

Open Space Views

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A publication of THE SAN ANSELMO OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE MISSION

The SAOSC is a volunteer committee of the Town of San Anselmo. We exist to identify and preserve valuable open space lands, viewsheds, and trails located in San Anselmo and the greater Ross Valley.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Jonathan Braun, Co-Chair
Stanley Radtke, Co-Chair
Kathleen Sanders, Treasurer
Amy Skewes-Cox, Secretary
Linda Hoch
Leonard Charles
Brian Crawford
Peter Horn
Daniel Krebs
Karin Ludwig
René Voss
Chris Brown
Sam Bruckner
Connor Clark

TO CONTACT THE SAOSC

San Anselmo Town Hall
525 San Anselmo Avenue
San Anselmo, CA 94960
415•258•4600
saopenspace@yahoo.com
www.SanAnselmoOpenSpace.org

The Committee meets the third Wednesday of every month at Town Hall. Please feel free to join us.

35 Years of Preservation



Stand anywhere in San Anselmo and look around you. See those open meadows and shady forests covering the hills on every side? See the ridgelines uncluttered with houses? Walk away from downtown in almost any direction and you soon enter untrammled open space, with trails winding away to be explored. It's all unfenced, open and free for all to enjoy. Deer, turkey, coyote, jackrabbits, songbirds, raccoons and foxes wander freely. Vultures and hawks circle overhead. With all the intense development pressure squeezing in from all sides, how can San Anselmo still be encircled with unspoiled natural areas, with new areas still being acquired and preserved? This is the story of the San Anselmo Open Space Committee.

Formed by the Town Council on October 13, 1981, the Committee has worked tirelessly to achieve our goals of protecting and preserving open space in and around the town. Staffed entirely by volunteers, we have had a huge impact on the quality of life in San Anselmo. Here are some highlights from the last three and a half decades.

The Committee drafted an open space master plan in 1988 that was the basis for an updated Open Space Element of the Town's General Plan, codifying the Town's commitment to preserving open space. We made an inventory of the remaining open space, identifying those properties that the Town wished to preserve. Before submitting development plans, owners of those properties must meet with the Committee to see if better alternatives exist. If possible, we facilitate purchases or work out conservation easements

...continued inside



35 Years...continued

with the owners, permanently preserving the land. We submit comments to the planning agencies, recommending mitigations to the proposed developments to protect open space, environmental impact, and the views we all love. We work closely with the Town Planning Department, Parks, and Public Works. We are currently working to revise the Open Space Element and the inventory to reflect current conditions. If the Committee did not exist, no one would be fighting for open space in San Anselmo.

In 1982, a hilltop above Oak Springs Drive in Sleepy Hollow became available and, after extensive fundraising, the Committee was able to facilitate acquisition of the Kite Hill Preserve. Though small, at 730' elevation it is the highest point in San Anselmo and provides glorious views.

In 1990, the Committee helped spearhead Measure D, a ballot measure to acquire Bald Hill. Heartbreakingly, it missed the 2/3rds requirement by 180 votes. The signature landmark of the Ross Valley remains in private hands and stands at risk of development, but it remains our highest priority and we continue to try to protect it.

After 60-acre Sorich Ranch Park was acquired by the Town in the 1960's, the land languished for years. In 1992, the Committee developed a Master Plan for the park, which was adopted by the Town. Subsequent grants, donations and hundreds of volunteer hours helped transform the park: The parking lot was relocated, the redwood grove and native vegetation were planted and the shade arbor built. This inspired the formation of Friends of Sorich Park, which still meets each month to mow, tend the plants, remove invasive weeds, and pick up litter.

In 1995, when story poles went up for a proposed development below Camino de Herrera, the Committee spearheaded a fundraising effort with neighbors and raised a quarter-million dollars to purchase the 22 acres. We succeeded in 1999, and it is now the Hawthorne Canyon Preserve.

From 1993-1996, the Committee partnered with the Marin County Open Space District and the Marin Community Foundation to acquire three parcels totalling 30 acres just

north of the summit of Bald Hill. The land was turned over to Marin County and is now the Bald Hill Open Space Preserve.

C. Fredrick Faudé donated an eleven-acre property above Drake High School to the Town in 1973. The Drake seniors painted a big white "D" and their class year on the hill each fall, and it became known as D Hill. Members of the Committee formed the Friends of Faudé Park, which installed a bench and picnic table on D Hill and is currently constructing new trails, steps and bridges. We work with the Parks Department to mitigate fire and flood danger and improve the park. Work parties continue to remove invasive broom and maintain trails.

In 2006, the Committee was approached by teenager Liam Hughes, who was looking for a project for his Eagle Scout certification. We proposed a new trail in Sorich Park to go up to Rock Fort, and Liam and his friends and family, working with volunteers from the Committee, built the Dean Nyberg Trail, named for the former Parks Director who had long worked for open space.

