



Forrestal Nature Preserve Annual Report



Prepared By:
Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy
916 Silver Spur Road #108
Rolling Hills Estates, CA 90274

Prepared For:
The City of Rancho Palos Verdes
30940 Hawthorne Blvd
Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90275



May 2004

Introduction

Since June 2001, the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy (Conservancy) has served as the management agency for the Forrestal Nature Preserve (FNP) for the City of Rancho Palos Verdes (RPV). The Management Agreement with the City requires that:

The Conservancy shall prepare annual reports setting forth the uses made of the property during the preceding year, in particular, addressing progress made toward implementation of the Plan, plans for future uses and improvements, and other pertinent data establishing its continuous use and operation of the Premises for the purposes designated in this Agreement.

This report satisfies that requirement. It is a summary of what has been accomplished since May 2003, the date of the previous annual report.



Forrestal Management Plan

Working with the Forrestal Steering Committee (FSC), the primary focus of the Conservancy's efforts has been the completion of the Forrestal Management Plan (FMP). The FSC consists of community members who represent different groups that use the preserve on a frequent basis. These steering committee members include local homeowners' association representative, an equestrian representative, a natural resource/habitat representative, and a trail expert. RPV staff and Conservancy personnel are also represented on the FSC.



The FMP will be the guiding document with respect to future decisions regarding the management of the preserve. With this document yet to be finalized, the FSC agreed to meet every two weeks until its completion. Revisions to each section of the plan have been reviewed and agreed upon by the committee majority before being included in the FMP that will be submitted to the City Council for approval.

With the exception of the Trails Section, the committee has approved each segment of the plan. Reaching a decision on trail issues in Forrestal has proven to be difficult due to the variety of groups involved and opposition to certain uses at the preserve. Consequently, the FSC has spent the greater part of its time deliberating on the preserve's trail system.

Alignments and trail usage were the primary issues that the FSC attempted to resolve in 2003-2004. The committee, through numerous site visits and community testimony, approved realignments to the FNP trail system. After the changes were made, the majority of the trails were left unaffected by the committee's decision. Notable exceptions included the closure of existing parallel trails in the quarry bowl, parallel trails through the area referred to as fossil hill, and the trail located on the eastern ridge above Cool Heights Drive, which was recommended for closure because the construction of a home blocked access to the trail.





Trail usage was clearly the most complex issue presented to the FSC. Three groups quickly emerged as the primary users of the preserve. Equestrians, hikers, and mountain bicyclists all utilize the trail system, but in some cases, would prefer that other uses be limited to certain areas. This provided a dilemma for the FSC and led to the committee's doing additional research to help them to reach a decision on trail usage.

The committee's first step in gathering information was to sponsor a Multi-Use Trail Workshop. Southern California experts with experience in trail planning and management joined in a public discussion about how to responsibly make decisions regarding trail uses. The workshop was open to the public, was well attended, and provided a great deal of useful information.



In addition, the FSC hosted an open forum to solicit public comment on the FNP trail system. The committee heard from more than thirty people at the meeting. The majority of the speakers were positive in their comments and made their trail preferences known to the FSC. One of the purposes of the meeting was to find out if the proposed trail plan provided adequate access to the preserve. Members of the public requested four additional trail segments, and their requests will be included in the report to the City Council.



The committee also decided to solicit public comment through a trail survey. The survey was distributed at the forum, posted on the City and PVPLC web pages, and was also available at the entrances to the preserve. The findings of this survey are included as an appendix to this report. They will provide the committee actual data about trail uses, demographics, conflicts and favorite trails that they can use in making their decisions.

The FSC has collated the information collected at the seminar, public forum, and trail survey but has yet to make its final decision concerning usage.



Habitat Restoration

As well as continuing its' efforts to complete the FMP, the Conservancy has actively worked to restore and maintain the coastal sage scrub vegetation that is native to the preserve. Habitat restoration and trail maintenance have been priorities of the Conservancy in the past year. The project's Restoration Ecologist continued to supervise each aspect of the restoration activities, performing vegetation surveys of the project areas and completing the second phase of the rare plant survey that was initiated last year. Approximately 12 volunteer days were held on the property, during which community members removed non-native plants, cleared trails, and transported weed biomass to dumpsters.

In August 2003, the Conservancy received funding from the Wetlands Recovery Project to implement a wetland restoration project at the FNP. A blue-line stream runs through the preserve, creating optimal conditions for wetlands. Unfortunately, past disturbances (mining, quarry activities, and off road motorcycling) and proximity to human encroachment have introduced non-native vegetation to the site. Areas



that once supported native willows, mulefat, and mugwort, were overwhelmed by palm trees (*Washingtonia species*), castor bean (*Ricinus communis*), tree tobacco (*Nicotiana glauca*), myoporum (*Myoporum laetum*), fig (*Ficus carica*), and ash (*Fraxinus uhdei*).



