

GOOD DIRT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ANDERSON VALLEY LAND TRUST

FALL, 2020

Pinus longaeva

Bristlecone Pine

These amazing trees are the ultimate poster oldsters for weathering adversity. Growing at elevations typically from 10,000 - 11,500 feet, bristlecone pines tolerate thin soils, scant rainfall, strong winds, cold temperatures and generally inhospitable conditions - perhaps in part because they have little competition. Other plants just don't bother.



drawing by Patrick Miller

Widely considered the oldest plants on earth, many of these trees have a longevity exceeding 4,000 years! Growing very slowly, *Pinus longaeva* at its highest locales takes on fantastically twisted forms with beautiful contorted trunks that appear reddish to almost white, and may look nearly dead even when still quite alive. The fairly short, shining green needles are held in tufted “foxtail” bundles of 5 (wonderful for us plant identification buffs). Immature female cones are covered in distinctive prickly “bristles”, thus the common name. Although usually purple, for reasons not totally understood, they are sometimes green in color. Bristlecone pines’ wood is dense and full of resin, thus rendering the trees resistant to insect infestation, a characteristic that contributes to their extraordinarily long life span.

(cont. on page 3)

Adaptable Native Landscapes Project

AVLT has a long history of offering hikes, lectures, and other events that provide opportunities for Valley residents to learn about the many natural resources that abound in our area. In 2019, AVLT received a Community Enrichment grant from the Community Foundation of Mendocino County to offer a series of lectures and in-the-field excursions focusing on identifying, protecting, and preserving our local native flora (native plants, flowers, and trees), fauna (birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, and fish), and their habitats. Matching funds for this project have been provided by the Frederick E. and Anne R. Barstow Fund at the East Bay Community Foundation, Friends of Rancho Navarro, and our generous donors.

Partnering with Sonoma State University’s Center for Environmental Inquiry, and utilizing the Galbreath Wildlands Preserve in Yorkville, hundreds have participated in events covering a variety of topics and protection/preservation strategies. Presentations and excursions were made on growing a wildlife garden (native plants and grasslands for wildlife habitat) and the role, propagation, and rebuilding of oak forests. Sadly after March 2020, due to restrictions stemming from the Covid-19 pandemic, project events that had previously been planned were postponed. Interestingly, that did not limit participation. In many cases we were able switch to the Zoom format for sessions that could accommodate many more people than a field walk. Topics included: using wildlife cameras to observe wildlife (selecting equipment and the placement and analysis of camera results); the art and science of animal tracking; planning and building hiking trails on private lands for watching wildlife, wildflowers, and weather; identifying oak species by examining their leaves, acorns, and caps; and understanding invasive plants and their impact on native flora, wildfire and flooding risks, and the reduction of habitat for native wildlife.

(cont. on page 3)

A Letter from the President:

The crisp mornings and colors of fall have arrived. But with the Covid-19 pandemic and an extended fire season, it certainly has been different spring, summer, and fall this year. While the pandemic has moved us to Zoom Board of Director meetings and virtual lectures and field trips, it has not stopped interest by property owners wanting to place a conservation easement on their land. We now are working on three easements in various stages with one hopefully being finalized about the time you are reading this Good Dirt.

We are pleased to announce that Paul Soderman accepted a part-time AVL T position in October to help keep the offices moving along smoothly. It is nice that Paul and his wife Amy live on a “conserved” property with an AVL T easement and that they know first hand how a conservation easement supports a quality of life habitat for humans and other animals.

On a somewhat different note, in the past year we were notified that the AVL T has been listed as one beneficiary in a family’s living trust. It is this type of contribution that in the future will certainly support our growing operations. This is a reminder that we announced back in 2015 a program that allows all of our supporters to make a gift with the stroke of a pen – a legacy gift through your estate. These gifts could be directed in any number of ways including into a special Easement Purchase Fund at AVL T. The money from that fund would be used to pay landowners for conservation easements that they grant to AVL T in situations where the donor’s right to take a tax deduction for the easement doesn’t provide strong motivation to just make a donation. Under this program your gift,



established as part of your estate plan, would be a bequest to AVL T. It could be cash, securities, or land. If it were land, AVL T would plan to sell the land promptly and put the cash back into the Easement Purchase Fund.

