

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

ACQUISITION PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Michael D. Antonovich Open Space (East Canyon / BFI)



The dedication to parkland of 480 acres in upper East Canyon in the Santa Clarita Woodlands had been long awaited, pursuant to a 1992 Los Angeles County landfill development condition. The former Browning Ferris Industries property finally transferred to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority in June 2002, with the cooperation of the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation and Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, for whom the property has since been named. The extraordinary property has enormous significance for recreational trail linkages and the ecological integrity of core habitat in the Santa Susana Mountains. It is a key part of a vital 8,000-acre wilderness corridor.

Biologically significant and unique plant communities thrive on this north slope site. Mixed forests of bigcone Douglas fir, five species of oak, foothill flowering ash, California bay laurel, and Southern California black walnut intermix with coastal sage scrub, chaparral, and native grasslands. Perennial springs and creeks add to the habitat value for mountain lion, black bear, and other large and small mammals.

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Lechuza Beach

In Spring 2002, the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) acquired spectacular Lechuza Beach, near Matador State Beach in Malibu. Purchased with a grant from the State Coastal Conservancy, it is the first beach property ever acquired by the MRCA. The beach includes exquisite rock formations and views northward up the coast. With easy public access, Lechuza Beach is Malibu's first new public beach in 18 years. The MRCA is working with the local community to develop a management plan for the property.



Mulholland Gateway Park—Avatar

The 325-acre Avatar acquisition permanently protects the largest, and most significant, private land holding adjacent to Topanga State Park. This regionally significant acquisition was ranked as one of the Conservancy's top ten Workprogram priorities because of its accessibility to the San Fernando Valley, numerous existing trails, critical viewshed, and unparalleled habitat resources. This addition to 1,100-acre Mulholland Gateway Park secures multiple access points into the 20,000-acre "Big Wild" Topanga habitat area stretching from Tarzana to Woodland Hills. It also secures over one and a half miles of viewshed along the Mulholland Scenic Corridor. Its three parallel canyons contain a premier example of a mixed coastal sage scrub-walnut woodland community. The property was acquired with a combination of Proposition 12 and 13 funds.



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Brown's Canyon—Horner

The properties at the juncture of the 118 Freeway and the Brown's Canyon drainage in Chatsworth have been high priorities on every Conservancy Workprogram since 1989. They provide the most direct connection between the San Fernando Valley and the Santa Susana Mountains. In a dramatic last minute effort, the approximately 14-acre Horner property was acquired through an unprecedented public and private collaborative effort. The Chatsworth Presidio Group, LLC optioned the property for the MRCA and contributed additional funding. Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael Antonovich provided the largest portion of funding from Proposition A excess funds. Acquisition of the property guarantees contiguous public ownership of land from the heart of the Santa Susana Mountains, underneath the 118 Freeway at Canoga Avenue, to Stoney Point Park in the Simi Hills. This corridor shall serve recreation and wildlife movement needs for all time to come.



Castaic—Larwin Donation

In October 2001, Larwin Homes donated a 355-acre site to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, planned for eventual transfer to the Santa Clarita Watershed Recreation and Conservation Authority. The property is located in the Castaic area of unincorporated Los Angeles County and is part of the Santa Clara River Watershed. The property's topography ranges from gently sloping hills to rugged cliffs with grassland vegetation and scattered coast live oaks.



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Tuna Canyon

The stunning, 1,255-acre Tuna Canyon property parallels more than two miles of the Pacific Ocean in Malibu and provides dramatic, 360-degree views from the San Gabriel mountains to the Santa Monica Bay. By donating 1,015 acres of this extraordinary wilderness to the Conservancy, biomedical entrepreneur Alfred E. Mann was able to take advantage of the Natural Heritage Preservation Tax Credit Act of 2000. This preserved one of the largest tracts of privately-owned undeveloped land along the Southern California coast. The MRCA acquired an additional 240 acres with Los Angeles County Proposition A excess funds secured by Los Angeles County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, a State Coastal Conservancy Grant, and Conservancy Proposition 12 funds.

