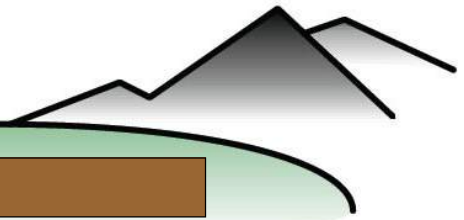


SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS TRAILS COUNCIL



FALL 2017

The Backbone Trek's Secret 'Glue'

Last May's Backbone Trek, a seven-day, 65-mile hike run by SMMTC since 2001, was Diana Savage's fifteenth time serving as "the glue that makes the group hold together," as the former teacher describes her role.

Diana is quick to give credit to the Trek's master planner and event coordinator Jerry Mitcham for the big-picture, long-term logistics. "The reason this walk happens is Jerry," says Diana. "I just make sure everyone does what they're supposed to do."

But her role as the BBT's camp coordinator involves planning all the breakfasts and lunches and wrangling the volunteer cooks for hot dinners, which is a big effort for an event that draws about 25 participants, plus three leaders and five or so support crew. "Every day the coffee is ready at 6:00 a.m. exactly," Diana says proudly. "I'm really only one small part, but it's an important part." That's a fact no hungry hiker would dispute.

Continued on Page 3

PRESIDENT'S VISION

Commitment - Education - Collaboration - Service

Throughout the past 45 years, the Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council has spread the word that our public trails are vital for the strength of our physical, emotional and spiritual health.

Trails Council members and supporters are essential to achieving our mission and goals to protect and preserve the area's resources so as to make them accessible for the general public to enjoy. You are the underwriters of our mission with your financial support, your physical work, your trail skills and your loyalty. As a stewardship organization, we protect trails, engage in public outreach, train volunteers, work with other trail organizations, and collaborate with dedicated, public land agency partners.

Prevailing over challenges are part of an organization's achievements. We have faced difficult issues before, whether deciding how to repair a trail so it becomes more sustainable, or where to spend our funds so they are used in the most judicious manner. It is fortunate that we have so much public land to enjoy over a diverse geographic area. However, that also means that the Trails Council has an immense number of trails on which to work. We can always use your support in whatever way you can give so that we can meet all the trails' challenges.

Providing a safe trail for the public's recreation is paramount for the Trails Council. Buying tools and supplies with your financial support, as well as your physical participation in repairing and building trails, is always needed and greatly appreciated. No matter your age or ability, every person with a tool is a big help on the trails. Remember, too, the exercise benefits your health.

Although some national public lands are being considered for reduction in size, and consequently that land would be removed from public protection, it is my hope that all trail users will mount serious support for keeping our public trails and our public lands intact for the public benefit and use.

Each of your contributions is a critical element to maintaining safe trails for present and future generations of public land users so that your legacy is limitless. You can be extremely proud to be a part of the Trails Council, an organization that continually contributes to the general welfare of the community. Thanks to each of you for being one of the essential pieces of the Trails Council's success.

Ruth

Upcoming Events

- **Annual Dinner Meeting – October 19**
6pm social, 7pm dinner, 7:45 meeting
Dinner & meeting are free and open to the trails community. RSVP online at smmtc.org. Agoura Hills/Calabasas Community Center, 27040 Malibu Hills Rd, Agoura Hills
- 37th Annual Santa Monica Mountains Trail Days April 27-29 2018
- Backbone Trek – May 2018

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.

Upper Sycamore Trail Restoration

This fall, the SMMTC volunteer trail crew will undertake a major trail restoration project on the Upper Sycamore Canyon Trail in Point Mugu State Park.

In December of 2014, an intense rainstorm severely damaged this section of the trail. The damage consisted mainly of a washout, occurring when a large volume of water cascaded down a steep slope, eroding away a section of trail including a set of rock steps. Our trail crew performed some temporary repairs, which were suitable for hikers, but did not resolve the hazardous conditions for equestrians. Several months ago, members of the Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council Trail Crew developed a conceptual design to restore this section of trail. The plan, approved by local authorities, required additional approvals from other agencies. All concerned agencies have now approved this plan.

