket purchase.

Cost: \$75 per person per day.

Support Sequoia Riverlands Trust’s ongoing efforts to conserve the natural beauty and rich agricultural legacy of our region.

About Sequoia Riverlands Trust: Sequoia Riverlands Trust is a 501(c)(3) community-based, non-profit dedicated to conserving the natural and agricultural legacy of the southern Sierra Nevada and San Joaquin Valley. For more information, please visit www.sequoiariverlands.org.

About the California Art Club: The California Art Club's primary purposes are to promote the traditional fine arts in the fields of painting, drawing and sculpture, with a special emphasis placed on the academic traditions and craftsmanship established by the founders of the organization; to produce and promote art exhibits that foster understanding and interpretation of the traditional art heritage; and to furnish educational opportunities in the fine arts. For more information, please visit www.californiaartclub.org.

####

Jenna Stafford
Homer Ranch
Community Service
Mr. Kamansky

The Homer Ranch is more than just home to one of the last remaining sycamore alluvial woodlands; it is home to the small, seemingly harmless Western Pond Turtles. These turtles were found from Klickitat County, Washington all the way down to Baja California, Mexico, yet in the San Joaquin Valley, the population of this species is declining due to urbanization, and predation of baby turtles by the non-native bullfrogs. Homer Ranch provides a place for these turtles to live and reproduce without the dangers of urban life. The Homer Ranch provides gentle streams and lush seasonal wetlands where these Western Pond Turtles can take cover in undercut banks, submerged vegetation, rocks, logs, and mud banks. These hiding places allow cover from harsh weather and predators. The water at Homer Ranch also provides a place for these pond turtles to thermoregulate their body temperature and eat their food, which can only be done underwater. Pond turtles eat aquatic plants such as algae, yellow pond lily fronds, willow and alder catkins, inflorescences, tule, and cattail roots. Western Pond Turtles are omnivores so they also prey on carcasses of mammals such as bird, reptiles, amphibians and fish species. They also eat larval aquatic insects, terrestrial grasshoppers and aerial flies off of the water's surface, beetles, fish, worms, and crustaceans. These small, seemingly harmless turtles have a large appetite! While eating takes place underwater, pond turtles use land for coverings under leaves during hibernation seasons. It's important for turtles to have a healthy environment where there is plenty of slow moving water, and plenty of cover around for them to survive and continue to prosper. They are fascinating creatures with classic, adorable features. They can be found at Homer Ranch. Who wouldn't love to see a native turtle?

<http://www.atlantismagazine.com/bettelheim/pondturtle.html>

6/22/10

Dear Neighbor,

As you probably know we hosted an outreach event on June 10th to address concerns from neighboring properties regarding the opening of Dry Creek Preserve during daylight hours as a public access park.

We developed this list regarding the questions/ concerns about the opening.

1. Q: What hours would the public be allowed to be on Dry Creek Preserve?

A: Tentative hours of operation will be an hour after sunrise to an hour before sunset at Dry Creek Preserve and limited access at Homer (access at Homer is still tentative but we are anticipating Homer Ranch having public access in the Winter, Spring and Fall months and by appointment only throughout the summer.

2. Q: As the neighborhood currently keeps a close eye on everything, how will neighbors know when gathering is legit?

A: We will try to establish some kind of schedule / routine of use so the neighbors can be informed and help keep an eye out when something out-of-the-ordinary is happening. Additionally we will try to communicate with the neighbors about what's going on, who is supposed to be out at the preserve (especially Homer Ranch), when special events are happening, etc. (Concerned neighbors are encouraged to sign up for SRT's newsletter which will give them early access to what is happening at DCP.)

3. Q: How will the preserve be monitored for unwanted activities (poaching, and gang activity, etc)?

A: Dry Creek Preserve will have a live-in caretaker whose residence is near the entrance to Dry Creek Preserve. We also hope to bulk up staff and volunteers at the Native Plant Nursery. We anticipate adding a caretaker and nursery staff at Dry Creek Preserve will help deter unsavory activities along Dry Creek. Additionally over the past 6 years of SRT planning the use of Dry Creek and Homer, our surveillance of the property has been limited because of infrequent and irregular access. We are hoping the exposure of consistent hikers, school groups, bird watchers, etc will lessen the chances of people doing something they don't want to be caught doing. i.e. more eyes on the area with on-site caretaker and other staff and volunteers; more people around doing wholesome stuff.