Tuna Canyon Park links over 18,000 acres of contiguous protected open space from Topanga State Park west to Las Flores Canyon. More than half of the property lies within Los Angeles County Significant Ecological Area Number 10. Deep canyons and ridges support a rich mosaic of coastal Southern California plant communities including sycamore riparian woodland, oak woodland, coastal sage scrub, and native grasslands. Tuna Creek, one of the most pristine aquatic habitats in the Santa Monica Mountains, courses through the eastern end of the property to the ocean.

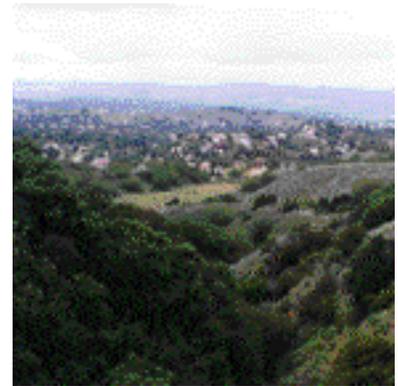


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West Mulholland Trailhead—21000 Mulholland Drive

The 61.4-acre West Mulholland Trailhead acquisition will offer a regionally significant recreational portal into the 20,000-acre “Big Wild” natural area. Optimally located at the beginning of the “dirt” section of Mulholland Drive, prior grading work on the property provides a slightly sloping four-acre pad that will be used to construct a state-of-the-art trailhead and interpretive site. This secluded parking area is surrounded by hillsides supporting high quality walnut woodland and purple sage-dominated coastal sage scrub vegetation. The site offers views of the Simi Hills and will provide access to numerous trails. Funding for the acquisition was provided by Proposition 12.



Agoura Hills / Rasmussen Donation

C.A. Rasmussen offered this 151-acre Agoura Hills oak savannah as the first donation to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy under the Natural Heritage Tax Credit Act of 2000. Beautiful specimen valley oaks and walnut woodlands dot the property, which is part of the Malibu Creek Watershed. Providing views of Ladyface Mountain, the Santa Monica Mountains, and the Simi Hills, the property had been included for many years on Conservancy Workprograms. Part of the inter-mountain range wildlife habitat linkage between the Santa Monica Mountains and the Angeles and Los Padres National Forests, it connects with City of Agoura Hills, National Park Service, and MRCA open spaces to form a nearly 15,000 acre block of publicly-owned parkland in the Simi Hills.



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Whitney Canyon



Whitney Canyon

The acquisition of this beautiful 442-acre site in the Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor was a major accomplishment of the 2001-2002 fiscal year. Located immediately adjacent to the Antelope Valley Freeway at San Fernando Road, Whitney Canyon is the first property owned by the Santa Clarita Watershed Recreation and Conservation Authority (SCWRCA), the joint powers agency between the City of Santa Clarita and the Conservancy. The property had been a Conservancy Workprogram high priority for nearly ten years, ranking fourth-highest in the Workprogram 2000 priority evaluation list.

Whitney Canyon provides outstanding examples of coastal sage scrub, oak woodland, chaparral, and riparian corridor vegetation, with year-round springs and at least ten sensitive species. Besides its importance for wildlife movement in a critical corridor between the Santa Susana Mountains and the San Gabriel Mountains, Whitney Canyon will now provide Santa Clarita with a regionally significant recreational entrance to the Angeles National Forest. The blue-line stream draining Whitney Canyon is part of the Santa Clara River Watershed and acquisition of the site ensures important watershed protection. The long-awaited purchase of this property was a victory made possible by the combined efforts of Assemblymember George Runner, the City of Santa Clarita, and the Conservancy. Funding was provided through the Conservancy's Proposition 12 allocation, additional Proposition 12 dollars from the Resources Agency, and funding from the City of Santa Clarita.

