



# MONTE NIDO VALLEY



## COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION



*A Dark Sky Community*

**E-NEWSLETTER**

**JANUARY 2006**

### What is a Dark Sky Community?

*Eds. Note: Last month the LA Times Real Estate Section featured an article on Monte Nido (who didn't see it?) and noted that Monte Nido abides by the recommendations of the Dark Sky Association. Many people have asked what this means so I am reprinting the article we ran last year when the MNVCA Board voted unanimously to encourage our residents to preserve and maintain our view of the nighttime sky.*

It is an unfortunate fact of today's life that most people are growing up unable to see the stars that our grandparents knew so well. The prime night sky exists largely in pictures or planetarium shows. This is true not only in cities but also in suburbs and in rural areas where street lamps and other sources of lighting have obscured our view of constellations, meteor showers, and even the planets.

Many children and adults exclaim after viewing the night sky for the first time in a really dark area away from a city that "it looks just like this in the planetarium." We have lost our view of the stars, and we have affected up our nighttime environment as well. Excessive lighting contributes to foraging difficulties for frogs, habitat degradation for bobcats and a proliferation of crows, which gain advantage over nocturnal owls and are linked to the disappearance of other raptors. Declines in these birds of prey can lead to increases in the numbers of rodents that make up a good part of their diet.

Such a loss might be acceptable if all of this lighting was the inevitable price of progress, but it is not. Most sky glow is unnecessary. The light that obscures our view of the night sky comes mainly

from inefficient lighting sources that do little to increase nighttime safety, security, or utility and diminish the rural quality that many of us moved here to enjoy.

Realizing that intensive outdoor lighting impairs the quality of life, citizens nationwide are drafting ordinances to protect their night sky. The City of Calabasas is working on an ordinance that would reduce the impact of outdoor lighting.

Monte Nido's old timers remember when the stars jumped out of the sky just like they do in the Sierra but increasing lighting from the cities to the east and north of us has had an impact on that view. Locally, within our neighborhoods, outdoor lights shine into the windows of nearby houses creating uninvited "nightlights" in nearby bedrooms.

To preserve Monte Nido's darkness, begin with a frank assessment of your own outdoor lights. Take a walk or ride down the road after dark, look homeward and ask yourself:

- Are my lights truly necessary for safety and security?
- Do they illuminate more than my driveway and walkway?
- Do I light my home's exterior so that the house appears as a beacon?
- Are my lights directed downward, or do they shine into my neighbor's windows?
- Does my driveway-street number light blind oncoming motorists?
- Can I see my lights from a distance? Is the distance measured in miles?
- Do my lights shine all night long?
- Do my lights shine in to the habitat of frogs, bobcats, owls and other wild creatures?

There are many ways to lessen the impact of outdoor lighting that range from simply turning lights off when you don't need them to replacing fixtures that shine onto other property. Information is available at the website of the International Dark Sky Association ( [www.darksky.org](http://www.darksky.org) ). There you'll find information about lighting fixtures, suggestions for approaching neighbors who over-illuminate your property and information on the impact of excess lighting on astronomy and the natural world.

If we're successful, our kids may be able to experience a Milky Way that isn't made of chocolate.

*Are you interested in participating in a Monte Nido wide night sky viewing? Look for information in future newsletters!*



## The MNVCA Board

Elections for the MNVCA Board were held at the December board meeting. The current board members are:

Rosemary Alden  
Marianne Cilluffo  
Les Hardie  
Cynthia Hodes  
Joan Kay  
Lisa Lehman  
John Low  
Jocelyn McKay  
Yehuda Netanel  
Joan Slimocosky  
Heidi Stompe

Officer elections were postponed until the February meeting.

## MNVCA Board of Directors Meeting December 6, 2005

The regular meeting of the MNVCA was called to order in the home of Cynthia Hodes at 7:16pm. In attendance were Les Hardie, Cynthia Hodes, Joan Kay, John Low, Jocelyn Mackay, Yehuda Netanel, and Joan Slimocosky.

**Treasurer's Report:** Director's insurance annual premium paid. Attorney latest bill paid. Overview of accts given.

**Federation Report:** Woody Smeck from State Parks at Nov. meeting with update on Gillette Ranch, shuttle bus service to Parks and report on mountain lions. John Low has been nominated for Fed. president. Congratulations to John from all!

