

Mt. San Jacinto Natural History Association

A Non-Profit Corporation Serving Mt. San Jacinto State Park and Wilderness since 1979



Issue 29, Number 1

September 2009

Upcoming Events:

- Saturday Sept. 5th
Family Days in Long Valley
- Sept. 12-25th Tram closed for annual maintenance
- Sunday, Sept. 20th
VIP Appreciation Dinner
- Sunday, Oct. 4th
NHA Board Meeting in Valley Station
- Saturday, Oct. 24th
Fall Training Day

Inside this issue:

President's Message	2
PEAKS is online	3
Rare Frog Found	3
Ranger Aitchison	4
Treasurer's Report	4
Meet Ranger Bart	4
NHA Annual Meeting	5

State Budget Cuts Funding to Parks by \$14.2 million

On July 24th, the California Legislature passed the fiscal year 2009-2010 budget. This budget reduced the general fund allocation to state parks by \$8 million. However, when Gov. Schwarzenegger signed the budget on July 29th, he used his blue pencil veto to cut an additional \$6.2 million from parks. The resulting \$14.2 million decrease in the allocation to the state parks is expected to result in more than 100 park closings. The California Department of Parks and Recreation is expected to make an announcement in mid-September about the park closings. Mount San Jacinto State Park is located in the Inland Empire region. The Regional Director has submitted a plan to Sacramento which calls for all the parks in the region to remain open. There will be shortened

hours at some parks and reduced services at all. The plan has not yet been approved in Sacramento.

Although no official announcements have been made, the NHA board does not anticipate the closing of Mount San Jacinto State Park because of the large number of visitors it receives and because it is a wilderness park. It would be difficult to close the entire wilderness area. Any hikers in the area would be in grave danger without a staff of rangers on duty at the park.

As part of the overall plan the overnight camping fees on the Idyllwild side of the park have already been increased by \$5 per night. Also, the park will be initiating a fee for wilderness camping of \$5 per person. This fee will be based on the number

of people camping and cover all the nights of the permit. The day use permit (hiking) will remain free.

The California State Parks Foundation has been lobbying to keep parks open. They have organized a campaign



called "SOS—Save our State Parks." They have been telling people to contact their representatives to urge them to keep the state parks open. You can find out more information about how to support the campaign at their website: www.savestateparks.org

President's Message



Iona Scapple

“Those that do volunteer, for the most part, enjoy meeting the interesting people who come from all corners of the world. “

By Iona Scapple

Each year more than 75 million people visit our California state parks. Unfortunately, with State budget problems, funding to properly maintain the parks is insufficient to do the job and therefore some parts of our park system are deteriorating. To help prevent this problem at Mount San Jacinto State Park the Natural History Association and the Volunteers in Park play an important role in providing funding to park rangers for necessary materials and equipment for their jobs. Sources for funding include: the sale of merchandise from our Visitor Center, membership dues, and donations.

This year I have high hopes that we can do even better than last year in increasing membership and improving our income from sales in the Visitor Center. Each member can help in this regard by asking friends and people you meet to consider joining NHA and pointing out the important work we do. Additionally, we very much need more

volunteers to man the Visitor Center. On too many days the VC is closed because we have no volunteers to open it. Those that do volunteer, for the most part, enjoy meeting the interesting people who come from all corners of the world. If you don't volunteer already, please consider it. Call me or Rob Howard to learn all about it.

At our first meeting of 2009 we increased our board membership by two people, and it gives me great pleasure to welcome these two new members who have taken on important new roles for NHA. Kim Clark is chair of the newly created education committee which will focus on introducing children to the park. Russ Andersen wears two hats; he is our web master (see www.msjnha.org) and also maintains the membership database. And I want to give special thanks to our other wonderful board members for their outstanding efforts to date: Vice President, Kurt Leuschner; Treasurer, John Beringer; Secretary, Regina

Landry; and directors; Jim Absher, Marsha Hansen, and Dennis Schirmer.