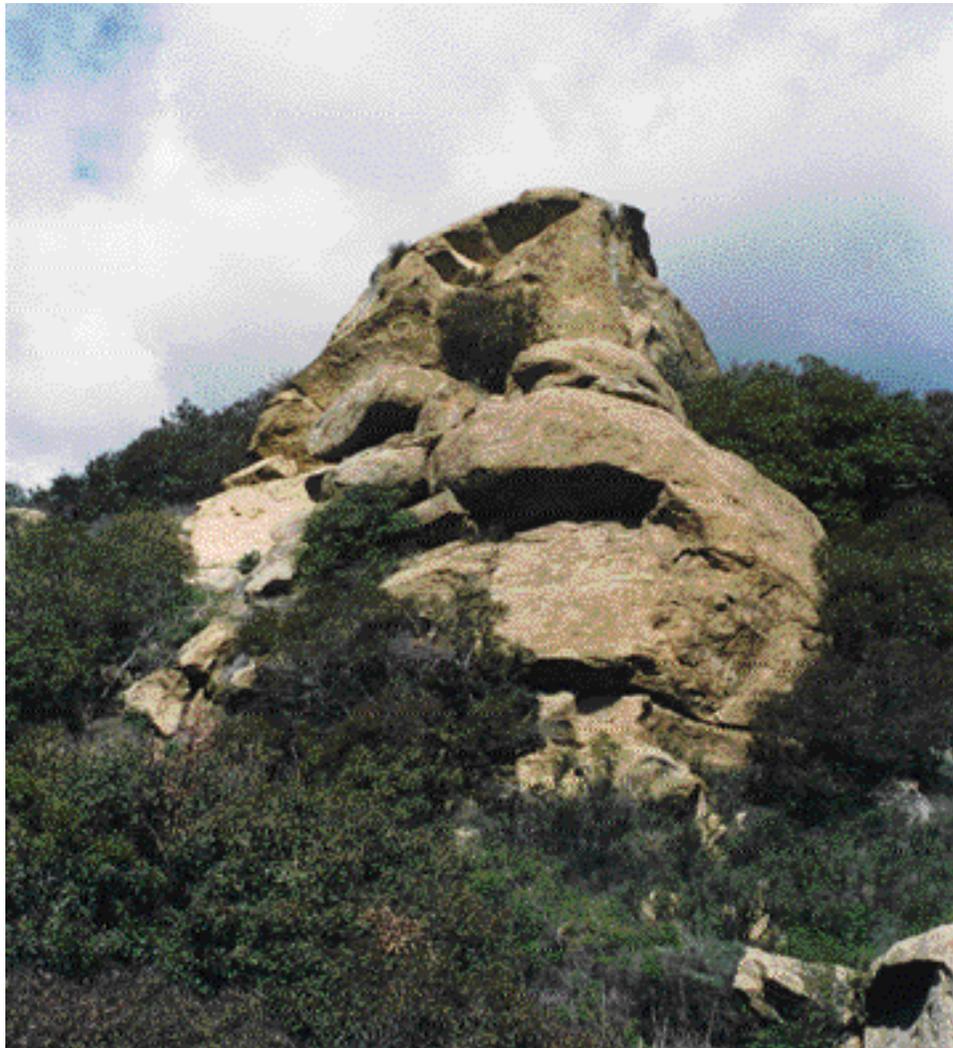
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Simi Valley—Rocky Pointe

Though smaller in size than other projects, 13-acre Rocky Pointe in Simi Valley ranked number one overall on the Conservancy’s 2000 Acquisition Workprogram priority list. Bringing extraordinary natural resources to the edge of the city, this ecologically significant property features scenic outcrops, endangered plant and animal species, oak woodlands, the confluence of two streams, and a vernal pool—all with easy public access.

The Conservancy worked in partnership with the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District (RSRPD) and local citizens to acquire the property with Conservancy Proposition 12 funds, RSRPD funds, Federal Land and Water Conservation grant funds, and a private donation. With its gargantuan sandstone rock formations—including a Ventura County designated landmark, Knolls Rock—Rocky Pointe provides a glimpse of how the edges of the Simi Valley appeared when Native Americans resided on the site. The property also provides unparalleled opportunities for the creation of new riparian habitat within existing flood control channels along its borders.



