



FEBRUARY 2017 - NEWSLETTER

***SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS TASK FORCE
MANAGEMENT GROUP MEETING***

Monday, March 13, 7:15-9pm

Location: At the home of MaryAnn and Ron Webster
9950 Farragut Drive (cross Street Madison), Culver City, CA 90232
Phone: (310) 559-3126

HUGE VICTORY: Chesebro Purchase Approved

The State Wildlife Conservation Board recently approved \$3.35 million in funding to purchase Chesebro Meadow in Agoura Hills, which helps pave the way for the construction of a proposed wildlife overpass that would span the 101 freeway. This new route is crucial for the survival of mountain lions in the Santa Monica Mountains, as they live in a trapped-in space that is bordered by the sea and the freeways.

Chesebro Meadow, a 71 acre property that lies just north of the 101 Freeway at the southern end of the Simi Hills, has been caught up in a contentious 10 year battle between developers and environmentalists. The City of Agoura Hills was the latest titleholder to the property.

The Board's decision marks a big victory for conservation activists. As part of the \$7 million deal, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy will also be contributing \$2.55 million, and Los Angeles County will pay an extra \$1.1 million. State funds come from Proposition 50, a \$3.4 billion bond measure passed by voters in 2002 to pay for natural resources. The property will be managed by the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority.

The area in and around Chesebro Meadow is critical for the construction of the overpass that will span the 101 Freeway. The overpass, to be built near Liberty Canyon Road, will connect the Santa Monica Mountains with the Simi Hills, which are separated by the 101 Freeway. This bridge is crucial for the

mountain lions in the Santa Monica Mountains. Since the lions live in a shut-off space, they are more prone to inbreeding, which means they suffer from lower genetic diversity. All of this conspires to greatly compromise the health of their species. Researchers at the National Park Service recently released a report saying that the mountain lions will almost certainly go extinct if they are not given a chance to roam outside of the Santa Monica Mountains.

Senator Fran Pavley, of the 27th District, noted that Chesebro Meadow is adjacent to the proposed site for the overpass. Pavley said that the purchase is "a critical acquisition to protect against urban and incompatible encroachment into the wildlife corridor. Intended to be the largest wildlife crossing in the world, the estimated \$33 to \$38 million wildlife bridge will be privately funded.

Chesebro Meadow has now been renamed "Fran Pavley Meadow" after the former state senator, who was one of the main proponents of getting this purchase to happen.

MOUNTAIN LIONS: A Must Read

Check out the recent New Yorker Magazine article (Feb. 13-20; pp.44-51) for the excellent article "Valley Cats", by Dana Goodyear.

The article's focus is on the mountain lions in the Santa Monica Mountains, especially lion P-45, the name he was given in 2015, when he was captured and fitted with a GPS collar by the National Park Service before being re-released into the mountains.

The article centers on the recent controversy with lion P-45 due to the recent killings of alpacas and other domestic animals in the Santa Monica Mountains. The author also describes plans by the State of California to build a land bridge over the I01 Freeway at Liberty Canyon, in Agoura Hills to allow mountain lions and other critters to safely cross and give them more room to roam in the open space into the Santa Susana Mountains and on to the Los Padres National Forest.

ENVIRONMENTAL HERO: Jane Lewis

Task Force members recently "planted" a bench, in honor of Jane Lewis, at a location above the Garapito Trail at a site that features beautiful views of the mountains.

Jane, who passed away two years ago, was a veteran activist in the Sierra Club and was part of the original group who founded the Santa Monica Mountains Task Force in 1972. She was instrumental in our efforts to open parklands to the public. And, as a trail builder, she worked thousands of volunteer hours: sawing, lopping, preparing tread, and digging out roots to build new trails and maintain old ones.

Jane was also an experienced leader and led countless hikes in the Santa Monica's through the years, including a great many treks with the late Milt McCauley along the Backbone Trail.

