

Wilderness Link

San Gorgonio Wilderness Association

August 2020

Volume 8, Issue 3

Calendar of Events

These are the major events tentatively planned for this year. Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, some of these events may not happen. For more information about these and other activities, or to sign up to volunteer go to www.sgwa.org.

August

15 Amphitheater maintenance
22 Amphitheater maintenance
25 Board meeting

September

29 Board meeting

October

TBD Awards event
27 Board meeting

November

17 Board meeting/Officer elections

December

TBD Holiday party

January

TBD Board planning retreat

February

23 Board meeting

March

30 Board meeting/Director elections

Still True to Our Mission

By Bettye Miller

Despite restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Apple Fire, SGWA volunteer activities continue to support our core mission of protecting and preserving the wilderness.

- Trail crews are smaller and are working during the week to minimize contact with hikers, and remain on track to remove approximately the same number of downed trees as in previous years.
- Coverage of trails by volunteers on patrol continues to be good.
- Visitor centers remain closed. But volunteers working remotely still process wilderness permits in a timely manner; some are using the hiatus to develop new interpretive materials; and ranger talks are now online.

See Mission on page 4

Wilderness Day Permits Return

Permits will be required again for day hikes in the San Gorgonio Wilderness beginning Sept. 1, according to an announcement from the San Bernardino National Forest. Permits are still required for overnight hikes. Day permits also will be required in the Cucamonga and San Jacinto wilderness areas.

The move to require day-hike permits will help realign management of the areas with mandates of the Wilderness Act of 1964.

"A key characteristic of wilderness is experiencing solitude," said Jody Noiron, Forest Supervisor. "We have lost that on many of our wilderness trails and sorely need a place for it in busy metropolitan Southern California."

See Day Permits on page 3



Trail crew volunteers Steve Peach and George Crusoe tackle a large tree blocking part of the John's Meadow Trail in June. Photo by John Flippin

Send Us Your Photos

We need your photos for the SGWA yearbook. Because we had no chipmunks this year we're using the pages that would have featured them to include a variety of other photos. Please submit your photos by **Sept. 5** to gorgoniogal@gmail.com.

Here's what we're looking for:

- SGWA volunteers in action.
- Your favorite photos of the San Gorgonio and Cucamonga wilderness areas.
- Photos from yesteryear of yourselves in the wilderness.



Banff Mountain Film Festival Cancelled for 2021

Another casualty of the coronavirus is the annual Banff Mountain Film Festival. The Banff Centre Mountain Film and Book Festival in Alberta, Canada, is going virtual this fall because of COVID-19, and World Tour plans are uncertain. We don't know when it will be safe to host screenings of 600 people or when the Banff Centre will resume its World Tour program, so SGWA will not sponsor the film festival in Redlands in 2021.

Celebrating Wilderness

Gifts to the San Gorgonio Wilderness Association help support our efforts to preserve the wilderness and the forest surrounding it. We are thankful for these supporters whose generosity makes it possible for us to further our mission to serve, protect and educate. This list includes lifetime members and individuals who have contributed to SGWA since December 2018. If you would like to make a gift in memory of a loved one or to honor someone special please contact our office at (909) 382-2906, or visit our website at sgwa.org. Gifts may be mailed to: San Gorgonio Wilderness Association, 34701 Mill Creek Rd., Mentone, CA 92359

Corporate

Adventure 16
Boeing
Edison International
REI
Rose Foundation
San Manuel Band of
Mission Indians

Lifetime

Santa Ana River Cabins
Assn.
Elick Bowler Family
David Brisban
Allan Chang
Bud Cole
Brigitte Denver
Bob Hazelton
David Knapp
Peggy Manning
Bettye Miller
Robert Oetzel
Bob Opperman
Karen Saffle
Dan Scott
Scott Warden
Bryan Walton
Jarome Wilson

President's Summit Team

Linda Griffith
Beth Gunn
Shauna Hoffman
Walt & Suzie Kirkwood

Audrey Scranton
Scott Warden
Ernie Woodhouse

Trail Blazer

Quentin Allison
Tammy Barta
Dulce Becerra
Franklin Becerra
Jodi Biers
Robbie Bishop
Laurie Borer
Patricia Carelli
Sandra Figueroa
Shane Franklin
Daniel Garcia
Terry Grill
Deborah Harrison
Mike Hawker
Carl Imthurn
Paul Lambert
Anna Lee
Justin Palmer
Joyce Palmese
Walker Price
Danielle Purdey
Michael Richman
Summer Rossel
Shelley Russell
Marianne Shuster
Caitlin Smith
Shannon Stratton
Paula Taylor

