

Transition Habitat Conservancy To Acquire Acreage

By Michael Palecki

Although the California state budget crisis has placed Transition Habitat Conservancy (THC) in a holding pattern to receive grant funds to purchase land, the organization is moving ahead on its own. On Memorial Day, THC held a Spring Garden Party Fundraiser at their Pinon Hills headquarters. Proceeds will be used to purchase the first two land parcels in Puma Canyon and Upper Sheep Creek Wash.

In conjunction with a recommendation from the Phelan Pinon Hills Community Services District (CSD)

forwarded to County Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt and his subsequent approval, two parcels were removed from the Chapter 8 Tax Sale. These parcels will be sold to THC for an amount equal to the back taxes owed. The acquisition begins the process to ultimately buy 1,000 acres in Pinon Hills and preserving it as open space parklands.

When the Wildlife Conservation Board informed President Jill Bays on April 22 that the THC grant application had been re-opened for funding, they were impressed with the news of the land acquisition. Likewise, rather than waiting for grant funding to pay

for land stewardship training, THC Directors attended the Cal Land Trust Conference in Sacramento during February. They learned more about conservation law, conservation easements and mitigating watersheds.

At the Garden Party, Bays also introduced Megan Juric-a second year Graduate student in Landscape Architecture, at Cal Poly Pomona. When funding becomes available, Juric will prepare a Vision Plan for the 1,000 acres. The written document will include topography maps, charts, a public education component on the

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importance of preserving watersheds, and the methodology for preserving the land, in its natural state.

Not comfortable with simply waiting for funding, everyone at Transition Habitat Conservancy