



SANTA SUSANA MOUNTAIN PARK ASSOCIATION

Dedicated to the Preservation of the Santa Susana Mountains and Simi Hills

A Non-Profit 501(c)(4) Organization

Incorporated August 31, 1971

Website: www.ssmpa.com

E-mail: mail@ssmpa.com

*update on info
from Fall 2011
newsletter
regarding
SSPSHP*

Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park

The Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park is in crisis because it is on the list of State Parks to be closed in July 2012. When State Parks close, they become a magnet for crime, illegal fires, and vagrancy. You can do something to preserve our beautiful State Park – help our volunteer group take over operation and management of the park.

The California Assembly passed AB42, which will allow non-profit organizations to take over operation of State Parks on the closure list. The law has not yet passed the Senate. Write your State Senator (see page two for a list) and encourage him/her to pass the Senate equivalent of AB42. Ask your representative to include language that allows local government the option to pay liability insurance for non-profits who take over State Park Operations. Ask your representative to include language that allows local government to provide and pay for law enforcement through a Joint Powers Agreement within the State Parks.

The mission of the Santa Susana Mountain Park Association (SSMPA) is to serve as stewards of the Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park (SSPSHP) and surrounding areas, and to continue to preserve and protect habitats for plants and animals native to the location, unique geological formations, and sites of ethnological, archaeological, and historic interest. We also seek to provide passive recreational and environmental education opportunities, support the acquisition of new public parks, open space and conservation easements, expand existing natural parks, and to participate in the planning of park infrastructure and programs. SSMPA has been working for the conservation of the Santa Susana Mountains/Simi Hills since 1971, and was instrumental in the establishment of the SSPSHP.

In 2009, SSMPA appeared at a State Legislative Hearing because many State Parks were being considered for closure due to budget problems. During the hearing, SSMPA committed to establishing a Volunteer Program to operate the SSPSHP for the State. Within one month SSMPA recruited volunteers for the first community training. A total of 63 local community members have been trained. State Parks staff conduct training and track volunteer hours. Volunteers lead/staff the Programs. To date, SSMPA has facilitated three successful Volunteer Programs within the SSPSHP: 1) Monthly Interpretive Hikes; 2) Daily Park Observers; 3) Monthly Graffiti Squad.

Closure of Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park – FAQ Sheet and Action Items



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Fall 2011 Newsletter

Volume 41.9

Santa Susana Mountain Park Association

Community Meetings 7:15 pm

SAVE THIS ISSUE: Sept. 19, Oct. 19, Nov. 21 FALL Presenters
(Community Meetings are Free to SSMPA Members and Public)

Rockpointe Clubhouse: 22300 Devonshire Street, Chatsworth CA 91311
(On the south side, one block before entrance to Chatsworth Park South)

Monday, September, 19

OLD STAGECOACH TRAIL

Presenter: **Ann & Ray Vincent** – Chatsworth Historical Society

Join us for a pictorial of The Old Stagecoach Trail including movie footage of the March 17, 1939 Stagecoach Trail dedication ceremony, presented by Ann and Ray Vincent of the Chatsworth Historical Society.

The Old Stagecoach Trail is a significant Point of Historical Interest and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, by the State of California. The steepest section is called the "Devil's Slide" located in SSPSHP. SSMPA and Sierra Club sponsors interpret hikes along the Old Stagecoach Trail: Refer to <www.ssmipa.com> for hiking updates for "SSMPA Welcome Walks" and "Stagecoach Trails".

Monday, October 17

THE FATE OF CHATSWORTH PARK SOUTH AND CHATSWORTH NATURE PRESERVE

Presenter: **Mitch Englander**, Councilmember, District 12

Chatsworth Park South has been closed since February, 2008, because of lead pellets found by a park visitor, remnants from over 40 years ago where the 80-acre park site was a skeet and trap range. The city park, gateway to the Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park, has been closed and gated pending handling the cleanup. Chatsworth Nature Preserve: Los Angeles Open Space Ordinance, 16973, April 1994, stated this property shall be limited to a Nature Preserve and accessory uses only. The LADWP transfer to LA Recreation and Park wetlands mitigation project agreement for 44 acres is in process. Mr. Englander will present the future plans for both Chatsworth Park South and Chatsworth Nature Preserve.

