



Black Cone Trail Update

VWA Supports Sierra Trail Shots

This past May, the VWA funded Sierra Trail Shots trail crew, from the Sierra National Forest, horse packed into Black Cone Camp and spent five days re-grading the Black Cone Trail from the top of the dozer cut above Strawberry Valley to just below White Cone Spring, a distance of about three miles. This work was made financially possible by the generous contributions of VWA members and supporters. The work was made physically possible by the commitment and hard work contributed by scores of VWA, Sierra Club and other volunteer trail workers who have joined together to re-establish the Black Cone Trail in the heart of the Ventana Wilderness. These trail volunteers have cleared the brush on the BCT to make it passable following the 1999 Kirk Fire and

have also cleared the Marble Cone Trail from the Arroyo Seco to Strawberry Valley to allow pack stock access to support the BCT trail work.

Just this past spring alone, VWA members, led by Boon Hughey, made five trips into the BCT and contributed 284 hours working on the trail (work hours do not include the hike into or out of the project area or other activities). Additionally this past spring, VWA member and Sierra Club veteran, Mark Maslow, led his second Sierra Club National Service trip to the BCT that resulted in 240 hours of work on the trail. And finally, the Forest Service's Sierra Trail Shots spent 225 hours re-grading the tread. Since the spring of 2000, when we first began to work on the BCT,

volunteers and the Forest Service crew have contributed a grand total of 1,312 hours of work re-establishing this important and spectacular trail.

While we can all be proud of the VWA success in opening and re-establishing the Black Cone Trail to backpackers and equestrians, there is still much work to do. As with all Ventana trails, regular brush maintenance will be an on going effort. We also plan to raise another \$8-10,000 to be used to hire a second Forest Service trail crew next year to continue the regarding north to the saddle above Venturi Camp. This would complete the needed re-grading work and help insure that volunteers can keep the trail open in the future. 🏔️

Bovines Banished from PV Flats

Thanks to determination of VWA Committee

Once again, the eternal vigilance and quick action of the VWA Public Lands Grazing Committee has resulted in an out-of-control commercial cattle herd being sent "back to the barn."

40 cow/calf pairs (80 animals) were turned out on the pastures of Pacific Valley west of Highway 1 on 1-April-2003, with USFS permission to remain until the end of August. Explicit in the permission was the rancher's responsibility to fix fence as necessary to make certain that the cattle cannot access Prewitt Creek (a key stream for the endangered steelhead trout) and to take steps to draw the cattle away from documented habitat for the

endangered Smith's blue butterfly in the pasture by strategically placing salt blocks.

On June 19, a member of the VWA Grazing Committee stopped by to routinely monitor the situation and found complete mayhem - all the water troughs in the pasture were empty, the dilapidated exclosure fence meant to keep cows out of Prewitt Creek had never been repaired and the cattle had blown through it and down to the creek, and there was not a single block of salt to be found anywhere in the pasture. Smith's blue butterfly host plants, seacliff buckwheat, were being trampled and literally shit upon by the cows, and springs and seeps had been

churned up to a muddy mess.

The situation was immediately brought to the attention of the District Ranger, and within a few days the cattle were moved into a more secure pasture before being completely removed from Forest lands in early July, two months ahead of schedule. Had it not been for the vigilance of the VWA Grazing Committee the situation might never have been noticed, but for the time being the creek is flowing a little clearer and the butterflies are mating unmolested.

To get involved with the VWA Public Lands Grazing Committee please contact Boon Hughey at boon@ventanawild.org. 🏔️

Wilderness Ramblings

As many of you know, the VWA has recently changed our membership email listserv to a more reliable system. This is a big improvement and I want to thank Gordon Johnson for spearheading this change. All VWA members should be on this listserv for this is the only way to keep current on all VWA activities. Contrary to the past, this listserv has only moderate traffic and is strictly limited to information relevant to the VWA area of influence and our mission. There is no spam, no off-topic correspondence. If you are not on this list, please contact Gordon, Gordon@ventanawild.org, to sign up.

VWA member Max Ritchie has volunteered to be the new VWA membership coordinator. Max is now handling the VWA database and is sending out all renewals and the T-shirts. Thanks Max! Max is an Institutional Research Analyst in the Planning and Budget Department at UC Santa Cruz. He spent three weeks this summer backpacking in the Alaskan wilderness while taking an outdoor educator course conducted by the National Outdoor Leadership School.

