



# Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council

Protect • Preserve • Maintain

Spring 2019

## 50TH ANNIVERSARY of the Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council

In 1969, a group of local horsemen gathered in the living room of Dick and Joanne Hubbard's home in the community of Monte Nido. Included there were Don & Jeanne Wallace, Grant Gerson, Frank Hendler, Darrell Readmond, Warren Jessup and others. These far-sighted people were discussing trails, mulling over what to do about the ones being lost to encroaching development, and figuring out how to save them. It was decided to form a legal organization to ensure they were protected and maintained. The name Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council was thrown into the discussion and everyone liked it. The board of directors was formed, and the by-laws were begun; there were lots of discussions and finally a consensus was formed as to what was basically needed. Of course, there were legal forms to qualify as a California non-profit organization, and, naturally, the IRS had to be included. Fortunately, there was strong unanimity among this group.

The 7 initial founders were: Dick Hubbard, Grant Gerson, Darrell Readmond, Peno Dwinger, Frank Hendler, Ann Sonderland, and Dick Hartley. Darrell Readmond was a cabinet maker; Dick Hubbard was a science teacher and athletic coach at Taft High School; Peno Dwinger was ETI president and a retired volunteer; Grant Gerson had a children's camp; Frank Hendler was an architect; Ann Sonderland boarded horses; and Dick Hartley was a landscape architect who owned a nursery.

In the 1960's, Darrell Readmond was the first with foresight to see a trail developed across the backbone crest of the mountains. At one of the early meetings, Joanne Hubbard, said, "Let's call it the Backbone Trail." The rest is history, as



Backbone Trail Dedication

hundreds of people gave endless hours towards the mutual goal of the Backbone Trail. Early pioneers were Warren Jessup, Don & Jeanne Wallace, Linda & Bob Palmer, Dick and Joanne Hubbard and others who added that trail on the maps they had.

Some of us were always repairing trails; and as we worked, hikers noticed what we were doing and joined us. Later on, mountain bikers also worked with us. More than 30,000 people, adults and youth, have participated and learned how to repair trails that had varying degrees of problems.

*Continued on page 2*

## President's Vision

Giving our all to a task is very satisfying for our spirit and soul. YOUR volunteer service demonstrates that commitment as YOU are shaping a better tomorrow for the community.

Whether you are donating muscle or funds makes no difference. The difference is that YOU are doing something for the benefit of the public. YOU are not alone in that respect, but we need more of YOU.

Our challenges and responsibilities include reaching more people in order to educate them. How many people just skate through days, weeks and months without purpose, without making a difference somewhere, without giving of themselves for something? We all know some of these people, so let's try to enlist their help in furthering our purposes and goals and get them out on the trails.

Take at least 1 person on your next outing along a trail. It will give them much needed physical, emotional and spiritual benefits. Blending cooperation, volunteerism, activism, and experiences on the land leads people to look inward and perhaps find their other self, a self beyond the urban and material ways, reaching toward the 'high' of replenishing their soul in Nature.

*Ruth*

## Upcoming Events

- 38th Annual Santa Monica Mountains Trail Days  
April 26–28 2019 Pt. Mugu State Park  
**Details / RSVP at [smmtc.org](http://smmtc.org) or (818) 222-4531**
- 50th Anniversary Celebration  
May 5th, 2019. 11am - 2pm. Complimentary lunch for the trails community.  
Calamigos Ranch 327 Latigo Canyon Rd, Malibu  
**RSVP at [smmtc.org](http://smmtc.org) or (818) 222-4531**
- Annual Dinner Meeting – October 24th  
6pm social, 7pm dinner, 7:45pm meeting  
Complimentary dinner for the trails community.  
Agoura Hills/Calabasas Community Center,  
27040 Malibu Hills Rd, Agoura Hills  
**RSVP at [smmtc.org](http://smmtc.org) or (818) 222-4531**

### **Trails Council Board Meetings**

Board Meetings are open to the public and held at Diamond X Ranch, 26412 Mulholland Highway, Calabasas, CA 91302, on the 4th Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm. There are three exceptions: Nov & Dec, meet on 1st Thursday; no meeting in August.



Santa Cruz Island

In addition many people donated funds to us for purchasing tools and equipment. The original purpose of the Trails Council has not changed – we still maintain, preserve and protect hundreds of miles of trails throughout the Santa Monica Mountains. In the last 15 years we added trails on Santa Cruz Island.

