The Laguna Foundation

The Laguna Foundation is a nonprofit corporation founded in 1989. Our mission is “To preserve, restore and enhance the Laguna de Santa Rosa, and to inspire greater public understanding and appreciation of this magnificent natural area.”

The Foundation implements restoration projects, works with landowners and public agencies to protect and improve Laguna resources, conducts education programs for children and adults and scientific research to inform our education and restoration activities, and creates opportunities for walking, riding and paddling in the Laguna.

Our board includes recognized leaders from throughout our community who share the vision of the Laguna as a thriving natural, educational and recreational amenity for Sonoma County’s future.
Leadership Message

Since 2002, when the Laguna Foundation made a strategic decision to hire a director and begin expanding the vigor and scope of our programs, we have seen a dramatic increase in the public’s attention to the Laguna de Santa Rosa and in our own capacity to capitalize on the many opportunities for restoration, learning and public stewardship of the Laguna’s unique ecosystems and history.

In that time, the Foundation has expected that after a period of “taking flight”, our efforts would level off into a steady but measured annual expansion. Yet as opportunities continued to mount and the movement to preserve, restore, enjoy and learn from the Laguna gained further public visibility and support, if anything the Foundation’s work arced even more steeply upward this year. The community’s investment in our vision for what the Laguna can and should be is still rising, and we now see that we may not yet even be able to imagine just how high and far that movement may soar.

Four years ago, the Foundation’s tiny office held a single staff member. Now our 11 employees are bursting the seams of a suite of offices in Santa Rosa and we’re looking ahead to moving into the Laguna Learning Center. Our programs have expanded, our collaborations with other organizations and institutions have deepened, and our relationships throughout the community have strengthened. This year, we invested thought and effort in rendering more robust and capable our internal financial systems, data management, planning and communications, even as our scope of program activities continued to expand.

We understand that the long trajectory of achieving the Foundation’s mission requires strategic direction, energy and planning for ongoing renewal, continued strong leadership and a wide range of partners. There is much to do before the Laguna’s natural systems are again functioning well and the general public truly treasures its value.

But from here, we can see that time coming. Rising through the clouds, wind at our backs, we see blue skies ahead for Sonoma County’s most important natural treasure.

Susan Churchill
President

Dan Schurman
Executive Director
The campaign to create the Laguna Learning Center made great strides in 2006, despite considerable challenges presented by Mother Nature. The heavy rains of winter prevented successful completion of a percolation test until late in the year, delaying the issue of permits for the first phase of construction.

While awaiting approval to begin work, we took advantage of the hiatus to retool nearly every element of the campaign to build the Learning Center, rendering it smarter, more effective, and more connected with the community leadership that will lead to its success. These improvements ranged from seemingly mundane details like conversion into a new and powerful database tool and refining our campaign messaging and materials, to profound steps such as hiring an experienced general contractor, Jim Murphy and Associates. We developed relationships with key potential investors in the Learning Center, and successfully recruited Wayne Mitchell, an experienced director who joined our staff to spearhead the capital campaign. Entering 2007, the Foundation's capacity to raise the outstanding balance of the $6 million campaign goal and build the Laguna Learning Center has become more robust at every level.

In September, we did at last secure the necessary permits, and work began on the ground. Installation of the mound septic system for the facility was completed in time to avoid the winter rains, and generous in-kind contributions of labor and materials resulted in conversion of the non-historic milking shed onsite into a construction office.

As 2006 waned, the Foundation looked forward to our expected completion of Phase I of the Learning Center project by the end of the 2007. It’s an exciting time, and we can hardly wait to be in residence at the Center, welcoming the public to explore the Laguna with us.

Laguna Learning Center

Campaign Committee:
Connie Codding, Chair
Renée-Eva Amochaev
Bill Bettinelli
Susan Churchill
Brad DeMeo
Bill Geary
David Katz
Mike Reilly
Greg Sarris
Wes Winter
The Foundation’s Education Department works to inspire a sense of connection to our local landscape and a passion for learning and the natural world. Taught by our Docent Circle of trained interpretive volunteers, our Learning Laguna program provides a wetlands science and cultural education program to elementary students through classroom visits and field trips. Engaging children with a fun, interactive program of hands-on activities, Learning Laguna communicates fundamental concepts about the natural world and helps to instill caring for our environment at a critical time in students’ development. For many, it is their first chance to see the teeming wildlife that lives right in their own back yards.

