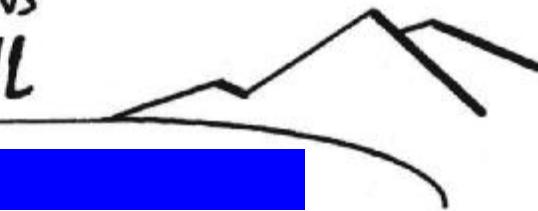


SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS TRAILS COUNCIL

SPRING 2007



New BBT Segment Now 85% Complete

Completion of a 2.8-mile portion of the Backbone Trail, Mulholland Highway to Etz Meloy Motorway, is now estimated for 29 June 2007. NPS Engineering Technician, Roads & Trails, Marcel Gillet says the job is now 85% complete. This is the last major construction to complete the BBT, although a few other sections of the trail are not officially open because of right-of-way issues.

Remaining tasks at percentage of completion:

- Removal of vegetation in brush corridor: 90%
- Pioneer cut: 85%
- Side Sloping: 85%
- Trail Tread Cut to Grade: 75%
- Installation of water structures: 50%

To date 12,300 feet of trail has been pioneered; 10,800 feet of trail has been side sloped; 8,800 feet of trail has been cut to grade with dip swale defined. Installed so far are 156 dip-drains, six culverts, eight fords, and one retaining wall.

The project is presently 81 working days off schedule, equal to 3.5 months. Delays are attributed to weather and park maintenance needs: winter storms in 2006 damaged existing trails; the Topanga fire last summer in which trail crew participated at the Palo Comado, Cheeseboro, and Shay canyon sites. Also crews were unable to do trail construction during Red Flag days. Trail crew have continued maintenance of park roads and trails.



Volunteers Invited to Help on National Trails Day, 2 June 2007

Volunteers are invited to maintain and improve the Backbone and other trails at Circle X Ranch beginning at 8:30 am during National Trails Day on Saturday, 2 June 2007. The lead agency, National Park Service, partners with California State Parks in the annual event.

NPS Volunteer Manager Mike Malone suggests volunteers bring their own lunch or snack food and water. Also recommended are hat, sunscreen and gloves. Trail-working tools will be provided. Children under 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. No reservation is necessary. For more information, call 805-370-2317.



PRESIDENT'S VISION

Many of us were lucky to experience Nature first-hand as children when we were growing up. It was common to build tree houses and dirt forts, and to collect all sorts of natural things we found in the neighborhood. We lived closer to Nature; and we took that for granted. We expected our children to be able to explore freely also, and we felt they certainly would want to do so. We did not anticipate the commanding and addictive attention that the internet and other electronic media would have upon us.

Even though times have changed, there remains an intrinsic human need to encounter Nature and to develop a relationship. Children need experiences with Nature to fully develop healthy senses, imaginations, and intellects. The meadows and woods of many childhoods have been replaced with housing tracts, golf courses, freeways and manicured lawns. Outdoor play is structured, safe, and isolated in fenced yards and designer playgrounds. The restorative quality of a relationship with Nature is missing. The lack of the natural world in today's childhood could even be a factor in various children's ailments. Some professionals feel that children who experience Nature may also experience increased attention span, independent thinking, and the ability to cope better with stress. Children need to be acquainted with hiking, fishing, bird-watching, and disorganized, creative playing outdoors. Nature is a healing resource. It is our role as adults to help children have a positive physical and mental connection to Nature. There are no textbooks to repair the splintered bond between the young people and the natural world. There is nothing that can replace hands-on learning in Nature.

I hope that each of you will take the time this year to help at least one child experience the connection with Nature. Children are the trail builders of tomorrow. Give them the desire to maintain trails, to care for the land, and to stay connected with Nature.



Coming Events

- SMM Trail Days — 27-29 April
- BBT Trek — 5-12 May
- State Trails Conference — 10-12 May
- National Trails Day — 2 June
- SMMTC Annual Meeting — 25 October

SMMNRA News

King Gillette Ranch

It is not official but the working title for the former Soka University property is King Gillette Ranch, sometimes shortened to Gillette Ranch. Whatever it will be called, the 588-acre site and buildings are now owned mostly by Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, but the university has a lease back of the campus property from MRCA through December 2007.

