



The Trail Companion

Spring 2004

Trail Center finishes repairs on the Gray Whale Cove Trail

By *Tim Oren*

Twenty volunteers put in a great day's work on March 20, 2004 on the Gray Whale Cove trail. We fixed up the 'great rut' from the junction of the use trail to the knoll southward, by cutting four of the largest drains the TC has ever built, through berms up to four feet thick, in some places chipping out decomposed granite.

The spoil from the cuts went to fill in the worst of the ankle-twisting ruts. (Now we wish for a couple of slow soaking rains to settle this fill.) We also did reroutes at the junctions with both the knoll use trail and the connector trail to Old Pedro road, cutting new trail and recycling the old rutted paths as a drainage structure in each case.

Three more drains were installed north of the use trail intersection, up to the overlook bench. So, this most heavily used section of Gray Whale has been greatly improved in the last two builds. Finally, we were able to send crews all the way to the north end of the trail to clean out, and in some cases improve, the drains we installed at this time last year.

The crew lucked out with perfect

weather for trail building, starting with a bright, sunny morning, then cooled down by an incoming fog as the day heated up. With this build, all of the really bad spots on Gray Whale have been hit at least once. This trail is now ready for safe use by hikers looking for beautiful wildflowers and ocean views.

Special thanks to all the volunteers who worked so hard on this project: David Alderman, Erin Aubert, Julie Ceballos, Rosabel Chang, Steven Chang, Dave Croker, Robert Fraser, Robert Grow, Bill Henzel, Aparna Kapur, Rajesh Krishnan, Hank Magnuski, Todd McGee, Jennie Mollica, David Nelson, Pat Oren, Tim Oren, Dave Taylor, Chris Thollaug, Jennifer Wong, Dawn Woo, and Grace Woo.



Dave Taylor and Jennie Mollica showing off their new drain. Photo by Hank Magnuski.

Inside this issue:

San Mateo Coastside Protection Program — page 2

More Trail Center Project Reports — pages 3, 4, 5

Balancing Recreation and Restoration in the Stanford Foothills — p. 6

Biking at Nisene Marks — page 5

A Summer of Trail Work — page 7

The Trail Center

The Trail Center is a non-profit volunteer organization formed in 1983 to provide and promote quality non-motorized trail opportunities for all people in San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Alameda and San Francisco counties. The Trail Center works with government agencies, outdoor enthusiasts and other interested parties to create and manage an interconnected network of trails for the five-county region. The Trail Center publishes *The Trail Companion* and organizes trail building, repair and mapping projects.

The Board of Directors meets every month on the second Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the Peninsula Conservation Center.

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San Mateo Coastside Protection Program gains momentum

By Joe Sexton

On February 11, 2004, the Santa Clara County Local Agency Formation (LAFCo), an agency charged with tasks associated with land use, endorsed the *Coastside Protection Program (CPP)*, an effort to preserve San Mateo County coastline as permanent open space. Their approval of the *CPP* brings the program one step closer to achieving its goal of ensuring that within the next 15 years, 11,800 acres of land on the peninsula will forever be preserved for the benefit of agriculturalists, wildlife, and outdoor enthusiasts.

The *CPP* was proposed by Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MROSD), a land conservation entity that encompasses and has preserved 50,000 acres of Bay Area land as open space. They see LAFCo's support of the *Coastside Protection Program* as a great first step – one that they hope will ultimately lead to the purchase and conservation of 140,000 acres of coastline when the project is complete.

MROSD hopes that the *Coastside Protection Program* will benefit all stewards of peninsula land. Protection of the land will preserve the rural quality and functionality of the coastline. According to MROSD, the preserved land will be a boon for farmers in that the encroachment of developers will not threaten their coastal farmland. MROSD plans to work with agricultural trusts to ensure that farming on

the coastline remains an economically feasible endeavor, both for the benefit of farmers themselves and peninsula residents who wish to prevent developers from acquiring more land.

