



# Santa Susana Mountain Park Association

Volume 30, Issue 57

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

## September 2006 Newsletter

### TROUBLE IN THE HILLS

Six days a week, beginning 2 years ago, neighbors along a private road in the Simi Hills noted numerous covered and uncovered trucks going up to a site and coming down empty, indicating the operation of an apparent unlicensed dump or landfill. The dumpsite is adjacent to a public open-space park operated by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. During 2005, Todd Doherty wrote about this operation by email to various agencies having enforcement capabilities, including Ventura County, California Integrated Waste Management Board, CA Fish & Game, Southern California Water Authority, the State Governor's office, and others with possible regulatory authority. Eventually, the Governor's office directed the County to review the allegations made. In May of 2006, the dump operator was issued an order to Cease and Desist from the County's Local Enforcement's Agency (an agency created to ensure compliance with environmental protection laws). Hearings have ensued on the matter, which are continuing presently.

In May 2006, two individuals organized demonstrations near the dumpsite and at the Ventura County Government center. The dump operator consequently filed a lawsuit suing participants in the small demonstration that was photographed at the Ventura County Government Center, as well as a Ventura County Supervisor candidate who had expressed public concerns about the dump activity, and others. Although 6 people and 50 DOES were named in the complaint that was filed in mid-June 2006, only two people have been served: (1) Todd Doherty, who has written most of the correspondence and was at the demonstrations, and (2) a neighbor of the dump operator, who is very familiar with the operations. Allegations in the lawsuit are primarily that Todd Doherty caused the investigation and public hearing process, due to his allegedly false statements and correspondence and telephonic activities, thereby causing damage to the dump operator's reputation, credibility and business, and causing emotional distress, pain and suffering and pecuniary loss "in a sum not less than one million dollars".



### SLAPPs (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation)

Generally, a "SLAPP" is a (1) civil complaint or counterclaim; (2) filed against individuals or organizations; (3) arising from their communications to government or speech on an issue of public interest or concern. SLAPPs are often brought by corporations, real estate developers, government officials and others against individuals and community groups who oppose them on issues of public concern.

SLAPP filers frequently use lawsuits based on ordinary civil claims such as defamation, conspiracy, malicious prosecution, nuisance, and interference with contract and/or economic advantage, as a means of transforming public debate into lawsuits.

Ultimately, most SLAPPs are not legally successful. Nevertheless, while most SLAPPs do not succeed in court, they "succeed" in the public arena. This is because defending a SLAPP, even when the legal defense is strong, requires a substantial investment of money, time, and resources. The resulting effect "chills" public participation in, and open debate on, important public issues. This chilling effect is not limited to the SLAPP defendants -- other people refrain from speaking out on issues of public concern because they fear being sued for what they say.

The filing of a SLAPP also impedes resolution of the public matter at issue, by removing the parties from the public decision-making forum, where both the cause and resolution of the dispute can be determined, and placing them before a court, where only the alleged "effects" of the public controversy may be determined. For example, imagine a company asks for a zoning variance to place an incinerator in a residential area. When local residents object to the city council, the company sues them for "interference with contract." The judge hearing the suit cannot decide the real issues -- the location of the incinerator -- but will have to spend considerable judicial resources to decide the side issues of the alleged "damages" or other consequences of the public debate on the real issues.

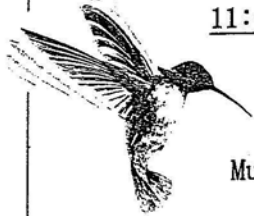
*[NOTE: When a SLAPP-type lawsuit recently was filed against a SSMPA Board Member, we researched the issue on the internet, and found a website that includes a great deal of additional information at [www.casp.net](http://www.casp.net), which is operated by the California Anti-SLAPP Project (CASP), a public interest law firm and policy organization dedicated to protecting the rights of Californians to participate in government and civic affairs and to speak freely about public issues. A legal defense fund is being created to assist the defendants.]*

## Annual Pioneer Day

presented by Chatsworth Historical Society  
Homestead Acre, Chatsworth Park South  
(west end of Devonshire St.)

Sunday, October 8th

11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.



Chili cook-off  
Bake sale  
Games  
Music by Art & Glen  
Panning for gold  
Spinning and weaving  
Veteran quilt display  
Blacksmith  
Indian artifacts  
Useful origami  
"Chores of yore"  
Lots more!

