

Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council

Volunteer Information

Here are some of the most important things to remember when preparing for and participating in trail work events with the Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council.

Know Before You Go

Please call or text the leader in advance to receive specific information about the trail, meeting location, and to have your questions answered. It's important that leaders know ahead of time if you plan to participate—this ensures there are enough tools, seats in any vehicle shuttles, and that you can be contacted in case of changes due to heat, rain, or fire.

What to Bring & Wear

Bring your energy and your sense of adventure - we're happy to have you join us!

To help you stay safe and comfortable out on the trail, **here's what you'll need:**

Footwear: Most volunteers wear hiking or trail-running shoes with lug soles. **Hard-toed boots are best for protection.** Please **do not wear open-toed shoes or street shoes** - they're unsafe for trail work.

Gloves: Work gloves are essential. If you forget yours or don't have any, **don't worry - we've got a few spares!**

Sun protection: Bring sunscreen, a hat, and wear **long sleeves and long pants** - they'll protect you from sunburn, insects, and thorny plants.

Weather-ready clothing: Dress in layers and be prepared for rain, cold, or changing temperatures.

Water and food: Pack **plenty of water** - in hot weather, you may need **a quart per hour** - and bring **a lunch** to refuel. **From 11:30 to 12:00**, we take a well-earned break to enjoy lunch together. It's a time to share stories, swap favorite trail tales, and enjoy each other's company.

Leaving early is not always feasible - we often carpool, shuttle or hike to the actual work site.

Children or Dogs?

A parent or legal guardian must accompany any volunteer under the age of 18. If you are part of an organized group such as Boy Scouts, the organizations adult leader must accompany them. Their organization assumes the liability and therefore is the adult supervisor to sign for the group.

Leave pets at home.

Trail Work Advice – Day of

Plan on arriving 10 to 15 minutes early. When you arrive, the crew leader will greet you and provide a registration and liability form to fill out. These are state or federal liability forms and yes, they're long, but necessary. After that, we'll introduce you to the rest of the crew, go over safety procedures, divide into teams, and hand out tools.

We will stop working about 1:30. Earlier, if it gets too hot. Heat exhaustion and heat stroke are very serious threats when doing manual labor in warm weather. We plan to arrive back at the trailhead by 2:00 (with some variation).

Pace yourself. If you do not regularly engage in manual labor, trail work can tire you out fast.

Be wary of thorn-laden plants — they are prepared to strike when you least expect it (as when you become very focused on your work).

Poison Oak is often found on our trails. We will do our best to alert you to its presence.

Rattlesnakes are normally not a problem because they prefer to avoid you even more than you want to avoid them.

We are volunteers who love to volunteer!



Will This Be Your First Time Working with Us?

We've been in your shoes and understand the angst that can come with meeting a new group for the first time. We will do our best to make your experience both welcoming and rewarding.

When you arrive, the crew leader (whom you called as part of the sign-up process) will greet you and provide a registration and liability form to fill out. These are state or federal liability forms, and yes, they're long, but necessary. After that, we'll introduce you to the rest of the crew, go over safety procedures, divide into teams, and hand out tools.

If the day's primary task is brush clearing, a small team will handle cutting while others rake and move the brush off the trail. Hiding the brush so it's out of sight is just as important as cutting it, and other hikers shouldn't see piles of debris. If gas or battery-powered tools are in use, please stay back 20 to 30 feet for safety.

As you gain experience, you'll have the chance to try out new tools and take on other tasks that help give the trail that *freshly maintained* look.

Throughout the day, we'll help identify the plants we're trimming, point out poison oak (if we see it or expect to see it), and do our best to name the many wildflowers we come across.

From 11:30 to 12:00, we take a well-earned break to enjoy lunch together. It's a time to share stories, swap favorite trail tales, and enjoy each other's company. Our crew master, Dave, always brings a bag of chocolates—an assortment of sweet treats that never fails to lift spirits and bring smiles. It's a friendly gesture that has become a beloved part of our day on the trail.

At the end of the event, we gather the tools and return to our vehicles. An ice-cold, non-alcoholic beverage will be available for you, courtesy of the crew leader.

If we've done our job well, you'll head home seeing trails in a new way, knowing a few more plant names and facts, and—hopefully—we'll see you again on the next outing!