



"You've Done Something Good for the Environment" awarded to Jerry Murphy

SCOPE celebrated Earth Day this year by once again giving our "You've Done Something Good for the Environment" Award to a local person who has given greatly of his time and effort to help protect our local environment.

Over the last several years, Jerry took it upon himself to be our local "River Keeper" - a person that watches over and truly loves our river. He has identified rare birds and other species, reported off road vehicle use and photographed questionable incidents to substantiate reports of activities that harm our river. We are very grateful to him for his endless hours of volunteer time and for the love he has shown for our most treasured local resource, the Santa Clara River.

Jerry Murphy is a retired IBM Computer Service Technician. He

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*After the last tree has been cut down,
After the last river has been poisoned,
After the last fish has been caught
Only then will you find
That money cannot be eaten.
---Cree Prophecy*

Riverpark or River Parking Lot

Planning Commission turns to public for "innovative" ideas on "Riverpark" development

Not a park, but 1100 housing units planned for the pan-handle area north of Soledad, east of Bouquet Canyon, in the floodplain of our Santa Clara River, razing hillsides, destroying trees and habitat. **See page 4**

RIVERPARK HEARINGS

- ◆ **May 13th**, Santa Clarita City Hall at 7:00 PM topic Water Quality, Biota, Floodplain
- ◆ **May 18th**, Santa Clarita City Hall at 7:00 PM review of all issues pertaining to the project.

Join Us Thursday, May 20th - 7 PM,
at Margarita's Mexican Grill
23320 Valencia Blvd.
(Next to Do It Center)

Guest Speaker from the Ahmansen Ranch Campaign
They did it, we can too!

When We Meet: We meet on the third Thursday of the month, at 7:30 PM. Location to be announced.

For more info call 255-6899. Or check us out on the web at

www.scope.org



Old Glory , new location, Page 3

Newhall Ranch Update

Despite the County's approval and the local media's bias, this 21,000 home project is not a done deal. The next step will be approval of the tract maps. Each tract will consist of 500 to 1500 units and will still require a detailed environmental review. With each one, the community will have the opportunity to bring up river protection, the liabilities of building in the floodplain, and the questions of water supply and traffic.

The first tract map will cover some of the most sensitive habitat in the river corridor, because it's

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President's Corner

Strapping Schools on the Front of the Bulldozer

Everyone wants good schools. Education is the foundation of our society. Democracy doesn't work without an educated voter base that can make good decisions. A democracy requires its citizens to think critically about issues, to debate new issues and change direction when a given strategy does not seem to be working. Criticism and discussion from the loyal opposition brings that change and growth. It is the fertile soil that keeps our democracy healthy and productive. Without an educated society, none of this is possible.

Folks that care about the environment also, of course, care about ensuring good schools and a good education for all our children. After all, how can society understand the significance of planning issues: how can they appreciate the beauty of nature and the interconnectedness of all life?; without education, how could they make good decisions about our society's future? People that care about our environment are often parents that want our children to grow up in a healthy environment where the air is clean, where kids can play at recess without having exercise curtailed by smog alerts. They want schools that children can safely walk to in the morning. They want schools where clean water comes out of the drinking fountain and doesn't have to be purchased from a machine.

In 1992, Santa Clarita Org. for Planning and the Environment, joined by the Sierra Club, challenged Newhall Land's Westridge project (now being built on the west side of I-5) for exactly those reasons. We were worried about school over-crowding in spite of the County's Development Monitoring System that was supposed to require adequate classroom space for new development. We were worried about the increasing air pollution levels and we were worried about the Valley Oaks Savannah (Significant Ecological Area 64) and its treasure trove of beautiful old native oaks.

A year later, in a landmark decision, the Court ordered the developer back to the drawing board to investigate the issues of school and library funding. The result was the formation of a library assessment district to fund new books and facilities as development is approved, and the tripling of school impact fees. It was a huge win for our community and for the County as a whole.

As our Valley has developed, SCOPE has continued to comment on school issues. We have tried to bring new concepts that are being promoted elsewhere to our Valley. These include the Safe Routes to School campaign that promotes siting of schools where

Why is it that when SCOPE or any other environmental group wants to preserve a stream or save oaks or not have schools placed where children can't walk to them, we are accused of stopping schools?

children can walk or ride their bikes rather than being driven by their parents. We have promoted siting schools away from high traffic areas so that children are not exposed to sources of high air pollution. We helped organize a presentation to school facility managers of the Cool School Concepts being used in the LA Unified School District. This program promotes a method of bringing down the costs of new facilities by incorporating trees, natives and unpaved areas into school design.