Robin Thuemler
Juli Unternaehrer
Catherine Walsh
Kathryn Wood
Kenneth Wright

Individual

Adrienne Allegretti
Judy Atkinson
Jonathan Baty
John Berlette
Jeffrey Boehler
Heather Broersma
Mark Campbell
Tricia Carelli
Ashleigh Covarrubias
Daniel Domancich
Juliann Emmons
Margaret Floyd-Evans
Linda Foster
Bertram Froehly
Gwyn Frost
Ewa Graves
Matthew Hall
Kevin Harvey
Viviane Helmig
Shauna Hoffman
Molly Leddy
Joanne Lessard
Carl Lindemer
Elisabeth Longo
Jim Matiko
Hannah McAnespie

Michael McCoy
Shan McNaughton
Sarah Mellon
Kevin Proctor
Penny Ramos
James Rasco
Kerry Rennie
Ralph Riggan
Phil Rosenkrantz
Rachel Sahl
Heath Sawyer
Matthew Schreiner
David Schumacher
Deborah Seibly
Patricia Shearer
Caitlin Smith
Sandra Smith
Frank Sprinkle
Ann-Marie Stauble
Brandon Swanson
Katy Swift
Troy Sykes
Paula Taylor
Amanda Tromblay
Vincent Van Rooijen
Catherine Walsh
Brian Wolk
Kathryn Wood
Caroline Wright



Director's Desk

Val Silva

Just when we thought this season couldn't be any more unusual, another fire is keeping us out of the wilderness. First it was the coronavirus, now the Apple Fire. It looks like the San Gorgonio Wilderness and part of the Pacific Crest Trail will remain closed until Sept. 1. You can get fire updates online at <https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/>.

Due to the wilderness closure, SGWA has been working on the Greyback Amphitheater, sprucing it up for next year's programs. Have you looked at the programs on our website? We have three campfire programs recorded. You could sit outside at night and play them, just like being there (almost).

The coronavirus has created an outdoor blitz, so to speak. People are not going to Disneyland, movies, zoos, cruises (I should quit listing these things so you won't feel bad). I am really excited to see so many people in the wilderness and other recreational areas in the forest – maybe this will be a positive thing that will carry on. There is nothing better for people than being outside in nature!

We are excited that day permits will be required effective 9/1/20 in the San Gorgonio Wilderness; the Cucamonga Wilderness, too. Woohoo! Many people have missed the peace and solitude provided by limiting the numbers of people in the wilderness. The definition and purpose of wilderness is to provide a place for peace and solitude that is "untrammelled (love this word) by man."

San G is an urban wilderness surrounded by millions of people, from San Diego to Los Angeles. Requiring day hike permits helps keep us from being overrun by people and preserves the idea of

wilderness. There are plenty of exciting places people can hike in the forest besides wilderness. Check out sites on the SBNF website and books by John Robinson. Our web store at SGWA.org has some of these books as do REI, Barnes and Noble, even Amazon.

Our patrol and trail crews have been busy and they're eager to get back out there. Trees keep falling, they keep cutting them out of trails. It's job security.

What's next? I'm thinking an alien invasion. They will come in space ships and take us away. Not sure we will notice anything out of the ordinary as things are no longer ordinary. Anyone know about this let me know ahead of time so I can prepare.

Everyone stay safe, stay cool, and get outside.

Day Permits

Continued from page 1

Reinstating permits will also help relieve overcrowding at trailhead parking lots, some of which are at capacity by the early morning hours. The frequency of damage to vegetation by the widening and degradation of trails as hikers pass each other will be reduced, Noiron said.

Up to 144 day hikers will be allowed at each trailhead in the San Gorgonio and Cucamonga wilderness areas each day, according to the Forest Service announcement. Group sizes for all wilderness areas will be capped at 12 people.

Fire Closes Wilderness Until Sept. 1

The San Gorgonio Wilderness remains closed until Sept. 1 due to the Apple Fire. The blaze, which started north of Cherry Valley on July 31, has burned 33,424 acres, 7,249 of them in the San Gorgonio Wilderness.

Teams from the Forest Service, Department of Interior and California are identifying areas that are at greater risk of floods and mudflows. Multiple agencies are involved because the fire burned on state, private, federal and tribal lands. These teams will share data.