The possibility of security cameras was brought up during the meeting. Although we do not have funding to enlist this measure at this time- we feel the caretakers quarters on site will improve the security and there is a possibility we could establish some sort of mock or temporary security camera system to deter unwanted activities.

4. Q: Will the caretaker be present 24/7?

A: It depends on the caretaker. If not- we can try to establish a volunteer preserve ranger corps to help greet visitors and patrol during times when the site isn't covered by the caretaker and nursery staff (also- even if the caretaker is off-premises for an amount of time- people on the preserve don't KNOW that the caretaker is not there which would hopefully deter some deviance)

5. Q: What will you be doing to deter trespassing on other neighbor's properties?

A: SRT will provide good boundary fencing and signage, (both already included in state grant money) especially along Dry Creek Drive

6. Q: Due to proximity there is poor response time by law enforcement, so the informal "neighborhood watch" effort is that much more important. How does SRT plan on helping this cause?

A: When considering who to bring on as a caretaker, neighborhood involvement will be considered as a highly important factor. The Caretaker can help with the neighborhood watch effort. SRT also plans on setting up meetings with DCP's local law enforcement to find out what we can do to help prevent problems on or near the properties.

7. Q: There are many dangers in the area, and emergency response time is limited by proximity. How will SRT keep visitors safe?

A: SRT will be establishing safety signs and other info -- fire hazards, rattlesnakes, feral pigs, creek crossings, etc. In addition, SRT realizes the very real risk of fire hazards in the hot summer months. The perimeter of the parking lot will be surrounded by boulders and a cable gate will be put up to keep unwanted vehicles off the access roads. (All of the above is funded by grant money). We will also be enlisting the help of inmate crews from Woodlake fire station (Don Tashima, Cal Fire) to establish a firebreak along Dry Creek Drive for both preserves and the help of local boy scouts to produce fire safety signage to put near the park entry way.

8. Q: Would you consider guided access only -- e.g. school field trips, bird walks, guided horseback rides?

A: Much of our funding for Dry Creek and Homer is contingent on opening the preserves to the public. That being said- we have been trying to communicate with the state that because of the nature of the sites, limiting public access somewhat-- especially on our Homer Ranch -- is important to both visitor safety and the community's safety. We anticipate Dry Creek Preserve's access to be an hour after sunrise until an hour before sunset (as mentioned in Q/A number one.) and that we hold off on opening up Homer Ranch's public access and limit it for the time being to guided tours, field trips, or scheduled groups (like bird watchers, scouts, equestrians, etc.)

9. Q: Have you thought about having hosted field trips from local schools?

A: YES! In addition to our state grants we also have grant money to start making connections to area educators and other stakeholders. Laura Childers, our Education and Volunteer Director has organized some stargazing events, bird watching, and service learning projects that have hosted up to 40 guests at a time! She is busy lining up school projects and field trips during the 2010-2011 school year and will be leading the water testing on July 2nd that will be held after the Family dinner. (See attached invitation for more details.)

We would like to thank you for your continued support of Dry Creek Preserve. Because you are a part of the community we know you have a vested interest in DCP that goes beyond that of the average preserve visitor. We are looking forward to establishing ourselves to you as a benefit to the area through restoration, education, and community involvement and a benefit to those outside the Dry Creek community by giving them the opportunity to experience the beauty and intrigues the area has to offer in a safe, exciting and informative manner.



Sequoia Riverlands Trust
Conserving California's Heartland

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

May 19, 2010

Press contact: Niki Woodard, Communications Director, 559.738.0211, ext. 108

Family Nature Evening and BBQ at Dry Creek

When: Friday, July 2, from 5:30pm to 8:00pm.

What: Kick off your Fourth of July weekend with a patriotic donation to land conservation, and enjoy a BBQ hot dog dinner with us. Please join Sequoia Riverlands Trust for a fun, family-friendly, educational summer evening and BBQ by the river at Dry Creek Preserve.

For your donation (**\$10 for SRT members, \$15 for non-members**, become a member that day and attend the event for free), you will get to enjoy a hot dog/veggie dog dinner beneath the shade of the rare sycamore alluvial woodland along Dry Creek.

