



# Santa Susana Mountain Park Association

Volume 28, Issue 3

## March 1998

A Non-Profit Organization Incentive August 31, 1971

### Annual Election of Board of Directors

Pursuant to the By-Laws of the Santa Susana Mountain Park Association, notice is hereby given of the election of the Board of Directors of SSMPA at the General Membership Meeting of SSMPA on March 16, 1998, 7:30 p.m. at the Community Room of Glendale Federal Bank, 21821 Devonshire Street, Chatsworth (1 block east of Topanga Canyon Boulevard.)

Article V (Board of Directors), Section 2 states that "The Board of Directors shall be elected at the annual meeting of the members of the association. The Board members shall assume office at the conclusion of the meeting at which they are elected." Article 4 states that "The Board of Directors shall be elected by a majority of the members present at the annual meeting to be held in March of each year. Election shall be by secret ballot."

(Editor's Note: This election will be very important to the on-going work of the Association. Please plan to attend to show your support for the candidates. These individuals are showing their support of us.)

### A Statement on Enlarging the Board

by Dorian Keyser

I strongly recommend that the membership vote "yes" to expand the SSMPA Board of Directors to include more people. Although I agree that some of the new candidates have great potential for helping us to

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### NOTICE OF CHANGE IN BY-LAWS

This is official notice of a motion passed at the regularly scheduled meeting (General Membership Meeting) of the Santa Susana Mountain Park Association on February 16, 1998, to change the number of members of the Board of Directors from 3 area chairman and 2 members at large to 8 Members-At-Large. The motion is an attempt to amend the By-Laws of SSMPA through "Section b." of "Article I - Revision of By-Laws", which state,

"By-Laws may be adopted, amended, or repealed by the following means: ... b) By the vote of written assent of a majority of the members entitled to vote, or the vote of a majority of a quorum at a meeting duly called for that purpose... c) A By-Law changing the number of directors shall be changed only by (b) above."

Voting on this motion will take place at the regularly scheduled meeting (General Membership Meeting) of the SSMPA on Monday, March 16, 1998.

(Editor's Note: SSMPA currently has an embarrassment of riches. Thirteen individuals cared enough about the current situation to volunteer to serve on the Board, which currently has only 10 positions. Many members think that we should not be excluding from the Board anyone who wants to serve. This motion attempts to allow all thirteen individuals to serve.)

## Work in Nature

By Chris Van Schaack

Recently I was browsing in yet another book on the environment. I noticed one of the chapters was titled 'Do You Work In Nature'. I didn't have time to read the book but I think the author wanted us to reflect on what we believe nature is and to see how this has effected nature.

My concept of nature is a wild preserve, which I can visit in order to reflect and renew. To me nature is a place void of human control or technological influence. It is a place where time and motion are in balance. Things take place in nature because they were naturally meant to be. The rain falls, the sun shines, the plants grow and blossom, creating seeds for new life.

Do You Work In Nature? Well, I want to spend my days on earth learning about and growing closer to nature. I'm taking a course in resource management to see if I might earn a living in an environmental field. Is this what is meant by working in nature?

Do You Work In Nature? I guess I would have to answer no. If nature is a place where things are in some kind of balance then I don't think I work there. I have been told the truck I drive is damaging the air and water. The materials I consume at work are taken at the devastating expense of forests. The waste I create is destroying neighboring canyons. So I guess I don't work in nature but at least I volunteer to help preserve it!

So to me nature is a place we visit, a place we sanction off and manage as a preserve. So then my question would be, can we 'preserve' nature? I think the author sees that our societies daily actions are not in balance with natural cycles and will not be sustainable. We cannot maintain nature in preserves. We have been working this way, using natural resources unwisely and degrading the earth's natural balance. I think he meant for us to begin to remember that we are a part of the earth, a part of nature and that it is nature that maintains us. We must live and work in nature. Our concept of visiting nature must be replaced with one of living within it.

I hope as I lead hikes in natural areas that I can share the concept of living and working in nature to others.

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achieve our goals, we need to remember that this might result in the exclusion of important people from our board since 8 people are candidates for 5 offices, including current president Doreen Rusen, who must be elected to provide continuity.