The VWA was represented at the recent dedication of the

Brazil Ranch by the Trust for Public Land and the USFS. Nikki Nedeff, Kevin Dummer, Kate Cunningham and I attended as VWA representatives and were able to hike a lot of the ranch and schmooze with a large group of people involved in land conservation in the Santa Lucias. Nikki and I also attended the Coastal Zone Forum meeting recently at Palo Corona Ranch as VWA representatives.

VWA founding director and former president Steve Chambers informed me this spring that he wished to step down from the board. Steve will be missed on the board for he has given a great deal to the VWA since its inception. He will continue to act on a project-by-project basis as is necessary to assist the VWA in our ongoing activities. At our annual gathering at Jacks Peak I presented a copy of the new book on the Arroyo Seco River to Steve as a small token of our appreciation for his tireless work over the years. Thanks Steve!

Do you have a VWA T-shirt yet? If not, you had better get one. They are not for sale but are available to all VWA supporters at the \$50 level and above. Contact the VWA office for details, max@ventanawild.org .

This newsletter has been designed and produced by new volunteer Chad Jordahl, brother of VWA board member Kelsey Jordahl, who is telecommuting for us from Chicago. Welcome aboard Chad, and thanks! You get the remote volunteer of the year award.

Thanks to all of you for your continued loyal support of the VWA. We have accomplished a lot in a short time and we are well respected in our field because of our consistent performance and your consistent support. There is a lot of work going on just now so keep in touch for the latest in our wilderness preservation efforts to come....Jon Libby, President of the Board, VWA (jon@ventanawild.org) 🏔️

Ventana Wilderness Alliance

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The Ventana Wilderness Alliance is an IRS 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization. Dues and donations are tax deductible.

Ventana Wild Rivers

The VWA has kicked off the Ventana Wild Rivers Campaign to seek protection of our local wild rivers by advocating for their inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Local rivers to be considered for this campaign are those segments of the following rivers that are within the Monterey Ranger District of the Los Padres National Forest: Arroyo Seco River, Tassajara Creek, San Antonio River, Nacimiento River,

Carmel River (above Los Padres reservoir), Little Sur River, Willow creek (coastal) and San Carpoforo Creek. At present, the only river in the region that has been added to the Wild and Scenic Rivers System is the Big Sur River, which is designated as a Wild River from the national forest boundary to its headwaters. If you would like to learn more about the Ventana Wild Rivers Campaign or to volunteer, contact Tom Hopkins at tom@ventanawild.org. 🏔️

VWA Supports National Trails Day

Eleven members arrived early at Botchers Gap on June 6 to assess the condition of the trail to Skinner Ridge. This was in concert with other organizations around the country in honor of National Trails Day. The group was blessed with decent weather conditions (warm, not hot).

The Trail is about 3 miles in length and represents a conduit to the Big Pines/Pat Springs back country. Previous assessment noted some downfall and hydro-deterioration of the trail as well as the usual poison oak and blue blossom "jungle."

The group sawed and lopped and pruned up to and somewhat past the Ridge near the Turner Camp cutoff. Several oaks on the trail were removed. As befitting the nature of the Alliance, few complaints were heard or noticed. Work proceeded until mid-afternoon. The members were fortunate to have Pat Bailey, new USFS Wilderness Ranger working alongside. Pat is looking forward to working with the VWA in the future on other projects.

Attendees were Jon Libby, Kate Cunningham, Chris Lorenc, Jack Mckellar, Mike Heard, Kelsey Jordahl, Chantell Royer, Heather Seifert, Sandy James and David Knapp Thanks for your help! 🏔️

Data entry volunteer needed

for VWA's Santa Cruz "office".

Involves a few hours per week, or less, in downtown Santa Cruz .

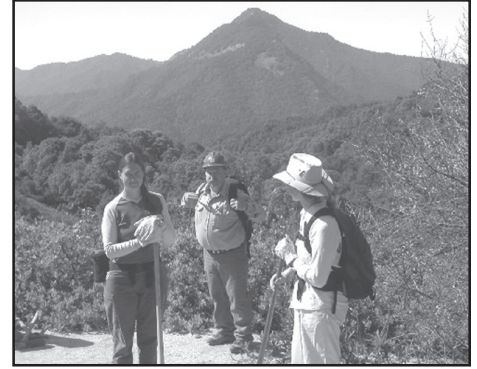
Contact Tom at 429-9010 for details.

