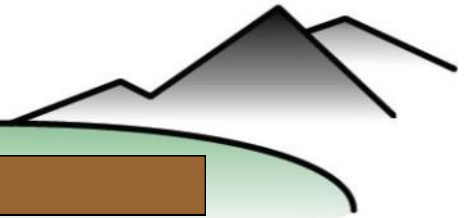


SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS TRAILS COUNCIL



FALL 2016

Opening the Completed Backbone Trail



Brad Sherman, Betty Weider and Arnold Schwarzenegger cut the ribbon to open the completed Backbone Trail. Julian Watkins photo

Story on page 2

Coming Events

2016

- Annual Dinner Meeting – October 27
Dinner & Meeting is open to the trail users community, at Calamigos Ranch in Malibu honoring Ruth Gerson. Please RSVP at www.SMMTC.org on or before October 12.

2017

- 36th Annual Santa Monica Mountains Trail Days – April 28-30 Danielson Ranch in Pt. Mugu State Park
- Backbone Trek - May 6-13

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.

PRESIDENT'S VISION

Honoring Our Volunteers

Volunteers are the backbone of any non-profit trail maintenance and advocacy organization. The Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council (SMMTC) has had some very dedicated volunteers through the years that have performed an array of functions to keep the Trails Council moving forward. Many of you reading this may have been volunteers at Trails Days or at our weekly trail maintenance sites. We are so grateful that people have taken their personal time to help maintain the trails. Many of these volunteers return week after week and literally put in hundreds of hours performing maintenance on the trails. **We will honor many of these volunteers at our annual meeting in October.**

There are other volunteers behind the scenes that are often overlooked, and I want to highlight and thank these folks. Their support includes keeping track of our finances, organizing the Backbone Trek, reporting on trail conditions for safety concerns, organizing Trails Days, working with local businesses and schools to support community service projects, maintaining our website, handling our insurance needs, organizing & recording our monthly Board meetings, recording minutes from our Board meetings, publishing our newsletters, and coordinating with other land agencies and non-profit organizations that support the trails. Board members perform these activities, and you can see their names on the last page of the newsletter. **I thank them for their contributions and encourage others in our membership to join us at our Board meetings and bring their unique talents to support the SMMTC Mission.**

I want to call out the contributions from our longest acting Board member and Past President, Ruth Gerson. Ruth has been supporting trails across the Santa Monica Mountains since 1974. Her advocacy for the balanced use of trails in partnership with landowners and land agencies is to be commended. Her passion for keeping the trails accessible for equestrians is unprecedented, and she is well respected by the land agencies for her years of service. We will honor Ruth at our annual meeting this year. **Please see the article on the Special Annual meeting and join us in honoring her contributions.**

Howard

Backbone Trail Completed

On June 4, 2016 the 67-mile Backbone Trail was officially completed with the cutting of a ribbon to mark the completion of a 40-year effort by officials, park agencies, volunteers and philanthropists.

One of the key actions to complete the trail was the generous donation of a 40-acre parcel in Zuma Canyon by former Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and fitness entrepreneur Betty Weider. The property, valued at more than \$500,000, represents the single largest

private donation for the Backbone Trail. "I am honored to accept this donation from two of our nation's most recognizable proponents of fitness and physical activity," said David Szymanski, superintendent for Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.

In addition to this recent donation, the route was assembled with more than 180 parcels, valued in excess of \$100 million. State Parks owns more than 60% of the BBT lands. "California State Parks is proud to have played a key role in protecting and preserving some of the most pristine and undeveloped sections of the Backbone Trail," said Craig Sap, district superintendent for California State Parks. "We congratulate all of the partners, including volunteers, who worked for so long to make this long-held dream a reality."

"The Backbone Trail has been a long journey to preserve, protect, and connect the parklands of these extraordinary mountains while providing recreational access for everyone who seeks the solace of nature here," said Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, executive director for the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. "Its completion is a testament to the strength of our shared values, the power of idealism, and so many determined people – quite literally – on their hands and knees with spades in hand navigating the twists and turns of topography, land acquisition, and political will."

The Backbone Trail traverses one of Southern California's largest remaining tracts of undeveloped landscape, a well-preserved mix of chaparral-covered hillsides, oak woodlands, and rocky outcrop spires. Many people were thanked for the countless hours of dedication and physical efforts they have put in to the BBT over the years, including Linda Palmer, Milt McAuley, Dave Brown, Ruth & Grant Gerson, Marvin Braude, Ron & Mary Ann Webster, Dick & Joanne Hubbard, Don & Jeanne Wallace, the SMMTC trail crews, and many others.

