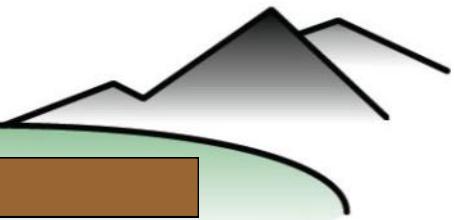


# SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS TRAILS COUNCIL



FALL 2015



A combined effort of SMMTC and COSCA built the Elliott Mountain Trail.

## Birth of the Elliott Mountain Trail

In February 2015, the Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency (COSCA) board of directors voted to name a geographic feature in the Conejo Open Space in recognition of Burt Elliott's many years of selfless volunteer service to COSCA. Burt also worked tirelessly with the Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council (SMMTC) and many other trails and conservation organizations. The selected feature, a peak in the Western Plateau area, has

*Continued on page 2*

## Coming Events

### 2015

- Annual Dinner Meeting – October 22

### 2016

- 35th Annual Santa Monica Mountains Trail Days – April 22-24  
Danielson Ranch in Pt. Mugu State Park
- Backbone Trek – April 30 - May 7

### 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

### *A Call for Your Support*

The trails in the Santa Monica Mountains have seen a dramatic increase in usage. For those who have visited the trails over the years, we have seen signs of this popularity putting extra stress on the trails, private land-owners and public agencies that manage these beautiful places.

We need to recognize these impacts and take the necessary actions to ensure that the trails are maintained, remain safe and continue to be accessible to the public. One example of the public responding to this need is where REI made a large donation in support of improvements to the Backbone Trail.

Public support for the trail systems from large companies is a cornerstone to getting funding to support creation and maintenance of the trails, especially as we have seen State and Federal agencies continue to have limited and decreasing budgets. The Trails Council appreciates REI for taking a leadership role in supporting our trails and looks to other companies to step up to provide this kind of support to the trail user community.

Here are some of the ways the Trails Council has applied donations in 2014 and 2015.

- Supported the Eagle Scout project to refurbish the La Jolla Valley Backcountry campsite with new picnic tables and food storage bins, replacing those destroyed in the Springs Fire.
- Purchased tools to conduct trail maintenance
- Provided funding for an inner city youth organization to attend Trail Days
- Provided funding to purchase a tree in the Thousand Oaks Botanical Garden in honor of Burt Elliot
- Hosted the Annual Trail Days event with overnight camping and a free barbecue, with 130 people attending and over 90 working on the trails

The Trails Council needs and appreciates your continued support to ensure future generations can enjoy these natural resources. Thank you for working on the trails and for your generous donations.

Happy Trails and see you on the trails or at our annual meeting at King Gillette Ranch on October 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Howard Cohen

been named “Elliott Mountain.” The peak overlooks spectacular views of the Santa Rosa and Conejo valleys.

It seemed fitting that there be a trail leading to such a prominent feature. Therefore, the SMMTC trail crew stepped forward and offered to help plan and build the “Elliott Mountain Trail” as a tribute to our past leader.

COSCA planned and flagged the new 0.3-mile trail and hired a professional crew to clear out the bushes in order to establish the new route. The trails council planned and organized a volunteer crew to cut in a flat trail with a four-foot tread and build a switchback on the new route. On May 30<sup>th</sup>, a crew of 31 volunteers, joined two COSCA Rangers at the Hill Canyon Bridge, to undertake the project. The volunteer crew consisted of SMMTC trail crew and local geocaching enthusiasts. All the volunteers worked tirelessly, and there were many “Burt Elliott stories” to be heard. By the end of the six-hour workday, the project was completed.

Burt was an avid geocacher and was known and admired by most other geocachers in the local community. Local geocachers knew Burt by his geocaching moniker of “Big Eagle,” a very fitting name. He had boundless enthusiasm for the game and eventually logged over 15,000 geocache finds. As a further and more lasting tribute to Burt, a new geocache named, “Big Eagle’s Roost,” was placed on Elliott Mountain.

While you are enjoying the views from the peak, if you look skyward, you might see a soaring eagle high above watching you.

