



# Ojai Valley Green Coalition

Monthly E-News

July 2009

## Next in the Ecology and Community Series: The Film “Mad City Chickens”

Are chickens calling to you? Have you been harboring a secret desire to start raising poultry in your backyard? Join the crowd. Actually, it's quite a *big* crowd. Home-based chickens are a common occurrence worldwide, and up until the expansion of suburban housing in the last half century, they were also the norm here in the United States.

Well, chickens are now coming back to neighborhoods across the nation, and in some burghs citizens are even fighting City Hall to ensure that their feathered friends can move back in.

At this month's community presentation, which will be happening on a Saturday afternoon instead of the usual Wednesday evening, the Coalition's Food and Agriculture Committee will be screening *Mad City Chickens*, a wacky and wonderful documentary about one Wisconsin city's creation of a “chicken underground” to make their poultry passion legal.

Even if you don't eat eggs or have no hankering for

your own chicks, hens, and roosters, this is a film you won't want to miss. It will make you laugh out loud, and sci-fi and Twilight Zone fans will especially appreciate its storytelling



style. One thing's for sure: if you've been on the fence about producing your own eggs, the film will inspire you to join the growing ranks of urban dwellers who are committed to including happy hens as a part of their home life.

*Mad City Chickens* will be shown at the Ojai Theatre on Saturday, July 25, at 4:30 p.m., as a fundraiser for the Food and Ag

Committee (\$10 will be the requested donation amount). The film will be followed by two speakers: Garm Beall, founder of the website [backyardchickens.com](http://backyardchickens.com), and Karen Kaminsky, a chicken owner and member of two local chicken clubs. At 6:30 the group will adjourn to the patio of the Village Jester next door, for those who have questions or just want to engage in more chicken chat. 🍷

## Two Green Thumbs Up!

Congratulations to the Ojai Valley Youth Foundation for showing that young people can lead adults toward a more sustainable community. The group will collect 1,675 pledges on green leaves by September 23. Signing a pledge is free, and you might win an Energy Star television. By following through with your pledge to save energy, you'll help the environment and save some money, too. Look for these youngsters at the farmers market, at local coffee houses, and outside of Von's and Starr Market.

Two more green thumbs up to Kenley Neufeld, who drives a van pool to Santa Barbara every work day, and to the other Ojai riders in Kenley's van pool, who help keep multiple cars off the road and thereby reduce both fuel waste and air pollution.



Non-native cape ivy and vinca dominate this part of the project site, 600 feet south of the Libbey Park Bridge. Mexican fan palm and Siberian elm are also found throughout the site.

## The Coalition's Wetland Recovery Grant

After six months of effort, the Ojai Valley Green Coalition, working with area environmentalists and representatives of the City, has obtained a \$30,000 grant toward the creek and ecosystem restoration of the Ojai riparian corridor that passes through Libbey Park.

The Community Wetland Restoration Grant completes the needed funding to restore 1.4 acres, at an estimated total cost of \$50,500.

Biologist Brian Holly of Ojai's environmental consulting firm [Bio Research Consultants](#), who is Co-Chair of the OVGC Watershed Committee, will be the project manager.

"Everywhere I look there is a project," said Holly. "We have dynamically changed the earth. Now we need to focus on the system, see how it works, and keep it alive. We don't need a wax museum interpretation."

This project will truly take a village. Holly has several committed and important partners: Carl Thelander, his

boss at Bio Research; Paul Jenkin of the [Ventura Surfrider Foundation](#); Bill O'Brien of [Hawks and Associates](#), the Ventura engineering firm for the City of Ojai; Tom Swetek, a retired Ojai teacher who has worked on the Channel Islands restoration project; John Kertis of the [Senor Canyon Mutual Water Company](#); and Derek Poultney of the [Ojai Valley Land Conservancy](#).

"We took the momentum of past grant ideas and projects," said Holly, "and built on them, proposing to continue those efforts with a new team."

According to Holly, the grant emphasizes community involvement and the proposal combines "a perfect synthesis of that involvement to include the Coalition, the City, the Department of Fish and Game, [the C.R.E.W.](#), the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy, Tom Bostrom of [Bostrom and Associates](#), and even Boy Scout Troop 405, led by Bill O'Brien."

