



Protect • Preserve • Maintain

Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council

ESTABLISHED 1969

FALL 2026

**Norm Simmonds,
Sharon Simmonds,
Dave Edwards &
Jerry Mitcham
have a combined
90+ years of
service totaling
more than 22,000
hours!**



Photo: Greg Sweel, January 30, 2010

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Welcome, trail users! We invite you to attend our Annual Dinner, which we will hold on Thursday, October 22nd. This dinner's all about celebrating the volunteers who pitch in on our projects, organize Trail Days and the Backbone Trek, and often handle 30-plus trail work events annually.

More than 55 years ago, our founders came together around an idea: to preserve and protect the trails of the Santa Monica Mountains. They talked, debated, refined their ideas, and ultimately shaped them into a plan. From that plan, came the Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council.

What strikes me most after all these years is how much of that original vision remains with us today. The trails we maintain are more than routes through the mountains. They are connections to the land, to our history, and to the people who have walked these paths before us and those who will follow.

Over my 21 years with the Trails Council, I have had the privilege of seeing countless volunteers give their time, energy, and knowledge to keep that vision alive. I have watched new volunteers become experienced trail workers, seen friendships develop on the trail, and witnessed

Article continues on page 5

YOU'RE INVITED

Dinner & meeting are free and open to the trails community. RSVP at smmtc.org or 805-885-7224

Calamigos Ranch, 327 Latigo Cyn Rd,
located at the intersection of Kanan Rd
and Mulholland Hwy.

6:00PM | Social Hour-Visit with NPS, State Parks,
MRCA, local officials and representatives
from other government & trail organizations
6:30PM | Dinner
7:15PM | Meeting

OCTOBER 22ND 2026 ANNUAL DINNER

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Several years ago there was an article in the LA Times about our Santa Monica Mountains and how they divide us and bring us together. The article was by Paul Haddad, and it certainly rang true for me. I will endeavor to give you the condensed gist of Paul's feelings, as they mirror mine and may mirror some of yours. [Link to the article.](#)

"Once you have a love affair with the local topography it would seem impossible to live anywhere without mountains".

Some of you already know that LA is home to the largest urban wilderness in the world.

Did you also know that LA is the only city in the world divided in half by a mountain range? The mountains do separate people living on the "other" side, whether it's the valley or town or beach; but they also attract millions who come together to enjoy the extensive variety of outdoor opportunities and activities that the land provides.

Not only are there the obvious – hiking, camping, fishing, biking, horseback riding, rock climbing, running, picnicking, bird watching - but the waterfalls, the

plants, the trees, the wildlife, the trails – they all offer us abundant visions, sights and sounds that will remain with us forever. In addition, these mountains replenish our souls.

We, who have a lifelong passion for the mountains and a shared appreciation for the bounty of its hills, are hopelessly caught in the love affair."

Sometimes, other people say things that cannot be improved upon in expressing our own thoughts and feelings. Paul Haddad has expressed that for me, and I hope he's done it for you. As John Muir once wrote, "In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks."

Perhaps, I can speak for most of us by saying that our mutual admiration for the Santa Monica Mountains actually transcends the mountains themselves. We feel so fortunate to have the shared experiences with nature, to have our lives intertwined with such depth of innermost feelings, and to know that life is so good right here in our mountains.

Ruth has been with the Trails Council since the beginning and has served as secretary, treasurer, vice-president, president and is now president-emerita.

Opportunities to Serve

We currently have board openings and we always welcome new trail workers and crew leaders. Skills in areas such as grant writing, event logistics, financial stewardship, or project support are also greatly valued. Whether through leadership or specialized expertise, your involvement can help advance our mission and increase our impact.

Trail Days 2026

The 2026 Trail Days event, which is a collaboration between the Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council, Concerned Off-Road Bicyclists Association and the Santa Monica Mountains Task Force of the Sierra Club was a huge success.