In 2009, the Committee started a project to build two new trails – one to the top of historic Red Hill, and another connecting Memorial Park and Sorich Park. After years of work and negotiations, this project is approved and under way. Trail designs are complete and tons of broom and litter removed. When the trails are completed, there will be two more beautiful assets for all to enjoy.

In 2013, Sky Ranch, a 16-acre property adjoining the Bald Hill Preserve, came on the market. SAOSC immediately swung into action. The Committee, partnering with the Marin Open Space Trust, the towns of San Anselmo and Fairfax, Fairfax Open Space Committee and Marin County Parks and Open Space, raised \$1.2 million to purchase the property in 2015. It is now part of the Bald Hill Preserve. Work continues to restore the property to its natural state.

All these accomplishments were made possible by the hard work of Committee volunteers, the Town Council, its staff, and your generous contributions.



Volunteers Needed for New Trails!

After years of planning and studies, the San Anselmo Trails Project is approaching the construction stage. The Red Hill Trail to the top of Red Hill will be constructed first, followed by the Memorial Ridge Trail from Memorial Park to Sorich Park. We are hoping the majority of the work can be accomplished by volunteers, guided by expert trail builders. Get some exercise and fresh air, meet new friends, and be part of creating something that will be a San Anselmo landmark for generations. Sign up now by contacting volunteer coordinator Brian Crawford at Brian@BrianCrawford.info or call 415-454-3439.



So Much To Save

The Committee continues to assist the Town of San Anselmo and other agencies in acquiring certain undeveloped properties in the Ross Valley to preserve them from development. Of the approximately 420 acres originally identified in the Town's General Plan for open space protection, 68 acres have been protected, about 148 acres have been developed by private landowners, and 208 acres remain to be protected. The Committee continues to seek potential sellers of target open space lands and to assist neighborhood groups in acquiring and preserving other important local open space properties. To do this and to attract the funding of larger agencies and foundations, we need to continually replenish our Open Space Fund, which relies solely on private donations from local residents and groups.

A question for some considering a donation is why do we need to protect more land in a county where half the land is already protected from development? For many, the answer has always been to protect views, habitat linkage, and recreational opportunities, and because they aren't making any more. Consistent with this is a view that values the essence of each of these individual properties. Each is a place unto itself with its own unique assemblage of millennia-old rocks

and soils, view of the sky, century-old lichens, trees, stumps, wood rat nests, wildflowers. That fragile wholeness is broken when the first shovel enters the soil to create a building foundation, when the bulldozer levels the building pad and creates a driveway for a 3-car garage, and when fences are constructed to impede the movement of landscape-eating wildlife. What took millennia to create is lost in a moment. Sure, some natural habitat may be retained on the parcel, but it is not the same place. Sure, there is a lot of other protected natural habitat in the area, but this place is not those. Once an undisturbed property is developed, that particular place is gone.



We hope that you might see each of our remaining target open space properties as a location worthy unto itself and that protecting it protects all of its setting and inhabitants -- its essence. There are not many of these places left in the Ross Valley. So, when deciding which worthy non-profit groups you will donate to this year, please remember this local group that will use your donation to buy these places. Perhaps you can think of your donation as providing long-term affordable housing for local plants and wildlife, benefiting them as well as the human community of San Anselmo and the Ross Valley.

Our New Fund

As of this spring, the Open Space Committee now has a new Fund for charitable contributions, aptly named the San Anselmo Open Space Committee Fund (or SAOS Committee Fund, for short). This move from the Marin Community Foundation was made to save steeply rising administrative fees. The Open Space Committee established a separate account under the auspices of the Town of San Anselmo, which, as a government entity, affords the same tax-deductible advantages to contributors as a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

The San Anselmo Open Space Committee Fund

_____ \$50 _____ \$100 _____ \$150 _____ Other

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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Please make checks out to:

SAOS Committee Fund

Your gift is tax-deductible.

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San Anselmo, CA 94960

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The Wilds of Conservación Patagónica

Our April 2016 Annual Benefit was a huge success, with a great turnout, delicious food, and a fantastic slide show by Alison Kelman of Conservación Patagónica (based in the southern reaches of Chile and Argentina). Alison showed slides of Patagonia Park and discussed Doug and Kris Tompkins' creation of Patagonia Park, as well as Tompkins Conservation's larger vision for using sustainable tourism and conservation to protect this land in perpetuity.

Alison first heard of Tompkins Conservation initiatives in Patagonia while interning at Outside magazine in 2009. A few years later, while serving as the Community Manager for the Patagonia DC store, she made the long trip down to Aysen, Chile to participate in the Patagonia Park volunteer program. Since joining the Conservación Patagónica team as the Communications Director in 2014, Alison now splits her time between Chile and San Francisco, working to protect one of the world's last wild places.

Her slides of this amazing part of the world, and the exotic animals to be found there, were captivating and entertaining for all. Alison also conveyed the great social element of the parklands with many locals working on the conservation effort and being supported as the parklands develop. As large sheep ranching enterprises have been purchased, certain lands have been restored using ecological techniques to restore watersheds and delicate ecosystems.



Patagonia Park, Chile

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