Four years ago, SCOPE filed suit against the West Creek project in San Francisquito Canyon because of concern over an inadequate water supply and impacts to San Francisquito Creek, one of our major sources of ground water. The developer, Newhall Land and Farming, said we were merely trying to stop the school and posted a sign on Copperhill claiming that it was our fault that the school was not being built. The



SCOPE President, Lynne Plambeck

Court agreed with us about the water supply issue and set West Creek aside for further review. The 2300 hundred units are not there, but the Rio Vista Jr. High is built and children are attending.

Two years ago, SCOPE commented that the location of the Pico Elementary School was the only school in the Valley

sited on a major highway. Children would be exposed to traffic noise and air pollution and would not be able to safely walk to school. The developer harangued us for trying to

STOP the school and the public seemed to fall for this ludicrous tactic. Recently, community school parents demonstrated to try to downsize Pico Canyon Rd., because they were concerned about exactly these issues, safety and the effects of noise and air pollution on the children. They were complaining about the very health issues that SCOPE was chided for bringing up during the planning process. We support their efforts to downsize Pico Canyon Rd. and will help wherever possible.

Why is it that when SCOPE or any other environmental group wants to preserve a stream or save oaks or not have schools placed where children can't walk to them, are we accused of stopping schools? Because it is often a little more expensive to build to save the stream. Or perhaps the optimal place for the school is really where the developer would like to make more money on a shopping center, etc., etc. In short, our concerns don't have anything to do with stopping schools. They just cut into the developer's profit margin. It is a

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When the Swallows Return To Santa Clarita Will we welcome them?

We, in Santa Clarita, are blessed with swallows that return every year from their amazing migration to Argentina, to nest in our commu-

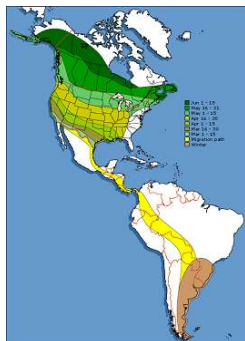


nity. Honored by the Franciscans in their mission in San Juan Capistrano, their return was greeted with a welcoming celebration. The Brothers of St. Francis held all living creatures to be precious

and St. Francis is often pictured with birds and animals at his feet. But in Santa Clarita, a city named for St. Clare, one of his female followers, we push down their nests with brooms and complain about how dirty they are. This is an issue we must address differently.

A few Swallow facts:

The introduction of House Sparrows was a disaster for these birds, since the sparrows usurp their nests and often cause the swallows to abandon a colony.



By some means Cliff Swallows after nesting under such condition for countless generations have evolved methods of nest site selection that nearly unerringly pick out amid the multitudinous wall exposures and tricky wind currents of the canyons the safe situations. However it is, whether occult instinct or empirical methods guide the birds, there is here shown a most interesting adaptation to environment.

*"Great ideas, it has been said, come into the world as gently as doves.
Perhaps then, if we listen attentively, we shall hear amid the uproar of empires and nations, a faint flutter of wings, a gentle stirring of life and hope. Some will say that this hope lies in a nation; others in a man.
I believe rather that it is awakened, revived, nourished by millions of solitary individuals whose deeds and works every day negate frontiers and the crudest implications of history. As a result, there shines forth fleetingly the ever-threatened truth that each and every man, on the foundation of his own sufferings and joys, builds for all."
- Albert Camus*

Old Glory lives on...for now

By Cynthia Harris

Old Glory, the 400-year-old Santa Clarita oak that was saved from the axe two years ago, is still alive.

In March supporters gathered to celebrate that fact at the tree's new location—a few hundred feet from where she had previously stood. The venerable tree was moved in January after a long protest, including a 70-day tree sit by activist/educator John Quigley.