**Old business:** Discussion of breakdown of Measure C defeat and approval of open space measure. MVI future for development and meaning of defeat of Measure C discussed. Workshop at Topanga (12/3/05) on Local Coastal Plan reported on. Approximately 60-70 attended and brainstormed LCP. 3/06 draft plan expected. Country planners there and took notes from groups involved. Newsletter will notify of upcoming hearings. A committee planned to coordinate Malibou Lake/Topanga/Monte Nido concerns re new plan.

Triangle corner update given by Gary Bardovi. New rep from Zev's office, Vivian Rascalvo, to be contacted with our concerns that Lot 7 has not been landscaped per contract with Rasmussen and MNVCA. Meeting is to be set up.

**New business:** Per bylaws, President John Low nominated Heide Stompe to replace Marianne Maloney's term. Heide accepted and Board approved by acclamation. Remaining slate of Board up for election also approved by acclamation. Officers to be elected next meeting.

Joan Kay brought up National Parks issue of mining rights being sold off. She is requesting Board/ individuals to send letters to State senators. MNVCA will distribute newspaper article for review by Board and possible action next meeting. Yehuda Netanel noted Verizon telephone relay station start up soon.

*-Joan Slimocosky*

## National Parks Threatened Once Again

While we've been hearing about proposals to turn over Santa Rosa Island to the Department of Defense for an R&R center, the larger issue is proposed changes to the "operating manual" of the Park Service with respect to resource protection. There is something called the "Organic Act," originally established in 1916, that sets out the way NPS manages resources. This act clearly established resource conservation as the top priority for park management and its principals have been upheld many times in the courts. It was modified in the 1970s to extend the same high standards to National Recreation Areas and other types of park property and there were some minor modifications made in 2001. These proposed modifications to the act that would give park managers a great deal of discretion in balancing (and mitigating the impact of) use with resource protection. While we would always expect park managers to act with the best interest of the resource in mind, local interests, could put particular pressure on an individual Superintendent to give certain kinds of uses priority over protection of the park resources. The result may be that a nationally significant resource is managed to serve local interest. An example of this would be local pressure to allow snowmobiles into Yellowstone during the winter months with the potential of unknown impacts on the ecosystem and known impacts (noise, air pollution) on wintertime visitors who come to the park for a quiet winter experience. The Park Superintendent would not have the clear guidelines for finding a balance between resource preservation and use that he has today and may well be forced to give in to the local interests or even concessionaires despite the potential for damage. While giving park managers discretion over the uses in their parks sounds like a good idea on the surface, it can have the effect of removing the baseline protection we have come to expect for our parklands.

An even more significant issue locally is a major shift in the method of protecting land. Now the primary method is to acquire it and set it aside as parkland. Ahmanson and Soka are prime examples of this. In addition, the park service has a number of other options to protect land, life

tenancies for example, and the last resort is usually some kind of scenic or conservation easement. The new rules reverse the order making conservation easements the primary method of land protection and acquisition as the last resort. Today, conservation easements are used when the owners are unwilling to sell and can be somewhat tenuous. The problem is that the Park Service is dependent in part on the good will of the owner to abide by the easement. This usually works fine until the land is sold. The new owner may not have the same sensibility and choose to ignore the provisions of the easement or may not even know about it. There are enough of these in the Santa Monicas that the Park Service may have difficulty tracking compliance and only find out about violations if someone reports a missing trail or a new fence on public land. The Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation area is particularly vulnerable to this change in policy because it has the largest backlog of property to acquire (30,000 acres) for protection of any unit in the National Park Service.

The proposed changes to the Organic Act are going to be acted on this spring and the public comment period closes on the 17th of February. To learn more about the issue visit the website of the National Parks Conservation Association, a bipartisan public interest group that has worked to protect our parks for over 80 years. Their web address is [www.npca.org](http://www.npca.org).

Parklands are an important asset for those of us lucky enough to live in the Santa Monica Mountains and contribute significantly to our quality of life. If you would like to be heard on this issue letters can be sent to:

Ms. Fran Mainella, Director  
National Park Service  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington DC 20240 Or,

Mr. Bernard Fagan  
National Park Service  
Office of Policy  
Room 7252 Main Interior Building  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington DC 20240

*-John Low*

## Equestrian Trails, Inc., Corral 36

### Monte Nido – Ravages of Weather 2006 Style

If you don't sell real estate in Monte Nido, you may have been peeved with the LA Times article that appeared in the Real Estate section by Times Staff Writer Ann Brenoff on January 1st this year. It describes Monte Nido in bucolic terms: "Creek beds with babbling brooks, wooden bridges to cross them, canopies of oak and sycamore trees, the horsy smell of country living. This is Martha Stewart's Connecticut masquerading as the Southern California hamlet of Monte Nido, Calabasas' little secret." What is not mentioned are the ravages of wind, water and fire! We had a little reminder on January 2nd.