Initially, we worked with State Parks on their trails in Malibu Creek SP, Topanga SP, Will Rogers Historic SP, Pt. Mugu SP, and Charmlee SP. When the National Park Service came to the area in 1975, the Trails Council partnered with them. In addition, we worked with the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy when they joined the area. Since we are a 501-c-3 organization with fiduciary capabilities, we are able to assist other organizations with handling funds for various projects.

Some of the Trails Council successes that stand out over the years are that we:

- Helped design and promote Los Angeles County’s Trail Plan for the Santa Monica Mountains, and we designed and built with Linda Palmer the Upper Stunt High Trail in Calabasas over 30 years ago
- Built the 60ft. long Viewridge Trail Bridge in Topanga 1999-2005
- Developed criteria for trail crew leaders
- Developed with Milt McAuley a trail work program for volunteers to learn how to repair problems on trails
- Regularly provide a trail crew to work on a public trail every Saturday for 10 months of every year
- Sponsor the Backbone Trek the past 15 years, a 1-week 68-mile hiking/camping adventure along the BBT
- Maintain trails on Santa Cruz Island with NPS
- Purchased large equipment for State Parks – Such as a Gator
- Promoted the first Santa Monica Mountains Trail Days in Topanga State Park
- Are one of the original sponsors of the Santa Monica Mountains Trail Days in Pt. Mugu State Park for over 30 years
- Carried the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy grant for

Ron Webster to design & build trails for 9 years in the mid 1980’s into the 1990’s.



Ruth Gerson doing trail work on horseback

Presently, the trail crew leaders are: Dave Edwards, Jerry Mitcham, John Kross, Barry Dydyk, George Sherman, Greg Sweel, Norm Simmonds, Sharon Simmonds, Don Brusselars, Anne Russell, and Barb Thomas. We are always looking for people to step up to become a crew leader

Past presidents are: Dick Hubbard, Linda Palmer, Ted DePass, Lenore Kirby, Howard Cohen, and Ruth Gerson.

Over the years we have developed credibility by doing the right thing for trails and working easily with the land managing agencies. In fact, a representative from State Parks and another from National Parks attend our monthly board meetings. We are most appreciative of the collaboration established with the public land managers, and we plan to continue the strong association we have with them as we all work towards preserving and maintaining trails in the Santa Monica Mountains. The Trails Council is here for you and your kids and their kids and so on. We are truly fortunate to have these parklands as our backyard, our front yard and our playground. But---we need to educate more people about trails and the importance of them as a resource for physical activity and for mental and emotional support, so that they will connect with the land and care about the trails enough to protect them.

By Ruth Gerson 

## Trail Maintenance Statistics

From January 01, 2018 through December 31, 2018 a total of 721 volunteers performed 4,302.50 hours of trail maintenance in the Santa Monica Mountains and nearby areas. State Parks and NPS budgets are not near enough to maintain the hundreds of trails we have.

Agency	Events	Vol #	Hours	Feet	Miles
CINP	2	7	152.5	23,230	4.4
COSCA	6	46	206.	6,648	1.26
NPS	22	220	1,243.50	49,488	9.37
State Parks	42	448	2,700.50	80,657	15.28
<b>Totals</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>721</b>	<b>4,302.50</b>	<b>160,023</b>	<b>30.31</b>

CINP - Channel Islands National Park

COSCA - Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency

NPS - National Park Service

STATE PARKS - California State Parks 

**Interested in becoming a team member?**

Visit us at [www.smmtc.org](http://www.smmtc.org) to get involved.

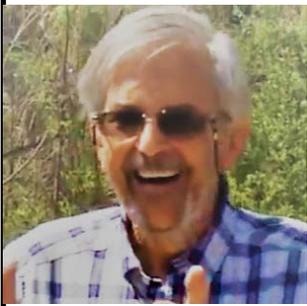
Pictured below is just a few of our hard working team!



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## DON WALLACE - Trail Legacy

Don Wallace was an ethical man with a wonderful sense of humor, a twinkle in his eye, and a passion for trails and horses. His passion for nature started when he was a young firefighter. As president of the firefighter’s union in 1970, he negotiated the fire departments’ first contract. Under his watch, membership went from less than 100 to over 3,000. After 26 years fighting fires, Don became a politician working with supervisors, local state government agencies, and homeowners’ associations.

