

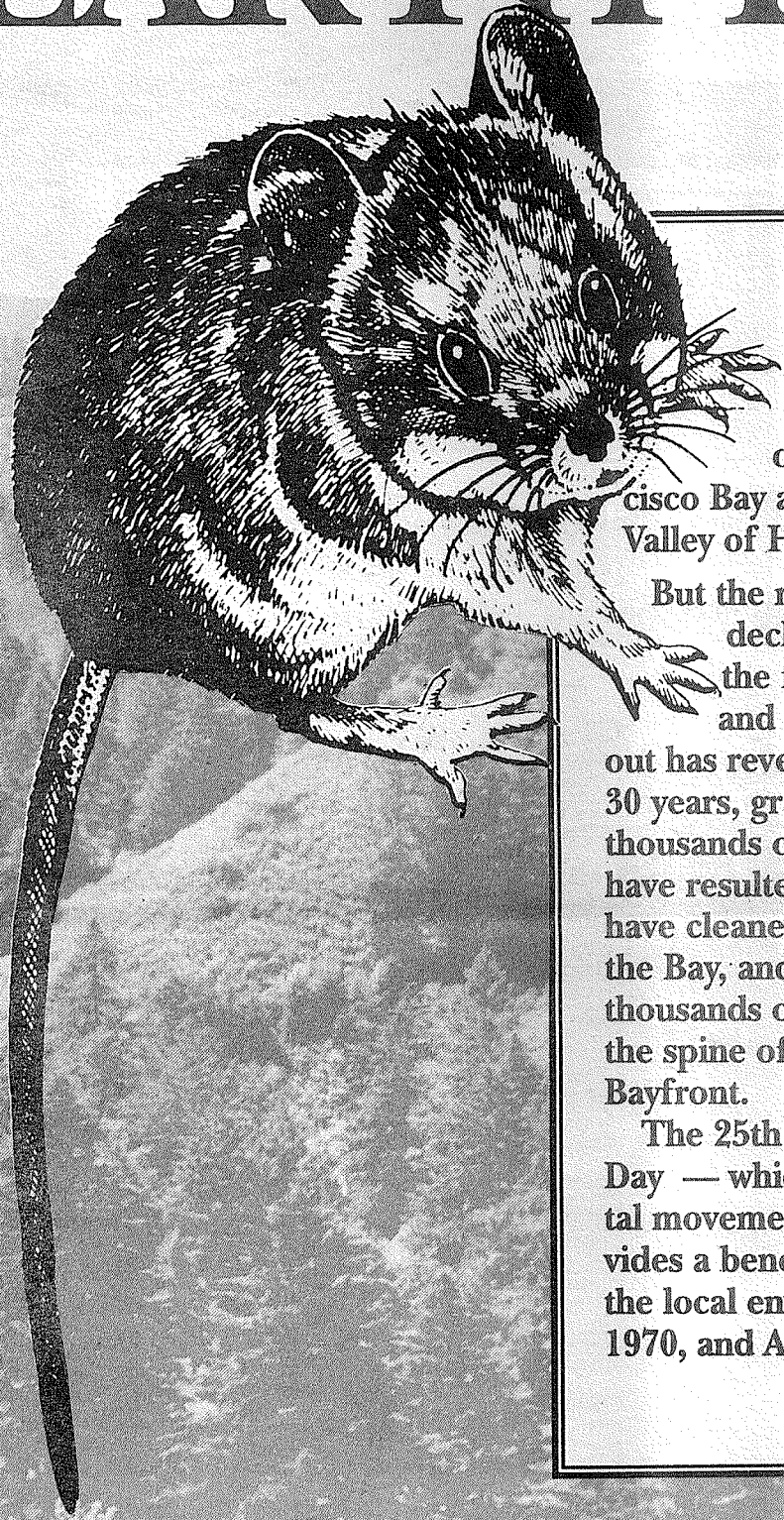
Menlo Park's Almanac

Vol. 73, No. 16 April 19, 1995

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EARTH DAY '95

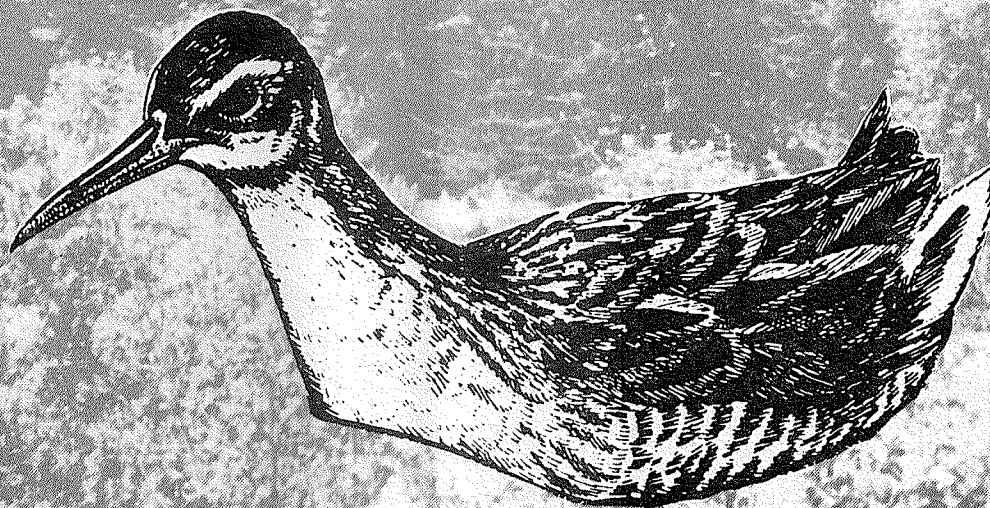
