

## Foundation Convenes first State of the Laguna Conference Since 1989

BY MARK GREEN, *Associate Executive Director*

Nearly 18 years after the first State of the Laguna Conference led to the formation of the Laguna Foundation, the Foundation convened a second conference to discuss the future of Sonoma County's most important wildlife area.

Sponsored by the Sonoma County Water Agency and framed by the vision presented in *Enhancing and Caring for the Laguna*, the restoration and management plan published by the Foundation this winter, the four-day Conference was held at Sonoma State University. It drew scientists, regulators, public officials, community organizations and the general public together to discuss and build energy for the Laguna's future.

The Conference began with a two-day Science Symposium. Researchers presented their findings and discussed gaps in current knowledge, culminating in panel discussions recommending how the Foundation can best develop its scientific research program. Topics ranged from the life cycles of Western pond turtles and California tiger salamanders to study of genetics of invasive plants, impacts on native grasslands of European slugs, and examination of the role in Laguna food webs of introduced Louisiana crayfish.

Saturday's conference included presentations, panel discussions with experts and representatives of stakeholder groups and public agencies on issues such as water quality, flood protection, wildlife and biodiversity, invasive species, outdoor recreation and other public concerns.

"The Laguna is a resource for all of us," said Sonoma County Supervisor

Mike Reilly in his opening remarks. "There was unanimous support for the Restoration and Management Plan at the Board of Supervisors, and we are prepared to consider other proposals to move it forward." Attendees including Assemblywoman Noreen Evans and Tom Roth, staff for Rep. Lynn Woolsey, described the specific steps they are advocating to improve the Laguna's water quality, habitat values and hydrological functioning.

The final day of the Conference was devoted to field tours in the Laguna led by docents and scientists. Attendees visited vernal pool areas and the Foundation's Middle Reach Restoration Project, explored prime birding areas, or took a driving "watershed tour".

"I've been to a lot of conferences," said Gene Cooley, Senior Botanist for the California Department of Fish and Game, "and this was one of the best. I learned new things."

"The Laguna presents tremendous opportunities for community benefit, and the movement to secure them is gathering momentum," said Foundation director and former State Assemblywoman Virginia Strom-Martin in her summary address. "There are many opportunities to get involved. You are the people who are going to make this happen."

The program for the State of the Laguna Conference, including abstracts of scientific talks presented, is on our website: [www.lagunafoundation.org](http://www.lagunafoundation.org). We thank everyone who helped make the Conference such a resounding success. We're certain not to wait another 18 years until the next!



*Laguna Foundation Board member and SSU professor, Caroline Christian, moderating a Science Symposium panel discussion.*



*Patrick Band, Restoration Project Technician, assisting community members with capturing species occurrence data.*



*Gene Cooley, Fish and Game Senior Botanist, identifying plants on a vernal pool field tour.*

Photo credits: Gary Hundt

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*Research Director***Executive Director's Report — Dan Schurman**

Judging from the press coverage and responses we heard about our recent State of the Laguna Conference and Science Symposium, concern for and interest in the Laguna is at an all-time high.

Dozens of scientists from multiple disciplines and a variety of institutions, as well as a large number of non-scientists convened and shared their knowledge, passion and curiosity about the Laguna. Time and again we were told that the conference and the dialogues it inspired are precisely what are needed if we're going to succeed as a community in achieving a watershed vision of a thriving Laguna ecosystem.

The vision that we've been touting and researching and planning and planting for is beginning to take hold in the hearts and minds of our local elected officials, academic and government researchers and land managers, and the general public. Not that there isn't a lot of work yet to do, but we have genuine confidence that we're going to succeed in realizing the vision.

One of the biggest challenges we face is in grappling with the complexities of the Laguna: some of the very same aspects that make the Laguna so biologically diverse and interesting also create difficulties in understanding it and addressing its needs.

- How does and how should the Laguna system function hydrologically?
- How do we reconcile the needs of the Laguna's urban and rural residents, of its human and nonhuman and plant inhabitants?
- How do we simultaneously support our needs for thriving local Laguna agriculture and endangered species preservation and public recreation?
- Can we restore our urban Laguna tributary creeks so they function once again as true riparian corridors and not merely as flood control channels?
- How do we balance the variety of needs of the Laguna's myriad landowners, both public and private alike, with each other and with its equally various and multiple users?