In 1976, he was appointed as a National Park Service Commissioner, and he started to realize that some of his visions could be implemented. Don believed that most of the recreation taking place in LA County was by people hiking. So, for 35 years, Don advocated for a safe passage trail in Calabasas that would go under the 101 freeway along the Las Virgenes Creek to give people a connection between the trails and lands north and south of the freeway. Many felt this to be impossible due to all the agencies that would have to be involved and all their red tape. However, Don’s perseverance, political savvy, and his friendly demeanor ensured that he would successfully accomplish this task.

On April 13, 2018 his long-sought dream came true. At the dedication of the newly built Don Wallace Multi-Use Trail in Calabasas, there were many politicians to help celebrate this momentous occasion. This trail has lights along the length of it as it goes under the freeway. It provides the connectivity of the southern trails in Malibu Creek SP with trails in the northern lands of MRCA, as well as trails along Las Virgenes Creek. Don’s vision materialized into his legacy with a 1,500-ft long connector trail built for the public to use and enjoy. Thank you, Don.

In the past 40 years that I have known Don, he has been an outstanding community member. He and his wife, Jeanne, have had horses a very long time and have ridden together on the local trails. He was always interested in seeing that trails were maintained so that everyone could enjoy them, especially horseback riders. He was a Life member of the Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council. Don and Jeanne were among the group of horsemen that initially came together to help found this organization 50 years ago, in 1969. He was always willing to help build and maintain the trails - repairing tread, cutting back brush, reducing erosion, and encouraging others to work with him. He constantly worked with his own tools repairing trails in his neighborhood to keep them in good condition and safe.

Jeanne would like any donations made in his memory to be sent to the Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council. Mail to SMMTC PO Box 345 Agoura Hills, CA 91301 or send via PayPal to SMMTC.org and note that it is in memory of Don Wallace.

By Ruth Gerson



## Superintendent of Public Safety Tony Hoffman Retires



Tony Hoffman has been a California State Park ranger for approximately 33 years, working at Malibu Creek State Park the past 28 years. On February 21, 2019, a retirement party for Tony was hosted at the MCSP Administration Building. It was attended by over 60 people, including representatives of the California State Parks, the National Park Service and the Mountains Recreation Conservation Authority and also Ventura County law enforcement officers. Also in attendance were many of Tony’s friends, his wife and children, and members of the Mounted Volunteer Patrol, MVP.

Superintendent Craig Sap was the master of ceremonies. The event began with Jeff Davidson of the MVP showing a photo presentation of memories of Tony’s association with the MVP. This was followed with many stories and memories and by co-workers and friends roasting Tony. A special presentation was made by a deputy for Representative Brad Sherman recognizing Tony for his contributions to the parks and to our greater community. A collection was taken up by his co-workers and friends providing him with a cash gift to purchase his service pistol at the culmination of his retirement. The MVPs presented him with a gift certificate to a local bicycle shop to help Tony enjoy one of his favorite activities. Tony will be succeeded by Ranger Lindsay Templeton. Ranger David Gunn will assume the responsibilities as the California State Parks liaison for the Mounted Volunteer Patrol. We all wish Tony success in his retirement and new life.

By Jeffrey Davidson



# Chaparral Responses to the Woolsey Fire

The devastating Woolsey Fire of 2018 burned hot and fast as it made its way from one side of the Santa Monica Mountains to the other. As a local hiker, I wondered how our mountains would respond. If the past is a guide for the future, the race to reclaim the scorched earth began as the fire was being extinguished. Landscapes previously covered with nearly impenetrable chaparral were reset to a blank canvas. Plant diversity will be more pronounced as seeds of the previous season and seeds long dormant burst out of the ground. This initial wave of new growth fades after a season or two. Seeds from these early "fire follower" flowers will comprise the newly replenished seed bank - ready and waiting for the next fire. Competition with these fast-growing plants will come from the slower growing shrubs that eventually form the next generation of impenetrable chaparral.

Soon after the fire, we observed that the landscape was not entirely a moonscape. It had reduced areas to ash and yet a few yards away flowers remained in bloom. Fire is capricious - an incinerated forest of oak trees here and only slightly burned chaparral over there. Differences in fire intensity created this unique mosaic. Can you locate the areas that did not burn? The first signs of recovery were immediate: Yuccas and laurel sumac poking out from the ash-covered ground. Wild cucumber's white blossoms appeared with the first rains. Now, approximately three months after the fire, it has become clear that a recovery is in process. After the onset of the rainy season, the hillsides are green with fast growing non-native grasses and mustard. Fire is but a speed bump to these invasive plants. After the rain stops, these green hillsides will become the tan color we know to expect. Contrast that with slower growing chaparral, an evergreen plant that can live 50 years or more. Recovery begins quickly enough but takes several years.

