

MT. SAN JACINTO
NATURAL HISTORY
ASSOCIATION

A NON-PROFIT
CORPORATION
SERVING MT. SAN
JACINTO STATE PARK



Issue 31, Number 3

Fall 2011

Upcoming Events

- New Board Member Nominations due October 31st
- Holiday Dinner at the Mountain Station December 10th

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NHA Seeking New Board Members

Perhaps you have joined the NHA in support of the valuable role our Association plays in supporting and promoting the Mt. San Jacinto Wilderness State Park.

Perhaps you have also been enjoying the many benefits of your membership in the Mt. San Jacinto Natural History Association, such as our Fall and Spring Picnics ...or the Holiday Banquet ...or the valuable discounts you and your guests receive at the Visitor Center and at the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway ticket office!

Perhaps you are even an active State Park Volunteer who has joined the NHA to further demonstrate your support for our Park.

What you may not

know is that behind the scenes of the NHA is a small but dedicated group of **Board Members** who meet on a monthly basis to oversee the operations and finances of our Visitor Center, who plan our quarterly events, and who support the State Park Staff members' many requests for funds, materials and supplies to make Mt. San Jacinto State Park the attractive, safe, and well-maintained gem of the State Park System.

This fall we are faced with replacing six Board Members with new recruits. **Now is the time to step forward and become an NHA Board Member!**

Board members serve on a three-year rotating cycle. In accordance with the Bylaws of the NHA,

there will be a meeting held on December 10, 2011 (during our Holiday Banquet) to elect directors to the board of the NHA. **Candidates must be nominated by October 31st to be eligible for the election.** Ballots will then be mailed to members in November.

Any member interested in serving on the board is welcome to place their name in nomination. **Contact any current member of the board to place your name in nomination.**

To learn more about what happens at board meetings, you can read the minutes of past meetings at: <http://www.msjnha.org/nha/forms.html>

A Thought about State Parks

A recent article in the LA Times brought up an interesting point: not only is the government's budget problems causing the closures of parks, but also those visitors who are evading park fees. After all, visitor centers, groomed trails, and signs have to be maintained by someone, and the fees we pay go towards keeping the parks open! So get out and enjoy the many parks our state currently has to offer (especially Mt. San Jacinto State Park!) And while you're at it, renew your membership in the NHA, and recruit a few new members to boot!

President's Message by Kim Clark



Every discussion with NHA board members, with visitors to the Mountain Station, and with State Park employees, inspires new ideas. Every Board Meeting explores new possibilities for the NHA...

In these times of political brinksmanship, of increasing poverty and increasing wealth, and of debates between private right and public good, one thing is for sure: ***we are devouring the planet faster than it can replenish itself!***

And yet, whether one believes that preserving wilderness is the responsibility of the private sector or the government, there appears to be constant and growing consensus on many sides that we need to value and preserve nature, as exemplified by the combined work of the NHA and State Park Staff to preserve and protect our own special 10,834' granite peak, surrounded by lush forest, overlooking a vast desert basin.

I first set foot on Mt. San Jacinto more than forty years ago. I cherish its uniqueness—boldly sitting at the northern end of a range of mountains that extends into the Baja Peninsula. Such information makes for good stories to tell the many visitors who arrive by Tram and by foot.

It has been a pleasure to volunteer for Rob Howard up at our Visitor Center, to be inspired by the patience and fortitude of Garratt Aitcheson, and to serve as an NHA Board member during the last few years. (One always wonders if any good has come of either.) But now I find that age and busy-ness is getting the best of me, and it's time to relinquish the platform to others.

Oh, to regain that youthful step that catapulted me so easily up those rocks! Then again, a stroll with Susie on a lovely autumn day isn't so bad...

2011 Board of Directors

Kim Clark
President 2009-2011

Kurt Leuschner
Vice President 2009-2011

Regina Landry
Secretary 2009-2011

Russ Andersen
Treasurer 2009-2011

Dennis Schirmer
Director 2009-2011

Iona Scapple
Director 2010-2012

Marsha Hansen
Director 2010-2012

Joe Migliore
Director 2010-2012

State Park Liaison
Garratt Aitcheson
Park Superintendent

Bart Grant
Supervising Ranger

Robert Howard
Park Interpreter

Fall Volunteer Training

Over 30 people showed up for the fall volunteer training held on October 15th in the Francis Crocker room. Volunteers for the visitor center, the nature walks and the PSAR program were in attendance.

Ellen Absher told us about the Mt. San Jacinto Interpretive Master Plan (See article on page 5). The plan has recently been

approved by DPR. She would like us to contribute our ideas on how we can implement the plan to better interact with the public.

Ranger Bart then told us about some of the projects occurring in the park, including the Fuller Ridge project, and the plans that are being developed for Long Valley and Hidden Lake.

Marsha Hansen talked about

the benefits of being a member of the NHA and encouraged everyone to join. There was a lunch provided by the NHA to show the appreciation for the work done by the volunteers in the park.

After lunch Ranger Bart presented training on how to use the radios. A set of radios will soon be available in the Visitor Center.

Treasurer's Report by Russ Andersen

The NHA is in good financial condition this year. For the nine months ended September 30, 2011, sales revenue at the Visitor Center was \$54,608. The sales have been slightly below budget and last year nearly every month in 2011. However, the gross margin on sales has been significantly above both the budget and last year. Part of this is due to the lower level of inventory at September 30th and part may be due to an increase in some selling prices. For the nine months ended September 30th, the gross profit on sales was \$35,968.