All of these questions, and many more, underlie our restoration, research, and educational activities and programs, and while they may seem daunting and sometimes bewildering, we know that the scientific curiosity and ingenuity, as well as the public and political will, exist in enough abundance that they can all be answered.

Part of our confidence stems from the valuable partnerships we've forged with the many stakeholders in the Laguna. One of the most important of these is with the descendants of the Laguna's original human inhabitants, the Southern Pomo and Coast Miwok people who are now collectively known as the Federated Indians of the Graton Rancheria. While they have long since lost their direct ownership and stewardship of the lands of the Laguna, they have nevertheless maintained a very real connection and devotion to those lands. Over the past several years, we have sought them out to advise us and inform us on our restoration and education activities. We view their participation in helping to create the programs of the Laguna Foundation as one of the reasons why our programs are authentic and true to the spirit of the Laguna.

Now that this Tribe is embarking on a new venture, one which has generated much discussion and attention, our partnership with them is being looked at in a new light. However, the history and reality of that partnership hasn't changed, nor has our shared vision of restoring and celebrating the Laguna as a community resource that all of us who live here can enjoy, benefit from, and help create. The Laguna Foundation and the Tribe are looking forward to a long and mutually beneficial partnership to pursue greater positive changes in the larger context of the Laguna's future.

We're also looking forward to continuing our partnership with you, our dedicated Foundation supporters who make possible all that we do for the Laguna. Thanks again to one and all.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dan Schurman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

# 2007 Laguna Science Symposium: A Close Look at Scientific Research in the Laguna



BY CHRISTINA SLOOP, *Research Director*

The first Laguna science symposium drew over 200 participants. Attendees were comprised of local and regional technical experts intermixed with a strong general public constituent.

The two-day symposium agenda was packed with short talks and panels by 34 presenters that addressed a wide variety of the recent, on-going and planned scientific studies on Laguna endangered species, invasive exotic species, biodiversity, water quality, hydrology, land use, sedimentation, natural resources management, restoration and conservation.

Experts from many different disciplines ranging from hydrology, remote

sensing, and water chemistry to ecology, population biology and conservation genetics came together to share their work. During breaks this exceptional mix of technical expertise created a buzz of excitement that could be felt as everyone mingled and discussed the presentations and related issues.

Thursday's theme was a look at the Santa Rosa plain oak savannah and vernal pool ecosystems, while on Friday presenters focused in on the entire Laguna watershed addressing floodplain processes, biodiversity, invasive species control and riparian restoration. Panelists discussed the need for standardized baseline monitoring of rare and endangered vernal pool species,

the role of constructed vernal pools in long-term species preservation, and the need for restoration success criteria.

Throughout the symposium the Laguna Foundation was acknowledged as a central force in bringing together stakeholders and in addressing these issues through further research, restoration and incorporation of new findings into the adaptive management process.

For a closer look at the list of talks and the presenters please access the State of the Laguna Conference program at our website. Future Laguna science symposia are planned every two or three years.

## What's New in the Education Program

BY MARY ABBOTT, *Education Program Director*

We welcomed 10 new docents into the training this Spring, a small but mighty group of dedicated new naturalists. Our small group has been the perfect venue to test out some new training strategies and new material. One training class each year is dedicated to learning about the Native American history of the Laguna. This was the first year we were able to learn from the Native community directly, as members of the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, including Jeannette Anglin (board member and docent), made presentations to the class.

Class began with a prayer in Coast Miwok, which included a thanksgiving for the Laguna. Tribal Elder, Joanne Campbell talked about the progress the tribe is making to reclaim the Coast Miwok and Southern Pomo languages. Amazingly, with no living native speakers for the past few generations, the tribe is gradually reconstructing words, phrases and nuances of the languages by working with linguists and archival material. This monumental struggle is fueled by the joy the language classes youngest members bring, twin three-year-olds, who easily play and engage each other – in Coast Miwok!