Monday, November 21

WESTERN FILMS SHOT ON LOCATION IN THE SANTA SUSANA MTNS. AND SIMI HILLS

Presenter: **Jerry England**, Author, Historian of Western Films

Jerry England, Author of *Rendezvous at Boulder Pass: Hollywood's Fantasyland and Reel Cowboys of the Santa Susanas* will entertain us with his new DVD covering magic movie moments filmed on location in Chatsworth studio location, Iverson Ranch, providing historical footnotes for movie and TV film history aficionados. You can order England's books in advance on his website: <www.cowboyup.com> and he will arrange to bring your autographed copy to the meeting.

PIONEER DAYS – CHATSWORTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mark your calendar! Sunday, October 2

Located Homestead Acre, 10385 Shadow Oak Dr., Chatsworth Park South

Old fashion family fun, Chili Cook off for prizes, blacksmith demos, crafts, exhibits, and visits in the Chatsworth Museum and Homestead Cottage. Small donation requested. Shuttle service provided every 15 minutes 11 am to 4 pm at Chatsworth Train Depot.

Memorial

Dolores "Laurie" Dager, wife of Robert Dager, SSMPA Board Member, died May 17, 2011. Laurie enjoyed an eclectic career from modeling, secretarial work, to real estate agent/broker winning the Real Estate Presentation Award for Los Angeles two years in a row. But her passion was community volunteer work. She served on the Board of the Chatsworth Historical Society and was active in the Chatsworth Women's Club. She achieved wonderful accomplishments, a five-year project to refurbish and stock the main library and dormitory libraries at Rancho San Antonio Boys Home and led the five-year project to create the General Plan to develop Santa Susana State Historic Park, approved and adopted in 2009. She dedicated over 50 years of her life to serving the community in volunteer work. Her enthusiasm and devotion to the Chatsworth community will be greatly missed.



Featured Critter ... Raccoon

Raccoons are omnivorous, nocturnal, medium size mammals. Their coarse fur is a mixture of gray, brown and black, with black-ringed tail. Their most distinctive features are their facial mask "black bandit mask" and dexterous front paws. This is a highly intelligent animal which explains their adaptability from natural mixed forests and coastal marshes to urban regions. They can identify objects before touching them. Their paws do not have opposable thumbs but they are dexterous using their paws to catch animals, to pick and open nuts, and even lift new lawn sod to dig for worms.

Their omnivorous diet consists of 40% invertebrates, 33% plant food and 27% vertebrates; insects, worms, fruits and nuts (acorns and walnuts) and birds, fish, amphibians and rodents. They do rob bird's nests for eggs and hatchlings. Raccoons have been observed dousing or "washing" food before eating. However, this is attributed to a vacuum activity imitating foraging at shores for aquatic foods. At shorelines its prey is crayfish, mussels, frogs, and fish and with its paws in water, it may appear to be "washing" its food.

You will often see a pair of raccoons together as they are gender specific socially. In the canyon roads it is best to drive slow to avoid running over nocturnal animals such as raccoons. Hunting and auto accidents are the most common causes of death shortening their life from 18 to 20 years in captivity to only 2 to 3 years in the wild. Natural causes of death runs from extreme cold in northern regions, starvation and distemper.

Raccoons can swim, run up to 10-15 mph in short distances and climb down a tree headfirst. They make tree hollows, old oaks rock crevices and caves, dense undergrowth their homes. Their human-made homes are roadside culverts, garages, abandoned houses and attics. As in all wildlife, it is best to not entice them into your yard by leaving pet food out or garbage cans unsecured, or structures not sealed. Attacks on humans, domestic cats or dogs are rare but there have been a few recordings of deaths caused by raccoons. Relocating or killing a raccoon without a permit is forbidden. Contact your local animal shelter for help.

Natural Predators: Bobcats, coyotes and young raccoons, great-horned owls. While raccoons may seem like a pest to urban dwellers, they do a great service keeping the rodent population down.

Summer Activities for SSMPA Board Members: Summer is traditionally the time to rest, take vacations, and enjoy life. The summer heat in our region does cause a lull in hiking activity. However, SSMPA Board Members still continued to be active: Attending community meetings such as Mitch Englander's inauguration celebration, participation in the SSFL Public Participation Group, attending public meetings and working with local representatives to keep our state parks open ... Los Encinos and SSPSHP. Yes, we dream of relaxing!

