

# Coastline

GAVIOTA COAST CONSERVANCY NEWSLETTER

FALL / WINTER 2020



Photo: Donna Senauer

## A New Crop on the Gaviota Coast

STORY AND PHOTOS BY PHIL MCKENNA

**T**he Gaviota Coast has been “anchored” by agriculture for centuries. Cattle grazing was the mainstay of the Spanish land grants. Dry-farming followed with crops such as wheat, tomatoes and beans. Orchards were created with large planting of avocados and lemons from the 1950s to the present day. Unique crops such as macadamia nuts, cherimoyas and abalone are also produced here. And did you know that the commercial production of the cymbidium orchid was pioneered at Dos Pueblos Ranch in the 1950s?



But coffee? Yes, coffee!

At 650 feet, near the Los Padres National Forest boundary, Jay Ruskey of FRINJ Coffee is exploring the nuances of coffee production, applying regenerative agricultural techniques and mimicking the native habitat of the coffee tree. Jay began developing the first commercial coffee farm in California in 2002 on his ranch, Good Land Organics, with test plots of 13 arabica varieties planted under various conditions on the ranch.

The coffee tree grows best in rich, well-drained soil with mild temperatures, frequent rain and shaded sun. Not all of these conditions naturally occur on the Gaviota Coast, but the fundamental characteristics, good drainage and mild temperatures, are found on the ranch. Soil amendments and irrigation can compensate for the missing necessities and frequent rain and shade can be creatively provided. The fruit of the tree, known as the “cherry,” named for its visual resemblance to that fruit, contains the coffee bean. Too much heat and sun can cause the cherry to ripen too quickly, producing an inferior bean; sun is essential, but shade is necessary to produce high quality beans.

After years of study and experience, Jay has created a growing environment that mimics coffee's native habitat. Two vari-

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## Vandenberg Air Force Base To Construct Five Golf Courses in an Environmentally Sensitive Coastal Area?

**T**he proposed project, known as Vandenberg Dunes Golf Courses would cover 1273 acres of land in the northern portion of VAFB, mostly inland from the Coastal Zone. The 5 golf courses are designed as “links courses”. The project also includes reception facilities, a driving range, a two-story inn and lodge facilities, 50 cottages, a 215,000 square foot maintenance facility and 25 acres of access roads and utility corridors.

Vandenberg Air Force Base (VAFB) is seeking to finalize a 50-year Enhanced Use Lease with MLK Consulting, a private enterprise, who is represented by The Larkin Group, a project management company specializing in golf project management. (<http://thelarkingroup.com/projects/military-projects/>)

The site is constrained by 3 Federally Endangered animal species, 1 Federally Threatened animal, 1 Federally Endangered plant, and a monarch butterfly aggregation site. A total of 15 Chumash sites are contained within the footprint of the project.

GCC is closely monitoring the situation and will keep the community posted on this development threat.



# President's Letter

A unique year for the Gaviota Coast Conservancy

BY STEVE FORSELL

**T**he coronavirus has made this year a real challenge for GCC, as it has with all nonprofits. Doug Kern, our Executive Director, and the Board have made every effort to be creative in our work protecting the Gaviota Coast.

Due to the virus it was necessary to cancel large in-person gatherings this year. We hope our annual Coastal Legacy event and SCAPE events will resume in 2021, along with other events we care about in Santa Barbara. In their place, we instituted a Donor Personal Note Card Campaign. This proved to be very successful, providing an opportunity for GCC to let our supporters know that we were continuing to work diligently on issues and threats that affect the Gaviota Coast.

With appropriate precautions (limited participants, masks and social distancing), we had some small gatherings, including a coastal cleanup, an herb hike at Baron Ranch and the Gaviota Wind Caves, a kayak paddle on the Gaviota Coast, and a geology hike at Haskell's Beach. The response to these small events was enormous and we regret that we could not allow more to participate. The overwhelming interest shows that GCC supporters are anxious to venture out to the Coast and learn about preserving it.



Photo: David Auston

We started regularly posting Gaviota Coast stories written by board members and volunteers to our website. Recent enticing titles include: Osprey Sightings On the Coast, A Walk on the Wild Side, Geology Investigation on the Gaviota Coast, Earth Kanji, Paddle Paradise on the Gaviota Coast and Terra Firma. I recommend you go to our website and click on "Blog" for more information. And speaking of websites, we are now in the process of completely upgrading our website to make it more user friendly, with additional information of interest to our supporters, [gaviotacoastconservancy.org](http://gaviotacoastconservancy.org).

In the coming year GCC will continue to protect the rural character and environmental integrity of the Gaviota Coast for present and future generations.

Thank you for your partnership with Gaviota Coast Conservancy.

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eties of tropical trees will be inter-planted with the coffee trees and pruned to provide the coffee tree with filtered shade and a windbreak from the down-canyon drafts. The coffee tree can grow to 30 feet. In commercial production the tree is pruned to a human height to concentrate its energy and facilitate selective harvesting by hand, providing wonderful synergy with the companion planting of the tropical trees.

