

AUDUBON CANYON RANCH



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Conservation in Action

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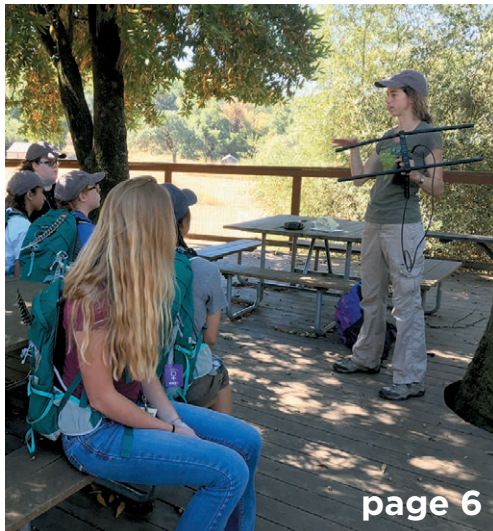
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As leaders in regional conservation we are grounded in our history, yet always looking ahead.



On our cover: participants of ACR's first Conservation Science Intensive (CSI). Story, page 6.

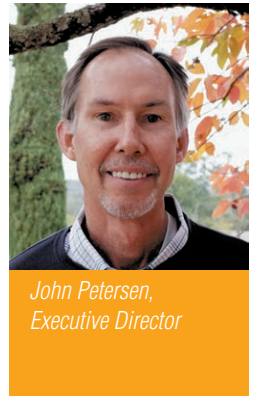
Fall 2016

ACR's Environmental Innovations

"I liked learning from women leaders in conservation about ideas that I usually don't think about." Hannah Chun

Hannah Chun participated in our recent Conservation Science Intensive (CSI), a week-long program for 16- to 17-year-old young women. It was made possible by a grant from Impact100 Sonoma.

The CSI (featured on pages 6 and 7) is an excellent example of innovative programming that pursuing our mission of science, land protection/stewardship and education can provide. Each of these ACR arms is deep and robust, and supports the others in a positive feedback loop that is greater than the sum of its parts.



By combining the expertise of our top-tier staff and volunteers, we can find new ways to instruct and inspire the conservation leaders of tomorrow.

Next-generation conservationists and technology

Taught by all nine of ACR's women scientists and educators, the CSI exemplifies our Conservation in Action vision. We believe that the future lies in well-educated, ecologically-literate individuals who can find inventive solutions to the environmental challenges facing our planet.

This includes using technological advances, both in our education and research, to answer conservation questions formerly out of reach. Our current Mountain Lion Project and our new heron and egret study, which starts in 2017, use satellite telemetry to answer key, and previously unknown, questions in terrestrial and wetland biology.

Following our original values

As leaders in regional conservation we are grounded in our history, yet always looking ahead. Whether it's training the leaders of tomorrow, informing policymakers with solid science or protecting thousands of acres of valuable habitat, we follow the values that ACR has held over the past 54 years.

Combining our historical perspective with advances in science and education, we adapt our programs for effectiveness in reaching ACR's goal—improving the environmental health of both our natural and human communities. ■



From left: Wildlife Ecologist and Lead Investigator Dr. Quinton Martins takes DNA samples while Dr. Winston Vickers monitors P1's vital signs; the research team attending our first collaring event; a regularly seen mountain lion of Modini Mayacamas Preserves; Dr. Martins and group of Junipers (junior naturalists) review recent wildlife camera footage.

Mountain Lion Project Hits Its Stride

ACR advanced its mountain lion research and education project with its first collaring of an adult female mountain lion in the Sonoma Valley in early October. After outfitting the lion with a GPS collar, recording measurements and collecting blood, tissue and other biological samples, the research team released the mountain lion at the capture site.

Named P1 (Puma 1) for our scientific records, the mountain lion is approximately 8 to 10 years old, as indicated by her dental condition. She weighed about 86 pounds and was over 6 feet long from nose to tip of her tail.

Biological samples, to be analyzed at UC Davis, will provide vital genetic and health information about the local population of mountain lions.

The research is being conducted under a Scientific Collection Permit issued to ACR by California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) in July. We expect invaluable data, both for local conservation efforts and to share with CDFW's statewide mountain lion program.

