



## LOS TRANCOS WOODS & VISTA VERDE Newsletter – December/January 2013

### **Los Trancos County Water District**

Having completed my term as Board President I offer the following personal observations. As we approach the festival of lights, I prefer to focus on the activities that illuminate, but also must reflect on those that seem only to generate heat.

On the light side, the District continues to work diligently via our programs and numerous external interactions to ensure the longevity of the District. A fundamental goal has been to maintain and improve local control of tax revenue. This requires that we work toward reconsideration, and eventual restoration of our legitimate status as a public agency. At that point we could then move toward possible reinvention as a Special District that can serve the changing needs of our community in the coming years and decades.

Our Fire Safety Program continues to engage the community and multiple sister agencies in improving our collective resilience to fire via physical improvements and educational events. Our Water Movement Control Program, recognizing the significant hazards of super-saturated slopes in earthquake country (see <http://www.ltcwd.org/> for a sobering video of an Italian mudslide), continues to evaluate District-wide priority areas and implement engineered solutions. The Program is currently engaged in obtaining a permit from San Mateo County to reduce slope saturation at the Ramona Road slide area, and implementing a Residential Incentive Program. Our Land Management and Water Use Efficiency Programs continue to respectively, manage and improve our lands, and provide valuable incentives to save water in and around our homes.

Our administration also continues to improve through the hiring of a highly effective Program Manager, a new Recording Secretary, and soon a new Finance Manager. We are engaged in a full-scale upgrade to our Policies and Procedures Manual, based on the industry-standard California Special District Association template. This will enable the Board and our contractors to operate from a single play book and reduce the types of heat-generating events that distract us from our real work.

Over the past several months the Board has been ambushed with a suite of inaccurate and inflammatory attacks that are not only disruptive but also discredit the District both within our community, and with the external community. While many of the issues are worthy of illumination, the heat generated from the attacks complicates or precludes rational discussion. Whenever inaccurate information is put forth, the District is obligated to set the record straight. What follows will, I hope, enlighten and help extinguish misinformation and rumor.

**Insurance coverage** – The District has maintained uninterrupted general liability and Directors and Officers insurance coverage. In 2012 we increased our coverage to \$3 million for each type.

**Public contracting** – The District is **not** subject to the CA Public Contracting Code. New policies will be adopted which specify how we manage contracting. Standard practice has been to obtain multiple quotes for large contracts.

**Lands protection** - The District, as fee owner, has **absolute control** over the lands. In effect we are a land trust, managed by an **elected** Board. Elections must be used to ensure Directors reflect the unanimity of keeping our lands as well-managed native habitat. The District has explored multiple other options to no avail. A new land trust is fraught with issues such as who serves, how are they elected, what is their charter. Do we really need another layer of quasi-government in our small community? Should the District suffer dissolution, disposition of the lands would undergo an extensive public process.

**Loan facts** - Despite recent inflammatory and inaccurate assertions, the District has not taken any steps to obtain any type of loan for any purpose. District residents cannot (an absolute legal certainty) be liable for any government agency loan default. This includes our outstanding loan to the Blue Oaks Homeowners Association.

**Communication issues** - The Board is committed to improving good communication with all residents and local Associations. The Board operates under legal rules for public agencies, so please give us plenty of time to respond, especially on new or changing policy issues. Our web site has lots of information, and we will be working to improve the site. Our meetings are open to the public. Attend, stay informed, ask questions. Check with multiple members before forming an opinion.

My sincere hope is that everyone interested in and engaged in District affairs will do their homework, check their facts, and engage in civil and respectful discussions. Together we can illuminate a path forward to our mutual benefit and avoid attacking each other in the process.

*Submitted by David Smernoff, Board Member of LTCWD*

### **Emergency Preparedness**

*What is CERPP and why should I care?*

CERPP is the Citizens Emergency Response and Preparedness Program serving the Woodside Fire Protection District including the Towns of Portola Valley, Woodside and adjacent unincorporated areas like Los Trancos Woods and Vista Verde.

CERPP's primary goal is to promote emergency preparedness and response capability at the citizen and local neighborhood level in the event of a disaster that overwhelms traditional emergency response resources. CERPP offers classes in emergency response training on an ongoing basis at no charge to local residents.

This holiday season presents a great opportunity for you and your family members to visit the CERPP website and take steps to be better prepared. There is information and helpful tips available on disaster supplies kits for your home and car, family communication and evacuation plans, how to shelter in place, earthquake and wildland fire preparedness, emergency food and water, winter storm planning, power outages, blocked roads, downed trees, flooding, landslides and more.

Take the first step and click-thru to [www.BeReadyToday.org](http://www.BeReadyToday.org)

*Submitted by Steve Friedman and Bill Tagg, your local CERPP leaders.*

### **Los Trancos Woods Community Association**

*LTWCA Annual Meeting and Board Elections:*

Our Association Annual Meeting was held at the Alpine Inn on November 8<sup>th</sup>. Re-elected to the Board were Jan Avilla, Julie Duncan, Steve Friedman, Sonia Martinez, Autumn Stanley and Tom Thayer. JoAnn Loulan has chosen not to continue for another year. Thanks Joann for your past two years of service!

*Dues Collection Update:*

Thanks to all of you who have paid your LTWCA dues so far. These funds are used for emergency preparedness, the annual Community Directory, and our annual picnic. We collect them every two years, at \$30 per year (a total of \$60). For those who have not yet paid your dues, please drop off or send your check to Julie Duncan, 111 Carmel Way, or <http://lostrancoswoods.org/> and pay your dues through PayPal.

*LTWCA Board Position Open:*

We currently have a position open on our Community Association Board of Directors. The time commitment for the position is limited to a few hours each month. If you would like more information or would be interested in serving, contact Tom Thayer at [tthayer@att.net](mailto:tthayer@att.net).

*Submitted by Tom Thayer for LTWCA Board of Directors*

### **Neighborhood Notes**

- Since Gene Hunner gave me the rainfall data early the numbers do not include the latest storm.  
October – 1.1”, Nov. through 27<sup>th</sup> – 3.5”. Season total – 4.6”

### **Community Associations' Web Sites**

The web site addresses are:

<http://lostrancoswoods.org/>

<http://www.vistaverdepv.org> NEW

The group e-mail list is:

[VistaVerdeLTW@yahoogroups.com](mailto:VistaVerdeLTW@yahoogroups.com)

[VistaVerdeCommunityAssoc-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:VistaVerdeCommunityAssoc-subscribe@yahoogroups.com).

*Thank you, Jerry Jensen & Rob Kalman for maintaining web sites*