

# Trails and Tales

News for VIP Volunteers in the Montane Sector  
November 2011

## News from Ranger Bob Hillis

November is the time to see the fall colors in Cuyamaca Rancho State Park. While Middle Peak and the Highway 79 corridor are not as glorious as they were in the pre- Cedar Fire days, there are still many spectacularly beautiful areas in the park. November is also one of the busiest day use months in the park. Thousands of visitors will enjoy the park as either a destination or as a stop-over on the way to or from Julian. November is one of our most difficult months to predict camper volume; if the weather is nice, we will continue to see full campgrounds on weekends, if it turns cold and rainy, camping will drop off significantly.

Unfortunately, leaves are not the only thing to fall this autumn. The budget ax has also fallen. As a result we were required to lay-off our seasonal staff two months earlier than usual. The combination of unfilled permanent staff positions and, now, the lack of seasonal staff has pushed us beyond the point of business as usual. We could no longer meet the health and safety requirements necessary to keep all of our facilities open. In Cuyamaca, Green Valley Family Camp, Green Valley Horse Camp, and Granite Springs Trail Camp, are now closed until next July. Palomar is now only open for day-use, with Doane Valley Family Camp and Cedar Grove Group camps closed until next July, when the entire park is scheduled to close. These are indeed sad and frustrating times for those who value State Parks. We are only able to keep Paso Picacho open by rotating rangers through kiosk shifts. One obvious draw back to having the rangers play Park Aid is that there are now fewer rangers to patrol and respond to emergencies.



## VIP Events

November 12:

Awards

Banquet

June 21-25

MAU

Los Vaqueros  
campout

Now, more than ever, the volunteers of Cuyamaca and Palomar play a vital role in shaping the experience our visitors will have during their time spent in our parks. A pleasant, helpful, knowledgeable volunteer cannot help but improve the experience of the visitor who meets that volunteer. The only visitor who does not want to see a volunteer in the park is one who is knowingly harming the park through his or her behavior. Your volunteer service to the park and to the public is honorable and deserving of gratitude.

This year's Montane Volunteer Appreciation Potluck will be at Descanso Town Hall on November 12<sup>th</sup> - social hour starts at 4:00, dinner starts at 5:00, and the awards ceremony starts at 6:00. We usually finish around 8:30. Please come, bring a dish to share and a friend or family member.

## 21<sup>st</sup> MBAU Benefit Ride

By Sean Murphy

So it's about two weeks before the MBAU Benefit ride and Susie is on the computer rubbing her forehead as if trying to sooth a throbbing migraine headache, "We only have 38 people signed up for the ride! What are we going to do?!"

Last year's turnout was one of the lowest ever and this year was looking even bleaker. Susie made some calls and found out that organized rides all over the county

were down an average of 20%. She called Chris Vine, our graphic designer extraordinaire, and asked him to drastically cut the t-shirt order. I knew living with Susie for the next few weeks were going to be somethin' special (insert sarcastic tone here).

Well, I'll spare you all the blow by blow drama I suffered and cut right to the good news. One week before the ride Susie is again on the computer but this time exclaiming, "We have almost 150 riders signed up and we're expecting at least 50 day of signups. I didn't order enough t-shirts! What are we gonna do?!"



Photo by Traci Shuck

So is the life of a ride organizer and poor guy who lives with her.

This year's ride was one of the most successful ever. The MBAU raised just over \$10,000.00! A giant "THANK YOU!" to all the volunteers who helped. The cook crew headed by Dan Long pulled off a miracle by feeding an extra 50 people or more. Also a big "THANKS!" to the honorary members and other friends who came back to lend a hand. And of course, what would an event in Cuyamaca be like without Dave and Michelle Hernandez who were there to wake everyone up at the crack of dawn (sarcasm again here). This year Michelle donated some of the most beautiful framed photos I've ever seen of our beautiful park. She is an amazing artist! Also a big "THANKS!" to the other unit members who came to support, especially Mark Arndt and Dave McClure. If some of your friends or family came to help, please tell them their help was much appreciated.