P1 was in excellent health and under anesthesia for less than an hour. Shortly after her release, we received GPS transmissions from P1's collar, showing her on the move several miles from the capture location.

A new partnership

ACR is now working with Sonoma Land Trust, whose efforts to conserve important wildlife corridors in Sonoma County align perfectly with our Mountain Lion Project.

Sonoma Land Trust and the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation have given ACR a grant of \$40,000 to fund a portion of our first year of mountain lion research.

Our investigation will show whether mountain lions are using movement corridors the way others have predicted, and will identify barriers to movement and important lands for conservation. ■



Jeanne Wirka,
Director of Stewardship

Meet our
volunteer
veterinarians
page 8

The ACR Mountain Lion Project is supported in part by the following partners as well as by ACR members and supporters.





Pacific herring

The Herring Effect on Waterbird Conservation



John Kelly, Director of Conservation Science

During winter, over 35,000 waterbirds, along with tens of thousands of shorebirds and gulls, pack the surface waters of Tomales Bay. This extraordinary phenomenon led, in 2002, to global recognition of Tomales Bay as a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance.

For three decades ACR has tracked the abundances of nearly 60 species of loons, grebes, cormorants, ducks and other waterbirds in the bay. These studies have revealed patterns of winter population growth and decline that are complicated enough to seem mysterious.

A magnet for herring spawning

Beneath the surface, tens of millions of Pacific herring (*Clupea pallasii*) also enter the bay each winter, to spawn in the vast, subtidal meadows of eelgrass. These events precipitate spectacular waterbird feeding frenzies. As each school of herring swims into the bay, it is marked by a dense cloud of foraging waterbirds, following the fish as they drift slowly southward toward the spawning beds.

The California Fish and Game Commission recently adopted a policy recognizing the importance of small forage fish, such as Pacific herring, in sustaining healthy marine ecosystems. Perhaps surprisingly, science has yet to determine how strongly waterbirds in our estuaries actually depend on Pacific herring or their roe.

Measuring the ecological importance

To ensure that principles in the new policy find their way into responsible fisheries management, ACR is using herring data from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to measure the ecological importance of herring to waterbirds.

Despite the complicated dynamics of winter waterbird abundances, we have found that fluctuations in herring availability lead to persistent changes in waterbird numbers over multiple years. Affected by intensive fishing, local problems in spawning areas and climate change, the availability of herring along the Pacific Coast is threatened.

Our work will provide important insights needed to implement the new state policy and ensure the protection of estuarine waterbirds. ■

Synopsis of article in our 2016 edition of *The Ardeid*, ACR's Journal of Conservation Science and Stewardship. Supporter-level members receive a complimentary print edition of *The Ardeid*.

Waterbirds foraging on Pacific herring near ACR's Cypress Grove Research Center on Tomales Bay.



New GPS Project Aims To Reveal the Secret Lives of Herons & Egrets

Wetlands provide crucial habitat for abundant wildlife and also benefit humans by filtering water, buffering us against floods, and providing a special place to enjoy nature.

As top wetland predators, herons and egrets also play an important role in maintaining wetland health. Their prevalence in these ecosystems makes them charismatic symbols for wetland conservation.

ACR has spent nearly five decades as a leader in heron and egret research and regional conservation action. Now we're expanding our study to include the interactions between these birds and their wetland ecosystems. This will allow us to provide science-based guidance for critical issues such as the mitigation of climate change impacts or the design and implementation of wetland protection and restoration projects.

Deciphering heron behavior

Beginning in spring 2017, we'll equip herons with miniature GPS tags to find out how individual birds interact with their environment. The tracking devices will show us where they nest and find food, and how they survive.

Our investigations will follow foraging activities and the effect these birds may have on wetland food webs. These new

results will be integrated with our long-term monitoring data to better understand the factors that shape heron populations.

Get in on the nature tech

With electronic tracking we'll be able to display the locations of GPS-tagged herons in near-real-time on any internet-connected device. Not just for the scientists, you'll be able to watch the secret lives of these amazing birds unfold on your phone or computer.

