



President's Message

Welcome 2024! We've started the year with much-needed rain, refreshing our landscape and turning the mountains green, dotted with the beginnings of what will be a spectacular wildflower show. The Trails Council crews have been busy all over the area, trying to keep ahead of the growth and rain damage. The same can be said for the State Parks, NPS, and Conejo Open Space roads and trails staff. Landslides, creeks changing course, downed trees, and lots of growth are keeping everyone busy while also in awe of the power of Mother Nature. Please get out there and enjoy the incredible parks we have here in Southern California! I've lived in many places in this country and around the world (Thanks Dad and the Air Force!) and I can say that this is the only place I've lived where there is such a vast park system accessible to so many people.

We have some folks coming and going on our Board and within the National Park Service. Jerry Mitcham, long time board member, has stepped down from the board but will continue to volunteer as a crew leader and supporter of Trails Council activities. Jerry's many key roles have included Backbone Trek coordinator, co-coordinator of the trail work scheduling, assisting on Trail Days, training and mentoring students in the Trail Corps Internship program with CSUCI, and helping young men attain their Eagle Scout level. Jerry is a master trail engineer and builder. Thank you, Jerry for all your hard work; we're all better off because of your contributions! We also welcome new board member, Denise Pomonik! Denise is an avid hiker, backpacker, and mountain biker who is bringing lots of new ideas to the board. She started volunteering on the trails with the Santa Monica Mountains Task Force of the Sierra club. When asked why she

volunteers for trail work, she says, "I just love it. I'm outdoors, working with a great team, burning calories, and being a part of something that feels great – giving back to the trails that give me such peace and joy." If you've ever worked with Denise on the trails, you'll know that her energy and enthusiasm are electric! Welcome Denise!

[David Symanski, Superintendent of NPS](#) for our area, has taken an exciting new position to be NPS Regional Director for the Pacific West. David Schifsky will be acting Interim Superintendent.



Mark your calendars and register now, you won't want to miss out! Trails Council, the Task Force, and CORBA are gearing up for our annual **Santa Monica Mountains Trail Days, April 19 to 22**. This will be the 41st year for the event! It will be held deep in Point Mugu State Park with opportunities to camp or come and work Saturday and/or Sunday. There will be the BBQ Saturday night, with the thank-you gift drawings and a very exciting campfire program by Aaron Davis, one of the park's archaeologists and a former interpretive ranger of SAMO, talking about the rich history of the Santa Monica Mountains. We look forward to seeing you there!

Our annual Backbone Trek is full! Twenty-eight hikers will take on the challenge of the Backbone Trail, with moderate to difficult hikes over a week's timeframe. Hikers will only need day packs, meals are provided, and gear is driven into the various campsites. Hike leaders are experienced and knowledgeable about the flora and fauna of the area. Put this challenging trip on your bucket list!

We're looking forward to a productive year, with trail work, education, and outreach. Please join us for an outing or two. We promise it's fun and satisfying to see what a transformation you can give to a trail. For some of you, it will become a passion and addiction! See you on the trails!

Barb Thomas
Barb Thomas, President

41st Annual Trail Days!

SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS TRAIL DAYS



Point Mugu State Park

April 19-21, 2024

Come for a day, or the weekend!
No trail work experience needed!
There's a fun job for everyone!

**Help improve trails and
parks for all of us to enjoy!**

Santa Monica Mountains Trail Days is supported by California State Parks and National Park Service, sponsored by Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council, Santa Monica Mountains Task Force (Sierra Club), Concerned Off Road Bicycle Association, and many generous members of the local community.

www.smmtc.org/traildays

Trail Days is a blast!

You'll find more than just a trail to clear - you'll discover a community and a cause that will leave you wanting more. The vehicle escort descends into scenic Point Mugu State Park via Big Sycamore Canyon before arriving at Danielson Ranch. Along the way you get amazing views of canyons and peaks. Friendly organizers get you signed in and out onto a trail. Once you join a work party, strangers become teammates. Clearing and restoring trails is led by experienced crew leaders. They safely guided us along the trail. Sweat and camaraderie flowed freely, creating a bond for all to bring back to the ranch for the BBQ. Forget boring participation trophies, get ready for epic swag! There seemed to be a prize for everyone provided by the amazing businesses who support this event. Camp for free and do it all over again the next day. Highly recommended!!!