Trails Council crews worked on Upper Sycamore Canyon, Old Boney, Hidden Pond, Blue Canyon, and Fossil Trail. Crews from CORBA worked on Wood Canyon Vista, Two Foxes and Sage Trails. The Sierra Club Task Force worked on the perpetually brushy Coyote Trail.

Volunteers cleared and widened trails, opened existing drains, built new drains, and helped rebuild a stone wall.

Many people learned new skills for trail building and trail maintenance. In the process we hope they developed a greater appreciation for the trails that they hike, horseback ride, and mountain bike.

The youth group in Blue Canyon helped widen the trails, cleared brush, and fixed tread on the trail. Some of these kids have been coming since they were 5 and they are now pre-teens! Back at camp they had an opportunity to learn about animals within our region with SAMOFUND/NPS naturalist Miroslava Munguia Ramos.

Hungry volunteers were treated to an outstanding BBQ dinner catered by Dearmore BBQ on Saturday night and fantastic sandwiches from Bodega Park, graciously provided by Arc'terex on Sunday. Volunteers received swag and had an opportunity to select gifts from our wonderful gift table as a thank you for their hard work. The state park seasonal staff presented "Creatures of the Night", an interactive show highlighting mountain lions, owls and our "cleanup crew" (ringtails, raccoons, skunks and opossums) in the Santa Monica Mountains at campfire. Thank you to all

volunteers, all those who helped organize and execute this event, and all Park Service staff, both NPS and State Parks, who provided much needed support. A very special thank-you to all our amazing crew leaders for assessing the trails, helping with set up and tear down, organizing tools, supervising the volunteers, and getting so much work done!

Our all-volunteer groups cannot put this event on without monetary and material support of some special sponsors. Many thanks especially to The Ranch Malibu, Arc'teryx, Don Brusselars, and Robert Bittner for their generosity.

This year was the first time we had to have an event limit of 250 people because the interest exceeded our capacity. We filled up in less than 3 weeks and had a significant waiting list. What a great sign that so many want to get out and give back to the parks, so keep that in mind for 2027!

Statistics

- 333 volunteers
- 20+ park staff including the Pt. Mugu S.P. maintenance crew
- 1578 volunteer hours
- 4.25 miles of trails maintained

Amazing! Thanks to each one of you who put in a hard weekend of work helping to keep our trails open and giving back to our trail community. Congratulations to each of you on the work that you've done; we could not do it without you!

See you in 2027! [April 2-4]

- Barb Thomas



Photo: Denise Pomonik

Trail Days, after a day of trail work, we had dinner and a prize drawing.

Trail Work



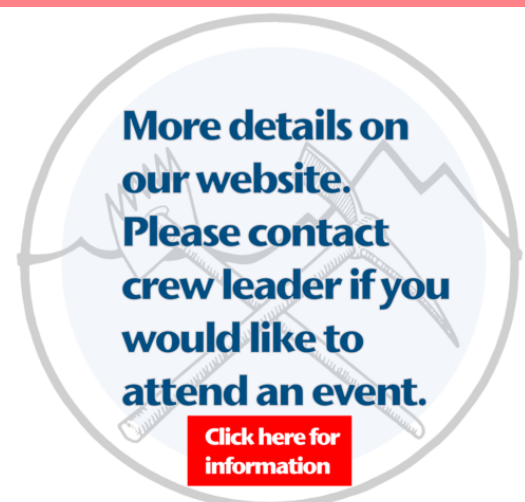
Jerry Mitcham

Highlights:

