



2024 Fall MCA Newsletter

TRIBUTE TO RAY AND DOMI SMITH

Long time board member Ray Smith and his wife Domi Smith were honored at this year's annual MCA meeting in May at the Natural History Museum. Dr. Smith, or "The Mayor of Mission Canyon" as we like to call him, has been involved in MCA for decades, and was instrumental in helping get the first Community Wildfire Protection Plan adopted by the Board of Supervisors. He served as President of MCA and pretty much every other position you can think of - from sitting down every month with the current Supervisor to advocate for Mission Canyon to installing and then refilling Mutt Mitts to keep our canyon as beautiful as possible.

The MCA, in partnership with the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden, dedicated a mature Coast Live Oak Tree at the Garden in their honor. If you see Ray and Domi out walking, please say hi and thank them for their dedication to our beloved Mission Canyon community!



From left to right: MCA President Nancy Weiss, Domi Smith, Ray Smith, SB Botanic Garden Executive Director Steve Windhager

TUNNEL TRAIL & MISSION CREEK UPDATE

Tragically, over four years after Southern California Edison severely damaged Tunnel Trail and portions of Mission Creek we are still dealing with the fallout of their negligence.

As we all know, Tunnel Trail has been closed for the past few months so SCE could do habitat restoration work which was required by the SB County District Attorney's office and other regulatory agencies, including removing much of the side cast they had dumped over the side of the trail into the Mission Creek watershed, impacting wildlife native plants and wildlife habitat and trail aesthetics. As they finished this year's work there was a week or so of intermittent helicopter activity between October 7th and 18th to remove debris from a portion of the Creek where work by hand is being done and which is inaccessible to trucks. Seeding and planting native plants will continue after the trail is reopened.

Unfortunately, SCE has recently informed us that they will not be able to finish the work this year because they are not allowed to do work in an actively flowing creek, so they will have to re-close the trail, likely next summer, to finish required work in the creek itself. Your Mission Canyon Association will work with SCE to make sure the trail is not closed any longer than necessary and to ensure the required



Photo courtesy of MCA Board member Hutch Axilrod

work is done to the highest standards.

MCA negotiated community compensation from Edison to make trailhead and Tunnel Road improvements. We are working with both the City and County to implement plans to improve traffic safety for pedestrians, bikers, and cars once the trail reopens. Improvements include evacuation planning with the expected expansion (cont. P. 2) of the turnaround at the trailhead near the City Water tank so that vehicles can turn around without having

TUNNEL TRAIL & MISSION CREEK UPDATE - CONT.

The good news is that the trail should be reopened by mid-November. We all can't wait to enjoy our beautiful trail once again!

to make a three-point turn. This will also create more maneuverability for fire trucks.

In addition, we are working to remove vegetation that may be blocking the line of sight to improve safety for vehicles and pedestrians as well as working with the County to make sure trail users are only parking in designated parking spaces.



UPDATE FROM THE SANTA BARBARA BOTANIC GARDEN

Happy autumn from the Botanic Garden! Our Fall planting season is rapidly approaching along with cooling weather and shorter days. Our Members' sale on Friday, November 8th is currently open for free registrations: Member Exclusive: Fall Planting Kick Off - Santa Barbara Botanic Garden (sbbotanicgarden.org) to book a parking spot and an hour of shopping. We will have plenty of volunteers to help answer gardening questions, and to ensure a smooth check-out process, helping to ferry plants in wagons to vehicles as needed. Our next Senior Free Day is on December 11th. (Free) Reservations are required to ensure we don't overwhelm our parking lot, nor the Garden: Hours & Reservations | - Santa Barbara Botanic Garden (sbbotanicgarden.org).

Also, September was Membership month, and this year we once again partnered with the Museum of Natural History to offer Member reciprocity (their Members get in free to the Garden and vice-versa). This has been a nice way to partner with local cultural attractions to expose people to each other's mission. As always, you can discover more events on our website: www.sbbotanicgarden.org. There's always a lot going on at the Garden! Yoga, tai chi, birding, etc.

Quick update on our newest hiking trail. The Tipton Trail (named in honor of the J.E. and Lillian Tipton Foundation, which provided the funds to purchase the land east of the Pritzlaff Conservation Center) is slated to open to the public on National Hiking Day, Sunday, November 17th. Our new foot bridge across a tributary of Rattlesnake Creek is currently being installed by SAGE Trail Alliance, a non-profit partner that cut-in the trail this summer. This trail is a 1.15-mile out and back, with an average slope of 12.5%, and total elevation gain of 329 feet. At the 873-foot summit, one can take in amazing

KNOW YOUR BOARD

President: Nancy Weiss

Past President: Jason Saltoun-Ebin

Vice President: Hutch Axilrod

Secretary: Darby Feldwinn

Treasurer: Selden Edner

Webmaster: Alex Feldwinn

Hugh Twibel: Chair Architectural Review Committee

Kevin Snow: Chair, Land Use Committee

Jason Jewell: Chair, Mission Cyn

Beautification Committee

Fire Safety Committee: Ray Smith and Selden Edner

If you are interested in serving on a Committee or joining the Board we would love to talk to you! Emails are best: Webmaster@missioncanyon.org

views of the northern Channel Islands, places where the Garden has done important conservation work for several decades, preserving some of California's rarest and most fantastic plants. We are excited to launch this trail which will bring the Garden's trail network up past 5 miles, in addition to our beautiful floral displays organized into habitat Sections across our 78 acres



Bridge stringers getting put into place this past week. Planking is currently being installed and additional trail maintenance and tree work will begin shortly thereafter. The Garden is turning 100 in March 2026! We will plan on announcing this more as the date gets closer, and will soon be working with a consultant on our Centennial campaign, which will raise funds for Garden improvements, offsite programming and increased endowment. We are grateful for neighbor support and appreciation.