-Peter Sullivan



How does free camping at the Danielson Ranch in Point Mugu State Park, a barbecue dinner, coffee & bagels in the mornings and the chance to score one of a few dozen giveaways - in exchange for some much needed work on our trails, sound?

Come work with us for a day or two! We could sure use your help! We have been gathering together in April as hikers, runners and cyclists to work on the trails we love and use since 1981. Our crew leaders are from the Trails Council, the Sierra Club Task Force and CORBA will teach you the basics of trail work (if needed) and then guide you as we work on several different trails in the park. The recent rains have provided ample opportunity to repair stream crossings and washed out sections of the trail. In some areas you might be building or clearing drains or even re-routing the trail around sections of trail obliterated by rushing water.

Trail Work Report



Old Boney Trail, Can you tell it was cold before we began working?

Where We Have Been Working:

- Old Boney Trail
- Upper Sycamore Canyon
- Phantom Trail
- BBT Latigo & Kanan
- Musch Trail
- Serrano Canyon
- Channel Islands

Another exceptional year of rain has created conditions that will keep us busy repairing trails while reminding us that trails are not permanent. Our crew has become used to repairing a trail only to have a deluge of rain rearrange things. We will persevere - we know how important having safe trails is to all of us. Check out our work and then come join us!

Crew Leader Spotlight

Greg Sweel

Since 2008, Greg has volunteered nearly 3,000 hours with the Trails Council, averaging more than 200 hours per year. Most every Saturday from September to July, Greg works on a trail.

You can count on Greg to arrive early and be prepared for the day's mission. Wielding a brush cutter for hours on end, he precisely trims back brush and grasses. Greg is known for his high quality trail work.

When not volunteering, Greg is a dedicated peak bagger and geologist.



Photo: Denise Pomonik

Greg, cutting back the brush on the Phantom Trail

Signs Project Update



SIGNS PROJECT UPDATE - Jon, Ruth & crew continue to place signs in some key locations throughout Point Mugu State Park. More than 60 signs have been replaced with more to be installed as time permits.

We are fortunate to have the right volunteers for this job. All the planning which included gathering of data (by hiking every single trail at least once) photographing and geo-tagging each existing sign, working with State Parks, coordinating purchases of signs and then installations of those signs is a huge task. Jon Sheldon is very humble, so it is up to the rest of us to sing his praises when you pass by the new signs that he and the crew have placed!

Trail News

David Szymanski Takes On New Role As NPS Regional Director for the Pacific West

NPS Superintendent for over 11 years, David Szymanski, has moved on to an exciting new role as NPS Regional Director for the Pacific West. The region encompasses all parks in California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, parts of Arizona and Montana, and the territories of Guam, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands. The area includes 65 parks over 13 million acres. As our Superintendent, David worked with local communities, parks and protected areas. David has been passionate about preserving cultural resources, especially recognizing and respecting the Native American people who inhabit and are stewards of the lands we enjoy. David will continue to work from the area before moving to central California. Please see the NPS article [Pacific West Regional Director](#) for information about David's exciting new role. Congratulations David!



Ruth Gerson, President Emeritus with David Szymanski at David's farewell party.

David Schifsky, acting Superintendent, comes to us from Golden Gate National Recreation Area. A 29-year veteran of the NPS, David has a wide range of work and leadership experiences throughout the Pacific West Region, including at Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, Point Reyes National Seashore, and the regional office. He joined the NPS in 1994 as an intern with the Student Conservation Association at Canyonlands National Park. He went on to work as a park ranger at Wind Cave National Park, Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, Arches National Park, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, Point Reyes National Seashore, and Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. He served as the chief park ranger of both Point Reyes National Seashore and Golden Gate National Recreation Area prior to his current assignment. David is currently the deputy superintendent for Golden Gate National Recreation Area. David will begin at SAMO as the acting Superintendent on January 16 and leave on May 17, 2024. Bio provided by NPS.

