



# Santa Susana Mountain Park Association

Volume 30, Issue 47

A Non-Profit 501(c)(4) Organization  
Incorporated August 31, 1971

## June 2005 Newsletter

### The "Write-Your-Letter" Column

A handwritten letter to an elected official is a very worthwhile tool for working to protect our environment. You are invited to write and send your own letter, using the suggested sample, if desired. This month features the following topic.

Human-caused changes to habitats, such as urban sprawl, water diversions and pollution, are endangering the survival of unique species that share the earth with us. Studies show that listing species under the Endangered Species Act helps prevent extinction. Species that were never listed and those whose listing was delayed were over 3,200 times more likely to become extinct than protected species. Species with designated critical habitat are twice as likely to be recovering as those without. Species with dedicated recovery plans in effect for two or more years show greater rates of survival and recovery. Citizen involvement helped increase the rate of species listings.

Some members of Congress, led by Republican Representative Richard Pombo, are opposed to environmental protections in general and have made the Endangered Species Act their number one target of attack. They are seeking to team up with Democrats, including Sen. Feinstein, to drastically weaken the law. Senator Feinstein and our governor especially need to hear your message.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger  
Office of the Governor  
Sacramento, CA 95814-4905

Senator Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senate  
750 "B" Street, Suite 1030  
San Diego, CA 92101-8126

*(Also write a letter to your U.S. Representative, who may or may not be the one listed below.)*

U.S. Representative Henry Waxman  
30th District  
2204 Rayburn House Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20515

U.S. Representative Brad Sherman  
27th District  
1030 Longworth Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20515

### SAMPLE LETTER

**Re: Protecting the Endangered Species Act**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Please work to fully fund a strong Endangered Species Act and reject so-called reforms being pushed by Representative Richard Pombo and Senator Mike Crapo. The Act needs to be strengthened, not weakened. The decline of species is a warning to us that we are damaging the very environment that supports us, too. Studies conducted by the Center for Biological Diversity studies show that the Endangered Species Act can reduce species extinction, protect environmental health and natural areas, and allow children to continue to experience the wonders of nature.

Sincerely,  
[Sign your name; include your address]

#### TO OUR MEMBERS:

As you know, each year our third-Monday-of-the-month program meetings cease for the summer and resume in September. We look forward to presenting an interesting lineup of speakers for the fall and winter. The next newsletter will announce the program for September 19 and should arrive in your mailbox in early September. So, remember, **THERE WILL BE NO GENERAL MEETING IN JUNE, JULY OR AUGUST.** Have a wonderful summer!



Gray wolves (*Canis lupus*) are listed as endangered in the Southwest under the Endangered Species Act and threatened throughout the lower 48 states. Wolves in Alaska are not listed under the Act.

*Regarding the issue featured in last month's Write-Your-Letter column, on May 17th LA 12<sup>th</sup> District Councilman Greig Smith introduced a motion to prohibit the City's use of anticoagulant rodent poisons containing brodifacoum, bromadiolone, diphacinone or difethialone by the Dept. of Rec & Parks, Dept. of Water & Power and General Services within two miles of mountain regions of the City of L.A. Thank you, Councilman Smith!*

Report from SSMPA Trail Committee Chair, Judy Garris  
Devil Canyon

In preparation of the Antonovich Equestrian ride in May, the County graded and widened the road going down into Devil Canyon. They bulldozed a new trail on the western flank of the hill above the canyon and widened the trail from Deerlake into Devil Canyon. The legality of the incline is doubtful. Because of the grading, Arundo is having a jump-start in spreading. The trailcat cut Arundo into numerous pieces. A small piece of the cane can root and start new plants unless removed. Once established, Arundo is difficult to remove. I informed the LA County trailsperson of the canyon's condition and invited him on a hike to evaluate the trails and invasive plants. The County would first like to investigate funding sources for removal of the invasive or exotic plants; this may take some time. I offered to organize an exotic plant removal crew. Stalks of Fountain Grass, another invasive exotic plant, were also spread down the road into the canyon as a result of the trailcat grading. It seems no studies were done on the potential impact of the equestrian ride, and it looks like a big cleanup job is ahead. Although the new County Trail Coordinator was aware of the event, he was not familiar with Devil Canyon and had never been there. He wholeheartedly agreed that trails maintenance crews should be trained in important plant identification. We are hoping to tour Devil Canyon with County trail officials within the next few months.

Dayton Canyon

I contacted the National Park Service to place an existing vernal pool in Dayton Canyon on a protected list for the Rim of the Valley. We are waiting for State congress to approve the ROV bill HR5056 before protection plans can be included. Meanwhile, the developer has removed all shrubs and trees from large swatches of land. Two oak trees were reportedly illegally removed.

Trail Overlooking Dayton Canyon

From Quiet Hills Court just south of Dayton canyon gate, follow the equestrian trail on the left side of the street. This takes you up and over ridgelines to a good view of Dayton Canyon and the Chatsworth Nature Preserve.