Special thanks to all our sponsors, including some local favorites like Julian Pie Company, Alpine Brewery, and Descanso Junction Restaurant. Mention your gratitude next time you're there. The grand prize was a 29 inch mountain bike donated by Eric Camerino of Itsa bike shop in Pt. Loma. Other special donations included a \$500 check from Intuit and \$200 from San Diego Mountain Bike Association. And the "donation award getter award" goes to Mike and Christine Bennett for the 10,000+ energy bars.

Well, hope to see you all at the banquet this coming November 12.



Photo by Traci Shuck





MBAU Benefit Ride



Photos by Michele Hernandez



Photo by Rick Barclay

## Report from Palomar Mountain State Park by Rick Barclay

Palomar Mountain State Park kicked off its fall season in October with two fantastic community events.

On the 8th we had a Clean Up & Restoration Day with over 40 people pitching in --- including a cadre of fine volunteers from Cuyamaca's TMU helping to lead and work (thank you for the assist!) Activities included: cleaning cattail from Doane Pond, planting Jeffrey pine seedlings, painting the kiosk and amphitheater, installing fencing around a plot of rare lemon lilies native to Palomar, and installing a

barricade at the end of French Valley Trail. At the end of a great workday everyone was rewarded with delicious chili dogs and cold drinks and a chance to hang out with each other.



Photos by Rick Barclay







Then, after a two week breather, we hosted an Apple Festival to celebrate the park's little known (til now) apple heritage. Most people don't know it, but the park is actually comprised of old pioneer homesteads that included large apple orchards which are still producing delicious apples to this day. The 100 year old orchards are being rehabilitated by Sue Wade, associate state archaeologist, who teamed up with Ranger Jessica to spearhead this event.

Over 100 people attended the day-long festival, which included a variety of activities. Kids and adults enjoyed apple dunking; making corn husk dolls, sachets and apple heads (google it, it's fun); making and drinking fresh apple cider squeezed from an old fashioned press; eating apple pie made from the park's apples --- as well as a variety of other homemade apple goodies brought by other volunteers; watching spinners and weavers (dressed in period attire) turn raw wool into string and fabric, and listening to a local bluegrass band. If you'd like to see photos and a video of these events, visit [palomarsp.org/october2011](http://palomarsp.org/october2011)

On a personal side note, I had the pleasure of attending an annual, two-day trail maintenance workshop generously hosted by the Orange County Park system (Laguna). This was my first formal training in trail maintenance and crew leadership, honing my "sea-legs" gotten under the watchful eye of Dave Hernandez and Dave McClure while establishing the Palomar TMU. Anyway, I mention this only because it may be of interest to aspiring trail hands who might want to expand their knowledge through this Southern California Trails Coalition-sanctioned curriculum. The first day was classroom, where I learned --- among other things --- that "brushing a trail" can have two opposite things: cutting overgrowth out of the way, or using cuttings to conceal an illegal trail. The second day was practicum, with an emphasis on drainage and erosion mitigation. Good to know for places with a lot of rain like Palomar. It's free, and if you're interested learning more, let me know.



Photos by Rick Barclay







Photos by Rick Barclay

## Palomar Apple Festival



## MAU News by Suzie Kirkwood

Most MAU members participated in our Safety Training last month at Lakeside Saddle & Driving Club. Our horses were exposed to unusual situations and sensory stimuli and we learned how to help the horses respond safely. Thank you to the CRSPIA board for sponsoring our training.

Walt and I saw lots of deer while we were camping at Los Vaqueros this weekend. It's so nice to see deer in the park again. Driving home from Los Vaqueros last night, Walt had to bring the truck and horse trailer to a complete stop at East Mesa parking for a big buck standing in the middle of the road! The buck was only a couple of feet from the truck! He looked at Walt and then sauntered up the fire road.

We have the dates for our MAU 2012 Los Vaqueros campout. Mark your calendars for June 21 – 25.

The Award Banquet is November 12<sup>th</sup> at the Descanso Town Hall. Look for details in this newsletter. It's always good to see everyone and enjoy the food and camaraderie at this event. I hope to see you all there!