Another *CPP* goal is to make the peninsula more accessible to outdoor enthusiasts. MROSD currently provides over 220 miles of trails in its current landholding and hopes to open previously restricted land on the coastline to public access. The *CPP* will also provide for a full ranger staff trained in such areas as wildfire suppression techniques and first-aid. They claim that the *CPP* will bring about better land stewardship and management that will benefit wildlife, the peninsula's diverse ecosystem, and residents, who will gain greater security and protection from landslides, wildfires, and other natural disasters that have caused serious damage to communities in the past.

Although the *CPP* needs only the approval of the San Mateo County LAFCo to be implemented, it has not been met with universal support. The area proposed for preservation does in fact encompass some populated areas. Residents of this area are concerned that MROSD will employ the power of eminent domain in acquiring the coastal land. Many fear that MROSD will seize their property without their consent or proper compensation in order to achieve its goal.

Ted J. Hannig, a resident of Woodside, CA offers his concern, saying, "But what of MROSD desire to annex jurisdiction over our lands? Their offer of 'protection' is reminiscent of the British offer of 'protection' (continued on next page)

CPP (cont.)

even if they were unwelcome” (Hannig). Many share Hannig’s qualms with the proposal, but MSORD hopes to lay all of the fears of peninsula residents to rest. The CPP plans to employ a “Willing Sellers Ordinance,” which means that MSORD will only purchase land from people who sell their property willingly.

Supporters of the CPP are optimistic that it will pass the San Mateo County LAFCo’s vote that peninsula residents will start reaping the benefits of the program very soon. The President of MROSD, Mary Davey, hopes to see the CPP “preserve open space, protect farmland, and save the unique scenic beauty of the coast.” She concludes by saying, “The *Coastside Protection Program* is the best way to defend this region against inappropriate development and urban sprawl.”

See <http://openspace.org/coastside/map.htm> for a map of the affected area.

Joe Sexton is currently a freshman participating in the Community Writing Program at Stanford University. He is originally from Baltimore, Maryland.

***Join the Trail Center
and help build and
maintain Bay Area
Trails!
Check out
www.trailcenter.org
for more information.***

TC tackles erosion at Mc Nee Ranch



Volunteers digging new trail. Photo by Hank Magnuski.

By Hank Magnuski

On a day that started with rain showers at home and cloudy weather on the coast, nine Trail Center members and volunteers showed up at McNee Ranch State Park near Pacifica for a makeup trail build that got rained out in December.

Fortunately, the weather cleared and Tim Oren, Project Supervisor, decided that soil conditions were just right to tackle the connector trail linking the Martini Creek trailhead with the southern end of the Gray Whale Cove Trail.

This trail suffers from severe erosion, and multiple competing trails had developed, making the path up the hill look like a three-lane highway instead of a regular hiking trail. Our mission was to expand and grade the main trail, and to block use of the alternate trails. Starting at the top we picked the best route and began

grading and ditching the path. Figuring out what was causing the erosion took some time, and we eventually ended up building an inside runoff ditch on the bottom two-thirds of the trail.

Our work was interrupted mid-day by a dramatic cliff-side rescue of a fallen hiker who tumbled onto the rocks near Devil’s Slide. The fire and rescue teams closed Highway 101 for about an hour while they pulled the person from his precarious perch. The afternoon turned warm and sunny and we completed work not only on the connector trail, but also some cleanup and repairs on the path to the trailhead entrance.

Hikers kept coming by our work area all day long. We know this will be a popular route and worth the effort to repair. In all, 460 feet of new or upgraded trail was completed, 15 new drain dips installed, another 12 drain dips were cleaned or restored, and the Trail Center logged another 45 hours of community service.

Finding enlightenment on the Audubon Trail: One volunteer's insightful observations

By Ed Alderman

There's always something new to learn when volunteering for Trail Work. I thought it would be all grunt work to volunteer for a trail maintenance work party, but there's so much more than that. The weekend of January 10, 2004, at Pescadero State Beach, I saw and learned the following while working on the Audubon Trail:

1. Trails built in marshy locations are wet, slippery and overgrown with appreciative vegetation, the most appreciative of which is the Blackberry bush. One can recognize these shrubs by their thorny leaves, stems, branches and remarkable ability to grab ones clothing as if to say: "I hope you didn't really care for that shirt; it's about to be shredded".

