FLC applies for ‘accreditation’

The Fallbrook Land Conservancy hopes to soon join an elite group of land trusts that have achieved the level of “accreditation,” a system of standards and practices established by the Land Trust Alliance (LTA).

Currently, the honor has been awarded to 357 out of 1,500 land trusts nationwide. The LTA was formed in 1982 as a national conservation organization based in Washington D.C.

Members of the FLC’s board of directors and staff met in January with Tom McCampbell, a facilitator with the LTA’s Land Trust Accreditation Committee. At the meeting, which was held at the Palomares House, McCampbell explained the application process, which can take up to two years or longer.

If all goes well, the board hopes to achieve accreditation by June 2018, said Will Shakespeare, chairman of the FLC’s board.

According to McCampbell, accreditation will help the FLC successfully attract and manage mitigation and conservation preserves by complying with LTA standards and practices in the areas of organizational strength and land transactions.

To achieve accreditation, the FLC must also “demonstrate fiscal accountability, strong organizational leadership, and a lasting stewardship of the lands we preserve,” he said.
When I take the time to escape the daily grind, I usually head for the desert, where I spend most nights gazing at the wide sky, imagining the distance to the farthest star in the black open space that seems to go on and on, forever in perpetuity.

Perpetuity: just another word to explain the indefinite, eternity, or forever. It’s a hard concept to grasp in a world that constantly reminds us that “Nothing lasts forever.”

It is also a concept our board of directors will face head on in the next two years as it plans for the future of the Fallbrook Land Conservancy in a process called “accreditation.”

In January, members of our board of directors and staff met with Tom McCampbell, a facilitator with the Land Trust Alliance, a national organization of land trusts. Over the next two years, Tom will help guide our board through a system of standards and practices that must be established, along with accurate documentation, to protect our preserves and conservation easements “in perpetuity.”

Planning for the future of the conservancy is not an easy task and our staff and directors realize this. But it is urgent that we set up a system of standards and practices now to guide future staff and board members through the years ahead.

And, if we are successful, by June 2018, the FLC will join other distinctive land trusts around the country that have achieved the honor of “accreditation.”

Future planning also includes financial planning. There must be funding to manage and monitor our properties when our present board and staff are no longer here, and the funding has to continue to grow and meet the needs of the land for generations to come.

A number of the FLC’s preserves that were acquired during our early days, continue to be very popular today, with walking trails, rest areas, demonstration gardens and more.

But for every property we own, there needs to be funding to pay for the staff to manage it and also for the rising cost of insurance.

During the 1990s, management funds were raised and paid to the San Diego Foundation to establish endowments to provide yearly distributions for these preserves in perpetuity. Over the years, more property was acquired, some with endowments, and some without.

Also over the years, our administrative staff has grown along with increasing everyday expenses. Yearly donations from members of our community are no longer enough to balance our operating expenses.

As a result, since 2,000, we have pushed for endowments for all old and new properties, with the realization that in order for the FLC to continue in perpetuity, it is also necessary to increase our holdings outside the Fallbrook, Bonsall and Rainbow areas.

In 2014, the FLC was certified to hold and manage mitigation properties in San Diego and Riverside Counties by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, following a process that was similar to accreditation. These certifications are not in perpetuity but must be re-qualified every five years.

To sustain cash flow for management and stewardship of our land, the FLC needs to continue to accept more mitigation properties outside the Fallbrook area. These properties must include sizable endowments for management, administrative expenses, and the continually rising costs of wages and insurance. Private donations are vital to our success, but they can only be one segment of the capital required to sustain our organization in the future — and who knows what uncertainties the future will bring?

Still, it remains our responsibility to set policies that future conservancy leaders can follow as good stewards of open space. Think of the FLC as an annuity that pays us back forever with special places in our community to enjoy nature in the wild.

Next year marks the FLC’s 30th year of protecting and conserving open space in San Diego North County. Over the years, we’ve seen many friends leave us and just as many new friends join us on our journey.

As I see it, our journey has only just begun.