Little Sur Trail Improvement

Volunteers Needed

The Little Sur Trail will finally get some much-needed attention as a crew of volunteers and USFS Wilderness Manager Pat Bailey clear encroaching chaparral and grade eroded tread on Saturday September 20 - National Public Lands Day. Anyone is welcome to help out. No trailwork experience is necessary. And remember, VWA trailwork outings are as recreational as they are productive.

We will meet at the Big Sur Ranger Station and carpool to the trailhead on Old Coast Road. Then work our way through redwood, oak and chaparral environs toward Pico Blanco Camp (5.7 miles in and 1300' higher) where volunteers can stay overnight or return. Pico



Chantell Royer, Pat Bailey, Kate Cunningham

Blanco Camp is a large pleasant oak-shaded campsite with a beautiful pool and small waterfall along the river 100 yards below. For more information and meeting time contact Vince - vince@ventanawild.org or 805-237-9708. 🏔️

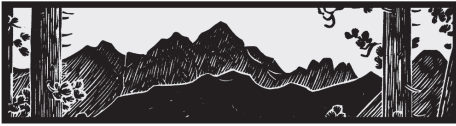
Update On Radio Repeater

Junipero Serra Peak

The Forest Service has begun the scoping process to collect information regarding a proposal to install a radio repeater on the summit of Junipero Serra Peak. Radio reception throughout the Monterey District is a top priority for public safety, fire communications and general Forest Service operations. The 5862-foot Junipero Serra Peak is the tallest mountain in Monterey County and is in newly designated wilderness added to the Ventana as a result of the Big Sur Wilderness and Conservation Act of 2002. The Forest Service will follow the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) protocols for the proposed radio project and has already begun evaluating a variety of alternatives to placing a repeater on Junipero Serra.

NEPA initiates a process that examines and evaluates the potential environmental consequences of proposed activities on federal lands before those

actions are undertaken. During the project analysis phase, the Forest Service has indicated it will be evaluating the possibility of placing a repeater on nearby Pinyon Peak, since Junipero Serra is not only in newly designated wilderness but is also a very significant cultural site for the Salinan Indians. The summit currently supports an abandoned fire lookout structure, a small cabin and various other "wilderness intrusions." No Proposed Action has been issued by the Forest Service and it appears that no proposals will be forwarded until radio reception is fully tested using Pinyon Peak. The VWA is following this issue closely. The VWA has provided scoping comments to the Forest Service and has indicated that the organization would be interested in helping to remove some of the intrusions found on the summit to return the site to its true wilderness character. 🏔️



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Annual VWA Gathering May 31st, 2003

The Ventana Wilderness Alliance Annual Gathering 2003, held at beautiful Jack's Peak Park in the native *Pinus radiata* forests overlooking Monterey bay, was a memorable day of camaraderie, feast, information sharing and friendship. Over 40 VWA members and guests were in attendance, resulting in an incredibly diverse and delicious pot-luck smorgasbord as well as a collective wealth of Ventana experience, all on the table for sharing.

Keynote speaker for the event was VWA member and Big Sur historian Jeff Norman, who captivated and delighted the crowd with detailed histories of both the newly acquired USFS Brazil Ranch property as well as the Willow Creek watershed on the south coast. As is his way, Jeff left no detail untouched upon, and no question unanswered.



Jeff Norman, VWA member
and Big Sur historian

Of course no VWA event can take place without some wandering involved. In this case, those lucky enough to tag along were treated to a super-informative botany walk along the trails of the park led by VWA member and professional botanist Bruce Delgado.

We hope see even more VWA members at next year's Gathering, and are already looking forward to it! 🏕️



Ventana Wilderness Alliance

VWA Workshop

VWA Director Gordon Johnson led a one day Wilderness Stewardship Workshop in July to ten VWA members. This was the first in a series of workshops which Gordon has developed to present to VWA members and others. The workshop covered the history of the wilderness movement in the United States, wilderness stewardship, Leave No Trace practices, wilderness ethics, managing wilderness campsite impact and low impact trail maintenance. The workshop will be followed up with a weekend trip to practice wilderness stewardship in the field. Thanks to the Elkhorn Native Plant Nursery of Moss Landing for donating the use of their ranch house for this workshop. For more information contact Gordon at gordon@ventanawild.org.