We will use the GPS data to energize ACR's successful and well-known education programs for children. Seeing the everyday movements and actions of herons and egrets will engage students and help them understand the birds' ecological importance.

Through this research and outreach program we can address challenges in the conservation of Bay Area wetlands. Ultimately, the project will dramatically strengthen ACR's scientific work on herons and egrets. The findings will inform regional conservation efforts and inspire generations of people to value these beautiful birds and the wetlands that sustain us. ■



Scott Jennings,
Avian Ecologist



Support the ACR Heron Telemetry Project

Heron Telemetry Project Founders Council \$25,000 and above

Lead investors are invited to experience the project first hand in the field with Director of Conservation Science John Kelly and Avian Ecologist Scott Jennings on a research site in the Bay Area.

Partners in Conservation \$5,000 and above

Members of the Partners in Conservation receive personalized updates and special access to ACR preserves as well as invitations to parties, expert-led hikes and kayak tours.

ACR Membership \$500 and above

Invitations to expert-led member hikes, kayak tours and special-access events on ACR preserves. Upcoming event: Private kayak tour of Tomales Bay led by Director of Conservation Science John Kelly, October 30, 2016.

\$250 and above

Invitation to the annual Appreciation Picnic, discounts on tickets to ACR seminars and signature events.

\$65-\$150 membership levels

Benefits range from 10% discount at the ACR bookstore to receiving *The Ardeid*, ACR's journal of conservation science.



Women Take Action for Conservation



Julia Clothier,
Education Program
Coordinator

In her 2013 book, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Dr. Robin Wall Kimmerer tells the origin story of her people, the Citizen Potawatomi Nation.

The first human being falls from the Skyworld to the ocean-covered earth. The animals hold her while they build land upon which she can stand.

Skywoman then scatters seeds

over the new ground, tending each new plant until she creates a garden for the well-being of all. This story reminds us of the reciprocal relationship between human beings and the wild earth.

The ACR community nourishes the understanding that healthy and resilient natural landscapes are essential to all life. And just as essential is creating experiences that inspire others to understand, protect and care for the land.

ACR is fortunate to have a multitude of highly competent and deeply committed women who see this as both a privilege and a responsibility. Our resident biologists, preserve managers, resource ecologists and more are Skywomen, one and all.

Women create new conservation camp

When I joined ACR, among my first projects was designing and directing a summer camp. The direction was clear.

Create a summer program combining ACR's commitment to Conservation in Action, our extraordinary female staff and financial support from Impact100 Sonoma. The purpose: inspire and mentor tomorrow's incredible women conservationists.

The new Conservation Science Intensive (CSI) program, entirely funded and led by women, included an unprecedented cross-program team of all of ACR's female conservation, stewardship and education staff.



Our first CSI campers

For five days in June, a diverse group of nine young women, ages 16 and 17, visited each of ACR's four preserves. Learning from and working with each team member, they developed skills in natural history, fire ecology, radio telemetry, invasive species control, vegetation assessment and marine ecology.

They experienced a ridgetop hike at Modini Mayacamas Preserves, an overnight at Martin Griffin Preserve and tide-pooling at first light on Duxbury Reef. Every participant and staff member



Clockwise from top left: Director of Stewardship Jeanne Wirka demonstrates traps for creek dwellers; GIS Specialist Emiko Condeso reviews bird counts and the wetland ecology of Tomales Bay; Biologists and educators Sherry Adams, Julia Clothier, Gwen Heistand, Eileen Shanahan and Jeanne Wirka; Preserve Biologist Sherry Adams describes ways to read a landscape after fire; Education Program Coordinator Julia Clothier leads a session on GPS tracking technology; Resource Ecologist Sasha Berleman explains using fire to manage the land.



was transformed. One camper said, “I am ecstatic that I got to share the week with such an inspiring group of friends and teachers. Everything we learned has been directly applicable to our lives.”

The spirit of Skywoman is alive and well in the hearts and minds of the young women who completed ACR’s first CSI program. Plans for CSI 2017 are underway, buoyed by a \$10,000 anonymous gift. Be a part of it! Your contribution will help us inspire and educate the conservation scientists of tomorrow. ■

Our Partners in Education donors fund innovative programs like these. Find out more about our giving circles at www.egret.org/support.