This will be a great event for the whole family. After dinner, take a short guided nature walk around the preserve. Also, go check out **macroinvertebrates** in the Dry Creek pond (formerly a gravel mining pit). Kids and adults alike will enjoy examining a dynamic water ecosystem under microscopes.

Also, attendees will get a sneak preview of exciting public access plans for the preserve.

For all of you **photographers** out there who are planning to submit photos to our photo contest, this will be a great opportunity to get onto an SRT preserve, typically closed to the public. It will also be a good chance to take pictures of the all-too-often underestimated beauty of the valley summer landscape, as well as a chance to take pictures of families enjoying nature.

Please bring a chair and/or blanket to sit on (beware of foxtails), sunscreen, insect repellent, water/beverages, and comfortable shoes.

Where: Dry Creek Preserve is located on Dry Creek Road, near Woodlake and Lemon Cove. From Visalia, travel east on Highway 198 to Highway 216 (about 17 miles). Follow Highway west toward Woodlake one-half mile and turn right (north) on Dry Creek Road. The preserve is located two miles down on your right.

Sequoia Riverlands Trust is a 501(c)(3) regional non-profit dedicated to conserving the natural and agricultural legacy of the southern Sierra Nevada and San Joaquin Valley. For more information on Sequoia Riverlands Trust, visit www.sequoiariverlands.org.



Sequoia Riverlands Trust
Conserving California's Heartland

**Join us for a fun,
family-friendly
BBQ by the river**

We'd like to invite you and your friends/family to enjoy a summer BBQ picnic by the river at Dry Creek Preserve.

When: Friday, July 2, from 5:30pm to 8:00pm

What: Kick off your 4th of July weekend with some patriotic support for regional land conservation. We'll provide the hot dogs (and veggie dogs), potato salad and cookies. After dinner, we'll be taking folks out on a short guided nature walk around the preserve. Kids and adults alike will enjoy making a trip up to the Dry Creek pond (formerly a gravel mining pit) to learn about macroinvertebrates and check out the dynamic underwater ecosystem under microscopes. We will also be discussing upcoming visitor access plans.

Donations of \$10 for SRT members and \$15 for nonmembers are requested. Please bring a chair and/or blanket to sit on, sunscreen, insect repellent, water/beverages (sorry, no alcohol), and comfortable shoes.

Please RSVP the number of people in your group: niki@sequoiariverlands.org

Special thanks and recognition to California River Parkways and the Sierra Nevada Conservancy for their generous grant support to implement visitor access plans at Dry Creek and Homer Ranch.



Sequoia Riverlands Trust
Conserving California's Heartland

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

July 21, 2010

Press contact: Niki Woodard, Communications Director, 559.738.0211, ext. 108

Dragonfly Photography Workshop at Dry Creek Preserve

When: Saturday, August 7, 2010, 7:30am – 9:30am

What: Get up close and personal with Dry Creek Preserve's active population of ornate *odonatas* (otherwise known as dragonflies and damselflies). It's prime feeding time for these colorful and highly photogenic winged creatures. Local photographer, John Greening, will guide you through a casual workshop on how to capture cool close-ups of feeding dragonflies and other small critters and winged beauties that you might find at the preserve. Make sure you bring your macro and telephoto camera lenses.

If you are planning to submit photos to SRT's *photo contest*, this will be a great opportunity to take some really vibrant close-up photos of summer life in the Valley on an SRT preserve that is typically closed to the public. To get more details on SRT's photography contest, please email photocontest@sequoiariverlands.org.

Please bring: macro and telephoto camera lenses, sunscreen, a hat, insect repellent, water and comfortable shoes.

Take note: you will have to cross Dry Creek, which is approximately 1 foot deep and 5 yards across. You can opt to remove shoes and walk across, wear hiking sandals or wear waterproof hiking shoes. There is a half mile walk from the parking lot to the photography site at the Dry Creek pond. If you are late, follow the signs. Be advised that the area around the pond is a bit rocky (afterall, this was a gravel mine) and uneven.

RSVP to: niki@sequoiariverlands.org or 559-738-0211, ext. 108.

Cost: \$10 for SRT members, \$15 for non-members (become a member that day and attend the event for free).