- Cleared the trail all the way to **Serrano Valley**, covering 2 miles through four Saturdays of work. Eighty-five volunteers contributed 526 hours, including participants in the **43rd Annual Trail Saver** event conducted with Troop 730 of Newbury Park.
- Finished building the **new campground at Prisoners Harbor on Santa Cruz Island**: There are 6 regular sites and a large one for handicap access/staff. We first started work in August of 2022. The project was then put on hold by NPS until September, 2024. We worked 2 events and then the project was on hold again. Beginning February of 2026 we had several trips culminating with the last one in July of 2026. Thank you to the 26 volunteers who contributed 690 hours over 17 events. The **campground was opened to the public August 27, 2026**. Dave Edwards has set his eye on the Eagle Ridge Trail. This trail would give visitors another hiking option from Prisoners Harbor.
- **Puncheons Project**: Jerry thought it would be a great opportunity to develop our internal skills. After several visits to the worksite we completed the installation. In the meantime we got a healthy dose of teamwork, basic carpentry skills and a new appreciation into the efforts required for puncheon installations.

Upcoming Events

Date	Trail
2026-09-26	Rancho Sierra Vista / Satwiwa
2026-10-03	Mulholland- Etz-Meloy Bypass
2026-10-10	Mulholland- Etz-Meloy
2026-10-14	Mulholland- Etz-Meloy
2026-10-17	Stunt-Schueren-Saddle Peak
2026-10-24	Phantom Trail
2026-10-31	Phantom Trail
2026-11-07	Phantom Trail
2026-11-14	Phantom Trail



Donation - CSUCI Foundation

In June 2026, the Trails Council donated 4,500 dollars to the California State University Channel Islands (CSUCI) Foundation for the express purpose of funding four student interns for the CSUCI Trail Corps.

The Trails Council entered into a formal agreement with the CSUCI Center for Community Engagement in 2021 and joined their Service-Learning program. Under this program, the CSUCI Trail Corps was established. The Trail Corps is a group of two to five student interns who work alongside our trail crew throughout the year.

More than a dozen students have participated in trail work events alongside our crew. These students have contributed more than 1,200 hours!

The Trails Council has worked with CSU Channel Islands for several years to create and maintain trail systems at the university and nearby areas.

-Jerry Mitcham

Update: Our donation is being put to good use. Four students have been recruited for the 2026/2027 Trail Corps program!

generations of people discover the beauty of the Santa Monica Mountains. That is what makes this work so rewarding. We are not simply maintaining trails; we are carrying forward an idea that began more than half a century ago.

Our original leaders were "horsemen". Over the years, because of the quality of the organization and its mission, we now have attracted leaders from hiking, running and biking groups.

"Their success is our success."

People like us assisted these leaders in their successful campaigns. Their success is our success. We get to enjoy access to trails, physical activity, and designated public open space because of our efforts.

The work continues, and so does the responsibility we share to preserve these trails for those who come after us.

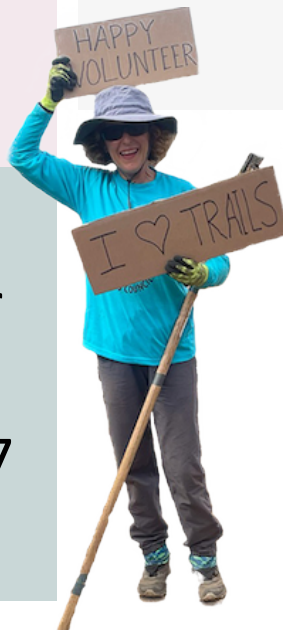
YOUR TIME MATTERS

I would venture to say, that, most of us do not have the confidence or drive to lobby, organize, and lead people. But, we can contribute our time and effort to help keep our trails available.

Volunteering helped move the levers of government to act and fund the acquisition of lands and the building of trails. Today, volunteering remains essential to maintaining those trails.

I hope you'll join us on the trail.

-George Sherman



Milestones:

Volunteer Hours

September 12, 2026,
Denise Pomonik has
surpassed 1,000 hours

Sadly, Jason Finlay's last day as the California State Parks Angeles District Trails Coordinator was July 30, 2026. Jason is now the Park Maintenance Chief for the Big Sur sector in the Monterey District, California State Parks, and they are lucky to have him. Trails in the Angeles District thrived under Jason due to his excellent leadership, dedication to the trails and the environment, persistence in pushing things through, and making sure things were done correctly. Jason also had superior interpersonal skills, high intelligence, compassion and a sense of humor. Jason treated all volunteers with respect, supported and listened to us, and worked harder than anyone else right beside us. We will truly miss him. - Ruth Feldon

Our partnership with Jason played a key role in our success. We wish him the best in his new position.



