

Wilderness Link

San Gorgonio Wilderness Association

November 2022

Volume 10, Issue 4

Calendar of Events

These are the major events planned for 2022. Some dates may change as circumstances with Covid 19 evolve. Check your email and the volunteer calendar at www.sgwa.org for updates.

December

3 Christmas party

January

TBD Board planning retreat

February

24-25 Banff Film Festival

28 Board meeting

March

28 Election of directors

April

25 Board meeting

May

20 Orientation

27 Ranger Talks begin
Barton Flats VC opens

One Great Season Ends, Another One Begins

By Bettye Miller

SGWA celebrated another successful season at the annual awards potluck on Oct. 15, a day of fun, food and recognition of volunteers who have contributed many years and hours of service. Overall, SGWA volunteers donated approximately 14,000 hours in FY 2022, which is valued at nearly \$420,000, in service to the Forest Service in the San Gorgonio and Cucamonga wilderness areas.

Never ones to sit still, our trail crew was back on the job in October and November, removing more fallen trees, learning how to build water grade dip diversions to reduce trail erosion, and doing extensive brushing on the South Fork Trail (see before-and-after photo below by Nelva Valladares, one of our amazing trail bosses).

The 2023 season is off to a strong start!



It's Party Time

Break out the Santa hats and holiday sweaters! SGWA's annual holiday potluck will be held at 11 a.m. on Saturday, Dec. 3, at the home of Bettye Miller. Directions are available when you sign up on the volunteer calendar.

Bring a \$20 gift if you'd like to participate in the gift exchange. Hope to see you there.



Save the Date for the Banff Mountain Film Festival, which returns Feb. 24 and 25 to the Fox Event Center in Redlands. Watch your email for details.

Celebrating Wilderness

Gifts to the San Geronio 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 January 2020. 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 Geronio Wilderness Association, 34701 Mill Creek Rd., Mentone, CA 92359

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David Knapp
Peggy Manning
Bettye Miller
Robert Oetzel
Bob Opperman
Karen Saffle
Dan Scott
Mark Voykovic
Scott Warden
Bryan Walton
Jarome Wilson

President's Summit Team

Rex Brown
Greg Craft
Linda Griffith
Terry Grill
Beth Gunn
Robert Hazelton
Shauna Hoffman
Alison Hill
Jim Hill
Walt & Suzie Kirkwood
Bob Oppermann
Philip Papadopoulos
Phil Rosenkrantz

Audrey Scranton
Steffan Slater
Ted Sledzinski
Scott Warden
B.J. Withall
Ernie Woodhouse
Christian Wuflestad

Trail Blazer

Quentin Allison
Tammy Barta
Dulce Becerra
Franklin Becerra
Jodi Biers
Robbie Bishop
Laurie Borer
Patricia Carelli
Sandra Figueroa
Shane Franklin
Ayme Frykman
Daniel Garcia
Linda Griffith
Terry Grill
Deborah Harrison
Mike Hawker
Carl Imthurn
Paul Lambert
Anna Lee
Sheila McMahon
Andrew Ngo
Justin Palmer
Joyce Palmese
Walker Price
Danielle Purdey
Stephanie Ramsey
Stanley Reese
Michael Richman
Eric Roddick
Summer Rossel
Shelley Russell
Marianne Shuster
Caitlin Smith
Shannon Stratton
Sharon Swan
Paula Taylor

Robin Thuemler
Juli Unternaehrer
Catherine Walsh
Kathryn Wood
Kenneth Wright

Family

Fast Track Capital
Management

Individual

Adrienne Allegretti
Judy Atkinson
Jonathan Baty
John Berlette
Jeffrey Boehler
Heather Broersma
Scott Brovsky
Mark Campbell
Tricia Carelli
Ashleigh Covarrubias
Donna Crawford
Shannon Cwikla
Guy Denton Jr.
Daniel Domancich
Juliann Emmons
Margaret Floyd-Evans
Cindy Foster
Linda Foster
Bertram Froehly
Gwyn Frost
Ewa Graves
Ezra Greenhouse
Matthew Hall
Kevin Harvey
Jacob Heighes
Viviane Helmig
Shauna Hoffman
Mike Holden
Sylvia Huber
Jennifer Jung
Molly Leddy
Andrew Lee
Joanne Lessard
Curtis Lindemer
Elisabeth Longo

Jim Matiko
Hannah McAnespie
Michael McCoy
Stephen McCrea
Seth McLaughlin
Shan McNaughton
Sarah Mellon
Meike Murone
Kevin Nerison
Brittany Nichelason
Jim O'Brien
Jan Pettit
Kevin Proctor
Penny Ramos
James Rasco
Sean Reed
Kerry Rennie
Ralph Riggan
Starla Rivers
Shelley Russell
Rachel Sahl
Rebekah Sanford
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
Daniel White
Kipi Wilson-Lee
Brian Wolk
Kathryn Wood
Caroline Wright
Christian Wuflestad



Director's Desk Val Silva

SGWA volunteers are an amazing bunch of people. Each one has a unique skill and contributes to the whole of SGWA. The San Gorgonio Wilderness is extremely fortunate to have such a dedicated group of individuals.

