

## Introduction to Conservation Easements - Part II

*Whenever Tri-Valley Conservancy is entrusted to uphold a landowner's conservation vision for a special property, it is an honor. Upholding that vision in perpetuity is an obligation.*

Our previous newsletter provided an introduction to conservation easements, but what happens after a landowner has granted a conservation easement to Tri-Valley Conservancy (TVC)?

Every property for which the Conservancy holds a conservation easement is visited annually. When a conservation easement is granted in perpetuity to TVC, a baseline report is prepared. This report identifies the existing conditions of the land and resources; it is used as a reference when TVC conducts an annual stewardship visit to the property. The procedure allows both TVC and the landowner to document any changes to the property and ensures that conservation values have been maintained or improved since the time when the conservation easement was executed.

A TVC staff member and a volunteer meet with each landowner annually so that we may provide an opportunity for them to ask us questions about their conservation easement. Our annual property site visits are intended to document any changes to the property subsequent to the previous report. Our visits provide data for the annual stewardship report and also provide us the opportunity to connect with the landowners to learn about current changes to the property and also about any anticipated changes.

One observation has been repeatedly confirmed over the past eighteen years of visits: the best stewards of their land are the landowners themselves! TVC realizes that developing strong

relationships with landowners is the best way to help provide for good stewardship of the land and avoid potential conflicts about conservation easements.

Our desire is to find tools, expertise, and resources to assist landowners as they steward their land and promote the economic viability of Tri-Valley agriculture. We have been working with each of the landowners to expand our contacts beyond the once-a-year "stewardship visit." We are adding to our network of resources, including the Alameda County Resource Conservation District and the federal Natural Resources Conservation Services.

A conservation easement can be an effective legal tool for protecting significant resources for the benefit of present and future generations. However, a conservation easement does not in itself protect land, but rather, *it authorizes a land trust, in partnership with the landowner*, to ensure the long-term protection of the property.

*In our next newsletter, we will discuss the different ways TVC received the sixty conservation easements we currently hold.*

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*...the best stewards of their land  
are the landowners themselves!*

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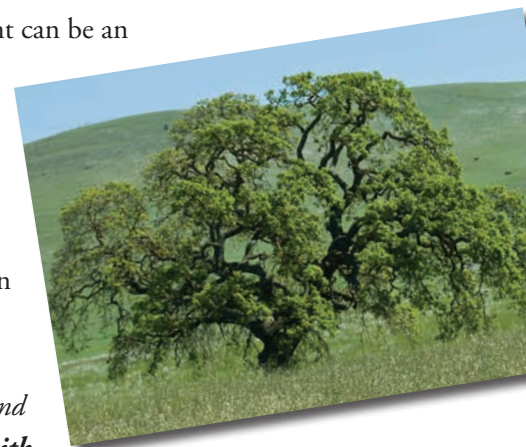


Photo Credit-Sarah Harrington

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## New Directors Join Board



CLAY  
WIDMAYER

Clay Widmayer was appointed to the TVC Board by the City of Livermore in 2013. Clay was born and raised in Walla Walla, Washington, the Pacific Northwest's pre-eminent winemaking region. He received a BA in Physics from Whitman College, and an MS and Ph.D in Physics from the University of

Oregon. Clay has lived in Livermore for 18 years and works as a physicist at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in the field of high-energy, high-peak power lasers for alternative energy research.

Clay has previously served as treasurer of the Friends of Livermore. His interests include open-space conservation, public planning, and transportation. In their spare time, Clay and his wife Jo Dee enjoy traveling, camping, hiking, and raising their rescue dogs. Their long-term goal is to visit all 59 of America's National Parks.



ART  
JEANNET

Art Jeannet joined the TVC Board as at-large Director in 2013. Art grew up outside St. Louis, Missouri and spent his early years working on a family farm. He received his MBA and Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from the University of Missouri, Columbia.

After gaining work experience in financial planning, Art completed postgraduate accounting coursework at Arizona State University and became a licensed Certified Public Accountant

Art is executive vice president and chief financial officer at Wentz Family Estates, where his areas of responsibility include finance, information technology, human resources and legal. Prior to joining Wentz Vineyards, he served as the senior vice president of finance for Jackson Family Wines. Art's previous experience includes 20 years in various finance and operational roles with consumer packaged-goods companies such as Anheuser-Busch, Pepsi, and the Dial Corporation.

Art has lived in the Bay Area since 2005. He enjoys playing tennis and traveling with his daughters, Gabby and Alexandra.

