

Santa Susana Mountain Park Association

Volume 30, Issue 10

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

May 2001 Newsletter

Newhall Ranch Development Update

A study, commissioned by Newhall Land and ordered last year by Kern Cty. Superior Court Judge Roger Randall, finds there is ample water available to meet the needs of the 21,600-home Newhall Ranch, the largest housing development proposed in LA County and opposed by Ventura County and environmentalists. The 8-month study found the project would have little or no effect on wildlife corridors and would have insignificant impact on traffic in Ventura County.



Newhall Ranch opponents said the study was flawed, and were particularly incredulous over Newhall's assertion the development could be beneficial. Ron Bottorff, chairman of Friends of the Santa Clara River, said the best way to care for a river is to leave it alone as one cannot improve on nature. He said the project, which surrounds part of the river, could damage endangered species and other wildlife due to possible increased river speeds and hardening of the banks. He said his group would hire its own hydrologist and biologist for its own study.

The study was questioned by Ventura County Supervisor John Flynn, who said the developer is relying on future supplies of state water that are not reliable estimates. "I think we're flirting with a dangerous situation by letting Newhall believe it has enough water," Flynn said. "I think they're way off base."

Release of the study signals the start of a 60-day public review period. Ventura County officials, environmentalists and other critics had predicted the

judge's ruling would force Newhall Land to shrink the size of the project. The newly released study, however, contends all impacts can be addressed without scaling back.

The 24-inch-thick study in 3 volumes will be available for review at public libraries in the Santa Clarita Valley and Ventura Cty. until it is presented to the County Regional Planning Commission on June 20.

Upcoming SSMPA General Membership Meeting

Monday, 5/21/01 - Chatsworth's own Virginia Watson will treat us this evening. She has added some new slides to her famous history show. If you have never heard her stories and historical gems before, this is your chance to be both educated and entertained. (If you *have*, you know what I mean.) Come early to get a good seat.

General Membership Program Meetings take place every third Monday of the months September through November and January through May. Program meetings start at 7:15 p.m. and generally conclude by 9:00 p.m. The venue is the meeting room at the Rockpointe Recreation Center, 22300 Devonshire St., Chatsworth, on the south side of the street, one block before entering Chatsworth Park South.

All SSMPA members are invited to attend both General Membership Program meetings and Board of Directors meetings, which take place at the Chatsworth Park South Visitors Center on the first Monday of the month. Refreshments are served at program meetings.

Do you have an idea for a future program? Call our program chairman, Dorian Keyser, at (818) 345-3795.

Sierra Club Shines Light on California Energy Myths



California's energy shortage has given rise to a slew of myths and misperceptions about the causes of and solutions to the crunch. In an effort to separate fact from fiction, the Sierra Club has prepared this release, reprinted here in part. Sierra Club energy experts are also available to provide more information. Contact Joanie Clayburgh, Press Secty., at (415) 977-5508 or by e-mail: joanie.clayburgh@sierraclub.org.

MYTH: Environmentalists caused California's power shortage.

FACT: The electricity shortage is mainly the result of a flawed deregulation plan compounded by mistakes made by the utilities. According to the California Energy Commission, no electric power plant in California has been rejected over air pollution issues.

MYTH: The Sierra Club is against building new power plants in California.

FACT: The Sierra Club has long advocated for modernizing or replacing older power plants with newer ones. New power plants are up to 50% more efficient and up to 90% cleaner than older ones. Utilities and power producers on the other hand, have resisted building new plants over the last ten years because, until recently, demand did not force them to do so and because the utilities knew that deregulation would force them to sell off plants.

MYTH: Higher energy prices and the California energy crunch show that we need to increase our oil supply by drilling in the Arctic National Refuge.

FACT: California gets less than 1% of its electricity from oil-fired plants and, as the LA Times states ("Arctic Oil a Sham Answer," Jan. 31, 2001): "Drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Pres. Bush's signature energy cause, would not generate one kilowatt or electricity for California. It wouldn't even produce any oil for an estimated 10 years." [Editor's Note: Dr. Daniel Lashof, senior scientist for Natural Resources Defense Counsel states, "Arctic oil will take at least 10 years to get to market and will have no impact at all on gas prices at the pump. Nor will Arctic oil reduce natural gas bills. And it won't do a thing to boost electricity supplies in CA, which generates less than 1 percent of its electricity from oil. These issues are just a smokescreen to hide an old-fashioned land grab of our nation's biggest wildlife refuge."] Instead of drilling in the Arctic, we could find a new source of oil by raising auto and light-truck fuel-economy standards. If we increased fuel economy standards by just 6 percent each year, by the time oil from the Arctic became available, we could be saving 1.1 billion barrels of oil annually. That's more oil than we import from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, and estimates of oil in the Arctic, and national offshore oil combined.