Where: Dry Creek Preserve is located on Dry Creek Road, near Woodlake and Lemon Cove. From Visalia, travel east on Highway 198 to Highway 216 (about 17 miles). Follow Highway west toward Woodlake one-half mile and turn right (north) on Dry Creek Road. The preserve is located two miles down on your right.

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Visitor Access and Amenities at Dry Creek Preserve & Homer Ranch

Purpose:

Sequoia Riverlands Trust wants to invite people to enjoy nature and outdoor learning at two private nature preserves on Dry Creek Drive north of Lemon Cove. We want to do it in ways that are respectful of neighboring land uses, and compatible with conservation objectives.

Funding in Hand for Visitor Amenities and Education Program Planning:

\$275,087-- California River Parkways grant (Proposition 50) for visitor facilities at Dry Creek Preserve

\$39,692-- California River Parkways grant (Proposition 50) for visitor facilities at Homer Ranch

\$45,750-- Sierra Nevada Conservancy grant (Proposition 84) for visitor use planning at Homer Ranch, and education program development and production of a visitor guide for the combined Dry Creek and Homer Ranch sites

\$360,529 -- Total Funding in Hand

Estimated Total Cost to Open Dry Creek Preserve & Homer Ranch: \$475,000

Anticipated Uses at Both Preserves:

- Nature-oriented, low intensity recreation – e.g. hiking, bird watching, horseback riding
- Outdoor education

Visitor Amenities Currently Planned for Dry Creek Preserve (13 acres of this 152-acre restored gravel mine):

- Gravel parking lot with bike racks
- Picnic area and native plant demonstration garden
- Restrooms
- Trails – including existing loop road and wheelchair friendly trails in the picnic area and to access a floodplain viewing area
- Elevated observation "deck" at the edge of the bluff overlooking Dry Creek and beyond
- Gateway pavilion with orientation and interpretive signs
- Additional interpretive signs – to tell the rich story of land use choices, collaborative restoration, area ecology, and the unique Dry Creek/Kaweah watershed.
- Residence for caretaker to oversee both Dry Creek Preserve and Homer Ranch (considered essential for providing visitor access)

Visitor Amenities Currently Planned for Homer Ranch (27 acres of this 1,819-acre working cattle ranch):

- Gravel parking
- Trails along Dry Creek
- Informal picnic area along the loop trail
- Orientation and interpretive signs
- Plus a bi-lingual visitor guide (trail map, educational info).

Partnerships to Date:

California Portland Cement Co.
Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District
Southern California Edison
Redwood High School
Golden West High School
Cal Poly Pomona, Studio 606
UC Berkeley
UC Davis
Eagle Scouts
CSET (Community Services Employment Training)
Sequoia and Kings National Parks
California Natural Resource Agency
California River Parkway Program (Prop 50)
Sierra Nevada Conservancy (Prop 84)
The Nature Conservancy
National Resources Conservation Service
Resources Legacy Fund Foundation
Coleman Kennedy
Jim Allen, P.E.
Wood Industries
L.E. Cook Nursery
Lowe's Home Improvement Warehouse
Sequoia Riverlands Trust members
Individual volunteers

In-Kind Wish List:

- Grading / compacting /excavation - parking areas, new trails and building sites, leach lines, buried utility lines (approximately 2 acres)
- Gravel / rock to surface one-acre parking area
- Road base for wheelchair-friendly trail surfacing
- Perimeter rock placement around the parking area (boulders available from hard rock pit on site)
- Cement / concrete for constructing gateway pavilion and other structures
- Fence materials and construction
- Water testing
- Well / water system expertise
- Pressure tank and backflow preventers to adapt existing well for potable water supply
- Plumbing time for restroom hookups
- Septic tank
- Auger time (prep for tree plantings)
- Welding service for gate repairs
- ***Anything having to do with building a caretaker's quarters!***
- And more...



Sequoia Riverlands Trust
Conserving California's Heartland

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

December 23, 2010

Contact: Niki Woodard, Communications Director, 559-303-8903, niki@sequoiariverlands.org

SRT is Planning Three Great Events to Kick off the New Year:
Bird counting, reptile shows and lichen tours

Kaweah Christmas (New Year's Day) Bird Count

Help Sequoia Riverlands Trust and Tulare County Audubon Society count winter birds at Kaweah Oaks Preserve and beyond...

