



Morro Bay Open Space Alliance

Newsletter
Fall 2017 / Winter 2018

WHAT WE'RE UP TO...



Chumash Blessing by Vennise (Miller) Forte

HARBOR FESTIVAL

The 36th annual Harbor Festival featured many different educational organizations, vendors, music, food and drink, and varying degrees of joviality. The free day-long event drew a huge crowd that was sometimes moving too much in a one-directional flow for people to break ranks and stop to see the booths. When the crowds got more reasonable, people stopped to have lively discussions and see what we are all about. Since surviving the festival last year in the howling wind, we've advanced our booth experience from simple durability to learning that: 1) people are really interesting, and for the most part, caring and kind; 2) everybody likes open space and the views that make our city special; and 3) pointing out Cerrito Peak across the street and up the hill was a big plus.

CERRITO PEAK CELEBRATION

— by *Nicole Dorfman*

I had been dreaming about the celebration since 2011, when I first began working to save Cerrito Peak from development. And it was all and more than I had imagined.

The Cerrito Peak Celebration, held on September 16, was a beautiful event. Nancy Castle worked her magic as the Event Coordinator and the scene looked like that from a fairytale. Colorful streamers welcomed folks along the trailhead and seemed to sway in tune to Salinian composer John Burch's serene keyboards. Birds chattered happily among the towering eucalyptus, protected from the developer's axe.

Mr. Burch later introduced Vennise (Miller) Forte, who gave a soulful Chumash blessing while the smoke from a smudge stick drifted through the air, infusing it with the scent of sage. Morro Bay Council Member John Heading offered heartfelt words to the many citizens assembled, all thankful to the City Council for its purchase of the land, with the intent to sell it to a conservation agency for permanent preservation. The Zen Mountain Poets then took to the stage, delighting everyone with their unique and soulful sounds that carried throughout the day.

Plein air artists were on site, including Jeff Odell and MBOSA board member Mimi Whitney Hafft, with easels set up along the hill and paintbrushes in hand while a steady stream of people passed by along the trail to the peak. Many meandered among the hillside enjoying the spectacular views of the back bay, the sand spit, the rock and North Morro Bay, all the way to Cayucos and beyond. Meanwhile children scrambled up and down the many boulders, and kept a look out for Monarchs, red tailed hawks, and great horned owls known to nest in this small slice of wilderness.



Plein air artist Jeff Odell

SAVING CERRITO PEAK CAMPAIGN

MBOSA is actively raising \$350K to purchase Cerrito Peak to preserve the property as public open space. We got a big push out of the gate thanks to a tremendous gift of \$25,000 from the Larry Hildblom Foundation via Cerrito Place neighbor Grant Anderson and family.

We've had some other generous gifts, too, like Jamie and Monica Iron's gift of \$2,500 to honor the memory of Curt Beebe. All told, we have almost 10% of the \$350 k we need to raise.

We expect the City Council to ask for an update on our progress soon, so those tax deductible year end contributions would really help! And most important, they would make our goal of saving Cerrito Peak a little closer.



MBOSA Chair Glenn Silloway welcoming crowd

Cerrito Peak Celebration *(cont. from page 1)*

Various conservation-minded organizations set up booths displaying their particular knowledge and areas of concern. Save the Park and the California State Parks joined MBOSA for the celebration. Jessica Griffith, local Monarch Butterfly expert, was on site

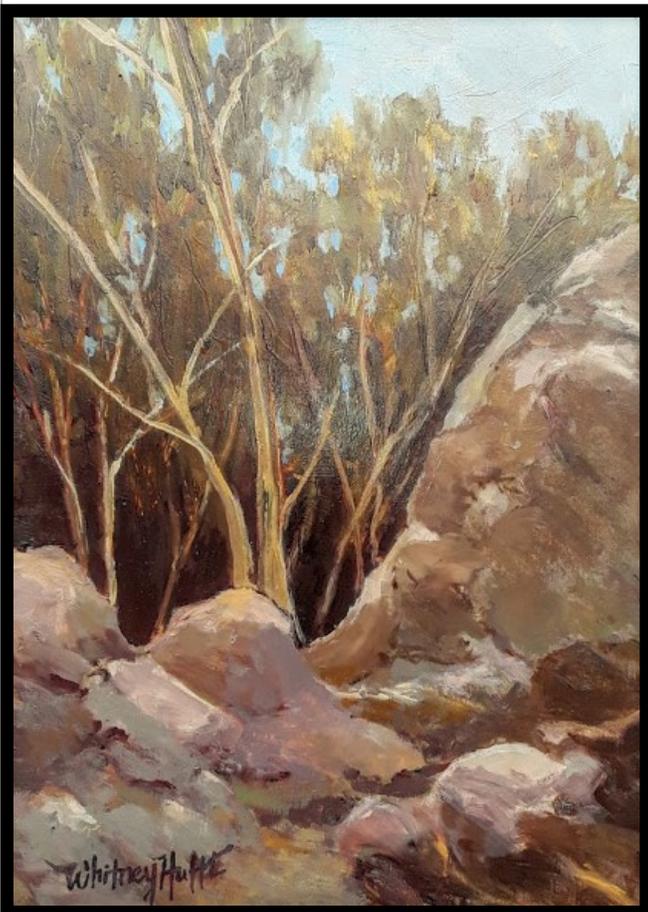
to share her wisdom about these threatened creatures. The Pacific Wildlife Center inspired us with a real-life great horned owl and an opossum, while Dennis Sheridan wowed kids and adults alike with his odd and sundry hands-on collection of reptiles and insects.

