

SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS TRAILS COUNCIL



SPRING 2005

ParkLink Shuttle Operation Delayed

On 1 March, just 11 days before the planned start up of the ParkLink Shuttle, Woody Smeck, Superintendent of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, announced that the operator, MV Transportation, had cancelled its contract with Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and National Park Service. Solicitation of bids from other contract operators is now underway. Charles Taylor, Chief, External Affairs for NPS, expects operation to start in July or August with a new operator.

The bus service is planned to serve 10 stops in the SMMNRA on weekends and holidays using 20-passenger buses capable of accepting wheelchairs and recreational gear such as backpacks, bicycles, boogie boards, and picnic baskets. Buses will operate hourly both clockwise and counter-clockwise on a loop consisting of Mulholland, Malibu Canyon, PCH, and Kanan roads.

<http://www.nps.gov/samo/shuttle/>



Another Section of Backbone Trail Opens

A 1.1-mile segment of the Backbone Trail opened in October 2004 in upper Trancas Canyon. This trail, running from Encinal Canyon Road to Mulholland Highway, replaces Clarke Ranch Road which had served as an unofficial link in the BBT. Only two gaps now remain to complete the BBT, which will stretch nearly 70 miles in length between Will Rogers State Historic Park and Point Mugu State Park.

At Encinal Canyon Road, the new trail connects with an existing BBT segment. With the exception of one 0.5-mile section, the BBT is continuous from Mulholland Highway approximately 41 miles to its eastern end in Will Rogers State Historic Park. The new northern end of the BBT at Mulholland Highway meets with an uncompleted section, approximately five miles in length including a portion of the Etz-Meloy Fire Road, which is the only remaining gap to the west end at Ray Miller Trailhead in Point Mugu State Park. Property acquisition is continuing to complete the public right-of-way over Etz-Meloy Motorway. Preparations are underway, however, to construct new trail on National Park

Continued on page 2

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

33 YEARS – Wow, time sure flies! As we look back over time, our organization is proud that we have remained dedicated to our mission — establishing and maintaining a public trail system throughout the Santa Monica Mountains that serves as a recreational, educational and historical resource for generations to enjoy.

Please note that:

YOU are a part of the actions we have undertaken toward our mission.

YOU are the linchpin that keeps us connected to the land.

YOU are vital for our mission to be a success.

YOU, through membership or trail maintenance and everything in between, have been a contributor and supporter that makes the Trails Council what it is.

As we strive to reach our goals, we will endeavor to increase our learning and knowledge, our relationships and partnerships, and our commitment.

YOU are a part of the **TOGETHER** as we reach for tomorrow, today.

Coming Events

Santa Monica Mountains Trail Days
– 29 April-1 May 2005. See flyer for details.
National Trail Day – 4 June 2005
L.A.-Malibu Family Walk – 31 July-6 August 2005
SMMTC Annual Meeting – 27 October 2005

See page 3 for details

The next Backbone Trek will be in 2006.
(No Trek in 2005)

Trails Council Revises Mission Statement and Sets Key Goals

Key Goals were defined by the SMMTC Board at a special board meeting held on 28 February at Ruth Gerson's house. Establishment of the organization's goals followed a previous meeting in which the Mission Statement was revised. The new Mission Statement was approved on 20 January 2005.

Both the Mission Statement and the Key Goals were developed by using a technique from Stanford University. Facilitating this meeting were Frank Padilla, Jr., Supervisor II, California State Parks, and Leslie Jehnings, Park Landscape Architect, National Park Service. SMMTC board members enthusiastically applauded both Padilla and Jehnings for their assistance.



Backbone Trail Continued from page 1

Service property from Mulholland Highway up to the motorway. Completion is expected in late summer 2006.

The new trail begins on the north side of Encinal Canyon Road at Clarke Ranch Road and quickly swings west while the old ranch road continues more northerly. Soon the trail affords good views to lower land to the south and west. Clarke Ranch Road is visible to the east as an elevation gain of about 250 feet brings the new trail to Mulholland Highway.

During a late February hike, your newsletter editor found numerous wildflowers blooming. Heavy rain had preceded the hike by several days, but the trail was in good condition because of careful trail design features which directed runoff water into controlled ditches and spread aprons.

Land acquisition for this trail was completed by National Park Service (NPS) several years previously. More recently the land had been assessed for archeological and natural features. A preliminary design was created before actual construction. NPS Engineering Technician Marcel Gillet said that following construction, computer mapping specialists will use GPS data to create a detailed as-built map of the trail for the Geographic Information System. According to Gillet, the full cost of creating this trail to National Park Service Standards after land acquisition was about \$92,000.

NPS Cultural Anthropologist Philip Holmes said there is no evidence of occupation by indigenous people along this trail. At Mulholland Highway, the

Mission Statement

The Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council is a volunteer, nonprofit organization dedicated to establishing and maintaining the public trail system throughout the Santa Monica Mountains, through advocacy and partnerships with public and private sectors.

Key Goals

- Pursue and protect public trail easements, connections and access through partnerships.
- Promote the establishment of trail camps for the Backbone Trail.
- Improve fiscal health/fundraise.
- Increase public awareness of the Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council.
- Support and encourage consistent and comprehensive signage.

Backbone Trail Continued

trail passes an old house that was built before 1917 by James and Nellie Vaughan and occupied by them until 1943, followed by a series of owners. The house is badly deteriorated and will probably be demolished.