Elder Gene Buvelot traced the history of tribal disintegration through non-native take over of lands, disease and federal policies. The tribes once formed numerous thriving, independent villages of Coast Miwok and Southern Pomo people sprinkled throughout the coast at Bodega Bay, down

to Point Reyes and inland to Petaluma, Sebastopol and Santa Rosa. Eventually, by the 1852 census, a group of 14 members remained. At its lowest point, the tribe endured a final insult as an Act of Congress, known as the Rancheria Termination Act, decided that the Coastal Miwok and Southern Pomo were no longer considered a "tribe" and put the Graton Rancheria in private ownership. This act effectively cut them from desperately needed housing, health and education funding. From these 14 remaining ancestors though, there are now well over 1000 descendants who eventually re-grouped to form a federation.



*Artifacts that are representative of life in Coast Miwok and Southern Pomo villages.*

After many years of patiently working through the system, Tribal members in 2000 were "recognized" as a tribe once again by the Federal Government. While cultural traditions never ceased completely, Federal recognition (with no federal funding, but through grants) helped to bring about the current cultural rebirth of basketry, language, repatriation (burial) of remains, foods, stories and other traditions.

Nick Tipon, member of the Sacred Sites Protection Committee, showed docents slides of 34 indigenous plants and explained how they are used for food, shelter, tools and ceremony. The class viewed "Grandmother's Prayer," a documentary on FIGR tribal member and world renowned, beloved basket weaver, Julia Parker.

Jeannette Anglin shared her basketry with the group and taught docents how to make a bittern bird toy made from tule, which came from Kelly Farm. And finally, Jeannette read from a moving piece written by Tribal Chairman, author and SSU Professor, Greg Sarris on the story of how the Laguna was created in mythological time.

Docents were deeply grateful for this generous sharing and connection to the tribe, and for their thoughtful presentations. Soon after this class, docents began sharing bits of Coast Miwok language with their Learning Laguna students, and have begun adapting the tule bittern so that young children can learn to make it. Best of all, we have brought tribal people out of the past and into our present.



## Restoration Begins on the Middle Reach

BY CATHERINE CUMBERLAND, *Restoration Program Assistant*

On April 21st the Foundation celebrated the inaugural of the Middle Reach Restoration Project. This extensive project is the largest restoration effort in the Laguna's history. It has been several years in the planning stages and involves numerous government and private partners including the Cities of Santa Rosa and Sebastopol, Balletto winery, and Dei dairy.

The once extensive wetland-woodland complex of the middle reach still contains valuable core habitat, and the purpose of the Middle Reach project is to enhance and expand this habitat to support wildlife, filter waterborne pollutants, and aid in flood control. Volunteers planted 240 trees, mostly the Laguna's signature valley oak, broadening the buffer of vegetation along the east side of the channel by as much as 200 feet.

In all, over 2000 trees and shrubs will be planted in the middle reach by the end of May. This spring's planting area encompasses approximately 7 acres. An additional 10 acres will be treated during spring and summer to control invasive pepperweed, *Lepidium latifolium*. Willow sprigging and late-fall planting will bring 2007's total restoration area to nearly 20 acres. The project will continue until fall of 2009.

Major funding and in-kind donations for the Middle Reach project have been



*Agilent Technologies employees cutting tree shelters down to size for oak saplings.*

provided by the Coastal Conservancy, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Wildlife Conservation Board and the Community Foundation, among others. In addition, Agilent Technologies provided funding and volunteer support on April 20th, helping Foundation staff prepare for the April 21st workday and enjoying a sunny escape from the office in the process. Numerous community partners also helped make the event

a success, including Atlas Tree Company, Frank & Grossman Landscaping, Whole Foods Market, and the City of Santa Rosa.

Future work dates will include further planting as well as irrigation installation. If you'd like to join this historic restoration effort, our next public workday is scheduled for May 19th from 9am to noon. Meet at 5344 Occidental Rd. and follow the signs to the work site.

## Early Maps Reveal Dual Nature of the Laguna

BY JOE HONTON, *Watershed Outreach and Database Manager*

While conducting research for our recently published restoration and management plan—*Enhancing and Caring for the Laguna*—we discovered in the archives many old maps that clearly depict the Laguna and its tributaries.