The Foundation makes a particular effort to serve underprivileged communities, and among the schools we serve are those facing the greatest challenges in socioeconomic status, district budgets and language diversity. For some of the children who experience Learning Laguna, their field trip to the Laguna is the very first time they have ever left the cities where we live—an eye-opening fact when we still tend to think of Sonoma County as a “small town” place. This year, the Education Program focused on expanding and refining the scope of its activities, and among the improvements we implemented a bus transportation scholarship fund to help disadvantaged schools participate in the Learning Laguna program.

Learning Laguna brought the magic of the Laguna to nearly 800 students in 12 school districts in 2006, with a waiting list of 12 additional classes hoping to participate. The Foundation’s annual 50 hour docent training graduated 21 new docents, expanding the active Docent Circle to over 50 active volunteers. We held 20 continuing education events and workshops to continue the steady development of our docents’ understanding of the Laguna’s history and wildlife, and 500 attendees of all ages explored the Laguna through our regular program of docent-led community walks.

**DOCENTS**

Barnee Alexander
Jeanette Anglin
Dana Blake
Sandra Bodley
Veronica Bowers
Barbara Briggs-Letson
Denise Cadman
Bob Caricato
John Condon
Catherine Cumberland
Nancy Dakin
James Dempsey
Magi Discoe
Frank Dono
Jeanette Doyel
Christine Engel
Andrew Fleming
Daught Geiger
Kathy Gilliam
Joany Goodwin
Ramona Haller
Sheila Handley
Linda Hanes
Elizabeth Haylock
Helen Heal
Tara Henteleff
Don Jackson
Jennifer Joell
Carolyn Johnson
Cheryl Johnson
Marcia Johnson
Mat Keller
Christine Kennedy
Lanny Keyston
Lana Koloboff
Judith Krist
Sharon Mansfield
Richard Mayer
Gretchen McIndoe
Franny Minervini-Zick
Fam Moskovitz
Bob Murnane
Patricia Newland
Joan Przekop
Lynn Renn
Lilith Rogers

*My students and I want to thank all of our docents for the “best field trip all year!” What happened today at the Laguna was magical. Thank you to all of your staff for teaching my students to slow down and observe the world around them... By teaching them the wonders of the natural world, they will grow up to be the stewards we so desperately need. I cannot wait until next year’s trip and classroom visits."
– Sharon Schuler, teacher
Jack London Elementary School

Elizabeth Sanville
Susan Shea
Erin Healy Sheffield
Sandra Steele
Anne Stephens
Virginia Strom-Martin
Raine Vallarino
Patrick Woodworth
W.e feel great pride in the 2006 accomplishments of the Foundation’s Restoration and Research Departments. Primary among them: publication of Enhancing and Caring for the Laguna, a 577-page restoration and management plan for the entire watershed. Two years in the making with participation by hundreds of stakeholder groups and individuals, the plan is a framework for restoring and stewarding the Laguna which is being embraced enthusiastically by stakeholders and decision makers, and will drive the Foundation’s restoration work for years to come. We congratulate Joe Honton, project manager for the plan, on a job well done.

Meanwhile, this was also a year of achievement for the Foundation’s direct restoration work in the Laguna. As we began Year 2 of the Ludwigia Control Project, we found that our approach to controlling this aggressively invasive weed has resulted in improvement in the Laguna’s functioning. Channels remained remarkably clear following Year 1, and wildlife have begun to return in affected areas: staff now routinely observe river otter in project areas which were formerly completely covered in Ludwigia, with a great influx of great blue herons and great white egrets, and ospreys and kingfishers hunting in open water. After 2 years, we have pulled enough vegetation out of the channels to cover a football field twelve feet deep, and several miles of channel are now clear which were once clogged with the plant. 2007 will be the final year of this three-year effort, and the Foundation has already begun to work with its partners to develop long-term control and restoration strategies in the affected areas.

We launched the largest wildlife habitat restoration project in the Laguna’s history in 2006, the Middle Reach Restoration Project. Restoring streamside, floodplain and oak woodland vegetation along
Education Program Supporters:

Restoration Program Supporters:
California State Coastal Conservancy, California Wildlife Conservation Board, Sonoma County Water Agency, Santa Rosa Subregional Sanitation District, City of Santa Rosa, Community Foundation Sonoma County, Marin-Sonoma Mosquito and Vector Control District, ESB.