## Gems Abound in the Valley: New Rubino Estates Winery Sparkles

by Laura Ness

Be prepared to be impressed by the newest high-end wine experience in the Livermore Valley. Winemaker Chris Graves and his team

from the well-established Ruby Hill Winery do not produce anything but well-made wines from their TVC-preserved estate vineyards. They've been busy preparing for the launch of their new brand, Rubino Estates Winery, which they believe will represent the most unique and Italianate winetasting experience yet to grace the Valley.

Helmed by GM Lindsey Callahan, daughter of owner and visionary in charge Mike Callahan, the new tasting room will be, by far, the largest in the region, at over 8,000 square feet. Rubino, which means "ruby" in Italian, is set to debut on March 1<sup>st</sup> at the site of the former Mitchell Katz at Ruby Hill Winery. Rubino will also become the new winery of record for the Palm Event Center. Says Callahan, "We have a great relationship with the Palm Event Center, and we wanted to continue it."

The Rubino label will feature primarily Italian varietals, including Barbera, Dolcetto, Nebbiolo, Pinot Grigio and Sangiovese, as well as some interesting riffs on Super Tuscans. Significant grafting is occurring in the preserved estate vineyard to make all this possible, and exciting new varieties are in the offering, among them, Cortese and Trebbiano.

Although you may already have a notion of what to expect, says Callahan, "When someone comes to our side of town, we want them to have two entirely different experiences."

*For complete article on Rubino Winery, please visit [trivalleyconservancy.org](http://trivalleyconservancy.org).*



# Preserve Our Rare Springtown Alkali Sink

Located in Northern Livermore, the Springtown Alkali Sink Preserve is a unique complex of Alkali meadows and scrub lands, seasonal wetlands, stream channels and vernal pools that provides rare and diverse habitat for a variety bird, amphibians and other animal species.

The Springtown Alkali Sink is unique biological ecosystem right in our own back yard!! There is no public access into the Sink. However, an old paved trail exists that offers opportunities for a leisurely stroll and viewing local and migratory wildlife without treading on the sensitive soils and plants.

The Friends of Springtown Preserve (FSP) has worked to raise awareness of this local treasure for years. Plant and animal surveys have been conducted, with the cooperation of the California Native Plant Society and the Ohlone Audubon Chapter. (For more information about the preserve, please see the FSP website: [www.springtownpreserve.org](http://www.springtownpreserve.org))

Unfortunately, the Preserve is threatened by invasive non-native vegetation and destructive off-road vehicle and bicycle use. Heightened public awareness of the existence and sensitivity of this area would help protect these threatened resources from further damage. If you observe

activities that appear to be destructive and damaging to the Preserve, please contact the Livermore Police Department at 925-371-4987.

In the meantime, the Tri-Valley Conservancy continues to work with its partners at the City of Livermore and FSP to develop strategies and methods of addressing habitat restoration and enhancement, trail connectivity, and wildlife corridors. Through public outreach, and education we raise our awareness of the special plant and animal species and their habitats.



**Wildflowers in bloom in the preserve area and White Crowned Sparrow perches on an Iodine bush.**  
(Photo Credit: Patti Cole)

## TVC Secures Bechtel Grant

Tri-Valley Conservancy is pleased to announce the award of a grant from the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation. These funds will be used to build the programs necessary to grow our capacity and support our efforts toward long-term sustainability. This ensures a solid foundation for increasing our fundraising efforts and visibility as we pursue our mission. Executive Director Laura Mecier said, “The Board of Directors was thrilled with the news that TVC had been awarded this grant. We are now in a position to take the next steps of becoming a stronger and community-involved land trust.”

Preservation of agricultural lands and natural open spaces in our area is vital to protecting our quality of life. The Tri-Valley Conservancy Board of Directors continues to strive to be a leader in the permanent preservation of the area’s rural and ecological environment. Our Board’s intent is to foster the creation and maintenance of a productive and balanced environment for current and future generations of Tri-Valley area residents. Tri-Valley Conservancy’s mission is to permanently protect fertile soils, open space, and biological resources and to support a viable agricultural economy in the Tri-Valley area.

# Important Announcements

## Livermore Valley Uncorked!

The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Livermore Valley Uncorked! competition winners will be announced March 12, 2013 at our Quest for Excellence. This competition is open to wines made from Livermore Valley AVA grapes ONLY. Visit [trivalleyconservancy.org](http://trivalleyconservancy.org) for more information.

## JEANS & JEWELS

### Committee Openings...

TVC invites you to volunteer to help with the planning of our 2013 Jeans & Jewels fundraising event to be held October 3, 2013. Help us create this really great event and make it a sell-out! Planning meetings will begin in early March. If interested, please contact Kellie Hayes, Resource Development Director, at 925-449-8706.

## Freeze Frame Exhibits

March 1-31 Livermore Public Library at 1188 S. Livermore Avenue  
April 1 -30 Livermore Robert Community Center at 4444 East Avenue

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