Here is a link to a video honoring Big Eagle, created by one of his geocaching friends:

[YouTube Link to Burt's Video](#)



## Call for Volunteers

On Sunday, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015, the Trails Council will host an information booth at the Thousand Oaks Street Fair. Our objective at this event will be to heighten awareness of our organization in the community, attract new members and volunteers and collect donations. The event runs from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Additional volunteers are needed to staff the booth. This is an interesting activity and opportunity to meet neighbors and new friends and hopefully attract new Trails Council members. Volunteers may serve for a shift of two to five hours. If you are interested in participating, contact Jerry Mitcham at (818) 406-1269.



## Save the Date!!

The 35<sup>th</sup> Annual  
Santa Monica Mountains Trail Days  
April 22 - 24, 2016

## Restoration of the Eagle Ridge Trail

On June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015, The Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council joined with two new partners, Island Packers and The North Face to begin restoration of the Eagle Ridge Trail on Santa Cruz Island, in the Channel Islands National Park.

The Eagle Ridge Trail, about 0.7 miles up Navy Road from the pier at Prisoners Harbor, not maintained in over ten years, had become impassable. Restoration of this trail, now partially completed, will provide more hiking opportunities in the island’s isthmus area. When presented with the idea, the National Park Service readily agreed.

Crewleaders from the Trails Council provided training and supervision of the work. Island Packers provided transportation to the Island, and The North Face staff provided much of the labor for the project. The total volunteer work force on June 18 numbered 24!

Early in the morning of the 18<sup>th</sup>, an advance party of SMMTC crew began work on the project. They used power tools to cut through the dense brush, leaving cuttings on the ground for other volunteers to clear away. The day volunteers from Island Packers, The North Face and Trails Council departed Ventura Harbor at 9:00 AM on the Island Packers boat for their trip to Prisoner’s Harbor, arriving around 11:00 AM. Upon arrival, the volunteers were shuttled to the work site, where a safety briefing was conducted and the project work tasks were described.

Tremendous enthusiasm was displayed as the volunteers grabbed their tools and plunged into the tasks. Although the work was hard, the volunteers attacked it with good cheer. They exhibited high spirits and many new friends were made. The work day was short but intense, terminating around 2:00 PM to catch the return boat to Ventura. There were many smiles and looks of satisfaction as we looked back on the work we had accomplished. It was a great start with almost a quarter mile of new trail. There is still about a mile of trail to be completed in future trips.

Many thanks to all those volunteers who gave of their time and energy to work on this project.



**Save the Date: 4th Thursday of October**

## **ANNUAL MEETING**

The Trails Council Annual Dinner Meeting will be held  
**Thursday, October 22, 2015**

at King Gillette Ranch, 26800 Mulholland Hwy, Calabasas, CA. Follow the arrows to the Dorm Dining Room. The meeting provides an opportunity to meet people who share an interest in trails. Members and trail enthusiasts are invited to bring their spouses and friends. The social hour begins at 6 pm, followed at 7 pm by a complimentary dinner hosted by the Trails Council. The meeting will start at 7:45 pm.

Please RSVP by Monday, October 19 to [AnnualMeeting@smmtc.org](mailto:AnnualMeeting@smmtc.org) with your name, phone number and how many in your group.

## **2015 Backbone Trek**

By John Kross

The 2015 Backbone Trekkers met on Saturday, May 3, at Thornhill Broom campground for an evening of introductions, instructions and dinner. There were 24 hikers. The weather was in the low to mid 60's, and stayed in that range throughout the trek.

After spending the night lulled by the sounds of the ocean while sleeping in our tents, we began Sunday morning setting up the breakfast and lunch spreads, nourishing our bodies, then taking down camp.

We started hiking at 8:30AM, up the Ray Miller trail, with magnificent views of the ocean and distant views of some of the Channel Islands.

Over the next seven days, nature provided us with incredible flower shows. As we hiked along, identifying the various flowers became in itself a source of conversation, since many of our hikers and hike leaders are flower aficionados.

We marched along a number of ridges and through canyons that form micro climates, constantly changing the vegetation and flowers, making a never-ending source of discovery and conversation.

The views are also constantly changing. As we reached Saddle Peak, we enjoyed the distant city views of Santa Monica and Los Angeles, reminding us that, as we hiked west to east, we are slowly getting back to civilization.