David Szymanski announced that the Secretary of the Interior has designated the BBT as a National Recreation Trail!



Annual Meeting and Dinner

Please join SMMTC for a very special Dinner and Annual Meeting open to the trail users community on Thursday October 27, 2016 at Calamigos Ranch in Malibu. Social hour begins at 6:00 pm and dinner will be served at 6:30.

We will be honoring long-time Trails Council member and former Trails Council President Ruth Gerson for her years of advocacy for trails and trail users and her dedication to the Trails Council. We have limited seating, so please RSVP at www.SMMTC.org. The deadline for RSVP is October 12, 2016.



Backbone Trek 2017 will use a new trail section

Backbone Trek 2017, May 6–13, will be the first since the National Recreation Trail designation of the Backbone Trail. It will also be the first time the trek will use the newest section of the BBT. Those who have done the trek in the past will recall that we had to coordinate with private property owners to gain passage through their gates on the Etz Meloy fire road. In 2017 we will bypass the gates on a new section of the BBT.

Registration for the Trek opens on February 1st, 2017 on a first come, first served basis. There are a limited number of openings and registration usually fills on the first day, so submit your registration promptly by mail.



Trail Supporter Dick Hubbard Passes

We are sad to report that the Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council founder and first President passed away on August 2 at age 89. With a few other trails advocates, Dick and Joanne Hubbard met in their living room in 1973 during which two great and lasting actions were adopted. This small group of activist neighbors founded the Trails Council and adopted the "Backbone Trail" as it's first priority.

Dick Hubbard was a visionary trails advocate and committed defender of the Santa Monica Mountains. Along with his wife and fellow trail activists, he guided this organization during it's formative years and established the procedures and activities that continue to animate the Trails Council today. He lobbied the County Board of Supervisors, organized coalitions of homeowner groups, the Boy & Girl Scouts, environmental organizations, horse clubs, political clubs, park agencies and just plain citizens to support trails and open space. It is remarkable that Dick's vision for his beloved Santa Monica Mountains has been largely realized. We who remain are grateful for Dick Hubbard's intellect, vision and hard work. We could never have employed a land-use attorney or professional lobbyist to devote the time and energy Dick volunteered. We cherish his wise counsel and friendship during his lifetime and honor his memory in death. We extend our sincere sympathies to Joanne and their daughter Jody.





BACKBONE TRAIL CHALLENGE RIDE
JULY 18 - 23, 2016 - Backbone Trail Cowgirls
 By Ruth Gerson

I decided to ride the entire BBT to publicize the trail, to show the great need for trail camps in our mountains, and because I am grateful that at 81 years I can ride that distance and enjoy it. I invited friends who had a sense of humor and horses that were trail savvy. Four women ranging in age from 45 to 74 years met my criteria.

We enjoyed many special things - trails & trail treads that were in great condition - rock formations of Old Boney seen from Blue Canyon Trail and Chamberlain Trail in Pt Mugu - views seen from the same place of the ocean and the valley from the top of Corral Canyon - riding up through the rocks and massive boulders of Saddle Peak Trail in Malibu Creek State Park - wonderful friends who previewed the trails for downed trees and removed them - friends who drove the horse trailers from campsite to campsite every day - friends who brought water at road crossings - friends who let us camp at their ranches - Calamigos Ranch for an amazing stay with cocktails, fabulous buffet, cabin with shower and beds - and many others who helped in myriad ways.

It was wonderful to have the support of National Park Service, California State parks, and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for this historic ride to publicize the Backbone Trail as a National Recreation

Trail since its dedication on June 4, 2016. We greatly appreciated the many small and big things that State Parks and NPS did to make it easier, especially SP putting up corrals at Trippet Ranch and NPS doing all the media and press.

We averaged 11.5 miles per day with lots of climbing. The two hardest days were the second one from Danielson Ranch in Pt Mugu to Yerba Buena Rd, and the fifth one from Monte Nido area to Trippet Ranch in Topanga SP. We rode the BBT from west to east as it's more climbing that way, which I prefer than going downhill due to my hip. I also like the views better in that direction.