Looking for a Volunteer Opportunity?

The Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency (COSCA) preserves, protects, and manages open space resources in the Conejo Valley.

Wildwood serves as the location for Trails Education Days (TED). This year close to 950 Conejo Valley Unified School District fourth-graders learned about local natural resources and wildlife. In small groups they take a guided hike into the canyon then rotate through interactive exhibits and educational presentations by experts in various fields related to conservation and ecology. If you are interested in volunteering at this year's event, to be held April 22-26, please fill out a volunteer application and list [Trails Education Days](#) under areas of interest.

Milt McAuley's Ceanothus Key



Milt McAuley

Flowers white, lavender or blue. Petals longer than sepals, clawed. Fruit is a 3 celled capsule
Ceanothus

Thin stipules (or none evident)
Fruits without horns on the 3 rounded apical segments

Leaves having 3 veins

Leaves saw-toothed
Hairy veins
Flowers lavender
Hairyleaf Ceanothus
Ceanothus oliganthus

Leaves having 1 vein, (sometimes 3)
Flowers white to blue.

Leaves entire - smooth margin, Flowers white to blue
White Thorn
Ceanothus leucodermis

Thick stipules
Fruit with horns on the 3 apical segments.
Flowers white

Most leaves alternate
Big Pod Ceanothus
Ceanothus megacarpus

Leaves entire, mostly flat
Buck Brush
Ceanothus cuneatus

All leaves opposite

Leaves hairy, revolute, rolled downward, Thick
Hairy-leaved Ceanothus
Ceanothus crassifolius

Did you know we had six species of ceanothus in the Santa Monica Mountains?

Board of Directors

Barb Thomas, President

George Sherman, Vice President

Peter Sullivan, Treasurer

Melody Reilly, Secretary

Don Brusselars

Jerry Mitcham

John Kross

Denise Pomonik

Roger Young

Ruth Gerson, President Emerita

Individual Membership

Annual - \$35 Family - \$60

Lifetime - \$360 Can also be paid over 3 consecutive years @\$120 per year

Business Membership

Supporter - \$100

Patron - \$250

Benefactor - \$500

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ ZIP _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____



Dues are on a rolling 12-month basis. Membership dues are effective the first of the month following receipt of funds; membership will be effective for 12 months. Please make your check payable to SMMTC and mail it to P.O. Box 345, Agoura Hills, CA 91376. Memberships can also be purchased on our website using Paypal.

Make a Donation?

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

Thank you for your continued support!

Generous Supporter:

Award Winning Luxury,
Fitness & Wellness
Retreat

THE RANCH
MALIBU™

OUR STORY

Since 1969, the Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council has been the only organization devoted to representing all trail user groups in the Santa Monica Mountains. We are a volunteer nonprofit organization, dedicated to establishing, preserving and maintaining the public trail system throughout the Santa Monica Mountains and adjacent areas through education, advocacy and partnership with public and private sectors.

We coordinate with various government agencies to enhance and preserve the trail system. We assist in negotiations with property owners regarding trail alignments. We promote public awareness and build, monitor and maintain trails.

Upcoming Events

Annual Dinner Meeting — October 24th

41st Annual Trail Days — April 19th to April 21st

Backbone Trek — May 4th to May 11th

Board Meetings (Currently held via Zoom)

Board Meetings are open to the public and are on the 4th Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm. There are 4 exceptions: No meeting in August; April meet on the 2nd Thursday; Nov & Dec, meet on 1st Thursday.

CONTACT US

Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council

Address: P.O. Box 345, Agoura Hills CA 91376

Phone: 805-885-7224

Email: mail@smmtc.org

Web Site: www.smmtc.org

George Sherman, Newsletter Editor

E-mail: mail@smmtc.org

REVISED: MAR 28, 2024

Our newsletter is published twice a year, in spring and fall.