

Preserving land and having the right management plan can benefit both nature and agriculture, fulfilling a growing community's needs.

Vision of a Copper Moon: Ranching, Naturally

by Julie Gallagher

We all need air to breathe, water to drink, food to eat, and a place to live. Land provides all of that and so much more. But as our populations grow, so do the demands on finite space. Housing concerns are often discussed, however, what can we do about the crucial needs that sustain all life like food, fresh water, and clean air?

One win-win solution is preserving land before it's too late. A single property with the right management plan can even support both nature and agriculture, allowing for critical multifunctionality that our limited space requires. Julie Gallagher shares her family's experience of striking the balance between ranching and ecosystem on their Copper Moon Ranch.

Hi. My name is Julie Gallagher. I am a fourth generation Livermore resident. My husband, Robert Stear, my daughter Amanda, and I have always wanted to live in the Livermore countryside. In 2011, our dream came true when we purchased 197 acres on Mines Road which we named Copper Moon Ranch.

In my naivete I thought that all land in a specific location was the same, but I sure learned quickly that this could not be further from the truth. Our property comprises at least three distinct areas: grazing land, oak studded valleys, and a riparian area, all of which have their own special and unique qualities.

The largest area is the grazing land. I believe when people think of California this is what they envision, with the native golden grasses of summer covering the hills. In late fall, with moisture and rains, those same hills begin to change to green. In the spring, a wide variety of wild flowers begin

to bud in the lush green native California grasses, bringing in a different variety of birds than the summer hills.

The oak-studded valley is in the back part of our property. It has a seasonal pond that can last year-round, depending on how much rain we receive. This area contains oak trees and different varieties of wild flowers and grasses than those in the grazing land. Due to the pond and the secluded nature of the area, families of wild pigs are drawn there, as are bobcats, coyotes, deer, skunks, ducks, hawks, owls, and many more species of wildlife.

Our third area is the riparian or creek habitat which is just behind our house. The Arroyo Mocho runs outside our backdoor from about November through June most years. Its banks are host to a variety of oaks, sycamores, chestnuts, and other trees, shrubs, and grasses – not all which are native to California.

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BUILDING A VISION

Not long after we built our house and moved in, we began to develop our vision for Copper Moon Ranch with the help of one of Tri-Valley Conservancy's partners, Natural Resource Conservation Services (NRCS), to "heal" the riparian area and restore it to its natural state. They were invaluable partners in the development of our vision as beginning ranchers and key sources for our funding. When I say "heal" the riparian area it is because livestock had been allowed to roam there year-round for decades and non-native plant species had been introduced that had choked out native species, which left a large stretch of the Arroyo Mocho "unhealthy".

Our first step in the process was to limit the livestock access in and around the creek. By limiting cattle, our hope was that bank erosion of the arroyo would slow or stop completely, native plants and seedlings would have a chance to grow, and the arroyo's water quality would improve. Working in conjunction with our livestock tenant, we accomplished all of this by dropping an agricultural well that would distribute plenty of water to cattle through troughs instead of using the creek as their water supply and installing a wildlife fence that would allow wildlife access to the Arroyo Mocho but eliminate access by livestock. This has worked amazingly well as the cattle now get all the water they need without damaging the fragile riparian eco-system which is critical to our natural water quality.

NEW THINGS IN SIGHT

In the two short years since we have completed this part of our vision, we have seen an increase and noticeable diversification in the plant life along the creek, which in turn has drawn in more varied animal life. Since we made the changes, we have started to see the endangered San Joaquin kit fox (which we caught on one of our trail cameras), badgers, roadrunners, and increased numbers of quail and other bird species.



Native California poppies along the spring grassland slopes.



A mighty oak near the barn provides habitat for wildlife.

Phase two of our vision, which is slated to begin this fall, involves planting native species of trees, grasses, and shrubs that thrive in California riparian areas. We are once again working with our friends at NRCS and have added a partner, Point Blue. Point Blue is a non-profit environmental agency that assists in making visions like ours happen while introducing school-age children to ecology through the program Student and Teachers Restoring A Watershed. The children will help Point Blue scientists plant the various flora while learning about conservation of the ecology and the environment.

