

# Bull Valley Agricultural Center

NEWSLETTER 6, July 2019

The Port Costa-based nonprofit Bull Valley Agricultural Center promotes land stewardship and preservation for agricultural, educational, and recreational uses that respect habitat, connect people with nature, and build community resources.

## Founder's Update:

Having started discussions five years ago and after three years of solid effort on behalf of the three partnering organizations—working with county officials, undertaking community engagement, and wrapping up the initial planning and public outreach phase of the endeavor—the Field Semester (TFS), Port Costa Conservation Society (PCCS), and Bull Valley Agricultural Center (BVAC) have signed operating agreements and are poised to make the Field Semester program and school a reality. And this has been no small feat!

In our efforts to gain the trust and support of the sometimes apprehensive Port Costa community, we watched as our series of organized in-home and larger public community meetings (all spanning about two years) morphed over time, transforming from moderate attendance and defensive postures all around, to doubling in size and ending with a standing ovation after presenting the project's full proposal at our last public meeting.



We would be remiss not to mention how hard-won this community support truly was, or how resolutely a few fought to defend their community from what they felt was either a bad fit or an outright assault on it. (All of us had strong feelings about our perspectives on the matter!)

We worked tirelessly to openly address community concerns, and, with time, we were able to win the support and blessings of the majority of the community. Without such indication of support, the signing of operating agreements would never have been possible. And in the process, we have all learned how everyone, whether for or against, are essentially after the same goals: to save Port Costa's natural and historic assets from harm and misuse and to assure it's survival as a place we all love—even if we see the path to these goals differently.

With this garnering of support, we have embarked on the next phase of bringing TFS into being: the initial planning phase for our capital campaign. The order is tall and the path ahead long! But we've been blessed to join with a true pro to help us through it. We are so pleased to announce the newest member of our TFS/BVAC crew, experienced fundraising counsel, Rebekah Truemper, who will help us successfully navigate what lies ahead for this essential phase. (You can read more about her below!)

From whatever angle you see the "saving" of Port Costa, may the best solutions be engaged, the brightest minds be turned upon them, and the most devoted community members take up the cause for Port Costa's future and its next generation of residents, learners, and—in true form—its unsuspecting interlopers who fall under its unique spell. And, regardless of how we came to be acquainted, we all have that last little bit in common... whether you've been here for a day or for 50 years.

—Earl Flewellen, BVAC Founder

## Meet Our Newest Team Member: Rebekah Truemper

With The Field Semester project moving at a pace, we're excited to welcome Rebekah Truemper to our team as designated fundraising counsel.

With a background including Outward Bound, Prospect Sierra School, the National Writing Project, and SF Education Fund, among others, Rebekah's more than 20 years of experience in the nonprofit education and human services sectors has already proven to be an invaluable asset. Her work on this project will focus on helping the three partner organizations—TFS, PCCS, and BVAC—to develop a comprehensive fundraising plan, as well as ensure our shared commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion.



To achieve those goals, we've already begun working with Rebekah to consult allies new and old on how to best leverage the many existing strengths of the program (such as immersive education, land stewardship, and environmental sustainability). By reaching out to potential collaborators and peer organizations to get feedback, we not only build a broad base of understanding from many diverse angles, we also connect ourselves to the best possible resources to achieve the aspirations of this project. With enthusiastic commitment to our vision, Rebekah is guiding us toward a successful capital campaign, and we're so happy to be working with her!



## TRASH CLEANUP: Volunteers Needed for the Final Push

Through a partnership with the Contra Costa Resource Conservation District and subsequent grant from CalRecycle, nearly 120 cubic yards of waste concrete and asphalt (more than a quarter of a million pounds) was removed from the land last summer with the help of local volunteers and contractors. In addition to that, stacks of illegally dumped tires and household waste were gathered from the land and centralized for disposal.

**We're now on the cusp of finally removing all of the remaining surface waste that has accumulated over the years!**

The final push will happen in two parts: tires and trash. With the help of Civicorps (which among many other amazing programs runs a commercial recycling service that trains young adults for careers in waste management), we'll be recycling as many of our waste tires as possible. Civicorps specializes in recycling unwanted tires and preventing them from ending up in landfills, and we couldn't be more grateful for the help.

### JOIN US FOR THIS LAST PUSH IN THE CLEANUP!

For the trash, we need you! We're putting out the call for a volunteer workday. With helping hands, we'll be doing one more sweep for solid surface waste that has been dumped on the land, and removing it once and for all. Lunch and refreshments will be provided. **Please join us if you can!**

**Saturday, August 24th, 9am-3pm**



## Help Us Make The Field Semester a Reality!

As we head into the planning phase of our capital campaign, we welcome any suggestions and introductions that will help expand our prospective contributor and donor base. If you know of individuals or entities that may be interested in helping make this project become a reality, please let us know. Interested in becoming a donor or long-term contributor yourself? Please reach out! You can contact us at [bullvalleyagcenter@gmail.com](mailto:bullvalleyagcenter@gmail.com)



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## ON THE LAND: Spring Honey Harvest

Winter rains followed by May's unseasonal deluge brought a wave of green to the watershed. Wild onions with their delicate white flowers dotted the landscape in March and April, and wild birds both annual and seasonal made their visitations all winter long. Now that spring has come and gone and summer is here, we look to our seasonal wetland to change yet again.

During these ebbs and flows, our bees have been working with the greenery, turning pollen and nectar from the wet and verdant conditions into our most recent harvest of springtime honey - 423 pounds all told! Early season willow, mustard, oak, acacia and black locust blossoms (along with other year-round perennials) have lent their subtle character to this batch, giving it a delicate, floral sweetness and a color that is more pale than last year's summer harvests. We'll be monitoring the hives closely as we head into the hottest part of the year, and continue to support them as they toil to bring in this season's rich, savory summer Port Costa wildflower honey.



BVAC founder Earl Flewollen and BVAC Executive Director Shane Santos, extracting spring honey!



## ON THE LAND: Fencing Repairs

In other news, after last year's rash of fence cutting vandalism and an unfortunately placed tree fall, our wonderful fencing contractor came to the rescue, professionally repairing all the damages done. **The fence continues to be the most important tool we have in halting illegal dumping on the land.** Though enterprising litterbugs still throw things over from time to time!

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## JOIN US! B.Y.O. PICNIC SPONSORED BY ORO EN PAZ WINERY!

July 27th, 11am-4pm

We've got some choice spots on the land and reservoir for summertime leisure, so come join us and stake out your favorite sunny (or shady) picnic site! Bring your own picnic and we'll provide the sweet spots and some cold beverages, courtesy of Ben Herod at Oro en Paz Winery.

Check out this special winery's delicious wines here: [www.oroenpaz.com](http://www.oroenpaz.com)

Please RSVP to [bullvalleyagcenter@gmail.com](mailto:bullvalleyagcenter@gmail.com) so we know how many spots to clear!

