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# Terra Firma Times

Spring 2010

## More Local Farmland Conserved

You might admire the grape orchard as you drive north from Ashland to access the interstate. Or maybe you remember your children going there each fall to pick a free pumpkin from the pumpkin patch. Perhaps you enjoy the view as you ride your bicycle past it on the

Bear Creek Greenway. No matter how you know it, Eagle Mill Farm is an important part of our community.

The Southern Oregon Land Conservancy, working with the property

owners, has permanently conserved the farm, which sits at the entryway to Ashland on the corner of Valley View and Eagle Mill Roads.

“It’s not easy to find 20 acres of land so close to an urban area like Ashland, with landowners who have a vision to permanently protect their farm *as a farm*,” says Executive Director Diane Garcia.

The land has been continuously farmed for more than 150 years. The McNabb family operated a dairy there from 1940 to 1982, when it was purchased by the current owners. Eagle Mill Farm,

LLC is dedicated to continuing the farming legacy. Each year, more than 2,000 students in the Valley visit the farm. Many come to pick their own Halloween pumpkin. Classes also come each spring and fall to prepare harvest lunches, through the Rogue



Eagle Mill Farm is visited by over 2,000 school children from around the Rogue Valley every year.

Valley Farm-to-School Program. The conservation of the property helps guarantee that Eagle Mill Farm will continue to be an agricultural resource for children for years to come.

The conservation agreement with

the landowners restricts development on the existing farmland and the areas near Bear Creek. It also ensures that the rural feel of the farm will be there far into the future. The agreement will be binding on all future owners.

This project could not have been completed without the incredible outpouring of support we received from community members like you. The project was also funded by the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, the Bear Creek Watershed Council, the Friends of Jackson County, Cycle Oregon, and Polaris Surveying.

## Director's Message



Diane Garcia  
Executive Director

Lately land trusts across the country are taking advantage of a poor economy by buying lands for conservation.

Recently in

California, the San Francisco-based Trust for Public Land purchased 595 acres of rare habitat in Yuba County. Tough economic times present a rare opportunity for land trusts as investors and developers are forced to abandon housing projects that would have made them a fortune just a few years ago. Often the land sells for a fraction of what it was worth. This trend is being called the Green Lining of a sour economy.

The Southern Oregon Land Conservancy has relied primarily on voluntary legal agreements with landowners rather than purchasing land outright as a means of permanently conserving land. For one thing, it costs less and there are less management costs after the deal is sealed. It allows land to remain privately owned while still being conserved. Yet this tool for conservation has its pitfalls as described in our column "Ask Alex." Uncooperative second generation landowners (those who purchase the land after the agreement is made) can make enforcement of the agreement challenging and the risk of a violation is always there. Fortunately, that has not been a problem so far.

Over the past year and a half, we've

been developing a Conservation Plan that identifies priority regions and focus areas for conservation in Jackson and Josephine Counties. In order to safeguard the most significant lands identified in the plan, a variety of strategies will be used. These will include forming new partnerships, raising funds for easements and other permanent protection methods, and being strategic in the selection process. We are looking forward to this next phase in our development and the opportunities that lay before us. Stay tuned for the exciting unveiling of the plan and ways that you can be involved in helping us achieve the goals it sets forth.

For the land,

*Diane Garcia*

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## Former President Honored with New Trail

When Mike Uhtoff was spearheading the fundraising drive to preserve what is now Siskiyou Mountain Park in Ashland, he probably never imagined that one day a trail there would be named after him - but it happened. The newly-built *Mike Uhtoff Trail* commemorates the devoted local naturalist, teacher, and businessman who died early last year.

Two youth crews from the Job Council worked on the project, along with crew boss Christie Lawson and project supervisor Jeff McFarland of the Ashland Parks Department.

The crews of youth, aged 16 to 21, were involved from the beginning of this trail project, learning how to design, lay out, and build a trail, earning valuable skills along the way. Along with practical skills, the participants also learned work ethics. Working for the Job Council provides them with work experience and job

references. The crews worked 30-32 hours a week and earned minimum wage. During the first 3 months, the participants worked with the crew. For their last month, they worked



Mike Uhtoff led the campaign to conserve Siskiyou Mountain Park in the early 1990's when he was President of the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy (photo: Ashland Daily Tidings).

in an internship project. Both the Medford and Ashland Parks Departments are providing internships for the workers now that the trail project

is completed.

The Mike Uhtoff Trail is a loop approximately a half-mile long coming off the White Rabbit Trail, a popular hiking and biking trail, part of Ashland's *Creek to Crest* trail system, running through the Siskiyou Mountain Park from the top of Park Street. The Trail, which is designated for hikers only, features some giant boulders, great views, and a canopy of mature conifers providing shading on much of the trail. McFarland had identified the area in the Siskiyou Mountain Park as potential location for a trail three years ago. At a suggestion from Executive Director Diane Garcia, the City Parks Commission reviewed the suggestion and approved naming the trail in commemoration of Mike's efforts to protect natural areas in and around Ashland.

