



PRESIDENT'S LETTER **SEPTEMBER RANCH PROGRESSES**

by *Larry Bacon*



Priscilla Walton

We all want a sustainable future for Carmel Valley. So, how do we attain that goal?

I found this quotation in an article in *The Atlantic Monthly* of March 2011 that I felt covered the range of issues and concerns

that we residents of Carmel Valley need to think about as we are trying to protect and sustain this incredibly beautiful and caring community:

“Sustainable communities share a common purpose: places where people thrive to enjoy good health and create a high quality of life. A sustainable community reflects the interdependence of economic, environmental, and social issues by acknowledging that regions, cities, towns and rural lands must continue into the future without diminishing the land, water, air, natural and cultural resources that support them. Housing, transportation and resource conservation are managed in ways that retain the economic, ecological and scenic values of the environment. And they are communities where the consumption of fossil fuels, emissions of greenhouse gases, water resources and pollution are minimized.”

As we enter the 2020's and look to the development of the next update to the Carmel Valley Master Plan, sustainability must be a primary goal.

This will require an engaged and committed local citizenry as a prerequisite. Local government and institutions must also commit to a set of sustainability principles and to a collective vision. Together, local residents and governmental bodies can then dedicate themselves to an integrative planning approach that includes environmental, economic, and social goals for sustainability. Thereafter, sustainability must be a process of continuous improvement and must constantly evolve.

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Although September Ranch was approved for development by Monterey County in 2011, the sale and funding for the project were not secured until 2018. The new owners engaged an experienced development team that has cooperated with county planning and has been willing to consider community input. Subject to some 190 conditions, the property is permitted for 73 residential lots (offered for sale) and for 22 affordable units (built by the developer). The land fronting Carmel Valley Road is to remain as an equestrian center.

presented to the Board of Supervisors for approval in the next few months. However, no grading or constructions can start until a turning lane to accommodate truck traffic is added on Carmel Valley Road at the intersection with Brookdale Drive, across from the project's future main entrance.

As approved in 2011, the project called for a signal light at the Brookdale intersection. Working with the County and the Carmel Valley Road Advisory Committee, the developer has agreed to forgo the signal light in favor of changing the stretch of Carmel Valley Road in front



Entry to September Ranch

Photo by Mibs McCarthy

As is often the case, the project has taken longer than expected to clear the many conditions. The property will have a sewerage system connected to the Carmel Area Wastewater District. Water will be provided from wells on the property, limited to 57 acre-feet, and monitored for separation from the Carmel River aquifer. No use of CalAm water is permitted.

The final map for the project will be

of September Ranch to three lanes, with a center turning lane like the roadway fronting Tehama. The cost of the work will be funded by the developer, but the full road project may not be completed in 2020.

The west side of September Ranch will be deeded to the Monterey County Parks Department, providing a trail from Carmel Valley Road to Jacks Peak Park. The easement will include a parking lot.

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If we work together, we have a chance to begin that process now in anticipation of the next Carmel Valley Master Plan and influence the vision of the next Monterey County General Plan. The following elements will be critical:

- the broad and diverse involvement and commitment of the residents of Carmel Valley
- the development of a collective vision for a sustainable CV
- the creation of sustainability principles for Carmel Valley
- an accurate accounting of all existing assets and resources
- a list of features that do not now exist but are necessary to sustainability
- clear, measurable goals
- the development of sustainability indicators to evaluate progress, and
- open and transparent communication with local planners and government

CVA, over the past few years, has worked tirelessly to protect the rural nature and natural resources of Carmel Valley. We have advised, protested, and at times even litigated to stop inappropriate development. We now need to also become proactive in defining our future to ensure the rural character of Carmel Valley continues into the next generation. We have moved in new directions these past few years to begin this process. We added a "Natural Resources Committee" that has focused on water and the Carmel River, we have supported removal of invasive genista plants, and we are supporting the acquisition of open space by backing the potential purchase of the Carmel Valley Airfield property in Carmel Valley Village and the conservation of the Wolter property for regenerative agriculture.