The work will have four phases, and will begin as soon as the City of Ojai signs off on the project; July will see a formal contract to verify the process.

"We'll finalize a work plan, adapt a

Continued on page 3

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Ellen Hall, Interim President
- Dale Hanson, Secretary
- Caryn Bosson, Treasurer
- Sue Broidy, Director
- Jaimie Jenks, Director
- Tyler Suchman, Director
- Ken Wright, Director

### NONVOTING MEMBERS:

- Cindy Cante, Representative of Supervisor Steve Bennett's Office
- Steve Olson, Representative of the City of Ojai

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(805) 653-8445  
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This e-newsletter is produced by the  
Communications and Publicity Committee



# Thinking in Green



## Food, Film, and the Future Tense

I'd always thought of myself as having a brown thumb, so when I did my first apprenticeship on an organic farm some 30 years ago, and the farmer sent me off on my own to plant zucchini, I was scared they wouldn't sprout. Fearing the worst, I got up early every morning to check the rows I'd planted. But the power of nature overcame my inexperience, and one morning the shoots were there and I was cured of my doubts.

My path didn't lead to organic farming as I thought it would, yet I'm starting to feel I've come full circle. The Food and Agriculture Committee has been talking about something called home farming, and this really resonates with me. Another similar concept that I love is urban agriculture. For me, they both conjure up a great feeling of abundance, community, and empowerment. Can you imagine every backyard, front yard, empty lot, barren fence, and street median filled with food and with folks tending to it? Of course that would mean we'd have to stop shipping out our food waste, green waste, and manure to landfills, because we'd need more and more compost . . . have you noticed how sustainability has a kind of dominos effect?

Along with growing produce, urban farming can mean keeping animals—especially chickens. That can get tricky because of ordinances, but communities are doing it, and in fact making a big deal about it on websites such as backyardchickens.com and on films like *Mad City Chickens*. If you already read page one of this newsletter, you know where this is going. Our community presentation for July will be the showing of said film, with the founder of the backyard chickens website speaking afterward.

There's no way you're going to find anything more interesting to do for 10 bucks on a Saturday afternoon than learning about the trials, tribulations, and triumphs of raising chickens! I promise you're going to laugh, shake your head once or twice, and then maybe ultimately even feel inspired to take the plunge. We plan for this to be just the first in an ongoing series of presentations on the many fascinating facets of do-it-yourself food production. Do come out and support the Coalition and our Food and Agriculture Committee, while helping to move our community in the direction of greater food self-sufficiency.

—Deborah Pendrey  
OVGC Executive Director

## Wetland Grant

Continued from page 2

plant palette, and then use an ecologically determined schedule," said Holly. "We will be building a coalition of volunteers. In late September to early October we'll be in the removal phase, working from the descending canopy, manually removing non-native plants. The community will be working right alongside us. Next it's planting native, drought-tolerant species that will take one to two years to adapt."

"Next year there will be another wave of maintenance," added Holly. "It will require an ongoing effort. Our next plan is to move further to the south. That's the connecting piece that gets us all the way to San Antonio Creek. There is also a County parcel adjacent to Soule Park Golf course that could be an excellent watershed project. The area has been compacted by off-trail vehicles, preventing the oak trees from getting enough water. It's really been abused; it's all trashy over there and could use immediate attention."

Holly, who grew up in Ojai and has been working on restoration projects for 10 years, is enthusiastic about the possibilities.

"This is going to be a successful project because we are going to make it successful," he said.

