

# Ann Muscat retires today, Oct. 7

## Conservancy leader served for 13 years as CEO, president

BY LAURA MECOY  
FOR THE ISLANDER

After 13 years as president and CEO of the Catalina Island Conservancy, Ann M. Muscat, PhD, will be retiring on Oct 7. As

Ann leaves for her next adventure, we look back at highlights of the Conservancy's accomplishments during her tenure.



Ann Muscat

"It is gratifying for me to see how with the support of the Board and our many donors, the Island community and the Conservancy's incredibly dedicated staff, we have been able to improve

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Catalina's ecological health, increase public access, expand financial and human resources and create a long-term strategic plan for the Conservancy," said Muscat.

The Conservancy improved the Island's unique ecology through concerted conservation efforts that controlled numerous invasive species.

It also expanded the Ackerman Native Plant Nursery's scope to include landscaping initiatives on the Island, along with restoration.

The Conservancy brought the Catalina Island fox back from the brink of extinction and supported the successful recovery of the bald eagle through its partnership with the Institute for Wildlife Studies.

It implemented innovative social (repatriation) and scientific methodologies (contraception) for managing the bison herd.

In addition, it conducted bird and small mammal surveys that discovered nesting sea birds and implemented protective measures for bat populations.

"Under Ann's leadership, the Conservancy has become a living laboratory of innovation in conservation, education and financial sustainability for nonprofit organizations," said Catalina Island Conservancy Board of Directors Chair Stephen Chazen, PhD.

The Conservancy greatly increased access to natural and intellectual resources through its web and printed publications, Families in Nature, Naturalist training, great educational programs for the K-12 grade students of Avalon and other programs it developed for Island residents, businesses and visitors. Beyond Catalina's shores, it

produced for 10 years the successful Isla Earth radio show that aired in over 320 markets across the nation.

It established the 37.2 mile Trans-Catalina Trail and added new running and biking events, and Catalina: The Wild Side Art Program to increase access and awareness.

The Conservancy increased volunteer program initiatives to include among others Americorps, which has also served the Avalon community. And it added a Nature Center in Avalon and a Mobile Nature station that has served Avalon and Two Harbors.

To ensure its long-term health, the Conservancy strengthened its financial model, dedicating 100 percent of charitable donations to program initiatives, and utilizing other revenues to support improvements across its road and bridge system and in its buildings. It replaced a storm-damaged pier, upgraded its vehicle fleet and significantly expanded employee housing.

The Conservancy revamped its organizational structure, doubled the size of the staff, and provided professional development and training for all staff while strengthening its customer service and community orientation.

Under Muscat's leadership, the Conservancy created a long-term strategic plan, IMAGINE CATALINA, to guide the organization into the future.

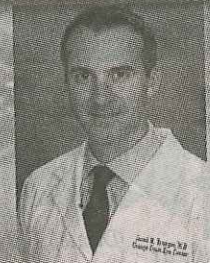
Two key initiatives are already underway: a new visitors' center in Avalon, The Trailhead, and Trekking Catalina, its largest trail expansion since the 2009 opening of the Trans-Catalina Trail.

It is a testament to the hard work of so many that Congressman Alan Lowenthal has entered the last 13 years of accomplishments into the

U.S. Congressional Record. "I have lived 21 years on the Island, working with USC and then with the Conservancy," said Muscat.

"It has been a joy to work on behalf of this extraordinary place, and Jack and I look forward to continuing to give back to the Island and maintaining the many friendships we have made.

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