—Mike Peters, Executive Director & Preserve Manager
Michele Redmon joins FLC staff

Hired in September, Michele Redmon is employed part-time as the FLC’s new administrative assistant.

A former administrative and bookkeeping assistant at Barrett Solutions, Inc. in Dana Point, her experience also includes work as a graphic designer, freelance writer and book reviewer.

Raised in Bloomington, Indiana, Michele has a B.A. in criminal psychology from the University of North Carolina. She married in 2004 to her husband, Daniel, who is an officer in the United States Marines, stationed at Camp Pendleton. The couple have two boys, Cole and Aidin.

Formerly stationed in Okinawa, Japan, the family moved to the Fallbrook area “on a whim,” Michele says. “We had never even been to Fallbrook before we met our realtor at an orchard in De Luz and fell in love with it. It was a fixer-upper and we have absolutely no knowledge of construction, so naturally we bought it.”

Michele learned about the FLC while searching for a job “outside of the corporate field.”

She describes the conservancy as “made up of people who give their time, money, talents and ideas to ensure that urban growth will not eradicate the open, green space so vital for the health and longevity of our community.

“It’s impossible to remain apathetic surrounded by such proactive, passionate individuals,” she adds.

Michele’s duties include data processing, print and email correspondence, as well as management of the FLC’s website and social media accounts. She’s a quick learner and already has a funny story to tell about her first experience at FLC event planning.

Having emailed National Charity League volunteers to request cookies or other baked goods for the annual Holiday Party in December, “I was feeling pretty organized and a little smug that everything was going so well,” Michele recalls.

On the day of the party, “Cookies began arriving in waves. Hundreds of cookies,” she says. “I was grateful but also a little puzzled. How many cookies did they think we would eat?”

“As it turns out, I had typed one too many zeros in my email request—ing cookies, so instead of 100 I had requested 1,000! Thankfully, the NCL has a good sense of humor and was able to put many of the leftovers to good use.”

The FLC is grateful for Michele’s sense of humor, too, along with her many other talents. She can be reached at the Palomares House from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, and 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Wednesdays.
A total of 433 local elementary school students visited Los Jilgueros Preserve during the months of January and February for our annual environmental education program. We are grateful for our liaison with Native Plant and Wildflower Team volunteers, who helped guide the students on five different planting days.

We also solicited and received generous donations from George and Brenda Garcia of The Rib Shack and the Firehouse Que and Brew. Their support covered the cost of the students’ bus transportation to Los Jilgueros.

South Mission Road

For some months now, we have been honing in on our 1.1 mile planting project made possible by a 2001 Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Grant. Work has included irrigation repair of the reclaimed water lines, installing new signage and replanting. Danny Conejo, assistant preserve manager of the FLC, works there once a week as part of our 2017 budget.

We are also working to resolve an issue with the area on the southwest corner of Olive Hill and South Mission. The new property owner has fenced into the easement area where SOF planted habitat according to San Diego County approved maps. We are working with the County to determine easement rights. The new owner has planted trees that will ultimately enhance the area. They have also topped and cut down many of our trees, which should be removed or replaced to complement the corner here. It is a slow process for all of it.

Downtown Treescape

Our volunteer force is very low. We consider our downtown Treescape to include about 2,650 trees. However, we only focus on the heart of the town. A recent Letter to the Editor in our local Village News resulted in two new volunteers. Seeking younger volunteers is imperative as the workforce of 20 years ago, once strong and interested, has dwindled.

E. Mission Flagpole

Planted by SOF some years ago, the area around the flagpole needs some rehab. We are now working with the Fallbrook Chamber of Commerce Ambassadors and the Fallbrook Beautification Alliance to improve the “welcome home” site. When a firm date is chosen, we will invite Camp Pendleton Marines and their Fallbrook liaison, Jay Johnson, to help with the project.

Pico Promenade

Over the last six months, I have been able to gain the support of the Fallbrook Garden Club to provide volunteers for an Adopt-A-Block concept for the Pico Promenade. Groups of four have adopted the first three blocks. The fourth block will be adopted by a freelance community group.

The Boys and Girls Club of North County has received a renewal of its SDGE “Environmental Champions” grant for its Youth Urban Forestry Program.

