



## Santa Susana Mountain Park Association

A Non-Profit Organization, Inc'd. 1971

# February 1997

Volume 27, Number 1

## Will They Get Away With It?

**Charlie Cook**, a chief of the Eastern Chumash Nation, very knowledgeable in our local, Native American history, will be making an **extremely important presentation** to our members, guests, and concerned, compassionate people at:

**7:30 p.m. Monday, February 3, 1997 at Glendale Federal Bank**, Community Room, 21821 Devonshire Street, Chatsworth, one block east of Topanga Canyon Blvd. February's General Meeting will precede the presentation and will begin at 7:00 p.m.

Following Charlie Cook's appearance,

### **Rich Rozelle, State Parks & Recreation**

will be speaking and answering questions about the state's actions on this matter.

This month's Program will be extremely important as we will have a chance to further develop and understand the reality of what transpired as a result of the illegal grading by Southern California Edison on state-owned property three years ago. It appears that SCE is not willing to accept responsibility for the damage they caused, and therefore, they will not settle (out of court) the suit brought against them by the state of California. It may be extremely critical for us now to make all of our elected officials cognizant of our outrage at the destruction and damage of so many outstanding archaeological sites.

### What you can do!

1. Call each person you know that is interested in:

- the environment,
- the history & significance of the Santa Susana Mountains/ Simi Hills,
- the native peoples of Southern California,
- justice being denied
- archaeology
- anthropology

2. Bring everyone to our meeting this Monday.

3. Write letters to Governor Pete Wilson and the Director of Park and Recreation. A sample letter and pertinent addresses are listed elsewhere in this newsletter.

4. Remember that the people united, will never be defeated. *El pueblo, unido, jamas sera vencido.*

### Election of Officers

Notice is hereby given, as per By-Laws, Article V, Section 4, "The Board of Directors shall be elected by a majority of the members present at the annual meeting to be held in March of each year." The chair of the Nominating Committee, Pauline Aue, is seeking individuals to serve a one-year term for several of the positions. Please call Pauline at 818-341-5872. Thank you.

## **SAMPLE LETTER OF SUPPORT**

FOR CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION VS. SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EDISON

This sample letter can be used as a blank (send as is) or it can be used as a guide in order to compose a letter of your own. Please send the original to Governor Wilson's Office and, if possible, copies to many of the following:

Donald Murphy (Director, Department of Parks and Recreation), U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer, U.S. Senator Diane Feinstein, State Senator Cathie Wright, State Assemblyman Tom McClintock, Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael Antonovich, Larry Meyers (CA Native American Heritage Commission), and others you think may be able to help.

*The letter may read something like this:*

Your Name

Your Address

Date

Governor Pete Wilson  
State Capitol  
Sacramento CA 95814

Dear Governor Wilson:

I am writing your office to urge you to strongly support the on-going efforts by the State of California, Office of the Attorney General, to claim restitution from the Southern California Edison Company (SCE)

The State is suing to a maximum sum of \$24,000,000, because of SCE's illegal grading of significant portions of archaeological sites CA-LAN-448 and CA-LAN-449 (which are located in Chatsworth). SCE is responsible for work which was itself completed by the Fire Department of the County of Los Angeles and which took place during December 1993.

The archaeological sites themselves are located on land which is (and was in December 1993) owned by the State of California Department of Parks and Recreation. These sites and the open space where they are located was purchased, and in theory was protected, for the purpose of their being included in a new California State Park (currently referred to as The Santa Susana Mountains Project).

These are significant sites and the damage done caused by SCE's ill-advised actions cannot be undone. Only a significant fine and/or other restitution can make up for the damage done and establish (to SCE and others) that archeological sites are an important public resource.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

# State Park Classification

The following letter is a letter sent by SSMPA to the Director of State Parks to notify him that we are very pleased with his actions to re-classify some areas as a State Park, our goal for over 26 years. We are encouraging all members and each interested individual to also mail letter to Donald Murphy, telling him how important the area is to yourself and to others and to thank him for his efforts.

Donald Murphy, Director  
California Department of Parks & Recreation  
P.O. Box 942 896  
Sacramento CA 94296-0001  
January 22, 1997

Since its original purchase in 1970 by the state of California, the areas in the Santa Susana Mountains/Simi Hills, which we have requested be named the Santa Susana Mountain Park (SSMP), have been classified as a State Parks Project. Our organization, Santa Susana Mountain Park Association (SSMPA) is deeply committed to this area.

It is our understanding that the process of re-classification of SSMP is now underway. We are very grateful for your efforts in this area and offer our assistance in your process to re-classify. Promotion from project status to full Park Classification will greatly increase the likelihood of the state's preserving this valuable site.

