



SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS TASK FORCE



FEBRUARY-MARCH 2016 - NEWSLETTER

JOINT MEETING - MARCH 7, 2016, 7:15pm

The Santa Monica Mountains Task Force & the West Los Angeles Group Management (David Haake, Chair) will have a joint meeting on Monday, March 7, 7:15pm, at the home of Ron and Mary Ann Webster, 9950 Farragut Drive, Culver City, CA 90232. All are invited to attend. Many important conservation issues are on the agenda.

GOING, GOING, GONE

After months of public controversy, the California Coastal Commission has voted to fire their Executive Director Charles Lester, at its recent (2/10/16) meeting in Morro Bay. It was apparent that several members of the Commission worked behind the scenes to force Lester's ouster. Private citizens and environmental groups, including the Sierra Club, rallied to Lester's defense and accused the Commission of being motivated by pro-development sentiments. The Commission received more than 20,000 written statements objecting to the termination. At Morro Bay, hundreds of speakers gave testimony, requesting that Lester be retained, but, to no avail. Director of Sierra Club California Kathryn Phillips stated that, "The Coastal Commission today has failed the public and the public interest. Rather than vote on Director Lester's clear performance with the Coastal Commission, the Commission has instead chosen to vote in line with developers and real estate lobbyists."

The Commission is composed of 12 voting members, of which four were appointed by Governor Brown, and all voted to remove Lester. Governor Brown has repeatedly declined to comment on the issue. The Coastal Commission is one of the state's most powerful regulatory groups. Getting rid of Lester is a drastic and unwarranted action and an enormous blow to environmental protection along the coastline. Latest update: A pair of San Diego lawyers just announced a lawsuit against the California Coastal Commission in an effort to get the agency to release documents related to the recent firing of Charles Lester.

RODENTICIDES

Our environmental friend, State Senator Fran Pavley, along with Assemblyman Richard Bloom, has just introduced AB 2596, a bill to ban the use of anticoagulant rodenticides in California.

Rodenticides are commonly used rodent poisons and are a major problem in our local mountains and throughout the state, but often end up eaten with fatal results by our wildlife, including mountain lions, foxes, bobcats, coyotes and some bird species.

It is unfortunate that AB 2596 would exempt agricultural use. But, this bill is an attempt to address the growing problem with rodenticide poisoning of the wildlife in our mountains.

RIM OF THE VALLEY

The completed Rim of the Valley study has been submitted to Congress. The plan proposes a 270,000 acre boundary adjustment to the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area which would include portions of the Los Angeles River, the Verdugo Mountains-San Rafael Hills, the San Gabriel Mountains foothills, Simi Hills, the Santa Susana Mountains, and the Conejo mountain areas.

Existing parks, such as Griffith Park, Hansen Dam Recreation Area, Sepulveda Basin, Los Encinos State Historic Park, Debs Park, El Pueblo de Los Angeles Monument, and Los Angeles State Historic Park, would serve as major portals into the Rim of the Valley Corridor area. The recommended expansion does not include any areas of the Angeles National Forest or San Gabriel Mountains National Monument. The proposed addition would provide recreational opportunities to a broad range of urban communities. Within the expanded area are habitat types that contribute to the high biodiversity of the archeological sites; geologic and paleontological resources, and thousands of acres of open space and recreation.

DESERT PRESERVATION

Three new National Monuments were designated in the California desert in mid-February by President Obama. Efforts to preserve our desert lands have been going on for a long time, so this is an important step forward. It is a critical step that these lands remain pristine. The three new monuments are the Mojave Trails National Monument, the Sand to Snow National Monument, and Castle Mountains National Monument.

Senator Dianne Feinstein has been a key figure in the efforts to protect our deserts. She will also introduce new legislation to implement provisions that monument designation does not include - many additional conservation areas.

MURPHY RANCH

The Murphy Ranch Area in Pacific Palisades has long been a destination for curious visitors. The graffiti-covered ruins at the abandoned Murphy Ranch in Rustic Canyon are legendary for their long and colorful history, which supposedly involved a group of Nazi sympathizers. The site is located in a wild tree-filled canyon and has been a popular hiking destination for a number of years. However, many of the ruins are in the process of being demolished and some of the minor structures are already coming down. The multi-structured compound has been an annoyance for Los Angeles City officials, and there have been safety concerns from residents in the area. The process had already started on a couple of minor structures. A member of Councilmember Mike Bonin's staff explained that only some of the more structurally unsafe buildings are coming down, but others will only get anti-trespassing additions, like metal plates on the window openings. The compound has been threatened with demolition in the past, and now this major demolition is a reality.

GLOBAL TEMPERATURE RECORD

Scientists report that earth's temperatures have reached the warmest level in more than a century. The data shows the upward trend, which scientists say is caused by the buildup of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide and methane in the atmosphere. President Obama's climate initiatives have included regulations to support the limit of CO2 emissions from power plants, and he has pledged to

reduce the nation's emissions of greenhouse gases. In 2015, global temperatures rose by 1.62 degrees Fahrenheit over the 20th century average.

WILDLIFE CORRIDOR PROJECT

The Sierra Club continues to support the Wildlife Corridor Project, and Caltrans officials have provided an overview of the project and design details. They will be asking for public input on the project in the months ahead. Environmental studies and project design phase is expected to continue through June of 2017.

