

Bixby Ranch Developers Plow Under Endangered Tarplant

The Bixby Ranch surrounds the dramatic Point Conception area; a biologically unique area in the transition zone between two of the most diverse bio-geographic regions in the world (*Gaviota Coast Feasibility Study & Environmental Assessment, NPS, 2003*). The very scenic land shown in the picture was stripped of vegetation in January by the new ranch owners to “convert to dry farming”, according to ranch representatives. This location is part of a larger area designated in 2002 as critical habitat for the endangered Gaviota tarplant; an endemic plant found only on the Gaviota Coast. This discing not only eliminated tarplant from large areas, it also destroyed a recent successful tarplant restoration at Cojo Point, which was completed just last year by Unocal. Now, the value of that restoration has been undone, and the County says all of this is okay under their existing policies.

The freedom to eliminate an endangered species during agricultural operations makes it impossible for the County to protect its natural resources anywhere where such operations might occur. It reveals the inability of present policies to balance the protection of agricultural resources with the preservation of rare and endangered natural resources. The County policies which allowed this travesty were invented in 1982 or before, when things were different. Back then, more of the Gaviota Coast was owned by farmers and ranchers, who were unaware of the significance of the rare plants they incidentally displaced in their work. That's not the case today. Now the Gaviota Coast is largely owned by development companies, hedge funds, and the world's wealthy elite who hire attorneys and others who know very well where the sensitive resources are, and how they constrain



Cojo Point in foreground with Pt. Conception beyond at top-center.

use of a property. These entities are accustomed to a higher return on investment than a farmer. They feel they must take advantage of whatever provisions in law and policy they can to achieve maximum return. It's their fiduciary duty.

These legal and financial forces support an insatiable real estate market. If left to operate free from appropriate public policy constraints, it would turn Santa Barbara County into a copy of Los Angeles County, and the Gaviota Coast into another Malibu. However, the latent, external costs of eliminating a state and federal endangered species within a designated critical habitat area have yet to be calculated. When GCC heard of this incident, we arranged a flight over the property with our partner, LightHawk, a non-profit organization of environmentally astute pilots. We took photographs which provided a basis for investigations by not only the County, but the state Department of Fish & Game, the Coastal Commission, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The costs for this ill-advised, “agricultural” activity are liable to be much more than expected.

Gaviota Planning Advisory Committee

Supervisor Farr created the Gaviota Coast Planning Advisory Committee (GavPAC) in June 2009 and appointed two GCC board members to sit on the eleven person committee. The GavPAC is undertaking a review and revision of the local coastal plan for the land from the ocean to the ridgetop of the mountains, encompassing the area west of Eagle Creek (the first major canyon west of Bacara) to Jalama Creek on the southern boundary of Vandenberg AFB. The issues of concern are comprehensive and include; agriculture, housing, transportation, recreation, resource stewardship, open space, land use and zoning. The Committee meets twice a month at Vista de Las Cruces School near Highway 1 and 101. The public is invited to attend all meetings; information can be found at:

longrange.sbcountyplanning.org/planareas/gaviota/gaviota.php

Reeve Woolpert Photo Exhibit



Photo © Reeve Woolpert

Reeve Woolpert Photo Exhibit 1st Thursday at Casa de la Guerra

As the photo above demonstrates, Naples is a world-class landscape. The Naples Coalition is sponsoring an exhibit of photographs of Naples made over the past decade by Reeve Woolpert.

**The show opens with a party
“1st Thursday” June 2
5:00 to 8:00pm
Casa de la Guerra
15 East de la Guerra Street**

The show will be up for a month and open to the public on Saturdays and Sundays from noon to 4:00pm.

Nobody knows the Gaviota Coast or Naples landscape better than Reeve. Reeve has hauled his tripod through winter mud and spring fog, predawn to twilight, photographing this piece of earth and sea in a way never seen before. Don't miss Reeve's work at Casa de la Guerra.

Regenerative Agriculture

By Guner Tautrim, Orella Stewardship Institute. www.orellastewardship.org

There is no doubt that most people love and admire the Gaviota Coast. Time and time again I hear people comment on how relaxing it is to get past Winchester off ramp headed north on HWY 101. The overwhelming splendor of the sweeping ocean views coupled with the dominating Santa Ynez mountain ranges are at the forefront of these feelings. In addition however, it is the relatively undeveloped nature of the coast that is of utmost importance to most. Open space is indeed center to this but I am here to argue that although open space has its benefits, a working landscape, one that provides value to our greater community, can harness the above mentioned benefits while also bringing local resilience to our community.

Regenerative Agriculture is the term we use for agricultural operations that regenerate our precious resources rather than degenerate them. It is possible to balance resource protection, wildlife habitat, visual integrity and enhanced soil and water quality with an economically viable agricultural operation.