Please note that the current version of our bylaws will be revised to allow 12 directors to be elected in 1999. Thus, allowing 13 this year, instead of 10 certainly meets the intent of the revision and will ensure that some very productive people will be included.

## Rocketdyne News

On March 4, 1998, from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., the Santa Susana Field Laboratory Workgroup Meeting will be held at Simi Valley Senior Citizens Center at 3900 Avenida Simi, Simi Valley, CA. SSFL Workgroup is a multi-agency/Community work group on the Boeing-Rocketdyne SSFL clean-up. The proposed agenda includes discussion on the Worker Health Study, Decontamination & Decommissioning, and recent groundwater monitoring developments. Questions may be directed to Vicky Semones or Tom Kelly of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in San Francisco at 800-231-3075.

## Archives

Much of SSMPA's archives are available at:  
CSUN Urban Archives Center  
Oviatt Library, Room 4  
18111 Nordhoff Street  
Northridge CA 91330-8326,  
or by phone: Robert Marshall, Archivist at 818-677-2832.

## **Stagecoach Trail Hikes**

SSMPA hikes are conducted every Sunday, October - June (except fifth Sundays of the month & rain-outs are occasionally a problem) from the parking lot of Chatsworth Park South Recreation Building, which is located at the western terminus of Devonshire Street, about one mile west of Topanga Canyon Boulevard.

Hikers meet at 9:00 a.m. with the hike leader for the four-mile (700-ft. gain) loop up the Stagecoach Trail, which is in the hills west of the park. Hikers are advised to bring water and a snack in hiker's back pack or hip pack. Lug sole shoes or sturdy, closed shoes are advised, as is the wearing of a hat. All hike leaders are knowledgeable and experienced.

Barbara Coffman is the hike leader for the first Sundays of the month; Judy Garris on the second Sundays, Lindsay Wilhelm on the third Sundays; and Lee Baum on the fourth Sundays. Sunday hikes are sponsored by the Santa Susana Mountain Task Force of the Sierra Club, and publicized by SSMPA & FPSSM.

## **Other Santa Susana Mountain/Simi Hills Hikes**

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority offer hikes on an irregular basis at Rocky Peak Park (SR 118 at Chatsworth Simi Valley line); Sage Ranch (SR 118 or 101 to Topanga Canyon Blvd., west on Roscoe or Plummer to Valley Circle, to Woolsey Canyon Road (Rocketdyne Road), to Black Canyon Road; Santa Clarita Woodlands/Mentryville (I-5, Lyons, west to Pico Canyon, left at Y to end of road); and Towsley Canyon Park (I-5, Calgrove, west on The Old Road to Ed Davis Park, 1/2 mile to parking area by the kiosk). These hikes are free. Please call Nancy at 310-589-3200, ext. 126 for additional information and requirements. There are many hikes scheduled every month.

## **More Hikes**

Rancho Simi Trail Blazers offers a comprehensive hike schedule, including strenuous five-mile hikes on Sunday evenings at 5:00 from Rocky Peak trailhead. For information call, Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District at 805-584-4400.

## **Invitation to Explore - Hummingbird to Rocky Peak**

Santa Susana Mountains Task Force (SSMTF) and SSMPA conduct hikes in the Santa Susana Mountains and the Simi Hills. The Invitation to Explore series this month is Hummingbird to Rocky Peak. Join us for an easy paced hike. Lunch at 'Gaucho' Cave near natural pools, then hike to Rock House. Five miles, 1000' gain. In Simi Valley, meet at 9:00 a.m. at Kuehner Drive north of the 118 Freeway. Bring water, lunch, and lugsoles. Leaders: Judy Garris, Rosemary White, Rick Farber.

## **Hike Leaders - Train Now!**

Every Sunday (except July-Sept. and fifth Sundays of the month) hike leaders take groups of approximately ten to thirty interested individuals, families, and groups on hikes on the Stagecoach Trail. The need for additional hike leaders to be trained is always there. If you would like to become one of these fine individuals, please call Barbara Coffman at 818-347-5603. Your heart will thank you.