Read the entire story online at [www.landconserve.org](http://www.landconserve.org).



### Trail Dedication Ceremony

The Uhtoff Family officially opened and dedicated the Mike Uhtoff Trail on February 4<sup>th</sup>.



### The Mike Uhtoff Trail



### Building a Trail in the Woods

The Job Council Work Crew builds the Mike Uhtoff Trail.



## Ask Alex



Staff Attorney  
Alex Liston Dykema

*The Southern Oregon Land Conservancy uses a unique tool called a Conservation Easement to conserve this region's special places for future generations. It is a very cost-effective method of land conservation. We receive many questions about Conservation Easements, so we will let our staff attorney, Alex, explain from the legal perspective.*

**Q** Is it better to own land outright or protect it using a conservation easement?

**A** These two methods of protection offer distinct benefits and burdens which should be constantly evaluated based on the project goals and the capacity and priorities of the land trust.

In the case of conservation easements (CE's), they have many strengths including: the ability to draft flexible terms allowing protection of unique attributes on private land which would otherwise be unprotected and the relatively low initial cost (especially in the case of donated easements).

CE's also have a number of limitations. They are mostly restrictive in nature, and can limit the ability for a land trust to take pro-active steps to enhance or maintain the conservation values present. They also require a robust, and often costly, monitoring and stewardship program to insure the continued protection of the conservation values. They require ongoing work with current and future owners of the land to guarantee that the easements' provisions are upheld, and a land trust must therefore be prepared, financially and structurally, to defend the easement in court.

For projects where ownership is an option, there are multiple benefits to that choice including: the flexibility of land ownership meaning the trust can allow public access and proactively maintain the land or manage it as they see fit. Ownership avoids future conflicts and legal disputes with a separate owner and gives land trusts a place to offer educational or recreational opportunities for the community, which provides resources to the community and a concrete source of identity to the trust. At the same time, there are costs unique to ownership which must be considered including: the initial costs of the land and the assumption of the long terms costs and liabilities of ownership.

In summary, each option has benefits and costs which should be evaluated based on an array of factors unique to each trust and to each project. There is also the possibility of creative combined solutions such as those we have used in Ashland and Jacksonville. In these cases, public ownership combined with a conservation easement may create a better result than either tool individually.

Just as every land trust is different, every project is different. The tools used should match both the trust's capacity and the project goals. For us, we have used conservation easements extensively to protect over 8,000 acres of public and private land because that is the tool that has fit those projects and our capacity best. In the future, we may find ownership fits in well for the right project, with the right goals, and with the right capacity.

*For more information, feel free to contact us at (541) 482-3069 or send us an email at [info@landconserve.org](mailto:info@landconserve.org).*



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## Welcome to our New Members!

*The Southern Oregon Land Conservancy is conducting a campaign to double our membership in three years in order to better meet the demand for our services. We are well on our way towards our goal, thanks to the following new members:*

Anonymous (3)	Dr. Carol Ferguson	Donald and Martha Miller	Betsy and Michael Shanafelt
Martha and Robert Abshear	Randall Frick	Karen Miller-Loessi	Debi Sheetz
Deborah and Fritz Ameen	James and Sharon Hardy	Maria Miller M.D.	Joyce and Arthur Sideras
Arthur and Laura Baden	Gerhard Heiter	Alice and Larry Mullaly	Charles and Mary Sinclair
Maria Barnes and Matthew Terrieri	Maryen Herrett	Gordon and Miriam Nunnally	John and Jane Stromberg
Karen Basin	Chris and Molly Holzshu	Dakota Otto and Anna Cassilly	Sarah and Colin Swales
Deborah Beauchamp	Robert and Catherine Izor	Anne Pollack and Bob Kuenzel	Joel and Donna Taylor
Thomas Becker	Susan and Richard Jacquot	Gary Powell	Ann Leslie Tennyson
Barbara Bobes	Augustus and Julia Janeway	Christopher Robinson	Wendy Siporen
Katy Cauker and Gerry Senogles	Andrea and Phil Johnson	Scott Rogers	Dale Vidmar and Karine Gabrielle
David and Susan Chapman	Roy and Sheila Kimball	Rogue Valley Runners	Charles and Karin Watson
John Corson M.D.	Andrea King-Brockman and Jenna King	Grant and Patti Ruiz	Claude-Marie Ward
Marilyn Costamagna	Gretchen Lee	Ernest and Marilyn Salter	Kendall Weaver
Dr. Richard Cottle	Aric Ludwig	Angelica and Victor Sansum	Alice White-Hoppe and Joseph Hoppe
Cathy DeForest and Leon Pyle	Daniel and Devon MacEachron	Richard and Linda Schaeff	Paul and Regina Winans
Michael Elich	John and Therese MacGregor	Jim and Elise Scheffel	Bernard and Gloria Young
	Nancy Menken	Donald and Virginia Schreiner	
		Patricia Sempowich	