

November 2005 Newsletter

General Membership Meeting, Monday, November 21, 2005

Our guest presenter will be Bill Neill, who will talk about local invasive eradication projects and show samples of invasive plants. See Bill's biography on the next page.

SSMPA General Membership Program meetings take place every 3rd Monday, September through November and January through May at the Rockpointe Clubhouse, 22300 Devonshire St., Chatsworth, on the south side, 1 block before entering Chatsworth Park South. Our program meetings begin at 7:15 pm and conclude at 9:00 pm.



Looking out over the eerie moonscape burned areas in the Santa Susana Pass State Park, it is somehow easier now to use one's imagination and get in touch with history. I did that recently while standing in the spot where the de la Osso family operated their stagecoach waystation in 1867 and then later the Bannon family lived and operated a quarry.

Here are some relevant facts taken from an interview Jan Hinkston conducted of Joe Bannon in 1974:

The land was taken as a stone claim by Gabriel Allen, who sold it as a quitclaim to his parents. Joe's father, William Bannon, improved the existing adobe house by building a kitchen and dining room. He also built a cellar (part adobe, part stone), and a bunkhouse and improved two springs in the area, building two stone cisterns to catch the water. He then began quarrying and selling "dimension" stone to make buildings. Around 1880, Mr. Bannon rebuilt an existing road so that stone could be hauled over the pass on wagons to the north. (A railroad spur was also used to carry rough-cut stone to LA to be cut to size.)

Near the adobe house, Mr. Bannon increased the flow of the water and constructed a catch basin, a large cistern. In a lower spot, he built another but smaller cistern and a barn for the stock animals. The water ran into the lower cistern from "Pointed Hill", as Joe Bannon referred to it, and some water flowed into this cistern from the upper one via an overflow pipe. The lower cistern (shown in above photo) was the site of a garden. The water was pumped from this cistern into water stalls for the horses and into containers for boardinghouse use.

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In later years, when the train tunnel was constructed through the mountain, the dynamiting action opened seams and drained the spring. In an attempt to mitigate this damage, Mr. Bannon was offered all the water that came out on his end of the tunnel; however, because of the difficult logistics of getting the water all the way to the Bannon property, the water mostly stayed in the Chatsworth Park area, filling a trout pond / recreational lake in the park.

Susan Gerke



Biography- Bill Neill

I have two Master of Science degrees, in Geology and Petroleum Engineering, and was employed by two oil companies for a total of 23 years, until late 1998 when crude oil prices fell to \$10/barrel (which we'll never see again). During my employment in the late '70s I became interested in environmental problems caused by invasive species, and from 1977 to 1981 I produced and directed an educational film for the Sierra Club Desert Committee on wild burros (feral donkeys) in desert areas. Then I became concerned about tamarisk or saltcedar from Eurasia that invades and takes over desert springs; so in 1983 I got a herbicide applicator license and started to organize volunteer work parties to remove tamarisk from desert springs and riparian areas throughout the California desert and occasionally in neighboring states.

Upon departing the petroleum industry in 1998-99, I converted my avocation into a part-time second career, continuing to work on wildland weed control but now mostly in coastal watersheds and mostly in the enormous flood control basins operated by the Army Corps of Engineers in L.A. County: Sepulveda Basin, Hansen Dam Basin, Whittier Narrows and Santa Fe Dam Basin. Since 1999 I've operated a partnership business named "Riparian Repairs" with a business license for herbicide application. My business partner is a biologist who is now employed by CA Dept. Fish & Game to manage invasive weed control programs on wildlife reserves in San Diego County. In my work as a contractor, funded by environmental grants or to mitigate wetlands development, I'm usually affiliated with a non-profit environmental organization such as the Los Angeles Conservation Corps or the Los Angeles & San Gabriel Rivers Watershed Council. I also work as a contractor for the CA Native Plant Society at Sepulveda Basin and for the Huntington Beach Tree Society in Orange County. On a volunteer basis, I continue to work on invasive weed control in several Orange County parks and one desert canyon near Coachella Valley, sponsored by CNPS chapters in those areas, and I'm an active member of the L.A. County Weed Management Area and a similar group in western Riverside County.

