

A JOURNEY DOWN THE SAN DIEGUITO RIVER:  
EXPLORING OUR SENSE OF PLACE

*“You can’t know who you are until you know where you are.”* Wendell Berry

On October 6, 2007, from the top of Volcan Mountain, the Conservancy will launch its first annual outdoor seminar series designed to give participants a crest to coast, mind and heart, close and personal experience with the San Dieguito River Valley. Based on a model described by Karen Harwell and Johanna Reynolds in their book, Exploring a Sense of Place, the series will take 25 committed explorers on eight monthly all-day Saturday excursions. The seminar will be co-facilitated by Chris Khoury and Linda Corey, long-time Conservancy members and outdoor enthusiasts, and Leslie Woollenberger, resource specialist for the Conservancy. Each Saturday will focus on a particular region and nature topic in the park. In the orientation session, Phil Pryde, geography professor at SDSU and author of San Diego: An Introduction to the Region, one of the texts selected for the seminar, will present an overview of the valley and set the stage for the journey from the mountains to the sea; during a subsequent hike, he will also share his enthusiasm about the incredible diversity of bird life in the river valley. Bill Proffer, geophysicist and chief scientist at SAIC, will discuss the complex geology of San Diego. Cindy Stankowski, executive director of the San Diego Archeological Center, will share artifacts and stories from our region’s Native American history. Rick Halsey, author of Fire, Chaparral, and Survival in Southern California, will conduct a spring wild flower tour. The San Diego Tracking team will discuss wildlife and help identify signs of its presence. In the final session in May, Wolf Berger, author of Walk Along the Ocean, and former director of The Scripps Institute of Oceanography, will

conduct a walk on the beach at the mouth of the river, culminating in a celebration and graduation picnic.

Having fun and learning is only part of the goal. Each Saturday, explorers will also have an opportunity to spend peaceful, creative time alone and with others sensing the beauty and power of this place we call home. The connection to nature will be strengthened; appreciation and sense of awe will be deepened.

The first 25 explorers committed to minimum of six of eight Saturdays and invested \$200 tuition to cover costs of the program. The first series filled quickly in the first round of registration opportunities. The group, known for short by the acronym "ESP," will report its discoveries in future newsletters. Assuming success, the Conservancy will offer the series again in the fall of 2008.