ACR’s School and Overnight Education Programs

ACR’s nature education programs provide students in grades three, four and five from Bay Area schools with a three-hour, docent-led nature hike, a pre-visit, in-class orientation, and a set of standards-based resources for teachers. The program cultivates ecological literacy and promotes stewardship of the earth through hands-on, inquiry-based nature education.

Fall 2015 – Spring 2016 By the numbers

Martin Griffin Preserve, Stinson Beach

40	Schools
79	Classes
2,247	Students served
6	Overnight Program classes participating
167	Overnight Program students served
51	Bus scholarships granted
\$49,968	Value of bus scholarships
82	Docents (active)
2,335	Volunteer docent hours – School Program (hikes and classrooms only)
\$64,423	Value of School Program docent hours
878	Volunteer docent hours – Overnight Program
\$24,776	Value of Overnight Program docent hours

Bouverie Preserve, Glen Ellen

53	Schools
121	Classes
3,429	Students
7	Bus scholarships granted
\$1,394	Value of bus scholarships
172	Docents (active)
4,235	Volunteer docent hours – School Program (hikes and classrooms only)
\$116,844	Value of School Program docent hours
40	Average hours per active docent for the school season

“...For the children to have a real opportunity to interact at this level — waiting, watching and then coming up with this wiggly, wet creature — how amazing is that?!”

—Ms. Kabat, Jefferson Elementary, San Francisco



Volunteer Veterinarians Join Mountain Lion Project Team



Dr. Jim Codington has a small animal practice in Novato, California. He also travels the world, working with primates, cheetahs, and of course, mountain lions. A 2015 finalist for the BBC Wildlife Photographer of the Year, his work was recently shown in the Wildlife Beyond Borders photography exhibit in San Jose. Jim has generously donated both time and veterinary supplies to the ACR Mountain Lion Project.

Dr. Sophia Papageorgiou is an animal disease expert who has worked all over the world, most recently in Mongolia. With a Ph.D. in epidemiology from UC Davis in addition to her veterinary medicine degree, Sophia is keenly interested in the health of mountain lion populations in California. When not traveling the globe, she works as a relief clinical, shelter and emergency veterinarian at various animal hospitals in the Greater San Francisco Bay Area.

Dr. Winston Vickers is a veterinarian with the UC Davis Wildlife Health Center. He was the co-principal investigator, along with Walter Boyce, of the Southern California Puma Project in the Santa Ana Mountains. Winston's team began using GPS collars to track mountain lion movements in this highly urbanized habitat in 2001. In 2014, he was named one of the most influential people in Orange County for advising transportation officials on road design that prevents mountain lion deaths. He also leads a UC Davis team that helps prevent wildlife from entering oil-affected habitats. ■

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Testing Effects of Fire on Invasive Rosy Sandcrocus

Bouverie Preserve stewardship staff is implementing a series of planned one-meter square controlled burns in its grasslands and oak woodlands. The first set of spring burns was completed in June in partnership with CalFire. Additional test burns will be conducted this fall. The purpose is to determine the best control methods for rosy sandcrocus (*Romulea rosea*). Rosy sandcrocus is an invasive herbaceous plant with potential to severely degrade California open spaces and rangelands. Almost no information is available regarding management of this species in California, though many landowners in the Sonoma County region report its recent colonization.

Native to South Africa, the species is thought to

have been introduced to California in the early 2000s from Australia through the Carmel Highlands in Monterey County. It has now spread through Marin, Sonoma, San Mateo and Santa Cruz counties, and has been found in more isolated populations in eight additional counties in California. Once established, rosy sandcrocus is challenging to control. Seeds of this species can be transported by grazing animals and are toxic to herbivores when eaten in high quantities.

For landowners who may have spotted this invasive species, our science staff plans to publish results from this study in late spring next year. ■



Bouverie Preserve Resource Ecologists Jennifer Potts and Sasha Berleman set the perimeter boxes for the fire trial.



One-meter square swatches will be monitored in coming months.