In addition to expressing our appreciation, SSMPA is writing this letter to request that our park be given a very high priority for general plan development. Our organization is dedicated not only to land acquisition, but to the maintenance of this resource. We feel that the area is unique due to the large number of pre-historic and historic sites of archaeological significance. These sites include Indian middens, the Old Stage Coach Trail and its historic station site (Los Angeles Cultural-Historical Monument #92), the 1880's Wagon Road, and the Bannon's Quarry site.

We are very appreciative of the State Parks' efforts to reclassify our area. You honor our traditional values and the memory of all who have worked so hard to preserve our heritage.

Thank you.

## Foundation Annual Election - March 3, 1997

The Foundation for the Preservation of the Santa Susana Mountains will hold its annual election of board officers at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, March 3, 1997 in the Glendale Federal Bank Community Room located at 21821 Devonshire Street in Chatsworth.

The tentative slate is as follows: President: Nancy Razanski; Vice President: Janet Lazik; Recording Secretary: (open, please volunteer), Treasurer: Pauline Aue; Corresponding Sec.: Lisa Nicholson; Founder (Life): Janice Hinkston; SFV Area Chair: Gretha Davis; Santa Clarit Area Chair: George Riipi; Simi Valley Area Chair: Pearl Turbush; Members-At-Large: Joe Meagher and Lindsay Wilhelm.

The Foundation meets on a regular, quarterly basis. We have a working relationship with the CA Department of Parks and Recreation and are looking forward to an exciting and successful year. Anyone interested in serving on any board position, except president, please call the nomination chairperson, Nancy Razanski, at 818-341-3512. If you have any suggestions where we can reach potential volunteers, please notify us as soon as possible. Happy New Year.

# Stagecoach Trail Hikes

SSMPA hikes are conducted every Sunday, October - June (except fifth Sundays of the month & rain-outs are occasionally a problem) from the parking lot of Chatsworth Park South Recreation Building, which is located at the western terminus of Devonshire Street, about one mile west of Topanga Canyon Boulevard.

Hikers meet at 9:00 a.m. with the hike leader for the 4 mile (700 ft. gain) loop up the Stagecoach Trail, which is in the hills west of the park. Hikers are advised to bring water and a snack in hiker's back pack or hip pack. Lug sole shoes or sturdy, closed shoes are advised as is the wearing of a hat. All hike leaders are knowledgeable and experienced.

Barbara Coffman is the hike leader for the first Sundays of the month; Judy Garris on the second Sundays; Lindsay Wilhelm on the third Sundays; and Lee Baum on the fourth Sundays.

## Hike Leaders, Train Now!

Every Sunday (except July-Sept. and fifth Sundays of the month) hike leaders take groups of approximately ten to thirty interested individuals, families, and groups on hikes on the Stagecoach Trail. The need for additional hike leaders to be trained is always there. If you would like to

become one of the few, the proud, the hike leader, please call Barbara Coffman at 818-347-5603.

We're non-violent.

## Santa Susana Docents

The Santa Susana Docents provide Nature/History walks at Chatsworth Park South for elementary school children. On the walk, the children tour five stations, including a small display of local artifacts at the Visitors Center. This program has been very well received by hundreds of children, and hundreds more children could learn about the Santa Susana Mountains and the Simi Hills if ... if ... we had a couple of more docents.

If you have a need to help others, have a couple of hours free on a regular basis, and want some really good times, this may be your great opportunity knocking.

For more information on becoming a docent and joining the fun, sharing your love of nature with children, please call Pat at 818-998-5224 or Jan at 818-993-0508.



## Other Simi Hill/ Santa Susana Mountains Hikes

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC) and Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority offer hikes on an irregular basis at Rocky Peak Park (SR118 at Chatsworth/Simi Valley border); Sage Ranch (Chatsworth, Valley Circle to Woolsey Canyon Road to Black Canyon Road); Santa Clarita Woodlands/Mentryville (I-5, Lyons, west to Pico Canyon, left at Y to end of road), and Towsley Canyon Park (I-5, Calgrove, west on The Old Road to Ed Davis Park, 1/2 mile to parking area by kiosk). These hikes are free. Please call Nancy at 310-589-3200,

extension 126 for additional information and requirements.

## Visitors Center Docents

Have you always wanted to tell people where to go? Have you never wanted to tell someone to come look at your rattlesnake?

Every Sunday, people visit the SSMPA Visitors Center, located in Chatsworth Park South, open from 12:00 noon to 3:00 p.m., asking questions about the area, its history, geology, archaeological sites, location of Devil's Slide, location of the rest rooms, etc.