Laguna Learning Center Capital Campaign Supporters:
Dan Smith and Joan Marler, Schulz Fund of the Community Foundation Sonoma County, Coddington Foundation, Gallo Family, Federated Indians of the Graton Rancheria, Carolyn Johnson and Rick Theris (Fledgling Fund), Kirk and Pat Veale, Clay and Kim Clement, Mary Frances Laier in memory of James Laier, MaryLee Carli, Nancy Peter and Jeffery Orth, Clayton and Anne Stephens, Susan and Ken Churchill, Gladys Sawyer, Sam and Mary Dakin, City of Santa Rosa, Glen Lippard, R&B Dual Roofing, Inc., EmCee Group, Bill and Cindy Gallaher, Susan Gotin, Brian and Jymmy Partill, Les and Lori Perry, Larry Moskowitz and Eric Koenigshofer (Perry, Johnson, Anderson, Miller, Moskowitz LLP), Jack and Judy DeMeo in memory of Betty Ann Rivard Ohlinger, Tom and Sally Lambert, Tom and Anne McGinley in memory of Helen McGinley Adams, Joany Goodwin.

General Support Donors:
The Foundation also wishes to thank our generous general support donors, including members of our Preservation Circle and all the fine people and businesses listed below who have given funds or in-kind contributions to advance the Foundation’s work (partial list):

ACC Environmental, Inc.        Joan Przekop
B & B Dual Roofing, Inc.        Jymenny and Brian Partill
Brad and Tina Baker             Gladys Sawyer
Allen Barberi                   Schulz Fund, Community Foundation Sonoma County
Bill and Gail Bettinelli         Foundation Sonoma County
Blue Rock Quarry                Dan Smith and Joan
Bohan & Canelis                 Mark and Smith Fund, Community Foundation Sonoma County
Dave Bramham Trucking           Foundation Sonoma County
Marylee J. Carli                Guy Smith
Susan and Ken Churchill         City of Santa Rosa
Clayton and Kim Clement         Sterling Environmental Corp
Coddington Foundation           Virginia Strom-Martin and Don
Sam and Mary Dakin              Martin
Delta Pre-Cast                  Raini Sigg Vallarino
Jack and Julia DeMeo            Van Dyke and Associates
EmCee Group                     Kirk and Pat Veale
Charles Evans                   Federation Indians of the Graton Rancheria

Miles Ferris                    Fledgling Fund
William and Cynthia Gallaher    The Gallo Family
Joany Goodwin                   Joseph and Susan Gotin
Kadon Trucking                  Eric Koenigshofer
Mary Frances Lair               Tom and Sally Lambert
Glen Lippard                    Glen and Franny Minervini-Zick
Larry Moskowitz and Ouisue      Packard
Nathan M. Oehbich Foundation    Nancy Peter

Statement of Condition

December 31, 2006

ASSETS

Checking/Savings                    369,152
Accounts Receivable                 66,114
Pledges receivable, current         204,000
Prepaid Expenses                    3,847
Total Current Assets               640,115

Fixed Assets

Office furniture                   1,805
Office & Computer Equipment & Software 19,851
Leased equipment                   5,236
Fieldwork equipment                7,514
Less Accumulated Deprecation      (7,373)
Laguna Uplands Real Property      322,200
Total Fixed Assets                 384,243

Other Assets

Pledges receivable, non-current    165,000
Discount                           (19,012)
Endowment Fund                    12,242
Workers Comp Policy Deposit       1,670
Security Deposits                  500
Laguna Learning Center Improvements 238,948
Total Other Assets                 395,258

TOTAL ASSETS                      1,406,704

LIABILITIES & EQUITY

Liabilities

Current Liabilities                
Accounts Payable                   16,767
Credit Cards                       6,047
Telephone Equipment Lease          1,600
Vacation accrual                   19,279
Wages accrual                      21,110
401(k) plan deductions            3,500
Payroll Liabilities                485
Sales Tax Payable                  1,019
Total Current Liabilities          69,807

Total Liabilities                  69,807

Equity

Temporarily Restricted Funds       593,960
Permanently Restricted Funds      10,000
Fund Balance                       732,937
Total Equity                       1,326,857

TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY        1,406,704

Income

Contributions                       391,203
Grants                             184,216
Temporarily restricted income      399,988
Special events                     48,731
Fees for Service                  171,018
In-Kind Donations                  20,500
Miscellaneous                      13,822
Total Income                       1,829,978

Expenses

Personnel                          597,835
Professional Services             117,633
Other Contracted Services        330,262
Direct Project Costs              94,420
Rent                              40,853
Postage & Mailing                 11,548
Printing                           19,637
Insurance                         2,321
Telephone                         5,321
Other Administrative Costs        29,461
Transportation, Conferences & Trainings  9,217
Volunteer Recognition             3,552
Special Events Expense            15,988
Depreciation                      4,066
Miscellaneous                     3,262
Total Expenses                    1,285,376

NOTE:
Includes accumulated pledges for Laguna Learning Center capital campaign.