These maps reveal several surprising facets of mid-19th century geography, such as these intriguing changes: the final stretch of the Laguna at the Russian River was called Mill Creek; Mark West Creek at one time joined the Laguna two miles north of its present confluence; lower Santa Rosa Creek was a braided stream with several large well-defined islands; Irwin Creek was once called the “Lower arm of Santa Rosa Creek”; the flood control channels that now cross the Santa Rosa Plain were the product of road engineering and wetland reclamation projects; and Copeland Creek (the true headwaters to the Laguna) fizzled out into the Cotati marsh before reaching

Redwood Highway.

But of all the maps uncovered, the one depicting the Laguna in its summertime form is my favorite. This *diseño* (a sketch that accompanied a land grant application) depicts nine separate bodies of water—in a straight line—situated just east of the sierra that we now refer to as the Goldridge Hills. While most other maps of the period show the wintertime extent of the Laguna, this one shows its summertime extent and reveals the dual nature of the Laguna. This dual nature was best expressed by one early geographer as “a series of disconnected pools that overflow and join together during the rainy season, forming a large shallow body of water.”

Despite all our changes to the landscape, this beautifully documented phenomenon—of a breathing and expanding Laguna—is still the driving force that makes the Laguna such a special place.

*Digital images of these historic maps were graciously provided through the courtesy of Robert W. Curtis, David Runsey, and the Bancroft Library archives and can be seen on our website at [lagunafoundation.org/Restoration/RMP/Plate04.pdf](http://lagunafoundation.org/Restoration/RMP/Plate04.pdf)*



## Opportunities to Get Involved with the Laguna de Santa Rosa Watershed

### SAVE THE DATE!

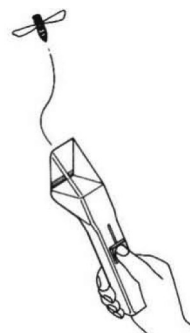
Fourth Annual Laguna Art and Garden Gala

The Laguna Foundation will hold our fourth annual Arts and Garden Gala on Sunday, September 9th, from 3-6 PM. The Gala will again take place at the Vine Hill House north of Sebastopol, a beautiful venue with lush gardens and a spectacular view across the Santa Rosa Plain.

This year's Gala features fascinating and unusual strolling entertainers, catering by celebrated chef Mark Malicki of the Café St. Rose, premium Sonoma County wines, delicious desserts, an auction of "drinkable art" and original artworks by prominent Sonoma County artists, plus a special live auction of a small number of adventurous "experience packages", with auctioneer David Katz! The Gala is unlike anything else—an event to remember. **Mark your calendar—invitations will go out in June!**

### Catch and Identify Insects with SNAPY!

The SNAPY is a well-made, unique German tool for catching and releasing insects and very small critters like frogs. SNAPY gives you a chance to study the critter, and release it without harming it. It is easy and fun to use -- kids love it (so do adults)!



Purchase of a SNAPY helps to fund Learning Laguna, our children's wetland education program. SNAPYs cost \$15 and can be purchased on our website, or you can pay in person at our office. SNAPYs are also sold at the Sebastopol Hardware Store.

### COTATI CREEK CRITTER EVENTS



**"Inside/Outside Nature Education series":** Indoor, evening presentations in the fall and winter, with outdoor field trips in spring and summer, featuring local experts. Evening presentations are on first Monday evenings at 7 p.m., at the Cotati Community Center, E. School Street, Cotati (behind Cotati City Hall, 201 W. Sierra Avenue).

#### June 4, Monday, 6 pm Creeks Bike Ride

Bring your bike for a ride along the creeks of Cotati and Rohnert Park. We'll get glimpses of the hydrology and geology of the Southern Laguna with Cotati Creek Critters' Stewardship Coordinator, Wade Belew, and retired SSU Geology professor, Rolf Erickson. You are responsible for your own bicycle safety. **Helmets required.**

**July 7, Saturday, 9 a.m.: Explore the Laguna Trails west of Hwy 101 with Joe Honton of the Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation.** An exploratory walk to investigate possibilities for a future trail from Cotati along the Laguna to Sebastopol and beyond. Wear sturdy footwear, a hat, sunscreen, and bring water and a brown bag lunch. We'll meet at 9 a.m. by the accordion player in La Plaza Park, to carpool to the starting point west of Hwy 101. Contact [jenny@creeks.cotati.info](mailto:jenny@creeks.cotati.info) or 792 4422 if you plan to come.