We support a plan to identify other properties for open space and for the creation of a Carmel Valley Land Trust to purchase open space that is critical to maintaining our rural character.

It is time for us to decide what we think is rural and important to preserve. To do so—

- We need to obtain the designation for Carmel Valley Road as a scenic highway to protect our viewshed.
- We should develop a plan to designate and protect the historical resources of the valley.
- We must be more specific about acceptable architectural designs for business and high visibility areas.
- We need to resist attempts to litter our valley with urban signs and plastic hearts.

Please join us in designing a truly sustainable community that preserves its essence and viability for the future. Let's get started!!

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A ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME OPPORTUNITY: RIPE FOR ACTION

by Paola Berthoin

In 2018, the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warned that this decade may be our last best chance to respond to the serious effects of climate change. The State of California has issued a plan for protecting biodiversity. How can we, as a community, respond? How can we take definitive steps to be climate resilient?

The CVA Natural Resources Committee is exploring how a Carmel Valley Land Preservation Plan could provide a vision and road map to support increased habitat preservation and climate resiliency for people, animals, and plants alike. While such a comprehensive plan will take time and community engagement to come into being, we can take a significant step right now to begin to bring this vision alive. Preservation often involves buying land that is for sale, and the purchase of the Wolter Agricultural would be an excellent starting point.

The Wolters' 'Down to Earth Farm' was part of the original organic certification program initiated by Rodale Press's *Organic Farming and Gardening Magazine* in 1971. Russel Wolter was a founding member of California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF) and received a Stewards of Sustainable Agriculture (Sustie) Award in 1994. This land has been tended organically for a good 100 years.

Carmel Valley residents Jason Wachs and Emily Underwood have provided a vision that would teach students from grade school through post-graduate studies and lay people alike about permaculture, also known as organic regenerative agriculture. The center could be called the Wolter Family Farm, Center for Regenerative Agriculture.

This iconic land of Carmel Valley could provide opportunities to learn about permaculture and floodplain restoration. It could be a place for the community member to come together and grow food in their own plots. It is a place that could provide food on a truly local scale in the form of community-supported agriculture.

Organic regenerative agriculture/permaculture builds and preserves living soil, conserves water, captures carbon from the atmosphere, supports



Top and bottom: Wolter Family Farm, Center for Regenerative Agriculture Concept sketches. Art by Emily Underwood

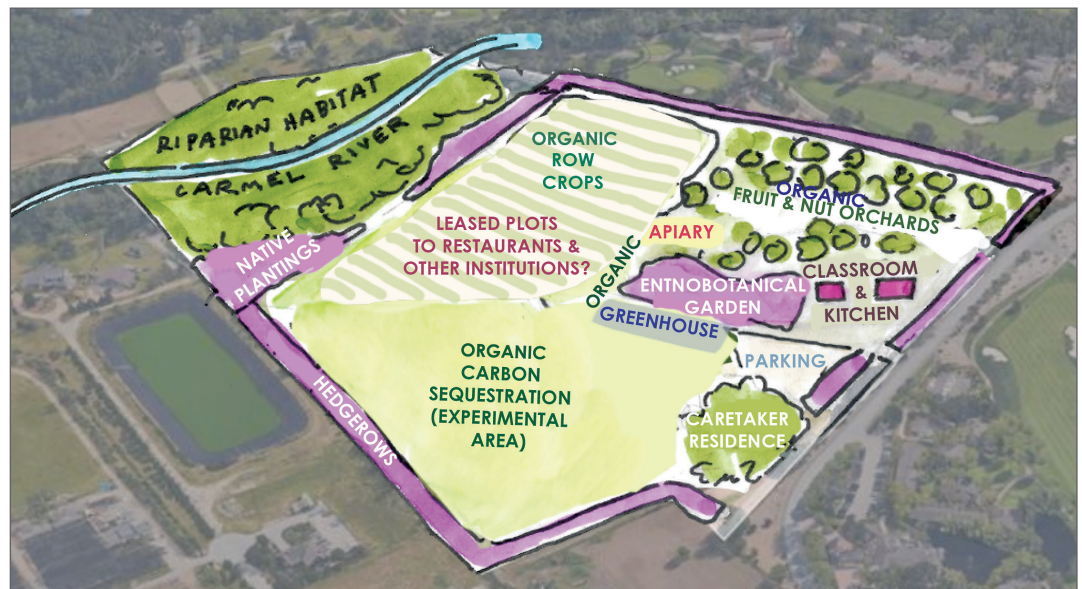
wildlife and pollinators, promotes jobs for farmers, increases nutrient value of food, and helps people to thrive in their home place. Three such learning center examples are The Land Institute in Salina, Kansas, the Pie Ranch in Pescadero, and CSUChico Center for Regenerative Agriculture and Resilient Systems.