If you are passionate about saving and preserving your State Park, please look at our website: <www.ssmpa.com> and see how you can help.

Activites ... Hikes

Refer to SSMPA website for updates: <www.ssmpa.com>

SSMPA Interpretive hike leaders: Teena Takata, John Luker and Elizabeth Harris

2011 Hike and Graffiti Schedule:

Hikes: 2nd & 3rd Saturday of the month

Hike 3rd Sunday of the month

Graffiti Abatement: 4th Saturday of the month

Please note that the starting time for the graffiti abatement has been changed to 9:30.

Starting/Ending Locations: Larwin entrance

Welcome Walks

Organized and led by SSMPA in the SSPSH
Refer to SSMPA website for updates: <www.ssmpa.com>

Stagecoach Trail

Meet 9:00 AM on the third Sunday of each month from November through June. No hiking in the summer-early fall due to hot weather. Interpretative hike into history of Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park. Hike is a 3 to 4-1/2 mile loop (400' gain) up the historic Stagecoach Trail. Directions: From Topanga Cyn. Blvd., turn West on Devonshire St. then South on Larwin Avenue. Go about 200 feet and park under the power lines.

Leader: Lee Baum (818-341-1850).

What's Happening at Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park?

It seems like a very good time to update our readers on efforts the local volunteers, SSMPA, and the Foundation have spearheaded to prevent our Park from being closed July 1, 2012 as 70 of our State's Parks are closed. The California State Legislature has passed, in both the House and Senate, versions of AB 42 that will allow local non-profits that are organized as 501(c)(3)s (public charities) to operate State Parks that would otherwise be closed. The Bill is not yet finally adopted, but has received very favorable votes in both houses, so we hope this will become law in the near future.

Luckily, we have two of the three key ingredients for the bill. We've helped develop a volunteer organization that observes the Park and removes graffiti – we need volunteers if we run a Park. We also have a non-profit that is organized as a charity – the Foundation for Preservation of the Santa Susana Mountains (the Foundation), that initially was formed to collect funds to purchase the initial land that became our Park. Lastly, we have to take the Foundation and qualify it as a state cooperating agency and have it approved for that purpose. It appears due to various steps involved in this process, we will be able to have this accomplished shortly before July 1, 2012 when the Park is closed.

The last step in the process isn't well defined – to have the cooperating agency (the Foundation) approved to operate the Park. But, we've met with the local Park officials and they are very interested in working with us with the ultimate goal to keep our Park open to the public, and they have encouraged us to establish the cooperating agency to be able to run an otherwise closed Park as contemplated by AB 42.

Under the cooperating agency agreement, the Foundation will have to furnish insurance for liability and for accident insurance for volunteers. This will represent the major cost for the Foundation as it moves forward as a cooperating agency that operates the Park. We expect to ask for some donations from the community to help us fund those costs, and during the first year we operate, we are reviewing other ways we may be able to raise funds and help support those costs.

While the above is critical – other items are being worked on, too.

The volunteers and others familiar with the Park want to place some basic signage so visitors have some good directional guidance for Park exits and major trails. Because we have a historic Park that has some very special areas, the State has to approve placement of markers, and the type of signage also has to be approved. Approvals are in process.

We also have a State Park information board at the most-used gate in the Park, which is the entrance off Larwin, just south of Devonshire. Visit that area for postings on hikes and other information. One of our volunteers and SSMPA Board members has also set up a Facebook page for "Friends of Santa Susana Mountains" – if you use Facebook, go into Facebook and search for this and "like" the site so you become part of it – it's full of information and comments and pictures. The Facebook site, plus our own SSMPA website at <<http://ssmpa.com>> are great places to visit for hike updates. The volunteers for the Park have run spring flower/nature/history hikes (one to three per month in the Spring), summer evening hikes (one a month), and graffiti abatement is ongoing when it is cool. We'll include comments on Park history on the hikes or any time we are asked, too – these hikes are fairly slow and we spend a lot of time visiting as we have gotten to know each other better since forming the volunteers in 2009 during the last threatened closure. So watch these areas for more information if you want to join us.

