

# THE CONEJO OPEN SPACE FOUNDATION NEWS

Spring 2024



The new Conejo Canyons Bridge connecting two major COSCA properties is nearly complete. More on the bridge project below.

## A Few Words from Our President

Greetings, friends!

I hope you've been able to get out and enjoy the amazing open space between all the rainstorms! I was on the trails yesterday and am already seeing the beginnings of what I hope is going to be a pretty stellar wildflower bloom.

My name is **Bill Miller** and I am the new President of the Conejo Open Space Foundation. I have lived in the Conejo Valley for 16 years now and am an avid mountain biker, hiker (with my darling wife and our dog) and believe that access to the open space is part of what makes our area unique and special. I've been a member of the COSF Board of Directors for two years and I feel strongly that we all have a role to play in the preservation of this beautiful place we call home.

I would also like to introduce our new Board vice president, **Katrina Nolan**. Katrina and I, along with the rest of the Board, will be working hard to support some exciting happenings in 2024. More on that later; for now, I'd like to welcome **Tom Becker** to the COSF Board. Having worked alongside Tom at a few Trail Outreach events, I'm happy he's joining us. To learn more about Tom, check out his Q&A below.

Finally, we're focusing on **three key strategic areas** within COSF this year:

- [Education](#). This includes our Scholarship Fund, the Speaker Series, Plantpalooza and, in partnership with COSCA, Trails Education Days (TEDays).
- [Fundraising](#). Fundraising is critical to support projects such as the Arroyo Conejo clean-up and the Wallis-Annenberg Wildlife Crossing in Agoura Hills as well as well as the education projects above and other local activities.
- [Volunteerism](#). Whether leading a hike at TEDays or sweating at a COSCA Trail Work Day, you have abundant opportunities to help our open space.

[Please consider making a gift today](#)

**Bill Miller**  
**President, Conejo Open Space Foundation**

*P.S.* Do you have the time and energy to be a part of our team? Let us know today! If you're interested in serving on the COSF board, please reach out to me at: [president@cosf.org](mailto:president@cosf.org)

## We Couldn't Do It Without You!

[COSF](#) depends on open-space supporters like you for donations that help us fund volunteer programs, education, scholarships, and so much more. COSF is an entirely volunteer nonprofit dedicated to protecting and promoting the Conejo Valley's beautiful open spaces that are owned and managed by COSCA for the benefit of all trail users.

**Please consider giving a gift to keep our efforts going. And ask your employer if they will match your contribution!**

Thank you for your generosity. It makes a difference.

Donate

Volunteer



The Conejo Canyons Bridge seen from the Lizard Rock Trail.

## Conejo Canyons Bridge Nears Completion

Two of the most popular Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency properties—the Conejo Canyons Open Space and Wildwood Regional Park—border each other.

Defining the boundary between them is the Arroyo Conejo, a waterway that represents some of the only riparian habitat left in the Conejo Valley.

While the Arroyo is beautiful and important ecologically, it is also a barrier to linking the two spaces. For trail users hoping to traverse the Conejo Canyons into Wildwood or vice versa, the only connection involves a lengthy walk along a paved service road. And for those who come to the area to get away from it all, touch grass, smell rain and look at flowers, trudging along Hill Canyon Road poses an obstacle to immersion in nature.

“Open space visitors do utilize that asphalt road, but the road wasn't designed to have people on it on foot or on bikes. It's a one-lane service road for big heavy trucks,” COSCA analyst Anna Huber says. The vehicles are heading for the Hill Canyon Treatment Plant.

Now, however, the Thousand Oaks Department of Public Works, in collaboration with COSCA, is **near completion of the \$3.2 million Conejo Canyons Bridge that will provide a direct connection between trails in the Conejo Canyons and those in Wildwood**. COSF contributed \$30,000 to the early phases of the bridge's development. “We want to create a better visitor experience and in support of that COSF has been a donor to the project,” Huber notes.

The need for a bridge was first identified in the 2009 COSCA Conejo Canyons Management plan. “From COSCA's point of view it is a really important visitor amenity because it will allow equestrians, cyclists and people on foot to access open space while staying on trails,” Huber adds.

More than a decade in the conception, planning and execution, the bridge is expected to be completed by the beginning of the dry season. Made of steel and concrete, it is 140 feet long and 12 feet wide. In addition to use by hikers, cyclists, and equestrians, the bridge will be used by service vehicles traveling between the treatment plant and the Thousand Oaks Municipal Service Center. It will also facilitate COSCA Rangers' oversight of the two open spaces and provide an important alternative exit in the event of wildfire.

“We work very closely with our colleagues in Public Works and this collaborative project is beneficial for all bridge stakeholders,” says Huber. “From their point of view, they get better connectivity between important city facilities. From our point of view, we get a really awesome visitor amenity.”—*Sean Crommelin*

## Update on 2024, 2025 COSF Scholarships

For the fourth year, COSF's Scholarship Committee is in the process of evaluating applications from Conejo Valley and Greater Ventura County high-school seniors who plan to pursue an environmental studies-related major at a two- or four-year college or university. The two college-bound students chosen will receive \$1,000 annually for up to \$4,000 in support. **The 2025 scholarship winners will be announced next month.**

Last year's winners of the third annual Conejo Open Space Foundation scholarships were **Avery Henson of Moorpark High School and Kaelin Carraway of Rancho Campana High School in Camarillo**. Avery is now in at North Carolina State University, working toward a dual degree in Nutrition Anthropology and Biological Engineering. Kaelin Carraway is at the University of California Davis, majoring in Environmental Science and Management. Before leaving Camarillo, she delivered the valedictorian speech at her high school graduation.