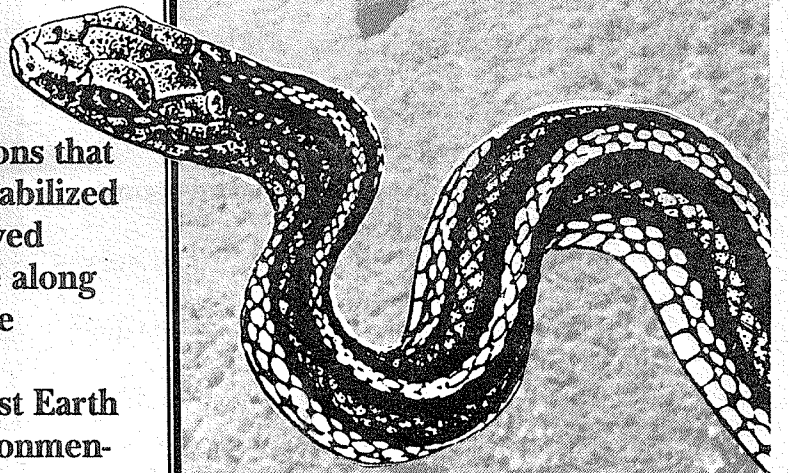
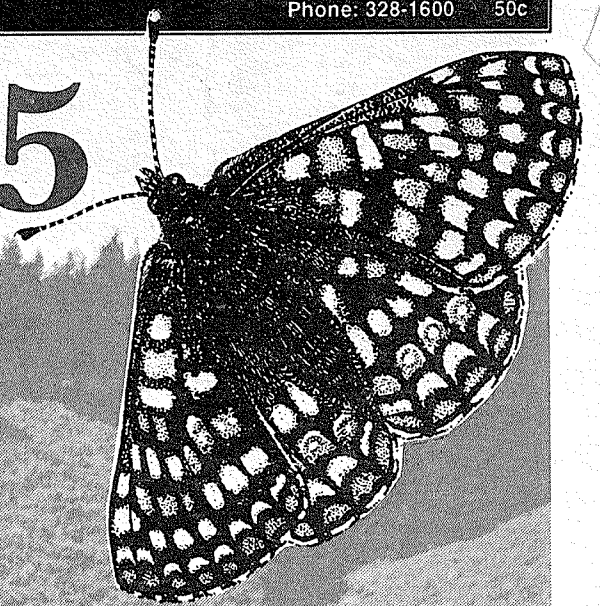


It's been a long time since anyone called the orcharded Eden that once lay between San Francisco Bay and the western hills "The Valley of Heart's Delight."