MYTH: Air-quality restrictions have caused blackouts across the state.

FACT: Air-quality restrictions are not a major factor in the blackouts. In fact, dirty plants are highly inefficient and waste valuable fuel. The blackouts are due to a lack of energy production and are mainly the result of the flawed deregulation plan and mistakes made by the utilities.

MYTH: Air pollution standards are unnecessary and too expensive.

FACT: Californians enjoy breathing cleaner air in part because we have taken sensible steps to reduce pollution from power plants and these limits have affected the price of electricity minimally. And these pollution standards have helped clean up LA's air pollution: In 1981 LA had 180 days where smog reached unsafe levels; in 1999, LA had only 42 unsafe days.



Foundation for the Preservation of The Santa Susana Mountains

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The Foundation is a directorship non-profit environmental organization that obtains grants and accepts tax deductible donations to benefit our local Simi Hills and Santa Susana Mountains. We support our Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park. For further information, write to us at P.O. Box 4831, Chatsworth, CA 91313-4831 or call Nancy Razanski, President, at (818) 341-3512.

TARWEED.

Hemizonia luzulifolia, DC. Composite Family.

Glandular, strong-scented plants. *Stems*.—Loosely branching; slender; six inches to two feet high. *Leaves*.—Linear; very small above; elongated and withering early below. *Flower-heads*.—White or light yellow; composed of ray- and disk-flowers. *Rays*.—Six to ten; two to five lines long; three-lobed. *Scales* of the involucre each clasping a ray. *Hab.*—Common throughout the western part of the State.

Under the common designation of "tarweed," plants belonging to two different genera—*Madia* and *Hemizonia*—and comprising thirty or forty species, may be found. They are mostly annuals or biennials, with viscid, heavily scented foliage, which make themselves conspicuous in late summer and through the autumn. The hemizonias are distinctively Californian; while the madias we have in common with Chile. Their viscid exudation is particularly ruinous to wool and clothing, but alcohol is a solvent for it, and will generally remove it.

We wonder how these plants, which flourish in our driest seasons, can extract so much moisture from the parched earth, and of what practical use this resinous secretion can be in their economy. Though some of them are described as having a disagreeable odor, many of them have a very pleasant balsamic fragrance, which gives our summer and autumn atmosphere a peculiar character of its own. Whole fields and hillsides are tinged with their warm olive foliage, or are yellow with their golden flowers, which appear like a fall revival of the buttercups. The flowers open mostly at night or in early morning, closing in bright sunshine.

Hemizonia luzulifolia is a common species, whose flowers have the odor of myrrh.

from

The Wild Flowers of California

Mary Elizabeth Parsons

Illustrated by Margaret Warriner Buck
(available at the Chatsworth Library)



TARWEED—*Hemizonia luzulifolia*.

New Parkland from Mountains to Ocean

The American Land Conservancy has decided to buy 1,659 acres in the Santa Monica Mountains for parkland, clearing the way for the largest coastal-area acquisition there in two decades. There are spectacular ocean views in the mountainous parcel and rare species such as the horned lizard and the dudleya plant. It is also habitat for threatened species such as the California gnatcatcher and Braunton's milkvetch. Straddling Topanga Canyon Blvd., the land shares a long boundary with Topanga State Park and a smaller border with Malibu. American Land Conservancy of San Francisco, which buys land for preservation, has had an option to purchase the parcel and intends to turn it over to the state. Gov. Gray Davis has set aside \$40 million in this year's budget for the land deal, and the state must approve the final price. The deal is expected to close by the end of the year. A key issue that must be resolved is whether the land must be unoccupied, as preferred for state parkland. For now, the future for the cluster of businesses on Pacific Coast Highway and the area's resident renters is uncertain.

The land was *almost* sold 10 years ago, when LAACO (an LA corporation that has owned the largely undeveloped parcel since the 1930s) had agreed to sell it to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, but the agency could not come up with financing.



Urbanization Pushes Endangered Species to Brink

According to a recent report released by the National Wildlife Federation, residential and commercial construction is the leading threat to the vast array of animals and plants at risk of extinction in California, imperiling 188 of the 286 species in California that are protected under the U.S. Endangered Species Act. Conservationists intend to use the report's findings as part of their growing national anti-sprawl movement, urging cities and counties to take a closer look at how land is developed. The second leading threat is nonnative species--from weeds to predators. For wild animals and plants, few things can inflict as much damage as a bulldozer. The most severe and everlasting harm comes from the simple physical loss of the natural landscape where they live.