For 2024, two additional students were recognized with honorable mentions and a one-time award: **Isaac Tieu of Santa Susana High School in Simi Valley and Avrey Tokuyama of Westlake High School**. Past COSF Scholarship recipients are Daniel Conway, Naomi Lin, Alessandra Lucchesi and Molly McNulty, all of whom are working toward four-year degrees at colleges in California.

Scholarship Committee Chair Katrina Nolan speaks for all on the COSF Board when she says, “It is inspiring to see so many young people passionate about conservation and protecting the environment, physically and culturally. **COSF is ecstatic to be able to offer this scholarship to support the next generation of land stewards.**”



In 2022, a group of mountain bikers completed all 10 Conejo Open Space Challenge trails in a single day—that's a record that's hard to beat!

## Time to Get Your Open Space Challenge On!

Have you signed up for the Conejo Open Space Challenge yet? COSCA sponsors this free event to encourage mountain bikers, hikers, trail runners and equestrians to discover 10 less frequently used trails.

The 2024 Challenge represents the event's 13th year and it runs **March 1 through May 31**, so it's not too late to get started. **If you complete the Challenge and report your results, you could win a fun prize donated by sponsors that include COSF.**

Email your photos or links to GPS tracks to [coschallenge@gmail.com](mailto:coschallenge@gmail.com) to show you've completed a segment. **Download this year's list and maps of trails at [our website](#).**



## Spotlight on...

**Tom Becker** retired from his role as an engineer at Texas Instruments in 2006. His second life has been teaching electronics and computer science—currently he’s an adjunct professor at California Lutheran. He’s also an avid amateur coach; since moving to the Conejo Valley in 1978 he’s coached over 35 soccer teams including 10 years coaching at Westlake High School (2006-2016). Since 2006, he’s been a coaching director in AYSO Region 9. He says helping shape children’s lives through the positive impact of sports has been a big part of his life. He’s an active golfer and notes that he has finally finished reading James Clavell’s Asian series + Whirlwind, which took a while !

**When did you join the COSF board and why?**

I joined COSTAC in 2021 and COSF in 2024. I enjoy advancing a good cause and our Conejo Open Space activities are beneficial and very productive.

**Why is open space important to you?**

COSCA’s open space management is one of the best programs in the US and I’m glad to be a part of it.

**What advice to you have for open space visitors to get the most out of their time there?**

Help us maintain the good condition it’s in!

**What do you like to do in the open space?**

I mountain bike 4 or 5 days a week and occasionally hike.

**What’s your favorite Conejo open space?**

Lang Ranch because it’s so close to home.

**Is there any “secret” or underused open space that you think people should know about?**

I enjoy taking my granddaughters to Little Cave, scrambling through it, and imagining who has visited it since it was created long ago. And the views up the Albertson fire road are beautiful on a cold, clear day.

**What are your hopes for the future of COSF and/or the Conejo Open Space?**

If we continue to raise the awareness of the good we are doing we’ll continue to attract good volunteers!

**Any other thoughts or words of wisdom?**



Trails Education Days at Wildwood Regional Park gives over 1,000 local kids the chance to learn about nature. See below for how you can volunteer to help out.

## News In Brief

Trails Education Days will take place from April 22-25 at Wildwood Regional Park. **If you'd like to help Conejo Valley public school 4th grade students have a memorable open space learning experience, we want to hear from you.** We're looking for hike leaders, equestrians, hikers with well-trained dogs and mountain bikers. Details about the program can be found at [our website](#). Please email [ted@cosf.org](mailto:ted@cosf.org) for details. New volunteers are needed and very much appreciated!

Want to get rid of your lawn but don't know where to start? **Apply between May 1 and May 31 for a Lawns To Habitat grant** from The Conejo Valley Audubon Society. You may be eligible to receive one of 30 grants redeemable for \$250 worth of native plants and a one-hour site visit to help you ditch the lawn and **create better habitats for birds and pollinators.** [To learn more, visit the CVAS website.](#)

**Photo contest enthusiasts**, watch your email! We're in the process of putting the finishing touches on a new seasonal open space contest for 2024. If you're already on the "You/Where in Conejo" contest list, you'll be notified. If not, and you'd like to be, [sign up at our website.](#)

**Join a free Open Space Appreciation Hike**, held monthly on the second Saturday, starting at 8:00 a.m., courtesy of Conejo Recreation and Parks! No pre-registration required. Rain, fire, or red-flag alert cancels. A responsible adult must accompany hikers under 18. For more info call CRPD at (805) 495-2163. This season's hikes will be:

- **April 13, North Ranch – Wishbone Trail**  
Come explore this newer trail at the Westlake Community Park on this moderate 5-mile hike—maybe see some poppies! (3 hours)
- **May 11, Backbone Trail – Kanan Rd to Latigo Rd**  
Moderate 4.5-mile out-and-back hike on a segment of the BBT. Gorgeous views and possible water crossings. (2.5 hours)
- **June 8, Los Robles – Los Robles West to Angel Vista**  
Moderate 5-mile out-and-back hike starting from Potrero Rd to Angel Vista. There should be spectacular panoramic and ocean views! (3 hours)

Have a comment, correction, story idea or other **input for the newsletter**? Let us know! Email us at [news@cosf.org](mailto:news@cosf.org)

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The Conejo Open Space Foundation (COSF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation formed in 1995 to promote, support and help maintain the open space and trail system of the Conejo Valley, and to educate visitors as to their roles as custodians and protectors of the open space and the environment. We support and help fund ongoing programs sponsored by the Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency (COSCA)  
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