## SSMPA Executive Board

Pauline Aue	Member-At-Large	818-341-5872
Barbara Coffman	Member-At-Large	818-347-5603
Theodore Dent	Recording Secretary	818-882-4664
Judy Garris	Member-At-Large	818-346-7654
Susan Gerke	Treasurer	818-704-9304
Jeff Johnston	Member-At-Large	805-522-8662
Albert Knight	Vice President	818-252-3466
Patricia Levin	Corresponding Secretary	818-998-5224
Doreen Rusen	President	818-360-0894
Lindsay Wilhelm	Member-At-Large	818-348-9682



## Phone List

Assemblywoman Tom McClintock - 818-368-3838  
California State Parks Department (general information) - 818-880-0350  
California State Parks Foundation - 415-258-9975  
Congressman Howard P. "Buck" McKeon (San Fernando Valley) - 818-885-1032  
Congressman Howard P. "Buck" McKeon (San Clarita) - 805-254-2111  
Frank M. Buda, Attorney At Law - 818-999-9871  
Governor Pete Wilson - 213-897-0322  
Los Angeles City Park Headquarters (general information) -213-665-5188  
Los Angeles City Park Headquarters (Ranger dispatch) - 213-913-4147  
Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy - 310-589-3200  
Southern California Edison (general information) - 800-655-4555  
State Senator Cathie Wright - 800-458-8500  
William S. Abbey, Deputy Attorney General - 213-897-2604

## Address List

Department of Parks and Recreation, Box 942896, Sacramento CA 94296-0001  
Pete Wilson, State Capitol, Sacramento, CA 95814  
Cathie Wright (or your Senator), State Senate, Sacramento CA 95814  
Tom McClintock (or your Assemblyperson), State Assembly, Sacramento CA 95814

**Check Out Our Web Page!** (in progress) - <http://home.LACN.org/LACN/ssmpa/>

**Publicity Chairman – Diana Dixon-Davis - 818-341-4242**

## Need That Warm Feeling?

Have you been wishing you could find our very special T-shirt which features Chumash rock art? These newly-arrived, attractive black shirts with red artwork come in a variety of adult sizes. You can buy as many as you like at our general meetings. (Or call Susan at 818-704-9304.) All proceeds go for the preservation of the Santa Susanas

## Have A FAX?

The Lands Committee of SSMPA needs the donation of a FAX machine. This donation (to FPSSM) could be very helpful at tax time! Additionally, this machine would enable the committee to receive government documents. If you have some thoughts on this matter, please call Judy at 818-346-7654. The volunteers and future generations (and your tax accountant) will thank you!



# ABSENTEE BALLOT

(for those members unable to attend the March 16, 1998 General Membership Meeting.)

Please mail the absentee ballot below (ensuring a postmark before March 9, 1998) to:

Albert Knight, Chairman  
SSMPA Nominations Committee 1998  
SSMPA  
PO Box 4831  
Chatsworth CA 91313-4831

## ABSENTEE BALLOT

BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
SANTA SUSANA MOUNTAINS PARK ASSOCIATION  
MARCH 1998

The Nominations Committee of the Santa Susana Mountains Park Association has considered and approved the following candidates for the 1998 Board of Directors.

Please vote for ONE candidate for each of the following offices by circling the name printed or by writing in the name of a candidate of your choice.

<u>PRESIDENT</u>	JEFF JOHNSTON	OR	_____
<u>VICE-PRESIDENT</u>	ALBERT KNIGHT	OR	_____
<u>TREASURER</u>	SUSAN GERKE	OR	_____
<u>RECORDING SECRETARY</u>	THEODORE DENT	OR	_____
<u>CORRESPONDING SECRETARY</u>	PAT LEVIN	OR	_____

### MEMBERS-AT-LARGE

Please vote for FIVE of the following candidates for MEMBERS-AT-LARGE by circling the name printed and/or by writing in the name(s) of a candidate or candidates of your choice (to a maximum of five names.)