2. Water flows downhill, even on trails clearly signed for pedestrian use. One can tell from gullies, puddles, abrupt dips and mud on one's boots. I certainly learned that a flat trail on a berm is better than a trail winding sideways to the slope.

3. The birds I am most interested in watching e.g. those catching fish, courting, and cackling are the first to fly away. And they didn't seem to consider my lunch yogurt as attractive feed.

4. When will I remember to bring along a piece of plastic to sit on during lunch, rather than getting my butt sodden and muddy?

5. When one does a good deed, it's nice to be recognized. Unfortunately, most trail hikers have their eyes glued



*Pescadero Marsh with a shot to the NW with US1 on the far left.
Photo by Hank Magnuski*

on the path in front of them and didn't spot our work crew. Or more likely, we were sufficiently sweaty and grimy to admit to eye contact.

6. Trail building is a great date outing. Talking is unnecessary if one is to hear the quiet, refreshing sounds of surf breaking on the rocks, fish jumping, birds singing, and helicopters chopping overhead patrolling the Pescadero Beaches.

7. I am ecologically inclined, however there are certain species that the world and I in particular, would be better off without, namely PO or Poison Oak for the uninitiated. They always say PO leaf is easily recognized by its irregular seven to ten scalloped edges and its very unique shrubby or vine-like or bushy or

scrubby or hedge-like non-descript appearance. At this time of year the absence of leaves, makes identification of barren PO twigs and branches a worthy challenge. A trail builder either gets it right or wrong; and knows within 24-48 hours whether they passed or failed.

8. The surprise at the end of a day of hard work is a choice of Frito-Lays finest, Mothers cookies and carbonated mineral enhanced aluminum packaged flavored waters. However, the comradie and opportunity to do something good for ones own health as well as enhancing local recreational opportunities makes it a worthwhile effort.

See you at the next project, where I'm sure there will be more to learn.

TC continues much needed work at Mount Sutro

By Hank Magnuski

On the morning of February 7th, 2004, a group of six hard-core members of the trail center, including our President Emeritus Geoffrey Skinner, met at the Mt. Sutro site in San Francisco to continue work rebuilding the trail system there.

We worked on three different sections of trail during the day. First, we extended our brushing and clearing of the North Ridge Trail to the saddle point where the trail may be rerouted to accommodate the steep descent down the hill to the perimeter of the park.

A series of switchbacks needed to be finalized to complete this segment of the trail. Next we concentrated our attention on a reroute of the trail which was started during crew leader training day. This section was completed and you no longer have to walk in the drainage ditch to navigate this segment of the trail.

Finally, we started brushing and clearing the beginning of the "Mystery Trail" which leads to the reroute segment. The Trail Center will work with UCSF management to decide on the final path for connection of this trail to the nearby roadway. We had fantastic weather, and got a lot done. We'll be back.

Biking in Nisene Marks

By Carlos Hernandez

A cool Saturday morning in Santa Cruz gives way to a pleasant bike ride down Soquel drive. The ride takes me to a hill, leading to a forest trail. Finally, having reached the beginning of the trail, the reason for the trek is in front of me.

Pedaling madly, my heart pumping, I take my bike from one perilous trail to another with the sun piercing through the canopy of the forest hitting my face. It seems that all my being is in harmony as my bike becomes an extension of me. Such is bicyclists' excitement experienced through the wild trails of Nisene Marks State Park.

Located in Aptos, and a part of the Santa Cruz Mountains, Nisene Marks is the largest state park in California, spanning over 10,000 acres of red-wood forest. Many of the park's trails are open to cyclists, but not all. Some trails are restricted for the exclusive use of hikers. In the past, problems have arisen because cyclists use the trails that are intended for hikers use.

Three years ago, a document was developed for the park's management, trail system, and future developments called the Nisene Marks State Park General Plan. This proposal was approved on August 22 of 2003 in San Jose by a unanimous vote of the California State Parks Commission.