You will see in the yearbook the accomplishments made through the year and the people who made them happen. Volunteers take on many jobs, some behind the scenes, like Andrew Sauer, who created the online wilderness permit program; Bob Williams, who keeps all the records that you find statistics on in this yearbook and also schedules patrols and manages the volunteer sign-ups; Eileen Hay and David Bratt, who survey trails and schedule trail work; and Bettye Miller, without whom we wouldn't have a yearbook or newsletter.

It takes a team to run a great organization like SGWA. We are indeed fortunate to have a great team, and we look forward every year to finding new volunteers to join the team. Come join us.

Amazon Smile Supports SGWA



Please remember SGWA when you do your holiday shopping on Amazon. Use smile.amazon.com and designate the San Gorgonio Wilderness Association as the charity to benefit from your purchases.

AmazonSmile will donate 0.5% of eligible purchases to SGWA.

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

2022: A Good Year

The impacts of climate change – devastating fires and their long-term effects – continue to challenge SGWA activities, and 2022 was no exception. Debris flows from the 2020 El Dorado Fire washed out part of Highway 38, resulting in fewer trail patrols and trail maintenance projects in August and necessitating the closure of the Barton Flats Visitor Center and an abrupt end to Ranger Talks at the Greyback Amphitheater. Catastrophic mudslides in Forest Falls in August and September further limited activities.

Even so, SGWA volunteers contributed nearly 14,000 hours during the abbreviated 2022 season, which the Forest Service calculates is equivalent to nearly \$420,000. Approximately 140 volunteers donated hours in the San Gorgonio and Cucamonga Wilderness areas, working to protect and clean the forest, improve facilities and trails, and help approximately 16,000 visitors appreciate and enjoy the forest, nearly 9,000 of them on wilderness trails.

After the successful launch of the online wilderness permit system in 2021, SGWA added the crowdsourced Switchback app, which allows users to upload information about trail conditions, such as water sources. It is a popular addition, with more than 50 people accessing the app every day.



The INFRA crew celebrates surveying 15 miles of trails in 2022. Photo by Eileen Hay

Volunteers picked up more than 170 bags of trash, cleaned up nearly 100 illegal fire rings, and removed a record 830+ fallen trees from the trails. Interpretive programs educated more than 7,200 visitors about fire safety, Leave No Trace ethics, and how to appreciate and share the forest with the plants and animals that live there. In a season shortened by the closure of Highway 38, the Radford Fire, and mudslides in Forest Falls, the Barton Flats Visitor Center served more than 650 people; volunteers at the Big Falls Recreation Area talked to more than 4,700 visitors; and Front Desk staff at the Mill Creek Ranger Station assisted nearly 1,200 visitors. **Please see Good Year on Page 5**

Volunteers Honored for Years of Service

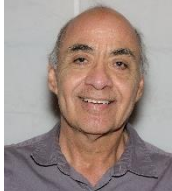
Several volunteers were recognized for many years of service at the awards potluck. They are:



Dan Scott, 30 years, who is well-known to campers at Dry Lake, one of his favorite places in the San Gorgonio Wilderness. Over the years he has assisted in the rescue of injured hikers, navigated pesky bears, and shared his love of the back country with his children, grandchildren, and the public.



Mike Garant, 30 years, who is a familiar face at Dry Lake and atop Mt. San Gorgonio, a hike he has taken many times over the years, often with volunteer Dan Scott. Ask him about his “miracle” sunglasses that fell between two boulders on the peak 25 years ago and were recovered nearly 20 years later. Without a scratch.



Bob Villa, 25 years, who began volunteering with SGWA doing trail patrols, answering questions posed by hikers and checking for wilderness permits. In more recent years has shared his love of wilderness with visitors at the annual Forest Festival.



Jeff Haggard, 25 years, who has participated in numerous nature trail and picnic area cleanup projects over the years. He also has welcomed thousands of visitors to the Big Falls Recreation Area, advising them how to protect their food from bears and be safe around the falls.



Janelle Zarate, 25 years, who has volunteered in many capacities over the years, including trail patrols and trail maintenance. She is especially creative when it comes to nature crafts, a talent she has shared with hundreds of children at numerous Forest Festivals.

Also recognized were Dee McCoy and Bob Williams, 20 years; Katherine Williams, 15 years; and Eileen Hay and Jean Rogers, 10 years.

Chipmunks of the Year

First-year volunteers Paul Eickhoff, Mark English, Micah Kiter, and Ana Soltero each contributed more than 100 hours in 2022. They patrolled trails, worked on trail projects, and volunteered at interpretive sites, including Big Falls, the Greyback Amphitheater, and the Barton Flats and Mill Creek visitor centers. They were amazing!



From left, Paul Eickhoff, Micah Kiter, Mark English, and Ana Soltero

The 300+ Club

These volunteers each donated more than **300** hours of service during the 2022 season.

Topping the list of volunteer hours donated this year is **David Bratt**, with more than 850 hours! David plays a critical role as a trail boss, surveying trails before crews tackle various projects and leading other volunteers as they complete those tasks. He also serves on the Board of Directors.