CHARLIE COOK	JUDY GARRIS	_____
HOLLY HUFF	DORIAN KEYSER	_____
MITCH LUCZYNSKI	MILT MCAULEY	_____
DOREEN RUSEN	LINDSAY WILHELM	_____

# CANDIDATES STATEMENTS

## JEFF JOHNSTON - President

I am an SSMPA Executive Board Member At-Large, and a candidate for the Office of President. I was elected to the Board last Spring and have enjoyed it so much I'm trying on as President.

I was appointed Chairman of the SSMPA By-Laws Committee soon after I joined the Board. The committee has worked hard in updating the existing by-laws to provide a structure to facilitate growth, and produce a document, which is relevant, functional and clear. It's been a laborious task, and we plan to have the new by-laws put to membership vote this autumn.

I'm a member of the SSMPA Land Acquisition Committee, chaired by Dorian Keyser. I've worked to understand the complex issues related to acquiring open space in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties. I've enjoyed being exposed to Dorian's extensive knowledge and experience. I hope to continue on the Lands Committee and increase the amount of time I contribute this year.

I'm responsible for updating SSMPA's picture and film library. Judy Garris has done the bulk of the work with the slides, and I've done some decent videotaping myself. Our goal is to catalogue the association's picture and video library for the assembly of programs and presentations.

Outside the SSMPA, I was recently appointed for a second term as the At-Large Public Board Member for the Rancho Simi Open Space Conservation Agency (RSOSCA). This is a joint powers agency which oversees the development of Corriganville Park, and includes two members each of the Simi Valley City Council and the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District. It has provided me a fine opportunity to learn how the different administrations operate. RSOSCA recently approved plans for a trail connecting Corriganville to Lilac Lane above our own Stagecoach Trail and State Historical Park.

I am a member of the Rancho Simi Trail Blazers (RSTB). I recently joined with other members to create the Volunteer Park Safety Service. This group, like the RSTB's, will be an arm of the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District. It was created to improve the safety and enjoyment of local trails by educating all users on trail etiquette and providing them knowledge about the local flora and fauna.

Last week I signed on with the Save our Open Spaces and Agricultural Resources (SOAR) coalition. The group has written a City of Simi Valley and a Ventura County measure to make open space zoning changes subject to voter approval on a per-development basis. I plan to help the group collect enough signatures to get these measures on upcoming November ballots.

As President, my goals will include focusing the Board and membership on the following main objectives:

- continued growth
- increased resources
- escalated activism
- become more progressive, decisive, and effective
- acquire more land
- create many of the great committees suggested in the past

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We must also bring the Association and the Foundation together. The Foundation was originally intended to provide resources to the Association in furtherance of SSMPA objectives, and this focus needs to be re-established.

I'm a sixth-generation Californian; a hiker and backpacker by nature; a direct descendent of Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston, dubbed "the ablest soldier in the Confederacy" by President Jefferson Davis. Preserving open spaces and America's historical sites are important to me, as is the Association's purposes. And I'm willing and able to accept the responsibility that comes with the honor of being President of the SSMPA.

## **MILT McAULEY - Member-At-Large**

My volunteerism goal is to work toward helping build and maintain trails on public lands. Many supporting organizations, like ours, are doing a fine job of interpreting Park values, but are sometimes hampered by a trail system in need of updating. I will form and work with an "Adopt-a-Trail" committee of the Santa Susana Mountain Park Association. The committee responsibilities will include:

Provide a trail maintenance leadership-training program.

Schedule a work program.

Recruit volunteers.

Network with other like organizations.

Control erosion on trail corridors and perform other essential maintenance.

Maintain frequent contact with the State Park people.

I do not want to take a place on the Board of Directors if someone else is deprived the opportunity. I am willing to work with an Adopt-a-Trail committee either on or off the board.