Several Tuesday/Thursday workdays have been added

to the regular weekly trail maintenance schedule to accomplish this project. The work will begin in late October and extend well into November. The project starts with the clearance of dead trees and other debris from the trail and the surrounding area. The major part of the project comes next, with the construction of a large, dry masonry retaining wall. Only local materials (rocks and soil) will then be used to backfill behind the wall to develop a smooth, unobstructed trail tread. The final phase of the project will be installing water diversions and other improvements above the damaged area to reduce future water runoff from damaging the trail.

This project will require immense effort from our volunteer trail crew, over and above our already busy schedule. When completed, the project will result in a safer and more pleasant experience for all trail users. Let us know if you want to be a part of this effort.

Work Dates for the Upper Sycamore Trail Restoration

Tuesday October 24 Dave Edwards (805) 279-3029
Thursday October 26 Jerry Mitcham (818) 406-1269
Tuesday October 31 Barry Dydyk (805) 490-2707
Thursday November 2 Dave Edwards (805) 279-3029
Tuesday November 7 John Kross (805) 587-0721
Thursday November 9 Jerry Mitcham (818) 406-1269
Tuesday November 14 Barry Dydyk (805) 490-2707
Tuesday November 16 John Kross (805) 587-0721

We would love to have you come and work with us on this project. Please contact crew leader before the event.

Pictures, a map and progress updates will be available on our website.

Other Trail News

Point Mugu State Park— A bridge has been constructed to avoid a surprisingly dangerous corner on the Sin Nombre Trail. The new bridge is about 500-feet from Ranch Center Road. Many people, including the father of the Eagle Scout candidate who led the project, have been seriously hurt by misjudging the corner and tumbling about 5-feet down onto the rocks below.

State Park workers completed the removal of asphalt from Ranch Center Road. The newly graded fire road provides access to Wood Canyon and is a part of several loops through the park.

State Park workers cleared brush along the edges of fire roads in Sycamore Canyon and Wood Canyon. This year's rains brought a bumper crop of invasive grasses and mustard plants!

Malibu Creek State Park—State Parks added 643 yards of new, single track trail to the Grasslands Trail in Malibu Creek State Park to bypass the steep, fall line section that was closed in 2010. The reroute was built in two parts. The first part was constructed by volunteers on Earth Day, April 22. This route had been previously cleared of grass and low chaparral by State Park workers and the volunteers finished it by digging it out to an appropriate width and slope.

State Park workers then completed the second half and the trail is now open for use. A seasonal drain will have a bridge built across it so that the trail can be used year-round, and that bridge is expected to be complete by the end of the summer.



Trail Maintenance Statistics

From September 1, 2016, through August 31, 2017, a total of 741 volunteers performed 4,128 hours of trail maintenance in the Santa Monica Mountains and nearby areas. State Parks and NPS budgets are not near enough to maintain the hundreds of trails we have.



Agency	Events	Vol #	Hours	Feet	Miles
CINP	5	13	229	17,216	3.26
City of Malibu	1	15	50	1,500	0.28
COSCA	2	27	150	8,570	1.62
NPS	14	158	764	23,732	4.49
State Parks	46	497	2700	61,495	11.65
Totals	72	710	3,893	112,513	21.31

COSCA - Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency
 CINP—Channel Islands National Park
 NPS - National Park Service
 State Parks - California State Parks

What is the biggest threat to our trails that is not caused by mankind? Water.

Water amplifies the damage of thousands of shoes, hooves and bicycle tread as it flows downward. Our repair efforts revolve around re-directing that flow. Nature, of course, had other plans as evidenced by the obliteration of numerous water diversions and segments on a variety of trails this past winter.

Winter storms delivered significant amounts of water into the region. One storm scoured Upper Sycamore Canyon rendering parts of the trail nearly impassable. Reshaped by the loss of several feet of earth, many segments of the trail were left high above the canyon floor. Our crew spent numerous work days rebuilding the trail.