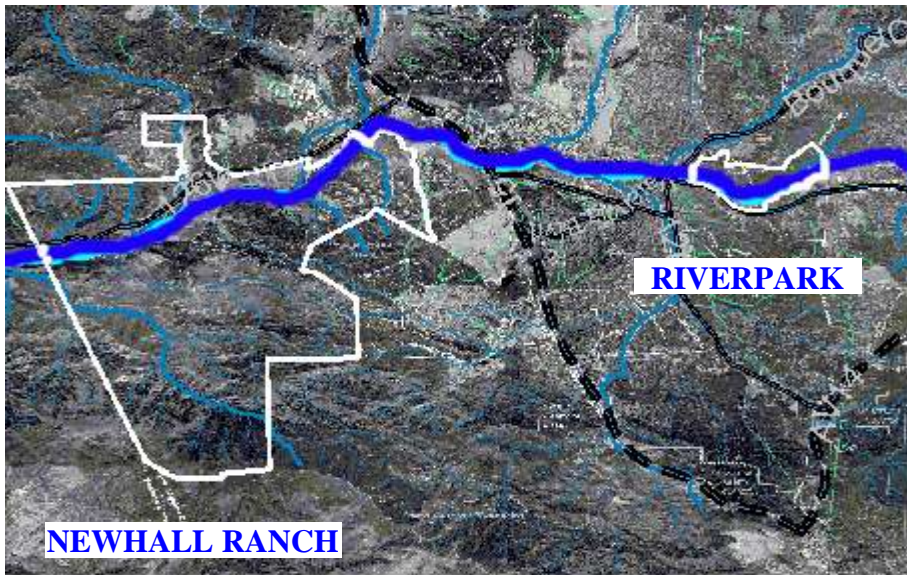
The supporters have guarded optimism that the 15-foot-circumference tree will continue to flourish. Hundreds of roots were cut to fit the tree in the wooden box for the move. Many arborists have expressed the concern that there may be too much shock to Old Glory's root system for her to continue to thrive. One arborist stated that "it's like cutting a rare spring flower from your garden that starts to wilt only to perk up when plunged in water."

The spring time gathering offered prayers, songs, and a group hug. Prayers were offered by Reverend Lynn Jay, Rabbi Mark Blazer, and spiritual head of the Chumash tribe Mati Waiya. Quigley reminded the supporters that they must be ever vigilant in protecting the Santa Clara River, currently threatened by the Newhall development.

For the first time since November 2001, the community knew that Old Glory was as safe as she could be. Old Glory now stands at the corner of Pico Canyon and Stevenson Ranch Road on the way to the Newhall Ranch Project and the 1876 pioneer town of Mentryville.



Cynthia Harris, Tom Barron, Barbara Wampole



- ◆ 1100 planned homes, apartments and commercial complexes.
- ◆ No schools for children so existing schools will be more over crowded.
- ◆ Creates expressway between Transit Mixed Concrete and Newhall Ranch.
- ◆ Removal of hillsides that are intrinsic to neighborhood ambiance.
- ◆ Threatens over a dozen Oak trees IN Riverpark and over 600 in Newhall Ranch
- ◆ THE FREEWAYS WILL BE PARKING LOTS

..NOT A DONE DEAL!

21,000 planned homes,apartments

(Continued from page 1)

the easiest to access and the hardest battle for Lennar, the new out of state developer. They think if they can win the first round, we ll stop fighting. But if approvals continue, what will come to light is that there isn t enough water for these projects. said Lynne Plambeck in a recent interview. The developer is buying water from the Central Valley —where food is grown and diverting it to these new homes. ”

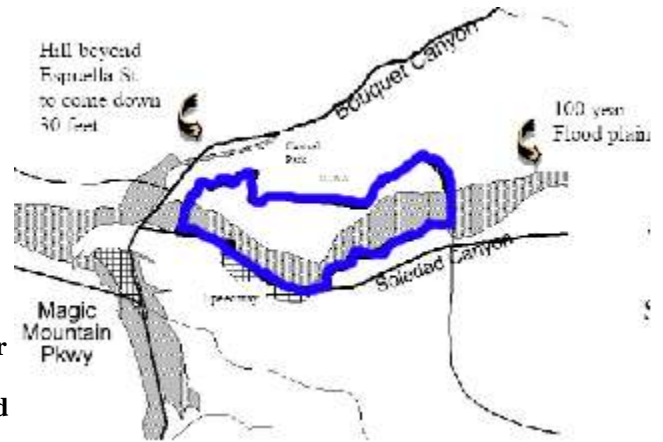
Another problem may arise due to the ammonium perchlorate pollu-

*What good is a house if you don't have a tolerable planet to put it on?
- Henry David Thoreau*

tion of our deep Saugus Aquifer from an old explosive device manufacturer. If we re not able to find an engineering way to fix this, we could be stuck with communities drinking a blend of polluted water because the new water will be directed to Newhall Ranch.