A BALANCING BUSINESS

Our goal as stewards of our land is to successfully bring about our vision of a healthy Arroyo Mocho riparian area, while balancing the land usage with our other agricultural businesses like livestock grazing. We want to get the message out to land owners and community on the importance of creating a healthy ecosystem. One way we do this is by entering photos of our property and its wildlife in Tri-Valley Conservancy's Freeze Frame photography competition so we can talk about and share what is happening on our land. Another way we share how we work to balance ranching with our property's ecosystem is by hosting NRCS classes at Copper Moon Ranch, where people can get a hands-on experience with the various ecosystems, soils, wildlife, and flora at different stages of development from the changes we have instituted.

What does our future vision hold? Perhaps adding more oaks to our barren hills, trying to eradicate those pesky non-native grasses like the Medusa Head grass and Star thistle, or adding goats to our grazing regimen. You'll just have to swing by and see what is happening at Copper Moon Ranch.

To help preserve more land for the environment and agriculture by donating or volunteering, please visit TriValleyConservancy.org.



Tri-Valley
Conservancy
Open House

Thursday, November 8, 2018

4:00 pm to 7:00 pm at Purple Orchid Resort & Spa in Livermore

Please Join Us

to celebrate your 2018 successes with
Local Olive Oil Tasting, Wine & Refreshments,
and a sneak peek of our 2019 Goals

generously sponsored by
Purple Orchid Resort & Spa, Valley Catering, Darcie Kent Vineyards,
The Olivina, and our dedicated volunteer Board of Directors

Please RSVP by November 1st
to Georgie at (925) 449-8706 or gsaucedo@TriValleyConservancy.org

Freeze Frame: Photos Help Land Before It's Too Late

It's easy for some to drive by our rolling hills and not truly take in their marvelous beauty. Any of us can get so busy we forget to notice how magical it is to see our vineyards change color throughout the year, the rise and fall of creeks, or the delightful appearance of seasonal pools and waterfalls. Luckily, local photographers have shared their enthusiasm for nature and our lovely open spaces by capturing their behind-the-lens experience for all of us to see in breathtaking photographs for this year's annual Freeze Frame Photography Competition.

These talented local photographers, from 6th graders to adults, lent us their artistic talents to help protect open space with a click of their cameras. Their unique perspectives of the lands you are protecting forever that give us gorgeous landscapes, abundant recreation opportunities, and diverse agriculture, are stunning. The votes from the judges and the people are in!

In the adult category, third place was awarded to Barbara Mallon of Livermore for her fantastic shot "White Pelican Takes Off from Del Valle". Mallon's clear talent for capturing birds in nature also won her second place for the exquisite detail in "Great Horned Owl Fledgling in a Sycamore Tree". The grand prize and people's choice award went to the sweeping views and incredible depth of "Livermore Valley from Del Valle" by Livermore resident Barry Zupan.

In the youth category, judges were impressed with finalist Michelle Park of Dublin, who took home third place for her photo of "California Wildflowers" and second place, along with the people's choice award, for the gorgeous contrast of cherry blossoms in "Lifeless Skies". First place was presented to Shane Common, also from Dublin, for an incredibly vibrant aerial shot of the sports fields in "Wells Middle School".

Although preserving land forever can take a long time and a lot of work, these talented photographers are able to showcase the benefits to the community in a snap! Congratulations to the finalists, and thank you to all who entered photos. Your work shows why it is so important to continue to preserve open space for generations to come.

These photographs will encourage others to make a difference that will last forever by helping to preserve the Tri-Valley's critical lands before it's too late. Just like you do.

View the top photos & exhibit schedule at TriValleyConservancy.org.