When: Saturday, January 1, 2011, 7:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. (or portions thereof). Meet at the Kaweah Oaks Preserve gate at 7:00 a.m. and choose to participate all day or for a few hours. If you would like to start later in the day, call Rob Hansen at 559.799.7181 for a meeting place.

What: Participate in the *National Audubon Society's annual Christmas Bird Count*, conducted across the country from Dec. 14, 2010 – Jan. 5, 2011. Join us for the Kaweah portion of the bird count on Jan. 1 and take part in "Citizen Science" as we find, watch, record and photograph common friends and rare visitors in our own backyard. At least one experienced birder is assigned to each crew; beginners are welcome! Most crews see 30-50 species during the day. [Read this article](#) for more information about the National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count and the role "Citizen Science" has played in helping to document the impact of climate change on birds.

Who: Rob Hansen, local biologist, College of the Sequoias biology instructor, Sequoia Riverlands Trust board member and member of the National Audubon Society, coordinates this bird count (along with Tulare County Audubon's John Lockhart) for beginning and experienced birders on behalf of the National Audubon Society.

Where: Begin at Kaweah Oaks Preserve, located on Road 182, approximately seven miles east of downtown Visalia via Highway 198. Drive north on Road 182 one-half mile. Meet in the parking lot on the west side of the road. Once the group assembles, smaller groups set out to cover portions of the 15-mile diameter area for this count, including Kaweah Oaks Preserve, Kaweah Reservoir (up to Slick Rock), Exeter, Woodlake, Lemon Cove, Lindcove and a portion of Yokohl Valley. At 5:00 p.m., crews meet at Todd's Pizza Factory in Woodlake to tally the day's results.

Donation: \$5.00 donation per person for the National Audubon Society to offset the cost of compiling and publishing the results of the winter bird count.

Bring: Water, lunch/snacks, layered clothing, sunscreen, hat, bird identification book, binoculars and/or a camera and a friend.

Reptile Show and Volunteer Work Day

Fun for the whole family!

When: January 8, 2011 - Reptile show is from 2:00 - 3:30pm and volunteer work day precedes it, 11:30-1:30.

What: E & M's Reptile Family will be performing their famed reptile show at Kaweah Oaks Preserve on Saturday, January 8. This will be a great event for the whole family! There's no better way to conquer your fears of reptiles than to touch one. Visit their website to learn more. <http://www.emreptilefamily.com/>

Who: Eric, who will be giving the presentation, began his career as a simple reptile enthusiast. However, when he kept running across domesticated reptiles that had been abandoned by their owners, he couldn't help but adopt some of them... then more of them... and soon he found himself caring for a large number of scaly friends. That's when he and his wife decided to start E & M's Reptile Family. Their mission is to educate the public about reptiles.

Where: Kaweah Oaks Preserve. Located on Road 182, approximately seven miles east of downtown Visalia via Highway 198. Drive north on Road 182 one-half mile. Park on the west side of the road; walk past the gate to enter and meet in the picnic area.

Donation: \$10 for Sequoia Riverlands Trust members; \$15 non-members. Become a member that day and attend the program for free. Memberships start at \$35 for an individual or \$50 for a family.

Join us before the reptile show for a volunteer work day. We will be doing restoration work at KOP. People should bring a filled water bottle and work gloves. Wear work clothes and water-resistant shoes, preferably boots. The work day is rain or shine.

Lichen Tour and Volunteer Work Day

When: Saturday, February 5, 10am - 1pm (*Please note change of date*)

What: Take a tour of Homer Ranch's vibrant lichen community. Find out about its history, why it grows, how it reproduces, how long it lives, what it eats and much, much more.

Who: Hans Konrad, who has been surveying lichen in the region, will be giving this insightful tour of the colorful fungal growth.

Where: Homer Ranch, located on Dry Creek Drive, north of Lemon Cove. From Visalia, travel east on Highway 198 to Highway 216 (about 17 miles, don't take the Lovers Lane exit). Follow Highway 216 west toward Woodlake one-half mile and turn right (north) on Dry Creek Dr. The preserve is located five miles down on your right.

Donation: \$10 for Sequoia Riverlands Trust members; \$15 non-members. Become a member that day and attend the program for free. Memberships start at \$35 for an individual or \$50 for a family.