And of course, no celebration would be complete without food and drink. A big thanks to the Morro Bay Lions Club for bringing out their hotdog cart and to all the local volunteers who donated cookies and other goodies.

All in all, the Celebration was a big success. Many people were introduced to the area for the first time; others had experienced it as children but hadn't been back in years. Everyone shared in the desire to preserve the peak for generations to come. And that is the next phase in our work, so stay tuned!

LOCAL ARTIST TO DONATE PORTION OF PAINTING SALE

Watching the progress of plein air artists **Mimi Whitney Haaft** and **Jeff Odell** as their paintings took shape and color was an exciting part of the September Cerrito Peak Block Party and Celebration. In their talented hands, the peak took on new form through human eyes. Mimi, who is a MBOSA board member as well as a local artist and member of the Morro Bay Art Association, is donating a portion of the sale of this oil painting to the Cerrito Peak campaign. It is currently on display through December 22nd at the "Annual Winter Faire & Juried Craft Show" at the Art Center located at 835 Main Street in Morro Bay. If you are interested in purchasing this painting, contact: Mimi Whitney Haaft at 528-1638 or by email at coastoilartist@aol.com.





Do you suppose they know? Yeah, probably...

CERRITO PEAK LAVA DOME

— by Glenn Silloway

The ‘peak’ is a pile of hard, cool lava. For years, I thought it was a little morro, a volcanic plug like Morro Rock, only smaller, but no: it’s a lava dome, typically formed by molten magma flowing through a vent and cooling in place. The magma that forms a dome is typically too thick to flow very far, so it builds up in place. This information came to us courtesy of Norma Wightman, who shared it with us at the Saving Cerrito Peak kickoff event.

I felt I needed to get re-acquainted with an old friend I had misunderstood. Luckily there’s an internet. Oregon State University maintains a site called “Volcano World” that includes information about [lava domes](#). Better yet, we have a local expert in Cuesta geology instructor John McCabe, who has given numerous talks on local geologic topics as a docent at the Morro Bay Museum of Natural History.

There are various shapes a lava dome can take, from flat-topped to spikey. It’s a little hard to see the shape of Cerrito since the lower slopes are covered by buildings, but it seems to be a fairly round base at the foot of the slope up to Black Hill.

The lava that makes a dome can be one of several compositions, but generally contains a high concentration of silica because that’s what makes lava more viscous, thicker. (Viscosity is a measure of resistance to flow.) John McCabe has a sample from the peak that is rhyodacite-rhyolite, with the rhyolite being one of the major general categories of volcanic rock. One of the interesting features of lava domes is that they often seem to be made of large blocks of rock because the thick lava cools into discrete chunks. Next time you walk up to the rocks on Cerrito Peak, take a look at the shapes of the blocks and rocks.

OSU says that lava domes can occur anywhere there is volcanic activity, with the exact terrain determining the dome’s final shape and size. It’s pretty clear that Cerrito Peak is part of the same cluster of volcanic activity that created the nine Morroa, including Morro Rock. It lies roughly in the line that includes all these volcanic plugs, from south of San Luis Obispo to Morro Bay. Geologists believe that this cluster of volcanic forms was part of an active system about 24 million years ago, perhaps located in an area that is now part of Baja California. The system moved northward on the Pacific tectonic plate, which is still moving at about half an inch per year. So here’s one more reason to save Cerrito Peak: it’s a geology lesson.