*(Editor's note: Milt is a well-known botanist and author, a frequent program speaker, and an expert on our natural setting.)*

## **DORIAN KEYSER - - Member-At-Large**

Please read this supplement to my statement that appeared in the last newsletter. It was incomplete because I was in the midst of massive surgery and treatment for the removal of a very large stone in pieces from my left kidney via delicate surgery and subsequent laser radiation. The following summarizes my contributions since I joined SSMPA in 1990, after retiring as a Senior Staff Engineer from the Hughes Canoga Park Missile System Group. Since retiring, I have given most of my time to:

- 1) Past president and vice-president of SSMPA and presently the chair of its Lands Committee.
- 2) Chair of the Santa Susana Mt. Task Force of the Sierra Club. I regularly represent our interests before the Angeles Chapter's Conservation and Lands Committees. Most knowledgeable of all SSMPA people about lands.
- 3) Generated massive document defining our lands objectives and regularly revise it as needed.
- 4) Official SSMPA representative to the Santa Monica Mts. Conservancy at its meetings and with its Executive Director and his staff.

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- 5). Testified before numerous LA County Board of Supervisors' and Planning Commissions Ventura County Planing Commission and Board of Supervisors' meetings, and LA City Council meetings on behalf of SSMPA. Have extensive dealings with Councilman Bernson's office and Mike Antonovich's office.
- 6) Very knowledgeable about the Ahmanson/Hope "Deal", having read numerous documents and testified 6 times on the matter.
- 7) Responsible for the wording of 1996 LA County Prop. A, which requires that any money left over from its \$4,000,000 designated for the purchase of north of Stoney Point be used in our area. Have been monitoring the status of this activity.
- 8) In the process of obtaining at least \$650,000 of the \$1,115,000 paid to LA County for the Deerlake Highlands purchase be made for land purchases in our area.
- 9) Lead the team which negotiated the agreement that 272.5 acres of the 338 Indian Springs Phase II be given to the Conservancy and continue follow-up to insure that this agreement is followed.
- 10) Analyzed the Sage Ranch Licensing Agreement of Eco-Camp by the Conservancy and submitted massive revisions, most of which are being followed;
- 11) Generated detailed comments for the SSM Task Force to the document, which will define trails for mountain bikes to use trails in LA City parks and will participate in hearings.
- 12) Participated in various meetings of the NPS' Santa Monica Mountains Recreation Area, supplied my comments to the NPS SMMART coordination project, the Jordan Ranch plan, Ahmanson, etc. Generated massive recommendations for establishing camp-grounds in LA and Ventura County (in the SM Mountains)
- 13) STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT THE SSMMPA AND THE FOUNDATION NEED TO CONTINUE THEIR PAST CLOSE RELATIONS. ELIMINATE CONFLICTS, AND CREATE JOINT COMMITTEES. To accomplish this I have generated a document with recommendations, which will be presented to the Foundation's Board at its next meeting.
- 14) Work closely with Robert Baxter, the state project engineer for the "Santa Susana Project", which has lead to the creation of the new Santa Susana State Historical Park.
- 15) Member of the SSMMPA Bylaws Committee until my wife's May 28, 1997 hip-replacement surgery necessitated me to take care of her during her recovery. Since then I have submitted detailed comments to its revisions.

## HOLLY HUFF - Member-At-Large

My name is Holly Huff

I'm a native Valley girl. I lived in Calabasas until I was 8 years In 1959 we moved to Chatsworth Lake (and there was a lake) where I continued to live until 1972, at which time I moved to the Susana Knells. I have now lived in the Knolls for over 25 years. My husband and I re-built our house and are still raising two children, ages 19 and 14.

I am very much interested in preserving the open space and wildlife animal corridors. I'd like to see Ventura County have more funds earmarked for the buying of properties large and small that become available.

I sit on the board of the Susana Knolls Homeowners Assoc. Protecting our community against over-development has been a constant battle. We are always fighting to save the rural flavor of our neighbor-

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hood, which isn't always so easy when you live in one such as ours, surrounded by vast open space on one side, and the City of Simi Valley on the other.

I am a member of the Rocketdyne Clean-up Coalition. RCC was formed in 1989 when contamination was found at the Santa Susana Field Lab, a.k.a. Rocketdyne. As a community group we set three goals. 1. To clean up the contamination which is always on going. 2. To stop any further nuclear work, which we were successful in doing, and 3. To have a health study done on the workers, in which one part has been completed, radiation contamination.