This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be part of a legacy to preserve this land of Carmel Valley in perpetuity, support future farmers, and actively address

climate change.

The Carmel River Watershed, with its unique and diverse habitats, is a singularly important landscape. Preservation of agricultural land is imperative. Let's not miss this chance to actively respond as a community to local and global challenges.

Contact CVA Natural Resources Chair, Paola Berthoin, at (831) 624-9467, to be a founding donor or to otherwise get involved.



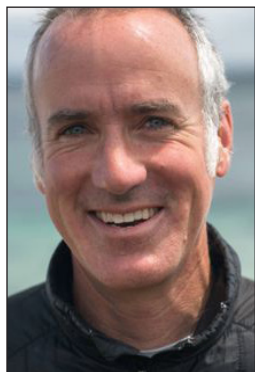
CARMEL VALLEY RESIDENT OVERSEES SEA OTTER RESCUE AND SURVIVAL

By Carolyn Rice

Karl Mayer thought he would pursue a fishery management career until the Monterey Bay sea otters called his name. Mayer, a youthful-looking 52, describes himself as shy and reserved. But when he is asked about sea otters, his blue eyes flash, and information spouts forth non-stop with intensity and passion.

When he first began work at the Monterey Bay Aquarium in 1993, he became intimately acquainted with Carmel Valley by riding his bicycle to work from Cachagua—one hour 40 minutes to work and two hours back home—a daily ride for about two years.

His knowledge of the small, densely-furred sea mammals almost hunted to extinction has attracted interviews with print and screen media, including the BBC, *USA Today*, *Forbes*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and *The Today Show*. An upcoming BBC documentary on animals will feature a segment on sea otters and Mayer. The *ORYX* publication of Cambridge University Press in September 2019 published a scientific sea otter paper authored by Mayer.



Mayer, a Carmel Valley Village resident and sea otter field response coordinator for the aquarium, developed the Rescue-and-Return-to-the-Wild program for orphaned sea otter pups, the only such program in the world. When implementing

the sea otter program, he found that the permanent aquarium sea otter females - Rosie, Abby Kit, Ivy and Selka - were willing to adopt orphaned pups and teach them skills to ready them to go back to the ocean.

The pups weigh about five pounds when born and 35 when released back into the Elkhorn Slough. Most of the pups enter the program after their mother has been attacked by a great white shark, or the pair have been separated during stormy weather. Sometimes the pups may be abandoned if the mom is sick and lacks the physical ability to raise a pup.

Mayer said the incidence of shark attacks recently has risen in Monterey Bay for complex reasons, including the increased population

Photos courtesy Monterey Bay Aquarium

of great white sharks due to their protected status and the higher ocean temperatures, which may attract more great white sharks, especially juveniles, to the area. "Fifty percent of (sea otter) deaths relate to shark attacks," Mayer said. Sea otter attacks may be a case of mistaken identity by the juvenile great whites, who hunt sea lions and seals for food. The sea otter population had been increasing until recent years when it came to a standstill, probably due to the sharks, Mayer said.