Roxanne Smith is well-known to visitors at the Mill Creek Visitor Center, where she donated more than 700 hours. At the Front Desk Roxanne answers visitors' questions, sells SGWA merchandise, and provides information about road and trail conditions. She also serves on the SGWA Board of Directors.

Eileen Hay volunteered more than 570 hours as SGWA's trails coordinator. She is a gifted leader, motivator and record-keeper coordinating and leading trail crews in an exceptionally busy season. She also serves on the SGWA Board of Directors.

In her second year with SGWA **Nelva Valladeres** has become an invaluable trail boss, contributing more than 500 hours this year. Her cheerful, can-do attitude is inspiring and fun to be around. She serves on the Board of Directors as well.

Keeping track of volunteer hours isn't everybody's cup of tea, but **Bob Williams** does a terrific job as SGWA's volunteer coordinator. He donated more than 525 hours, scheduling trail patrols, inputting volunteer hours, and sending weekly reports to the Forest Service.

If there's a trail blocked by trees or with tread that needs repair, that's where you will find **Antonio**
Please see 300+ Club on Page 5

300+ Club

Continued from Page 4

Huerta. In his second year as a volunteer he has become a valued member of the trail crew, donating more than 450 hours this year.

Dan Scott is a longtime volunteer who contributed more than 400 hours on trail patrols and teaching colleagues how to use patrol radios. He is a familiar face at Dry Lake, where he talks to campers about bear and fire safety, and where to find water. Ask him about the bear ... that got away with his food.

SGWA board Vice President **Bettye Miller** donated more than 400 hours in 2022. She volunteers at the Barton Flats Visitor Center, writes grant proposals, is editor of the quarterly newsletter and yearbook, and co-chaired the Forest Festival this year.

Curt Lindemer donated more than 325 hours in a variety of activities in 2022. He patrols trails, works at Big Falls and the Front Desk, and put his organizational and business experience – and sense of humor – to work as co-chair of the Forest Festival. He also serves on the Board of Directors.

If you hike in the Cucamonga Wilderness you've likely met **John Do** on the trail. John contributed more than 300 hours this season, checking permits and advising hikers about water sources and trail conditions. "Regulars" preparing to hike Mt. Whitney have come to view him as a valuable resource.

Good Year

Continued from Page 3

Protect and Serve

SGWA trail crews continued to clear and repair trails damaged in the 2015 Lake Fire, and began rebuilding the Lost Creek Trail destroyed in that fire. They also repaired trails washed out by debris flows and removed fallen trees burned in the El Dorado Fire of 2020.

Volunteers cleared more than 830 trees and repaired more than 34,300 feet of trail in both wilderness areas in 2022. They repaired damage to switchbacks, hauled tons of rock by hand to shore up trails with rock walls, and removed brush growing over trails.

Patrol volunteers monitored water availability in the backcountry – a service that has become more critical during a historic drought – and advised backpackers about the need for permits. They also dismantled nearly 100 illegal fire rings, which improves fire safety in the backcountry.



Patrol volunteer John Do advises hikers in the Cucamonga Wilderness.

The online permit system SGWA developed in 2022 remains popular with hikers and appears to be increasing compliance with permit requirements because they are easier and faster to obtain. The system also allows SGWA to provide updates about information important to hikers such as water availability and bear activity, and enables the issuance of immediate safety warnings. SGWA issued nearly 2,100 permits for day and overnight use, primarily during the summer season.

Volunteers also measured and surveyed 15 miles of trails for the Forest Service in the INFRA program.

Education and Outreach

SGWA volunteers shared their passion for the forest in a series of Ranger Talks at the Greyback Theater, programs that drew more than 200 visitors.

Others helped educate more than 4,700 visitors at the Big Falls Recreation Area helped educate more than 4,700 visitors about how to safely enjoy and protect the forest. Volunteers also appeared at spring outdoor festivals in Oak Glen and Glen Helen and Prado regional parks, where they interacted with nearly 1,500 people.

At the Barton Flats and Mill Creek visitor centers, volunteers answered questions about the forest, the San Gorgonio Wilderness, and what trails were closed in the aftermath of the El Dorado Fire; explained how to access the online wilderness permit system; and helped more than 2,500 visitors enjoy their mountain experience.



President's Corner **Rex Philpot**

It has been a great honor to serve this year as your president. I have been volunteering with SGWA for 15 years now. Our organization is awesome!

For decades our group has put forth the effort to protect the wilderness, educate the public and maintain the trails of our beautiful San Geronio Wilderness. It has been my privilege this year to make new friends and welcome new volunteers into the family.

We have had many challenges this season with mudslides closing access to many of our activities.

Despite the hurdles, our volunteers have done an awesome job.

Thanks to all of you volunteers who help make SGWA work. From greeting people in our visitor centers, programs at the amphitheater, Big Falls, trail patrols, trail crew and many who work behind the scenes to help organize and keep everything going. All of this cannot be done without you. You all rock!

I leave you with a John Muir quote:

“Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature’s peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop away from you like the leaves of Autumn.

SGWA

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Serve

Protect

Educate