Where the trail crossed the creek, we re-created a graded path where it once existed and when fallen trees blocked the way we cleared a path. In the Spring, all that water brought lots of flowers and a substantial amount of invasive mustard and thistles. Plants grew tall and dense—encroaching on trails. Some trail segments were “blessed” with so much Yellow Star Thistle that it was painful to travel through. Severely impacted trails including Serrano, Upper Sycamore, and sections of the Backbone Trail. Augmented with groups of runners, mountain bikers, Boy Scouts, The Ranch at Malibu and students from CSU Channel Islands, our regular trail crew got right to work. We cut, chopped and cleared as much of the brush as time allowed.

We are back at work after a Summer hiatus and have an ambitious schedule to tackle many of the problems created by the Winter storms. We can always use a few more good volunteers - come join us!



In addition to her military precision in managing the unloading and loading of the portable kitchen and all the hikers' gear (“10 to 15 minutes!” says Diana) in the support vehicle that travels from campsite to campsite, she also “makes sure everyone knows what we’re doing. We have a plan and we follow that plan.” And she acts as the hike’s sweeper, following the hikers each day and keeping track of their contact information, in case anything goes wrong.

Diana has some impressive hiking credentials in her history: In 2003 she completed the entire Coastwalk, a 1,200-mile trek down the Golden State’s coastline, with her husband Mel. “A small group of us walked from the California-Oregon state line to Mexico,” she recalls. Starting in the month of June, it took them 110 days to finish.

Prior to Coastwalk, Diana had met the legendary Milt McAuley. From Milt, she observed the importance of good planning and organization. Milt McAuley, the former SMMTC director who was instrumental in the creation of the Backbone Trail was part of the event. That led to her participation in the inaugural Backbone Trek in 2000.

Diana got into hiking initially because her mother had a heart attack at age 60 and it prompted her to ask her doctor what she could do to ensure her own heart’s health. The doctor advised her to walk regularly. “Both my sister and I started walking that day,” she recalls. “And I never stopped.”



[Trails Council on the Web](#)

This paper won't self-update, but our website will.

Save the Date!! Annual Dinner Meeting October 19, 2017

- 6PM Social Hour—talk with NPS, State Parks & representatives from other volunteer groups
- 7PM Dinner catered by a local restaurant
- 7:45PM Meeting

Please RSVP online at smmtc.org
 Agoura Hills/Calabasas Community Center,
 27040 Malibu Hills Rd, Agoura Hills

Like us on Facebook!

[Facebook.com/TrailWorkSMMTC/](https://www.facebook.com/TrailWorkSMMTC/)



Comings and Goings on the Board

After over a decade of service on the Board, **Howard Cohen** is moving on to the greener pastures of Hood River, Oregon. Howard served as president for two years and as ambassador to one of the newest user groups in the Santa Monica Mountains—Trail Runners. Howard's connection to Backbone Trail attracted attention when he posted on his website the bits and pieces of his trail knowledge at a time when the web held little information. As Race Director for several trail runs in the Santa Monica Mountains, including the Backbone Trail Run from Will Rogers State Historic Park to Pt. Mugu State Park, Howard encouraged trail maintenance by mandating trail work as a condition to entry into the race. Howard organized work events with groups of runners. This partnership benefitted our trails and those who use them. Our loss is Oregon's gain. We wish Howard continued success running and advocating for trail users.

Ruth Gerson, who previously served more than a decade as President, took up the reins upon Howard's resignation.

Cynthia Maxwell has resigned from the board of directors after serving for over twelve years to pursue other endeavors. She has always made sure that the Trails Council has the proper and sufficient insurance coverage for our activities. She will continue to bring her pet hawk, Lancelot, to the events of Trail Days and the Backbone Trek. We wish Cynthia the very best as she goes forward with future plans.



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: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ ZIP _____

E-mail: _____

Phone: _____

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

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The Trails Council newsletter is published twice a year, in the Spring and Fall.

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SANTA BARBARA ISLAND TRAIL RESTORATION AUGUST 24 – 31, 2017

Most of the work we do is in the Santa Monica Mountains but several times a year our crew performs trail work in the Channel Islands National Park.