Boeing Settles Massive Lawsuit Over Rocketdyne Site

In September of this year, Boeing agreed not to fight the residents of Simi Valley and western San Fernando Valley towns adjacent to Boeing's Santa Susana Field Laboratory (SSFL) anymore, and settled a sprawling lawsuit that had been churning away in the courts since 1997. Local residents have claimed that the troubled site, polluted with myriad high-level toxins – including the remains of two partial nuclear meltdowns – was responsible for a cluster of cancers and other deadly diseases in scores of people.

The confidential agreement includes no admission of responsibility on the part of Boeing or SSFL's former parent company, Rockwell International, but did keep the lawsuit from going to a jury trial.

As the recent enormous Chatsworth wildfire blazed through parts of the 2,668-acre Boeing facility, sending skyward enormous plumes of possibly radioactive smoke, the conclusion of eight years of contentious litigation was realized.

Boeing admitted no wrongdoing. Some environmentalists complain that the confidentiality of the settlement means that some evidence will never come to light.

The lawsuit alleged that the 1959 meltdown of a nuclear liquid sodium cooled reactor released enough radiological poisons to exceed 15 to 260 times the amount of radiation released in the U.S.'s most infamous meltdown, at Three Mile Island.

The plaintiffs alleged that for over 50 years the Rocketdyne facilities, which were involved in the testing and manufacture of large rocket engines and experimental nuclear reactors, polluted the environment with huge amounts of radiation, including strontium, cesium, and plutonium. The lawsuit contended that gross contamination also occurred from poisonous chemicals including hexavalent chromium, trichloroethylene (TCE), arsenic, hydrazine, formaldehyde, and the metal beryllium.

Attorneys for over 100 plaintiffs with 174 claims filed 11 expert reports including emissions on dioxins, hex chrome, radiation, and TCE, risk-dose experts, medical-toxicity experts. Their medical expert has opined, on over 90 individual cases, that the plaintiffs' cancers/diseases are directly linked to the three Rocketdyne facilities' toxic air emissions (cooling towers for hex chrome, SRE [sodium reactor] meltdown for radioactive iodine, and TCE usage).

Critics of the settlement are very concerned about the health of people exposed to toxins released by Rocketdyne, saying the settlement seals evidence that may link Rocketdyne's contaminants to local health problems.

Please Note: There will be a community meeting hosted by the U.S. Dept. of Energy on Tuesday, Nov. 15 at 6:30-7:15 p.m. (open house) with a presentation and discussion from 7:15 to 8:30 p.m. They will discuss the recent Topanga fire and its effect on the clean-up efforts in Area IV. They will also give an update on the investigation of tritium in groundwater. Location of meeting: Grand Vista Hotel, 999 Enchanted Way, Simi Valley. For more info, call Mike Lopez (DOE) at (510) 637-1633 or Majelle Lee (Boeing) at (818) 586-5283.

The Foundation for the Preservation of the Santa Susana Mountains periodically assists in the acquisition of land that is being acquired or may be acquired by federal or state agencies that have funding shortfalls. Contributions to the Foundation are tax-deductible; please consider the Foundation while making year end contribution decisions. Donations should be made payable to The Foundation for the Preservation of the Santa Susana Mountains, and sent to P. O. Box 4831, Chatsworth CA 91313-4831.

