

Ridge Lines

SUMMER 2018



Heal the land, heal the people

A story of generosity as people in the North Bay put their lives back together post-fire

Margaret Garvin and her husband Russell were in bed when the phone rang at 11:38 p.m. on October 8, 2017. It was a robocall, but not the usual telemarketer. A recorded voice described a fire in the vicinity and advised residents to prepare for evacuation.

The Garvins' house is up a twisting one-lane road about 30 minutes from downtown Santa Rosa, near the top of the Mayacamas mountain range, not far from where the Ridge Trail passes through Trione-Annadel State Park.

Margaret and Russell checked outside for signs of fire, but there were none, not even the smell of smoke. But they began gathering the things they'd most want to save if they had to evacuate. By 1:15 a.m. there was still no sign of fire, but Margaret was uneasy. She called 911 to see if emergency personnel had any updates.

The dispatcher's response was short and sharp: get out now. When they opened the garage door to leave, the night sky was glowing orange and the air from smelled faintly of smoke. In separate cars,

Continued on page 4



A fire began burning on the ridge near the Garvins' home, but because they are in a valley, they could not see any signs of fire until it was almost too late.

EVENTS

Save the date!

Mount Madonna Overnight

August 18-19, 2018

Come and enjoy the summer night skies on this fabulous campout and hike on historic Mount Madonna.

Register Today! East Bay Hills Benefit hike and equestrian ride

August 30–September 3, 2018

This Labor Day holiday spend your days hiking pack-free and your nights under the stars. For as low as \$65 per day we shuttle your gear, prepare your meals, and provide nightly entertainment. Choose your number of days from 1-5!

Save the Date!

Ridge Trail Service Day

Saturday, November 3, 2018

Volunteer and join hundreds of trail enthusiasts and REI Co-op to provide trail care by building and restoring the Ridge Trail at a location near you. This is your chance to make friends and get your hands dirty!

Partner Event

Pacific Coast Trail Run

Saturday, August 4, 2018

Join Pacific Coast Trail Runs for the second of four in their Ridge Trail Race Series. Choose from 3 distances (23k-37k-60K) as you explore Baker and Stinson beaches. Be sure to stay for the BBQ!

See RidgeTrail.org/events for details on these events and our monthly hikes.

Restoration & Reopening of Fire-Damaged Trails

Thanks to all of the Ridge Trail (RT) supporters and hard-working North Bay volunteers, five of the six Ridge Trail sections that were closed due to fire damage last fall have been reopened. We can't thank you enough!

For nearly three weeks last October, more than a dozen wildfires raged simultaneously in Northern California. The Nuns, Tubbs and Atlas fires in Napa, Solano and Sonoma Counties were the most damaging, and in fact they now rank among the most devastating fires in California's history, with the Tubbs being the most destructive ever. Those three monster fires scorched a combined 181,000 acres, killing 44 people and destroying more than 8,300 structures, including 2,800 homes in the city of Santa Rosa.

The toll on the North Bay was immense. Lives were lost, people were displaced, and many homes, businesses, farms and vineyards were destroyed. Parks and wilderness areas in the region were hit hard as well, and many trails—including about 25.5 miles of the Ridge Trail—had to be closed. The damage included burned out trees at risk of falling on or near trails, destruction of retaining walls, bridges and signage, and obliteration of trails where firefighters bulldozed tons of earth to stop fires from advancing.

Helping people find shelter, cope with loss and rebuild was everyone's first priority. But it was also important to reopen parks and trails, in part to give fire victims a respite from the aftermath of the fires. So at the Ridge Trail we made wildfire restoration a priority:

- In November and December we sent out our end-of-year fundraising campaign, and donors responded generously. We used some of that money to support North Bay and other trail restoration and construction projects.



Lovely Trione-Anadel State Park flourishes with springtime flowers. This park still has 3.5 miles of trail that still needs work before it can completely re-open.

- The Santa Rosa home of longtime RT supporter Margaret Garvin was one of seven in her neighborhood that was not burned down by the Tubbs fire. Our campaign got her thinking about the spectacular healing power of nature, and in December she and her family made an amazingly generous gift to the Ridge Trail. We earmarked a portion of that money to go to the Napa County Regional Park and Open Space District to help fund restoration. (Look for Margaret and Russell's inspiring story on page 1.)