She earned a badge from the Sierra Club for bagging 100 peaks, including Mt. Whitney.

The inscription on her bench reads:

"Jane Lewis - Trail Builder"
"In wildness is the preservation of the world"

GREETINGS ACTIVISTS

For those of you who want to keep up to date on actions that the Sierra Club resistance is taking with regard to the environmental disaster of the Trump Administration, we now have a web page dedicated to Sierra Club day-to-day resistance efforts. Please join us in our resistance efforts, for YOU are the resistance! <https://www.addup.org/resist> For the Resistance, Jim Hines

BACKBONE TRAIL FESTIVAL 2016

The proposal for a Backbone Trail goes back 50 years when it was mostly a figment in the imagination of early hikers. Milt McAuley, who had a Santa Monica Mountain peak recently named after him, is considered the Father of the Backbone Trail, being one of the initial ten hikers who plotted the route of the trail. In 1980, he wrote the seminal *Hiking Trails in the Santa Monica Mountains* and in 1990 wrote *Guide to the Backbone Trail*. Since his days the Backbone Trail has slowly extended across the Santa Monica Mountains through the efforts of the Sierra Club, the Santa Monica Trails Council, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, and others.

Many of the trail segments have been built by the Sierra Club's Ron Webster and his trail building crew. Work that continues to this year with a segment that created an end-to-end trail, finally. Over the years the Sierra Club Santa Monica Mountain Task Force (SMMTF) has been celebrating the Backbone Trail with a festival of weekend hikes in October. This year to celebrate the completion of the Backbone Trail, Sierra Club leaders decided to change the Backbone Trail Festival into a series of through hikes along the entire trail.

So, on Sunday November 19th Backbone Festival hikers finished the last leg of the series coming down the Ray Miller trail into La Jolla Canyon of the Point Mugu State Park. This was the culmination of four weekends (hiking both Saturday and Sunday) of hikes along the entire trail. The last leg of the Backbone Trail was 17 miles, the longest leg, and it had been threatening rain all day, but the rain would come later that night after their hike and the celebration at Neptune's Net was finished. There were sixteen who started and finished the last leg with six of these having completed all eight legs. The six had started hiking on Saturday, October 29th with 37 other hikers on the first leg out of Will Rogers State Park and had hiked the entire nearly eighty miles (additional mileage that includes 67 miles of the Backbone Trail).

Kim Yarnall had come all the way from Orange County each weekend to do all the hike legs, getting stronger on every hike with the 17-mile finish one of her longest treks. Brian Marks came from the Valley to walk the complete Backbone and had enjoyed all the legs, particularly the second hike in the rain. Paul Templeman, out of Topanga Canyon, had lived along the Backbone Trail for years, but now after completing all the legs said he understood the beauty and scope of the trail. He had brought his daughter, the group's youngest participant, on five of his eight legs. Kara Seuerwald, a mom from Palos Verdes, had taken a break from her boys' soccer matches for four Saturdays, to do the entire trail. Tatiana Toroyan from Los Angeles had hiked the complete trail with welcome boyfriend support on the last leg.

Participants came from all over Los Angeles and others from Orange, Ventura, San Bernardino, and other counties. In all there were 192 hike participants on this year's series of hikes, though only 83 actual individuals as 37 hikers did at least two legs with 23 of these hiking three or more. Sierra Club leaders stepped up big time to support the hikes with over 15 leaders supporting the various hikes. Sierra Club sections like the Wilderness Adventures, the Wilderness Travel Course, the Camera Committee, etc. were happy to be involved and to inform participants of their various activities.

Some of the Backbone Trail participants had never hiked in the Santa Monica Mountains. Many had never hiked the Backbone before. Others had hiked in the Santa Monica Mountains and had hiked around, near and over the trail, but hadn't quite grasped the concept of its entirety. Most were amazed at how out of civilization you were on these hikes. All were amazed at the diversity of the trails, the scenery, the views, and the beauty of the trails. So maybe it took a while to build, but to this year's Backbone Trail participants it was just in time.