Perhaps we are the ultimate NIMBY's, but what Brenoff ignores, as do some of the real estate agents selling in the neighborhood, is the fact that some very nasty weather rolls around annually either with severe winter storms or summer extreme Santa Ana winds pushing fire storms - and what owners must deal with should they desire to change the footprint of their home in our neighborhood with the county rules and the California Coastal Commission.

The beginning of 2006 brought in some very bad, blustery rain storms. Rain is good except when accompanied by heavy winds that manage to take out trees, which in turn take out power lines. Families that think they are seeking shelter from the city by moving to Monte Nido little realize just how often the power goes down here. The latest incident left half the homes in Monte Nido without power for more than 28 hours. If you didn't have a generator to run the essentials in your kitchen such as a stove and refrigerator, and don't have a fireplace to heat at least one room, you were literally out in the cold and dark. Or you got out of the neighborhood to a hotel, relatives, or friends outside. Those home owners that can't take the weather and the commute are usually gone within a year of moving in.

Living in Monte Nido means being prepared for anything that will cut us off from normal

services and even from fire and police protection. We can be isolated in a flash. If the towers are still standing, you have to stand in exactly the right spot to get most cell phones to work, and if you don't have a Ham Radio, forget communications with the outside world. In the 30 plus years I've lived in Monte Nido, many times we have been limited to one way in and out of the neighborhood, and some sections of the area have been totally cut off when the those quaint little one-lane wooden bridges are washed out by that babbling brook.

So make a plan how to survive in Monte Nido without power, bridges, phone service, fire and police protection. There is a little red book produced in this neighborhood by the horse owners. It's good enough to be used by anyone who lives here, and for that matter, anywhere else in this country. Anyone can download the little red book FREE: "What Do I Do With My Horse in Fire Flood and/or Earthquake?" ...on line through the Equestrian Trails, Inc., national website at <http://www.etinational.com> or <http://www.equestriantrailsinc.com>

By the way, at the local market the Jewish "Yahrzeit" light memorial candles are the best to use for power outages. These little candles are great as they come in a glass container and burn for 24 hours. I used mine to mark the stove, bathroom, stairs, and to remind me that I have split levels that I need to be careful about.

--Stephanie Abronson

### Want to be in the Know?

Send your email address to Lisa Lehman, the devoted MNVCA secretary at [mnvca@charter.net](mailto:mnvca@charter.net), to receive announcements of meetings, community activities and the time and location of our Board meetings.

**Contributions to the newsletter** including nonprofit events to be listed in the calendar can be made by the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month to me (the editor) at 856 Wonder View Dr. or by email to [mnvcanews@charter.net](mailto:mnvcanews@charter.net). --Marianne Cilluffo

## Calendar of Events

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### **MNVCA Board Meeting**

Tuesday February 7 at 7:00 p.m.  
at the home of Les Hardie  
471 Cold Canyon Road  
222-5485

### **Equestrian Trails, Inc., Corral 36**

Tuesday, February 14 - 7 pm  
at the home of Jeanne & Don Wallace,  
1610 Cold Canyon Rd., Monte Nido. 818-222 2560.  
☉It's Valentines Day ☉-

### **A Course in Miracles Study Group.**

Tuesdays, 9:30-11:00AM  
Marilyn Browning  
222-6362

### **Zen Meditation**

Thursday evenings at 7:30pm  
Rosemary Taylor Alden  
222-2936

### **Universal Worship Service:**

First Sunday of each month, 10:00AM  
Marilyn Browning  
222-6363

## Postal Problems

Unfortunately, the December issue of our newsletter was lost by the post office. (You should have received the E-version on time). I have reprinting two of the noteworthy articles that many of you didn't get a chance to read in the print version of the newsletter. Hopefully, this won't happen again but if you ever don't receive the newsletter, I would appreciate you letting me (and our postal carrier) know. You should have the newsletter in your mailboxes by the end of each month. If you would like a copy of the November minutes, please let me know and I will get it to you.

*-Marianne Cilluffo*