The Gaviota Coast Conservancy was very pleased to provide important financial assistance to realize the development of a demonstration coffee agroforest of 1.13 acres on the Gaviota Coast at Good Land Organics. This planting will demonstrate new and scalable cropping systems that have the

potential to enhance and expand the viability of Gaviota agricultural operations. Through regenerative agricultural techniques, the planting will improve soil management protocols for healthy orchard ecology.

For the first time in history, coffee is being grown commercially on the U.S. mainland and it was pioneered on the Gaviota Coast!



## One Man's Trash is Another Woman's Treasure

STORY & PHOTOS BY JANET KOED



Some time ago, before "social distancing" mandates were imposed across the lands, a group of hearty Gaviota guardians were called upon to remove a large amount of plastic debris near Driftwoods Cove. This volunteer group toiled for the better part of a day dragging irrigation tubing and various other rubbish from the picturesque beach. Jim and Susan Deacon filled their truck full of trash. Warren Powers drove to the dump to see if it could be recycled. No dice. The transfer station could not repurpose it.



Knowing the landfill was not a good home for plastic, Warren put his creative Powers to work and came up with a solution. He called his wife Eva, a landscape designer and volunteer President of the Board of the Santa Ynez Valley Botanic Garden. Eva knew this beach blight could be used for something at the Garden, but for what?

The tube sat for a while, and it was finally decided that it could be turned

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# A Walk in the time of Coronavirus

The best prescription for your general wellbeing, assuming you are adhering to social distancing and washing your hands more than you think you need to, is to take a walk

STORY AND PHOTOS BY PHIL MCKENNA

**T**he Gaviota Coast provides numerous wonderful strolls, walks, and hikes. The closest one to most of the residents of the South Coast is Coal Oil Point Reserve, part of the UC Natural Reserve System, and the adjacent UCSB North Campus Open Space.

The Coal Oil Point Reserve is best accessed by parking in Isla Vista near the intersection of Del Playa Dr. and Camino Majorca and walking west (away from UCSB) across the top of the bluff about one-half mile to the Point. Sands Beach is immediately to the west of the Point. The view overlooking Sands Beach on a clear day offers one of the best vistas of the Gaviota



Coast; Government Point is in the distance, just a half mile from Point Conception. Sands is a broad beach where the Devereaux

Slough meets the ocean. It is accessible to walkers at most tides) and allows for a beach walk to the Bacara Resort. When beach walking, always be aware of tidal direction and magnitude. If you walk this beach, look for the Ellwood Onshore Facility adjacent to the Bacara (about 1.5 miles from the Point). This oil processing facility is non-functional given the abandonment of Platform Holly, but we expect the location will one day provide public beach access.

To view the inland portion of the Devereaux Slough, from the Point walk about one-quarter mile north (toward the mountains) to an overlook at a dilapidated bridge. The Slough is a coastal wetland as it mixes with salt and fresh water. During dry periods low freshwater flow and a sand berm at the ocean will block the interchange of ocean and fresh water. But in stormy periods fresh water and wave action will break the sand berm creating a flooded tidal lagoon. It is a very dynamic environment seasonally ranging from extensive mudflats to a broad shallow lagoon. You can also drive to this spot by taking Slough Road to the end – it is very scenic.

The northern portion of Devereaux Slough is a restoration wonderland, known as the UCSB North Campus OpenSpace Restoration Project. Under the direction of

Lisa Stratton at the UCSB Cheadle Center for Biodiversity and Ecological Restoration, a 64-acre golf course that filled the northern portion of the Slough was removed (literally) and the Slough restored to its original dimensions. This is a mammoth undertaking that must be visited to be understood. Work



is ongoing, but a loop trail with bridges is complete and can be accessed via Whitter Drive – look for a sign on the left, behind student housing, shortly after turning onto Whitter from Storke Road. The parking lot is currently being used for construction activities so park on the street.

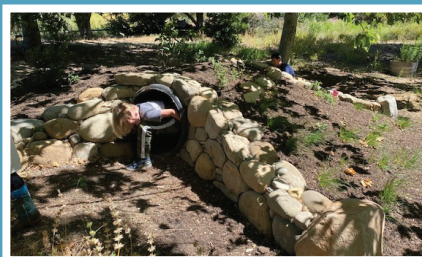
A total of over one square mile of contiguous coastal habitat in this area has been preserved over the past 20 years. Go for a walk in this time of uncertainty. It will be rejuvenating.

## Gaviota Coast Conservancy Protecting the Gaviota Coast Since 1996

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into a play tunnel for the kids! A generous grant was procured from Montecito Bank and Trust. This allowed the botanic garden folks to hire a mason to create a retaining wall with local river rocks. Next native flora was planted. This trash was converted to treasure. A perfect example of the mantra....Reduce, Reuse, Recycle!