The Forest Service Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) team will focus on potential emergency impacts to life and safety on National Forest System land and recommend emergency stabilization measures and actions. BAER teams may consist of scientists and specialists including hydrologists, geologists, soil scientists, road engineers, botanists, biologists, archaeologists and geographic information specialists.

The Wilderness Link is published quarterly by the San Gorgonio Wilderness Association.

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Contributors this issue:

George Crusoe, John Flippin, John Howell, Dee McCoy, Val Silva, and Shawn Sisler

Submit story ideas and photos to sgwa@earthlink.net or gorgoniogal@gmail.com

Mission

Continued from page 1

"We've accomplished a lot," said Val Silva, SGWA executive director. "Our trail crews have been real consistent and work well together. They're getting a lot done. Our trail patrols have been out there keeping the public and the wilderness safe. Everyone has been doing a great job."

Before the San Gorgonio Wilderness was closed when the Apple Fire started on July 31, trail crews had been tackling downed trees almost every week.

"We used to do only one trail crew a month, sometimes two," said Eileen Hay, trail coordinator. "This year we've been going out once a week, or every other week. We've been getting a lot of work done."

COVID-19 safety protocols limit trail crews to six people, and require all volunteers to call in and answer questions related to their health and exposure risks before they leave home. Trail crews practice social distancing on the trail, and wear face masks at worksites. Work is limited to removal of downed trees and tread repair at those sites.

Under the supervision of Eileen and trail bosses Steve Peach and Shawn Sisler, trail crews removed dozens of trees in June and July, and expect to tackle many more when the Apple Fire is contained and it's safe to reopen the wilderness.



Volunteers take a break after removing a tree blocking the Aspen Grove Trail.

Photo by Kristy Loufek

some in Aspen Grove. We're focusing on the biggest hazards, especially where the public makes their own trails around them."

The largest tree removed so far was 46 inches in diameter. Another one, on the South Fork Trail, lay beneath another tree and took hours to remove.

On the South Fork Trail trees killed by the Lake Fire in 2015 are falling with more frequency. "We've cleared over 30 trees on the South Fork Trail, 27 within the first mile and a half, plus a few more on the trail up to Dry Lake and five on the Dollar Lake Trail," Eileen said. "We took out seven on the John's Meadow Trail, and

"Jim Hill was determined to get that one out," Eileen said. "He used a rock bar and ropes, and we were using axes. I didn't think we'd get it, but we did."

With smaller crews, there is less down time for volunteers.

"It's physically exhausting. It's also a good feeling of accomplishment," Eileen said. "Our crews are smaller, but very active, and I am happy about that."

See Mission on page 5

Volunteer Profile Shawn Sisler

By Bettye Miller

Shawn Sisler has loved the forest since 1965 when he was a little boy and rode bicycles on paths in Yosemite Valley.

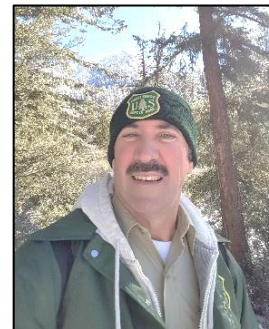
Fifteen years later he spent a summer working as a resource crew member cutting brush to create a fire break around Grizzly Flats in the Tujunga District of the Angeles National Forest. He earned a pre-forestry degree, then changed careers and began working in the computer service field.

"For 30 years I still dreamed of working in the forest, but the best I could do was get together every year with my buddies and go backpacking for nine days somewhere very remote in our national forests," Shawn said. "Every year I looked forward to those trips and the adventures we had."

As his friends grew older and his children grew up he found he had time to volunteer. "I was thankful that there was a place to do that called the San Gorgonio Wilderness Association," he said.

Shawn joined SGWA in 2015. In the last five years he has served on the Board of Directors for three years and has volunteered as a trail boss, trail crew member, patrol ranger, trail surveyor, and front desk volunteer at the Mill Creek Visitor Center.

"I enjoy keeping San Gorgonio Wilderness trails clear for those that enjoy being in nature's wilderness," he said. "I've enjoyed these past five years with SGWA and look forward to future years to come."



Mission

Continued from page 4

Hikers they encounter are thankful that SGWA continues to maintain the trails, she said, especially when it comes to removing major obstacles.

“That’s one of the nice things when you’re out there doing something and people appreciate it,” she said.