A N N O U N C E M E N T

The Independent Shakespeare Co. is running Charles Dickens' Christmas Carol, starring David Melville, at the Barnsdall Theatre in Hollywood this December (see the recent LA Times review below). The company has offered to open in the northwest valley area (if we can provide them with a theater/auditorium, lights, etc.) with a benefit performance if net proceeds will be used to facilitate a refurbishment and potential acquisition of an historical site and property in the Simi Hills. SSMPA board members are working to make this happen sometime in December, and although it is too early at the time of this newsletter mailing to give you the date and location of the benefit performance, please look for a postcard in your mailbox giving you the details and plenty of time to mark your calendars! We will appreciate your support for this endeavor to preserve some local heritage!

"Melville is wonderfully vital, with eloquent word pointing and physical choices. His colleagues are impressively spontaneous, starting with Melissa Chalsma's mercurial Ophelia, arresting in the mad scene. Michael Keith Morgan's brazen Claudius dovetails with Bernadette Sullivan's sympathetic Gertrude. David Nathan Schwartz is a potent pedant of a Polonius. As Laertes, Hayden Adams has youthful zeal, and Sean Pritchett subtly underplays Horatio. Campbell, Jennifer Mefford, Darrel Guilbeau, Matt Hurley and Taka Yamamoto relish their multiple roles."

David C. Nichols, The Los Angeles Times

[A link: www.independentshakespeare.com]

Visit to the Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park by Senator George Runner, 17th Senate District, October 28, 2005. The Park lies partially in the 17th Senate District.



Senator Runner, SSMPA President Jan Miller



Teena Takata, Jan Miller, Sen. Runner, Todd Doherty and daughter Alana.

Reid Bogert

When the status quo is headed in the wrong direction, it would be foolish for anyone to go along. Be different, be better, and lift your world up in your own special way.

Ralph Marston

Group Accused of Land Grab in Proposed Park 1,800 Owners Assail Tactics of Association

The Santa Susana Mountain Park Association, which seeks creation of an 80-square-mile mountain preserve stretching from Castaic to Canoga Park, was accused Thursday by property owners within the proposed park area of planning a 20th century land grab.

Led by the editor of the Box Canyon Bee, a semimonthly newsletter with a circulation of 3,000, the 1,800 property owners in the proposed park area are out to thwart efforts of the Association. Jan Hinkston, Association president, could not be reached for comment.

L. Webster, owner of 42 acres on which sits the famed Overland Stagecoach trail, took the first action by removing his property from the market.

The Association has been attempting to raise money for a one-year option on the site for future acquisition as an addition to Chatsworth Park. Webster's action followed a visit to the area by state officials involved in a feasibility study on the proposed park initiated last year by Assemblyman Robert Cline (R-Canoga Park). Webster said he wasn't fully aware of the "epic proportions of the Association's scheme" when he originally considered the option. He said in addition to removing the property from the market he also wants to end Association hike-ins to the trail site. "If anyone goes up there again," Webster said, "they'll be trespassing."

Another property owner said that while no resident of the area is opposed to the preservation of historical sites, they are against the overall plan and tactics of the Santa Susana Mountain Park Assn. "The map not only shows our property included in the proposed park, but the Bob Hope Ranch, Miller Ranch, Newhall Land and Farming, Gillibrand Mine, Getty Oil, Magic Mountain and even Valencia. The owner also criticized the Association for even entertaining the notion the public can stand for acquisition of such a park. "This smacks of communism," she declared.

The Association has said it has no intention of acquiring land an owner does not wish to sell, donate or otherwise release for public use.

[Excerpted from an article published in the Los Angeles Times, San Fernando Valley Section, June 30, 1972.]