Join us before the reptile show for a volunteer work day. We will be doing restoration work at Homer Ranch. People should bring a filled water bottle and work gloves. Wear work clothes and water-resistant shoes, preferably boots. The work day is rain or shine.

About Sequoia Riverlands Trust: Sequoia Riverlands Trust (SRT) is a regional, non-profit land trust dedicated to conserving the natural and agricultural legacy of the southern Sierra Nevada and San Joaquin Valley. Our mission is to protect working landscapes, wildlife habitat and scenic open spaces, while ensuring that economic growth in our communities remains vibrant and sustainable.



Sequoia Riverlands Trust
Conserving California's Heartland

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

March 23, 2011

Contact: Niki Woodard, Communications Director, 559.738.0211 x 108

Spring stargazing party at Dry Creek Preserve *Join local astronomers for a "star-studded" tour of the great night sky*

When: Saturday, March 26, 2011, 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

What: A stargazing event at Sequoia Riverlands Trust's Dry Creek Preserve

Why: Before the summer heat scares you inside, take time now to enjoy the outdoors as much as you can. Get outside, feel the ground beneath you, the air around you and the immense sky above you. Join us this Saturday to learn about the skyscape -- from stars, planets and constellations to the Milky Way, nebulas and super novas. Several large telescopes will be on hand, and avid astronomers from the Tulare Astronomical Association will answer your questions about the universe and distant galaxies. ***If the weather is considered to be too overcast to view the stars, then the event will be cancelled.***

Where: Dry Creek Preserve, located near Lemon Cove. From Visalia, travel east on Highway 198 to Highway 216 (about 17 miles). Follow Highway 216 west toward Woodlake one-half mile and turn right (north) on Dry Creek Road. The preserve is located two miles down on your right.

Bring: Water, layered clothes, insect repellent, blankets or lawn chairs and a friend. If you have a telescope, binoculars or star chart, bring those as well. Please, no dogs.

Special notes:

- 1) If you are late to the event, please park your vehicle on the roadside, outside the gate and walk in. This helps other participants keep their night vision by avoiding your headlights.
- 2) Because white light from flashlights makes it harder to see the night sky, use only red-lamped flashlights, or retrofit your regular flashlight using red cellophane and a rubber band.
- 3) If you have a new telescope that you'd like to bring, please do a trial run at home to make sure you know how to properly operate your equipment.

Donation request: \$10 Sequoia Riverlands Trust members; \$15 non-members. Join that day and attend the program for free. Memberships start at \$35 for an individual or \$50 for a family.

About Dry Creek Preserve: Since California Portland Cement Company donated this 152-acre quarry north of Lemon Cove in 2004, Sequoia Riverlands Trust has been restoring natural stream flows, re-contouring disturbed areas, seeding native grasses and planting oak and sycamore trees. As of December 2009, this preserve is the first example of an ecologically-based aggregate mine reclamation in Tulare County. SRT will be opening the preserve for year-round public enjoyment in late spring of 2011. The preserve serve the community as a place to

enjoy natural river environments while learning how retired gravel mines can again provide wildlife habitat, scenic beauty and an opportunity for community stewardship.

About Sequoia Riverlands Trust: Sequoia Riverlands Trust is a 501(c)(3) regional non-profit dedicated to conserving the natural and agricultural legacy of the southern Sierra Nevada and San Joaquin Valley.

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Sequoia Riverlands Trust
Conserving California's Heartland

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
April 5, 2011

Contact: Niki Woodard, Communications Director, 559-738-0211, ext. 108,
niki@sequoiariverlands.org

Sequoia Riverlands Trust's Trail Blazing Bonanza at Homer Ranch Preserve

What: Trail Blazing Bonanza Volunteer Event

Where: Homer Ranch Preserve. From Visalia, drive East on Hwy 198 towards Lemon Cove (about 17 miles). Turn left on Lomitas Dr. (Hwy 216) and right on Dry Creek Dr. Homer Ranch is about 6 miles up the road on the right.