SANTA BARBARA FIRE SAFE COUNCIL AND BRUSH CHIPPING

The Santa Barbara County Firesafe Council is a non-profit community benefit corporation that was founded in the 1990s after the Painted Cave Fire with the goal of bringing fire agency leaders and fire-vulnerable community leaders together to facilitate cooperative action to reduce the dangers of wildfire and increase community resilience in fire situations. Ray Smith was an early Mission Canyon representative on the Firesafe Council Board and Selden Edner is currently in that spot.

The Firesafe Council has been successful in getting grant awards and hiring full-time staff to accomplish projects and make progress in some of the following areas:

1. Forming, leading, and maintaining Firewise groups throughout the county (19 and counting)
2. Offering free home fire vulnerability assessments with a comprehensive report that gives useful tips to achieve defensible space and harden your home
3. Education programs
4. Free chipping and tag and trim programs
5. Herbivore fuel reduction (contracted sheep and goat grazing to thin fuels)

The chipping, tag and trim, and herbivory grazing programs are designed to improve defensible space for individual properties, clear roads of overhanging trees for evacuation safety,

FIREWISE USA COMMUNITY UPDATE

The Mission Canyon Association is so pleased to announce that there are now four communities within Mission Canyon that have enrolled in the national Firewise USA program that is locally run by the Santa Barbara Firesafe Council. The four communities include the top of Mission Canyon Road, Montrose Place, Arriba Way and parts of Upper Tunnel Road. Some participants have already been able to receive 5-10% discounts from their home insurance carrier. More importantly, the Mission Canyon Association strongly believes that participation in the Firewise Community effort will help keep Mission Canyon safer when we have the next fire. Programs like our annual chipping program can also be counted toward the required maintenance hours to maintain the Firewise USA status. Please visit the Santa Barbara Country Fire Safe Council website for more info: <https://sbfiresafecouncil.org/firewise/> or contact Kate Furlong at (805) 220-9037 ext. 703.

and create larger reduced-fuel buffers. This summer a herd of herbivore program goats was put to work thinning brush across a 250-foot wide swath at the top of Mission Canyon - an important measure to reduce the chances of fire entering our community.

The annual free chipping program is probably the most familiar benefit of the Firesafe Council. With funding from a California State Cal-Fire grant, local tree professionals worked Mission Canyon roads and chipped and removed over 125 tons of brush this year. An additional 88 tons of brush cuttings and fibrous material were removed in the roll-off bins. Grant funds have also been made available for additional tag and trim programs along narrow

lanes /
streets in
Mission
Canyon.



More of this work is currently scheduled for the week of October 14th along Tunnel Rd, Mission Canyon Rd, Las Canoas Rd, Cheltenham Rd, Glen Albyn Rd, Williams Way and Montrose Place. Please reach out to Jesse Tobin at the Fire Safe Council at 805-259-9976 or email her at jtobin@sbfiresafecouncil.org if you have any questions.

CENTRAL COAST ENERGY (3CE) UPDATE

Have you been waiting for the right time to purchase a backup battery for your home? Now just might be the time thanks to significant rebates from Central Coast Community Energy providing over \$7,000 and as much as \$13,800 for home backup batteries for qualified purchasers. These rebates are now available in addition to the rebates for electric vehicle purchases, water pumps and work toward electrifying your home. Take advantage of these while they last. Please visit the Central Coast Community Energy website, w.3cenergy.org, for more information.

MISSION CANYON WATERSHED HEALTH AND FIRE SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS



Brian Trautwein, a long-time analyst at Santa Barbara's Environmental Defense Center, presented his extensive report on the Mission Creek Watershed Health and Fire Safety Recommendations at this year's MCA annual meeting.

The report "identifies recommendations to local, state, and federal agencies, land managers, landowners, and nonprofit organizations regarding actions to reduce the growing wildfire threats caused by climate change and other human activities while enhancing the Mission Creek Watershed and its associated riparian woodlands and fish and wildlife habitats located in the City of Santa Barbara and unincorporated portions of Santa Barbara County."

The EDC's three main key findings include:

1. Measures to minimize the threat of fires, floods, and debris flows to public safety and private property by replacing invasive, flammable, nonnative plant species with native plants;
2. Reducing the threat of fire and impacts to the Watershed and riparian forests by protecting, respecting

and uplifting people experiencing homelessness; and

3. Protecting and restoring the natural hydrology of Mission Creek, the Watershed, and groundwater basins can lessen fire hazards and enhance Mission Creek, its tributaries, riparian and oak forests, and fish and wildlife. The Reports seven main recommendations include: (1) Replacing invasive flammable nonnative plants with native plants; (2) Reduce water extractions and increase groundwater recharge and infiltration; (3) Restore degraded habitats and protect natural habitats; (4) Transition unhoused community members to permanent housing; (5) Increase funding, equipment, and staff for defensible space inspections and wildfire response; (6) Acquire land and conservation easements in Wildland-Urban Interfaces and wildlands; and (7) Downzone properties in Wildland-Urban Interfaces and wildlands.

The full report can be found online at the EDC website, <https://www.environmentaldefensecenter.org> on the Watershed Preservation and Restoration page. And if you have any questions about invasive species or are just looking for suggestions of native plants our own Santa Barbara Botanic Garden has a beautiful nursery full of native plants for sale.