Donations: Adults \$4 - Children over five \$1  
Information: (818) 882-5614

### Message from Laurie Dager:

**"We are getting done! Thanks for your support!"**

For over 3 years now, you have been in the forefront of the campaign to improve the Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park with a visitors' center, state ranger, and the marking and maintenance of all trails and historic sites. Good news! The State Park's process to achieve our goals is almost complete. In 2005, the State Parks did several required studies of the Park, and in 2006 we have had 2 out of the 3 necessary public meetings for these improvements. Public meeting #3 is to be held within the next few months, and that will complete the process for the General Plan.

Next step: formulation and implementation of the Special Plan. Please write a letter today, from yourself, your office, or your organization, supporting our campaign and requesting (1) funds for capital improvements - specifically the visitors' center, and (2) additions to the State Park's next budget to cover staffing, maintenance, equipment and other specialty expenses that will be incurred. Address your letter to: Ted Jackson - Chief, Southern Section, California State Parks, 700 N. Alameda, 5<sup>th</sup> Fl., LA, CA 90012. Kindly send a copy to me: Laurie Dager, 10035 Gierson Ave., Chatsworth, CA 91311; [rwdager@worldnet.att.net](mailto:rwdager@worldnet.att.net).

Thereafter, copies will be made and mailed to the same State, State Parks, U.S. Government and Los Angeles City officials who have been receiving copies of our petitions every 3 weeks for the past 3 years.

Thank you for your continued cooperation, your concern, and your determination to preserve this unique cultural and historical heritage for our community and our children.

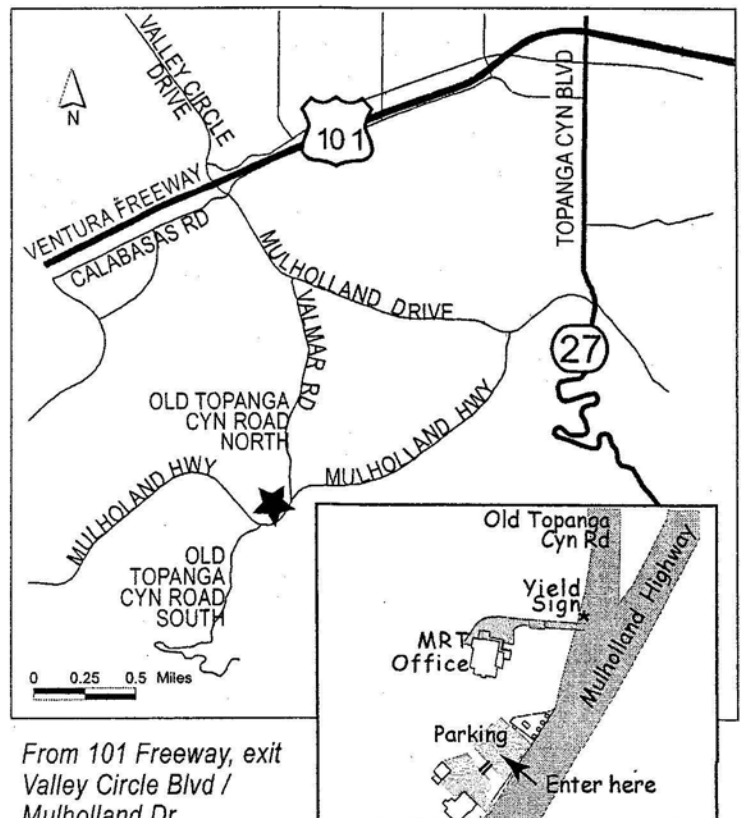
### Wetland Mapping Process Interactive Two-Day Open House

Interested in local wetlands? Mountains Restoration Trust is preparing *Headwaters to Groundwater: Upper Los Angeles River Area Assessment Project*, funded by Prop 50 CALFED Watershed Program. The maps cover the undeveloped sections of the **Santa Susana Mountains, Simi Hills and Santa Monica Mountains** west of the 405 Freeway in the LA River watershed. The Geography Dept. at Cal State University, Northridge, has been working on creating wetland maps using National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) methodology under the direction of Dr. Shawna Dark. This is an involved process that relies heavily on the interpretation of aerial photography. They have completed a first pass at the wetland maps, but nothing can replace the knowledge of local experts.

The maps will be available for review and comment from **9am to 5pm, Thurs., Sept. 14<sup>th</sup> and Fri., Sept. 15** at the office of Mountains Restoration Trust (see map).