But the man-made environmental decline that saw the Bay shrink, the forests downed, the air dirtied and the grizzly bear wiped out has reversed. Over the last 30 years, grass-roots efforts by thousands of Peninsula residents have resulted in government actions that have cleaned the air and water, stabilized the Bay, and permanently preserved thousands of acres of open space along the spine of the Peninsula and the Bayfront.

The 25th anniversary of the first Earth Day — which launched the environmental movement across the country — provides a bench mark to assess changes in the local environment between April 22, 1970, and April 22, 1995 — Earth Day '95.

—See Page 18.



The Almanac looks at the state of

On the
25th anniversary
of the first
Earth Day

In this issue, the Almanac will put aside the troubled world environment and focus on the Midpeninsula where we live. We'll look at how far we've come in 25 years, and where we're headed in a murky future filled with challenges.

"We're really privileged here," says Pete McCloskey of Woodside, noting the enormous population and environmental problems afflicting the nation and the world.

Mr. McCloskey, who, with Wisconsin Sen. Gaylord Nelson, was one of the two congressional sponsors of the original Earth Day, recalls how a bunch of college kids turned Congress around. Led by Denis Hayes, the Earth Day team targeted "the dirty dozen" congressmen who had bad environmental records and were also vulnerable.

Thousands of students walked precincts, and in 1972, seven of the "dirty dozen" went down to defeat. Congress got the message. "As a result," says Mr. McCloskey, "we got the Clean Air Act, the

Clean Water Amendments, the Endangered Species Act, the Estuarine Protection Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act and the Coastal Zone Protection Act."

This Earth Day, Bay Area Action, a coalition of local environmental groups, is sponsoring more than a dozen activities on the Peninsula to clean and restore habitat, with the theme "Restoring Nature, Restoring Hope." Volunteers will be pulling up invading plants, such as ivy and pampas grass, from locations from East Palo Alto Baylands to Pescadero Marsh, and from San Jose to Golden Gate Park. They will replant with native species, create new habitat for burrowing owls, and clean San Francisquito Creek. Then they will gather at Palo Alto's Baylands Center for an evening of letter-writing, fun and educational food.

"Our main goal is to get people back to the land and to get them to appreciate the land," says Dr. Cindy Russell of Portola Valley, co-director for Earth Day '95. "Habitat restoration is good for the

Where we've been — where we're headed

A look at five critical areas of the local environment

Air Quality

Much cleaner

In 1970, Bay Area residents were choking through 70 to 80 bad-air days a year; 25 years later, the Bay Area meets federal air quality standards of fewer than three days in violation in three years — that's one bad-air day a year. On Monday, April 24, the Bay Area Air Quality Maintenance District (BAAQMD) and the federal Environmental Protection Agency will celebrate compliance.

Success in cutting air pollution comes from relentless pressure from the air board on businesses, industries and governments to clean up their acts, and from state and federal efforts to

make auto engines and gas burn cleaner.

"The major source of air pollution is still the auto," says Milton Feldstein, executive director of the BAAQMD. Even though autos run 95 percent cleaner than they did 15 years ago, there are twice as many on the road.

Success in improving air quality translates into better health for rich and poor alike, stresses Jay Thorwaldson of the Palo Alto Medical Foundation. "Air quality standards are based on health," he says. "A bad pollution attack triggers the deaths of eight to 10 people."

Supervisor Mike Nevin, San Mateo County's representative on the air board, is working with federal agencies

to reduce pollution from idling airplanes — which is due to get worse as the airport expands — by requiring them to use battery-operated equipment for more taxiing.

Where we're headed: Probably better

The next challenge to the air district is to improve beyond federal standards and meet the stricter state air quality standards. "I think the air will slowly get better," Mr. Feldstein says.

A positive step will be introduction of reformulated, cleaner-burning gas in March 1996, Mr. Feldstein says.

The biggest job is still to reduce the number of cars during morning commute hours, he says. Those emis-

sions in the morning turn to ozone in the afternoon.

The district is requiring employers to reduce single-occupant trips by measures such as promoting shuttles, car-pools and van pools, and by subsidizing bus and train tickets. "If we reduce the number of cars on the road, we reduce the emissions," he says.

