

Successful Week For Transition Habitat Conservancy

By Michael Palecki

Last Wednesday at Red Mango Grill in Phelan, supporters of Transition Habitat Conservancy (THC) filled the restaurant to capacity for their quarterly dinner. It had been a very successful week for the Pinon Hills based land trust, and President Jill Bays had exciting news to share with guests. Just days before, on the weekend, more than 50 volunteers had participated in restoration efforts on the first 20 acres acquired, for the Puma Canyon Project.

During that weekend, ridge tops scraped clean by bulldozers combating the 1994 Boy Scout Fire, and subsequently used by Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) riders-were restored.



Jill Bays, President of THC and Director Tara Matthews at the Red Mango Dinner. Photo by Michael Palecki

In the 18 years since the fire, while the barren terrain was an exciting ride for OHV enthusiasts, tire tracks turned into ruts that became small gorges-when heavy rains occurred. With no vegetation to hold the soil and encourage germination of native plant seeds, erosion increased

the visible scar.

Implementing a technique known as "Vertical Mulching" developed by BLM Senior Ecologist Tom Egan, volunteers first bored into the gorges with power augers and "replanted" fallen tree stumps and branches.

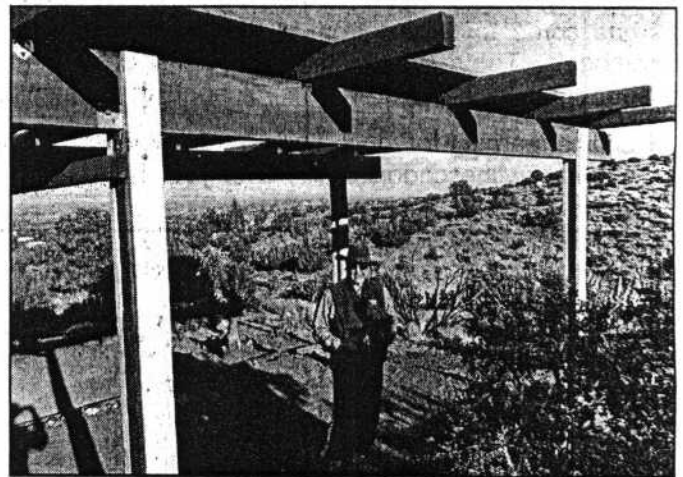
THC on A-6

THC from A-1

Following that, native soil and rocks were used to fill in the crevices, and then Botany Specialist Wendy Cook supervised reseeding of the slopes.

Later in the week, construction of a shade structure for two eight-foot picnic tables began on an overlook of the 20 acres. From that vantage point, areas that had been restored blended into the natural terrain and man-made disturbances had been erased. Future improvements for the hiking and horseback trail head include a "step over" gateway to the picnic area.

While future OHV use on the 20 acres will not



THC Bert Bays stands under one of the new shade structures in the Puma Canyon restoration project. Photo by Michael Palecki

be allowed, that specific prohibition complies with funding criteria of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation-provided to acquire the land. The restoration project and trail head improvements were funded by a generous

donation of \$22,500.

Last week at Red Mango, in addition to great food, exciting news and wonderful raffle prizes-community support for Transition Habitat Conservancy made the event the most successful ever.