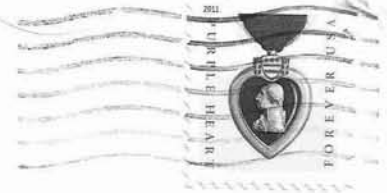
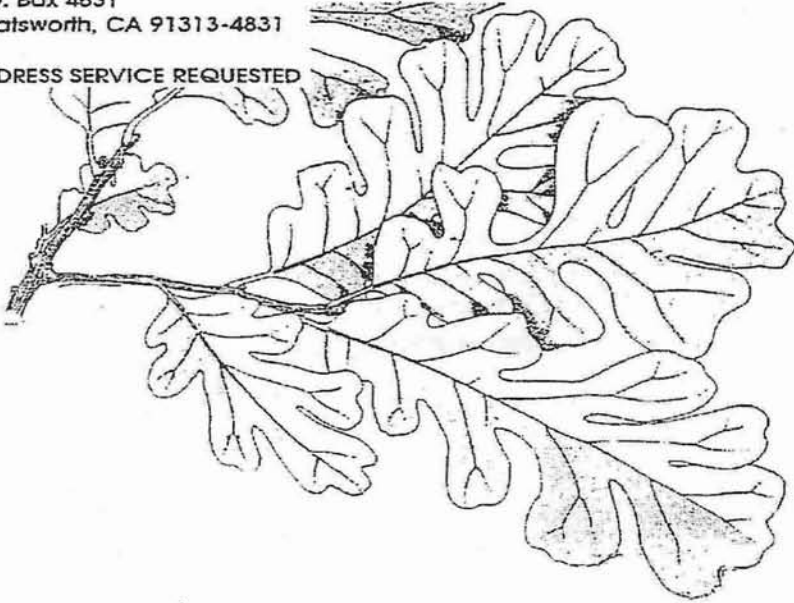
We continue to recruit volunteers – if you want to join the volunteers there is a training course that will take about 3-4 hours taught by State Parks that must be taken. After that, you are on the volunteer list and report your hours monthly to our Park coordinator, Jennifer Dandurand with State Parks.

Please email her at jdandurand@parks.ca.ca.gov if you are interested in becoming a volunteer. Teena Takata

*See update on next
page after
page 4 of newsletter*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



SSMPA Mission: Our mission is to serve as stewards of the Santa Susana Pass State Historical Park (SSPSHP) and surrounding areas and to continue to preserve and protect habitats for plants and animals native to the location, unique geological formations, and sites of ethnological, archaeological, and historic interest. We also seek to provide passive recreational and environmental education opportunities, support the acquisition of new public parks, and open space and conservation easements, expand existing natural parks, and to participate in the planning of park infrastructure and programs

SANTA SUSANA MOUNTAIN PARK ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Future newsletters will be sent via e-mail ... we need your e-mail address!!!

Membership renewal is due September, 2011 for the 2011/2012 season. We accept donations and/or Individual and Family Life Membership any time! **IMPORTANT ...** If you need to continue receiving your SSMPA Newsletter via snail mail, please send in an additional \$10.00 with your membership renewal. If you are a Life Member, please mail your \$10.00 donation. **SIGN UP FOR LIFE MEMBERSHIP or A DONATION OF \$50.00 AND RECEIVE A FREE SSMPA/CHUMASH DESIGN Organic Cotton T-SHIRT:** Let us know your size when you mail in your check.

Membership dues: () \$15.00 for individuals () \$20.00 for a Family () \$30.00 for a business or organization () \$150.00 for Individual Life Membership () \$200.00 for a Family Life Membership. Make your check payable to SSMPA and mail to SSMPA, P.O. Box 4831, Chatsworth, CA 91311

Please be sure to fill in the following information:

Name(s) _____ E-mail _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Special interests or skills you have and if you would like

to volunteer for any activities: _____

PLEASE NOTE: We must have your E-mail address because future SSMPA newsletters will be sent via E-mail. If you do not have an E-mail address, please let us know and we will continue to send via U.S. Mail every three months. Please send today your e-mail address to board member, Robert "Bob" Dager: rwdager@socal.rr.com

Your e-mail address is exclusively used for the SSMPA newsletter and community announcements.

Thank you for your support!