Stay in the Loop

eNewsletter

Published every month, our eNewsletter brings you updates from the preserves, school group visits, latest findings from science staff, volunteer opportunities and ways to explore ACR's nature sanctuaries.

Visit www.egret.org to opt in.

Find Us On Social Media



Become a Member

Audubon Canyon Ranch members and corporate sponsors think globally and act locally through ACR's land preservation, nature education and conservation science programs.

Join us today, and together we will protect wildlands in Marin, Sonoma and Lake counties. Benefits include the ACR Bulletin, 10% discount at the ACR bookstore, invitations to exclusive members-only events and more.

Contact Development Manager Jen Newman at 415.868.9244 ext. 119, support@egret.org or visit www.egret.org/membership.



Pileated woodpeckers, Modini Mayacamas Preserves



Winter waterbird watching from Toms Point, Tomales Bay



Buckeye butterflies, Martin Griffin Preserve



Gray foxes, Bouverie Preserve

ACR Programs and Events, Fall 2016



Signature
Event



Nature
Hikes



Outdoor
Learning



Volunteer



Member
Events



Preserve
Visits

Programs and events are open to the public unless otherwise noted.
More detail and full calendar listing online www.egret.org/calendar

SIGNATURE & MEMBERS-ONLY EVENTS

Cypress Grove Preserve

 Kayaking on Tomales Bay

Sunday ~ October 30, 2016

Sunday ~ November 13 ~ rain date

ACR members at the Patron level and above are invited to join ACR Director of Conservation Science John Kelly and Director Jude Stalker for a special-access members-only kayak tour of Tomales Bay. We'll launch from ACR's Cypress Grove Preserve and be on the water for about three hours. Experienced and new kayakers comfortable on the water are welcome

By invitation only

Not an ACR member? Become a Patron today and join us for this members-only event!

Bouverie Preserve

 Clerin Zumwalt Legacy Circle Luncheon

Saturday ~ March 18, 2017

11:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

The Clerin Zumwalt Legacy Circle honors supporters who have included Audubon Canyon Ranch in their estate plans. Every year, ACR says thank you to our members with an appreciation luncheon on an ACR Preserve.

By invitation only

Not a member? Join the Zumwalt Legacy Circle today and join us at this luncheon! For information, please call 415.868.9244.

DROP IN!

ACR Conservation Center, Downtown Healdsburg

 Drop-in Hours

Mondays – Thursdays ~ 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. *

ACR Conservation Center at Modini House

226 Center Street, Healdsburg

ACR's new Conservation Center, located just 1/2 block off the Healdsburg Plaza, offers visitors a selection of video captures from our wildlife cameras and seasonally changing art exhibits. Discover the history of the Modinis and the role ACR's largest preserve plays in regional conservation.

** General hours listed; schedule may change without notice.*

Martin Griffin Preserve

 Winter Arts and Nature Celebration

Saturday ~ December 10, 2016

10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Celebrate the season and winter solstice by creating beautiful arts & crafts, observe the rhythms of the season with winter waterbird watching, and get inspired with nature-based entertainment for families and people of all ages.

Martin Griffin Preserve

Ranch Guide (volunteer naturalist) Training

Saturdays ~ March – April 2017
9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Become a volunteer naturalist of ACR's Martin Griffin Preserve and share your knowledge and appreciation of nature with the public. Volunteer naturalists interpret the natural environment of Martin Griffin Preserve and its many unique natural features for hundreds of visitors each year. Classes meet weekly for eight weeks.

Registration required: volunteer@egret.org or 415.868.9244 ext. 110

Spring Workday

Saturday ~ March 4, 2017
9:15 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
1:00 p.m. ~ lunch

Help us with trail work, library work, pulling weeds, planting native flowers or cooking the lunch (provided). Bring your favorite tools and gloves for outdoor projects! Meet in Picher Canyon.

Registration required: volunteer@egret.org or 415.868.9244 ext. 110

Habitat Protection & Restoration Stewards

Thursdays ~ 9:00 a.m. – noon

Join Martin Griffin Preserve Stewards on Thursday mornings to help with ecological restoration in the preserve's four canyons. Activities include collecting seeds, propagating native plants, preparing project sites, out-planting and ensuring survival of plants.