In March, the NHA received a \$3,000 grant to be used for the Park's PSAR program. Other

donations for the year-to-date have been \$1,704. Management and general expenses have been \$10,610, or \$3,490 under budget.

The result is an excess of receipts over expenditures of \$30,916 for the 9 months. Funding for park services and interpretive programs has been \$19,466 leaving an increase in unrestricted net assets of \$11,450.

The endowment earned \$4 in interest and was increased by \$300 in new life memberships.

As of September 30, 2011, the unrestricted cash and savings was \$90,789 and the endowment saving account was \$9,015 for a total of \$99,804.

NHA Picnic in Idyllwild



Plan to attend the

NHA HOLIDAY BANQUET

Saturday Evening, December 10th
5:30pm-8:00pm at the Mountain Station

*Photo Contest Award Presentations
State Park Update*

Appetizer, choice of entrée, side dishes, beverage and dessert.

\$25 per person

Mail your check made out to Mt. San Jacinto NHA to
255 N. El Cielo Rd. Ste. 140, #141, Palm Springs, CA 92262

A Message from Sector Superintendent Garratt Aitcheson

It was a pleasure to see several of you at the Idyllwild picnic recently. I told you that I made a mean hamburger! However, they wouldn't have tasted anywhere near as good without the wonderful side dishes. In between trips to the table of goodies, I had a chance to talk to some of you about the current projects happening in the park as well as our future direction.

I am excited to announce that Mount San Jacinto State Park (MSJSP) and Mount San Jacinto Natural History Association (MSJNHA) continue to work closely in accomplishing the missions of both. The recent agreement to staff the mountain station Visitor Center with a part time paid park employee is an example of the cooperation that will improve the visitor's experience. This park aide will work closely with Park Interpreter Robert Howard and the volunteers in managing the visitor center. The goal is to compliment and improve upon what the volunteers are currently doing. Eventually we anticipate that this position will also assist in presenting formal interpretive programs.

More exciting news is that our park-wide Interpretive Master Plan (IMP) has literally just been completed. This 80 page document is a detailed description of existing and future interpretive resources, goals, objectives, and strategies. We owe a thank you to both Rob Howard and Ellen Absher for their dedication in completing a plan that will help

guide our interpretive efforts for years to come. The IMP will also help direct MSJNHA and MSJSP as they develop a strategic plan together for 2012 and beyond. For those of you considering filling one of the 6 upcoming Board vacancies, this is a dynamic time to be part of shaping the goals and strategies for the next several years. Remember, silence is agreement.

The Long Valley Management Plan is also coming together. With an anticipated completion date in the Summer of 2012, this plan will be devoted to all resource, and recreational activities in Long Valley. Expanding trail systems, improving facilities and upgrading interpretive panels will be specified, recognizing the need to accommodate the increasing number of visitors while protecting the very resources that make this place so special.

Work continues both in Round Valley and along Fuller Ridge. State park and California Conservation Crews are making some incredible improvements to the trail system. Round Valley work includes improving the trail around the meadow as well as individual campsite trails. The Fuller Ridge crews are concentrating on the portion of the PCT that runs through the state park, improving trail grade, drainage, width and overall safety. Several state park and CCC dignitaries



ABOVE: Fuller Ridge Trail 2011

BELOW: Dinner time at the Fuller Ridge Camp



spent two nights with me touring the proposed and ongoing project sites in August. They visited the VC and I think they even made a purchase or two. They pass on their gratitude for all of you hard work.

Finally, most of you have noticed the improvements to the Interpretive Center (aka Museum) and theatre atop the Tram. Rob, Ellen, and I have been busy implementing changes that we hope will improve the visitor experience. Still to come are several interpretive panels, new taxidermy, and an interactive touch table.



San Jacinto Peak from the north side. Photo by James Absher.

Excerpts from the Mt. San Jacinto State Park and Wilderness Interpretative Master Plan

The **Interpretive Master Plan (IMP)** provides directions for and improvements to interpretive services in the park. The **IMP project team** worked in conjunction with the Long Valley Management Plan team, conducted stakeholder meetings, consulted with subject-matter experts, and did research to collect information needed to prepare this master plan. **The foundation of the IMP is a detailed summary of the park's natural, cultural, aesthetic, and recreational resources and newly developed interpretive mission and vision statements.** The IMP also evaluates current staffing, facilities and interpretive opportunities. A visi-

tor analysis includes a profile of who visits and an assessment of visitor expectations, interests, and preferences.

The plan identified seven broad interpretive program improvement goals, along with general guidelines for directing the improvement effort. In addition, specific objectives and strategies for accomplishing the goals were developed. Together, these elements...**provide the road map that is intended to guide the overall effort to improve interpretation in Mount San Jacinto State Park and Wilderness over the next decade and beyond.**

The final major element of the

IMP is an **Interpretation Action Plan** that presents specific tasks to guide park staff in both daily and multi-year interpretive program improvements. The Action Plan will be updated on a regular basis in order to align with changing conditions and trends.

Together, these steps integrate management's interpretive goals and the interests of park visitors to establish the future direction of interpretive programs in Mount San Jacinto State Park and Wilderness..

(The complete IMP should be available for view on the website soon.)



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www.msjnha.org

Keeping the Wild in Wilderness

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Palm Springs, CA 92262-6974

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(or drop in the bank at the VC)