- Since early November, hundreds of volunteers have come out to help clear and regrade trails, rebuild drainage features, remove weak tree limbs (or whole trees), rebuild bridges and retaining walls and re-sign trails.

Bay Area Ridge Trail Program Director Louisa Morris attended two fire recovery trail work days, including one on April 28th in Skyline Wilderness Park near Napa. "It's humbling to be part of a crew on days like this," Louisa says.

"The fires caused so much heartbreak," she explains. "You can feel it when you look out over a huge swath of burn area. But another thing that hits you is how quickly nature recovers. There was so much green already that day, and tons of wildflowers and birds. It was beautiful."

TRAIL NEWS



Twenty-five miles of trail have been restored and reopened in Napa and Sonoma thanks to the tireless efforts of volunteers and park and open space staff.

But Mother Nature can't fix retaining walls or regrade trails on her own, Louisa points out. "To be part of a crew swinging tools side-by-side with strangers to help make all this beauty accessible again is really inspiring," she says. "It makes you think about the fragility of life, but also the resilience."

Want to help us open the final fire-damaged section? The Ridge Trail has been reopened in Skyline, Robert Louis Stevenson State Park (north of Calistoga), Hood Mountain Regional Park and part of Trione-Annadel State Park (near Santa Rosa). That leaves only the 3.5 trail-miles in lovely Trione-Annadel State Park near Santa Rosa to restore. Volunteers with Sonoma County Trails Council plan to restore a bridge there this summer and the Ridge Trail plans to do further restoration on Ridge Trail Service day—Saturday, November 3. Mark the date if you'd like to pitch in!



This photo shows an ariel view of the Garvins' property (circled.) The surrounding fire icons show their neighbor's properties that were burned to the ground. The Garvins' wanted to make a gift that would help the community heal in a lasting way—by restoring trails that provide a respite from dealing with the fire's aftermath.

Continued from page 1

they started down the hill. Once outside the semi-sheltered area of their property, they could see the whole sky was alight, and as they descended they passed within yards of a blazing wall of fire.

They didn't know it yet, but Margaret and Russell were one small step ahead of the Tubbs Fire, one of a several wildfires tearing through the North Bay (see related story on page 2). Strong winds were pushing the Tubbs fire southwest at breakneck speeds, and it was engulfing everything in its path on its way toward the city of Santa Rosa. It killed 22 people, destroyed at least 5,200 structures, and ravaged parks and wilderness areas that include many miles of Ridge Trail.

By some stroke of fate, though, the Garvin's house survived. "There were miles and miles of devastation, and we were right in the path of it. In our little community alone, there were 160 homes and all but seven were destroyed. For some reason ours was one of the lucky seven."

Margaret was grateful for their good fortune, but heartbroken at the fate of the hundreds who lost loved ones, homes, possessions, or livelihoods.

"Everybody was donating clothes or food, or handing out money, and it was beautiful to see everyone contributing. But it didn't feel like the best way for us to help. Those things were crucial but transitory; we wanted to do something long-reaching, but we weren't sure what."

One day in December, it hit her: "I'd been thinking about what a community needs in order to heal after a disaster like this," Margaret explains, "and I started thinking about the healing power of nature. How restorative it is to breathe fresh air and move your body quietly through nature." She thought maybe the Ridge Trail Council could help.

"Russell has hiked and loved the Ridge Trail for as long as it's been around," explains Margaret, "and I was so impressed with their ethos. They're really dedicated to their mission of connecting people to nature."

With all these thoughts percolating, Margaret poked her head into Russell's office. When he looked up from his desk, she said, "How about giving to the Ridge Trail?"

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Russell's face lit up instantly. "He loved the idea so much," Margaret says. "He looked at me like I'd just validated everything he believes in."

Margaret called Ridge Trail Development Director Eileen Morris that very day. "Eileen told us the types of projects donated funds would go toward--including several fire restoration projects in the North Bay," explains Margaret. "That made us even more certain we were doing the right thing."

"We were blown away by their generosity," says Eileen, "and it's helped us provide funding to Napa County Parks for Ridge Trail bridge and retaining wall restoration, as well as felling trees burned to the core. We are deciding how to invest the rest of the money, we want to be very strategic."