Board member Nicole Dorfman and new friend



Plein air artists adding their human touch to the beauty of the peak



Dennis Sheridan and critters

CERRITO PEAK? EAGLE ROCK? NAMING RIGHTS?

— by Glenn Silloway

The recent idea floated by SLO County Parks to rename El Chorro Regional Park to “Eagle Rock” made me wonder what could they be thinking. Luckily, we had lots of good company opposing this silly idea, including a forceful argument from local historian Dan Krieger. To simplify, Professor Krieger pointed out that El Chorro is the traditional name for the place, with a heritage that shouldn’t be trashed for some poorly thought out marketing scheme.

And why “Eagle Rock”? We’ve already got an Eagle Rock, although that is usually stated “Cerrito Peak, aka Eagle Rock” to acknowledge that many folks around Morro Bay have always referred to the peak that way. I wonder if our Chumash or Salinan friends call it Eagle Rock? Or what do they call it?

Being a marketing guy myself (but I would never rename El Chorro Regional Park “Eagle Rock”!), I couldn’t help but think of the naming possibilities for the peak. After all, it’s fairly likely that the Cerrito Peak name was a developer’s idea of a classy way to attract attention to all those paper lots around the paper road in the first place.

So what do you think the naming rights for the peak would be worth? We might jumpstart our fundraising campaign with a big donation from someone who would like a permanent monument to whatever. PG&E Peak? Less likely with the Diablo Canyon closure, but who knows? Do you think this is heresy? I fully expect to get soundly texted for raising the issue, but it might be fun to hear ideas for naming the peak. This is totally, completely, and utterly not official, of course, but I for one would enjoy your input. Send us your thoughts on our contact form at <http://mbopenspace.org/contact-mbosa/>. Civil, family-friendly language only.



Event Coordinator Extraordinaire, Nancy Castle



Even the possum seemed to be having a good time.

CHEVRON PROPERTY in TORO HILLS

— by Glenn Silloway

We've been told that big conservation deals take a long time, and our experience with Chevron's Toro Hills property sure fits the bill. There's a little news, but no one should count on this being done anytime soon.

From the beginning, our conservation groups under the leadership of the Trust for Public Land have aimed at a comprehensive deal for the whole property. This would be an actual purchase, not just an easement for a limited use. This includes thinking strategically through the overall conservation goals and how that might translate to an acquisition plan that works for all parties.

However, Chevron has run into a problem with remediation. We have known all along that different pieces of the property experienced more contamination than other parts. Ultimately, Chevron is obligated to clean up that contamination before transferring the property. The clean-up itself is a slow process. Chevron has been working on the remediation over the last many years, and continues to do so. Because the damage is uneven, it has made more progress in some areas than others. For example, we hear that the Shore Plant is almost fully cleaned, but does not have final inspections and approval. On the other hand, there has been almost no remediation done along the course of Alva Paul Creek.

Working internally, Chevron is developing its mitigation plan for portions of the property (tank farm, pipeline along Alva Paul Creek), which are now being slated for clean up some time in the future, versus near term. Therefore, this has slowed a few things down. Structuring a comprehensive deal is still very much in the works and continues to be a priority for the Trust for Public Land. However, as long as the conservation deal includes the whole property, there can be no sale until all remediation is done. If Chevron is not making a priority of cleaning up the various parcels, the finish line fades into the distance.

TPL has met recently with Chevron to work on finding an arrangement to cope with the remediation roadblock. Inevitably, this means restructuring the deal in some way, and since there are so many moving parts, this won't be easy. We'll keep you informed best we can.



NEWS FROM THE MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

MBOSA's membership list is growing as more people are becoming aware of our organization and of the projects and goals that we have for our area. The desire to save Cerrito Peak, as well as the looming Chevron property sale, has brought us many supporters. If you haven't already joined, please consider doing so before the end of the year in order to gain the tax incentive for 2017.

Thank you to all who have renewed their memberships. The larger our membership, the more clout we have in negotiations to preserve as much of our precious Central Coast as possible. As an added bonus, we have many fun-filled activities that our members participate in, and we know you want to be part of the fun!



Newsletter production by Janet Gibson, with articles from Nicole Dorfman, Glenn Silloway, Dianne Bianco, & Janet Gibson

Yes, I want to help!

- \$25 Individual
- \$50 Family/Household
- \$100 Contributor or Business
- \$250 Advocate
- \$500 Patron
- \$1000 Steward (lifetime member after 3 years)
- \$2500 Guardian of the Land (lifetime member)

Visit the website to join, or cut and return the following:

www.mbopenspace.org

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New Member

Renewing Member