

Connecting with Nature on Fiscalini Ranch Preserve: The Last Bench on the Ranch



By KITTY CONNOLLY, Executive Director, Friends of the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve (fiscaliniranchpreserve.org)

Did you ever wonder about the benches on Fiscalini Ranch Preserve? These artistic creations provide a place to enjoy the view, rest your feet, take a picture, and have a chat. They are landmarks that help us find our way and, vitally, serve as a means of memorializing people who loved the Ranch. But why are they there?

When the Ranch was purchased as public open space, no funds were allotted for managing, protecting, or restoring the property. Friends of the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve (FFRP) created the Bench Donor Recognition program to raise the funds needed for these important aspects of caring for the Ranch.

Donor recognition benches come under an agreement between FFRP and Cambria Community Services District (CCSD) that allows for the placement of seventeen benches on the West Ranch. Donations are recognized through plaques on those benches that are dedicated in people's honor.

Bench donations (from \$5,000 to \$50,000) are added to the endowment of FFRP solely to benefit the Preserve as open space for the public. Each year proceeds from these endowment funds support work on the Ranch, including forest health projects, removal of invasive species, and planting of Monterey pine seedlings.

Among the early benches was one dedicated to Barbara Harootunian, a Cambria resident who left a significant bequest to the Ranch. Other benches are dedicated to people who contributed their support to the founding of the Ranch, but most recognize beloved friends and family.

This month the last of the seventeen benches was installed on the West Ranch. Designed by Walt Andrus, who drew his inspiration from local stone and wood, this bench is situated on the slope above the Marine Terrace Trail and takes in views of the Santa Lucia Mountains and an expansive ocean vista.

I like to think about the people memorialized on the benches, how much the Ranch meant to them, and how their dedications continue to support it.



 Walt Andrus