Work began in mid-August 2003. The project was separated into two areas, the upper draw of the canyon and the lower draw. Conservancy staff initiated work in the upper draw, extracting two palm trees and a myoporum from the streambed. The majority of labor costs and volunteer hours were spent removing cut portions of the trees from the work area to a green waste container approximately ½ mile walk from the upper draw. This portion of the project involved 27 community members in various capacities. Community members, with Conservancy staff supplementing removal

efforts, hauled the remains of the vegetation from the work site to the green waste containers.

Extraction efforts in the lower draw were initiated in early October. This area differed from the previous work site because of the presence of dense stands of pampas grass (*Cortaderia selloana*). Two palm trees, three myoporums, one Brazilian peppertree (*Schinus terebinthifolius*) and the remains of the pampas grass were removed after extraction by PVPLC staff.

The final phase of the riparian restoration project was initiated in February 2004. Eight community members volunteered to plant the lower draw of the quarry bowl. 60 willow trees (*Salix sp.*), 50 mulefat (*Baccharis salicifolia*), 27 mugwort (*Artemesia douglasiana*), and 22 giant rye grass (*Leymus condensatus*) were planted where palm trees once stood. The perennial flow of the spring will provide these native plants with ample amounts of water.



The PVPLC sponsored an Eagle Scout project that planted the upper draw of the canyon (and the trail project discussed below). On February 29, 40 scouts worked to revegetate the draw and strengthen the banks of the riparian area. The boy scouts planted 140 willow trees, 60 mulefat, 33 giant-rye grass, and 27 mugwort. In this phase of the project, over 250 volunteer hours were donated to the restoration of the riparian area.

The most impressive aspect of this restoration project was the quantity of community members involved in each stage. Steering Committee members, neighborhood associations, high school students and boy scouts totaled close to 80 people, with over 1,000 volunteer hours donated to the wetland restoration project. A variety of people were exposed to the importance of wetlands and how their involvement in a restoration project can be so effective. The final report submitted by the PVPLC is posted on the California Coastal Conservancy web page.





Trail Improvements

Trail maintenance was an important aspect of the Conservancy's management duties this year. The Conservancy provided a professional trail builder to reconstruct the Cool Heights Trail that provided public access to the FNP for years. Recent home construction had blocked passage to the preserve and a new alignment was deemed necessary. The FSC was provided two options for the trail and, working with the City, decided on the least intrusive alternative. The trail building lasted a week and a new link was available to the neighborhood to access the preserve.

The Los Angeles Conservation Corps (LACC), with funding from Proposition 50, agreed to reconstruct the portion of the Mariposa Trail that passes through the upper draw. This particular footpath is an integral part



of the trail plan that has been created for the FSC. Heavy use, combined with erosion, had left the path in disrepair. Without immediate attention, this slope would have continued to degrade and affect not only accessibility, but also the establishment of native plants in the riparian area. Crewmembers spent five days in December building an erosion control feature and leveling off the upper bank's trail. The reconstructed trail will help stabilize the stream bank and benefit the overall success of the habitat restoration project.

The LACC also worked alongside the Conservancy's trail builder in realigning the Flying Mane Trail. The hazardous condition of the Flying Mane Trail above the quarry bowl prompted the decision to move forward with the project immediately. The trail was relocated further down the bank to avoid exposure to cliffs and to sustain its new alignment. The



workers removed the section of fencing along the trail and added erosion control features to improve the ongoing stability of the trail. After construction was complete, the Eagle Scout project planted the effected areas with native plants.

2003-2004 has proven to be an industrious year at the Forrestal Nature Preserve. Habitat restoration, trail/access improvements, and community involvement have provided tangible benefits to the overall condition of the preserve. The commitment to Forrestal as a nature preserve has guided the Conservancy, the City of Rancho Palos Verdes, and the Forrestal Steering Committee in working toward decisions that will assure the longevity of this local resource.

Scientific Research

The Forrestal Preserve can serve as a laboratory for scientific research. During the past year, Dennis Miller, a graduate student from California State University Long Beach, has been conducting entomological field research at the Preserve.



Current literature suggests that native plant communities support a higher level of insect biodiversity than disturbed plant communities. His research was directed toward determining the effects of disturbance and human impacts on the biodiversity of insect populations in coastal sage scrub communities. In October of 2003, Miller established four temporary "malaise" (as shown) traps throughout the Preserve to obtain a preliminary sample of insect biodiversity. Two of the traps were established in highly-impacted sites and two of the traps were established in sites that had not been impacted. Analysis of the results showed that there were 466 individual insects and about 50% more insect families and individuals within the highly-impacted sites. The preliminary data suggests that human use results in a greater biodiversity, but the analysis has not been done to determine the ratio of native to non-native insects.



In March of 2004, four traps were established for two weeks, in both high and low impact areas. The photo at left depicts the locations of the traps.

Miller is currently analyzing the data from this collection period. He has



applied for a National Science Foundation grant to support continued research. We hope he is successful on obtaining funding and will continue to provide valuable data to the ecological community.

Locations of the four traps



Attachments

- Map of Photo Points
- Monitoring Photographs with record sheet
- Annual Inspection Form
- Final Report on Wetlands Grant
- Results of Trail Survey