I share a small gardening business with a friend that keeps me busy.

Not knowing a lot of the works the SSMPPA is involved in, I can only say I will do the best I can to contribute to the organization.

## **FROM THE ARCHIVES**

by Albert Knight, Vice-President, SSMPPA

One of the last of the REAL "Good Old Boys" from Chatsworth is dead... Frank Retz, 84, died at his ranch in Santa Susana Pass during the early morning hours of February 9, 1998. Retz died either from injuries or from drowning, after a car he was riding in fell into a ravine which was flooded with rapidly flowing water. A close friend of his told AK that "other than the people he was traveling with I was one of the last people to see him alive". According to his friend, Retz had spent Sunday night at a German restaurant, partially owned by this friend. "Frank had had a fine dinner, had danced and drank and sang with old friends.... he was very happy, and shook my hand as he left, saying that he would see me again soon", I was told by this by his friend as we surveyed the place of Frank's demise.

Retz was an old cavalryman, a veteran of the German Army during World War 2, and an immigrant, but he could also claim a direct connection to the old west. After coming to southern California following WW2, Frank used his skills as a rider to get a job as a stuntman, and he appeared in numerous equestrian scenes in several of the movies, which were filmed in the Santa Susana Pass area. Indeed Retz WAS Zorro (or at least a stand-in for the actor who played him) in a number of films and in the TV series; and if you can remember seeing Zorro riding hard through an Oak Woodland setting, it may well be Frank Retz that you were seeing....

Frank met lots of famous, and infamous, people over the years. One of these was "Shorty" Shea, who was eventually murdered by Charlie Manson and his followers. Manson and some of his "family" had lived at the Spahn Ranch where Retz was then working (the Spahn family had established a homestead in Chatsworth during the late 19th Century- the real ranch later became a movie-ranch), and had plenty of time to hide the body. And "Shorty" was in poor condition indeed, before he was found. Frank had even know Manson himself. The two didn't get along, and Manson once told Frank that he would "get him." However, Manson's followers got Sharron Tate, and a few other people first, and Manson and most of his followers are still in jail today. Retz later thought that the old Spahn Ranch (which he now owned) would make a fine home and Beer Garden (separately, of course... the Beer Garden would have cost \$3,000,000 and had a fine view of the Rocky Peak area.... a good thing Al wasn't a SSMPPA member when this idea

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came up!)... "Squeaky, why, I never thought she could have harmed nothing.... I have tried to forget what happened here, and I look at this property as a piece of natural beauty.... I love nature and am going to build my home on a hill just over that ridge...." Retz once told a reporter. Retz started out but never nearly finished. Some irate folks (who could it be???) didn't share his vision and griped to the authorities about the mess.... The rather unattractive scar Retz's earth grading activities left on the hillside above Chatsworth Park North and South can be seen from quite a distance today, Personally, I think he has created a fine lookout for the new State Historic Park (Hey a few \$100,000 and we can fix it!)...

I find it impossible to not mourn for Frank, who was known to fire rifle shots over the heads of intruders, when he did not have the time, or the inclination, to verbally exile them from his realm (please remember, there really are a LOT of idiots out there that just love to trespass onto your property, and not all of the people that Frank had to deal with are as nice as we are....). It is a sad point to note that Frank died because the car he was riding in drove onto an illegal bridge, that Frank himself had built, off of Santa Susana Pass Road. Frank, you see, thought that almost all governmental regulations were.... intrusive of his rights (let's say), and he didn't build his culverts or prepare his drainage system to code (i. e. adequately). It also seems that his version of a bridge lacked certain credentials as well. At any rate, for whatever reason, the car he was riding in fell into a raging torrent caused by many hours of intense rain. Both the culvert and the bridge had washed away, and Frank suffered the sad, but inevitable consequences.

Frank was one of the diminishing number of local folks with a personal memory of Chatsworth as a farming and ranching community (even though he arrived towards the end of this period), which for a time became an important focus for the movie industry. Frank lived to see Chatsworth become a major communications route between L. A. and Ventura Counties, and become the increasingly important modern community that it is today. In the end Frank saved several tens of thousands of dollars on fees (getting his property legal!) and all it cost him was his life. Frank Retz died with his boots (or perhaps his dancing shoes) on. How can one not be sad?