But Margaret and Russell consider it a privilege. "The thing about giving," Margaret says, "is that it feels fantastic. Being part of the solution makes me feel the worthiness of being alive."

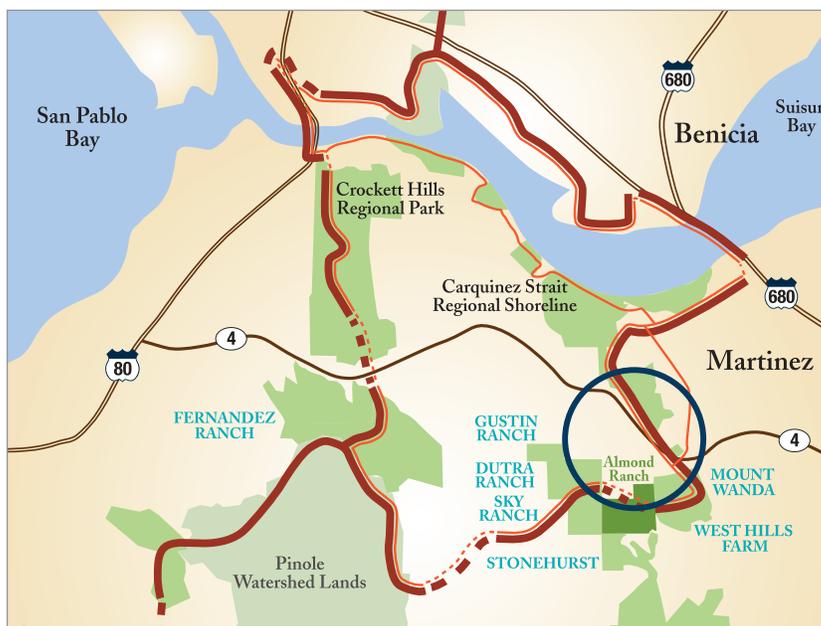
EAST BAY

Let's Help Save Almond Ranch

If you've ever hiked the Ridge Trail through the hills of John Muir National Historic Site in Martinez, you've probably arrived at a padlocked gate and had to turn back. Beyond the gate is Almond Ranch, 281 acres of private property abutting Mount Wanda.

The land on either side of the ranch was protected by the John Muir Land Trust (JMLT), a wonderful RT partner committed to the protection and care of open space, ranches, farms, parkland and shoreline in the East Bay. On April 17, JMLT made an exciting announcement: after years of negotiation, they have come to an agreement to purchase the land for \$4 million if they come up with the money by the end of 2019.

This acquisition would save the land from possible future development, preserving 281 acres of grassland, scrub, oak-bay woodlands in the riparian zone surrounding the seasonal stream that winds through the property and eventually flows into Alhambra Creek. It would also close a critical one-mile gap in the Ridge Trail, which is currently one of several remaining gaps in the Carquinez Strait Scenic Loop Trail, the 50-mile loop that encircles the Carquinez Strait and climbs into the surrounding hills.



John Muir Land Trust is working hard to acquire the Almond Ranch property and close a critical one-mile RT gap. Visit jmlt.org/almond ranch for more info.

Here's How We Can Help!

To raise the money, JMLT has launched the Campaign to Save Almond Ranch--and they've already received a commitment of \$1 million from the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD). The EBRPD grant will use funds from the 2008 voter-approved Measure WW supporting high-priority community park projects.

That leaves \$3 million to be raised by December 31, 2019.

"JMLT is a wonderful advocate for land conservation *and* public access" says Ridge Trail Executive Director Janet McBride, "We're excited to help spread the word and support this project in any way we can."

To find out more about the project visit jmlt.org/almond ranch.



PARTNERS



California State Coastal Conservancy



Sonoma: A 4.8 mile stretch of the Ridge Trail that winds up the north slope of Sonoma Mountain, traversing groves of bay laurel and oak before opening up to stunning views of the Santa Rosa Plain.



San Mateo: 3.5 miles of new singletrack in Sanborn County Park that created 22 continuous miles of prime mountain biking between Sanborn and Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve.