Few people have ever heard of most of the 188 species imperiled by urban construction, which include the fairy shrimp, milk vetch and dudleya. More than half are plants. But as obscure as they are, the disappearance of such species indicates the elimination of a whole ecosystem, such as Southern California's scrubby coastal hills or the Central Valley's small seasonal pools.

Urbanization is a double whammy, because it is closely associated with many of the other 17 threats, including road construction and water diversion.

CANADA GOOSE PROJECT



Canada geese are large wild geese. They are usually grey with a black head and neck, and a white throat. Their scientific name is *Branta Canadensis*. The Canada goose makes a honking sound when they call out and they are known for flying in a "V" shape. We like the geese.

Stephen Barr • Age 6 • Winnetka, CA

The Earth Day Celebration at the Chatsworth Nature Preserve Sunday on April 1st was enjoyed by all attendees. The overcast sky and coolness lent an air of mystique to the day's event. We took a tour of the ecological pond and came back to view a great live exhibit brought by the Southwestern Herpatology Society. After we had gathered in a large circle in an oak savannah clearing, the Chumash dancers began to dance. All eyes were on them. Then we heard their words of beauty and respect for Mother Earth. It truly was a wonderful day.

The Canada Goose Project is soliciting suggestions and comments as to what people would like to see happen at next year's Earth Day event. Drop a line to: Canada Goose Project, c/o Dr. Rosemarie White, 11576 Morrison St, Valley Village CA 91601. Want to be a volunteer and assist with programs given by the Canada Goose Project? Write to Dr. White at the above address. If you would like to learn to be a docent in the Chatsworth Nature Preserve, call Tish Gillensen at (818) 340-5409.

Thanks for renewing your membership to SSMPA! Milt McAuley, Joanne Woodruff, Richard Bublitz, David & Diane Schwartz, Margo Murman, John Otter, Joan Weaver, Pat Jump, Maryanne Lonnie, Arlene Bernholtz and Don & Evelyn Heim. Welcome to our new member, Liliana Haro. A special thanks to members Terrie Brady (membership chair), Bunny & Bud Levine, and Jack & Barbara Levin for their great help with the labels, sorting, stapling, and delivery to the P.O. of this newsletter.

About this newsletter: If you would like to submit an article for publication in this newsletter, send it to SSMPA, Attn: Newsletter Editor, P.O. Box 4831, Chatsworth, CA 91313-4831. *Susan Gerke, Editor*

Linking up Open Land Fragments in LA

As part of an effort to create a 1,200-acre park, a half-mile stretch of La Cienega Blvd. is proposed to be covered by green space, allowing animals and park users to cross without even knowing there were cars below. An alternate plan, which could be chosen at coming public workshops, would be three small bridges to cross La Cienega, for wildlife and pedestrians. La Cienega at that part runs through a valley and creates the biggest obstacle to uniting two main ridges of land. The nonprofit Community Conservancy International unveiled the proposed plans to restore and save habitat in the oil fields and canyons of the Baldwin Hills. A year-long biological inventory of the Baldwin Hills has been conducted by the Natural History Museum of LA County and funded by the state, resulting in the findings that a surprising number of native species still live there: 166 kinds of birds, 72 of plants and 21 of mammals, including the gray fox. Patches of coastal sage scrub and grassland are remarkably pristine, considering almost a century of oil production in the area. Some delicate species, such as the Pacific tree frogs and California quail, which often are the first to disappear in developed areas, still live there. Yet other species have disappeared. Coyotes roamed the Baldwin Hills until at least the 1950s, and the cactus wren was spotted there as late as 1995. Neither showed up in the recent study.



Ranch in Santa Clara County to Be Wildlife Preserve

Under a new agreement made between two California state agencies, 200 acres of the old Stevenson ranch will become a new southern entrance to the 81,000-acre Henry Coe State Park, the remaining 4,200 acres of the ranch will be set up by the Dept. of Fish & Game as a wildlife preserve with

programs for area schoolchildren to learn how to track animals, restore streams, fish and hunt, turning the land into an outdoor education center. The property will be called La Canada de los Osos Ecological Reserve. Public access to the new preserve will be limited mostly to school groups, scout troops, volunteer restoration groups and researchers. The Sierra Club is interested in watching the management plan to see what details are arranged for use, to make sure that any hunting in the preserve will not harm endangered species or affect Coe State Park. The current ranch contains the nests of bald eagles and golden eagles, as well as deer, mountain lions and wild turkeys.