Watershed Monitoring

LA residents want clean water. Rainwater seeps through the soil to recharge our groundwater supplies. Fertilizers and pesticides and other man-made chemicals often travel many miles away from their source by underground plumes of water.

As you may have heard, a grant proposed by Mountains Recreation Trust to study the LA watershed has been approved. Heal the Bay will be conducting the watershed studies. In early June they began evaluating sites of the LA watershed. Water quality testing will begin November 2005, at the beginning of the rainy season, and will continue for about seven months.

Members of Mountains Recreation Trust, Heal the Bay and Santa Susana Mountains Task Force investigated a few

locations for monitoring the watershed. A member of Heal the Bay took GIS readings and measured water levels in Dayton, Devil, Woolsey and Mormon creeks. This took three hours. Later trips will cover Box Canyon creek, Ybarra and other streams east to Bull Creek. Twenty points will be chosen for monitoring above and below development and stream confluences. In November, the Streamteam, a group of trained volunteers, will take water measurements and samples for lab analyses.

Join Streamteam

*We need you to test the water quality in the creeks once a month for thirty weeks on the third weekend each month beginning in November. Volunteers will be trained in water testing by Heal the Bay. Call Judy, Volunteer Coordinator, at 818-346-7654, if you would like to be a part of this exciting work.*

**Douglas Ranch Unit 5 – Simi Valley**

Larwin Company, a developer from the San Fernando Valley, has been trying to build condominiums on part of the old Douglas Ranch, located north of State Route 118 and west of Kuehner Road for the past several years. Simi Valley, the second largest city in Ventura County, located just over the hill from the San Fernando Valley, is home to a largely white population with many residents commuting to greater Los Angeles to work. The Simi Valley City Council has historically approved just about every development project that came before them, paying no attention to the direct and cumulative impacts and losses to the natural environment. Simi Valley has the worst air pollution in Ventura County. It is surrounded by beautiful mountains, with the Santa Susana Mountains to the north and the Simi Hills to the south. Arroyo Simi is the upper reach of Calleguas Creek, which drains into the Pacific Ocean at Mugu Lagoon.

Last year the City tried to push through the condo development with only a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) prepared by Rincon Consultants, ignoring the fact that CNPS found several plant species that are rare in Ventura County. The biological resources section of the MND minimized the diversity and richness of the small, 12+ acre, site by being very general in their description of the plant communities present onsite. Field surveys were not performed during the right season, and the biologists conducting the surveys were either inexperienced or otherwise constrained from doing an adequate survey or assessment. The Environmental Coalition of Ventura County successfully convinced the City to prepare an EIR for the project since CNPS had provided clear and convincing evidence that sensitive biological resources were in fact present onsite and that the project would likely result in unmitigated significant impacts. The EIR was prepared in 2004 by Envicon Consultants, but CNPS found that they still failed to consider the impacts to locally rare plants known to occur onsite, and persisted in recommending transplanting mature oak trees as mitigation, among other serious issues. Many Simi residents, including Cori Martinez, worked hard and hired biologists out of her own pocket to critique the MND and EIR.

Amazingly, the Simi Valley City Council voted 3-2 against the project at the project hearing held on 10 January 2005. This is one of the first times that this city has actually turned down a project over largely environmental concerns. Thank you Simi Valley.

Coast Live Oak No Longer in the Way

Most of us who live in Lake Manor recoiled in horror when the old, beautifully-canopied, multi-trunked, oak tree in the empty lot between the fire station and the restaurant and market on Valley Circle Blvd. was hacked a couple of years ago. Tree cutters removed the outer trunks at a former owner's request, leaving the tree looking massacred and unable to produce another canopy.

On June 9<sup>th</sup> at 8 a.m., the rest of the tree was cut down. The lot owner showed me his permit indicating that the tree was a hazard. He said that neighbors wanted it taken down, too. Branches might fall on someone. He said I will like the spot better with the new café and yoga studio. S. Gerke

# Summer Hikes (Sierra Club)

Bring water, lunch or snack, lugsoles, hat, sunscreen.

**Sunday, 6/19 - Stagecoach Trail - 9:00am:** Interpretative hike into history in our Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park. Meet 9:00 am for a 4 mi (700' gain) loop up the Stage Coach Trail. From Topanga Cyn Blvd., turn W on Devonshire, drive into Chatsworth Park S to the 2nd parking lot. Wear long pants, lugsoles are preferred, bring water & snack. Ldr: Lee Baum. (818) 341-1850. (*San Fernando Valley, Santa Susana Mtns Task Force hike*)

**Tuesday, 6/21 - Fossil Hill via Chumash Trail - 8:30am:** Moderate, 4-6 mi easy pace. 1200' gain hike in Santa Susana Mtns. Meet trailhead (from 118 Fwy in Simi Valley, exit Yosemite Ave, N ½ mi to Flanagan Dr, ¼ mi to end, park). Ldrs: Ramona Dunn, Judy Garris, Marcia Harris. (*San Fernando Valley, Wilderness Adventures hike*)