Bad Results of both Projects:

- ◆ Our air even more polluted.
- ◆ Devastation to Significant Ecological Area (SEA 23) (historic Santa Clara River)
- ◆ Degradation of needed habitat for threatened hares and herds of deer as well as, hawks, song birds, and sensitive turtles and toads (Arroyo Toads, Western Spadefoot Toads, and Western Pond Turtles).
- ◆ Threatens ancient Indian villages.
- ◆ Homes built in the flood plain have increased chance of flood damage.
- ◆ Further loss of diminishing water supplies.
- ◆ Concrete used for bank stabilization ” damages river s edge, animal habitat, and ability of animals to get up to high ground in time of flood.



A View of Riverpark
c. 2004 andrew harvey www.visualjourneys.net

What's Up at Newhall County Water District

Last November the voters of this District elected by an overwhelming majority, board members who were concerned about the overstatement of water supply in the Santa Clarita Valley. With this new voter direction, the Newhall County Water District recently passed Resolution 2004-3, which seeks to clarify for planners what water is available for use and what water is planned for acquisition, but not yet at hand.

For example, five wells in the valley are currently closed due to contamination by ammonium perchlorate (rocket fuel) from the Whittaker-Bermite property. Perchlorate reduces thyroid gland function which may cause retardation in fetuses and small children.

Previously, all water districts in the Santa Clarita Valley counted this polluted water as available for new development. Newhall County Water District's new Resolution clarifies that this water will not be counted as available until cleanup is completed and the water can really be delivered safely to the public.

Other items covered by the resolution include State Water Project (aqueduct) reliability, water transfers and water banking, groundwater pumping and desalination. This was an impor-



Maria Gutzeit, Board Member

tant and timely clarification to make, because Newhall County Water District does not want existing residents and businesses to suffer in the future as a result of not having all the details explained to planning agencies that approve new projects. The new Resolution uses the definition of "existing water supply" spelled out in recent state law enacted by Senate Bills 610 and 221.

Our Concern: Real or Imaginary Water?



These laws mandate that planning decisions for large projects must be based on finalized, rather than pending, water sources. The Board believes incorporating the definition required by state law will make it easier for planners and developers by providing needed continuity in the planning process.

If you want to view either the resolution or a presentation covering the reasoning behind it, you can do so by visiting :

www.ncwd.org

or by calling the District at 661-259-3610 and requesting copies.



A Rare Blue Oak at Riverpark c. 2004 andrew harvey www.visualjourneys.net



Jerry Murphy...

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watched his Valencia home be built in 1977.

Jerry had always figured that he would move away when he retired, but that was before he met a redtailed hawk family. For the next few years the family of hawks nested in his neighborhood. He kept a close watch on them, and helped the young by feeding them mice, and taking them in at night to protect them from predators.

Teresa Savaikie first met Jerry two years ago as he was standing by the River near Lennar's proposed Panhandle Project with a pair of binoculars watching the family of hawks he had become so familiar with. She asked Jerry if he would like to get involved in saving the Santa Clara river and open space in Santa Clarita, left him her number and a week or so later he called.

Jerry has been a faithful guardian of our natural resources. There was



never a time that Jerry was called to help that he didn't immediately respond. Such dedicated people are few and far between. When faced with an environmental emergency, such as dead fish, threats to nesting birds, illegal grading, or illegal tree trimming Jerry Murphy never turned us down. Jerry has attended many city council meetings; he has walked and photo-

graphed plant species in order to get them identified. Jerry recently became concerned about the swallows under Bouquet Canyon Bridge. He waited for the biologists from the City to make sure they saw these migrating visitors, asking if they wanted to borrow his glasses when they seemed to have trouble locating the nests..

Jerry has also gotten soaking wet in rain storms helping to collect water for testing. He has even gone to the river before sunrise to keep a watchful eye on wildlife. Jerry is the true definition of a volunteer and defender of our native wildlife.

This SCOPE award is given annually on Earth Day.

Past recipients:

1998 - SCV Historical Society for the planting of dozens of native oaks at the Newhall Historical Train Station.