ADULT CATEGORY



1ST PLACE by Barry Zupan
"Livermore Valley from Del Valle"



2ND PLACE by Barbara Mallon
"Great Horned Owl Fledgling
in a Sycamore Tree"



3RD PLACE by Barbara Mallon
"White Pelican Takes off
From Del Valle Lake"

YOUTH CATEGORY



1ST PLACE by Shane Common
"Wells Middle School"



2ND PLACE by Michelle Park
"Lifeless Skies"



3RD PLACE by Michelle Park
"California Wildflowers"

Valley Trail Connections: The Five-Park Link Planned for Next Year



Your new trail connection to link five parks, from Sycamore Grove Park in Livermore to Mission Peak in Fremont, is well on its way to becoming a reality thanks to an outpouring of support. Replacing the missing link with a single permanent trail connection will create an amazing 44-mile regional trail and may even add to the 1,200-mile Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail—one of just 30 trails in the entire National Trails System. We had hoped to begin construction on the highly anticipated trail connection this summer, but now, to protect sensitive bird and bat species during fledgling season in nearby trees, construction is planned to begin in August 2019 to have as little impact on the park and its wildlife as possible.

For years, thousands of people using a Sycamore Grove Park trail have been forced to stop at the Arroyo Del Valle, where the current trail ends. Thanks to you and your fellow supporters, this problem will be forever resolved by building a permanent bridge across the creek, so that hikers, equestrians, cyclists, strollers, and people with disabilities will have year-round access to more of the park's recreational benefits and natural beauty. The bridge component of the trail connection will also improve the creek's water quality, flow, and habitat by decreasing human impacts to the creek. That will help keep the water cleaner and help wildlife to thrive.

You helped take the first step towards making this trail connection possible by preserving 74 acres between Sycamore Grove Park and Del Valle Regional Park in 2014. The land was added to Sycamore Grove Park for public visitation the following year. However, due to the Arroyo del Valle flowing through the park, permanent safe access for all visitors wasn't an option without the final crucial piece to the trail connection—a multi-use bridge. As soon as the land was preserved, we started designing a bridge that would provide the long sought-after trail link and protect the sensitive habitat in and around the creek. After a rigorous feasibility study and permitting process, we now have the necessary approvals and permits to create the bridge. But since the intent of the Valley Trail Connections

project is to improve both recreation opportunities and natural resources, we're working with both park and permitting agencies to carefully plan construction to have as little impact on the park's wildlife and critical natural resources as possible. Construction is currently planned to begin in August next year.

Completing the trail connection between Sycamore Grove Park and Del Valle Regional Park has been on park and city planning wish lists for years. After many years of work together, we're grateful to all of you and the partners who have brought the Arroyo Del Valle Trail connection to its final stage, including Alameda County Supervisor Scott Haggerty, Bay Area Barns and Trails, Chevron, City of Livermore, California Coastal Conservancy, Dean Witter Foundation, East Bay Regional Park District, Friends of the Vineyards, Joseph & Vera Long Foundation, Livermore Area Recreation and Park District, Sierra Club, and Zone 7 Water District. The project has had such a great outpouring of encouragement that the items available to engrave at the trail connection, known as Your Name Here, in support of the project have nearly all sold out. Only the Tree Markers remain, to provide a native tree planted in the name of your choosing while providing shade and habitat for generations to come.

Because of you, once the bridge installation is completed, visitors will be able to enjoy a trail that links nearly 25,000 acres of open space through five parks—Sycamore Grove Park, Del Valle Regional Park, Ohlone Regional Wilderness, Sunol Regional Wilderness, and Mission Peak Regional Preserve. You're truly making something monumental happen in the Tri-Valley, with benefits that will ripple across a much greater area and into future generations. Thank you for all of your support! We look forward to keeping you updated on the progress of the Valley Trail Connections project.

To learn more about Valley Trail Connections or to secure a Tree Marker in support of the trail connection, please visit TriValleyConservancy.org.



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Mark Your Calendar

NOVEMBER 8, 2018

Open House—2018 and 2019 updates—4pm–7pm at the Purple Orchid.

NOVEMBER 27, 2018

Donate on Giving Tuesday to save land at TriValleyConservancy.org!

APRIL 4, 2019

Livermore Valley Uncorked Wine Celebration—Palm Event Center!

NOVEMBER 23, 2018

Ditch the stores for the great outdoors and take a Black Friday Hike!

JANUARY 2019

Volunteer Appreciation—Celebrating those who get it done—Stay tuned!

NOVEMBER 1, 2019

25th Anniversary Celebration Jeans & Jewels—6pm–11pm at Casa Real.

Want more details about any of these events?

Call 925.449.8706, email info@TriValleyConservancy.org, or visit us online at TriValleyConservancy.org.

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