

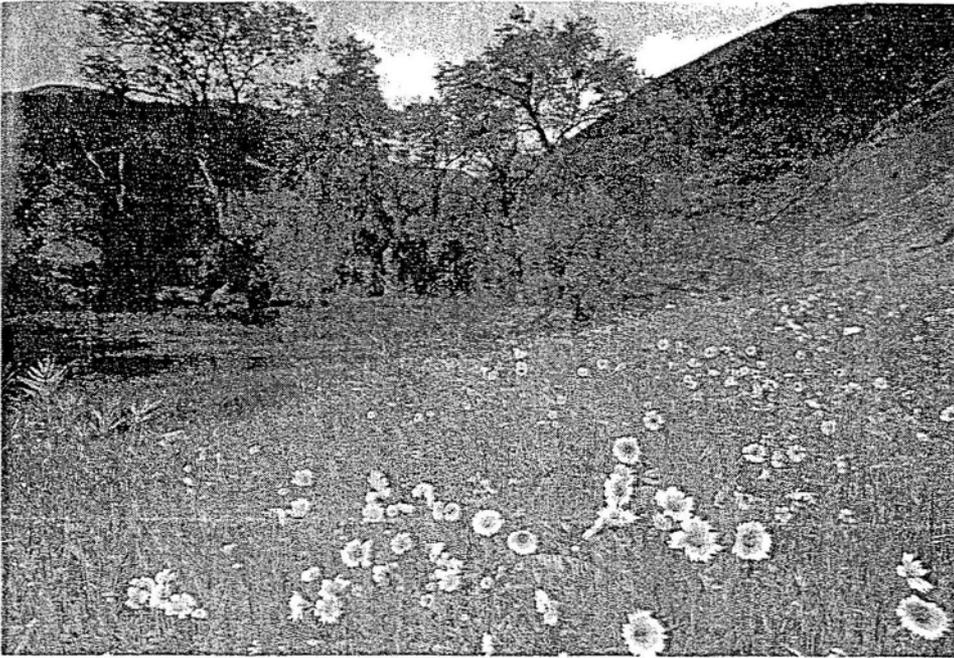


Volume 30, Issue 25

Santa Susana Mountain Park Association

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

February 2003 Newsletter



Marge Feinberg Rim of the Valley Trail

Marge Feinberg's vision of a wilderness trail encircling the San Fernando Valley and adjacent mountain ranges led to California law establishing the Rim of the Valley trail in the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Zone. Her tireless voluntary efforts encouraged the formation of an interlinking system of parks, trails, open space, wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities for all Californians.

Dedicated to the memory of Marjorie S. Feinberg by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy.
2002

SSMPA General Membership Meeting: Monday, February 17, 2003

Our speaker, **Mary Loquvam, Watershed Coordinator, LA & San Gabriel Rivers Watershed Council**, will address the Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project and discuss how it relates to the Santa Susana Mountains. Please join us for what is sure to be an interesting evening.

SSMPA General Membership Program meetings take place every 3rd Monday of the months during the months September through November and January through May. Program meetings begin at 7:15 p.m. and conclude by 9:00 p.m. Location: Rockpointe Clubhouse, 22300 Devonshire St., Chatsworth, on the south side, 1 block before Chatsworth Park South.

Members are invited to attend General Membership Program meetings and Board of Directors meetings. Board of Directors meetings take place at the Chatsworth Park South Visitors Center on the first Monday of the month at 7:30 p.m. Refreshments are served at program meetings.

The Rim of the Valley Corridor Plan, a vision manifested into reality through the efforts of the late Marge Feinberg, was celebrated by elected officials and the public they serve at a gathering at Stetson Park in Sylmar on January 25th. The site was the Saddletree Ranch trailhead of the Rim of the Valley Corridor.

Joe Edmiston of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC) explained to the group that the 100-mile, oval-shaped Rim of the Valley Corridor surrounding LA and nearby communities was created in collaboration with the SMMC and Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. "The trail binds people together in a mystical way. We have not had more elected officials together at one event ever before. Marge's idea of this ecological system was carried forward by many politicians and committees."