1999 - Henry Schultz for the many conservation hikes he has lead, teaching people about our local flora and fauna and explaining local conservation issues

2000 - John Ahart, Hart High Environmental Science teacher for his work to teach students about the environment in our local schools. John originated and developed this program.

2001 - Alex Florimonte for her watchful care of the South Fork of the Santa Clara River.

2002 - LaVerne Booth for her work on light pollution and "dark sky" awareness (Bright lights waste electricity and hide the beauty of the starry night sky).

SCOPE and Center for Biological Diversity

Settle Suit Against Lennar's Auto Dealership Project

When the City approved a car dealership next to the River, many residents came out to protest. They were worried about air pollution from diesel trucks, the use of potentially polluted dirt from contaminated sites being used to fill the flood plain next to water wells and run off from the dealerships polluting the river. Other local residents were concerned about the impact a car dealership would have on endangered species. SCOPE had hoped to persuade the City to save more of the floodplain and provide better mitigation for the endangered arroyo toad.

The settlement will provide a scholarship fund of \$25,000 to help students attending Calif. State University at Northridge pay tuition for biology studies. It will also pay \$25,000 towards a wetland restoration project next to Central Park when the City acquires this part of Bouquet Creek and provide an educational Kiosk on the River Trail to explain to walkers the many attributes of our beautiful river.

We are still sad to see the continued loss of so much of our floodplain.

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Santa Clara River Watershed Tours?

Anyone interested in attending or planning or leading docent led tours in the Santa Clarita section of the river –call Larry at 254-5957

Placerita Nature Center

Hikes Every Sat. at 11 AM. Bird Walk every second Sat. at 9AM



Local Sierra Club Hikes

05/05/2004 Mission Pk Moonlight Conditioning Hike

Moderate 5 mi, 1200' gain to view San Fernando Valley. Meet 7 pm trailhead (take 405 Fwy to Balboa, N 2 mi to Sesnon, W 1 mi to Neon Way, R to end of street). Bring water, lugsoles, flashlight. Rain cancels. Leaders: Ldrs: Henry Schultz, Gaylon Rodin Sponsor: Santa Clarita Rating: O

05/08/2004 Sierra Pelona Ridge via PCT

Moderate 6 mi, 1200' gain with gorgeous views of Bouquet Cyn. Meet 8 am San Fernando Rd Park-N-Ride in Santa Clarita (take 14 Fwy, exit San Fernando Rd). Bring water, lunch, lugsoles. Rain cancels. Leaders: Gaylon Rodin, Melinda Arredondo Sponsor: Santa Clarita Rating: O

05/16/2004 Towsley Pk

Strenuous 8 mi, 1500' gain in Towsley Cyn Park. Explore recent fire area and see new growth and wildflowers. Meet 9 am entrance to Ed Davis/ Towsley Cyn State Park (take I-5 to Calgrove exit, W to The Old Rd, S to park entrance). Bring water, lunch, lugsoles. Rain cancels. Leaders: Ldrs: Henry Schultz, Ed Benison Sponsor: Santa Clarita Rating: O

05/23/2004 Placerita Cyn Loop

Moderate to strenuous, 1600' gain in the western end of the San Gabriel Mtns. Excellent views of the Santa Clarita and San Fernando Valleys and possibly Santa Catalina Island. Meet 9 am Placerita Cyn Nature Center (take I-5 to 14 Fwy/ Antelope Valley Fwy, exit Placerita Cyn Rd, turn R and drive 2 mi to park). Bring water, lunch, lugsoles. Rain cancels. Leaders: Ldrs: Ed Benison, Geraldine Lorme Sponsor: Santa Clarita Rating: O

06/02/2004 Mission Pk Moonlight Conditioning Hike

See information for 5/5/04 above

06/05/2004 Los Pinetos Conditioning Hike

5 mi, 1500' gain. Start at Walker Ranch section of Placerita Cyn County Park, climb to Wilson Saddle, then return. Views of San Fernando and Santa Clarita Valleys. Meet 9 am Walker Ranch gate (take 14 Fwy/Antelope Valley Fwy to Placerita Cyn exit, S 3/4 mi to Walker Ranch section; park along street-do not block gate).