And here is an interesting footnote California State Parks is interested in buying the property for use as a Visitor's Center for the new SANTA SUSANA PASS STATE HISTORIC PARK.... I wonder how they will do the interpretation on the "Manson Period."???

## **Ahmanson Makes Deal to Acquire Open Space**

Edited from the Los Angeles Times, Valley Edition, 29 January 1998; By Coll Metcalfe,

Clearing the way for one of the largest housing developments ever approved in Ventura County, Ahmanson Ranch developers have struck a deal to acquire additional land needed for open space.

Home Savings of America has agreed to purchase two ranches from entertainer Bob Hope for an undisclosed amount and turn the land over to local park agencies, Hope spokesman Ward Grant confirmed Wednesday.

That would satisfy the promise that the development firm made six years ago when it won permission to build the \$1-billion mini-city on the county's eastern edge.

The purchase, estimated by some to cost as much as \$30 million, should be completed by Friday.

After a decade of negotiations and lawsuits, bulldozers could finally move in and begin grading the 54 million cubic yards of dirt - enough to fill the Rose Bowl three times - for construction of more than 3,000 homes, a commercial complex and golf resort.

"An agreement has been reached, but I am not aware of any details," Grant said. "However, it was something that Mr. Hope felt was fair."

Home Savings spokeswoman Mary Trigg confirmed that after years of on-again, off-again negotiations with Hope, a deal has

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been struck that will put the once stalled project back on track. She, too, declined to comment on any specifics.

"All that I can say is that it was an equitable settlement for both of us," she said. "We are very pleased with what's been accomplished" County planners say they don't expect any work to begin at the site for at least a year. And foes of the project, who spent years fighting it with unsuccessful lawsuits, say they don't intend to give up.

"We'll have to look at the deal before we decide what action to take, but our intention is to keep fighting this until the last house is built," said Vince Curtis, a board member of the conservation group Save Open Space.

As part of its 1992 agreement with the county, Ahmanson Land Co. is committed to acquiring Hope's 4,369-acre Runkle Ranch near Simi Valley and his 339-acre Corral Canyon property near Malibu. Ahmanson would dedicate another 2,633 acres of its ranch property to the public, as well.

In a side deal with Hope, also part of the agreement, park agencies purchased two of the properties promised them in the deal - the 2,308-acre Jordan Ranch near Oak Park and 300-acre Liberty Canyon near Calabasas--for about \$26 million.

But the project had been stalled because negotiators for Hope and Ahmanson could not settle on a price for the final two properties. It had been reported that Hope's asking price was more than Ahmanson was willing to pay.

Because of the impasse, Ahmanson missed the 1996 deadline for purchasing the properties, but was granted a two-year extension from the county. That would have expired in December.

Last month, in what some have described as a savvy negotiating ploy, Ahmanson filed a sketchy, two-page application asking the county to scrap its commitments and instead allow it to establish an open space fund in an amount equivalent to the appraised price of Hope's properties.

According to the application, the fund would then be used by the county for future open space acquisitions. Ahmanson apparently asked the county earlier this week to begin processing the application, which--if passed by the County Board of Supervisors--would have left Hope with nothing.

"It was obvious from the vague request that Ahmanson was using this to put pressure on Hope," Calabasas City Planner Steve Craig said. "And it looks like it might have worked."

The impending deal should now open the way for Ahmanson to get the necessary permits to begin grading. The firm would then sell the land to builders.

Spread across 2,408 acres of hilly grassland that borders Los Angeles County, the Ahmanson Ranch project would include 3,050 homes, a sprawling 400,000-square-foot commercial complex, two schools, a 300-room resort hotel and two championship golf courses.

The sheer size of the project and its location in a rustic, undeveloped area of the county has made it a target for critics who contend that it will irreparably damage the environment, specifically the headwaters of Malibu Creek and wildlife corridors through the Santa Monica Mountains.