**August 6, Monday, 5.30 p.m.: What happens to Wastewater?** A tour of the Laguna Treatment Plant with Denise Cadman, Natural Resource Specialist for the City of Santa Rosa. We'll carpool from La Plaza Park to the Treatment Plant. Contact [jenny@creeks.cotati.info](mailto:jenny@creeks.cotati.info) or 792 4422 if you plan to come.

**September 8, Saturday, 2 p.m.: The Incredible World of Insects with Frederique Lavoipierre.** Prepare to change your view of bugs and creepy crawlies! Did you know that 95% of all animal species on earth are insects, that less than 1% of insects are pests, and that without pollinating insects, there would be no apples, silk, oranges, berries, cotton or chocolate, among other things? Frederique Lavoipierre is a garden and nature freelance writer who is currently working towards a master's degree in biology at Sonoma State University, with an emphasis on garden ecology and entomology.

See [www.CotatiCreekCritters.info](http://www.CotatiCreekCritters.info) for more details.

### TAKE A WALK IN THE LAGUNA!

All walks take place at the Sebastopol Wetlands Preserve with parking behind 425 Morris Street.

A great way to learn more about the Laguna, our docents are also available for group tours. Members free, \$ donation others.

Saturday, June 9 at 9:15am

Wednesday, June 20 at 7:00pm

Wednesday, July 11 at 7:00pm

Saturday, July 21 at 9:15am

Saturday, August 18 at 9:15am

Wednesday, August 22 at 7:00pm

Wednesday, September 19 at 6:00pm

Saturday, October 13 at 9:15am

To sign-up, please call Mary at ext. 102 or e-mail: [mary@lagunafoundation.org](mailto:mary@lagunafoundation.org)

# The New Laguna Learning Center

BY WAYNE MITCHELL, *Director of Campaigns and Individual Giving*

It is thrilling to see work beginning in earnest at the old Stone Farm site. In the coming months expect to see dramatic changes at the future Occidental Road home of the new Laguna Learning Center. The historic farmhouse will actually be lifted off its foundation and moved to the side to allow for the construction of a new foundation. Then, the home will be returned to its original position.

When completed, the Laguna Learning Center will be the Foundation's headquarters for research and restoration, as well as an interpretive center for people to understand and appreciate the Laguna. It will serve as the public's gateway to this unique wildlife area: a physical gateway to a new trail system, and a learning gateway for students, researchers and tourists.

The campaign to fund construction of the Center is gaining momentum. Our campaign committee has grown, and the number of people we are reaching out to is increasing exponentially. People are recognizing the campaign as a unique opportunity to preserve wildlife and open space, improve water quality, support agriculture, enhance flood control, mitigate impacts to endangered species, and provide education and recreation for the community. The goal of a restored and thriving Laguna for all to enjoy is an achievable vision.

We hope you will consider becoming involved in this exciting opportunity to restore and embrace the Laguna.

If you are considering helping support the construction of the Learning Center, you may want to tour Stone Farm to see what the excitement is about and to experience the site's sweeping vistas of the Laguna. Contact Wayne Mitchell at ext 111 or e-mail: [wayne@lagunafoundation.org](mailto:wayne@lagunafoundation.org) for more information about the project or the campaign, or to request a site visit.

Volunteer List for the Campaign for the Laguna Learning Center

#### Campaign Committee

Connie Coddling, Chair  
Renée-Eva Amochaev  
Bill Bettinelli  
Susan Churchill  
Brad DeMeo  
Bill Geary  
David Katz  
Mike Reilly  
Greg Sarris  
Wes Winter

#### The following community leaders have provided valuable information and advice.

Ken Alton  
Jeannette Anglin  
Bonnie Berkeley  
Jim Beyers  
Dick Carlile  
Cary Fargo  
Jim Keegan  
Eric Koenigshofer  
Jim Maresca  
Sandy Mays  
Susan Moore  
Steve Rabinowitsh  
Carolina Spence  
Virginia Strom-Martin  
Frances Werner

## Welcome Wayne!



Our newest staff member is Wayne Mitchell, Director of Campaigns and Individual Giving, who joined the Foundation in January. He directs the Laguna Learning Center capital campaign and manages the Foundation's individual giving programs.