Point Mugu State Park Trail Signs Project

9/15/26: After Phase 4

- Completed
- Phase 5(Serrano Valley)

La Jolla

Serrano

Sycamore Canyon



Jon

Jerry

Phase Summary

PHASE	CATEGORY	START	END	EVENTS	VOLS	HOURS	SIGNS
I	Survey	2022-01-09	2022-02-20	7	19	94	0
I	Signs	2023-09-06	2024-01-25	5	29	155	33
II	Signs	2024-03-04	2024-04-19	8	31	169	33
III	Signs	2024-08-19	2024-10-21	4	19	93	31
IV	Signs	2026-03-11	2026-05-11	3	11	74	18
Total		2022-01-09	2026-05-11	27	109	584	115

Your Donations at work*

* Plus several hundred volunteer hours!

Eagle Scout Projects

While the Trails Council's primary focus is on direct maintenance and preservation of the trail system, part of our mission is to **"partner with public and private sectors"**. In addition, one of our stated goals is to partner with land agencies, local government, businesses and the community in support of our mission".

Over the last few years, in support of these ideals, the Trails Council has assisted over twenty young men and women in our community in achieving the Eagle Scout rank in the Scouting America (formally Boy Scouts of America). In these projects, the Trails Council staff assists the scout in defining their project and obtaining the scout organization approvals and Park approvals. More importantly, the Trails Council plays a major role in defining the details of the project, procuring (and usually financing) materials. Once the project begins, Trails Council's staff provide technical assistance and oversee the project to ensure compliance with park standards.

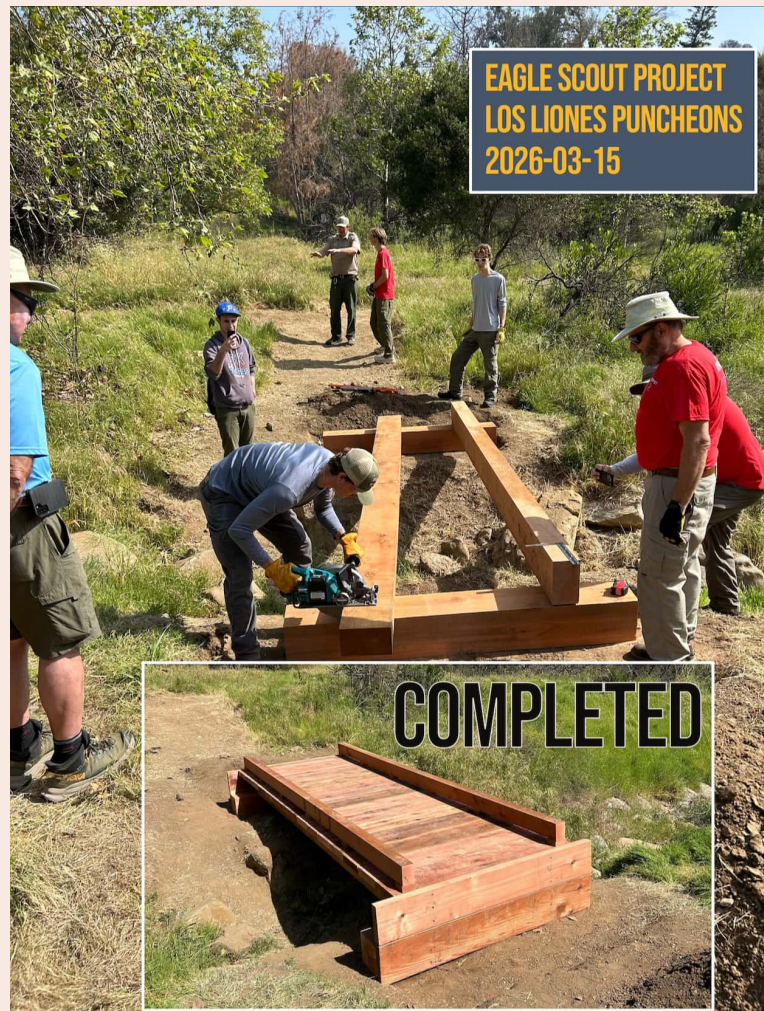
These projects have been a significant improvement to the parks and a boost in Trails Council's contribution, they have also been an important experience in these young people's lives, giving them an opportunity to develop their organizational and leadership skills. **Attainment of the Eagle Scout rank is a significant milestone in their lives.**