## **Strategy Types for Plant Recovery After A Fire:**

- Crown sprouting from dormant buds on the root, e.g., Scrub Oak, Red Shank, Poison Oak, Chamise
- Plants that grow from banked seed - germination occurs after sensing a disturbance: fire, smoke or increased sunlight, e.g., Ceanothus, Phacelias, Fire Poppy
- Plants that both re-sprout or germinate seeds, e.g., laurel sumac

The plants that can re-sprout staked out the ground around their crown/root systems. Where there was once a single trunk, many shoots now grow upward. These plants have advantages over seed-germinated plants: existing root systems and dormant buds already in place. The odds against any seed germinating and growing to maturity are enormous compared to its chances of sprouting from an existing stump. Toyon and scrub oak are two examples of this.

Plants "banked" their seeds in the soil in the years after the last fire and waited for fire to create space for them. A subset of these plants reveals itself only after fire and becomes dormant in subsequent years. The seeds of these short-lived "annuals" may have hard coatings that the fire cracks or insulation that allows them to survive the heat. The fire/heat breaks through these protective barriers (which prevented hydration) and allows germination to take place.

Chemicals in the fire's smoke activate other seeds. The nitrogen compounds in the smoke signal some seeds that "the aboveground biomass" has burned, and it is time to germinate.

Some plants both sprout and reseed after a fire. Sprouting from a stump is more efficient than germination from seed for many plants. Seeds become a backup solution should the root of the plant burn. Manzanita and chamise use this strategy—akin to having a low-cost insurance plan.

*Chaparral Responses - continued on page 5*

## Woolsey Fire - Third Degree Burns to Parks

If you have been through the burned areas, you can see the fire's unprecedented path of destruction. However, as the phoenix rises from the ashes, so are the trails, landscape and park facilities coming back. Please be patient while park agencies repair trails. Replacing lost bridges and buildings could take years. It's a monumental task because so much was destroyed, and here's a partial list of what's gone.

**Bridges and other trail structures:** Three Backbone Trail bridges over Zuma Creek and Trancas Creek, the de Anza bridge and North Grasslands bridge in Malibu Creek SP, and the Nicholas Flat accessible trail's 60-foot bridge, boardwalk, and viewing platform.

Fire burns down to the water

**State Park maintenance yards:** Reagan Ranch & Leo Carrillo yards lost the heavy equipment fleet, spike camp gear & trail maintenance supplies.

**Trail signs and kiosks:** Many signs burned. Be sure to use official maps for wayfinding, and please respect the map's trail use designation until the new signs are installed.

**Leo Carrillo State Park facilities:** Visitor center, group campground, south beach/north beach restrooms, stairs to south/north beaches, and the Malibu Sector administrative office.

**Ranger residences:** Three NPS and five State Park ranger residences.

**Historic structures:** Paramount Ranch Western Town, the ranch house at Peter Strauss Ranch, Sepulveda Adobe, and the barn at White Oak Farm. The NPS archive storage building at Rocky Oaks burned, and many historical documents and items were lost, including most of the records that SMMTC past president Linda Palmer had kept over the years, as well as the door handles to Rex Allen's Diamond X Ranch.

Paramount Ranch

**Other structures:** State Parks' natural resource greenhouse facility in Malibu Creek SP, the UCLA La Kretz Center at Rocky Oaks, and MRCA's Peach House in Ramirez Canyon Park.

**Landscape and habitat:** The loss of wildlife and the habitat they depended on is vast. Wooded canyons from Zuma/Trancas Canyons to the Simi Hills have been decimated; but wildlife will move in slowly and repopulate as their habitat grows back.

Burned Canyon

In the meantime, please heed park orders to stay on trails to help the land heal. Unstable conditions continue - boulders & rubble perched behind burned shrub skeletons, sinkholes from fallen and burned tree trunks, scraggly trail tread, continued sloughing of soil and rocks onto the trails. The positive side to all the destruction is that temporarily there are awesome vistas, and a super Spring flower show is growing. Be good trail stewards, enjoy them, and be safe.