Information on the park planning process is posted on a website operated by MRCA: <http://smmc.ca.gov/KGRP/index.html>. A recent study of the historic and cultural resources of the property will be posted in the near future. The public may sign up on the website for updates and will be invited to participate in forging the park's long term future through a process with public meetings to be scheduled.

The agencies are gathering data to determine the condition of the buildings and the property. This task is slowed considerably by the lease agreement that allows Soka to control access to the buildings through 2007.

Interim plans for 2008 are to use the office spaces and classrooms as a combined National Park Service/California Department of Parks and Recreation interim headquarters and visitor center. All National Park Service personnel currently working in Thousand Oaks and some State Park personnel working in Malibu Creek State Park will move to the new location sometime in 2008. By being co-located, the two agencies stand to benefit immensely from each other's resources, such as NPS's Geographic Information Systems Lab, with its extensive mapped data on natural and cultural resources.

Although the buildings are closed, the grounds at the site are open to the public from 9 am to 4:30 pm daily. Visitors are asked to check in at the gate. No dogs, bikes or horses allowed.

Trail Management Plan (TMP)

Melanie Beck, NPS Outdoor Recreation Planner, reports that no progress has been made on the SMMNRA Interagency Trail Management Plan (TMP) because of a funding lapse. A draft TMP EIS/EIR with defined trail alternatives will be released for public review when funding is received. When finalized, the TMP will provide a 20-year vision for new trail construction, use designation, backcountry camps, trailheads, signage, and trail management policies.

The project is a joint effort of National Park Service, California State Parks, and Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. Trail inventory maps published by NPS in PDF format may be viewed at www.nps.gov/samo/trails/roster.htm.

Superintendent Smeck Wins National Award

In late 2006, the National Park Service named Woody Smeck, superintendent of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, "Superintendent of the Year for Natural Resource Stewardship."

The award stated that Smeck "... has provided outstanding leadership and support for effective natural resource stewardship by embracing scientific inquiry, linking data and science to management decision-making, and promoting resource stewardship broadly among partner agencies and organizations at the park and the Mediterranean Coast Network..." 

Santa Monica Mountains Trail Days

Volunteers are invited to an interesting day or a full weekend while helping to improve trails during the 26th annual Santa Monica Mountains Trail Days on 27-29 April 2007. The rare opportunity of camping under the sycamores and oaks at Danielson in the heart of Point Mugu State Park is free to volunteers on Friday and Saturday nights. Volunteers may also enjoy a free barbecue dinner on Saturday evening. Trail users have the opportunity to build and restore the trails that they and others enjoy.

Held only once a year, Santa Monica Mountains Trail Days is organized by a committee of citizens who love trails and is partnered by California State Parks, Sierra Club, Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council, California Native Plant Society, Concerned Off-road Bicyclist Association, National Park Service, Santa Monica Mountains Natural History Association and Temescal Canyon Association.

Experience in trail building is not required, and there are jobs for everyone no matter what their ability. Along with trail work, a special crew will restore native plants. Bring your own lunch, snacks and water. Tools and Saturday evening dinner will be provided.

For more information and for camping reservations, call the Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council, 818-222-4531. 



ParkLINK, the shuttle bus service that circulates to 13 locations within Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, is free to all riders this spring, according to Margie Steigerwald, Outdoor Recreation Planner for NPS.

The service can be accessed by parking near any of the stops or by transfer from Metro routes 161 or 534. Check timetables for times at which shuttles connect.

(Continued on page 4)



Al Bandel and Jerry Mitcham work a section of the Pacific Crest Trail.

SMMTC Crew Leaders Attend Traditional Trail Skills Training

Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council (SMMTC) crew leaders Jerry Mitcham, Al Bandel, Virginia Grue and Tom Siebert attended a Traditional Trails Skills Training workshop in September 2006. The workshop, hosted by the Student Conservation Association (SCA), was conducted in two sessions on two consecutive weekends. The workshop was held on the Pacific Crest Trail in the John Muir Wilderness in the Sierra National Forest. SCA and National Forest Rangers staffed the workshop and provided all meals. The base camp was in a spectacular location on the Pacific Crest Trail near Pocket Meadow. To get to the base camp, the four participants had to drive 300 miles, ferry across Lake Edison, then backpack 4.5 miles to the base camp.