Must have lugsoles, water, snacks; bug spray or head net recommended. Serious rain cancels. Leaders: Ldrs: Ed Benison, Melinda Arredondo Sponsor: Santa Clarita Rating: O

06/13/2004 Mt Pinos To Sheep Camp

Moderate 8 mi, 1000' gain hike in Los Padres National Forest, one hour north of LA. Meet 8 am entrance to Ed Davis/Towsley Cyn State Park (take I-5 to Calgrove exit, W to The Old Rd, S to park entrance). Bring water, lunch, lugsoles. Rain cancels. Leaders: Ldrs: Gaylon Rodin, Melinda Arredondo Sponsor: Santa Clarita Rating: O

06/27/2004 Baden Powell

Moderate 8 mi, 2800' gain on classic peak in San Gabriel Mtns. Meet 8 am Cyn Country rideshare pt. Bring water, lunch, lugsoles, fsp. Rain cancels. Leaders: Ed Benison, Gaylon Rodin Sponsor: Santa Clarita Rating: O

06/30/2004 Golden Ridge Moonlight Hike

Moderate 5 mi, 1000' gain on ridge overlooking Golden Valley. Meet 7 pm park and ride (S side of 14 Fwy/Antelope Valley Fwy at Golden Valley exit). Bring water, lugsoles. Rain cancels. Leaders: Ldrs: Matthew Lax, Gaylon Rodin Sponsor: Santa Clarita Rating: O

07/03/2004 Los Pinetos Conditioning Hike

See information for 6/5/04

Towsley Canyon. (661) 255-2937

Saturday, May 15, 8:00-10:00 AM.

Morning Bird Walk:

"Do birds bathe?"

Saturday, May 29,

7:30-8:30 PM. Evening

family campfire:

Tuesday, June 1,

8:00-9:30 PM.

Moonlight hike: "Bats in the belfry."

Saturday, June 19, 8:00-10:00 AM.

Morning Bird Walk: "Feathers –just

another form of Velcro".

Saturday, June 26, 8-9 PM. Evening

family campfire:



President's Corner

(Continued from page 2)

ludicrous, but unfortunately effective tactic, to say the environmentalists are stopping schools. It is a way of obscuring the funding, safety, health and planning issues that school boards and our community should be addressing.

After all this hard work and the proven fallacy of questionable PR campaigns saying that environmentalists are stopping schools (there stands Rio Vista Jr. High to prove it!, in spite of Newhall Land s's smear campaign), it is amazing to me to see the Newhall County Water District or anyone else harangued by developers for stopping schools .” I am sure our community is too smart to fall for the use of this ludicrous tactic again.

In short, people who care about the environment also care passionately about good schools and healthy children. If a developer or the Building Industry Association tells you differently, just look at the history of this issue in our valley. I ask you to judge for yourself who is telling the truth and who is merely running a smear campaign to push their project forward and increase their bottom line by avoiding good planning.



2003 California League of Conservation Voters Report Card



Compiled by Stephanie Pacheco and Katy Rexford (for Southern Sierran)

The California League of Conservation Voters lobbies on state environmental bills and then at the end of the year releases the California Environmental Scorecard. To learn about the issues behind each vote, visit www.ecovote.org.

SD17 William Pête Knight	0	AD36 Sharon Runner	0
SD19 Tom McClintock	0	AD37 Tony Strickland	5
SD20 Richard Alarcon	100	AD38 Keith Richman	24
SD23 Sheila Kuehl	100	AD41 Fran Pavley	100

Official SCOPE Enrollment Form

SCOPE is a forum for all interested people of the greater Santa Clarita Valley. We're residents of this area because we like this Valley, its open spaces, its opportunities. SCOPE is the voice we use to challenge questionable development, to promote a concern for the environment, to promote good planning.

Regular Single Membership, \$18 Regular Family Membership, \$24
 Sustaining Membership for: \$50 \$75 \$100 \$500

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
PHONE _____
eMAIL _____

Make checks out to SCOPE.
Clip or copy this form and mail to
SCOPE
P.O. Box 1182
Santa Clarita, CA
91386-1182
Donations are tax deductible

Santa Clara River Action Fund

Your donation for this cause will help us pay court costs and legal fees to challenge projects which intrude on the run of the Santa Clara River, and for Santa Clara River preservation.

\$10 \$20 \$50 \$100 Other _____ I can offer the following services: _____

**Focus on
SCOPE**



A Quarterly Newsletter of the
Santa Clarita Organization for Planning the Environment
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Canyon Country, CA 91386-1182

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Inside This Issue:
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Newhall Ranch (not done deal)