Riders:

- Jeanne Wallace on 21 yr old Quarter horse, *Dill*
- Janet Peterson on 19 yr old Peruvian Paso, *Sunny*
- Kimberly Gustafson on 12 yr old draft Quarter cross, *Chief*
- Tracey Potter on 9 yr old Quarter, *Scooter*
- Ruth Gerson on 19 yr old Mustang, *Crystal*

Supporters:

- Calamigos Ranch // Harrison Maps // West Valley Horse Center // Bright Star Saddlery // Dr. Merle, Conejo Equine Vet
- Numero Uno Pizza, Agoura // Pollo Loco, Agoura // Park-WatchReport
- Non-Profits: SMMTC website & Facebook // Recreation & Equestrian Coalition vehicle fuel
- Media & Press; Ventura County Star - Acorn & Topanga newspapers - PBR KPCC - KTLA channel 5 -

My more detailed report on the ride and trail is on our website, or contact me at 818-991-1236, ruthgerson@aol.com

Many thanks for the help and support from all the volunteers and parkland agencies on our achieving success on the Backbone Challenge Ride. We greatly appreciated all you did in every small and big way.

We had a great time and really laughed our way across the Backbone Trail.



Trail Maintenance Report

From August 15, 2015, through September 1, 2016, a total of 778 volunteers performed 4,625 hours of trail maintenance in the Santa Monica Mountains and nearby areas.

Agency	# of Events	Volunteers	Labor Hours	Feet	Miles
CINP	5	18	442	107420	20
COSCA	3	29	133	4220	1
MRCA	1	20	69	1500	0
NPS	17	150	821	33959	6
SMMTC	2	6	47	0	0
State Parks	51	555	3114	148259	28
Totals	79	778	4,625	295,358	56

- CINP - Channel Islands National Park
- COSCA - Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency
- MRCA - Mountains Recreation and Conservation Agency
- NPS - National Park Service
- State Parks - California State Parks



Michelob Ultra - The Extra Mile

The Trails Council provides benefits to the local trails like trail maintenance and grants for community projects within the trail system throughout the Santa Monica Mountains. We need your support to get more funding and we have a great opportunity to get funding for the Backbone Trail.

Please vote for our Backbone Trail on <http://www.michelobultra.com/theextramile.html>

After entering your birthday and putting in your name and email, you will get a reply to confirm and only when you enter your birthday again will your vote be counted.

The trail with the most votes gets the most money!
 Please act now so we can get more grant money for Backbone Trail improvements. Thanks for your support. And SHARE this with your friends.



California Trails and Greenways Conference

This April, SMMTC Vice-president Barb Thomas participated in the California Trails and Greenways Conference in Riverside as part of a panel on Sharing Our Trails along with moderator Jim Meyer from Trails for All, Steve Messer from Concerned Off-Road Bicyclist Association (CORBA), and Ingrid LeMasters from Equestrian Trails Incorporated (ETI). Each participant presented trail courtesy from the perspective of different users with Barb representing hikers/trail runners. The Sharing Our Trails trail etiquette brochure served as the basis of the presentation. This brochure was created in conjunction with SMMTC, CORBA, and the Conejo Open Space Foundation and is available at www.smmtc.org under Resources. Following the presentation was an open panel discussion where the audience queried the panel on implementing appropriate etiquette in their areas and there was open sharing on issues that we have in common and how to resolve them.

The meeting was an opportunity to explore the many challenges and opportunities facing trail managers and users. Conference speakers noted the challenges of managing trails in dense urban settings including increased user demand, urban encroachment, challenging demographics, shrinking budgets, and climate change. Our newly dedicated 67-mile Backbone Trail exemplified progress made by agencies and grassroots efforts. Joe Edmiston (Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy), Craig Sap (California State Parks), and David Szymanski (National Park Service) gave a luncheon presentation on the Backbone Trail and announced that it was recognized as a National Recreation Trail.



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WHAT'S BEST FOR YOU?

A paper copy of this newsletter *OR* an electronic copy?

Please let us know by emailing to mail@smmtc.org

PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Dues are on a rolling 12-month basis. Membership dues will be 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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Check to have newsletter sent by e-mail

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

Individual Memberships

Annual Membership — \$35

Life Membership — \$360*

Business Memberships

Supporter — \$100

Patron — \$250

Benefactor — \$500

Donation \$ _____

* Life membership may be paid in three consecutive annual payments of \$120. SMMTC

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