Many city, county and state officials paid homage to Marge and acknowledged the legacy she left to future generations. Her family was publicly thanked for allowing her to do the work over many years.

"We had to name this trail after Marge," said Senator Sheila Kuehl. "This is Marge's trail, and it shows the power of one person's life. Here was a woman with more than a spark of passion, who through blood, sweat and tears made her dream happen. Along the way, she inspired others to believe they could make it happen, too."

Brad Sherman, who was "redistricted" into the area, stated he is working with Adam Schiff with Federal money and efforts to preserve the northern SFV. He presented Marge's family with a flag that had flown over the nation's capitol building.

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Senator Richard Alarcon remarked that Marge realized there might be no San Fernando Valley as it originally existed. He said, "We could lose the beauty of the SFV, and wild lands will die if we do not allow a greater vision to exist. You have our commitment that we will continue to educate and ensure this at every point in the process. Kids will have opportunity to see what naturally exists here, so we all have a better future."

Milt Feinberg shared how the trail was born in the '70s when his wife Marge was hiking in the valley and remarked that there should be a trail all the way around the mountains. Milt explained that although it was a long haul through the years to bring the Rim of the Valley Corridor forward, now LA has a 100-mile trail for hiking and equestrians in wilderness, in the middle of a large urban population. "We can be proud." He thanked Senator Kuehl, who authored the bill, for her strong support of the environment and the project.



SULWASUNAYTSET

Fernando Librado, John Peabody Harrington's Chumash informant, told the story of an old man at Santa Barbara named Sulwasunaytset. He was short and chubby and looked like a bear. After he was baptized at the mission, he told all of his friends: Everything we have has been taken away from us. We have lost our rights in this land. I will go where you will never see me again. I am going, for all is gone, and I do not want to stay and see you suffer. I go.

He went to sea alone in his little tomol (canoe), heading in the direction of the islands and was never seen again. He is supposed to have gone to the bottom.

Fernando's story fits well with a story told by several visitors to Santa Cruz Island after 1824. They describe being met by an old Indian in a plank canoe. The Indian related to one shepherd that he had been removed from Santa Cruz Island as a child and had always wanted to return. Following the Indian revolt of 1824, he had paddled to Santa Cruz Island and continued to live there in the old ways. He was seen only infrequently and then not at all. --Mike Kuhn

Ramps for Wildlife

Caltrans crews are replacing freeway ramps in Anaheim with a wildlife corridor that cuts under the freeway. The pathway will allow wildlife to migrate between portions of Chino Hills State Park, now divided by traffic lanes.

The wildlife corridor is considered the last viable crossing between the parcels and is crucial for preserving a wide array of animal life and vegetation. Environmentalists consider the parkland one of the top 25 sensitive hot spots in the world because of the number of endangered species of wildlife and vegetation. But until the parks department bought property that had been slated for development, much of the wildlife was cut off from one side of the range, limiting access to food and mates. "We bought Coal Canyon two years ago to protect one of the last remaining wildlife corridors," said Ruth Coleman, acting director of the park dept. Without this linkage, the habitat would be fragmented into remnants unsuitable for use by wildlife.

SSMPA Executive Board 2002-2003

Jan Miller, President	818-702-0854
Dorian Keyser, Vice President, Program Chair	818-345-3795
Diana Dixon-Davis, Treasurer	818-341-4242
Patty Miller, Recording Secretary	818-702-0854
Teena Takata, Member at Large	818-703-1040
Judy Garris, Member at Large	818-346-7654
Sandra Johnson, Member at Large	818-341-0341

Thank you for renewing your SSMPA membership:

Shannon-Vaughn family, Tony Gaudenti, Shields family, Merrily Lovell, Doug & Karen O'Rourke, Carl Wilkening,

Thanks for your donation: Life Member Ted Dent.

Welcome to our new members: Diane & Donald Fike, Linda & Lou DeMarco, Maya Hyams, Kris Schmidt, Nancy Krupa, and Natalie Krah.