**Tuesday, 6/28 - Chatsworth Park - 8:30am:** Moderate, 4-6 mi easy pace. 1000' gain hike. Many trails to explore and interesting sites to see. Meet in Chatsworth Park S 2<sup>nd</sup> parking lot near Rec Bldg (from Topanga Cyn Blvd, W on Devonshire, turn into park. Ldrs: Ramona Dunn, Judy Garris, Marcia Harris. (*San Fernando Valley, Wilderness Adventures hike*)

**Tuesdays, 7/5, 7/12, 7/18, 7/26, 8/2, 8/9, 8/16, 8/23, 8/30 - Easy Pace in SFV - 7:30am:** Moderate pace, 4-6 mi. Meet at top of Reseda Blvd. (take 101 Fwy, exit at Reseda Blvd S, 3 mi to Mulholland Gateway Park. Park along street below the white line at beginning of fee area). Ldrs: Pixie Klemic, Ramona Dunn. (*San Fernando Valley hike*)

**Thursdays, 7/7, 7/14, 7/21, 7/28, 8/4, 8/11, 8/18 - Northern Topanga State Park - 7:30am:** Moderate pace, 6-8 mi, depending on weather. Meet at top of Reseda Blvd. in Tarzana (take 101 Fwy, exit at Reseda Blvd S, 3 mi to Mulholland Gateway Park. Park along street below the white line at beginning of fee area). Ldrs: Lee Baum, Bob Galletly, Pixie Klemic, Nancy Krupa, vera Salomons, Margaret Vernallis. (*San Fernando Valley hike*)

## We have a home again!

Thanks to SSMPA Life Member and Member of Board of Education of the LA Unified School District, **Jon Lauritzen**, our organization again has a place to hold Board of Director meetings, store our SSMPA items, and even to show off artifacts and nature displays.

SSMPA Board Member **Diana Dixon-Davis** interfaced with Jon, who arranged for us to use a room at the mostly unused Devonshire Elementary School, 10045 Jumilla Ave. in Chatsworth.

We also want to give a great big thank you to Life Member **Barbara Pampalone** for generously allowing us to store our materials and supplies at her dental offices until a home was found.



The purposes of the Santa Susana Mountain Park Association are the protection, preservation, restoration, and enhancement of the Santa Susana Mountains and Simi Hills as open space lands and wildlife corridors linking the Los Padres National Forest and San Gabriel Mountains, including the Angeles National Forest, to the Santa Monica Mountains; as habitats for plants and animals native to the Santa Susana Mountains and the Simi Hills; as locales of unique geologic formations; as sites of ethnological, archaeological and historical interests; to provide passive recreational opportunities and environmental education opportunities; and, to support the acquisition of new public parks, open space and conservation easements, the expansion of existing parks, participate in the planning of park infrastructure and programs, and support said programs. To find out how you can participate, contact Jan Miller at (818) 702-0854.



## Santa Susana Mountain Park Association

invites you to **JOIN / RENEW** (circle one).

Investing in the future of our communities and its resources is probably one of the best expenditures of our time and efforts. Return this cutoff with your contribution lend your support. Make your check payable to SSMPA and send to SSMPA, P.O. Box 4831, Chatsworth, CA 91313-4831.

- Senior or Student (\$5.00)       Individual (\$10.00)       Family (\$15.00)  
 Life Member (\$100.00)       Business / Organization (\$25.00)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

City / State / Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Interest / Expertise: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for renewing your membership: Ann Monaco, Kimberly Sodek, Marie Burdick, Lilliana Haro, Judith Rothman, Lizz Samuel, Jack & Barbara Levin, Ellen Pifer, Christopher Lindelien, Willem & Cheryl Rietveld and Melissa Lovelady. **New Life Members:** Reid Bogert, Jim & Maureen Shirley and Beatrice Samuel. **To those who donated something extra (you know who you are), we are grateful.**  
*Susan Gerke, Editor*

**SSMPA BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
ELECTED MAY 16, 2005:**

Jan Miller, President  
Teena Takata, Vice President  
Diana Dixon-Davis, Treasurer  
Patty Miller, Recording Secretary  
Susan Gerke, Corresponding Secretary  
Reid Bogert, Member at Large  
Todd Doherty, Member at Large  
Carla Henry, Member at Large  
Judy Garris, Member at Large  
Sandra Johnson, Member at Large  
Warren Stone, Member at Large

**ODE TO A CHATSWORTH OAK**

O' beautiful oak  
embrace me in your massive arms  
As I rest in your boughs  
soothe my mind with your centuries of wisdom

will you listen  
when I speak?  
will you answer my questions  
and hear of my grief?

O' wise oak  
I must have faith in you  
for I am told, and so believe  
you have the answers to comfort me

take me in your mighty arms  
and shield me from human harm

O' beautiful oak  
you have the answers that  
man cannot speak

and I will listen  
for your voice  
in the wind

-Ann Onna Miss

Santa Susana Mountain Park Association &  
Foundation for the Preservation of the Santa Susana Mountains  
P.O. Box 4831  
Chatsworth, CA 91313-4831

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