

Meeting summary for Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council April, 2026 Meeting (4/23/2026)
Via Zoom

Directors Present: George Sherman—President; Don Brusselars — Vice President; Peter Sullivan—Treasurer; Roger Young—Secretary; Ruth Gerson—President Emeritus; Robert Bittner, Denise Pomonik, Livia Szoke

Directors Absent/Excused: Vanessa Ting

Guests Present: Barb Thomas—Past President, Geoff Grant — Scouts, Rachel Glegg—Sierra Club, Dave Edwards.

Park Staff Present: Neli Navarrete, Lei De Vera—NPS

Approval of Previous Minutes

George called the meeting to order as President at 7:01 PM. Peter made a motion to approve the previous minutes and the minutes were approved

Treasurer's Report

Peter presented the treasurer's report, noting total assets of \$166,403 at the end of March, with receipts of \$10,106.24 and expenses of \$12,420.61, resulting in a net deficit of \$2,314.37. George asked about the transfer of the \$10,000 Treasure Bond and it has not yet been converted to cash. Peter reviewed Assembly Bill AB221, which aims to modernize non-profit status requirements and improve compliance processes. Don made a motion to support this bill by lending our logo and name to the California Nonprofit Association's efforts and the motion passed.

Agency Reports—NPS

Neli gave the following update:

- Thanks for the April 4th work day with SMMTC
- Chesebro Canyon brushing is complete in preparation for a race.
- Repairing Sandstone steps is in process as is work removing rocks on Sandstone Road
- Trail clearing from Mishe Mokwa to Split Rock is in process
- SAMO fund crew is working on the Backbone from Kanan going west
- Repairs to signs at RSV have been completed
- Ruth noted branches that need to be cut in Paramount Ranch on their trails.

Agency Reports—State Parks None

Agency Reports—LA County Parks and Recreation None

Agency Reports—SAMO Fund None

President's Report

Presidents Report Trail Days 2026 was another success for our organization. This event is only possible because of the tremendous time and effort contributed by our volunteers. Barb and her team rose to the challenge, navigating the whirlwind of last week's activities and then carrying that momentum through to a strong finish as Trail Days 2026 concluded on Sunday. All of our crew leaders supported this event, and a majority of our Board Members played a role as well. This is the Trails Council's largest public event, and if you weren't able to take part this year, we'd love to have you join us next time.

I would be remiss in saying this but our board has the highest participation rate in Trail Days and trail work in general. Thank you for being a big part of our success.

California State Parks asked us to take part in a survey that seeks to distribute \$100 million dollars from the California Climate fund for trails. Website CaliforniaTrailsSurvey.com – the survey is open until April 30th.

All good things don't simply end—they evolve and take on new forms. We're beginning to see some of that transition now, as crew leaders face health challenges, reduced mobility, and the natural limits of long-term participation. Our core group continues to lead events nearly every weekend from September through June, which is a remarkable commitment.

Some of our crew masters - and their trucks -will be stepping back in the coming years. As these leaders retire, it will inevitably affect the number and scale of events we're able to offer. The Trails Council can plan ahead by recruiting and mentoring new leaders, expanding resources, or adapting event organization—to ensure we continue this important work into the future.

We've been focused on trail work since the completion of the Backbone Trail in 2016. We're going to check out other possibilities to push our mission forward in the next few months.

This is an exciting time to be on the Board of Directors as we make adjustments, both large and small that will impact our future.

Trail Days

Barb reported that we had 235 people on Saturday and 197 showed which was an excellent turnout. 136 of 183 sing-ups turned out on Sunday. State Parks and National Parks Service

provided amazing help. The afternoon and evening presentations from the agencies were excellent.

There were several conflicts with this year's event so we are looking at the first week of April rather than the third week of April.

Rachel Glegg agreed with moving the timing earlier in April. Dave mentioned that moving Trail Days earlier would give us more time to prepare between Trail Days and the Backbone Trek.

Roger mentioned an incident with a biker on Hidden Pond trail and suggested that at future Trail Days the Park Ranger post themselves at trail heads where work is being performed to observe violations of park policy.

Barb reported on an incident with a trail worker who's family member was worried about their whereabouts and called Riverside Search and Rescue who called us.

Barb also talked about the need for sufficient power at the camp.

Trail Maintenance George that since last month we have worked over 665 hours on trails including on the Channel Islands. George reported on Nicholas Flats

Trail Corps George reported that we continue to see low attendance from Trail Corps members.

Backbone Trek May 2-9

Don reported on the Backbone Trek. All spots are filled. We have multiple people driving the truck and Barb reiterated that every driver has to be registered with Hollywood Storage. Dave reported that all hike leader assignments are confirmed.

Social Media, Membership, and Outreach

We will do another outreach event with REI corresponding with their sale events. We will set something up with REI and at Satwiwa during our July/August break.

Denise also plans to talk with Nat at Arcteryx to place an SMMTC banner at their stores as part of their support for us.

Denise mentioned shirts, tote bags, or buttons saying "Ask me about SMMTC". She also mentioned that the new banner was at Trail Days and we have positive comments.

Facebook is going well with lots of comments.

An REI employee interested in trail work is Caelan Jack who also does documentaries and is interested in doing something about us for free. Vanessa and Denise will have a call with him on May 11th.

George reported a request from Vanessa for a survey follow-up to Trail Days volunteers.

Annual Dinner

George is asking the board to consider what would be a reasonable cost per person for the dinner. Last year's dinner was about \$165 per person. Ruth said that Calamigos is willing to take whatever we'd like to pay for the event. George encouraged anyone with relevant experience for the cost of events like this to provide feedback for him.

Chumash Museum

George suggested a donation or membership to the museum. Roger made a motion that we donate \$500 to the Chumash Indian Museum by Lang Ranch. Denise seconded and the motion passed.

Web Site

George mentioned changes in our web site including the scout project and La Jolla signs.

Scouts

Geoff reported on our joint efforts with Scouting BSA. He gave big thanks to Jerry and Barry who provided direction and then encouraged the scouts complete the work. His troop 67 worked on two of the puncheons. This was one of the most rewarding Eagle Scout projects that he has worked. One of the scouts also created a scale model to help future scouts. We are working on having the scout present to the SMMTC board for future projects.

Geoff is an investment advisor with Merrill Lynch and works with the California Community Foundation and other donor advised funds. The Foundation has their own fund and helps givers find donor advised funds for others. George asked about assistance with grant writing and Geoff mentioned potential connections to retired executives. One potential connection is Jeff Lapin who is a retired executive. Geoff also mentioned Tom Means, Mayor of Moorpark as a potential local connection for the SMMTC and said that the new owners of the Palisadian Post <https://palipost.com/> are friends of his and would be willing to publish news about SMMTC.

News and Announcements

Peter mentioned that he has a truck in case we need more capacity to carry tools. Roger noted that we had approximately 2,000 volunteer hours during trail days. Roger also asked Rachel to talk about their efforts to accumulate photos and videos for training and outreach-Rachel will talk with Denise. George mentioned that Milt McAuley is the only former board member with a local peak named after him (off of Mesa Peak Motorway). Don asked that we find a repository

for 14 boxes of SMMTC history that we need to clear out of his garage now that his remodel is underway.

George adjourned the meeting at 8:36 PM.