In this plan, which has not yet been implemented, more trails are designated multi-use. This decision has not gone over well with the hikers and runners of the area.

Visitors on foot say that the use of bikes on this property violates the deed restrictions imposed by the Marks family, the family that donated the parks land in 1963. The Santa Cruz chapter of the Sierra Club filed a lawsuit against the state, demanding revision of the plan because the restriction in the deed is dishonored by cyclists and the state did not conduct enough research with the plan to determine if its effects would damage the environment.

The lawsuit is still pending, so its ramifications have not been felt. The visitors, 88% of whom come from Santa Cruz County, are split between their support or opposition to the plan. They see more trails used as a positive change, but not the development of new facilities.

A visitors' center with parking lot and new all-weather bridge are some of the most significant developments planned. Over the next twenty years, this General Plan will be the rulebook for the park.

Even if we don't live in the area, this is an issue that concerns us all because it is the type of plan used in other state parks. Also, by permitting developments harmful to the environment, it will set a precedent for future state park plans. For developments in the Forest of Nisene Marks General Plan see the California State Parks website at: www.parks.ca.gov/

Carlos Hernandez is a freshman at Stanford University. He wrote this piece as part of the Community Writing Program.

Special Note on Pescadero Beach

The Pescadero rangers were so appreciative of our work that TC has a standing invitation to arrange a Sunday time when David Augustine will provide a guided tour of the wildlife, waterfowl and vegetation of the area. Please contact us at info@trailcenter.org if you're interested

Join us at our next work day at Pescadero - July 10, 2004.

Balancing habitat restoration and recreation in Stanford's foothills

By *Trinidad Solis*

My first visit to Stanford's foothills, which I later was informed are known as "The Dish," was an awesome experience. I was breath-taken by the area's extensive trail system and by its wonderful view of the surrounding communities. These characteristics enabled me to grasp the idea that there are about 300,000 annual visitors who enjoy walking or running on the Dish's trails. Before visiting the foothills, this number seemed like an exaggeration to me; perhaps it is because I come from a small town of 20,000 people.

During my visit, one thing that quickly caught my attention were several bright blue tarps, which seemed randomly placed throughout the hills. The signs posted near the tarps, though smeared by rain, eased my confusion. It turns out that researchers from Stanford's Center for Conservation Biology spread these tarps on the foothills in an attempt to find inexpensive ways to safely remove exotic weeds from the area. In doing this, researchers will be able to restore the region's native grasslands.

Tarps are placed on the foothills during the early growing season because exotics, like black mustard (a weed from Europe) thrive during this period. However, before researchers spread the tarps over an area, they first mow the plot of land and then they hand-seed the region with native plant seeds such as those of the purple needlegrass. Small scale experiments showed that tarps were effective in reducing the growth of exotic grasses.

These results prompted researchers to experiment on a larger scale with tarps that covered up to a 30-

meter-by-30-meter area. Doing restoration on this scale is more effective than attempting to plant native grasslands on the hillside all at once.

I had a difficult time understanding the importance of restoring the native grasses of the area. I also questioned whether researcher's restoration efforts were aimed at simply making the foothills' aesthetically pleasing. I soon found answers to my questions.

Restoring the native grasslands actually helps support the animals and plants of the region. Researchers are now spotting more wildlife, such as redwing blackbirds, foxes, and moles because of their restoration projects. The prospect of having a high biodiversity among the wildlife in the foothills is gradually becoming a reality.

However, restoration comes with a price. For example, the hours of visitor access to the Dish area have been reduced in order to protect the native grasslands. Some residents fear that this restriction will eventually culminate to Stanford's closing of the foothills to the general public.

University officials are educating the public about their restoration efforts, yet some people remain unconvinced by their explanations.

Sean Anderson, a postdoctoral fellow at the Center for Conservation Biology mentions how the University's restoration efforts are wrongly portrayed by groups of people who fear that the University will soon construct on the foothills. He writes, "These same groups have, time and again been wholly wrong about the plans and desires of the University and almost entirely act from selfish motivations (i.e. issues surrounding trails, issues

surrounding public access, etc.) rather than altruistic or truly environmental motivations. Many (although not all) of these peoples efforts have led to a decreased environmental quality."

