

Equestrian wants series of tied trails

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By JOSEPH PONENTO
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Calabasas resident Linda Palmer dreams of the day when the National Park Service will have its parkland in the Santa Monica Mountains so she can ride her horse from one end of the mountains to the sea.

The idea of a series of interconnecting trails, though, has been more than just a dream. For the past 10 years, Palmer has been working to get developers, the county, the state and the National Park Service to set aside open space for the trails.

"It's relaxing," she said, speaking over the sound of a crackling fire at her Mulholland Highway home. "When I come home on the freeway, turn onto Mulholland (Highway) and get away from the tracts, I feel like a different person. It's the peacefulness . . . To walk along a trail or ride just feels good. It gets me back in my own rhythm; in touch with myself."

For the past six years, she has been president of the Santa

Monica Mountains Trails Council, a group of equestrians and hikers whose goal is to connect all the public parks in the mountains to each other through a system of trails.

"What motivates me is not so much preserving the trails for me and my family, but for others after me — or they won't be able to enjoy what I've had," Palmer said. "I do what I can to preserve this."

Palmer is quick to say she doesn't like being labeled an environmentalist, "a buzzword that means nut to some people."

"I'm not really that different from other people," she said. "I am essentially a responsible person concerned about the world around me, rather than the image of myself."

Palmer and her husband, Boyd Holister, moved from their Hidden Hills home 13 years ago, primarily to be nearer the mountains and trails that are a large part of their lives.

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"When we moved to the Mulholland Highway, I became aware of how development was occurring," she said. "I watched how a couple of local trails got closed off, but I realized that with planning and coordination, the trails could stay open . . . I wanted to help out with coordinating and planning and started looking around for a way to help."

She helped with the petition drive that asked the Legislature to buy the land for the Backbone Trail, a 55-mile trail that eventually will traverse the Santa Monica Mountains. She's put in time on the Calabasas-Cold Creek Trail, the Stokes Ridge Trail, the Zuma Ridge Trail, the Westlake Connector Trail and the Escondido Falls Trail, to name just a few.

Currently, she has taken a leading role in a move to persuade the state Department of Transportation to include a safe equestrian crossing on the Ventura Freeway in plans for rebuilding the Valley Circle bridge.

"That is very important," she explained. "The city of Hidden Hills is equestrian-oriented. The Woodlake community has a lot of horses, and there is no safe way to get into the mountains without trailering your horse."

Her future projects include the Rim of the Valley Trail and persuading Home Savings and Loan Association to set aside easements for trails when it develops the Ahmanson



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Linda Palmer and her horse, Baraka, spend many hours on Santa Monica Mountains trails.