There are three afterschool sessions, each held on Monday afternoons for six weeks. During the sessions, students will learn to plant native and drought tolerant plants in the Pico Promenade area. SOF volunteers and program facilitators from the Club oversee the students’ work. The grant provides for the plant material and some tools for each student to keep.

Nursery Location

For over a year we have been waiting for the completion of a new space for our plants at Silverthorn Nursery. The nursery has leased property from FPUD off of Alturas near the sewage plant. Part of its lease agreement allowed SOF to utilize 500 square feet for plants grown for our Environmental Education program and the Environmental Champions venture. While we wait for the confirmation of a moving date, we are storing newer plantings in the Heyneman backyard.

A Healthful Environment

Two years of working with the national office of Walgreens, and its national contractor for landscape maintenance, has finally come close to fruition.

We have requested that Walgreens plant new trees to replace the original required plantings of large crowning shade trees for its parking area. Through a mitigation offer, I was able to acquire 15 new trees from Solar City. Nine have been planted by Walgreens’s new landscape company.

—Jackie Heyneman,
SOF Chair

Volunteers Needed

Adopt-A-Road
Trash pick-up,
2nd Sat of month, 8 a.m.
Old Hwy 395 at
Pala Mesa entrance

Native Plant Restoration Team
8:30 a.m., Wednesdays
Los Jilgueros Preserve

Save Our Forest
3rd Wednesday, 8:30 a.m.
Last Sunday, 7:30 a.m.
Village Square

Sign up on our website at
fallbrooklandconservancy.org
Fifth-graders learn to plant native sage, buckwheat, yarrow and monkey flower.

During the months of January and February, more than 400 local fifth graders traveled by bus to plant native seedlings at Los Jilgueros Preserve as part of SOF’s annual environmental education program. Two field trips were postponed due to heavy rain, but they were soon rescheduled and the work was completed on time. Participating elementary schools were: La Paloma, Live Oak, Fallbrook Street, Maie Ellis and William Frazier. Next year, SOF hopes to add Fallbrook Home School Academy to the program.
In the Field

Rains give way to colorful worlds beneath our feet

Every year, as soon as there's enough winter rain to keep the soil moist for a few days, the ground comes alive with seedlings, burgeoning mosses and emerging mushrooms.

Many native plants, animals and other residents of Southern California's xeric climate region have adapted to wait out the heat by drying in relative suspension of animation. They save energy for when conditions improve and they can go about the tasks of feeding and reproduction again.

Due to variable winter conditions, some species may end up waiting years for enough rainfall to trigger their release. In addition to our regular cool-season community, this winter's anomalous weather system sent quite a lot of rain our way in a short period of time, giving us an especially rich display of rain-awakened diversity.

Bryophytes

Mosses, liverworts and the like lack the vascular tissue that allows flowers, trees and bushes to move water relatively great distances from roots to tip, so they must stay close to their source and require moisture to grow and reproduce. Hot Southern California is abundant in microclimates, and mosses proliferate despite the challenging conditions. It's stunning how quickly seemingly bare earth can bloom into a carpet of green after the first good winter rains. The micro-communities formed by these moss, green beds of small wildflower seedlings, lichen and fungi, stabilize bare slopes and rocky hillsides.

In undisturbed semi-arid wild areas, mosses, liverworts, lichen, fungi, algae and cyanobacteria make up what is called a "biological soil crust." This living crust is both fragile in its thinness and incredibly durable, as it weather heat and cold and flood and drought, helping to feed and protect the soil surface all the while, even helping to discourage invasive plants where it is well-established and healthy. Mosses are one of the best indicators of a remnant or colonizing biological soil crust. In your yard, try to leave those areas to themselves while cultivating native plants around them. On our nature preserves, always stay on our trails.

Fungi

Mushrooms are like the flowers of fungi: their purpose is for spreading their spores, so they have short life spans. They represent only a tiny, temporary bit of the mass of fungi that is living and working below-ground or inside rotting organic matter. Fungi species comprise a significant portion of the mass of health, living soil, where they're busy decomposing matter and forming networks of communication among the roots of plants. They'll only fruit in moist conditions, when their spores are likely to survive, so mushrooms are most common in fall and winter here, when most of our rainfall comes.