It has also come under fire from such communities as Calabasas that fear an estimated 10,000 new Ahmanson residents would choke their roadways with traffic.

Los Angeles County officials have also assailed the project because it would generate sizable tax revenues for Ventura County, while dumping all of its negative impacts, such as traffic, on Los Angeles County. The city of Calabasas and groups like Save Open Space have filed lawsuits against the development based on those assertions. The lawsuits, however, have since been settled or won by Ahmanson.

News of the impending deal, the linchpin in this notoriously controversial project, took many by surprise.

Craig said it was still too early for Calabasas to begin plotting a strategy and didn't know whether the city would even take any action.

However, the deal will open a new chapter in the Ahmanson saga that could play to the benefit of the opposition.

According to County Planning Supervisor Keith Turner, Ahmanson must now draw up detailed grading and subdivision plans, which must then be approved by the county, before any construction can begin.

That will open the floor for discussion, giving concerned residents and groups the opportunity to voice their objections to county leaders.

Additionally, when Ahmanson begins selling the subdivided parcels to builders, the entire plan and development agreement will again be open to scrutiny and possible lawsuits.

Curtis has said his group is planning to file a new suit against the development, alleging that the soil in and around Ahmanson Ranch may have been contaminated by decades of nuclear and rocket research from Rocketdyne's Santa Susana Field Laboratory, just three miles away.

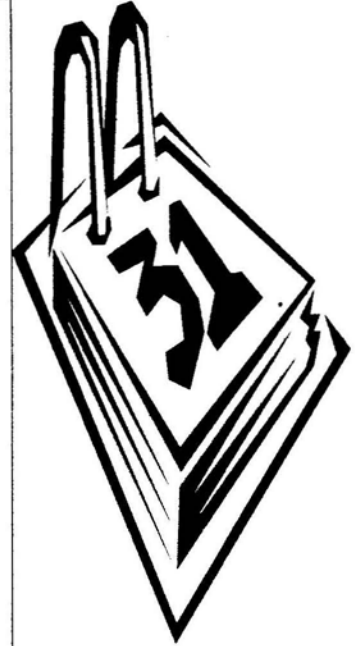
"We've got a number of options we can pursue.... We're not dead in the water," Curtis said.

While Ahmanson officials declined to say when they plan on breaking ground for their project, Turner said that if all goes smoothly, it would be at least a year before any bulldozers begin carving up the land.

"This really opens up an entirely new process that will take some time to move through the county system," he said. "Even if [Ahmanson] brought in their grading and tract plans tomorrow, it would still take at the very least six months, but that's unlikely."

## CALENDAR

March 1 (Sun.) ; Interpretive Hike into History, with Al Knight;  
meet at Chatsworth Park South - 9:00 a.m.  
March 2 (Mon.) Executive Board Meeting, Visitors Center, Chats.Pk.S.  
March 8 (Sun.) Weekly Hike; meet at Chatsworth Park South - 9:00 a.m.  
March 15 (Sun.) ; Interpretive Hike into History, with Lindsay Wilhelm and/  
or Lee Baum; meet at Chatsworth Park South - 9:00 a.m.  
March 16 (Mon.) General Membership Meeting, Glendale Fed. - 7:00 p.m. -  
SSMPA Annual Election of Officers  
March 16 (Mon.) Deadline for articles for the April Newsletter  
March 22 (Sun.) Weekly Hike; meet at Chatsworth Park South - 9:00 a.m.  
March 29 (Sun.) Weekly Hike; meet at Chatsworth Park South - 9:00 a.m.



### Explorer Series Hike

Explorer Series – Devil Canyon Wildlife Corridor, a 2-½ mile walk to see one of 3 choke-points for wildlife to migrate from the Santa Susanas to the Simi Hills. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at Iverson Road. (Take Topanga Canyon Blvd. north to Santa Susana Pass Road, turn left, go about one mile to Iverson Road, turn right and proceed at ½ mile to 118 Freeway underpass and park.)

Come prepared to hop streams and get muddy feet. Call 818-346-7654 for information.

## SANTA SUSANA MOUNTAIN PARK ASSOCIATION

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