As a citizen/volunteer, you can become a Visitor Center docent and become fulfilled and have a great time doing it. Please call right now, or as soon as you can, 818-704-9304, and tell Susan that you know you are the right person (trained or trainable), you have three hours a month to give to others, you're ready to begin building some great relationships.

# From the Archives

(Note: Al Knight has been going through the files of SSMPA, which were recently moved from Jan Hinkston's home to the SSMPA Visitors Center in Chatsworth Park South. The files are currently somewhat disorganized, but eventually SSMPA hopes to have this precious record of 25 years worth of research, community-based effort, and persona and group inspiration organized so that the materials are readily (more or less) available for reference, research, and general use. Beginning in this issue of the SSMPA Newsletter, we will take a look at some of what has been researched, so far, in the material donated by Jan to the Association.)

## Through the Santa Susana Pass - September 22, 1869

by *Albert Knight*

The members of the SSMPA have all heard about the importance of the Old Stagecoach Trail (El Camino de Santa Susana y Simi) as a communications route between southern and northern California, but how many of us can name a historically important person who used the old route? Although I wondered (and wonder) about who some of those important people/travelers might have been (we know mainly about local people who used the route), I was started to find (in the files of SSMPA) a definitive article stating that William H. Seward, himself, passed through our future State Historic Park. William H. Who?

Mr. William H. Seward was Secretary of State during the Lincoln presidency (i.e., during the Civil War), and he was attacked and seriously wounded on the same night as Lincoln by the cabal of assassins that murdered the President. But it was during the Presidency of Lincoln's successor, Andrew Johnson, that Seward's name (he was still Secretary of State) would become a household word. For it was Seward, who, in 1867, negotiated the sale of Alaska, by the Russian Empire, to the United States. The sale price was the then astronomical (according to some) sum of \$7,200,000! And for what was widely referred to as a gigantic "ice box".

Alaska was virtually unknown to the general population, and the great potential value of the gigantic province was not understood - by most. Seward "saw" the strategic position and the great potential resource value long before almost anyone else. However, for most Americans, Seward seemed to be nuts (to put it into today's vernacular), and for a long time to come, the now-American Alaska was known as "Seward's Folly."

... more on Seward's wild So CA 1869 ride in the next newsletter

## TARWEED NURSERY & LANDSCAPE

'The best way to improve our environment is to grow in our own backyard'

### Our Neighbor Nature

'Some simple ways we can help protect local natural resources'

Lets focus for a moment on some simple ways you can support native plants and animals in our neighborhood. There are many changes in our daily actions which will improve their lives. Furthermore in discussing simple changes we are better capable to develop long term strategies which will greater benefit wildlife.

#### **Help increase natural space.**

Many opportunities are available for helping to make more places available for wild life. Landscaping your home workplace or neighborhood with native plants is a fun and great example. Getting involve and supporting local groups who are helping to preserve and maintain natural areas is very rewarding.

#### **Avoid destroying natural areas.**

Small changes in our daily life styles and work practices can have a great effect on the quality and long term preservation of wildlife areas. When visiting a natural area use the largest trails and always stay on existing trails. The damaged caused by 'bush whacking' or creating new trails is devastating to the fragile local plant communities. To the casual observer it would appear that native vegetation will aggressively reappear after being damaged. This is not true. In most cases non native invasive plants gain a foothold in disturbed areas. This is why it is extremely important to keep disturbances such as grading or fire abatement to a minimum. It is best to site buildings or land 'improvements so as to keep natural areas undisturbed.

#### **Do not allow pets to roam free.**

The opportunity to quietly observe nature is lost when natural habitat is being disturbed by roaming pets. Roaming dogs and domestic cats pose a threat to wild life. Their presence in natural areas is threatening to small mammals, reptiles, birds and the plant life. Restraining domestic animals when visiting natural areas and containing them in securer areas insures their safety from wild animals in search of food and the smaller inhabitants in the natural area. Small cats and dogs should be kept indoors at all times unless they are being supervised. Animal left outdoors should be kept in runs with a secure top or 8 foot high fences

Honor the open spaces still remaining for native plants and animals to use as habitat. Try to protect it from improper use and over development. This practice starts with thinking about how our actions effect natural areas, whether it is in a park or our own back yard. Our goal should be to disturb it as little as possible and to teach others to respect open space. This requires allowing people to develop a close bond with nature. Unfortunately we have developed a very individual oriented, hands on society which often conflicts with fragile natural areas. All too often individuals take for granted natural areas. For example most people do not realize how fragile and valuable the local Coastal Sagebrush community is. Our recreation habits and construction policies are destroying habitats which have survived and evolved millions of years. These areas have survived the more recent droughts of the middle ages which lasted 200 years (not 6 years like our last DWP's nightmare!). All this to be devastated by our interaction.