The Liberty Canyon Wildlife Corridor would connect the Santa Monica Mountains and Simi Hills, helping to protect the safety and genetic integrity of wildlife populations in both areas. Scientists, biologists and other wildlife experts have stressed the critical importance of creating this key wildlife corridor. National Park Service researchers have documented serious threats to the long-term viability of local mountain lions if a connecting structure is not built. Twelve mountain lions have been struck and killed by vehicles in the National Park Service study area since research began in 2002, including a male mountain lion hit on US-101 near Liberty Canyon Road in 2013.

WE NEED HELP . . . PLEASE READ ON . . .

SIERRA CLUB SUES THE COASTAL COMMISSION

On December 10, 2015, the California Coastal Commission approved the Edge (U2 - David Evans) Development in the Malibu Hills of the Santa Monica Mountains. The Santa Monica Mountains Task Force (SMMTF) asked the Sierra Club to support a lawsuit against the California Coastal Commission (CCC). The Sierra Club has approved the lawsuit, filed on January 21, 2016, challenging the CCC approval of the flawed Edge Development.

The SMMTF is funding the lawsuit but we need your help, now. We can only continue the lawsuit if we get donations to pay legal expenses, including the attorney representing us, Dean Walraff. Any amount, large or small, will be an investment in protecting our environment. Thank you so much.

Please send checks made out to: SMMTF (Santa Monica Mountains Task Force)
Send the checks to: c/o Mary Ann Webster, 9950 Farragut Drive, Culver City, CA 90232.

SMMTF WEBSITE

Visit the Santa Monica Mountains Task Force website. You can access the website at and be up-to-date on all Task Force conservation news, scheduled activities, events, trail work, outings, and other timely information: smmtf.org/ Click on "Calendar"

If you have conservation news, events, photos or other Sierra Club related information that could be posted on the website, email full descriptions to our webmaster Bill Vanderberg, so he can evaluate these items for posting: bill.vanderberg@ca.rr.com

If you are receiving the SMMTF Newsletters by mail and prefer to receive future SMMTF Newsletters by email, please let us know by emailing Sue Palmer at: rumpuskat@sbcglobal.net

*Newsletter Written by Taskforce Management Committee Representatives –
MaryAnn Webster, Conservation Chair / Joan Weaver, Editor*

The Santa Monica Mountains Task Force is an activist committee dedicated to encouraging the protection of the Santa Monica Mountains while promoting the understanding and awareness of their natural values. The goals encompass maintaining open space and acquiring additional parkland. To achieve these goals, members participate in bi-monthly meetings, recommend policy on the Santa Monica Mountains, lead outings to acquaint the public with the mountains, build and maintain trails.

SMMTF ACTIVITIES – February-March 2016 – <http://smmtf.org/calendar.php>

Tue 3/1/16	O: Tue Tiger Hikers		Outing	Hike	Strenuous
Sat 3/5/16	O: Santa Monica Mountains Trail Work		Outing	Service/Stewardship	Moderate
Tue 3/8/16	O: Tue Conditioned Hikers: Santa Ynez, Musch, Garapito, Trailer Canyon Trails		Outing	Hike	Strenuous
Tue 3/8/16	O: Tue Moderate Hikers/Trippet/Eagle & Hub Junction/Garapito Trail to Eagle Rock		Outing	Hike	Moderate
Tue 3/8/16	O: Tue Tiger Hikers		Outing	Hike	Strenuous
Sat 3/12/16	O: Santa Monica Mountains Trail Work		Outing	Service/Stewardship	Moderate
Sat 3/12/16	O: Mishe Mokwa Trail to Sandstone Peak		Outing	Hike	Moderate
Sun 3/13/16	O: Baldwin Hills Ramble		Outing	Hike	Moderate
Mon 3/14/16	Bi-Monthly Meeting		Outing	Hike	Moderate
Tue 3/15/16	O: Tue Conditioned Hikers: Sullivan and Rustic Canyon		Outing	Hike	Strenuous
Tue 3/15/16	O: Tue Moderate Hikers/ Santa Monica's Hidden Staircases		Outing	Hike	Moderate
Tue 3/15/16	O: Tue Tiger Hikers		Outing	Hike	Strenuous
Sat 3/19/16	O: Santa Monica Mountains Trail Work		Outing	Service/Stewardship	Moderate
Tue 3/22/16	O: Tue Conditioned Hikers: De Anza Park		Outing	Hike	Strenuous
Tue 3/22/16	O: Tue Moderate Hikers/Parker Mesa Overlook (1530')		Outing	Hike	Moderate
Tue 3/22/16	O: Tue Tiger Hikers		Outing	Hike	Strenuous

Sat 3/26/16	O: Santa Monica Mountains Trail Work	 Outing	Service/Stewardship	Moderate
Tue 3/29/16	O: Tue Conditioned Hikers: Kanan Dume Road - Castro Peak Loop	 Outing	Hike	Strenuous
Tue 3/29/16	O: Tue Moderate Hikers - Bienveneda/Leacock Tr to Howard's Peak:	 Outing	Hike	Moderate
Tue 3/29/16	O: Tue Tiger Hikers	 Outing	Hike	Strenuous
Sat 4/2/16	O: Santa Monica Mountains Trail Work	 Outing	Service/Stewardship	Moderate