"The biggest challenge is to improve the mass transit system," adds Mr. Thorwaldson. It's archaic and unarticulated; buses and trains need to connect better so that people will use them. They need to be user-friendly.

The air quality district will also buy back older, polluting models of cars. And if you see a really smoky car, call 1-800-EXHAUST and report it.

San Francisco Bay

A real success

Between 1849 and 1965 the surface of San Francisco Bay shrank from 787 square miles to 548 square miles, through sedimentation from mining, diking for salt ponds and agriculture, and filling for garbage dumps, ports, airports and development.

By 1995 the Bay had grown by 800 acres (a little over one square mile).

What stopped a century of damage to the Bay was the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC). Established in 1965 as a temporary commission and made permanent in 1969, the 27-member BCDC has reversed the century-long trend of the Bay's shrinking by 4 square miles a year.

Mel Lane of Atherton, one of the founders and the first chairman of BCDC, says: "Random filling of the Bay was stopped. Filling today is done thoughtfully and with adequate reason."

BCDC requires that new development along the Bay be related to the wa-

ter, and requires developers to mitigate impacts on the Bay, according to Deputy Director William Travis. Often the BCDC requires developers to breach existing dikes to create new wetlands.

When BCDC started, the public could approach the Bay only along 4 miles of shoreline. Now, through purchase of parks and requirements on developers, 200 miles of shoreline are open to the public.

Creation of the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge has added some 20,000 acres of marsh and salt ponds around the fringes of the Bay to preserve wetlands and habitat, and to provide recreation. More than 300,000 people visited it last year.

The Bay is also much cleaner. No longer do you hold your nose when driving across the Bay Bridge because of the stench of raw sewage.

Where we're headed: ???

The continued improvement of San

Francisco Bay is threatened by proposed actions in Sacramento and Washington.

Gov. Pete Wilson has recommended eliminating BCDC to help reduce the number of government agencies. He would fold its functions into the Coastal Commission and the Regional Water Quality Control Board.

Almost everybody in the Bay Area — environmental and business organizations, government agencies and the press — oppose this strenuously. They argue it won't save money and will make the permit process more cumbersome and expensive.

"We really have a good set of rules that most people agree to," says Supervisor Ruben Barrales, San Mateo County's representative on BCDC. "I'd hate to see these written off and have to fight the battle again in the 1990s."

Among the opponents of dismantling BCDC is the Bay Planning Coalition, an organization of the major landowners around the Bay, including the Port of San Francisco, the Port of Oakland,

Cargill Salt Co., Chevron, and Redwood Shores. "This will only exacerbate problems for business in the Bay," wrote Executive Director Ellen Johnck.

Meanwhile, the agencies involved with the Bay are working on other problems: for example, reducing toxics in the South Bay that threaten the ecology and subsistence fishermen; and using the muck from dredging ship channels to help restore wetlands, according to Mr. Travis.

In the future is the certainty of reduced government funding for future acquisitions and programs to improve the Bay and its surrounding wetlands.

Bay supporters are also watching, with emotions ranging from caution to near panic, the assault on environmental regulations contained within the Contract with America. They particularly fear proposed elimination of protections for wetlands and endangered species, and "takings legislation" that, if passed, could require compensation to property owners whose land is reduced in value by federal regulation.

the Environment: Midpeninsula

body, the soul and the environment."

Bay Area Action, an outgrowth of the huge International Earth Day in 1990, continues to carry the Earth Day message. "Everyone has a role to play in the solution of environmental problems," says Co-Director Peter Drekmeeier.

The murky future

No one yet knows what the tidal wave of change sweeping Washington will mean to the environment as the new Republican majority tries to reinvent government. Regulations — and bureaucracy — built up to protect air, water and habitat in the quarter-century since the first Earth Day are all under assault as the House of Representatives tries to reduce regulations, compensate landowners and cut the budget.

Reactions vary. Many environmentalists are panicked; others see need for reform and welcome the process as healthy and overdue.

"It's atrocious. It's worse than predicted," says Craig Breon of Portola Valley, legislative advocate for the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society. "It will play out locally."