Lastly, your generous donations throughout the year allow us to continue our work of ensuring a sound environmental future for Anderson Valley, the Navarro River and its tributaries. We appreciate your past support and hope you will use the enclosed envelope to renew your support or become a new donor.

Sincerely,

Patrick Miller
President, AVL T Board of Directors

Bristlecone Pine (cont.)

These remarkable trees occupy quite a restricted native range, from the mountains of eastern California, sprinkled throughout high elevations in Nevada and into parts of Utah, and are sometimes commonly called Great Basin bristlecone pine. A closely related species, the Rocky Mountain bristlecone pine, is found in Colorado. Bristlecone pines

Have been closely studied as part of “dendrochronology” due to the wealth of knowledge derived from observing (and meticulously counting!) their annual growth rings, which not only helps determine age but also affords insight into climate changes from year to year (smaller rings indicating less precipitation).

Pinus longaeva trees are quite difficult to cultivate in gardens, as conditions are usually “too good” for them to thrive. They’re easy to kill with kindness. So if you’d like to see them in the wild, you’ll need to make a special trip. The Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest near Bishop, California has a lovely visitor center and self-guided interpretive trails there for the hiking, if you are willing to make the trek up a long and curvy access road. The trees themselves, and the panoramic views of the surrounding environs, are nothing short of spectacular.

Bristlecone pine is so worthy of recognition that Nevada adopted it as the official state tree in the late 1980s. Fun fact!

In this time of so much physical and mental uncertainty, a tribute to this most enduring tree that overcomes so much adversity seems a fitting choice to highlight; hope you agree.

Written by Jane Miller



Big Hendy through the fog

Adaptable Native Landscapes Project (cont.)

Looking forward, we have tentatively planned two field excursion events on managing woodlands for wildfire and managing erosion and protecting stream health in Spring 2021.

If you are interested in either the planned upcoming wildfire or erosion events or receiving notices about other activities that the AVLT conducts throughout the year, please either:

- call the AVLT office at 707-895-3150 and leave a message along your name and email address or phone number;
- use the contact form on our website (www.andersonvalleylandtrust.org); or
- send us an email at AVLT@MCN.ORG.

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WORKSHOPS FOR RANCH AND FARM LANDOWNERS

The Mendocino County Sustainable Agricultural Lands Committee (SALC) has been busy planning four free workshops for farm and ranchland owners centered on the benefits of the Williamson Act and conservation easements in January and February. The workshops are focused on both the current viability of working lands and the legacy of transferring them intact to the next generation. The workshops will be offered online or by telephone. Technical assistance will be available. Full workshop information will be posted at <https://mcrd.org/project/mendocino-county-sustainable-agricultural-lands-strategy-program> and www.andersonvalleylandtrust.org or call the AVLT office at 895-3150.



© View from Clow Ridge looking upstream toward Boonville.

□

OUR WATERSHED RESOURCES

We have a New Web Page!

Interested in one-stop shopping to learn about the natural resources of the Navarro River watershed, how they are used, and how they are managed? We have a new addition to our web site at <https://www.andersonvalleylandtrust.org>. Just click on “**Our Watershed Resources**”. This page is annotated webliography and provides links to about the natural and cultural resources and their management in the Navarro River Watershed and Anderson Valley. Included are publications that may be downloaded and links to web sites of interest. This is a living list in that it will be amended as new sites are discovered. If you have a suggestion for adding to the site, please send it along to avlt@mcn.org.

WINTER IS HERE



ARE WE BECOMING ANDERSON ZOOM VALLEY?

Perspective

“Tech Workers Take to the Mountains, Bringing Silicon Valley With Them”. *Wall Street Journal*.

“Demand is Rising for Properties in Vacation Home Markets”. *Forbes*.