Dr. Dark will hold a special program on **Thurs., Sept. 14<sup>th</sup> from 10am to 2pm**. A formal presentation of the methodology and what is needed will be presented during the first hour. Attendees will be invited to mark any missed or miscalculated wetlands on the maps.

Getting input in the form of stakeholder review has not been done on previous NWI maps, but now this will be a regular part of the wetland mapping process. Share this announcement with someone you know who might have knowledge of the areas being mapped.



From 101 Freeway, exit Valley Circle Blvd / Mulholland Dr.

Take Mulholland Dr to Valmar Rd. Valmar becomes Old Topanga Cyn Rd to Mulholland Hwy. MRT is located just after intersection of Mulholland Hwy and Old Topanga Cyn.

3815 Old Topanga Cyn Rd, Calabasas, CA 91302, 818-591-1701

## UPCOMING HIKES

**Sun., 9/17: Elsmere Cyn./A Wild Heritage Hike - 9:00 a.m.** Moderate, 5 mi, 500' gain hike in historic canyon. Frequent stream crossings. Meet at south end of San Fernando Rd. in Newhall. Take I-5 Fwy N to 14 Fwy Antelope Valley Fwy N, 1<sup>st</sup> exit San Fernando Rd; R to park & ride. Bring water, lunch, lug soles, long pants. Ldrs: Henry Schultz (661-284-5613) & Mary Ellen Dittmore (661-254-8543). *Sierra Club, Santa Clarita Task Force Outing*

**Tues., 9/26: Sage Ranch in Simi Hills - 9:00 a.m.** Moderately-paced 4-6 mi, 200' gain. Enjoy a beautiful morning. Sack lunch at Ramona's mobile home on way back from hike, refreshments will be served. Meet at trailhead (take 101 Fwy to Valley Circle Bl. Exit N, 6 mi to Woolsey Cyn Rd, L uphill to end, R ¼ mi on Black Cyn Rd to Sage Ranch parking lot on L). Bring water, lunch, lugsoles, sunscreen, hat. Ldr: Judy Garris. Asst. Ramona Dunn. *Sierra Club, Santa Susana Mtns Task Force Outing*

**Thurs., 10/5: Chumash Trail to Rocky Peak - 8:00 a.m.** Moderately-paced 8 mi, 1400' gain hike in Santa Susana Mtns. Meet at trailhead (from 118 Fwy, exit Yosemite Ave N ½ mi, R on Flanagan Dr ¾ mi to end, park). Bring 2 qts. water, lunch, lugsoles, hat, sunscreen. Ldr: Margaret Vernallis. Asst.: Nancy Krupa. *Sierra Club, San Fernando Valley Wilderness Adv. Outing*

**Sun., 10/15: Stagecoach Trail - 9:00 a.m.** Interpretative hike into history in our Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park. Meet at 9:00 am for 4 mi (700' gain) loop up Stagecoach Trail. From Topanga Canyon Blvd., turn W on Devonshire, drive into Chatsworth Park S to 2nd parking lot. Ldr: Lee Baum (818) 341-1850. *Sierra Club, Santa Susana Mtns Task Force Outing*



native grasses



Olive-sided Flycatcher

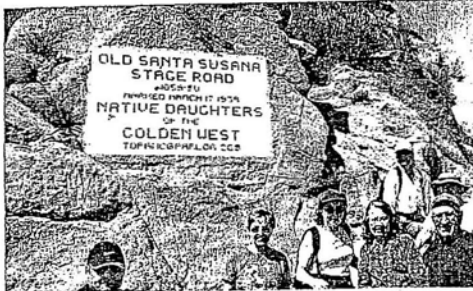
## UPCOMING BIRDWALKS

**Sat., 9/16: Santa Monica Mtns. Conservancy Bird Walk @ Towsley Cyn - 8:00-10:00 a.m.** Directions: Go N on I-5 through Santa Clarita, exit Calgrove, turn W (L) under fwy, then L again on Old Road. Watch for sign, "Ed Davis Park at Towsley Canyon." Turn R and park in back lot. Meet at kiosk. Ldr: Roger McClure (661-255-3606). *SFV Audubon Society Outing*

**Sun., 9/17: Malibu Creek State Park Bird Walk - 8:00 a.m.** Meet at 2<sup>nd</sup> (lower) day-use parking lot. Entrance to park is on W side of Las Virgenes Rd, just S of Mulholland Hwy. Entrance fee is \$8 per car. Ldr: Muriel Kotin (310-457-5796), AKotin@earthlink.net. *SFV Audubon Society Outing*

**WANT TO PITCH IN?** SSMPA is a volunteer organization, and we could use some more good people who want to roll up their sleeves and get involved. Call Jan Miller at (818) 702-0854.