When: Sat., April 16, 2011, from 12:30pm – 6:30pm

Join Sequoia Riverlands Trust and other committed community members for a fun-filled day of trail building on Saturday, April 16, 2011. This volunteer event will be held at Homer Ranch Preserve, a beautiful 1,800 acre nature preserve located 20 miles east of Visalia between Lemon Cove and Badger. Volunteers will work together to build a hiking trail that will allow the public to stroll along the stunning sycamore-flanked Dry Creek, an important, north-south water channel that provides critical habitat for migrating species. Opening at the end of May 2011, the preserve will be an excellent destination for community members to observe wildlife and bird species, as well as the beauty of the changing seasons in our southern Sierra Nevada foothill community.

The day's activities will proceed as follows:

| | |
|------------|---------------------------------------|
| 12:30 p.m. | Volunteer registration |
| 1:00 p.m. | Volunteer informational & safety talk |
| 1:30 p.m. | Trail blazing & volunteer work |
| 5:00 p.m. | BBQ dinner |
| 5:30 p.m. | Owl presentation by Burleigh Lockwood |

Volunteers are encouraged to register for the event ahead of time. **RSVP by April 11th for a free dinner.** RSVP to Laura at 559-738-0211, ext. 103 or by email at laura@sequoiariverlands.org.

Volunteers should wear long pants, sturdy shoes or boots, and wear sunscreen and/or bring a wide-brimmed hat. They should bring a re-usable water bottle and chair to sit in for the dinner.

After a hard day's work, volunteers will enjoy a BBQ dinner and a free presentation by Fresno Chaffee Zoo's **Burleigh Lockwood**, "the bat lady." Lockwood will teach us all about the owls

that inhabit the San Joaquin Valley and foothills.

About Homer Ranch Preserve: Homer Ranch is an 1,800-acre ranch that extends east out of the Dry Creek valley and up into the southern Sierra foothills. In the spring, Homer Ranch is one of the most picturesque destinations for wildflower viewing in all of California. The preserve is also home to one of the healthiest and largest stands of sycamore alluvial woodlands in the world.

The property has a long history of grazing and continues to be grazed with consideration for the diverse native plant community that benefits a number of native wildlife species. Well-managed livestock operations mimic the grazing patterns of the elk and antelope that once roamed our southern Sierra foothills.

About Sequoia Riverlands Trust: Sequoia Riverlands Trust (SRT) is a regional, non-profit land trust dedicated to conserving the natural and agricultural legacy of the southern Sierra Nevada and San Joaquin Valley. Our mission is to protect working landscapes, wildlife habitat and scenic open spaces, while ensuring that economic growth in our communities remains vibrant and sustainable. www.sequoiariverlands.org.

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4/19/10 SRT blog

Sequoia Riverlands Trust Volunteer Trailblazing Bonanza

On Saturday, April 16, a group of about 120 volunteers donated their time and muscle to complete a scenic hiking trail at the Homer Ranch Preserve, outside Lemon Cove.

The event truly was a trailblazing bonanza, with diverse members of the community coming out to support the final touches on a new nature preserve that Sequoia Riverlands Trust (SRT) will be opening to the public on May 21, along with Dry Creek Preserve just down the road. SRT also owns and manages Kaweah Oaks Preserve.

The trailblazing event brought together groups of volunteers from the local business community—Southern California Edison and Kawneer—as well as student groups from CSET, Redwood High School's Pro/Youth HEART program and COS Upward Bound, in addition to other committed volunteers from the community.

In two and a half hours, the volunteers accomplished an incredible amount of work. They scraped clean about 2/3 of a mile of trail that loops along Dry Creek and through the sycamore alluvial woodland.

At eighty degrees, it was a warm spring day for laboring in the sun, but the group remained dedicated and upbeat. Satisfied with a hard day's work, the trailblazers enjoyed a BBQ dinner in at the preserve, provided by Southern California Edison.

Laura Childers, Education and Volunteer Director for Sequoia Riverlands Trust, remarked, "This is the largest volunteer event we've ever organized. It's so neat to see so much community support for this important project." She went on to say that these "volunteer events are all about getting the community to invest in the stewardship of the land."

In addition to the food supplies contributed by Southern California Edison, Kawneer also contributed above and beyond the hard work that they put into the trails. Kawneer, as part of the parent group Alcoa, encourages partnerships with local nonprofits by contributing donations for employee volunteer work. All told, Kawneer's twelve employees will bring in about \$1500 to SRT's conservation efforts.