The last day we stopped for a snack, as we always do, under the Lone Oak tree just a couple of miles from Will Rogers State Historic Park in Pacific Palisades. Afterwards, we continued on to WRSHP, where our trek ended, leaving us with a great sense of accomplishment and, a sense of bonding among new-found friends.

## **Trail Maintenance Statistics**

From September 1, 2014, through August 31, 2015, volunteers performed 5,298 hours of trail maintenance over nearly 38 trail miles in the Santa Monica Mountains and nearby areas.

In addition, 18 SMMTC volunteers performed 113.5 hours of outreach, training and other administrative support.

Agency	Volun-teers	Labor Hours	Distance	
			Feet	Miles
COSCA	62	320	15,284	2.89
MRCA	19	78	4,000	0.76
NPS	112	494.5	20,108	3.81
NPS C. I.	41	583.5	74,545	14.12
State Parks	662	3,822.5	84,635	16.03
<b>Totals</b>		<b>5,298.5</b>	<b>198,572</b>	<b>37.61</b>

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

The chart below lists crew members who volunteered nearly 50 hours or more on trail work and supporting efforts from September 1, 2014, through August 31, 2015.

Crew Member	State Parks	NPS	COSCA	NPS C. I.	MRCA	SMMTC*	Total Hours
1 Jerry Mitcham	291.0	65.5	25.0	56.0	4.0	27.0	468.5
2 Dave Edwards	264.5	49.0	19.0	81.0	4.0	14.0	431.5
3 John Kross	210.0	44.5	22.0	77.5	0.0	17.5	371.5
4 Barry Dydyk	203.5	43.0	16.0	82.0	6.0	0.0	350.5
5 Sharon Simmonds	224.5	51.0	21.5	0.0	4.0	0.0	301.0
6 Norm Simmonds	249.5	36.5	11.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	297.0
7 George Sherman	193.0	34.5	9.5	23.0	0.0	14.0	274.0
8 Greg Sweel	72.5	12.0	10.0	51.0	6.0	3.0	154.5
9 Virginia Grue	100.5	12.5	18.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	131.5
10 Barb Thomas	60.0	21.5	15.5	3.5	0.0	14.0	114.5
11 Mark Simril	71.0	0.0	0.0	31.0	0.0	0.0	102.0
12 Dave Perlmutter	51.0	8.0	0.0	31.0	0.0	0.0	90.0
13 Michael Davison	58.0	4.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	14.0	76.0
14 Casey Gonzalez	45.0	11.5	14.0	0.0	4.0	0.0	74.5
15 John Reyes	6.0	0.0	0.0	51.0	0.0	0.0	57.0
16 Anne Russell	42.0	4.0	0.0	3.5	0.0	0.0	49.5

\*SMMTC volunteer hours are for Outreach, Training and other non-agency hours



Find us on



## Illegal Marijuana Plantations in Cold Creek

Marijuana growing operations have been found recently on public lands in the Cold Creek area. These activities do great harm to habitats and wildlife in our mountains. Growers dam up streams and divert water into plastic-lined pits, depriving plants and wildlife of precious water. Rodenticides and other poisons are used to kill any animals that might eat the plants. The growers, frequently armed, live with the plants until ready for harvest. When the plants are harvested, all trash, pots, irrigation lines, plastic sheeting and poisons are left behind. Often, small animals fall into the water pits and cannot escape.

Those who use the trails could be very helpful in protecting our environment by looking for signs of these "grows" and reporting them to parks officials. Take note of any streams that suddenly stop flowing. This could be an indication that water is being diverted.

Cut branches piled up at the edge of a trail could be hiding a new trail that accesses the planting site. Installation and maintenance of plantings requires frequent access and may increase nighttime activity at trail heads.

Suspicious signs should be reported to California State Parks, Angeles District dispatcher at (951) 443-2940. Report the location, such as trail name, closest road and type of activity. **Do not try to interact with the growers as they are dangerous and often armed.** If the operation is not on State Park land, State Parks will relay the information to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority or the National Park Service.



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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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](mailto:mail@smmtc.org)

## PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 2016

Payments in October and later are credited to the following year. Dues are on a calendar year basis. 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: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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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 annual payments of \$120.

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

## CONTACTS

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