Releasing an otter

The orphan pups get a number but not a name. Names go only to permanent residents, and the pups are identified by number with the goal of keeping them wild with minimal human contact or attachment. The surrogate moms are placed in tanks not open for public viewing to bond with the pups. The moms work six months raising the pups and then get six

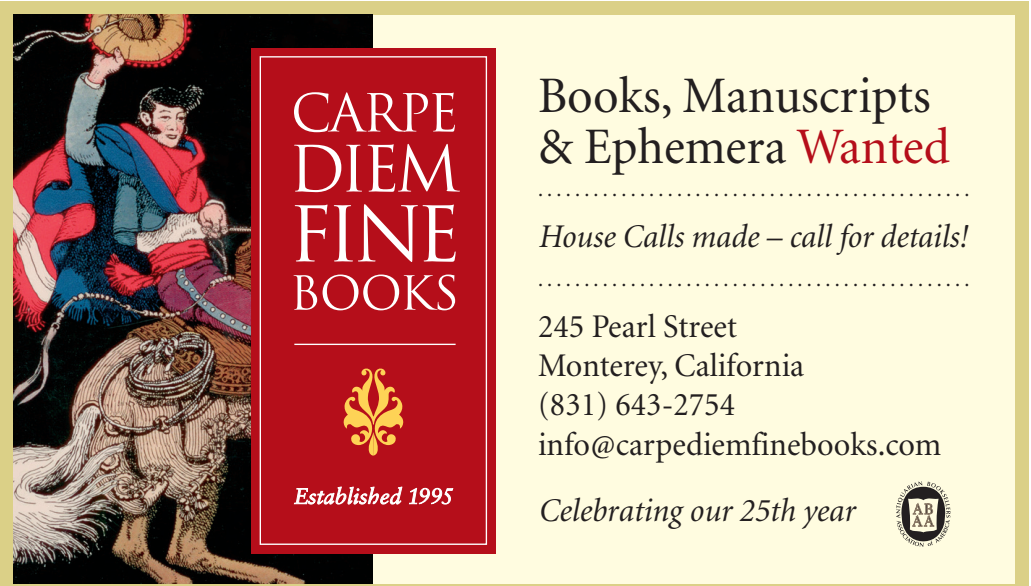
months of rest and recuperation. Rosie, now 20, has raised 15 orphaned pups and recently retired from the taxing job.

The adult sea otters' personalities undergo marked changes when they adopt a pup. They become protective of them, teaching them critical skills of grooming, foraging for food, opening shells, and an important one, fearing humans. "Their behavior really changes," noted Mayer. He has taken some trips to the emergency room for stitches after bites, but shrugs off the crushing nips from the moms' powerful jaws as "part of the job."

About 450 or 15 percent of the total 3,000 sea otter population live in Monterey Bay. The aquarium has released 37 in Elkhorn Slough, where the adopted ones reared by the surrogate moms have a survival and reproduction rate about equal to ones reared in the wild. Mayer said based on the aquarium's model program, populations could be re-established in other coastal areas such as San Francisco Bay and Humboldt Bay, where sea otters existed in the past. The program would be complicated to implement, but Mayer said it would be possible. Sea otters are considered a keystone species, defined as one that has a disproportionately large effect on its environment relative to its abundance.

Volunteers for the aquarium's sea otter program undergo intensive training and commit to a 5 1/2-hour weekly shift for at least a year. Mayer's wife, Claire, met him when she volunteered for the program and shares his enthusiasm for the mammals. The first time she saw a new baby she said it was so cute and fascinating that it didn't appear to be real to her. Contact the aquarium if you are interested in volunteering.

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Carmel Valley's Largest Land Grant Recalls Familiar Names

By Elizabeth Barratt

Carmel Valley's largest land grant, the triangular-shaped Rancho los Tularcitos, was named for the little lakeside tules or cattails found in the area. At 26,581 acres, the ranch boundaries stretched eastward from today's Camp Steffani toward an area northeast of Jamesburg, then north to Buckeye Ridge and Burned Mountain, and southward to Cachagua Creek. The rancho boundaries included a portion of the Carmel River. Among today's better-known locales on the former grant are Rana Creek Ranch and many old and new ranches that extend all the way to the Hastings Natural History Preserve.