Sequoia Riverlands Trust
Conserving California's Heartland

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Press Release
February 28, 2012

Contact:
Kelly Ryan
559-738-0211 ext. 105
kelly@sequoiariverlands.org

Visalia Preserve to open to public

Visalia, CA –

Sequoia Riverlands Trust has announced that Dry Creek Preserve will be open on a daily basis beginning Thursday, March 1, the first time it's been open for daily use by the public since it was acquired by SRT in 2004. Visitors can stroll the Preserve from dawn to dusk while taking in one of a kind views and rare sycamores. This former gravel quarry is now fully restored and is the first example of an ecologically based aggregate mine reclamation in Tulare County. Its 152 acres is also home to SRT's native plant nursery. Dry Creek has some ecological treasures as well. It has rare sycamore alluvial woodland found in just 17 stands across central California and ranked third in size and health of all the remaining stands.

In 2004, California Portland Cement Company ended their Dry Creek gravel operations and donated the property to SRT. Twelve years of gravel mining operations significantly altered the Dry Creek streambed and resulted in the felling of numerous mature sycamores and valley oaks. Since 2004, SRT has partnered with community members, educational institutions and other conservation organizations to re-establish natural stream patterns and restore the land's woodland vegetation with hundreds of oak and sycamore plantings and native grasses. Now, the Dry Creek Preserve once again provides critical habitat for an ever-increasing population of resident and migratory birds and supports native species such as the great blue heron, bald eagle and herds of mule deer. The preserve also has a stunning wildflower show every spring. SRT encourages everyone to come out and see this spectacular natural wonder that has been brought back to life!

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About Sequoia Riverlands Trust

Sequoia Riverlands Trust (SRT) is a regional, non-profit Central California land trust dedicated to conserving the natural and agricultural legacy of the southern Sierra Nevada and San Joaquin Valley. The wealth, productivity and beauty of this land inspire our work to conserve it for the prosperity and enjoyment of future generations. Our mission is to protect working landscapes, wildlife habitat and scenic open spaces, while ensuring that economic growth in our communities remains vibrant and sustainable. For more information, visit Sequoia Riverlands Trust online at <http://www.sequoiariverlands.org>, on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Sequoia-Riverlands-Trust/68408628311>, and Twitter at @riverlandstrust.

Excerpt from 2/29/12 Central Valley Afterschool Foundation e-Newsletter:

Afterschool briefs

Another Great Outdoor Education Resource

After receiving our January newsletter, Sequoia Riverlands Trust (SRT) contacted us about an outdoor education resource we overlooked in our region. Sequoia Riverlands Trust, a Visalia nonprofit, is providing teachers and students the opportunity to shake things up and enjoy the great outdoors just minutes from their school site. Students get to breathe in fresh air, bask in the sunlight, and take in gorgeous natural scenery—all while learning valuable lessons in Life Sciences.

Two of SRT's nature preserves—Kaweah Oaks Preserve and Dry Creek Preserve—are currently open for school field trips and volunteer projects. Kaweah Oaks Preserve offers students the chance to take a hike through the woods, spot local wildlife, do scavenger hunts, learn about bugs, and much more. Students visiting Dry Creek Preserve get to explore the blue oak savannah, do fun river activities, and see terrific views of the Sierra foothills.

Older students, grade 7 - 12, volunteer with SRT and help care for the nature preserves. These students enjoy hands-on activities, such as planting native plants, building trails, and testing water for pollution. Not only do they help the environment, they also learn about applied sciences and careers in the field of natural resource management.

Sequoia Riverlands Trust is eager to increase participation in its education program. To sign up, contact the Education & Volunteer Director, Laura Childers, at 559-738-0211 x103 or laura@sequoiariverlands.org. Teachers may visit www.sequoiariverlands.org to learn more about field trip and service learning opportunities.

March 2012 SRT Blog announcing opening of the Dry Creek Preserve for daily use --

Preserve ready for visitors: Dry Creek opens to public!



Dry Creek Preserve is now open to the public on a regular basis and it's fun to learn a little about this amazing location and transformation. This former gravel quarry is now fully restored and is the first example of an ecologically based aggregate mine reclamation in Tulare County. Its 152 acres is also home to SRT's native plant nursery. Dry Creek has some ecological treasures as well. It has rare sycamore alluvial woodland found in just 17 stands across central California and ranked third in size and health of all the remaining stands.

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