If you want to be inspired by the transformation of this trash to treasure, you might consider visiting the Santa Ynez Valley Botanic Garden in Buellton.



See their website for more information at [santaynezvalleybotanicgarden.org](http://santaynezvalleybotanicgarden.org).



Photo: David Austin



# Accomplishments

Gaviota Coast Conservancy is dedicated to protecting the rural character and environmental integrity of the Gaviota Coast for present and future generations.

GCC has a lot to celebrate. In addition to our successful advocacy work we're now implementing a permanent protection strategy for coastal lands

BY DOUG KERN

**G**aviota Coast Conservancy is working on a number of important initiatives that are **making a difference** for our Coast **today and for the future**. While the year has been challenging one for everyone, there is plenty of reason to be optimistic about a bright future on the Coast.

## ENVIRONMENTAL INTEGRITY

With our colleague organization **Coastal Ranches Conservancy (CRC)**, we pushed for improved wildlife passage in the Gaviota State Park area. We've appealed to the California Coastal Commission the SB County Planning Commission approval of a freeway culvert project where project planners failed to **incorporate wildlife passage** into the design. With CRC we brought evidence that showed wildlife and vehicles were coming into severe conflict at the Gaviota site. While we understand the need for improving the freeway, this is an important opportunity to provide safe wildlife passage in a area frequented by mountain lions, bear, deer, bobcat and other large mammals.

GCC is closely monitoring and advocating for improved public access to **Haskell's Beach** at the **Bacara Resort** where an ugly, unpermitted seawall and perpetually closed beach food service have resulted in poor public facilities and access.

## RURAL CHARACTER

With funding secured through GCC's settlement agreement with the County of Santa Barbara and others concerning the Tajiguas Resource Recovery Project, GCC funded several innovative projects on the Coast that utilize **regenerative agriculture**

practices. These include: (1) a grant to **plant 1800 coffee trees** entailing a diversified farming system, with wind breaks, cover crops and understory crops; (2) funding to develop monitoring of ecological outcomes at the **Jalama Cañon Ranch** prior to acquisition of the property by **White Buffalo Land Trust**; (3) a **vermiculture project** aimed at helping Gaviota ranchers best manage reuse and recycling of waste organic material; (4) a **pollinator hedgerow project** on the **Las Varas Ranch** to procure and plant additional plants to fill gaps. The project will include monitoring of insects before and after installation of the new plants.

All of these projects seek to assist our Gaviota ranchers and farmers become more sustainable and keep Gaviota lands in agriculture.

## PUBLIC ACCESS

As GCC's Executive Director, I was selected to be a member of the **Hollister Ranch Coastal Access Program (HRCAP)** Working Group. This Group is charged with developing recommendations to the State agencies who must create a plan for public access to the coastal areas of the Hollister Ranch. I'm optimistic that the result will be a managed access plan that protects natural resources and respects private property rights. AB 1680 requires the HRCAP planning process to be completed by April 1, 2021 and the first phase of public access is required to begin by April 2022.

GCC is also actively engaged in dialog to dedicate **Baron Ranch** on the Gaviota Coast for public recreational activities, and to restore and protect an endangered steelhead trout stream on the property.

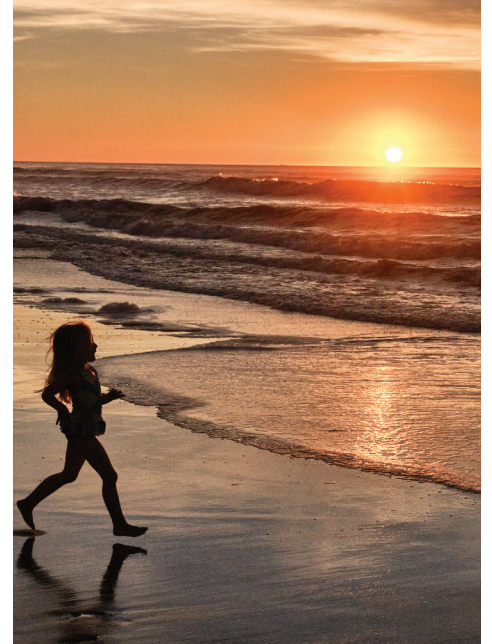


Photo: David Auston

## PERMANENT PROTECTION

GCC is updating our internal practices, policies and capabilities to receive, manage and **permanently protect Gaviota Coast properties**. Working with our environmental partners and colleague organizations, we are actively pursuing several possible Gaviota Coast acquisitions to insure permanent protection from inappropriate development and make the coast more accessible to the public. These are expensive properties and will need the support of everyone who wants to leave a legacy of protecting the Gaviota Coast.

Please contact me if you would like to play an active role in this process.

## GCC Staff

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## GCC Board of Directors

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## Coming Events

11/21 Herb Hike  
11/23 Geology Hike at Arroyo Hondo  
11/29 Beach Hike  
12/31 New Year's Eve hike

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