If you'd like to get involved, contact Brian Holly at [Brian@biorc.com](mailto:Brian@biorc.com) or call the Coalition at 653-8445. 🍏

—From an article written by  
Linda Harmon for *Ojai Valley News*

# Thank You



COMMONWEALTH *financial network*



- ORTIZ NURSERY
- MOUNTAIN MEADOW NURSERY
- GREEN ROWS

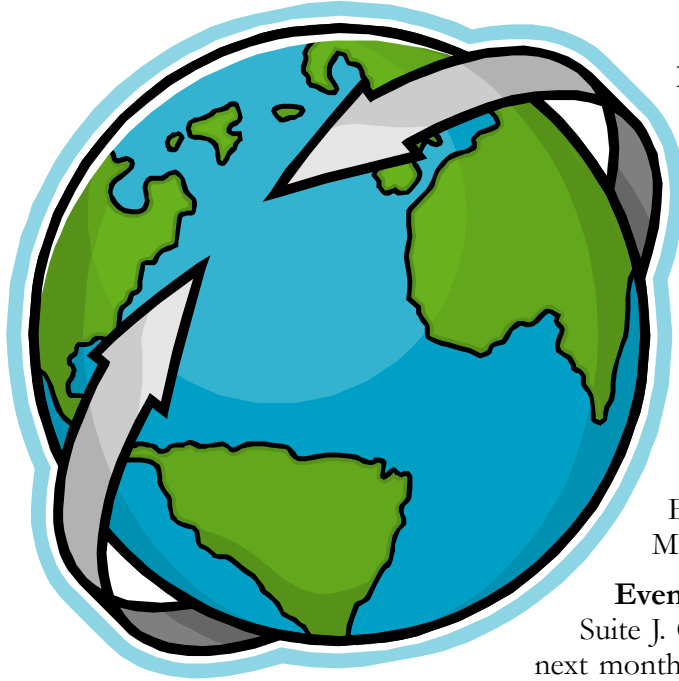
**For helping the  
Ojai Valley go greener.  
We are 16 gardens stronger!**

the Food & Agriculture Committee  
Grow Food Party Crew Project



# What's Going on in the Coalition Committees

## “Knowledge, Put into Action, Is Power”



**Building and Construction** - Meets on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday at 7 p.m., Chaparral High School, 414 E. Ojai Avenue, in the conference room off the breezeway next to the Administration Building. The committee is working on a residential efficiency evaluation program. They hope to work with local youth in initiating the program and to focus on low-income families with the service.

**Communications and Publicity** - Meets on the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday at 6:30 p.m., 202 W. Aliso Street. The press release and calendar notices for the *Mad City Chickens* presentation on July 25 have been completed. Other ongoing projects include website maintenance and the creating and editing of flyers, emails, display ads, radio interviews, this monthly e-newsletter, and letters to the editor for the *Ojai Valley News*, plus a national media campaign being spearheaded by Ellen Johnson and preparations for the OVGCC's winter exhibit at the Ojai Valley Museum.

**Event Planning** - Meets on the 1<sup>st</sup> Monday at 5 p.m., 221 E. Matilija Street, Suite J. Call 653-8445 for confirmation. The committee is working on details for the next monthly presentation on July 25, and continuing to give thought to the Coalition's forthcoming museum exhibit..

**Energy** - Meets on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday at 7 p.m., Chaparral High School, 414 E. Ojai Avenue, in the conference room off the breezeway next to the Administration Building. The committee has submitted to the board for review an outline for a business and residential sustainability award program that would start with photovoltaic electricity, and is partnering with the Building and Construction Committee to start a home energy auditing program.

**Environmental Health** - Meetings have been temporarily suspended, as the chairperson has been working with the Green School Committee in connection with a Food for Thought grant. Call Marleen Luckman at (805) 279-2101 for more information.

**Executive Committee** - Meets on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday at 6:30 p.m., Chaparral High School, 414 E. Ojai Avenue, in the conference room off the breezeway next to the Administration Building. Board Members and Committee Chairs make up this committee, which is currently working on a strategic plan for the Coalition. Please note that Box.net now has important Coalition documents online, including minutes from most committee meetings.

**Food and Agriculture** - Meeting dates and locations vary. Email Dulanie Ellis-La Barre at [dulanie@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dulanie@sbcglobal.net) for information. The committee and its Grow Food Party Crew and Culinary Club subcommittees are preparing for this month's community presentation on urban chickens, among many other projects.

**Resources** - Meets on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday at 5 p.m., Chaparral High School, 414 E. Ojai Avenue, in the conference room off the breezeway next to the Administration Building. The committee has presented a plan to the Board for a new membership structure.