Trail Patrols

Coverage of trails by patrol volunteers has been consistently good and on a par with past years, said Bob Williams, volunteer coordinator.

“We’ve had people signing up every weekend,” he said. “We can always use more volunteers. Losing new people this year (because of the coronavirus) was a blow and cut us by about 50 people. We always have a few of them join our patrols.”

Patrol volunteers continue to break up illegal campfire rings, although no more than in previous years, Bob said.

“They find and remove evidence of illegal campfires at wilderness campsites during most patrols,” he said.

“Our people make the forest safe. All of them strike up conversations with people they meet, and make sure they know that ground fires are not allowed, and they encourage people to keep their dogs on a leash. I used to be a fire inspector and it’s hard to know how many fires you’ve prevented. We continue to have a positive impact.”

SGWA volunteers Lonnie Yett and Roxanne Smith have continued to process wilderness permit



Photos before and after trail crews cleared part of the John's Meadow Trail. Photos by Shawn Sisler

requests, remotely.

Eileen said when she is on patrol she asks hikers how long it took to get their permits after they applied.

“They always say within two days, but many of them tell me it only takes a day or

less,” she said. “Great job by Roxanne and Lonnie!” Maintaining the permit system not only continues to protect the wilderness from overuse but also was instrumental in evacuating backpackers when the fast-moving Apple Fire started, Bob said.



Patrol volunteer George Crusoe takes a break along the trail.

“The Forest Service sent search-and-rescue helicopters and buzzed all of the wilderness campsites to tell people to evacuate,” he said. “I thought that was really significant. Everybody got out safe and quickly.”

“Being in the wilderness, that’s my happy place.” – Eileen Hay

Interpretive Activities

Thanks to the efforts of SGWA board member Chelsey Feierfeil and others, three ranger talks are now available for viewing on the SGWA website at <https://sgwa.org/events/virtual-ranger-talks/>.

The first three videos feature Teddi Boston and her “Solo Hike on the Pacific Crest Trail,” Phil Rosenkrantz discussing “The Amazing John Muir and the John Muir Trail,” and “San Geronio Wilderness: A Legacy Preserved,” a video SGWA produced in 2014 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act.

Several volunteers are making repairs and sprucing up the Greyback Amphitheater so it will look its best next year.

The efforts of trail crews, patrol volunteers, and interpretive volunteers all indicate that volunteers want to keep moving forward, Eileen said.

“This is temporary. The forest is still there, and we’re still doing what we love,” she said. “Being in the wilderness, that’s my happy place.”



President's Corner **Bettye Miller**

Neither fire, flood, nor global pandemic can keep SGWA volunteers from their mission. Protect. Serve. Educate. That's what we do. Unexpected events – namely COVID-19 and the Apple Fire – have certainly put a dent in our operations this summer, but we remain undaunted. Disappointed, for sure, but we are a resilient lot.

With visitor centers closed for the season and ranger talks cancelled, the interpretive side of our program has been severely impacted. But not neglected. Lonnie Yett and Roxanne Smith process permits with a turn-around of less than 48 hours. Three ranger talks are available for viewing on the SGWA website. Volunteer Sheila McMahon developed a nature bingo card that will be available next summer for children who drop by the Barton Flats Visitor Center. Still more volunteers are sprucing up the Greyback Amphitheater so it will be ready for ranger talks next year. Join us this

Saturday, the 22nd, if you'd like to do a little painting in the cool mountain air. Sign up on our website.

On the patrol side, our volunteer rangers continue to provide good coverage of trails, directing hikers to water sources, breaking up illegal fire rings, and generally sharing their love of wilderness. They help protect our wilderness from illegal campfires and encourage an ethic of leave no trace. They are an invaluable resource for the hiking public.

As for our trail crews, there's no stopping them. Except for the temporary wilderness closure prompted by the Apple Fire. Before the one-month closure was announced our trail crews were making significant progress in removing downed trees. COVID-19 safety protocols limit the size of our crews to six, their tasks to removing hazard obstacles, and their schedules generally to weekdays to minimize contact with the public. They have accomplished so much this summer – certainly on a par with recent years – that you could say they are SGWA's own rapid deployment force.

While this isn't the season any of us expected, as I've said before, SGWA volunteers are a dedicated, skilled, and persistent bunch. Despite significant obstacles, we continue to persevere and stay true to our core mission.

SGWA

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