Indeed, some kinds of fungi have fruiting bodies that are dependent upon rainfall to release their spores. Earthstar fungi form under leaf litter: a central sac filled with powdery spores is encased in two layers of leathery skin. When it rains, these skin layers split and peel back with enough force to push the earthstar up into the open. The skin of the spore sac hardens and forms a single opening at the top, creating a cushion which, when struck by a raindrop, releases a puff of spores into the moist air. Keep your eyes out for the leathery stars of these unique fungi in the leaf litter under Live Oak trees, where they prefer to grow.

Lichen

Despite the single species name used to distinguish between them, lichens are actually composite organisms coexisting in mutualistic symbiosis. The species name of a lichen is actually the name of the fungal partner (mycobiont), which has combined with a species of algae or cyanobacteria (photobionts). Mutualism is a kind of symbiosis in which both participants are benefitted by the interaction. Algae and cyanobacteria, unlike fungi, are able to photosynthesize, but are usually confined to continuously wet habitats. The fungal tissue mass (thallus) of a lichen insulates the more delicate algal or cyanobacterial cells inside, in return sharing in their solar-powered energy (photosynthesis products). This means lichens can grow anywhere they can reach sunlight and collect a bit of water, making so collaborations amazingly durable even through extreme exposure. Crustose lichens that
have rehydrated and colored up on the surfaces of boulders are excellent examples, as they stand not only direct sunlight and drying wind, but also the reflected and absorbed heat of the rock mass they cling to. You’ll also see lichens springing out all over trees and bushes, either clinging close to the bard (crustose) or protruding in leafy lobes or fuzzy branches (fruticose).

**Slime Molds**

Slime molds are a broad grouping or organisms that aren’t quite plant, animal or fungi, although they do reproduce by spore as fungi do. What’s really amazing about them is that they’re colonial organisms: single cells or nuclei that join together to function more efficiently. They require moisture to be active and feed by decomposing organic matter so are mostly seen travelling like amoebae or forming reproductive sporangia on old damp logs or freshly saturated mulch.

When faced with rapid drying, spores form a hard shield called a sclerotium in which they can remain dormant for as long as 75 years. The morning after a rain, you may have seen our most common backyard slime mold on your mulch: Fuligo septica, known as Dog Vomit Slime Mold because of its off-white, foamy-lumpy appearance. After the last month-and-a-half’s drenching rain, some less common slime molds have ventured out an about; check the edges of old logs and leafy corners under trees for these unobtrusive, alien organisms.

Byrophytes, fungi, lichens and slime molds are all important members of our ecological community. They provide crucial services including initiation of pioneer colonies, nutrient cycling, soil building, erosion control, atmospheric gas and particle cycling, and bolstering community resilience to disturbances, invaders, weather events and climatic trends. They’re also easy to overlook. Being extra-observant during a wet winter and spring will not only open up a tiny, colorful world to you, but will also help you be mindful of the hard-working little guys, even when they hide during our dry season.

—Miranda Kennedy, FLC Board Member, NPRT volunteer

A new Pollinator Garden was installed in January at the Habitat Garden at Los Jilgueros Preserve. Positioned near the northern entrance to the preserve, the patch of garden is designed to promote the health and survival of native pollinators with specially chosen native plants.

The NPRT team collaborated on the project with the California Native Plant Society and their partners in the San Diego Pollinator Alliance, San Diego Chapter US Fish & Wildlife Service Partners for Wildlife Program and Butterfly Farms.

The NPRT team has been working on improving the neglected former Firescape Garden area. With $2,000 of grant money designated in August 2016, the team has planned for a large Habitat Garden, which will vastly improve the value of the area for native wildlife as well as offer new experiences for visitors.

Permaculture techniques were used to maximize rain catching potential and strategize planting. These techniques include “Hugelkultur,” the practice of burying wood in layers with soil. This practice puts valuable organic material directly into the ground where it will be more accessible to plant roots and microbes and where it will absorb water in rain events that slowly releases as the soil dries.