Mr. McCloskey welcomes the new Republican majority in Congress — the first in 41 years — but shares concerns about some of the legislation being churned out by the House of Representatives. "They're trying to gut the Endangered Species Act," he says. "I think the majority of people would like to keep the act but make it better."

Mr. McCloskey depends on the Senate to provide a cooling-off period and modify some of the more damaging legislation coming out of the House. "It's not clear what will happen, but the debate is healthy," he says. "The more debate, the more likelihood we'll do the right thing."

By
MARION SOFTKY

San Francisquito Creek

Holding it's own

Somehow San Francisquito Creek has survived the development of the Midpeninsula in a more or less natural state. No lakes or flood control channels block the passage of steelhead trout, which still splash up to its headwaters to spawn during high winter flows.

"It's stayed natural over the last 25 years," says Debbie Mytels. "It's one of the few remaining steelhead streams in the South Bay."

Ms. Mytels coordinates CRMP (Coordinated Resource and Management

Planning), a federal planning program that brings together the dozens of agencies and groups interested in enhancing the creek and its watershed. Started almost two years ago, CRMP is preparing plans for the 43-square-mile watershed which extends all the way to Skyline ridge and from Page Mill Road to Kings Mountain.

Volunteers have already conducted a biological inventory of the creek, and CRMP task forces are addressing creek problems ranging from the homeless camping in the creek to runoff from farms and stables.

Where we're headed: Improving

After the first March storms, Jim Johnson, streamkeeper for San Francisquito Creek, spotted a 40-inch steelhead in West Union Creek in Woodside. "That's the kind of fish you see in the Eel River," he says.

The CRMP process is beginning to bear fruit in terms of more education and awareness about the creek and its value. Bay Area Action has been sponsoring regular creek cleanups, and Menlo Park and Palo Alto have begun clamping down on the encampments of homeless who have been living in the creek for years.

This summer Stanford will build a fish ladder in Los Trancos Creek near Arastradero Road to allow steelhead to reach the upper pools in the creek for spawning. The university has already awarded the contract and will pay the additional costs above what is available from a federal grant.

CRMP is moving on other fronts. It is convening meetings with farmers and Stanford tenants to improve management of streamside lands. It is also inaugurating a comprehensive study aimed at improving flood control while preserving the natural environment.

"I think things are happening," says Mr. Johnson.

Open Space

A success story

In 1970, most of the green hills rising behind the cities of the Midpeninsula were in private ownership and slated for development.

Now 37,000 acres in the mountains, foothills and Baylands are owned by the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MROSD). Its 23 preserves receive more than 600,000 visitors a year. "It's a huge success story," says Betsy Crowder of Portola Valley, local director of the MROSD.

In 1972, voters of northern Santa

Clara County voted to pay 10 cents on their tax rate to preserve open space. In 1976, southern San Mateo County voted to join the district, which now extends from south of Los Gatos to San Carlos, and from Skyland to the Bay.

In 1977, the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) was formed to raise private funds to leverage the public funds available to the open space district.

POST's first major purchase was Windy Hill Open Space Preserve in Portola Valley. The last was the Phleger estate — most of the hillside north of Woodside — which is now

part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. POST raised \$11 million locally, including \$6 million from the open space district, which was matched by \$11 million from the federal government.

Where we're headed: Expanding, but more slowly

The greenbelt is in place; it can't be taken away. Beyond that, money is tight.

The open space district still gets some tax dollars to manage its lands and to purchase new ones; however, since Proposition 13, it receives 1.7

cents on the tax rate instead of the 10 cents originally voted, according to Mrs. Crowder.

The district has already acquired about two-thirds of the greenbelt lands it has targeted, Mrs. Crowder says. "Recently, people are coming to us to sell land, and we don't have enough money to buy it," she adds.

Meanwhile, POST recognizes the lack of public funds and is gearing up to try to raise more money privately to complete the vision. "I'm moderately positive," says POST Executive Director Audrey Rust. "Open space is why a lot of people live here."

Endangered Species & Habitat

Holding their own, just

"People used to push red-legged frogs aside to swim in San Francisquito Creek," says Craig Breon of Portola Valley, legislative advocate for the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society.

