

Bean Creek Preserve SFC Dedication

John Muir, Geotourism & our rural communities

"It's Muir weather." That was the shared view of Robert Hanna –Muir's great-great-grandson --- and John Hutchison--from Scotland-- (The John Muir Trust Chairman) about the rain Saturday, June 4th during the dedication of The Bean Creek Preserve, the latest addition to the John Muir Highway Geotourism project and Sierra Foothill Conservancy's (SFC nature preserves).

The dedication was the only event that persevered though the rain in Northern Mariposa County and drew nearly 50 attendees. The highlights of the event included the gloriously green, lush 80 acres of preserved sub-alpine meadow now owned by the Sierra Foothill Conservancy a site included as part of the geotourism plans for the Historic John Muir Route from Coulterville to Smith Station. For residents of Greeley Hill the meadow has been a view shared since before Muir's visit by travelers and now drivers on Fiske Rd. SFC will protect the preserve in perpetuity as a result of the donation by Ken & Teri Pulvino from their Birders Homestead Ranch.

Bridget Fithian, Mariposa Director of SFC, shared that 6,000 miles away in John Muir's homeland of Scotland, The John Muir Trust (JMT) was hosting their annual meeting and celebrating their successes in fulfilling their conservation mission to protect wild places as well. She shared that John Hutchison, Chairman of the Trust, had shared about our celebration and the Dedication of the Bean Creek preserve at his gathering and provided the following statement from John Hutchison,

“At the time of the Pulvino's generous donation of the Bean Creek Preserve to the Sierra Foothill Conservancy and the visionary John Muir Geotourism Project, I believe that the spirit of my countryman, John Muir, his legacy and ethic, spans time and continents to unite us in our work for conservation and communities in the natural world.”

Fithian also shared the generous words of D. Swagerty, Director of the John Muir Center at University of the Pacific,:

Were Muir here today to witness the dedication of these eighty acres adjacent to the newly-designated John Muir Highway, I feel that he would congratulate Teri Graf and Ken Pulvino for their vision and generosity. Muir championed both environmental preservation as well as public enjoyment and education, especially after coming out of the Sierra as his home, returning periodically as a visitor from 1880 until his death in 1914.

His oft-quoted passage from one of his pivotal essays in the 1890s reminds us of the importance of these set-asides, where the earth has been generous to both wild and domesticated beings; and where future travelers will enjoy seeing a segment of the trail that Muir once walked on his way to Yosemite. May the Bean Creek Preserve always bear that association with Muir's ethics and commitment to protect Nature, while

simultaneously accommodating those among us in most need of a respite from the stress of modern lifestyles and urban congestion. Muir put it thus:

"Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wildness is a necessity; and that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life."

John Muir, "The Wild Parks and Forest Reservations of the West," *Atlantic Monthly*, January 1898, 15-16.

The dedication ceremony's focus was expressed in the thankfulness of Ken & Teri, "The mission here is to honor John Muir by helping to preserve, protect and restore the natural and human communities along this historic route he took in 1868 on his walk to Yosemite Valley."

Local leaders spoke enthusiastically about the prospects for following in Muir's footsteps while supporting the effort to help sustain the rural lifestyle threatened by the economic plight of the area.

Mariposa County Supervisor Lyle Turpin noted the importance of local stewardship by pointing out how the parcel had been improved by Ken & Teri with the addition of high quality fencing for cattle grazing. Northern Mariposa County History Center President John Shimer talked of bringing local history to life with their new docent tours. Former Deputy YNP Superintendent and current Mariposa Supervisor Kevin Cann told the audience about a brighter future with the benefits of geotourism and the work being done by our local land trust, SFC.

Robert Hanna shared of the Muir family's ongoing commitment to land and water conservation. This was no surprise to admirers aware of John Muir's many talents, -- he was widely acclaimed for his acumen as a botanist, geologist, inventor, businessman, ecological activist and as a wonderfully talented writer. But he was also known for his love of children and family. He felt comfortable corresponding with renowned scientists, cruising to Alaska with a railroad tycoon, and camping with President Roosevelt under the Giant Sequoia's. And, he stated that "tourists coming to see nature's glory was a good sign of the times".

Supervisor Lee Stetson, nationally acclaimed in portraying Muir in the Ken Burn's "National Park" PBS series, offered bits of history and support for SFC and the project. Sierra Business Council's Development Director, Sahara Saude, spoke to the group about supervising a team of MBA graduate students from the Monterey Institute of International Studies commissioned to evaluate expansion of the John Muir Highway Geotourism project as a way to aid the region. Jeannette Tuitele, Executive Director of SFC expressed her gratitude for the Pulvino's vision and generosity and noted that the dedication of the Bean Creek Preserve marks SFC's 7th nature preserve.

Although he could not attend in person, Jeff Hentz of the Yosemite-Mariposa Tourism Bureau sent along a statement of support, "The Pulvino's donation of the Bean Creek Property to Sierra Foothill Conservancy will provide a great place to honor Muir and showcase the ecosystems he wrote about. The potential for development of Geotourism programming in the north county of Mariposa is tremendous and we are thankful to the Pulvinos for spearheading the project."

Donna Sisson, *YNP Branch Chief of Public Involvement and Outreach*, provided a valuable perspective on behalf of Yosemite National Park in support of SFC's work to conserve local lands and the John Muir Geotourism Project goals to teach about and showcase the values of the local region to tourists. YNP Superintendent Don Neubacher echoed Sisson's sentiment with his statement issued in support of the project, "John Muir was instrumental in the preservation of Yosemite National Park. This generous donation of land adds to the preservation legacy of John Muir and will enable visitors to experience the natural beauty of the Sierra foothills, an area that John Muir loved."

The event was coordinated and presided over by Bridget Fithian, Mariposa Director for SFC. Individuals interested in supporting SFC's mission are encouraged to become a member of SFC. Property owners interested in participating in a conservancy easement or a land donation should contact SFC directly at 209-742-5556 in Mariposa or 559-855-3473 in eastern Fresno County.

For more information on John Muir Geotourism visit www.JohnMuirHighway.net
Visit www.sierrafoothill.org to learn more about Sierra Foothill Conservancy