Much of our conventional agriculture has become devastating for our environment. We sterilize our soils before planting and treat our crops with countless inputs of fertilizer. Although plants can get by on this they rarely are happy about it and require ample amounts of pesticides and herbicides, all of which come from fossil fuels, a resource increasingly shown to NOT be sustainable. Although this form of farming provides incredible quantities of food, a closer look reveals this food to be sorely lacking in nutritional value.

As this realization becomes more and more evident a movement has been born in which many people desire sustainable, organic and local (SOL Food) sources of food. By supporting regenerative agriculture we have an opportunity to vote with our dollars for a food supply that does not destroy healthy soil and healthy water supplies. The Gaviota Coast has the potential to be this source of local food resilience for our greater community.

Bacara Condos Haskell's Beach Bacara Addition

Little has been heard lately of this 55 room Hotel Condominium project applied for by Bacara. Labeled the "Completion Phase," it is maintained by Bacara that this new project is a part of their original application.

However that issue plays out, the project continues to wind its way through permitting review at the City of Goleta. While an Environmental Impact Report is being prepared, the project has also been going through extensive review by the Goleta Design Review Board. The project features a starkly modern set of eight tri and bi-plex, two story buildings on the land between the current public parking lot and the beach. Parking for residents would be under an elevated first floor deck. Reportedly, grassed roofs have been proposed to help the buildings present green profiles.

Existing tennis courts and 50 public parking spaces would be relocated slightly to the north to accommodate the condos with public and fire department access to the beach proposed to circle the complex on its eastern side. New beach related public facilities are also proposed adjacent to Bell Creek, near the Venoco processing facility.

There has been a delay in processing the application due to financing issues which are currently being resolved. Once the environmental review is completed, the project will go to the Goleta Planning Commission for a public hearing. No date has been set for that hearing. There are several unresolved issues such as General Plan inconsistencies, destruction of the critical habitat restored as mitigation for the original development, and a range of other issues to be addressed by the Planning Commission.

Our Coastal Wildland

You may have noticed that the Gaviota Coast is a mixture of landscape types, some steep and wild and others more suitable for agriculture. Set back from the ocean in Goleta, the mountains crowd in close to the shoreline at Gaviota, where the South Fork of the Santa Ynez Fault divides the mountains on the east, from the lower hills to the west. This is the most remote coastline in Southern California; a place where our living, natural resources are still abundant.



Together, Gaviota State Park and adjacent National Forest lands amount to more than 7,800 acres. When you add the County's Baron Ranch, and the Arroyo Hondo Preserve, it raises that number to over 10,000 acres. If the Land Trust is successful in acquiring the Brinkman property, (photo above) which sits between the Arroyo Hondo Preserve and Gaviota State Park along the southern edge of the National Forest, it will bring this block of protected wildlands to over 13,400 acres. Adding the nearly 1,400 acres of conservation easement on the Dos Vistas Ranch, it's possible to piece together about 14,800 acres of protected coastal wildland, encompassing all or part of 11 watersheds.



Photo © Reeve Woolpert

Naples Update

The "Naples Township" is still a pasture

Despite the Supervisors approval of 71 houses at Naples in 2008, the development has been devolving to the point where what the developer thought was worth \$200 million did not sell for \$50 mil at the foreclosure sale in May of 2010. Nothing has been built, nothing is planned to be built, indeed the development agreement on the coastal portion of the development was rescinded by the Supervisors.

The Naples Coalition, of which the GCC is a founding member, is challenging the project's approval in Superior Court, with the case to be heard in July. The legal action alleges that the development was "rushed to completion to gain the advantage of a political climate favorable to the developer, causing a disjointed patchwork of approvals that necessarily swept various issues under the rug and left a number of core issues unresolved". We look forward to our day in court.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Join the Gaviota Coast Conservancy and help us maintain our efforts to preserve our beautiful coastline and watersheds. Please use our reply envelope and thank you!
- Consider making a donation to the Gaviota Coast Conservancy. We are a volunteer organization that relies upon public support to continue our work. We cannot defend our coastal heritage without broad based community involvement; please be generous. Many thanks!



Photo © Reeve Woolpert

Links

Gaviota Coast Conservancy:

www.gaviotacoastconservancy.org

Naples Coalition:

www.savenaples.org

NPS Gaviota Coast Feasibility Study:

www.nps.gov/pwro/gaviota/

"In the professional opinion of NPS, the most effective and efficient means of protecting these significant resources and for providing public enjoyment along the Gaviota Coast is for these types of local protection strategies to continue and grow..."

Gaviota Planning Advisory Committee:

[longrange.sbcountyplanning.org/
planareas/gaviota/GavPAC.php](http://longrange.sbcountyplanning.org/planareas/gaviota/GavPAC.php)

The role of the GavPAC is to receive community input, review and comment on planning issues in the Gaviota Coast Plan area, which will be used by County staff to draft the Gaviota Coast Plan.

www.gaviotacoastconservancy.org

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NonProfit Org
US Postage Paid
Santa Barbara, CA
Permit #553


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