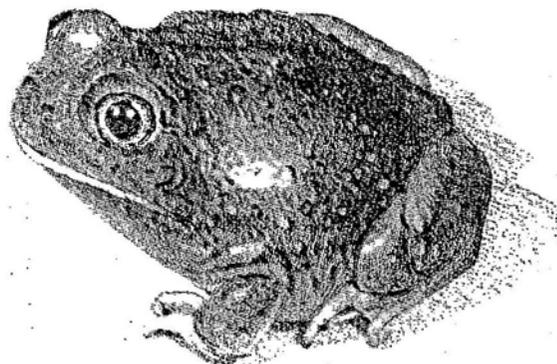
Sunrise Ceremony for Chumash Village Groundbreaking



The Wishtoyo Foundation will hold a sunrise "Awakening Ceremony" on the morning of Wednesday, November 16, at 6:30 a.m. to honor the groundbreaking of its Chumash Demonstration Village at Nicholas Canyon County Beach in Malibu. The Village will include authentic components of a Native American village, with Ceremonial Circle (Sil'i'yik), Aps (dwellings), Tomols (canoes) and a native plants garden. It will be constructed on a four-acre site where Chumash existed for centuries, on property owned and managed by LA County Dept. of Beaches and Harbors, a partner in the projects.

After more than three years, Wishtoyo has completed all planning and permitting required for the projects. Work has begun at the adjacent stream restoration site, a project to restore native plants and habitat in an area that was overrun by invasive weeds such as ice plant, and debris, which clogged the natural creek's flow. Educational tours will reveal the ancient Chumash people's lifeways of sustainability.

The location is 33850 Pacific Coast Hwy, Malibu, across from Malibu Tennis & Riding Club, three miles south of Neptune's Net. Please park in the Nicholas Canyon County Beach public parking lot (metered parking); entry on west side of PCH; then walk along access road (or PCH) to Village area at south side of property. For more information about Wishtoyo Foundation projects, visit www.wishtoyo.org or call Lin Myerson at (805) 658-1120, ext. 2.



Western spadefoot

[**SPEA HAMMONDII**]

Deep in their underground burrows, spadefoot toads in the undeveloped lowlands of Southern California start inching upward through the sun-warmed soil in February or March. For weeks they may lurk beneath the surface waiting to hear the drumming of a heavy spring rain overhead. Driven by this primal cue, they surge out by the tens of thousands and head for ephemeral basins of rainwater. After one to two years of waiting for the proper combination of moisture and warmth, they are extremely thirsty, hungry — and ready for sex. Plumping their bellies down into shallow pools where their thin skin can soak up long drafts of water, males erupt into deafening choruses that sound like hoarse snoring. Mating ends quickly because the toads must return underground before the sun rises for another long sleep.

NATURAL HISTORY

The same warm rains that bring out spadefoots also trigger massive eruptions of their favorite food — highly nutritious, fat-laden winged termites. By eating half their weight in termites in a single night, spadefoots are guaranteed enough energy to fast for a year or more.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Spadefoots have two diagnostic features that separate them from other toads: a vertical, cat-like pupil and a curious little "spade" on the undersides of their hind feet, the perfect tool for digging their burrows.

Remnants of old wall remaining in the Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park, made prominent by the recent fires. ▶



HIKES

Sun., 11/20: Statecoach Trail - Interpretative hike into history in our Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park. Meet at 9:00 a.m. for a 4 mi (700' gain) loop up the Stage Coach Trail. From Topanga Canyon Blvd., turn W on Devonshire, drive into Chatsworth Park S to the 2nd parking lot. Wear long pants, lugsoles, bring water & snack. Ldr: Lee Baum (818)341-1850. Asst: Bob Galletly. (*Sierra Club/Santa Susana Mountains Task Force hike.*)

Tues., 11/22: O'Melveny Park/Bee Cyn/Mission Pk - Moderate, 4-6 mi easy pace. 1200' gain. Meet 8:30 a.m. trailhead (Balboa Bl N, L on Orocco to Sesnon, L past parking lot 4-5 blks to Neon, R, park at end of street, possible \$3-5 parking fee). Bring water, lunch, lugsoles, hat, sunscreen, Rain cancels. Ldr: Pixie Klemic. Asst: Ramona Dunn. (*Sierra Club/San Fernando Valley, Wilderness Adv. Hike.*)