If you haven't seen the Visitors Center lately come take a look. Mary Wilson is doing a wonderful job as retail committee chairperson and has added a number of new items including books, shirts, refrigerator magnets, etc. Deanna Ryan is in charge of scheduling volunteers to work in the VC and has been busy trying to find volunteers to keep the VC open to sell these items.

On September 20th Volunteers In the Park will be honored with a dinner of appreciation at the Sunset View club house In Sun City, Palm Desert. All VIPs, and guests must sign up for this event on the sign-in book at the Visitor Center by September 12th.

In closing I want to express my gratitude for the many years that Kathleen Herring was responsible for doing an excellent job of editing and publishing PEAKS. And I want to welcome Russ Andersen and thank him for taking over as the temporary editor of PEAKS.

PEAKS is going Electronic

Mt. San Jacinto Natural History Association is entering the 21st century! Last year, we set-up a website to provide visitors with information about the state park and to inform members about the association.

Starting with this issue, we are converting our quarterly newsletter, PEAKS, to an electronic format. For those members with computers, PEAKS will be available

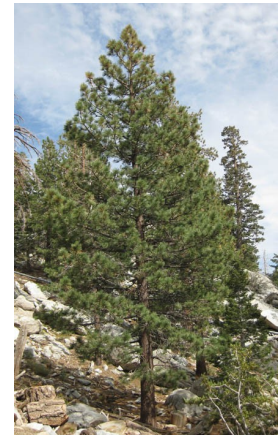
online. When a new issue of PEAKS comes out, an email will be sent to our members having email addresses. A traditional paper copy of PEAKS will be mailed to members who do not have an email address.

There are several advantages to receiving PEAKS over the internet. First, we save paper and that means we save trees. If you would like a hard copy of an article, you will be able to print it from your computer. Second, you will receive PEAKS as soon as it is ready...no waiting for the US mail. Also, it will be available in color so the pictures will be much clearer. The text should be easier to read and, if not, you can enlarge it on your computer. Third, you will be able to access websites mentioned

in the newsletter simply by clicking on the link. Finally, you will be able to access prior issues of PEAKS as well as the current issue.

If you received this newsletter through the mail and would like the electronic version, go to <http://peaks.msjnha.org>. You can add your email address to our mailing list to receive notices of new issues of PEAKS. You can also use that webpage to change your email address. Just input your old email address to delete it and then add your new email address.

We hope you will enjoy the electronic version of PEAKS. But, if you have any problems accessing it online, contact us at postmaster@msjnha.org and we will try to resolve them.



Save a tree—get your PEAKS delivered via email!

New Life Members:

Tracy Albrecht

Kirk Olsen

Karl Keating

Rare Frog found in San Jacinto Mountains

A population of the endangered mountain yellow-legged frog of southern California was recently rediscovered by the US Geological Survey in Tahquitz Creek, which is located on San Jacinto Peak in San Bernardino National Forest. Two weeks later the San Diego Natural History Museum found another

individual upstream in a tributary to Tahquitz Creek. This is the first time in almost 50 years that a mountain yellow-legged frog has been seen in any Coachella Valley drainage.

The San Diego Natural History Museum has been retracing the 1908 expedition to the San Jacinto Mountain region

originally explored by the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology at Berkeley. They want to document the changes in the plant and animal life in the mountains over the past 100 years.

An Associated Press article about the discoveries was printed in the Desert Sun on July 29, 2009.



Photo: Chris Brown, USGS



Garratt Aitchison

Sector Superintendent's Message

By: Garratt Aitchison
Sector Superintendent
Mt. San Jacinto State Park

It comes as no surprise that my message for this edition of PEAKS revolves around the budget cuts to our Department and how it affects Mount San Jacinto State Park and Wilderness. Statewide, each district has been tasked with cutting costs and raising revenue, both of which are necessary to make up for the multi-million dollar cut.