Now the frogs are virtually gone, and among 4,000 candidates for federal listing as threatened or endangered species. Locally, grizzly bears, tule elk and bald eagles are long gone. "But it's nice to see mountain lions," Mr. Breon adds. "It shows we still have some reasonable habitat."

Since 1970, Mr. Breon says, "Very

few species have gone extinct, but we're on the edge with so many."

Local endangered animals include the salt marsh harvest mouse, the Bay checkerspot butterfly, the clapper rail and the San Francisco garter snake. Candidates also include the burrowing owl and the Western pond turtle, he says.

The importance of endangered species goes beyond the species itself, Mr. Breon says. "It's more than protection of an owl; it's an indicator of the health of an ecosystem," he explains. "Owls feed on voles which feed on

fungus which feed on trees. Ecosystems rely on diversity to be stable."

Where we're headed: Down

"I'm pessimistic," says Mr. Breon. In the immediate area things are not going to be that bad. Still we'll see the slow fragmentation of habitat.

Mr. Breon, an attorney and planning commissioner in Portola Valley, is particularly worried about the deluge of new national legislation aimed at gutting the Endangered Species Act and wetlands protection, and establishing new rules for compensation of landowners.

For example, Bair Island, 1600 acres

of diked wetlands at the end of Whipple Avenue and home to endangered clapper rails, could be returned to marsh and Bay simply by breaching the dikes. It is high on the priority list for addition to the National Wildlife Refuge; it is also owned by a Japanese corporation.

Mr. Breon worries that under the proposed "takings" legislation, a developer would have to be compensated if his application were turned down. "Takings, combined with lack of money, would be devastating," he says.

"The picture is fairly bleak in the long term."

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NEXT PAGE

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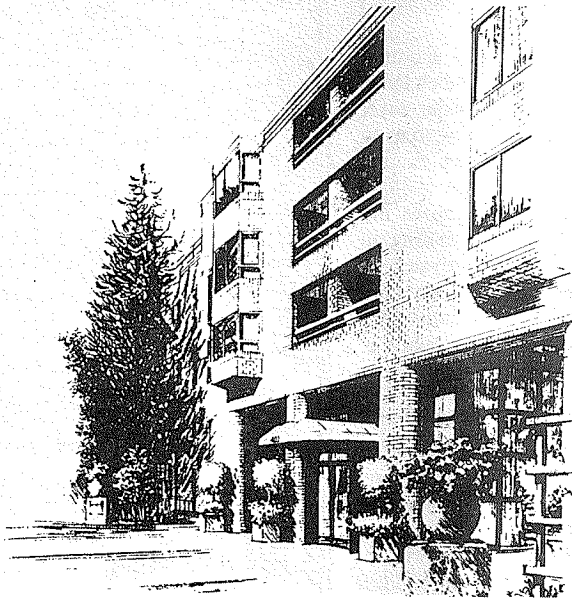
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Continued from previous page

Lennie Roberts named 'Conservationist of the Year'

By MARION SOFTKY

When Lennie and Mike Roberts moved to Ladera in 1965, San Francisco Bay was "a place to dump sewage and old tires in terribly smelly mudflats." Hills were ripe for development, forests were waiting to be logged, and maps showed freeways planned up the Bay, down the coast, and across the Peninsula in several places.

Much of the credit for the changes that have cleaned up the Bay, controlled logging and stopped most of the freeways, goes to grassroots activists who wrote letters, attended hearings and walked precincts for environmental candidates.

Prominent among the leaders of the local environmental movement has been Mrs. Roberts. She started fighting to "Save the Bay" before the first Earth Day, and has been tirelessly pursuing land use issues — from saving open space to protecting San Mateo County's scenic coast — ever since. As legislative advocate for the Committee for Green Foothills in San Mateo County, Mrs. Roberts has lobbied city councils, county supervisors and assorted other government agencies. At one time she was informally known as the "sixth member of the Board of Supervisors."

For almost 30 years of efforts on behalf of the Peninsula landscape, Mrs. Roberts will receive the Conservationist of the Year award from the Peninsula Conservation Center Foundation at a reception on Thursday, April 20, from 7 to 9 p.m. at the First Congregational Church,

1985 Louis Road in Palo Alto.

"There's been a change in people's perception of the environment, an emerging consciousness about its value," Mrs. Roberts says. "And the Peninsula's really at the leading edge of that."