**Transportation** - Meetings have been suspended and there is no committee business at this time, as a new Committee Chair is being sought. If this is an area of interest to you, please call the Coalition's Executive Director, Deborah Pendrey, at (805) 653-8445 for more information.

**Waste Management** - The next meeting will be on Thursday, July 9, at 7 p.m., Chaparral High School, 414 E. Ojai Avenue, in the conference room off the breezeway next to the Administration Building. At this meeting the committee will be discussing options for potential reusable shopping bags for this year's "Day Without a Bag."

**Watershed** - Meets on the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday at 7 p.m., Chaparral High School, 414 E. Ojai Avenue, in the conference room off the breezeway next to the Administration Building. Email Brian at [brian@biorc.com](mailto:brian@biorc.com) for further information. The committee has been awarded a grant by the Community Wetland Restoration Grant program to fund a creek-restoration project that will eradicate non-native invasive plants and restore the ecosystem of the Ojai Creek riparian corridor within Libbey Park.

## Ojai Valley Museum's "Go Green, Ojai!" Exhibit To Run December 10 Through February 17

By Ellen Hall

Starting in December, the Ojai Valley Green Coalition will pose the question, "How green is Ojai now?" and follow that up by asking, "And how green will be the future we're aiming for?"

The coalition's exhibit, planned for December 10, 2009, through February 17, 2010, will explore the many facets of sustainability that are vital to our community's health and well-being.

The following are some of the areas of public interest to be highlighted in the coalition's displays:

- The greening of Ojai's food and agriculture, including organic fruits, nuts, vegetables, and wines
- The Grow Food Party Crew's playful food garden installations
- How to build a compost tumbler from recycled materials
- The future community kitchen and inspired gleaning project called Harvest Helpers
- Ojai's existing green buildings, with info on how to transform a home into a green oasis with alternative energy, rainwater catchment barrels, beautiful recycled tiles, carpet, and flooring, etc.
- The coalition's energy audit project
- Where our valley's water comes from and where it goes: our rare and valuable watershed and what we all can do to protect and preserve it, plus how reconstituting our historic wetlands recharges the groundwater
- The coalition's funded plan to restore the creek in Libby Park
- Alternative modes of transportation and the latest in biofuel conversion
- A celebration of our trolley system of public transportation and the bicycle-friendly Ojai trail

- Ojai's canopy of native trees, and how—with the help of the dedicated volunteers of Ojai Trees—we can reverse its decline and reforest the valley

The "Go Green, Ojai!" exhibit is planned to be interactive, family-friendly, and something we can all look forward to enjoying during the coming holiday season. 🌱

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## Announcing Some Potential Good News for California Graywater Standards

Amid all the anxiety regarding California's insolvent status, a small piece of very good news is pending in our state. The following is from the June E-Newsletter of the Quail Springs Learning Oasis and Permaculture Farm, [quailsprings.org](http://quailsprings.org), and is used here with their kind permission:

"Thanks to the drought and to intervention from the Governor's office, the new California Graywater standard could go into effect August 4, 2009, right after the California Building Standards Commission Meeting, instead of in 2011! The new rules allow a graywater system that consists of a washing machine and/or one other fixture, such as a shower, to be installed without a permit, if the system meets a short list of reasonable requirements.

"This opens the door to upgrading California's stock of 1.7 million illegal systems by the professional installation of simple graywater systems by licensed landscapers, contractors, and plumbers. This is the approach used successfully in Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and soon Nevada, Montana, and Oregon.

"With this change, California is regaining its leadership role for graywater reuse." 🌱

## In and Around the Valley

**July 4, Ojai's 4th of July Parade,**  
10 a.m. See the Food and Ag  
Committee strut their chicken stuff!

**July 4, Go Green on Oak Street,** a  
part of Ventura's 4th of July Street  
Fair, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. in downtown  
Ventura

**July 18, the award-winning film  
Fuel,** about alternative fuel and  
energy sources, 3 and 7 p.m.,  
Bell Arts Factory, 432 N. Ventura  
Avenue in Ventura, info from  
Kendra at [earthworks\\_works@  
yahoo.com](mailto:earthworks_works@yahoo.com)