Rocky Pointe

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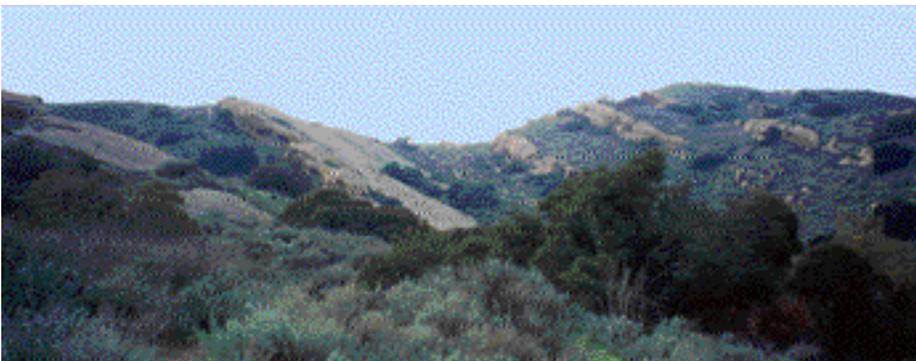
Ultimate Destination Trail

Over the past sixteen years, Cherry Canyon in La Cañada Flintridge has been protected by incremental acquisitions funded by grants from the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, City funds, and other state grants. Last year, the Conservancy granted \$75,000 to the City of La Cañada Flintridge for construction of a trail to link the parcels, and efforts culminated in April 2002 with the dedication of the "Ultimate Destination Trail." The trail winds through oak woodlands to a plateau that offers breathtaking views of La Cañada Flintridge, the San Gabriel Mountains, the Verdugo Mountains, and the Santa Monicas. The trail project was included in the Conservancy's Park Improvement and Development Workprogram. The Ultimate Destination Trail connects the Cerro Negro and Flint Canyon Trails, and was a longstanding dream of the La Cañada Flintridge Trails Council and founding member Liz Blackwelder.



Wood Ranch / Long Canyon Open Space

Located on the north-facing slopes of the Simi Hills, the 463-acre Long Canyon Open Space was acquired by the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority in a partial donation/sale at the end of 2001. An additional 506 acres will be transferred six years hence, for a total of 969 acres. Views into Oakbrook Regional Park, Lang Ranch open space, and across to nearby Simi Peak on the National Park Service's China Flat are dramatic on the southern boundary. The land adjoins the Bridle Path private open space to the east, and long-planned trail connections can finally be realized to link RSRPD's Challenger Park to MRCA and Conejo Open Space Conservation Authority parkland in Thousand Oaks. The site supports chaparral, coastal sage scrub, oak woodland, riparian woodland, and annual grasslands.

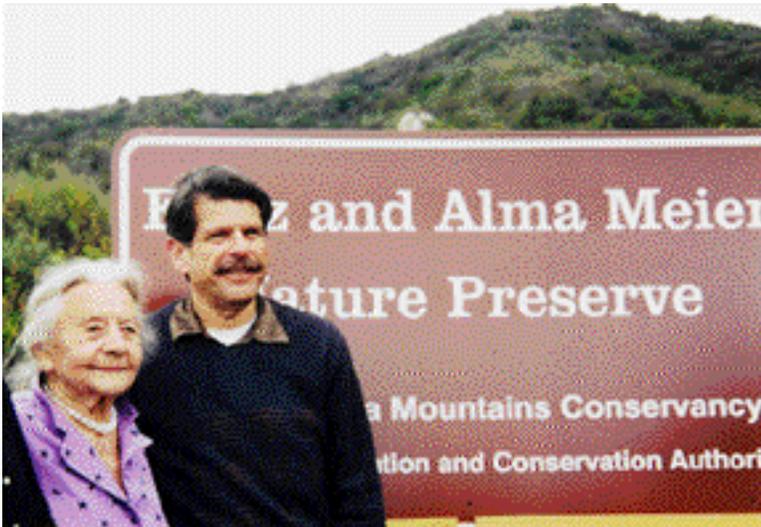


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Zuniga Pond

The Red Rock Canyon area of the Old Topanga watershed is known for its striking, colored sandstone formations and wilderness qualities. Immediately north of Conservancy-owned Red Rock Canyon Park, the 120-acre Zuniga Pond acquisition permanently protects both the northern section of these rock formations and a historic pond containing a regionally significant population of Southwestern pond turtles. The willow-encircled pond provides a year-round water source for wildlife and is one of the more beautiful settings in the Santa Monica Mountains. The Mountains Restoration Trust (MRT) initiated the acquisition. In this complex transaction, MRT pooled funding from a Proposition 12 grant from the State Coastal Conservancy, a Habitat Conservation Fund (Proposition 117) grant obtained by Los Angeles County, a grant from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and Conservancy Proposition 12 funds. The property was dedicated as the Fritz and Alma Meier Nature Preserve in honor of a private donor, Alma Meier, whose \$350,000 donation to the Conservancy made completion of the acquisition possible.