By learning about the University's restoration efforts, I am no longer suspicious of the blue tarps. In fact, experiencing the beauty of the Dish area has allowed me to understand the importance of finding a balance between restoration and recreation. Such a compromise is beneficial for all: the athletes that enjoy running on the foothill's trails, the families who come to enjoy the view of the surrounding communities, and of course, the Dish's precious wildlife.

Trinidad Solis is currently a freshman at Stanford University. She contributed this article as part of a Community Writing Program.

***Be amazed!
Join us at our
next work days at
Mount Sutro on
May 15 and
June 5. Come
see this
surprisingly
natural park
located in the
heart of San
Francisco.***

Perspective on trail building: a summer in Mesa Verde Nat'l Park

By Matt Percy

My first experience with trail repair came out of necessity: I needed a summer job before beginning my first year at Stanford. I heard about an opening on a trail maintenance crew at Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado. While at first I was reluctant to wake up at 5:30 am and make a 45-minute commute everyday, I decided to give it a shot.

On my first day of work, I drove up the mountain wearing my new workpants and a nervous expression. My first task was to load buckets of sealer that we were going to apply to some freshly patched asphalt trails. All of the other workers easily lifted the buckets, but I was shocked at how heavy they were! I struggled to load them in a trailer and made a few more trips, each time feeling as though I couldn't make another. I had some serious doubts about the job at this

point, but I hopped in a truck and we headed to the worksite.

Once I got out into the park, things improved. I made a few mistakes the first day, but I learned from them and made fewer every day. As the days went by I began to enjoy the work more and more. Everyone on the crew shared a love of the outdoors. I'll never forget the insightful conversations we shared while fixing trails. I also got to chat with passing tourists from all around the world. These experiences alone were enough to make that 5:30 wakeup call worthwhile, and I began to really enjoy trail repair.

Eventually tourists, trail guides, and rangers all began to compliment us and thank us for the job we had done. It felt good to know that people actually appreciated our work. As an added bonus, I got stronger. I could eventually carry those heavy buckets with no trouble at all. Despite my original wariness, my summer as a trail

maintenance worker was a wonderful experience, and I look forward to doing it again next year.

When you fix a trail or build a new one, you give people a chance to see nature in a way that they couldn't have done without your help. Whether it is adding cold patch to an asphalt trail in a park, or simply fixing up a dirt path that runs alongside a creek near your home, trail building is a great way to have fun while benefiting your community. It's also a great excuse to spend a weekend outdoors.

If you ever see anyone fixing up a trail, be sure to stop and tell the person how much you appreciate it. Not only will it make them feel good, but it will also give them an excuse to take a well-deserved break.

Matt Percy is a freshman majoring in Chemistry at Stanford University. He originally hails from Cortez, CO, and brings us this piece as part of a Community Writing Program.

TC's November activities: Crew Leader Training and Annual Meeting/Tool Party



Tim Oren demonstrating proper use of tools at Crew Leader Training on November 15, 2003. Photo by Scott Heeschen.



Volunteers reroofing the tool trailer at the November 22, 2003 tool party. Photo by Scott Heeschen.

Upcoming Events

Trail Repair, Foliage Maintenance, and BBQ - Tony Look Trail, Stevens Creek County Park

April 24, 2004 - Saturday

Trail Repair and Foliage Maintenance - Mt. Sutro Open Space

May 15, 2004 – Saturday

June 5, 2004 – Saturday

Trail Repair - Marsh Trail, Pescadero State Beach

July 10, 2004 – Saturday

For directions and further information, email outreach@trailcenter.org, check www.trailcenter.org or call (650) 968-7065. Not receiving our email newsletter, [Trail Center News & Upcoming Events](#), yet? You're missing out on the most current announcements, news and alerts. Email tcnews@trailcenter.org to sign up today!



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