Thank you for renewing your SSMPA membership: Christopher Lindelien, Leland Gassert, Jeff Pomerantz, Laura Graff, Barbara & Michael Haas, Kira Fuchs, Lorie Lussier-Lawrence, Jack Unger, Susan Bradshaw and Marilyn Stout. Welcome new member, Jeannie Plumb.



### 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.

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior or Student ((\$10.00) | <input type="checkbox"/> Individual (\$15.00)              | <input type="checkbox"/> Family (\$20.00) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life Member (\$150.00)       | <input type="checkbox"/> Business / Organization (\$30.00) |   |

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 Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City / State / Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Special Interest / Expertise: \_\_\_\_\_



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.

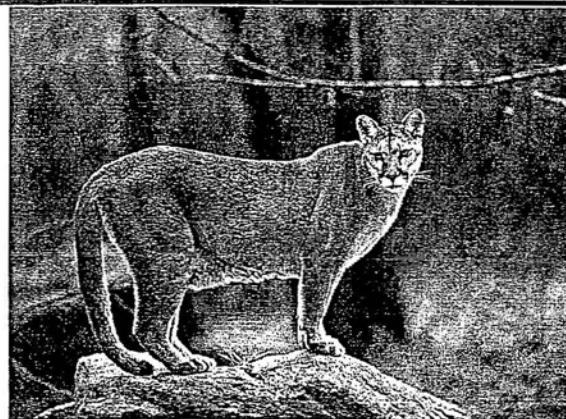
Please consider joining our forces and help us protect and preserve by attending our meetings and getting involved.

# California Mountain Lions

They live here too, so why not be good neighbors?

- Find out about lion history, biology, and behavior
- Discover ways to reduce people/cougar conflicts
- Ensure the security of your family, pets and livestock
- Take home original publications

Mountain Lion Foundation-Southern California Office  
P.O. Box 780  
Moorpark, CA 93020  
[www.mountainlion.org](http://www.mountainlion.org)



## Living with Lions

A natural history program given by Christa Kermode of the Mountain Lion Foundation

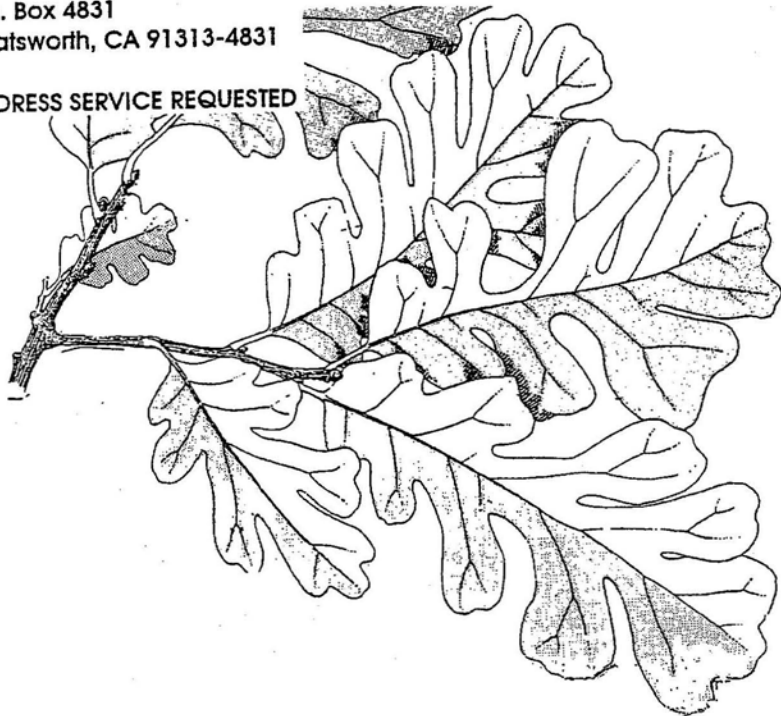
### SANTA SUSANA MOUNTAIN PARK ASSOCIATION PROGRAM MEETING:

Monday, September 18, 2006

SSMPA General Membership Program meetings take place every third Monday during the months of September through November and January through May. Program meetings begin at 7:15 p.m. and generally conclude by 9:00 p.m. at the Rockpointe Clubhouse, 22300 Devonshire, Chatsworth, on the south side, one block before Chatsworth Park South.

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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