By Melanie Beck



## *Chaparral Responses - continued*

Plants in the chaparral community adapted to fire long ago. Invasive plants and loss of habitat are tilting the odds away from the recovery of native plants after a fire. Drought worsened by a changing climate will further test these plants. The results may be that some plants are not likely to return within our lifetime.

Chaparral—a shrub area, mostly hardwood and evergreen, a dominant community of the Santa Monica Mountains.

Our chaparral environment is diverse and has adapted to a fire cycle. Fire in chaparral would occur every 30 to 100 years before suburban encroachment. Chaparral rebounds quickly with fires of this frequency. Trouble occurs when an area burns too often (three to ten years) because this consumes the seed banks. Non-native grasses and other non-native species often further their spread during this time. Invasive plants (mainly grasses) are good at burning while forcing many native plants out which can increase the risk of future fires.

This year is shaping up to be a spectacular year for flowers - make time to enjoy their beauty and observe some of these adaptations!

By George Sherman



### The Impact on the Wildlife

The chaparral and tangles of creekside vegetation in canyons that the lions use to move undetected through the mountain range were reduced to burned stumps and broken branches. The destruction of their habitat meant that the lions faced additional challenges to their survival, especially related to hunting. The fate of an alpha predator is inseparable from the fate of its primary prey. Temporarily at least, the mountain lions in the Santa Monica's will likely find fewer deer to eat, some radio-collared deer had perished while most escaped during the fast-moving fire, and because mountain lions are ambush predators that conceal themselves before pouncing on deer rather than pursuing their prey over distance, the loss of the chaparral and canopy will hinder their hunting success. In the short term, wildfires tend to be more disruptive than catastrophic for mountain lions. The animals adjust to the new normal by finding different routes through their territories. Surviving deer can begin to prosper, especially if they have access to nearby unburned areas to hide. The deer benefit both from the lions' loss of ambush cover and from the greater nutrition found in fresh growth emerging in charred areas. Thanks to decent rains, many burned areas in the Santa Monica's have started to green up with both non-native grasses and native shrubs, most of which sprouted quickly after the fire. Even before the Woolsey fire, mountain lions in the Santa Monica's faced existential challenges. The southern California mountain range is truly an island on the land for the cats. Hemmed in by the Pacific Ocean on the south and virtually separated by the 101 from neighboring Southern California ranges, the cats largely live in isolation.



## Meet Our Newest Board Member

**Mike Epler:** Joined the Board in January of 2019. Mike is an avid Trail Runner and Race Director for The Coyote Ultra Backbone Trail Run. Mike brings some serious grit (he finished an Ultramarathon stage race in the Gobi Desert) and organizational skills to the board.

## Save the Date!!

### Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council

### Anniversary Celebration

**May 5th, 2019 - 11am to 2pm**

#### Calamigos Ranch

11 am Social Hour - Visit with NPS, State Parks, MRCA, local officials and representatives from other government and trail organizations.

12pm Complimentary lunch for the trails community.  
Calamigos Ranch is located at 327 Latigo Canyon Road, Malibu  
**Please RSVP at [smmtc.org](http://smmtc.org) or (818) 222-4531**

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### Officers

<b>President</b> Ruth Gerson	<b>Secretary</b> Georgia Farinella
<b>Vice President</b> Barb Thomas	<b>Treasurer</b> Sheryl Phelps

### Directors

Don Brusselars	Jerry Mitcham
Steve Clark	Charlotte Pattison
Jeffrey Davidson	Anne Russell
Mike Epler	Lylene Sheets
John Kross	George Sherman

## PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Dues are on a rolling 12-month basis. Membership dues are effective the first of the month following receipt; membership will be effective for 12 months. Please make your check payable to SMMTC and mail it to PO Box 345, Agoura Hills, CA 91376 or you may use your credit card with PayPal.  
<http://smmtc.org/membership/>

*Thank you for your continued support.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
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City: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Check to have newsletter sent by e-mail

### MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

#### Individual Memberships

- Annual Membership — \$35
- Life Membership — \$360  
Life membership may be paid in three consecutive annual payments of \$120.

#### Business Memberships

- Supporter — \$100
- Patron — \$250
- Benefactor — \$500

Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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

## CONTACTS

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The Trails Council newsletter is published twice a year, in the Spring and Fall.