On August 24, 2017, a three-person SMMTC trail crew traveled to Santa Barbara Island to perform restoration work on the Landing Cove Trail. Santa Barbara Island, one of five Islands making up the Channel Islands National Park, is located approximately 47 miles southwest of Ventura. This island has been closed to visitors for almost two years due to storm damage to the boat landing and the associated trail connecting the dock to the ranger station and campground.

This trail extends steeply uphill for approximately 650 feet and includes over 170 steps. The trail has had minimal maintenance for several years, resulting in generally poor trail conditions. Last year's storms further damaged the path, creating unsafe con-

ditions. The three-person crew deployed to the island for a week to repair existing damage. Additional drainage features were installed to deter future erosion. The project began with the removal of large amounts of slough and vegetation encroaching on the trail. Water

The purpose of this project was to repair the damage to the Landing Cove Trail to facilitate the reopening of the island to visitors.

flowing off the hillside had eroded the steps. Rocks and dirt were used to fill trenches and ruts between steps. Replacement of several rotted steps was next. Essential to redirect the flow of water, was the installation of three drains

and 75 feet of wattles (see definition below) Several dozen feet of the berm was removed from the down-side of the trail to improve drainage of water off the trail.

This project has restored the trail to a safe condition. These improvements will remove one of the obstacles to reopening the trail to the public. Thank you to Jerry, Dave and Barry for taking on this project!

Slough and berm are terms to describe erosion on our trails. Take dirt, loosened by thousands of hooves, shoes & tires and then mix it with organic matter on the downslope side to create a raised berm. This buildup traps and diverts water down the trail rather than off. On the uphill edge, a similar process creates slough. Tread work involves removing both berm and slough to create an outslope—where the trail gently slopes from the uphill side to the downhill side which encourages water to flow off the trail.

Wattles are an erosion and sediment control device used to minimize erosion on recently burned slopes or where there is no vegetation. Wattles assist in stabilizing a slope by shortening the slope lengths, reducing water flow velocities and trapping sediment on site. They are often made from straw or wood shavings and wrapped in burlap. A common size for wattles is 8 inches in diameter by 25 feet in length. Wattles biodegrade in little over a year and by trapping sediments, provide a fertile seedbed for plants to reduce future erosion.



Before



After



Wattle in Place



Tread Worked!

Plants in the Santa Monica Mountains are in bloom in every month. This uncommon plant is/was blooming during Fall 2017. Our web site features a [Plant of the Month](#) . We are always to happy you help you identify plants you see on our trails.



Tejon Milk Aster



Common Name(s)	Tejon Milk-Aster
Scientific Name	Stephanomeria cichoriacea
Family	Asteraceae
Plan Type	Perennial
Size	Up to 48 inches
Habitat	Chaparral, Coastal Sage

Stephanomeria cichoriacea is a species of flowering plant in the aster family known by the common names chicoryleaf wirelettuce and Fort Tejon milk aster. It is endemic to California, where it grows in the coastal mountain ranges like the Santa Monica Mountains. The plant is a Perennial herb, erect, 18 to 48 inches in height and has milky sap. It is found on rocky slopes and in open areas of Chaparral and Coastal Sage.

Milt's book says this plant is uncommon. I have seen this plant the summit of Saddle Peak and on the trails around Circle-X (Mishe Mokwa and Sandstone Peak). Since the flower blooms in late Summer to early Fall this flower comes as a surprise to those who see it for the first time. How could something so beautiful bloom so long after Spring? The flowers bloom on some very short stems and have a five toothed petals in purple to pink colors. The flowers are small less than an inch and a half in diameter with white pistils and stamens. The flowers have a Pappus (think Dandelion) similar to Cliff Aster, Twiggy Wreath, San Diego Milk-Aster among other flowers. The leaves are classified as alternate, oblong to oblanceolate and can be up to 8 inches long. To read more [click this link to our website](#).

Origin of name: Stephanomeria: derived from the Greek stephane, *wreath or crown*, and meros, *division* (ref. genus Stephanomeria) Amazing descriptions in some of these flower names! (ref. CalFlora Plant Name Origins). Found on CalFlora.net a wonderful site for native plant information.