Because of environmental successes, the challenges have changed

tionists are still fighting one of the big old projects that she calls a "relic of the dinosaur age": the Devil's Slide bypass. Caltrans has been trying for a generation to build a bypass for the ever-slipping Coast Highway through giant cuts in Montara Mountain, while conservationists have been fighting for a smaller alternative. Right now they want to study a tunnel through the mountain.

The changes since the first Earth Day have been very positive, Mrs. Roberts believes. "We now think of the Bay as a tremendous resource," she says. She then lists other accomplishments, in most of which she was a key player: "We have the California Coastal Act as a result of tremendous citizen effort, and then Measure A (for the San Mateo County Coast). And the Open Space District (which has saved 37,000 acres in the Peninsula hills and Baylands) is a tremendous accomplishment."

Mrs. Roberts is concerned about the future, even as she concentrates on fighting for the local environment, issue by issue. "Our big worry — and it's true here was well as globally — is population pressures," she says.

"And how can we provide for economic growth and still protect the environment?" she continues. "People basically want both."

Mrs. Roberts likes to quote the great naturalist John Muir: "Climb the mountains and get their good tidings."

She concludes: "We need to have wilderness. We need to have places where people are not the dominant part. We need ways to have people connect with their natural environment and get 'the good tidings.'"



PHOTO BY CAROL IVE

Lennie Roberts has been prominent among local environmental leaders since before the first Earth Day in 1970.

— at least locally — since the first Earth Day. "We talking about a smaller magnitude of battles," Mrs. Roberts reflects in an interview about where we've come and where we're headed. Instead of talking about taking the top off San Bruno Mountain to fill the Bay or extending Edgewood Road to the Coast, we're talking more about individual projects that are much smaller."

Mrs. Roberts and the conserva-

How you can celebrate Earth Day

■ **"Endangered Species Act Forum,"** Wednesday, April 19, 7-9 p.m., Palo Alto City Council Chambers, 250 Hamilton Ave. Rep. Anna Eshoo, D-Atherton, will moderate a panel discussion on the Endangered Species Act and other environmental concerns. For information call Bay Area Action, 321-1994.

■ **"A Conservationist's Evening,"** celebrating 25 years of the Peninsula Conservation Foundation, Thursday, April 20, 7-9 p.m., First Congregational Church, 1985 Louis Road, Palo Alto. Rep. Anna Eshoo, D-Atherton, will speak on "Competing Visions: the Environment as Community or Commodity." Lennie Roberts of Ladera, longtime conservationist and legislative advocate for the Committee for Green Foothills, will receive the Conservationist of the Year award. Tickets are \$20 each. Call 962-9876.

■ **"Earth Day '95: Habitat Restoration,"** Saturday and Sunday, April 22-23, will enlist volunteers in restoring habitat at 15 Peninsula sites from Pescadero and San Jose to Golden Gate Park. Participants will remove invasive non-native plants, plant native species, and restore local creeks. Local sites include Palo Alto and East Palo Alto Baylands, Edgewood Park, San Francisco Creek, and Stanford Hills. To sign up, call Bay Area Action at 321-1994, or show up at the Palo Alto Baylands Center at the end of Embarcadero Road.

■ **"Food for Thought Festival"** will culminate Earth Day activities Saturday, April 22, from 7 to 10 p.m. at the Palo Alto Baylands Interpretive Center at the end of Embarcadero Road. Visitors can enjoy the rhythms of Bole Bantu, sample a variety of foods and

learn how eating choices affect the environment. Admission is free, but donations are requested for food tasting. For reservations call Bay Area Action at 321-1994.

■ **Earth Day 1995 at the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge** will be celebrated Saturday, April 22, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. with a variety of activities for the whole family. Refuge cleanup will start at 9 a.m. at the Visitors Center (across the Dumbarton Bridge; follow the signs). There will be programs on endangered species, a native plant sale featuring drought-resistant plants, naming of winners of the 13th annual Endangered Species Contest, and educational and interpretive programs. For information, call 792-0222.

■ **Earth Day open house at the BFI Recyclery,** Wednesday, April 19, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Call 637-1411.