He earned a BA from UC Berkeley and his MBA from St. Mary's College. He has a long background in nonprofit fund development and capital campaigns for education and science, including work at the Assistance Dog Institute, the Chabot Space and Science Center, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and San Francisco Day School.

Wayne enjoys spending time outside, working in his garden, and going for long walks with his Golden Retriever. He has a lifelong enthusiasm for the beautiful landscapes of Sonoma County, and is thrilled to be working for an organization dedicated to preserving and enhancing the area's natural wonders.

## Help Us Create A Lasting Laguna Legacy

With each exciting step forward, each tree planted, each project implemented, and every child served by Learning Laguna, the Laguna Foundation is restoring the Laguna's rightful place as a thriving and beloved centerpiece of Sonoma County's landscape. We can see a day—not far off, now—when, like the coast and the Russian River, everyone in the county will know what the Laguna is and cherish its value. It won't be long before the Laguna and the Laguna Learning Center are landmarks that define Sonoma County in the minds of residents and visitors alike.

The vision we are building will stand for decades and centuries to come. To fulfill this vision and ensure the Laguna is stewarded forever, the Laguna Foundation must remain active and vital. That's why our members are including the Foundation in their estate planning.

If you are planning your estate or philanthropy and would like to include the Foundation, we have relationships with financial and legal professionals who can help. Please contact Wayne Mitchell at ext 111 or e-mail: [wayne@lagunafoundation.org](mailto:wayne@lagunafoundation.org) for more information on leaving a legacy to our programs, or for sample language to indicate the direction of your assets in your estate plans. Thanks for considering the Laguna in your financial planning.



## Thank you to our generous supporters since the last *Meanderings*...

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and you.



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The **Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation**, founded in 1989, works to preserve, restore, and inspire greater public understanding and appreciation of the Laguna de Santa Rosa, a rich and extensive complex of freshwater wetlands on the North Coast of California. The Foundation conducts educational programs, implements preservation and restoration projects, works with landowners and public agencies to protect and improve Laguna resources, and works to develop appropriately managed opportunities for the public to enjoy the Laguna.

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## Let's play Lucky Laguna!

Are you ready to play Lucky Laguna? Teachers and kids are excited about the new game they are helping to create. Our game is based on the Mexican version of bingo, called "Loteria." Our version is called Lucky Laguna. Instead of numbers on the bingo card, there is a grid of images which correspond to a deck of cards with the same images. And instead of calling out the name of the image, you call out a clue to the image. For example, the teacher chooses the first card from the deck, which is a Valley Oak. She says: "Keystone tree species in the Laguna." The students call out the answer: "Valley Oak!" and mark their cards, if that image is on their card. And the game proceeds along like bingo, where the winner has covered their four corners, a diagonal, etc.

Teachers who have participated in Learning Laguna received an invitation, a species list and a template to use for their students to create the images for the game. It wasn't long after sending the flyer that the amazing artwork began coming into the office! Please stop in to the office to see the changing displays. But the story gets better as the emails from teachers began coming in too.

One third grade teacher said: "I highlighted all the categories (on the species list) and then made a "Tree Map" to pick one choice from each. Now they (the students) have to narrow it down again to one choice per habitat. They are learning about the habitat families and descriptions of species. It will become a mini-report before we finalize the drawings."

Docents visiting classrooms have been delighted that the students, because of creating this game, already knew many new plants, animals and insects and habitats of the Laguna. Children have been asking "Will we see a California Poppy when we visit the Laguna?" "Will we see a Common Merganser?" It is especially gratifying this year as there have been so many more young students who have not been familiar with the most common animals, such as raccoons.

*The Education Program is currently seeking a summer intern or volunteer to create the game with the new artwork. We are also seeking funding to produce the game to distribute to those Lucky students Learning about the Laguna.*