Photo by Michele Hernandez



Photo by Kevin Johnson



## A Volunteer has Designs (in) for the Store...



By Elizabeth Baker

*Take a Hike!* Usually a brush off.... among many in San Diego that sentiment is usually followed up with “*See you there!*”

We are fortunate to have seemingly endless options for hiking; from the Pacific Ocean all the way to Borrego and beyond. It is that spirit of gratitude that inspires both the new designs currently featured on t-shirts on sale at the Visitor Center.

“My designs were inspired by the resilience of the oaks, coming back slowly after the fires. It felt like we went from nothing green to so many wreathes of green around the blackened trunks. It was so amazing and inspiring to see and I looked forward to “checking up” on specific trees as I retraced favorite trails” said designer, Elizabeth Baker, a TMU Volunteer.

Inspired by the UK-Tube Map..a wallet sized rendering of a colorful maze of intertwined lines making up the London Underground, the Trails Design also covers a lot of ground in a small space. “The fun part was putting the puzzle of the trails together with Barb McCoy” Elizabeth noted.



Back by popular demand, the Theodore Roosevelt “quote” t-shirt is a favorite. A quote collector, Elizabeth treasures this one as it has stood the test of time. “Teddy” was president over 100 years ago and his vision of holding parks in trust for the nation is shared by everyone who enjoys the miles of parkland within Cuyamaca Rancho State Park.

Both designs share the *Take a Hike!* slogan “winkingly” punctuated by an oak leaf exclamation point. Items may be purchased by visiting the store. It is open Saturday’s and Sunday’s from 10-4. For more information, please contact Barb McCoy at [BMcCoy@CRSPIA.Org](mailto:BMcCoy@CRSPIA.Org)

The Nation behaves well if it treats the natural resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased, and not impaired, in value.

Theodore Roosevelt



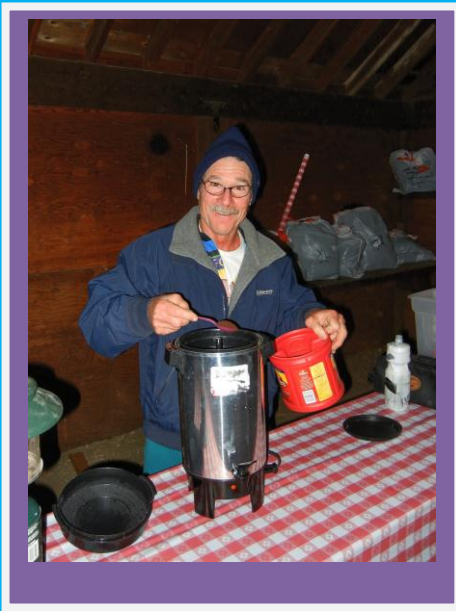


Photo by Michele Hernandez

### **TMU ARTICLE By Dave McClure**

The weather is finally starting to cool off and making our trail work conditions a bit more tolerable. But with the cooler weather and imminent rain and snow that winter brings, we are also getting ready for the inevitable falling trees that the wet ground and winter winds bring. As time goes by, the already fragile root systems of the trees burned in the Cedar Fire become even more fragile as the remaining support structures continue to decay. As the ground becomes soft and saturated with the rain, more trees, with nothing left to hold them up, will simply fall over. This is also true of the Oaks which seem to be alive with new growth all around. The new growth, unfortunately, does nothing to hold up the older, larger tree structure that was burned in the fire. This sometimes makes it difficult to remove fallen Oak trees that are blocking a trail. We have to cut up and remove the old tree that came down, but try to work around the new growth so as not to damage or destroy it.

Another event that happens in the winter is when the rains begin, the old drainages which have been nice and dry for the past few months begin to fill up and flow. There are a couple of particularly nasty drainages on Fern Flat and Middle Peak Fire Roads that makes it difficult if not impossible for us to get our work truck through. Unfortunately, there isn't very much that can be done about "rogue" drainages, either on trails or fire roads. These are just more natural features of the park and like all things in nature; we simply learn to co-exist with them.