The trail presents a good display of all three varieties of lichen: crusty, leafy and hanging – in colors ranging from pale gray and green to yellow and orange. Look for them on rocks and on branches in the interior of plants. Park Ranger Sheila Braden says the presence of so many lichens is an indicator of good air quality in the area.



Santa Monica Mountains 24th Annual Trail Days

Trail Days is a weekend for individuals and groups to build new trails and restore old ones. You are invited to join us, 29 April-1 May 2005. Please see attached flyer for details.

National Trail Day

Another opportunity to help is 4 June 2005

Trail Volunteers Hike With a Purpose

Santa Monica Mountains trails are maintained by volunteers, working every Saturday, except during July and August. Also, once a month there is a Wednesday outing combining a hike with light trail work.

Bring water, lunch, work gloves, hat, long-sleeve shirt and eye protection. Long pants and sturdy shoes or boots are required. The Trails Council provides tools or you may bring your own.

Burt Elliott, burtrun@adelphia.net, 805-498-2475, is the trail maintenance coordinator. For further information or a copy of the schedule with specific dates and locations, please call 818-222-4531, e-mail to mail@smmtc.org or check the SMMTC website at www.smmtc.org.



ANNUAL MEETING

The Trails Council Annual Meeting will be held on

October 27, 2005

at the home of hosts Ruth and Grant Gerson, providing an opportunity to meet people who share an interest in trails. Members and trail enthusiasts are invited to bring their spouse and friends.

The social hour will begin at 6 p.m., followed by dinner at 7 and meeting at 7:45.

Please RSVP by Monday, 24 October, to facilitate meal planning. Call Ruth at 818-991-1236 and leave your name, telephone number and how many are in your group. The Gerson's home, Wolf Creek Ranch, is at 3450 Cornell Road, Agoura.

Trails Council on the Web

This paper won't self-update, but our website will. Please check

www.smmtc.org

for the latest news and information on the Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council.

TRAIL NEWS

Heavy rainfall during January and February not only prevented maintenance activity but brought substantial erosion damage to many trail sections. Some trails with good drainage design held up well as did hard-packed trails with rock and gravel bases such as old fire roads. Even some well drained trails still suffered from rock and mud falls onto the trail treads. Portions of some trails washed down into valleys while other sections became temporary ponds.

Frank Padilla, Jr., State Park Superintendent, Safety and Trails, asked Burt Elliott, Volunteer Coordinator, to survey and report back so he can select projects.

Elliott said he had improved the condition of some trails after the rains and so far has not encountered any really hazardous situations. "One thing is clear," he said, "poison oak will be a serious problem to trail users this year." Cutting back poison oak is a very labor intensive effort and to many volunteers it is a significant health risk to work near it. NPS trail managers recognize the health risk to their workers and have a herbicide spray program that can eliminate the risk before workers encounter the poison oak.

Volunteer Tom Siebert reported that he assisted the City of Malibu in surveying and lopping brush on trails at Charmlee Natural Area.

Prior to the rains, volunteer crews made a big impact improving the trails in almost all parks/properties in Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA). They also supported the Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency (Thousand Oaks area). Crews also worked on Santa Cruz Island in support of Channel Islands National Park. State Parks were supported in a project to reroute the Backbone Trail around a large slide area on Mesa Peak Fire Road. An ongoing series of Wednesday projects repaired Old Boney Trail and Fossil Trail in Point Mugu State Park, although longer and longer hikes were required to access the entire trail. About one half mile of work remains.

Water diversion from the trail has been more of an issue in the recent year, using newer techniques that paid off during the recent rains. A series of work days over the last few years has greatly improved a steep section of the Mishe Mokwa Trail in Circle X Ranch.

"We are never done," said Elliott. "Where we had worked several months ago on the Fossil and Old Boney Trails, now needs more work. It's certainly not as bad as it was, but the trail is still not up to our standards."



PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 2005. Dues are on a calendar year basis, January through December. Please make your check payable to SMMTC and mail it to P.O. Box 345, Agoura Hills, CA 91376. *Thank you for your continued support.*

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ ZIP _____

E-mail _____ Check to have newsletter sent by e-mail

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

AMOUNT ENCLOSED

Dues schedule for 2005:

- Associate \$35
- Life Member \$350*
- Business \$100
- Corporate Level 1 .. \$250
- Corporate Level 2 .. \$500
- Donation \$_____

* Life membership may be paid in three annual payments of \$150, \$100 and \$100
SMMTC is a tax exempt, non-profit organization under IRS code 501 (c) (3)



Webmaster Wanted

Our web site provides useful trails information. If you have web design skills or believe you could be a quick on-the-job learner, please contact Ralph Waycott at mail@smmtc.org.



It's time

to pay your dues unless you're a Lifetime member.

SMMTC dues are on a calendar year basis, January through December.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ruth Gerson President	Linda Palmer Vice President
Toni Semple Secretary	Ralph Waycott Treasurer

DIRECTORS

Ted DePass	Lylene Sheets
Virginia Grue	George Sherman
Doug Kirk	Ed Stauss
Cynthia Maxwell	Karyne Ventris
Annie Salerno	Jeanne Wallace
Ingrid Shattuck	

CONTACTS

Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council
Mail: P.O. Box 345
Agoura Hills, CA 91376
Phone: 818-222-4531
E-mail: mail@smmtc.org
Internet: www.smmtc.org

Ruth Gerson, President
ruthgerson@aol.com – 818-991-1236

Ed Stauss, Newsletter Editor
ed@stauss.org – 818-883-7843

The Trails Council newsletter is published twice a year, in the spring and fall.

©2005 Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council