**Continued on page 11**
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Emerald Grove

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Accreditation
Continued from page 1

Today, more than 3,100 acres of open space in San Diego County is now permanently protected by the FLC. The total includes 2,164 acres in North County San Diego that is owned and managed by the conservancy. This “fee title” acreage includes the Palomares House and Park, 11 nature preserves and six additional properties that protect valuable habitat.

In addition, the FLC holds 955.93 acres of conservation easements. These are legal agreements between a landowner and the FLC that permanently limits uses of the land in order to protect its conservation values. In 2014, the FLC was certified to hold and manage mitigation properties in San Diego and Riverside Counties by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. With endowments in place, these properties help the FLC generate additional income.

The accreditation application includes a 47-page questionnaire, 30-plus written statements with dozens of attachments and exhibits, and detailed project documentation on land projects selected by the Commission.

A pre-application package is due this June, with a final application package required in September.

Board development is also a priority. “Recruiting board members is becoming more and more difficult,” McCampbell said. “It’s getting harder and harder to find people with time, energy, passion for environmental conservation, plus with the skill sets we need,” he said.

The Commission supports land trusts by providing templates for board recruitment and development.

SAVE THE DATE
October 1
Stagecoach Sunday
Palomares House & Park

We Need Your Support
The mailing label on the back page shows when your annual renewal is due. A donation envelope is enclosed for your convenience. Thank you!
In Memorium

Otis Heald made all the difference

Otis P. Heald passed away on the evening of Dec. 25. Otis was the second generation of the Heald family to live in Fallbrook. He was a business leader, community leader and a generous philanthropist.

The FLC benefitted enormously from his generosity. Otis and his partners donated to the FLC the Palomares House and park, and the Monserate Mountain Preserve. Otis was also a major contributor to the FLC’s Save Our Forest committee, which planted thousands of trees throughout the Fallbrook area.

On behalf of our members, board and staff, the FLC sends our heartfelt regards to the Heald family. Our community will never be the same without Otis.

Pollinator garden
Continued from page 7

A rolling swale was also built into the pathway. This is a gradual-grade swale that acts as a berm to redirect rainwater from flowing down the bare pathway, eroding soil as it goes, and send it into a series of swales that will take the erosive energy out of the water and allow the water to sink deeply into the soil where it will support plants and energize natural waterways through subterranean feeding.

Alden Hough of the Sky Mountain Institute, CNPS and San Diego Pollinator Alliance employed a laser level to find contour lines across the slope that would be suitable places to dig rain catchments in the form of basins, swales and hugelkultur beds. The contour lines are marked with sticks jammed vertically into the ground: swales are dug along these lines with level bottoms so they will catch and slow rainwater, reducing erosion and maximizing soil hydration.

A catchment basin was dug uphill of the hugelkultur swale. The basin will take the brunt of the water that will flow off the pathway, allowing it to slow down, some to percolate and overflow to be directed in a controlled flow into the hugelkultur swale.

Native plants were planted almost exclusively downhill of the catchments where they will get the most benefit from the water. After planting, the ground around the plants was mulched to help hold in moisture and to suppress non-native weeds.

Finally, chicken-wire cages were cut, bent and placed over plants susceptible to herbivory by hungry squirrels and rabbits.

Participants in the planting project were: David Allen, Gary Beeler, Audrey Bond, Eileen Dupont, Jim Hall, Alden Hough, Ann Kreile, Pat Flanagan, Mike Gonzales, Diane Kennedy, Miranda Kennedy, Susan Liebes, Wilson Lubeck, Larry Miura, Jonathan Scoll, and Joan Williams.

—Miranda Kennedy

For more details and photos, visit the FLC’s Facebook page.

At left, Pat Flanagan (Butterfly Farms and San Diego Pollinator Alliance) and Mike Gonzales (California Native Plant Society) and helpers dig a pit for a hugelkultur swale. Right, Eileen Dupont gives plants a thorough watering. Miranda Kennedy photos.
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