The Santa Susana Mountain Park Association (SSMPA) and The Foundation for the Preservation of the Santa Susana Mountains (FPSSM) together are forming the Santa Susana Coalition. We have an important plan underway. We have asked other groups to join us. A letter has been sent to our elected representatives, which states, in part:



"Many of your constituents use and enjoy Chatsworth's Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park and are interested in its future. We are writing you to ask that you support efforts to obtain needed State funding for the park.

This 670-acre State Park, located in the northwest corner of the San Fernando Valley, was established in 1998. Land used by the park was acquired in three phases, starting in 1979, but the Angeles District of California State Parks and Recreation that holds the land has been unable to acquire funding to staff the park, provide signs and properly develop and maintain a marked trail system. Badly needed funding to acquire additional lands that are available to expand the park has not been forthcoming. Funding is also needed for education purposes.

The Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park:

- ▶ is home to a rich array of historical, prehistoric and natural and scenic resources, from the old Stagecoach Trail with ruts still carved into sandstone by iron wheels, to scenic rock outcroppings that are appropriately named the Chatsworth Formation. A turn of the century quarry site provides historic evidence of a time when sandstone was used for buildings and breakwaters in the Los Angeles area.
- ▶ provides habitat for rare plants such as an unusual red variation of the Sticky Monkey Flower and the state-listed Santa Susana tarplant. A trail system in the park is a prime locale for trailheads leading to nearby parklands and to the proposed Rim of the Valley trails. The park also supports a crucial wildlife corridor between the Angeles National Forest, the Los Padres National Forest and the Santa Monica Mountains by providing open space and habitat, enabling wildlife movement.
- ▶ has been used for community-organized hikes and by well-known naturalists and historians as an outdoor classroom. Many classes of schoolchildren have toured what is now the Historic Park over the last 28 years. The park is heavily used for passive recreation and provides a superb scenic background for the entire northwest portion of the San Fernando Valley.

The Retz/Rockridge Parcel Acquisition

We strongly support the acquisition of this significant, contiguous 40-acre parcel of undeveloped land, which is presently available for sale. We believe this land should be part of the park; a large portion of it is a rugged mountaintop towering above much of the park. This urban "wild lands park" is accessible to the handicapped, and school busses of inner-city children could come on field trips to experience a mini-wildlife/land adventure. The land is on the market now, and has been identified as the Number One acquisition by the Angeles District of California State Parks and Recreation. Additional nearby parcels with access to trails will be available soon, so additional funding is requested. The entire area is part of the foothills around the northwest San Fernando Valley, and is coming under intense development pressure.

Needs of the Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park:

- ▶ **Staffing** of two full-time rangers and one maintenance worker.
- ▶ **Major Land Acquisitions:** \$3 million for the Retz/Rockridge acquisition and \$21 million for other nearby lands to preserve wildlife corridors and local trails.
- ▶ **Park Improvements:** Trailhead, restroom facilities, nature center and kiosk for interpretation of history, signs showing trail maps, to limit off trail uses, significant geologic, historic, botanical features, etc., trail development and extensive maintenance, ranger station and place for storage for maintenance tools and equipment, restoration of the native plants and removal of graffiti on oaks and rocks.
- ▶ **Feasibility Study for Incorporating Trails in this Park with the Rim of the Valley Trail System:** The Rim of the Valley Trail should pass through the park since it is elevated in the foothills. Additional lands south of the park that provide routes that traverse low foothills to the Chatsworth Nature Preserve should be studied.
- ▶ **Funding for Educational Purposes,** including field trips, docent programs, staffing for the Visitors Center and maps and exhibits of the local wildlife corridors."

The Santa Susana Coalition meets regularly, working toward our goal of appropriation of State funding for the Park.