San Jose: 5.3 new Ridge Trail miles restoring access to Mt. Umunhum, the highest peak in the Santa Cruz Mountains, after a 37-year closure.

These are just three of the many completed projects made possible by one of the Ridge Trail’s greatest partners: the California State Coastal Conservancy. The “Conservancy”, founded in 1976, is a state agency that partners with like-minded organizations to preserve, protect and restore the natural beauty and environmental health of the California coastal zone (including watershed areas), and provide public access. In 1997, its jurisdiction in the Bay Area was expanded beyond the coastal zone to address resource and recreational goals throughout all nine Bay Area counties, and in 1998 the San Francisco Bay Program was created.

“The Conservancy has been a stalwart champion of public access and regional trails,” says Ridge Trail Executive Director Janet McBride. “They currently fund about 20% of our annual budget.” Since 1998, the Conservancy has awarded over \$12 million to support acquisition, planning, and building of Ridge Trail sections and staging areas, including \$7 million in direct grants to partners.

“A continuous ridgeline trail is one of the key elements of our grand vision,” says Brenda Buxton, the Conservancy’s Bay Area Deputy Regional Manager. “We imagine these two concentric loops—the Bay Trail along the shoreline and the Ridge Trail being the outer loop—with a rich network of regional trails as arteries between the two. We don’t have the resources to do the work ourselves, so we’re thrilled to fund partners like the Ridge Trail Council to help prioritize the work of land acquisition and trail building.”

A few of the current Conservancy-funded Ridge Trail projects Brenda is excited about include the Vallejo Bluffs completion and the extension of the Ridge Trail from Garin Regional Park in Hayward down to Niles Canyon. “Vallejo Bluffs especially,” says Brenda. “This will close a 1.5-mile gap that’s part of the Carquinez Scenic Loop Trail, which crosses both the Carquinez and Benicia bridges and goes through waterfront towns. It’s really well-aligned with our mission to make sure people who live in Bay Area cities and towns have access to trails.”

For more information about the Coastal Conservancy, visit their website at scc.ca.gov.

LEGACY CIRCLE PROFILE

Phil Arnold: Legacy gift aimed at Ridge Trail's financial infrastructure

"I like improving things people can't see, so what they do see works," says Phil Arnold, Board Chair of the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council.

Arnold, a former chief financial officer for the San Francisco Rec and Parks Department, became acting director of the San Francisco Zoo the year of the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. "Much of the zoo's infrastructure collapsed during the quake," he said. He helped put together a major bond issue that was used to repair the zoo's water, gas, electrical and sewer systems—all invisible to the visiting public.

Golden Gate Park had a similar potential for hidden damage, he continued. "So I worked on a bond issue to rebuild all the stuff you don't see—underground utilities, including water, power, and sewer systems.

As past treasurer of the Council, Arnold saw some financial weaknesses that, like damaged infrastructure, are invisible to most.

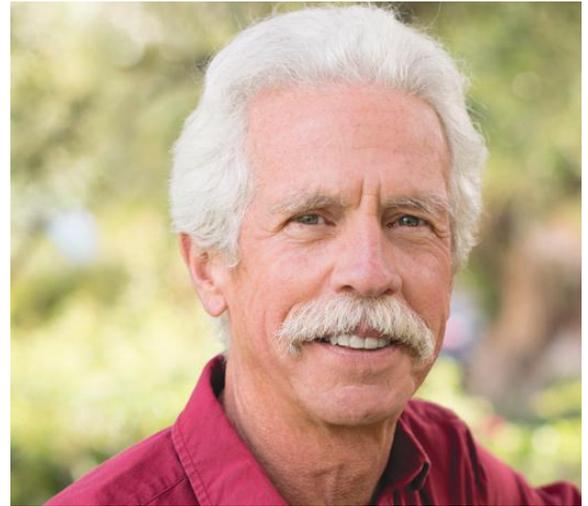
"The Council went through some rough financial times in 2009. About 20% of our budget is realized through state park bonds and in 2009, all bond money was frozen." Arnold said. "Then we got a bequest out of the blue of about \$160,000 that saw us through."

But Arnold knew that surprise bequests were not the answer. "I realized we lacked sufficient operating reserves and diversity in our fundraising," he said. Like water and electrical systems, operating reserves provide quiet, reliable support to nonprofits during times of economic stress or uncertainty.

