Annual Report
July 1, 2010-June 30, 2011
by Marty Eberhardt

Fiscal Year 2010-2011 was an extraordinary year for the Water Conservation Garden. Exactly halfway through the year, we changed our governance from a Joint Powers Authority to a nonprofit. We transferred not only our governance, but also our staff, volunteers, and physical and financial assets from one group to another.

During the first half of the fiscal year, the burgeoning Friends Board was working with the Joint Powers on a management agreement acceptable to both. Key to this agreement was a several-year financial commitment from the five water agencies that have been our primary funders: San Diego County Water Authority, Helix Water District, Otay Water District, Sweetwater Authority, and the City of San Diego. By December of 2010, we toasted the new era with champagne. An agreement was signed that was acceptable to both groups. The Garden staff retained their jobs and benefits.

In January 2011 the next phase of work began for the very young Friends Board, now called the Governing Board of the Water Conservation Garden. In February, they met with staff and came up with a new mission statement that reflects our commitment to a greener community in which water conservation is part of a larger picture. The new statement reads, “To educate and inspire through excellent programs and exhibits that promote water conservation and the sustainable use of related natural resources.”

Our programs reflected this strong base of water conservation, branching out to embrace other aspects of sustainability. Ms. Smarty Plants, with her inspiring message about “saving the world with your own two hands”, reached 28,000 children this year. The following generous organizations contributed to the success of the Ms. Smarty Plants programs: California American Water, Otay Water District, San Diego Gas & Electric, Sempra Energy Foundation, Sweetwater Authority, and Wells Fargo Bank. Many programs were school assemblies, where the redoubtable Ms. Smarty Plants engaged as many as 450 children at a time!

The Garden had its first art exhibition in 2010-2011, a collaborative effort with Art Pulse. Fourteen talented artists interpreted our mission statement with media as varied as artificial turf, recycled glass and wine barrel casks. The collaboration brought a whole new audience to the Garden, allowing us to expand our reach. Audiences from all over the country loved our new method of natural pest control, and inhabited our owl box in February via our live streaming Owlcam. Our nesting pair of owls, Hoot and Holla, were on display for months on our website. The world watched their young grow and fledge, increasing our web traffic by a factor of nine. (cont. on page 2)
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We celebrated our members with March Plant Madness, featuring plant sales and free classes for members during the month of March. Our celebration of spring continued with our well-known Spring Garden Festival, which drew 5,000 people. Two thousand people attended our Fall Garden Festival, eager to learn about water wise landscaping. In the warmer months, our “Dog Days of Summer” program opened, and we welcomed canine friends and their owners on summer evenings, reaching yet another audience. And, we celebrated our newly shaded amphitheater with a summer concert featuring Novamenco.

In addition to some of these major programs, we welcomed some important visitors to the Garden, including many who came on tours with the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and the Water Education Foundation, as well as State Department visitors from the Middle East who were interested in water issues. We were pleased to host the San Diego Press Corps, local event planners, the Rotary Club of Spring Valley/Jamul with their “La Bella Wine and Food Vida” event, and the East County Chamber of Commerce’s production of “Politics in Paradise”. We were also delighted to present awards at the San Diego County Landscape Contest awards ceremony.

Despite the enormous changes in our operations, our horticulture crew continued their excellent care of our grounds. They added a lovely garden outside of the “Retrofit House”, and worked the entire year on an excellent exhibit on Storm Water Management, funded by San Diego County, which featured a green roof and permeable pavement fountain. They also coordinated with our talented docent crew to turn our multipurpose room into a space worthy of our inspiring Garden. With Ms. Smarty Plants, they put together a “Jurassic Garden” for our younger visitors. We began discussions with Cuyamaca College about using one of their portable buildings for offices and classroom space -- huge needs for our dynamic institution. On top of all of these projects, the horticulture staff created a terrific little retail nursery, for those visitors who want the plants they see right away.

Behind the scenes, staff, docents and board members were working furiously to market and raise money for the Garden. Our membership increased 44% over the previous year. We also began our planned giving program, hoping to create an endowment over time. A look at the enclosed donor list shows how many people need to be thanked for fiscal year 2010-11, which was finished in the black, a goal many nonprofits were not able to reach this year. Please note that the numbers in the enclosed graph reflect a transfer of financial assets on 12/31/11 in the form of a contribution from the Joint Powers Authority of $367,946. Three hundred thousand dollars of this is composed of the savings account of the JPA, which was also transferred to the Friends. The Garden policy is to keep at least three months of operating income in case of emergencies.
Friends of the Water Conservation Garden
Board President Remarks
by Michael Grisdale

2010-2011 was, by any measure, a tumultuous, yet successful year for the Garden.

Effective January 1, 2011, after successfully completing extensive legal, financial, organizational and operational changes during 2010, the Garden transitioned from being managed as a public agency by a Joint Powers Authority to being managed as an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

These 2010-2011 changes, and others that will follow over coming years, reflect the belief that a community-based nonprofit form of governance, coupled with on-going support from the Joint Powers Authority and others, is the best form of organization to manage the Garden into the future.

The impact of recent changes at the Garden contributed significantly to the Garden’s 2010-2011 success. Some of these key changes have been:

- Improved and expanded physical facilities
- Strengthened governance and management structures
- Strengthened and diversified financial resources
- Strengthened personnel and administrative resources
- Strengthened marketing, public relations and community outreach
- Increased regional, national and global recognition, including awards received

These changes demonstrate clearly that the Garden’s supporters, members, external advisors, management and staff - working together with shared goals and passions - have proven ability to achieve sustained growth and success in today’s difficult environmental, operational and financial conditions.

Changes at the Garden are a continuing process, however.

Changes already made will require ongoing attention, effort and modification. Additional changes – many anticipated and others not anticipated – have already begun in 2011-2012 and will continue for at least several more years.

Without your confidence in the Garden’s direction and leadership, your support and your assistance, these vital changes would neither be possible nor likely to succeed.

Fortunately, as 2010-2011 results show, we appear to be on the right track and making significant progress.

Thank you for doing so much for our Garden and yours.
Donors
July 1, 2010-June 30, 2011

Fall Festival Sponsors 2010
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Barbeques Galore
Miramar Wholesale Nurseries
Mountain States Wholesale Nursery
Metropolitan Water District of Southern California
San Diego Gas & Electric

Spring Garden Festival 2011
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San Diego Gas & Electric
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Joint Powers Authority Contributions
City of San Diego
Helix Water District
Otab Water District
San Diego County Water Authority
Sweetwater Authority

Ms. Smarty Plants Program Support
California American Water
Otab Water District
San Diego Gas & Electric
Sempra Energy Foundation
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Hans & Margaret Doe Charitable Trust
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In-Kind Donations
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The Garden is grateful to all of its members and contributors!