Speaking of drainages, this would be a good time to remind everyone about the issue of "footbridges" and the problems they cause. If you absolutely must scavenge for branches and logs to build a bridge

across a drainage so you don't get your shoes wet, please remove it and scatter the construction materials around after you have crossed. These bridges cause no end of problems because they act as dams for the drainage. As leaves and other debris flowing with the drainage become blocked by the home made bridge, the bridge will turn into a dam and the water will start to back up. That water has to go somewhere and that somewhere is almost always down the trail or road. What was previously a nice trail is now a flowing stream. The stream flows down the trail and the resulting erosion takes the trail with it and we now have a nice new drainage that we must deal with. A good example of this is on the California Riding and Hiking Trail west of the old Paso Group Camp. There is a dogleg turn in the trail which then goes up a slope and crosses a drainage. Someone will construct a footbridge across the drainage and the drainage inevitably backs up and reroutes itself down the trail. The flowing water flows down the trail for around a hundred feet or so before it returns to the stream bed. Every winter, we have to clean up the damage several times on this section caused by footbridges.

Poison Oak is going to be an issue this winter simply because there is so much of it in the park this year. Right now it is pretty visible and distinctive making it easy to avoid. As the cold weather sets in, though, the leaves die off leaving only the branches which are difficult to distinguish from the surrounding vegetation. The branches are every bit as toxic as the leaves so stay away! There are very few places in the Park where the Poison Oak grows out onto the trails, so if you stay on the trail you will be able to avoid the itchy pest.

And since I have brought up the subject of cooler weather, the Oaks will soon begin to turn their fall colors. This is an excellent opportunity to go hiking or riding with your camera and take pictures of the fall foliage. And after you take your fall pictures, don't forget to send them on to Susan, the Trails & Tales Editor for inclusion in the next newsletter. Susan's contact information is elsewhere in this newsletter.

We've made a few changes in the TMU organization this past month. One of the more important changes is that we are discontinuing the regular weekly Saturday trail work parties. In the place of the every Saturday work party, we will generally be doing two events a month. One of the events will be our monthly "Fun 'n' Lunch" Saturdays with Milo and Janet. Milo and Janet host the trail work and then host a hot



Photo by Michele Hernandez



lunch at their campsite after work. The many of you who have attended these always fun events will attest to both Milo's trail knowledge and Janet's cooking skills. Milo and Janet usually host this event on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of every month.

Our other trail event will usually be a work project on a particular trail. We will meet at the trailhead and will go for a group hike and do some trail cleaning. If you have a trail that you would like to work on and it's a project that can be completed in less than 4 hours on a Saturday, please let me know and I will put it on my list of projects to be completed. I will notify everybody of these projects at least 2 weeks in advance with all the details. If you are not on my TMU mailing list and would like to be notified of these and other projects, please let me know and I will add you to my mailing list.

And as a reminder, you do not need to be a TMU member or regular TMU volunteer to participate in our trail work functions. We welcome one and all to our projects and have age and skill appropriate projects for everyone. We are always "family friendly" and you are free to drag along friends, associates and family members.

As many of you know, earlier this month I suffered a computer failure in which, among other things, I lost my entire email address book. Thanks to everyone who emailed me, I have pretty well gotten my Contacts rebuilt. If you, or someone you know, has suddenly stopped receiving TMU email notices from me, please let me know and I will get your name put back on my list. My contact information is at the end of the newsletter.

Finally, one of our longtime volunteers, Ken McIntyre, suffered a serious injury while riding his bicycle at the end of September. Ken is now out of the hospital and recuperating at home and we are looking forward to his returning to help us on Wednesdays.

Don't forget about the Annual Awards Banquet on Saturday, November 12. I'm looking forward to seeing every one of you there.



Photo by Michele Hernandez



## Palomar Clean up Event



Photos by Michele Hernandez



## CONTACTS:

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Paso Picacho Kiosk (for weekends) -- 760-765-3023

Green Valley Kiosk -- 760-765-3024

Palomar Headquarters -- 760-742-3462

Send articles and photos for next month between the 24<sup>th</sup> and the 29<sup>th</sup> to-

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