

NEWS RELEASE



SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY

For Immediate Release
November 26, 2002

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Conservancy Purchases Archaeologically Significant Oak Forest Canyon Natural Area In Sherman Oaks

*Site of inspiration for Tarzan Author, Edgar Rice Burroughs
Preserved After 35 Years Of Local Effort*

Sherman Oaks—After more than thirty years of effort by the local community, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy announced today that it has purchased beautiful Oak Forest Canyon Natural Area in the hills of Sherman Oaks. Assemblymember Paul Koretz, a strong advocate of open space, joined the Conservancy and dozens of local residents today at a check signing ceremony and celebration at the bucolic new parkland. “This is a celebration of a neighborhood not giving up, and making a difference.” said Koretz. “This canyon is a hidden jewel that is now protected forever.”

Oak Forest Canyon Natural Area is a small but significant oak woodland with a perennial stream adjacent to the Conservancy’s 110-acre Fossil Ridge Park. Fossil Ridge Park is one of the most prolific paleontological sites in the Santa Monica Mountains. Miocene era fossil beds are rich with fossilized porpoises, whales, sharks, and lantern fish. The new acquisition will provide easy access and a trail into the park, which had previously only been reachable through a guard-gated community.

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Edgar Rice Burroughs, the famed author of *Tarzan of the Apes* and dozens of other novels, is said to have frequented Oak Forest Canyon as a source of inspiration for his writing. In the early 1920s, Burroughs, an avid outdoorsman and naturalist, would ride up on horseback from his 540-acre country estate in what is now Tarzana. He and his family, or friends like William D. Mulholland, Edward L. Doheny, and Errol Flynn, explored the wooded canyon and picnicked under the giant oaks. The author of the immensely popular story of prehistoric life, *The Land That Time Forgot*, Burroughs was keenly interested in fossils and archaeology. An interpretive plaque commemorating Burroughs was unveiled at the ceremony.

Almost since its inception in 1979, the Conservancy worked alongside neighborhood organizer Arnold Newman to preserve Fossil Ridge and Oak Forest Canyon. Newman, a local resident and President of the International Society for the Preservation of the Tropical Rainforest, has led the charge to preserve Oak Forest Canyon since the late 1960s. Nearby Buckley School, represented at the ceremony by headmaster Paul Horovitz, has also been an active partner.

“The Conservancy has always been pleased to work together with a neighbors who care so deeply about their community,” said Joseph T. Edmiston, Executive Director of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. “This day is a testament to their perseverance, and to the enduring beauty of this remarkable canyon.”

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority are dedicated to the preservation of parkland throughout Southern California.

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