An active hiker, swimmer, sailor, and runner, Arnold encourages people to get out on the Trail. "I want them to experience its beauty and see how it enhances life in the Bay Area. I want them to feel that it deserves their support."

Arnold has set aside a fixed amount in his living trust for future benefit to the Trail Council. "My gift is totally unrestricted," Arnold explained. "But I hope it can go to the operating reserve."

A San Francisco resident, where he lives with his wife Monique Zmuda, Arnold is the father of four adult children and a passionate advocate of open space. "I grew up in Southern California,"



Legacy Circle member, Phil Arnold, included the Ridge Trail in his will to support the financial infrastructure on the trail.

he said. "When I was in high school, I saw the orange groves of Orange County paved over."

After moving to San Francisco, he joined the City's Rec and Parks Department. At age 41, he became director of the Open Space Program, which provides funding for acquisition, development and maintenance of public open spaces.

When asked to join the Council board twelve years ago, his personal and professional history made him immediately sympathetic to its mission.

"Imagine the vision the Council founders had back in the late fifties and early sixties," he enthused. "How many people back then were thinking of a trail encircling the Bay and connecting some 65 parks. We are the torch bearers of their vision."

The Bay Area Ridge Trail Council is honored to list Phil Arnold as a member of its Ridge Trail Legacy Circle. For more information, contact Eileen Morris at 415-561-2595, ext 203, or eileenmorris@ridgetrail.org.



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Thank You for Shopping at Whole Foods on April 19!

Whole Foods 5% Day Raises Big Money for the Ridge Trail

Did you buy a pound of kale at Whole Foods Market in Berkeley on April 19? Stock up on bread and milk that day at the store in Oakland? Eat lunch at the Whole Foods Market salad bar in Los Gatos?

Whatever you bought, thank you! It was “5% Day” at Whole Foods Market, and your purchases translated to a whopping \$197,716 donation to the Ridge Trail.

5% Day is just one way the grocer gives back to the communities it serves, and it does this by donating 5% of net sales from participating stores to a local non-profit or educational organization. “We were excited when our application to be a Whole Foods Market 5% Day partner was approved,” says Ridge Trail Executive Director Janet McBride, “but when the numbers came in we were blown away. Nearly \$200,000 to fund Ridge Trail projects, rally trail volunteers and get people outside. That’s fantastic!”

“At Whole Foods Market we believe in nourishing both people and our planet,” says Nichole Carpenter, Marketing and Community Relations for Whole Foods Market, Northern California. “It was incredibly gratifying to host a 5% Day that directly benefits the Ridge Trail, and it was fantastic to be able to get to know the community that supports the Bay Area Ridge Trail through the events we hosted.”

As part of the campaign—which was about raising money but also about raising awareness and getting people out on the trail—Whole Foods Market sponsored a four-part “Find Your Local Wild” hiking series. The series drew about 250 people to Ridge Trail hikes at Coyote Ridge, on Mt. Tamalpais, and in San Francisco: one on Mount Sutro and one—a “happy hour hike” capped with cold beer and healthy snacks donated by Whole Foods Market—in the Presidio.

Both Whole Foods Market and REI Co-op donated prizes for a raffle that helped us get people to spread the word about saving their grocery shopping for April 19. The following lucky winners were announced in May:

Monica Gonzales won a private hike for ten guided by Bay Area Ridge Trail staff and local experts; Sai Kiran Polavarapu won a \$250 Whole Foods Market gift card; and grand prize winner Diana Soriano of won an REI Co-op hosting camping trip on Angel Island, REI Co-op hiking gear, including a backpack and hiking poles, and a \$250 Whole Foods Market gift card!

Winner Sai Kiran says, “Ridge Trail is my go-to place during the weekends. With more than 375 miles to hike, I’m always looking forward to exploring the trail. I’ve covered sections starting down in the South Bay and in Marin. I also volunteered for trail work last year at John Nicholas trail and it was fun! I hope everyone experiences what Ridge Trail has to offer!”



Ridge Trail hiker and volunteer, Rachel Cox, enjoys a goodie bag filled with healthy snacks provided by Whole Foods Markets while attending a Ridge Trail event.