

# WILDERNESS WAY



To: Marin County Board of Supervisors  
From: Wilderness Way  
Re: San Geronimo Golf Course Purchase

November 5, 2017

Recommendation: Purchase the golf course!

Wilderness Way is an environmental education organization that has been teaching up to 300 students a year in the two schools in the Lagunitas School Dist. since 1999. Our main goal is to connect kids with their environment by exploring the outdoors where they live. We do this by hiking along Valley trails and streams observing plants and wildlife. We prepare them for these experiences by teaching them how to improve the uses of all their senses including their peripheral vision - tools perfected by Native Americans.

A core component of our program is our annual Fall Salmon Studies program. Larsen Creek, a salmon spawning tributary creek for coho salmon and steelhead trout, is located in the Marietta Larsen Memorial Preserve between the two schools, 50' from the kindergarten class and borders the golf course. It is home for many of our activities. Before the fall rains we clean the dry creek of manmade debris and collect golf balls (90 in one day by the kindergartners!). Our students have many joyful experiences hiking in the Preserve and the Valley that includes tracking, observing wildlife and collecting native plants. We expand those experiences back in the classroom with stories, making Wishing Poles to Call Back the Salmon and accordion books that describe the salmon life cycle. Kids make and install salmon crossing signs, write stories, poetry, haiku, compose music for their elderberry flutes and watershed models of our beloved Valley. We are ecstatic to learn that graduates of our program are now avowed stewards of the land. Some have jobs in environmental fields and trace their feelings and jobs to their WW experience.

The bad news: The spawning habitat in Larsen Creek is only about 100 yards long. It ends at the golf course where Larsen Creek eventually goes under the golf turf and surfaces in two ponds that impounds Larsen Creek water for golf course landscaping. It then goes through a culvert under Nicasio Road and crosses into the safety of Roy's Redwoods Preserve to its headwaters.

This purchase does several things: It will allow for full restoration of Larsen Creek in a park like setting. Golf cart paths will become safe trails that can be used by elders, disabled, families with toddlers and students walking next to a salmon stream on their way to Roy's Redwoods. No more car shuttles or dangerous walking along SF Drake Blvd. And the WW salmon curriculum will be dramatically expanded. This board has a second chance at a "once in a lifetime opportunity" to create a stunning legacy for students, residents and future generations – Purchase the golf course!

David Fisher

Wilderness Way President