“Planning and Development Challenges in Western Gateway Communities”. *Journal of The American Planning Association*.

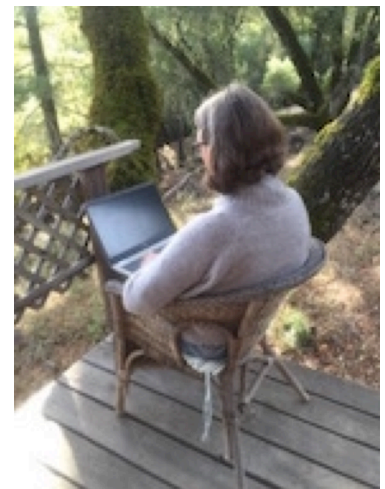
“The Rise of 'Zoom Towns' in the Rural West”. *Phys.org*.

The above headlines are all from October 2020. Will Boonville or Philo or Navarro become Zoom Towns supporting new ownership and land use changes both nearby and in the surrounding watershed lands? Or are they already? It is not such a far-fetched thought. Lumber, sheep, apples, back-to-land, grapes, second homes, and tourism have each changed Anderson Valley in their own ways. What is next?



With the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic making everyone realize that working from home or anywhere with a reasonable internet connection is a realistic option, ownership patterns in some rural areas seem to be changing.

“An entirely new problem: A flood of remote workers fleeing big cities to ride out the pandemic perhaps leaving permanently. Like oil discovery led to western boomtowns, the pandemic has led to the rise of "Zoom Towns"—and with this so-called amenity migration comes a variety of challenges.” (Lisa Potter, University of Utah). The *Journal of the American Planning Association* noted that “many problems that seem atypical for small rural communities, such as challenges associated with housing affordability, cost of living, and congestion are becoming a reality. These challenges seem to be more related to population growth than increasing tourism and stand out in stark contrast against the fact that these communities strongly value and identify with their small-town character.”



Feel familiar? Is it too implausible to take the leap and envision that this trend applies to Anderson Valley and that land ownership and land use patterns are on the cusp of changing once again? Or would this trend only affect Ukiah and the Mendocino coastline? The indicators are there be it part of the “Zoom” boom of working from home caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the advent of expanded high-speed internet throughout Anderson Valley, or the addition of urban infrastructure (water and sewer) for Boonville that is now being planned.

What the news articles cited above do not address is how this growth affects the conservation of our natural resources and the rural quality of life those resources support. The majority of the AVLT conservation easements are donated by individuals who are aging, have lived on their property for many years, and who just do not want the next owners to overdevelop the land or develop it at all. The need for the Anderson Valley community to start thinking and planning for a growth future that includes resource conservation is probably at our doorstep.

THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS DONORS

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AVLT 2019 Financial Statement		
Statement of Activity as of December 31, 2019		
	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds*
Current Assets		
Operating Accounts	\$30,862	
Pioneer Stewardship Fund		\$28,924
Stewardship Endowment*		\$314,318
Total	\$30,862	\$343,242
Portfolio Increase		\$18,070
Donations	\$27,193	
Grants	\$5,000	
Other Income	\$5,723	
Total Support & Revenue	\$37,916	
Expenses		
Operating Expenses	\$36,208	
Easement Expenses		\$46,622
Special Events & Workshops	\$1,220	
Total Expenses	\$37,428	\$28,552
* restricted funds for the continuing protection of our easements.		

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EXPRESSIT

“Dedicated to the Preservation and Restoration of Our Unique Rural Landscape”



INSIDE DIRT

PINUS LONGAeva (BRISTLEcone PINE)

ADAPTABLE NATIVE LANDSCAPES PROJECT

A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

ZOOM VALLEY

CONTRIBUTORS:

BARBARA GOODELL, GLYNNIS JONES, PATRICK MILLER,
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ANDERSON VALLEY LAND TRUST
14150 HIGHWAY 128
BOONVILLE, CA 95415
707-895-3150
avlt@mcn.org
www.andersonvalleylandtrust.org