Tues., 12/13: Johnson's Motorway to Rocky Pk - Moderate, 4-6 mi easy pace. Hike on picturesque trail in Santa Susana Mtns. Meet 8:30 a.m. outside Indian Wells gate (from N end of Topanga Cyn Bl in Chatsworth just N of 118 Fwy exit, L onto Poema Pl ¼ mi. Park along curb outside gate). Bring water, lunch, lugsoles, hat, sunscreen. Rain cancels. Ldr: Ants Leps. Asst: Virve Leps. (*Sierra Club/San Fernando Valley hike.*)

Thanks for renewing your membership and supporting SSMPA: Keith Larson, Leona Ward, Hal & Marlene Lovett, Erica Stux, Tom Harrison and Edith & Samuel Roth.
Welcome new member: Gregory Sanders.



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.

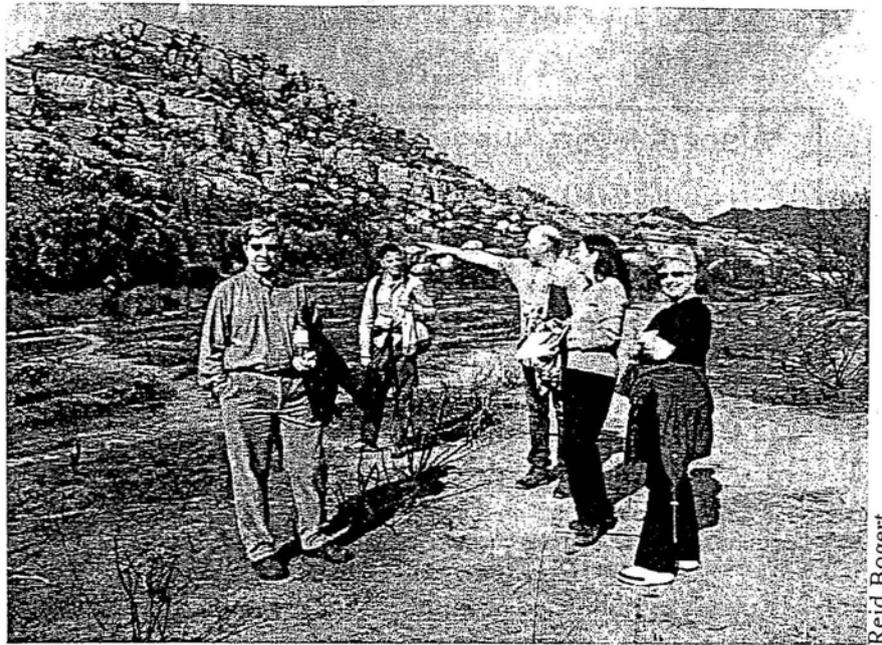
- Senior or Student (\$5.00)
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 Family (\$15.00)
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 Business / Organization (\$25.00)

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Southland Mountain Cycle
by
Robert Pavlik

Chaparral
A soft sound
For a hard land

Home to the horned lizard and the red tail hawk
Chamise, sage and scrub oak with small, leathery leaves
And pungent, fragrant smells in summer
That explodes in flame
In the fall
The seared, scorched earth
Inures itself to winter rain
Runoff rushes in torrents to the sea
And in spring
As damp clouds cast shadows
Life erupts from the soil
The return of the softness
Of chaparral.



Reid Bogert

Visit to the Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park by Sen. George Runner, 17th Senate District, on Oct. 28, 2005. (from left to right: Sen. Runner, SSMPA Board Members Todd Doherty, Jan Miller & Teena Takata, Linda Johnson, District Representative, 17th Senate District)

Members, we appreciate you! Please note the renewal date on your label. If you are a Life Member, we thank you and invite your continued support with periodic donations to help SSMPA meet costs. If you have questions regarding this newsletter, please contact Susan Gerke, Editor, at (818) 704-9304.

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.

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Foundation for the Preservation of the Santa Susana Mountains
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