The land grant was bestowed by Mexican Governor Jose Figueroa on December 18, 1834, to Rafael Gomez, a Mexican lawyer who came to California in 1830 and died in an accident on his Tularcitos property in 1838. His widow Josefa married Captain Charles C. Wolter in 1843. She and her heirs filed claim in 1852 for the property and were granted the patent in 1866.

In 1861 William H. Brewer passed through the area, partially following cattle trails, other times climbing to high peaks for the view. He recorded in his journal, "What a magnificent view I had! A range of hills two thousand to three thousand feet high extends from Monterey to Soledad. It is a part of the mountains, yet there is a system of valleys behind, up which we had passed. The Carmelo River follows through this a part of the way... to the northwest, lay the Bay of Monterey,



The Field Party of 1864 Gardiner, Cotter, Brewer, King

Image from yosemite.ca.us/

calm, blue and beautiful, to the east was the great Salinas plain, with the mountains beyond, dim in the blue distance."

Over the years, portions of the rancho were sold off to a series of buyers. Among them was Andrew Jackson Ogletree, who purchased a large portion in 1866. He later sold his share, possibly due to large debts, to Alberto Trescony, owner of Rancho San Lucas. In time, Trescony also sold off portions of the land, some of which was purchased in 1885 by Andrius Blomquist. In 1924 a large portion of the ranch was acquired by the Marble family and still bears the name, Rancho Tularcitos. Across from the residence, a fragment of an adobe structure is all that remains of the original ranch house.

IT'S INVASIVE PLANT ERADICATION TIME!

by Paola Berthoin

With the rains comes the opportunity to pull up genista/French broom and other invasive plants. The CVA Natural Resources Committee Weed Wranglers will be removing genista at Garland Park and Palo Corona Regional Park in February and March. We invite you to join us by pulling genista wherever you see it! Genista is not only an insidious plant as it exponentially takes over wildlife habitat each year it is left unattended; it is also a significant fire hazard. It grows taller than most scrub habitat, which in turn creates a taller flame, and it has oils in the woody stems that make it flammable. Additionally, it changes the soil composition, making it less favorable to habitat restoration, not to mention its millions of seeds that last for years in the soil, ready to sprout in the winter.

With the approval of the invasive species resolution last year by the Monterey County Board of Supervisors, it is up to all of us to do our part to help preserve the biodiversity of the wildlife habitats that support the birds, bees, moths and butterflies, and all animals that support our lives in tangible ways.



This is not a pretty plant. It is a noxious invader. Below, photo of the 'Weed Wranglers' set up, by Paola Berthoin.



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Banner photo of Wolter land by Paola Berthoin

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ELECTION INFORMATION

Please plan to attend. Each year, at this time, we introduce our board for the upcoming year.

Any CVA member in good standing may nominate other candidates by gathering 15 member signatures and submitting them by February 21st. If other candidates are submitted, ballots will be sent out by e-mail (or mailed, on request) by March 1st, with votes due back by March 14th.

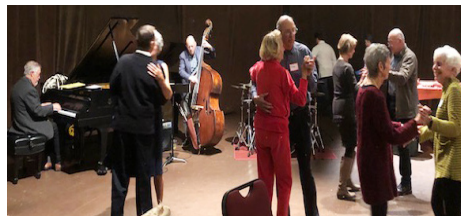
If there are no new petition candidates, the slate will automatically be appointed.

The new board and board-designated officers will be introduced at the annual meeting.

Current board members nominated for a new three-year term are **Paola Berthoin, Donna Kneeland, Kate Daniels Kurz, Lesley Nall, Eric Sand, Bob Siegfried, and Dick Stott.**



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The CVA Holiday Party included dancing to the music of the Dick Whittington Trio, (photo, Mibs McCarthy), and a delicious dinner served by Jerome Viel, donated wines from Hubert Fabre, photo, Hannah Priestley.



Karin Strasser Kauffman and Rick Manning share a memory over a stuffed animal for the Angel Project toy bin. Photo, Mibs McCarthy