Sticky Monkey Flower
Mimulus longiflorus
(figwort family)



"Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative and creation, there is one elementary truth the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then providence move, too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents, meetings and material assistance which no man could have dreamed would have come his way. Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. Begin it now." --Author Unknown

Canyon Sunflower
Venegasia carpesioides
(sunflower family)



Deerlake Ranch Project Update

A County-organized meeting was held on December 17, 2002 between Presidio Partners and community representatives selected by Patti Friedman, Field Deputy for 5th-District Supervisor Mike Antonovich. Present for the developer were Jack Spound (principal), Pike Oliver (principal) and Hans Giraud (engineer). Community members were: Anna Cox (Save Chatsworth, Inc.), Allan Glazer (Chatsworth Chamber of Commerce), Warren Stone (Twin Lakes Property Owners Assn.), Ken van Emden (Chatsworth Land Preservation Assn.), Jan Evanson (Chatsworth ECHO), Erin Miller (ETI Corral 54), Marty Woll (Chatsworth Neighborhood Council), Ray Adams (Indian Falls Home Owners Assn. (HOA)), Eric Miller (Indian Springs HOA), Walter Prince (PRIDE), and Jan Miller (SSMPA). Mark Watters of Twin Lakes HOA was invited but unable to attend.

Mr. Spound opened by apologizing for the poor job Presidio had done of listening to the community and telling attendees they had hired a whole new design team, abandoning much of the previous work. He asked the community representatives to help provide ideas and vision for the project. He then asked each attendee for his/her top few issues. As the meeting attendees shared their issues, all the substantive concerns raised previously in hearings and in letters were mentioned and recorded. Mr. Spound also stated that he had attended every hearing and had heard testimony from community members.

The developers did not divulge a number for dwelling units, saying that design goals for the project should first be agreed upon, although they said it would probably be less than 400. The community reps asked whether a new EIR would be circulated, and were told that an addendum to the original DEIR would be issued for public review during a 45-day comment period. At the close of the meeting Presidio distributed a Preliminary Draft Community Character Statement for community review and comment. Additional copies are available for review at the Supervisor's 5th-District field office at Plummer St. and Topanga Canyon Blvd.

One community rep's conclusion upon reading this document is that although more thought has been put into the aesthetics of the development (single-loaded streets, step-graded lots, natural materials and colors, four distinct neighborhoods, etc.), there is no material reduction in the number of dwelling units proposed, no change in the underlying assertion that all potentially negative effects have been adequately mitigated, and no substantive additions to the list of proposed community "benefits".

Community reps are concerned that they are being asked to approve or reach consensus on some of the visual design concepts without having real input on critical areas such as density, traffic, environmental protection and overloading of city services. At a second meeting, held January 16, the developer asked for reactions to sample house styles and street loading. The community reps raised the issues of preserving rock outcroppings and avoiding ridgelines; the developer listened but made no firm commitments owing, they said, to the practicalities of grading and street placement. Again, the developer provided no answers as to proposed density. Future meetings may either bear out or alleviate the above-mentioned concern. The next meeting between the developer and this community committee is scheduled for February 6.

Editor's Note: The character of this area of the SFV could drastically change if Deerlake Ranch builds roughly 400 single-family homes in the Santa Susana Mountains between Topanga Canyon Blvd. and Canoga Ave. Not only will local street traffic increase substantially, but the precedent will be set for future developers who want to sell small lots in the unincorporated area adjacent to LA city limits. Under previously offered plans, this developer proposed 45.5% of homes on lots that are 6,000 to 8,000 sq. ft. There will be 10 feet between most of these two-story homes, creating an image of solid houses. (By comparison, most of the homes south of the freeway near Deerlake Ranch are on lots that generally are 17,500 sq. ft. up to an acre or more.) Other character-altering changes include a proposed bridge spanning Devil Canyon and the leveling of a large hill at the immediate end of Topanga Canyon Blvd. The planned projects immediately adjacent to Deerlake Ranch by other developers are 159 multi-family condos to the west (see next article) and 137 single-family homes to the north (not yet at the project stage), further adding to the overload.

Condo Project

There is an additional project, currently in the initial phase, that is located immediately to the southwest of Deerlake Ranch, for 159 multi-family condos. (In response to community concerns expressed about growth-inducing impacts of building two bridges across the riparian Devil Canyon to accommodate access to the Deerlake Ranch development, the County has stated that the greatest number of additional homes that could be built would be 137.)