The workshop was intended to develop traditional trailbuilding skills using hand tools, natural materials and manual labor. Daily sessions provided instruction and hands-on application of the National Forest trail standards. Instruction addressed safety, selection of materials, proper use of handtools, cutting and shaping rock, and constructing trail features to National Forest standards.

The instruction included applying the skills. Specific problem areas were identified on the trail, the site prepared, selected rocks were moved to the prepared site and the trail tread groomed. Rocks up to several hundred pounds were pushed, pulled, pried and levered into precise positions. It was not unusual to see as many as four workers straining with rockbars to nudge a rock into position. While participants agreed the work was hard, they also agreed they learned a lot.

More Trail Signs Courtesy of REI

The 6-mile Phantom trail loop now has 10 new signs paid with a grant from REI. The trail is completely within Malibu Creek State Park and is composed of seven individual trails: Crags Road, Grasslands Trail, North Grasslands Trail, Liberty Canyon Trail, Phantom Trail, Cistern Trail, Lookout Trail, and again on Crags Road to return to the parking lot.

New Trail Signs at Point Mugu State Park

Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council is installing new trail signs throughout Point Mugu State Park to assist the budget-constrained park district.

Approximately two years ago, the Trails Superintendent for Angles District, State Parks, designed and ordered over fifty new signs to replace missing or damaged signs and provide additional trail identification. SMMTC volunteers are following State Park specifications for installation and placement. Some signs will be installed as part of regular trail maintenance projects. On occasion, there may be a special "sign installation project." Other groups (e.g. Eagle Scout projects) may install signs under supervision of SMMTC.

Planning has been in process since late 2006. The first sign installation took place February 3 on the Fossil Trail maintenance project. Three new signs were installed and one existing sign was replaced. This initial effort provided valuable information regarding type and usage of required tools and hardware as well as installation techniques.

SMMTC plans to complete the job by July 2007.



Brent Johnson, New State Parks Trail Coordinator

Brent Johnson has been appointed Park Maintenance Supervisor by Dennis Dolinar, District Maintenance Chief, Angeles District. Johnson has been employed in State Parks since 1988. His primary focus in the new assignment will be trails. Pleased to have a good replacement for retired Frank Padilla, Jr., Angeles District Superintendent Ron Schafer said of Johnson, "Glad he's there."



ANNUAL MEETING

The Trails Council Annual Meeting will be held on
October 25, 2007

at the home of 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, 22 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.

State Parks Offers ADA Accessibility

During the last year State Parks has focused on construction and upgrading of ADA accessible trails and pathways and other access aspects, according to park maintenance supervisor Brent Johnson. He noted that he improvements will allow "...people with disabilities to enjoy the park system along with friends and families."

Newest is the Camp 13 Trail in Leo Carrillo State Park. This trail meets the guidelines for ADA trails and is a minimum of 36 inches wide with compacted native soil to accommodate wheel chairs, etc. This also allows folks to walk side by side and talk. The trail has two entrances – one near the Leo Carrillo kiosk building on the main entrance road and the other at the back of the camping area on the northeast side. This trail also intersects the Nicholas Flat Trailhead.

Another ADA trail is in the Lower Topanga acquisition. Starting at the large parking area along Pacific Coast Hwy., in front of the Topanga Ranch Hotel, this trail takes people to a new picnic area near Topanga Creek and to the top of a hill. The trail is rough cut and awaiting a hand crew that will finish grooming, compacting, building rock work and installing barrier rail near the top. The trail has not yet been named.

Frank Padilla, Jr., volunteered to operate equipment for much of the construction, said Johnson.

ParkLink (continued from page 2)

ParkLink shuttles operate weekends and holidays all year. Organizations may arrange special charter tours to or among the parks on weekdays.

Amenities include bike racks, cooler and stroller space and wheelchair lifts.

Detailed schedules and additional information on ParkLINK may be found at www.ParkLinkShuttle.com or by calling 888-734-2323.

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PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 2007

Dues are on a calendar year basis. Payments in October and later are credited to the following year. 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.

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SMMTC is a tax exempt, non-profit organization under IRS code 501 (c) (3)

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.

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

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