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Arroyo Pescadero

The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) received a grant from the Puente Hills Landfill Native Habitat Preservation Authority (NHPA) to design and construct an accessible trailhead and interpretive trail at its newly acquired Arroyo Pescadero open space in the Whittier Hills. Working with NHPA, the MRCA restored the planted native vegetation community and constructed new trails, interpretive displays, kiosks, and monument signs. MRCA commissioned steel artist Brett Goldstone to work with student designers to create an original gateway depicting the Whittier Hills at the entrance to the park.



Arroyo Pescadero

Heavenly Pond in Franklin Canyon

Franklin Canyon Park is located in the Eastern Santa Monica Mountains, nestled between the San Fernando Valley and Beverly Hills. Features of the 600-acre park include a lake, an outdoor amphitheater, a nature center, over five miles of hiking trails, expansive picnic areas, and a pond. The MRCA received a generous donation from Lotte Melhorn, a longtime Conservancy supporter, to improve the area around the pond, known as Heavenly Pond. Site improvements added handicapped access around Heavenly Pond, native planting, and picnic areas. Proposition 12 funding augmented the donation to improve fencing, signage, and public access. The area is a popular destination for local school groups.



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Los Angeles River Culinary Arts Center

The California Arts Council granted funds to renovate the former Lawry's kitchens at the Los Angeles River Center and Gardens. The kitchens, abandoned for over seven years, are being renovated to meet all current health codes while creating a first-rate culinary arts training facility. The Conservancy plans to develop a culinary arts training program for disadvantaged youth that will serve both students and the dining public. In-class training and opportunities for career advancement will be provided through educational partnerships.

A portion of this grant was previously used for capital improvements for the Los Angeles River Visitors Center. The programmatic elements achieved in the Visitors Center provide interpretive displays on the history of the Los Angeles River with particular emphasis on the eleven-mile natural streambed portion of the river. With murals and dioramas of the river ecosystem, the exhibit prepares students and casual visitors for field trips to the nearby Los Angeles river.



Los Angeles River Culinary Arts Center

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Las Virgenes View Trails

The Conservancy and the MRCA completed two trailheads and corresponding multi-use trails for hikers, mountain bikes and equestrians on the 696-acre Las Virgenes View Park located within the Malibu Creek watershed. Las Virgenes View Park is owned in fee by the MRCA, the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District, and the City of Calabasas. A large, two-sided kiosk with interpretive displays and a park entry sign mark the start of the southern trail. MRCA crews planted over fifty native trees and shrubs, and installed a bench and a drinking fountain. The 2.4-mile trail reaches deep into the southern half of the park with views of the Las Virgenes Valley, Malibu Creek State Park, and Saddle Peak. A scenic overlook includes a wayside display interpreting the geographical features of the valley. The northern trailhead, marked by an informational kiosk, heads deep into the northern part of the park and connects with an existing trail in MRCA's adjacent 624-acre open space dedication.



Las Virgenes View Park

Temescal Dining Hall

Renovations to the eighty-year old dining hall in 160-acre Temescal Gateway Park were completed in June 2002. Funded by grants from City of Los Angeles Proposition K and Conservancy Proposition 12 funds, new flooring, utilities, a stone fireplace, and restrooms were added. The new addition mirrors the original redwood paneling and the style of the old hall. The renovations have made the dining hall completely accessible to visitors of all abilities. Increased seating capacity, bungalow lighting fixtures, windows, and exterior shingles have enlivened the facility and made it more functional and attractive for camp, education, and conference center users.



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Mentryville

Located in Santa Clarita Woodlands Park at the base of Pico Canyon's chaparral-dominated slopes, Mentryville was an 1880s oil boom town built around the first commercially successful oil well in the United States. Now a California State Historic Landmark acquired by the Conservancy in 1995, Mentryville's historic barn and one-room schoolhouse have been undergoing extensive restoration and rehabilitation. MRCA crews lifted the barn and laid a new foundation. While providing structural stabilization to the beloved historic buildings, the restoration process retained the original elements wherever possible.



Mentryville Barn