NEW WILDERNESS ACRES

The signed Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP) permanently protects almost THREE MILLION ACRES of some of the most unique and ecologically and culturally important landscapes in the California desert. These nearly three million acres (about 4,375 square miles) of California Desert National Conservation Lands (NCL) are to be managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in such a way as to conserve and restore their "outstanding cultural, ecological, and scientific values."

SIGN UP NOW: Leadership Training Seminar

Offered just twice a year, the next Sierra Club Angeles Chapter Leadership Training Seminar is scheduled for Saturday, April 15, 2017. Apply by April 1st to guarantee a spot and learn all about the best leadership practices of our outings program. This all-day event covers group management, our ratings system, rules of conduct, safety, and much more, from presentations, breakout groups, and scenarios.

Location: Eaton Canyon Nature Center, Altadena, CA
Time: 7:30 am until 4 pm. There is a fee for the Training
Information at: <http://angeles.sierraclub.org/>

McAULEY PEAK

Just a reminder that we have a peak in the Santa Monica Mountains named in honor of the late Milt McAuley. Milt was a long-time member of the SMMTF, as well as a famed hike leader and guidebook author of locales in the Santa Monica Mountains. McAuley Peak (formerly Peak 2049) is 5 3/4 miles round trip and some 1850' total gain.

SOLAR with Sungevity and the Sierra Club

Join 1,300 fellow Sierra Club supporters in the rooftop revolution and go solar today. Send a message to the world: the clean energy future is now. With just one click you can begin to power your life with sunshine: www.sungevity.com/. When you go solar with the Sierra Club and Sungevity, you will receive a \$750 discount on the cost of your solar system and Sungevity will give \$1,000 to the Angeles Chapter of the Sierra Club.



PROJECT.....Coastal Litigation on Front Burner

The SMMTF has been instrumental in implementing a lawsuit on behalf of the Sierra Club (filed by Advocates for the Environment) against the California Coastal Commission, challenging its approval of the Edge Development Project near Sweetwater Mesa in the Santa Monica Mountains. As Peter Douglas, the former Executive Director of the Coastal Commission stated, the project is an environmental disaster. It should never have been approved.

The Edge development is the plan of David Evans (U2 musician) and his associates, who in 2005 purchased the 151 acre site on which he proposes to build five mansions. This land was zoned as open space and designated Environmentally Sensitive Habitat. Evans and friends had no reasonable expectation that they could legally develop the land and build houses on this open space. Yet they went ahead anyway.

Many environmental organizations have opposed the Edge Project, advocating that the site should be publicly owned and integrated into the surrounding parkland in the hills above Malibu and adjacent to National Park Service and Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy open space.

The Santa Monica Mountains Task Force is continuing to fund this lawsuit and needs financial help from the environmental community.

DONATIONS would help us continue to fight this destructive development in the Santa Monica Mountains. Please access the website (Advocates for the Environment) which gives an overview of the Edge project and instructions for donating.

Website: <http://aenv.org/coastal.html> Then press: Coastal Litigation

IMPORTANT MEETING

Malibu Creek Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study

There will be a public meeting on Wednesday, March 1, 2017, from 6-8 pm at the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District located at 4232 Las Virgenes Road, Calabasas, CA 91302.

A draft has been prepared by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the California Department of Parks and Recreation.

The study will address several problem areas, including the loss of connectivity to quality aquatic spawning and making rearing habitat rare for migratory species and disturbances to adjacent riparian, habitat due to construction of Rindge Dam and other upstream road crossings and small dams isolating reaches of Malibu Creek and tributaries in the watershed. Other concerns include reduction of natural sediment delivery during storms to reaches of Malibu Creek and tributaries, the Malibu Lagoon, Pacific Ocean shoreline, and nearshore environments...for over 90 years...and changes to the natural creek slope in the vicinity of Rindge Dam as a result of dam construction and sediment deposition. The purpose of the study is to establish a more natural sediment transport regime from the watershed to the shoreline in the vicinity of Malibu Creek within the next several decades and future efforts to restore migratory access to former upstream spawning areas for aquatic species and allow for safe passage from the Pacific Ocean.

