



## Eagle Ridge Trail and Restoration Work

This past summer the Save Our Forest Association donated \$3,000 to the San Bernardino Mountains Land Trust to support restoration and trail work at the site of the failed Eagle Ridge housing project on Grass Valley Road. The Land Trust purchased the 80-acre parcel in April 2011, after the developer defaulted on bank loans and went into foreclosure.



*A view of Pheasant Run on the Grass Valley Parcel*

SOFA spent nearly 15 years opposing excessive development at the beautiful Grass Valley Parcel, after it was traded out of Forest Service ownership in 1988. That ill-conceived land trade provoked a major public outcry that led to the formation of SOFA. The subsequent approval of a highly detrimental housing development in 2000 stands out as one of the worst decisions ever made by the County Board of Supervisors for our mountain community in recent memory. The foreclosure and purchase by the Land Trust seven years later can now be seen and celebrated as a miraculous intervention of poetic justice.

The Land Trust recently commissioned the design of a conceptual plan for reclaiming areas disrupted by unfinished construction work and has started work on two slope restoration projects. This fall a 2-mile loop trail through 60 acres of natural forest land was completed.

Friends and relatives of longtime SOFA supporter, Will Abell, who passed away in August, made generous donations to help complete the trail. These funds enabled the Land Trust to utilize trail crews from the San Bernardino Urban Conservation Corps, an organization that recruits inner city youths. Will Abell was one of the leading volunteers to help initiate the trail.

The forest at Eagle Ridge is considered to be the best example of a stately southern Sierran native forest found in our San Bernardino Mountains. Hiking through these woods makes it possible to enjoy the beauty of the forest landscape much the same way as the first pioneers coming into the area must have experienced it. The trail provides a first rate hiking experience for the community of Lake Arrowhead, which has long lacked a good hiking trail of its own.



*Lyn Dessaux, Steve Farrell, Bill Engs, and Kevin Kellems on the trail at Eagle Ridge*

## What's the future for Serenity in Crest Forest?

Over a year ago the developer, Arimol Group, destroyed and graded a favorite meadow and riparian area of the Crest Park community. Without a permit and without any environmental review, the area's natural stream was buried with fill and diverted into a pipe culvert. These actions not only radically altered the neighborhood's environment, but the water quality as well.

Serenity appears to be a "plan of common development" for a sober living facility complex. It is a 1.8 acre development (with at least four additional separate lots and new structures totaling 27,160 sq ft) at the corner of Meadowbrook Road and Cedar Court in the Crest Park neighborhood of Lake Arrowhead.

"The Arimol Group has violated the community esthetically, environmentally, and ethically"

In response to public complaints, after months of investigation and communication with Arimol, California's State Regional Water Quality Control Board, Lahontan Region, has filed Complaint Number R6T-2012-0049 (October 26, 2012), with a total maximum administrative civil liability for multiple violations of \$498,000. The almost 50 page complaint, with supporting attachments, chronicles the failure of Arimol Group to submit compliant technical reports, implement corrective actions, and basically stonewall the State of California, the County of San Bernardino, and the local community.

The Water Board Complaint is scheduled to be heard during the next Lahontan Water Board meeting, January 16-17, 2013, in Barstow.

In a separate but related action, the Mountains Group of the Sierra Club and the Save Our Forest Association have united to hire legal representation to pursue our concerns that the project was improperly approved by the County in the first place, even before any environmental damage was

done. Permitting and developing the project's multiple parcels separately and one at a time (as if they were not all a part of a larger "plan of common development") is a violation of state law and County regulations. The practice (referred to as "piece-mealing" a project) improperly circumvents planning review and avoids the disclosure requirements afforded the public by the California Environmental Quality Act (or CEQA).

Stay tuned! Much can and should still happen on this case. The January Water Board meeting in Barstow is a public meeting, so anyone can attend, but the attending public will not be guaranteed a chance to speak about the case. As progress is made regarding our separate CEQA and County concerns, we will let you know when and how you can participate.

The mountain quality of life has irreparably changed for the residents of this Crest Park neighborhood. The Arimol Group has violated the community esthetically, environmentally and ethically with limited repercussions to date. Arimol's disdain for process is just another example of why our environmental laws and protections are so important.



*The "Trail Crew" hard at work on the Eagle Ridge trail.*

**UPDATE: The Church of the Woods** project in Rim Forest remains with the County Planning Dept. as internal deliberations continue. We are awaiting a Planning Commission Hearing at a currently unknown date. Stay tuned!



## SOFA and Highway 18

**H**ave you noticed the "Adopt-a-Highway" signs along Highway 18 as you travel up or down the mountain? Well, next time keep your eyes peeled for the SOFA logo on the highway between the old Cliff Hanger Restaurant and Rimforest. SOFA Members join together quarterly to clean up our "Adopt-A-Highway" section of Scenic Highway 18. Our dedicated volunteers don snappy Cal-Trans supplied vests and fill the white Cal-Trans bags with refuse from the turn-outs. No risky traffic dodging is involved! The visual beauty of Rim of the World Highway is greatly enhanced without the distraction of fast food wrappers, plastic grocery bags, and discarded bottles and cans. If you would like to join us in maintaining a cleaner highway, send an email to [lakearrowheaddentist@verizon.net](mailto:lakearrowheaddentist@verizon.net) and we will add you to the contact list. Highway Clean Up's are usually on Friday mornings from 9-11am, refreshments provided!



*Our dedicated highway crew: Lori Semeniuk, Bernhard Voelkelt, Peter Jorris, Mike Ayotte, Bob Kinzel, Carl Blank, Trudie Blank. Not pictured: Stephanie Lenfesty, Hugh Bialecki, Bob McConnell, Drake Bialecki*

## Crestline's Ninth Annual Old-Fashioned Community Picnic

**S**OFA is always happy to join in celebrating the Annual Old-Fashioned Community Picnic on July fourth in Crestline. This event is always a great opportunity to talk with supporters and welcome new residents to the neighborhood while sharing SOFA's efforts to



*Hugh Bialecki mans the booth at the Crestline Picnic.*

maintain the mountain quality of life. The Community Picnic is co-sponsored by the Crestline Community Development Alliance and the ROW Recreation & Park District. Please join us next year the Ninth Annual Old-Fashioned Community Picnic at this very well attended community party!

### SAVE OUR FOREST ASSOCIATION

SOFA was formed in 1988 by citizens outraged over the management of the public forest lands in the San Bernardino Mountains, and the exchange of valuable forest open space out of public ownership into private hands. SOFA was incorporated as a 501 (c) 3 non-profit corporation in 1992, with the express goal of preserving the mountain quality of life.

#### Officer Slate for 2013

Hugh A. Bialecki, DMD - President  
Bernhard Voelkelt - Vice-President  
Sherry Noone - Secretary  
Trudie Blank - Treasurer  
(To be approved at Annual Meeting)

Pat Huckaby - Newsletter Editor