I have worked with our District Superintendent, Ron Krueper, in developing a proposal that would keep our park

open. The sacrifices include leaving full time ranger vacancies unfilled, fewer seasonal staff, shorter camping seasons, and an increase in camping fees. One such fee will be a \$5.00 wilderness camping fee. The mandated three days per month furlough for full-time employees will continue.

Can we continue to provide a quality, safe experience for the visitor? We believe that we can. Certainly services will be reduced. The priority will be to fund health and safety programs. Our wilderness staff, by definition, fall under this

category. It is recognized that their presence saves lives. That being said, we will see a significant reduction in interpretive programs both on and off-site.

Donations and memberships by MSJNHA members will be critical in funding interpretive programs and staffing on both sides of the mountain. With my hat in hand, I will be humbly requesting NHA funding for such programs. Your support is greatly appreciated and graciously accepted. Again, thank you all for supporting Mount San Jacinto State Park.

Treasurer's Report

By John Beringer
Sales have been strong in the last few months and exceed budget through July by \$7,000, and prior year sales for the same period by

\$9,000. Net income through July is \$6,000 over both budget and prior year for the same period.

As the result of your efforts, Mt. San Jacinto

Natural History Association has provided \$8,000 in funding to date, for State Park interpretive projects & programs and interpretive staff. Way to go VIP's!

Meet Ranger Bart



Bart Grant is the new Supervising Ranger for Mt. San Jacinto State Park.



VIP Appreciation Dinner
Sunday, September 20th
 All active volunteers are invited to a free dinner to show our appreciation for all your hard work during the year. The dinner will be at 4 pm at the Palm Room, Sunset View Clubhouse in Sun City Palm Desert. The signup sheet for this event is in the Visitor Center. You are welcome to bring a guest for \$25.

2009 Board of Directors

Iona Scapple
President 2007-2009

Kurt Leuschner
Vice President 2009-2011

Regina Landry
Secretary 2009-2011

John Beringer
Treasurer 2007-2009

Dennis Schirmer
Director 2009-2011

Jim Absher
Director 2007-2009

Marsha Hansen
Membership 2007-2009

Kim Clark
Director 2009-2011

Russ Andersen
Director 2009-2011

NHA Annual Meeting held on August 29th

It was a beautiful day at the top of the mountain compared to the 100+ degrees on the valley floor. The day began with coffee and donuts at the mountain station followed by a hike led by Ellen Absher. The NHA Annual Meeting began after a picnic lunch.

President Iona Scapple welcomed everyone to the meeting. There were reports given by all the committees and discussion about future events.

Jim Absher gave the Treasurer's report because John Beringer could not attend the meeting.

Ranger Bart Grant explained the new policies for tram passes for volunteers. He also discussed some of the changes occurring because of the budget cuts (see article on page 1).

Membership chairperson, Marsha Hanson reported NHA has almost 150 members. We have received over \$1,500 in



Photo by Jim Absher

dues and donations this year. She challenged everyone in the room to bring in 5 new members this year.

The board decided to purchase a new donation box for the museum to replace the one that has been damaged and repaired.

There was a general discussion about the visitor center and how well it has been performing since Mary Wilson took on the job of ordering the inventory.

The meeting was adjourned at about 4 p.m.

Tram Closed
for Annual
Maintenance
Period from
September
12th to 25th.





is the quarterly newsletter of the Mt. San Jacinto Natural History Association. It is sent free of charge to members and other interested parties.

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We're on the Web
www.msjnha.org

Keeping the Wild in Wilderness

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Palm Springs, CA 92262-6974

New Membership Application or Renewal Form

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zipcode _____

Phone No. _____ E-Mail _____

Check the type of membership you would like to join or renew, fill in your mailing information and return this form with your dues. Make your check or money order payable to: MT. SAN JACINTO NHA.

Mail to: Mt. San Jacinto NHA
255 N. El Cielo, Suite 140, #141
Palm Springs, CA 92262

(or drop in the bank at the VC)

Dues Schedule

- Senior \$15
- Student \$15
- Individual \$20
- Family \$25
- Supporting \$30
- Life \$150
- Endowment Fund Contribution \$ _____