## Docent Doings

by Nancy Razanski

The Santa Susana Mountain Park project has been strengthened recently with the addition of three volunteers to run the Invitation to Explore hikes, Janice Hinkston used to run. These people are

Rosemarie White, Rick Farber, and Judy Garris. Call Judy at 818-340-0469 for more info. on these

exciting 9:00 a.m. Sunday nature hikes.

Barbara Coffman, Lee Baum, Judy Garris, and Lindsay Wilhelm continue to do great jobs leading the 9:00 a.m. Sunday Stage Coach Trail hikes. Call Barbara at 818-347-5603.

Our Visitors Center can now stay open every Sunday from 12:00 noon -3:00 p.m. because, in addition to our loyal stand-bys, Gretha Davis and Catherine Roy, we now have added Rodney Harding and Irene Tonius. We still need someone for the fifth Sunday of the month. Call Gretha, 818-340-4011.

Janet Lazik is pleased to add Rodney Harding on her children's nature walk docent list. Her loyal stand-bys are Jim Riley, Lisa Nicholson, Joe Meagher, and Pat Levin. Janet still needs someone to coordinate field trip scheduling. Call Janet, 818-993-0508.

Thanks go to Janice Hinkston and Lindsay Wilhelm for their successful volunteer recruitment efforts.

## The Editor's Desk

by Theodore Dent

It's been a busy month for the editor: we'll find the right software (the one that doesn't eat articles) for next month. Look for a many informative articles, including details on the release of \$55 million by the county to buy land, including North Stoney Point, and many others, which now live only in cyber-space.

Our congratulations and thanks to Al Knight for his article in the December 1996, The Valley, the journal of the San Fernando Valley Historical Society. His article, based on a new informative letter Al and others are creating, was titled, "The Old Stagecoach Trail and Devil's Slide".

Al also got SSMPA in the paper, when the Los Angeles Time identified him as vice (I think that should have been capitalized) president of SSMPA. Al's letter to the editor on January 26, 1997 was titled "Historical Facts" and dealt with the so-called "Treaty of Cahuenga".

If you think you have information, an article, an idea, praise, criticism, etc. regarding the newsletter, please send comments to the editor at P.O. Box 4831, Chatsworth CA 91313-4831.

Thanks to all.

## SANTA SUSANA MOUNTAIN PARK ASSOCIATION

*We Invite You To Join/Renew/Rejoin S.S.M.P.A.*

Investing in the future of our communities and its resources is probably one of the best expenditures of our time and efforts. Please return this cutoff with your contributions. Please mail checks payable to SSMPA. and mail 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: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/STATE/ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

SPECIAL INTEREST/EXPERTISE: \_\_\_\_\_

# Feb

## CALENDAR, February 1997

- Feb. 2 (Sunday) Weekly Hike; meet at Chatsworth Park South - 9:00 a.m.  
Feb. 3 (Monday) General Membership Meeting (see article on page one)  
Feb. 9 (Sunday) Weekly Hike; meet at Chatsworth Park South - 9:00 a.m.  
Feb. 16 (Sunday) Weekly Hike; meet at Chatsworth Park South - 9:00 a.m.  
Feb. 17 (Monday) Exec. Board Meeting - Glendale Federal Bank - 7:00 p.m.

### Address List

Donald W. Murphy, Director, Department of Parks and Recreation; Box 942896; Sacramento CA 94296-0001  
Governor Pete Wilson, State Capitol, Sacramento CA 95814  
Senator Cathie Wright (or your Senator), State Senate, Sacramento CA 95814  
Assembly Tom McClintock (or your assemblyperson), State Assembly, Sacramento, CA 95814  
Senator Diane Feinstein, U.S. Senate, Washington DC 20525  
Senator Barbara Boxer, U.S. Senate, Washington DC 20525  
Honorable Howard P. "Buck" McKeon (or your Rep.); 307 Cannon HOB; Washington DC 20515

### SSMPA Executive Board

Doreen Rusen, President (818-360-0894); Albert Knight, Vice President (818-252-3466); Theodore Dent, Secretary (818-882-4664); Susan Gerke, Treasurer (818-704-9304); Janice Hinkston, Founder (818-884-9610);  
Members-at-Large: Pauline Aue; (818-341-5872); Bette Butler (818-700-0220);  
Barbara Coffman (818-347-5603); Lindsay Wilhelm (818-348-9682)

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Foundation for the Preservation of the  
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