The Malibu Creek Watershed is the largest coastal in the Santa Monica Mountains and is encompassed by one of the largest areas of protected open space left in southern California, the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.

Please plan to attend this important meeting. No reservations are necessary.

You can find these plans on the project web page:

<http://www.spl.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Projects-Studies/Malibu-Creek-Study/>

SIERRA CLUB ANNUAL AWARDS BANQUET, May 7, 2017, 5-10pm

All Sierra Club members are encouraged to attend the Annual Banquet of the Angeles Chapter. The date is Sunday, May 7, 5-10pm at the Brookside Country Club, Pasadena. The Santa Monica Mountains Task Force will have a table.

Everyone please mark your calendars for this fabulous banquet, which will celebrate the Angeles Chapter awardees, leaders, and volunteers for 2017. This is our most exciting event of the year.

We will be honoring all of our entities and leaders' achievements, meeting old friends and making new ones. We will cheer on the awardees. There will be speakers, presentations, awards, and Silent Auction Treasures. All profits will benefit the Angeles Chapter.

Reservations are \$40 per person (or \$400 for a table of 10). If you want to make a reservation, contact the Event Coordinator Donna Specht. Her email address: donnaspecht@juno.com . Or, you can download a reservation form on the Angeles Chapter Website at: angsc.org/banquet

If you have items to donate to the action, contact Stephanie Gross: madelinesmother@gmail.com

A number of plaques will be awarded this year to deserving individuals, both in the Sierra Club and in the community. Awardees this year include David Eisenberg, U.S. Representative Ted Lieu, Michael Sappingfield, Steve Lopez of the *Los Angeles Times*, Ron and MaryAnn Webster, and many others.

Looking forward to seeing you at the 2017 Awards Banquet!

LAST PRINTED COPY OF THE SMMTF NEWSLETTER

NOTE: Sorry! For snail mail readers, this is the last printed copy of the Santa Monica Mountains Task Force Newsletter that we will be able to send as a printed copy by snail mail. We will continue the online Newsletter, as usual.

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: smtmf.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:
Eric Edmunds, Chair / 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 2017 – <http://smtmf.org/calendar.php>

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|-------------|---|--------|---------------------|-----------|
| Tue 2/21/17 | O: Tue Conditioned Hikers: Chamberlain Serrano Mishe Mokwa Hike | Outing | Hike | Strenuous |
| Tue 2/21/17 | O: Tue Moderate Hikers/Danielson Monument Canyons Hike | Outing | Hike | Moderate |
| Tue 2/21/17 | O: Tue Tiger Hikers | Outing | Hike | Strenuous |
| Sat 2/25/17 | O: Santa Monica Mountains Trail Work | Outing | Service/Stewardship | Moderate |
| Tue 2/28/17 | O: Tue Conditioned Hikers: De Anza Park | Outing | Hike | Strenuous |
| Tue 2/28/17 | O: Tue Moderate Hikers/Malibu Creek Dams | Outing | Hike | Moderate |
| Tue 2/28/17 | O: Tue Tiger Hikers | Outing | Hike | Strenuous |
| Sat 3/4/17 | O: Santa Monica Mountains Trail Work | Outing | Service/Stewardship | Moderate |
| Tue 3/7/17 | O: Tue Conditioned Hikers: Malibu Creek, MASH, Paramount & Reagan Ranches | Outing | Hike | Strenuous |
| Tue 3/7/17 | O: Tue Moderate Hikers/Calabasas Peak & Red Rock Canyon from Stunt Road | Outing | Hike | Moderate |