These numerous Eagle Scout projects, usually financially supported by the Trails Council, have resulted in noteworthy improvements in the public trail system. Some of the projects were: installation of 75 trail signs in Point Mugu State Park (2007); restoration of the La Jolla hike-in campground after being destroyed in the Springs Fire (2015); improvements to twelve trailheads on the

Backbone Trail (2018); and the most recent project, restoration of five puncheons in Topanga State Park destroyed in the Palisades Fire. In addition, there were numerous smaller projects building steps, retaining walls and assembling picnic tables at the Danielson Ranch in Point Mugu State Park.

Our Eagle Scout Project Coordinators:

Eagle Scout projects are coordinated by Jerry Mitcham and Barry Dydyk. Jerry's expertise in technical trail work is widely recognized, and he is frequently consulted by agencies such as State Parks, the NPS, MRCA, and COSCA. Barry, a recipient of the prestigious Silver Beaver Award - the highest honor bestowed on an adult volunteer - is also the father of two Eagle Scouts. Together, Jerry and Barry have coordinated more than 2 dozen Eagle Scout projects in the Santa Monica Mountains.



Individual Membership

☐ Annual - \$35 ☐ Family - \$60

☐ Lifetime - \$360 Can also be paid over 3 consecutive years @ \$120 per year

Business Membership

☐ Supporter - \$100

☐ Patron - \$250

☐ Benefactor - \$500

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ ZIP: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____



Dues are on a rolling 12-month basis. Membership dues are effective the first of the month following receipt of funds; membership will be effective for 12 months. Please make your check payable to SMMTC and mail it to P.O. Box 345, Agoura Hills, CA 91376. Memberships can also be purchased on our website using Paypal.

Make a Donation?

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

**Thank you for
your continued
support!**

Board of Directors

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Don Brusselars, Vice President

Peter Sullivan, Treasurer

Roger Young, Secretary

Robert Bittner

Denise Pomonik

Livia Szoke

Vanessa Ting

Vacant

Ruth Gerson, President Emerita

Upcoming Events

Annual Dinner Meeting — October 22nd 2026

42nd Annual Trail Days — April 2nd to April 4th 2027

Backbone Trek — May 1st to May 8th 2027

Board Meetings (Most Meetings are via Zoom)

Board Meetings are open to the public and are on the 4th Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm. There are 4 exceptions: No meeting in August; April meet on the 2nd Thursday; Nov & Dec, meet on 1st Thursday.

Generous Supporter:

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OUR STORY

Since 1969, the Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council has been the only organization devoted to representing all trail user groups in the Santa Monica Mountains. We are a volunteer nonprofit organization, dedicated to establishing, preserving and maintaining the public trail system throughout the Santa Monica Mountains and adjacent areas through education, advocacy and partnership with public and private sectors.

We coordinate with various government agencies to enhance and preserve the trail system. We assist in negotiations with property owners regarding trail alignments. We promote public awareness and build, monitor and maintain trails.

CONTACT US

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Our newsletter is published twice a year, in spring and fall.