[Editor's Note: Our thanks to SSMPA member Mary Gorman for the above news article.]

Watchdog Group Joins Fight Against Newhall Projects

The Center for Biological Diversity threatens to sue the U.S. Dept. of Interior, Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for not being in compliance with the Endangered Species Act, alleging that the agencies failed to adequately consider the impact of the Newhall Land & Farming Co.'s North Valencia II & West Creek developments on the amphibian habitat in the river basin. Red-legged frogs were found in the project area in the "very recent past," according to the center, which is "very concerned about the health of the Santa Clara River ecosystem and its imperiled species."

This is the latest action by an environmental group fighting the developments. In March, a Ventura County judge issued a temporary restraining order halting work on West Creek and a bridge spanning San Francisquito Creek, a river basin tributary, pending further arguments. The order was sought by the Santa Clarita Organization for Planning the Environment, and Friends of the Santa Clara River, which has members in LA and Ventura Counties.

MAY HIKES

Hikers need water, sunscreen, socks, lugsoles, hat, and snack or lunch. Serious rain cancels.



Sierra Club Hikes

Thurs. 5/3: Chumash Trail: 10 mi. round trip, 1700' gain, moderately-paced hike in Santa Susana Mtns. Meet 8:30 am at trailhead. From 118 Fwy in Simi Valley, exit Yosemite Ave., go N 1/2 mi to Flanagan Dr., 3/4 mi to end. Park.

Sun. 5/6: Towsley Canyon Loop Provisional Hike: Moderate 5.5 mi, 1200' gain. Snack atop oak-covered hill overlooking Santa Clarita Vly. Hawks & vultures soar over rugged canyons. Meet 9 am at entrance gate of Ed Davis/Towsley Cyn St Pk. Take I-5 to Calgrove, W to Old Rd, L to park entrance.

Sat. 5/19: Vasquez Rocks Twilight Hike: Easy 3-4 mi trek among the rocks of Vasquez Rocks County Park in search of the ghost of Tiburcio Vasquez. Experience the eerie shadows formed by timeless rocks as the sun reluctantly sets, and stars slowly envelop the land. Meet 6 pm at entrance to Vasquez Rocks County Pk. Park on street. Bring water, lugsoles, and imagination.

San Fernando Valley Audubon Walks

Sun. 5/6: For Birdwatching Buffs: From 8:00 am to noon at the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Area. Directions: Exit 405 Fwy at Burbank, go W on Burbank 1/2 mi, turn N (R) on Woodley, go 1/2 mi to first possible R turn, turn R, go 1/2 mi to wildlife area parking. Look for people with binoculars. (SFVAS will loan binoculars to persons age 7 and up for this walk.)

Sun. 5/20: Bird Walk in Malibu Creek State Pk. Beginners & buffs. Enjoy birds in habitat; learn what they eat, how they live. Meet 8 am at Malibu Creek St Pk, 2nd parking lot past last kiosk (4 mi S from 101 Fwy on Las Virgenes Rd or 6.5 mi N from PCH on Malibu Rd). Bring binoculars & bird book.

Rancho Simi Trail Blazers Hike

Sun. 4/29: Wildflower Hike on Rocky Peak Trail. 3 mi RT. We will be frequently stopping to identify the flowers and plants along the first 1-1/2 mi of trail. Meet 2 pm at Rocky Peak trailhead at north end of Rocky Peak Rd off Santa Susana Pass.

Stagecoach Trail & Exploration Series hikes are offered by Santa Susana Mtn. Task Force (SSMTF) of the Sierra Club. Rim of the Valley hikes are sponsored by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy & Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority.

Sun. 5/29: Stage Coach Trail Hike: Interpretative hike into history in our Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park. Meet at 9:00 am for the 4-mile (700 ft. gain) loop up the Stage Coach Trail. Bring water and a snack in a back or hip pack. From Topanga Canyon Blvd., turn west on Devonshire and drive into Chatsworth Park S to the 2nd parking lot by the Rec Building. Lee Baum (818) 341-1850.

Rim of the Valley Hike

Sat., 5/12, 9:00 to 11:30 am: Sage Ranch Morning Saunter. Explore wildflowers, birds, and scenic vistas from the east end of Simi Hills! Hiking distance is approx. 3 miles. Come spend your morning with us! Directions: From 101 Fwy, exit Valley Circle heading N. From Topanga Cyn Blvd., take Plummer to Valley Circle Blvd. Head to Woolsey Cyn intersection. Turn R at top of hill onto Black Cyn Rd. The entrance to the park is 200 ft from intersection. Park inside gate.