The developer of the 159 condominiums has contacted representatives of community organizations, and a community meeting has been scheduled for February 19. The first public hearing will be March 19, at Regional Planning in downtown LA). The staff report can be accessed at http://planning.co.la.ca.us/drp_agnd.html, by looking for Case No. #53235. The comment period on the EIR is still open; draft EIRs are available at the Chatsworth Train Depot library (open afternoons only), or at the County library in Sylmar. Information on the meeting date and time will be posted at <http://www.savechatsworth.org> when the schedule is set.

Greenbelt Strategy

In the Sacramento region of Yolo County, the cities of Davis and Woodland didn't want to wake up some day and find their new subdivision projects bumping into one another, so they took a big step toward making a permanent greenbelt of thousands of acres of farmland between the cities. While this is one of those nonbinding agreements that either side could theoretically get out of, it does something that is extremely important in local land-use politics. It ends the destructive cycle of land speculation on the urban edge. And it keeps developers from playing one community off another.

The greenbelt is part of a large growth strategy that makes great sense. The future growth is to go inside the cities, keep county supervisors out of the land-use business. And to make sure that the growth works as part of a broad strategy to protect wildlife and farming, Yolo County is slowly devising a habitat conservation plan, government's way of forcing the growth to underwrite the costs of preservation. In this respect, Sacramento County's leaders are light years beyond their peers in other California counties.

Monday March 10, 2003 is

"Save Chatsworth, Inc. Night" at Los Toros Restaurant (at Devonshire and Owensmouth)

Enjoy great Mexican food with family and friends.

Present this coupon with your order,

and a portion of the proceeds will go to Save Chatsworth, Inc.

UPCOMING HIKES

• *Sierra Club/Santa Susana Task Force Hikes:*

Sat. 2/15: Los Virgenes Cyn. Valentine Picnic: Easy paced 6 mi RT, 400' gain with stream crossings on mitigated land from the Ahmanson development. Meet 9 am Los Virgenes Cyn trailhead (from 101 Fwy W, exit Los Virgenes Rd, turn R on Los Virgenes, go 1 mi to end). Bring sweets or treats to share, cup, utensils, plate. Rain cancels. Leaders: Judy Garris & Bob Galletly. Call Judy Garris at (818) 346-7654 for further info.

Sun. 2/16: Stagecoach Trail Hike: Interpretative hike into history in our Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park. Meet at 9 am for a 4 mi (700' gain) loop up the Stagecoach Trail. From Topanga Cyn Blvd, turn west on Devonshire and drive into Chatsworth Pk South to the 2nd parking lot by the Rec Bldg. Leader: Lee Baum; Asst. Leaders: Judy Garris & Bob Galletly. Call Lee Baum at (818) 341-1850 for further info.

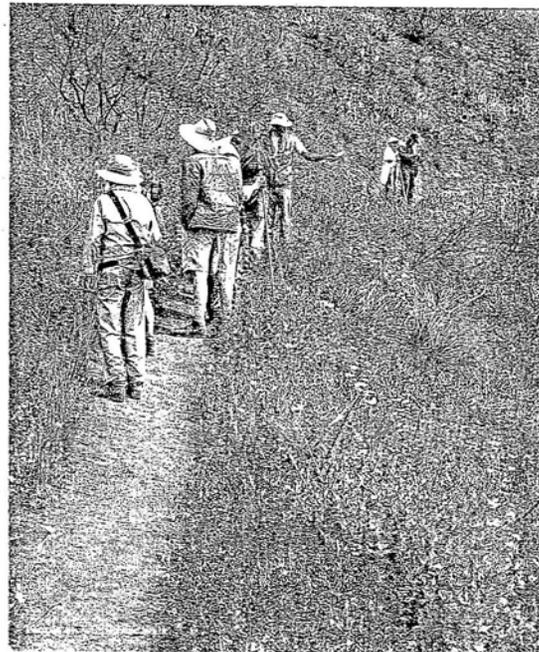
• *Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Mountains*

Recreation & Conservation Authority Rim of the Valley Hikes:

Sat. 2/15: Towsley Cyn. Park: Morning Bird Walk: Join us for a casual walk. Bring binoculars if you have them. Directions: Traveling north through Santa Clarita, take the Calgrove exit from I-5, turn west back under the freeway and take the Old Road south, proceed to the 1st driveway on your right. Look for sign: "Ed Davis Park at Towsley Cyn." Park in back lot; meet at kiosk.