Call 415.868.9244 ext. 118 or email Gwen Heistand at gwen.heistand@egret.org

Bouverie Preserve

Habitat Protection & Restoration Stewards

Mondays ~ 8:30 a.m. – noon

Bouverie Stewards work intimately with the land throughout the year. This dedicated crew assists with all sorts of habitat protection and restoration work, while learning about the ecology behind the project.

Contact Resource Ecologist Jen Potts at jennifer.potts@egret.org

Modini Mayacamas Preserves

Modini Mayacamas Preserves Stewards

Recurring third Saturdays and fourth Fridays 2016 - 2017
9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Help heal the most impacted spots on the preserves. On any particular workday we might plant a trailside with bunchgrasses, remove an invasive species, maintain part of a trail, clear excess fuel from around a big tree, collect and sow native seeds, water some bunchgrass.

Registration required: <http://www.meetup.com/Friends-of-the-Modini-Mayacamas>

Native Garden and Nursery Projects

Thursdays through Fall 2016 ~ 8:00 – 9:30 a.m.
ACR Conservation Center at Modini House
226 Center Street, Healdsburg

Help with native garden maintenance and nursery projects. Share your knowledge, skills, energy and experience, or just come to learn.

No registration required



Bouverie Preserve

Guided Nature Walks

Saturday ~ October 29, 2016
Saturday ~ November 5
Saturday ~ November 19
Saturday ~ February 4, 2017
Saturday ~ March 4
Saturday ~ April 15
9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Experience the beauty and rich natural history of this 535-acre preserve.

Reservation required: rspv@egret.org or 415.868.9244 ext. 110, space limited.

Donation: \$15–25 per person

Morning Open House

Saturday ~ April 22, 2017, 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Guided Hikes: 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m.

Discover the hills, habitats and hidden treasures of this protected landscape. Join a guided hike and learn about the preserve with nature activities in Gilman Hall. All ages welcome. (Entrance gate closes shortly after 12:30 p.m.)

Call 415.868.9244 ext. 110 for more information

Modini Mayacamas Preserves

Guided Nature Hikes

Various weekdays, weekends and some overnights

Join us for a range of natural history and ethnobotany guided hikes. Themed expert-led hikes include Birds & Botany, Documenting Wildlife, Trees of the Preserves, Hiking the Foss Trail, and more.

Online registration required: <http://www.meetup.com/Friends-of-the-Modini-Mayacamas>. Donation: \$15–25 per person

Orientation to Modini Mayacamas Preserves + Optional Hike
required for independent hiking access

Saturday ~ November 12, 2016
Saturday ~ December 10
Saturday ~ January 14, 2017
Saturday ~ February 11
Saturday ~ March 11

An introduction to the preserves and their history. Agree to ACR rules and you will be given a printed trail guide and permit for independent hiking.

Online registration required: <http://www.meetup.com/Friends-of-the-Modini-Mayacamas>. Donation: \$15–25 per person

AUDUBON CANYON RANCH



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Our Mission

ACR protects our natural and human communities through land preservation, nature education and conservation science.



NEW!
Drop by our
Conservation
Center, downtown
Healdsburg.
See events & hours,
page 10

Visit Us

Bouverie Preserve
Woodlands in the Valley of the Moon
Martin Griffin Preserve
Sweeping coastal views in West Marin
Modini Mayacamas Preserves
Wilderness in the Mayacamas Mountains
ACR Conservation Center
Garden and gallery near the Healdsburg Plaza

By appointment only

Cypress Grove Research Center
Call 415.663.8203 to schedule

See the **Calendar of Events** inside



Don't miss these ACR Signature events!

October 30: Members Kayak, Tomales Bay

March 18: Clerin Zumwalt Legacy Circle Luncheon

More events listed inside, pages 10-11!

Green Your Mailbox

Join us in our continuing commitment to green practices and choose to receive the ACR Bulletin online.



If you'd like to opt out of the snail mail version, contact Leslie Melendy at ACR headquarters at 415.868.9244 ext. 110 or leslie.melendy@egret.org.

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