IT'S OFFICIAL!

When the votes were counted election night, April 16th, at SSMPA's general meeting, the results showed the majority of votes went to (and here is the new Board of Directors for 2001):

- President:* Judy Garris
- Vice President:* Dorian Keyser
- Treasurer:* Diana Dixon-Davis
- Recording Secretary:* Sandra Johnson
- Member-at-Large:* Susan Gerke
- Member-at-Large:* Jim Shirley
- Member-at-Large:* Jan Miller
- Member-at-Large:* Holly Huff

Welcome Sandra, Jim and Jan, our newest members to be elected for the Board. Together we will plan a fruitful year with lots of fun and good effort followed by great results.

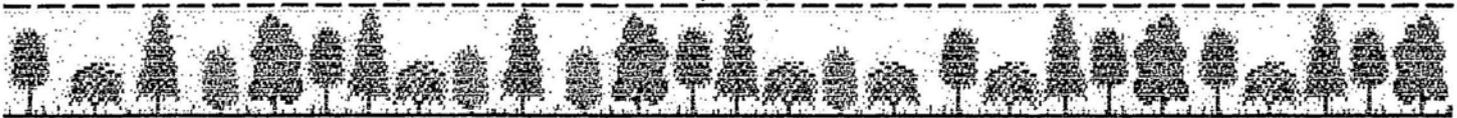
Have you ever been in Chatsworth Park South on a dark evening to attend a meeting at the Chatsworth Historical Museum or the SSMPA Visitor's Center and wished you had an escort to walk you to your car... or at least had brought a heavy duty flashlight so you could *find* your car?

It's been rather difficult to feel safe in our unlit park, and we could have more programs and classes if the sense of danger was not present by having some more lights, so we are asking you to write a letter to Councilman Hal Bernson's office to request adequate lighting from the museum and along the driveway through the park to and including the parking lot.

Mr. Bernson's address is:

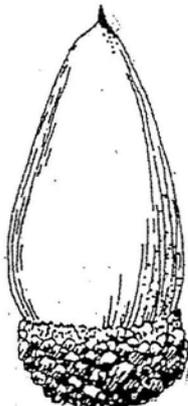
Councilman Hal Bernson
18917 Nordhoff Street, #18
Northridge, CA 91324

Remember: The squeaky wheel is the one that gets the oil!



SANTA SUSANA MOUNTAIN PARK ASSOCIATION

WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN / RENEW / REJOIN S.S.M.P.A. (Please circle one.)



valley oak

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 contributions to help ensure our futures. Please make checks 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)
- Business or Organization (\$25.00) Life Member (\$100.00)

Name: _____ Phone: _____
 Address: _____ Fax: _____
 City/State/Zip Code: _____ Email: _____
 Special Interest/Expertise: _____

We encourage any member who lives in or near the Santa Susana Mountains or Simi Hills to become an active member in SSMPA's effort to protect these area's wildlife corridors. Speaking at City Planning hearings to educate about our wildlife corridors would be great, yet any type and amount of voluntary service is always appreciated. You may be able to contribute an article to the newsletter, man a table of SSMPA merchandise, participate in a committee. . . To find out how you can volunteer for the SSMPA, call Judy Garris at 818-346-7654 or Susan Gerke at 818-704-9304.

May 7, 2001, 7:30 PM Board of Director's Meeting: Chatsworth Park Visitor's Center
May 21, 2001, 7:15 PM Program Meeting: Rockpointe Recreation Center
June 4, 2001, 7:30 PM Board of Director's Meeting: Chatsworth Park Visitor's Center
June 18, 2001, 7:15 PM Program Meeting: Rockpointe Recreation Center



Thanks to the folks at the Office Depot store on Topanga Canyon Boulevard south of Victory for the donation towards the duplication of our newsletter. We very much appreciate it!

If the expiration date on your label is marked in **pink**, your SSMPA dues have **expired**. Please send in your dues if you wish to continue your SSMPA membership and to receive our newsletters. If it's already paid, kindly disregard this notice.

If the expiration date on your label is marked in **blue**, payment of your SSMPA membership dues is **due this month**.

Finally, if the expiration date is marked in **green**, payment of your dues is **requested next month**.

Santa Susana Mountain Park Association &
Foundation for the Preservation of the Santa Susana Mountains
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