Sun. 2/16 Sage Ranch: Ceanothus in the Wild: 2:30-5:00pm. Check out flowering Ceanothus and Rhus on this easy to moderate hike, 2.6 mi RT, 100' elevation gain/loss. Directions: In Woodland Hills, from the 101, exit Valley Circle Blvd. heading north. From Simi Valley, exit Topanga Cyn. Blvd., go west on Plummer to Valley Cir. heading south. Go to Woolsey Cyn. intersection. Turn and follow signs to Boeing & Sage. Turn right at top of hill onto Black Cyn Rd. The entrance to the park is 200' from the intersection. Park inside the gate.

Sun. 2/22: Towsley Cyn. Park: Be An Animal Detective: 12:30-2pm. Search for evidence of animals without actually seeing them. (See above directions for Towsley Cyn. Park.)



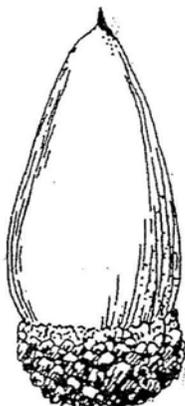
UPCOMING EVENTS & OPPORTUNITIES

- From Outings Chair of the Santa Susana Mtns Task Force, Judy Garris (818) 346-7654; nature@lafn.org: Sierra Club leadership training applications must be submitted by March 22 for the class on Saturday April 5, 2003. The next one-day class will probably be held in the fall. You only have to lead a hike once a year to remain a certified Sierra Club leader. Call me, I am the Outings Chair of the Santa Susana Task Force, or read the task force mission statement in the next Sierra Club Schedule.
- Re-Enchanting the City 2: Urban Wildlife: How To Enjoy It and Protect It
Dr. Rosemarie White (818) 769-1521; canadagooseproj@aol.com
Saturday, May 17: 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Presenter: John Hadiddion, Dir. Urban Wildlife for Humane Society.
Location: LA Zoo - Grande Room. Please come. Can you volunteer some time to help make this a special event?



SANTA SUSANA MOUNTAIN PARK ASSOCIATION

WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN / RENEW / REJOIN S.S.M.P.A. (Please 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 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)
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The purposes of the Santa Susana Mountain Park Association are the protection, preservation, restoration, and enhancement of the Santa Susana Mountains and Simi Hills as open space lands and wildlife corridors linking the Los Padres National Forest and San Gabriel Mountains, including the Angeles National Forest, to the Santa Monica Mountains; as habitats for plants and animals native to the Santa Susana Mountains and the Simi Hills; as locales of unique geologic formations; as sites of ethnological, archaeological and historical interests; to provide passive recreational opportunities and environmental education opportunities; and, to support the acquisition of new public parks, open space and conservation easements, the expansion of existing parks, participate in the planning of park infrastructure and programs, and support said programs. To find out how you can volunteer for SSMPA, call Judy Garris at 818-346-7654.



For your calendar



SSMPA BOARD MEETINGS

@ Chatsworth Park South Visitors Center:

Monday, Mar. 3, 2003, 7:30 p.m.

Monday, Apr. 7, 2003, 7:30 p.m.

SSMPA PROGRAM MEETINGS

@ Rockpointe Clubhouse:

Monday, Feb. 17, 2003, 7:15 p.m.

Monday, Mar. 17, 2003, 7:15 p.m.

About this newsletter: If you have comments or would like to submit an article or announcement for publication in this newsletter, write to SSMPA, c/o Susan Gerke, Newsletter Editor, P.O. Box 4831, Chatsworth, CA 91313-4831 or call (818) 704-9304.

Please note the renewal date on your label and send in your dues if you wish to continue your SSMPA membership and receive the newsletter. If you are current with your dues, kindly disregard this notice. If you are a Life Member, we thank you and invite your continued support with periodic donations to help meet the costs of producing this newsletter.



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Foundation for the Preservation of the Santa Susana Mountains
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