

# Bull Valley Agricultural Center

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The Port Costa-based nonprofit Bull Valley Agricultural Center promotes land stewardship and preservation for agricultural, educational, and recreational uses that respect habitat, connect people with nature, and build community resources.

## OUR STORY

Alarmed by the decline of honeybee populations worldwide, Bull Valley Agricultural Center (BVAC) founder Earl Flewellen sought to establish a bee yard away from pesticides and conventional agriculture. In 2011, a local property owner who offered up her nearby land for the bees. The land is known locally as “the reservoir” and is adjacent to the Port Costa Schoolhouse.

Holding solid to the belief that personal and community health is rooted in a deep sense of place and a connection to nature, Flewellen set out to engage folks in reviving two of the town’s historic buildings and businesses and to take care of the nearby reservoir land. Supportive community members, partners and friends pitched in to revive the Burlington Hotel & cafe along with the Bull Valley Restaurant next door—opening in 2012 as The Bull Valley Roadhouse and now known for its commitment to sustainable agriculture.

With these projects holding their own, Flewellen turned to focus on giving back to the surrounding land and community. He founded the Bull Valley Agricultural Center in 2015, and raised donations to acquire the reservoir land where his honeybees were thriving—a first step towards preserving the land, protecting it from vandalism, and securing its future as a community resource. Together, Flewellen, BVAC, and the hard-working crew at the Bull Valley Roadhouse are embarking on what they hope is the beginning of a long future of giving back to their community and contributing to a greener, healthier world.

## WHAT’S COMING

In coming years, BVAC aims to bring a beloved community asset back to life by improving its health and restoring its beneficial capacity to both the immediate community and others who are drawn here to participate in its renewal.

**Community Access, Workshops, Retreats:** BVAC will aim to provide retreat to sustainable farming professionals and learning opportunities to the immediate community. With a focus on demonstrating how human endeavors can coexist with good land stewardship, the organization will improve existing outdoor access spaces. In addition, we hope to host workshops ranging from gardening and cooking to compost and water conservation. Whether paths, gardens, personal retreats, or workshops, we aim for all to be made accessible to the immediate community to participate and enjoy.

**Educational Programming:** BVAC is currently in discussions with an educational endeavor called The Field Semester, a high school program that immerses motivated students in nature and sustainability while they pursue their regular rigorous academic curriculum. The two organizations hope to work with The Port Costa Conservation Society to host this body of inspired learners. To learn more visit our web site at [www.bullvalleyagcenter.org](http://www.bullvalleyagcenter.org) and The Field Semester site at [www.fieldsemester.org](http://www.fieldsemester.org).

## WHAT WE’RE DOING NOW

The beautiful 11-acre BVAC property known as “the reservoir” is adjacent to the Port Costa schoolhouse and is home to our bee hives. But it has also been the site of decades of neglect and abuse. BVAC aims to reverse these abuses and bring health and sensible community use back to the site.

**Refuse Removal:** Over coming years, we will work with volunteers to continue to reverse decades of refuse-dumping on the site. We’ve already removed some 300 cubic yards of refuse over the past year.

**Tree Clean-up:** Years of drought have stressed trees, killing many on the property. Efforts are underway to clean up trees that have suffered.

**Spillway Maintenance:** To keep water flowing freely from the reservoir into the culvert during rains, we annually remove debris from the spillway to safeguard against flooding. Ongoing efforts are also being undertaken to remove and control graffiti on the spillway walls.

## WHO WE ARE

### Bull Valley Agricultural Center’s Board of Directors

**Earl Flewellen** | Founder

Co-owner of The Bull Valley Roadhouse and the Burlington Hotel, Earl has worked since 2011 to keep bees thriving in Port Costa and to help bring Port Costa’s historic assets back to life and into beneficial community use.

**Suzanne Statler List** | Secretary

A Port Costa resident and devoted community member with 25 years of human resources and career counseling consultation under her belt, Suzanne has an extraordinary talent for communicating and building community.

**Anne Scheer** | Board Member

Port Costa resident and retired Chief of Operations for East Bay Regional Parks District, Anne is passionate about land preservation and brings 30 years of experience working with public lands, habitat management and community collaboration.

**Paolo Gomez** | Treasurer

Acting controller for the Bull Valley Roadhouse and The Burlington Hotel, Paolo has 15 years of previous experience running the books and comes well-equipped to make sure BVAC dots its “i”s and crosses its “t”s when it comes to bookkeeping!

## LATEST NEWS:

### SPILLWAY GRAFFITI, BE GONE!

On July 28th, 2016, we held BVAC’s first volunteer cleanup effort. Our first improvement project on the land involved helping paint over graffiti that has increased significantly over the last couple of years. Contra Costa County provided the paint and volunteers took to the walls of the spillway like a canvas, using tree leaves as stencils to create a natural texture obscuring the graffiti and mimicking trees and leaves in dappled shade. On your next walk around the reservoir, be sure to look down as you pass the spillway to see how beautiful anti-graffiti painting can be! Special thanks to Suzanne Statler List, Anne Scheer, Jeff Wilson, Paolo Gomez, Yaeir Heber, Ashleigh Lobalbo, Chris Shima, and Lucy Shima.



## UPCOMING EVENTS {get involved!}

BVAC will be hosting events aimed at inviting the community to participate in efforts to improve the reservoir and land.

### Reservoir Guided Nature and History Tour

**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2016: 10AM**

Join us for a guided tour of the reservoir and learn about what lurks there, high and low, and why we even have a reservoir in the first place. You may be surprised on all fronts. Our tour guide, Jeff Wilson, will take us on a perimeter overlook of the site and an interior walk around the reservoir itself. Meet by the community garden at the Port Costa Schoolhouse at 10 AM on 9/25/16.

### Path Improvement Work Party {and lunch!}

**OCTOBER DATE TO BE ANNOUNCED**

BVAC will be hosting its second work party to improve an existing path up to the reservoir to make access to the land easier for the immediate community. Be a part of the first step in bringing the site back into community use and enjoy lunch and refreshments on us!

If you have questions about these events, you can contact both Suzanne Statler-List and Earl Flewellen via e-mail at [peggy@thehotelburlington.com](mailto:peggy@thehotelburlington.com).

To find out more about Bull Valley Agricultural Center and to keep up on news and upcoming events please visit our web site at [www.bullvalleyagcenter.org](http://www.bullvalleyagcenter.org)