**July 20, Meeting of the Ojai Valley  
Municipal Advisory Council,**  
7 p.m., Oak View Community  
Center, 18 Valley Drive, Oak View

**July 25, the film "Mad City  
Chickens"** (see page 1), 4:30 p.m.,  
Ojai Theatre, 145 E. Ojai Avenue

**July 25, Household Waste and  
E-Waste Collection Day ~**  
Call (805) 658-4323 to make an  
appointment

**July 27, a talk on the City of Santa  
Monica's Green Building and  
Environmental Programs** for the  
local chapter of the [United States  
Green Building Council](http://UnitedStatesGreenBuildingCouncil.org), 5:30 p.m.  
at Patagonia Firehouse Community  
Room, 259 W. Santa Clara Street in  
Ventura



## A Media Library Page

New on our Coalition website is a media library that we'll be stocking with educational videos and PowerPoint presentations. If you have a green-theme film that's suitable for online viewing, please send an email to [coordinator@  
ojaivalleygreencoalition.com](mailto:coordinator@ojaivalleygreencoalition.com) to offer your suggested film for consideration.

## *Watershed Revolution:* Our Best-Attended Community Event Yet

If anyone has ever questioned whether the people of Ojai care about their source of water, that doubt was put to rest on June 24 when more than 300 people showed up at the Chaparral High School Auditorium to watch *Watershed Revolution*, the documentary film coproduced by Rich Reid and Paul Jenkin. Hometown images of familiar places like downtown Ojai, the Matilija Dam, Surfers Point in Ventura, and the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy's Ventura



River Preserve off Rice Road filled the screen. There were also a number of familiar faces from around Ojai, including those of Sara Benjamin of the "Once Upon a Watershed" project and Rick Bisaccia, Ojai Valley Land Conservancy Preserve Manager.

Not only was the local populace out in force, but when asked to raise their hands if they knew where their water comes from, nearly two-thirds of the audience did so. This actually surprised Paul Jenkin, Co-Chair of the Watershed Committee and the Executive Director of the [Ventura Surfrider Foundation](#), as Paul is accustomed to people being unaware of the source of their tap water. Ojai's water comes from the Ventura River Watershed, a drainage basin through which everything from the Los Padres National Forest above us to the barrancas lacing through our neighborhoods flows down to meet the ocean at the mouth of the Ventura River.

The film's message was clear: we must all help manage our resources on land to improve the quality of our rare indigenous water supply. Wetlands play an integral part in this system, as does

flood control. The audience learned how capturing and retaining water on their property counteracts drought and prevents urban runoff to drains, which during storm events often contain pesticides, fertilizers, and bacteria from animal waste. Wise municipal water planning by city and county agencies was cited as another important aspect in the safeguarding of our water resources.

The removal of Matilija Dam was explained as potentially playing an important part in restoring our watershed and preventing further beach erosion at the mouth of the Ventura River. Paul Jenkin's blog, [Ventura River Ecosystem \*venturaecosystem.blogspot.com\*](#), offers a chronological series of posts, reportage on the current status of the removal effort, and more photos like this one taken at the Ojai premiere of the film. On Paul's site you can also check out a map of the Ventura River Watershed.

Filmmaker Rich Reid plans to enter this documentary in various environmental film festivals around the nation, and soon it will also be available for viewing on the Internet. Right now you can see the trailer at [watershedrevolution.com](#). 🌍

### **Wanted: A Mechanical Engineer**

This may sound wacky, but here goes . . .

Prompted by one of our members, we asked the Ojai Public Works Department if they had looked into putting bike racks on the city trolleys. We were told yes, and that in fact they had received racks through a grant several years ago (before our present Public Works Director's time). However, there was an oversight. The bike racks are designed to be installed on the front end, and that's where the motor compartment on our trolley cars is located. Use of the bike racks would make maintenance and daily inspections too difficult.

Enter you engineer types! The City asked if we had any ideas, as they had not figured out a workable solution. Well, we said, perhaps one of our members or someone in our community could look into the possibility of modifying the racks or maybe installing them on hinges. Of course, this would have to be done pro bono, but the personal gratification of figuring it out, plus the gratitude of your fellow residents? Priceless. ~D. P.