



Inside this issue:

New News on Horses and Water Pollution	2
New SEA Plan Due Soon	2
Our 4th Annual Ride	2
Horse Boarding Ordinance in Limbo???	4

President's Message

Mother Nature smiled down on the 4th Annual Ride to "Celebrate Recreation". With weeks of fires, smoke, unseasonable heat, and a day of rain just prior, November 1st was a glorious, mild, beautifully clear day. It was a simple reminder of why we work so hard to keep our open spaces open to public enjoyment.

Almost 100 riders joined in honoring National Park Superintendent Woody Smeck in the very first event of a year-long celebration of the 25th anniversary of the creation of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. We are grateful to our ride sponsors for their financial support - Liz Blackwelder, Gwen Allen, Bill & Inger Hogan, Zacharosa Ranch, Prime Residential Sales, Electronic Systems Design; and to the many generous donors who also gave. Special Kudos to Calamigos Ranch for an outstanding barbecue feast. Thank you also to everyone at the barbecue who donated help to the burned horses in Moorpark. We raised over \$1,000.

We have much to be grateful for and much to celebrate. We have a new governor and a new administration. There will be many new faces and many new ideas emerging from the new leadership. Now is the time for all those recreation activists to secure a role in the new administration. If you'd like to be considered, go to www.JoinArnold.com and fill out the application. We need your voice and your participation.

Ruth

Governor Seeks New Faces for Administration

Want to have input into the policies and decisions of the State of California. Now's the time. Put your name in the hat for appointment to one of the many boards commissions and committees filled by gubernatorial appointment. Just a few examples: California Coastal Commission, Baldwin Hills Conservancy, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, 56 County Fair Boards, Fish & Game Commission, Heritage Preservation Commission, Historical Resources Commission, Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Commission, Parks & Recreation Commission, Recreational Trails Committee and nine regional Water Quality Control Boards.

Let us know if you apply. We'll round up support from fellow recreation enthusiasts to help you join the new administration team.

New News on Horses and Water Pollution

The California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Los Angeles Region, held a meeting Oct. 22 in Malibu to consider a proposed amendment to the Basin Plan that would incorporate a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) to reduce bacteria in the Malibu Creek Watershed. After their presentation, at which they acknowledged that less than 1% of bacteria comes from horses and livestock, questions were allowed. Less than 1% in bureaucratese means “undetectable”. This is good news for horsemen, and bad news for those who want to ban horses from our open spaces because they seemingly pollute our rivers and streams. When questioned on the board’s source of information, they responded that the information was “based on literature and a prior study of the number of horses” and they “drove by streams and counted the number of horses nearby.” Their “literature” was a 1995 study by NCRS, and we have no idea how accurate or scientific that is. However, we do know that there are no known streams in the SM Mountains or anywhere in the region’s area that anyone can “drive by and count the horses” alongside. Their “study” was apparently a guesstimate. Has the CRWQCB done any scientific testing to determine the DNA of e.coli of any animals? Asked how the CRWQCB determined specific sources and percentages, they replied that they “calculated”, which is semantics for ‘guessed.’ This hearing was for bacteria and others will be held for nutrients. Mitigation measures may be different for TMDLs for bacteria and for nutrients. We are pleased that their findings were consistent with what we already know – horses are not a major contributing factor to bacteria in the watershed. Written public comments are due by Nov. 26th and may be sent to Rod Collins at rcollins@rb4.swrcb.ca.gov or 320 W. 4th St., #200, LA 90013. 213-576-6600 , fax 213-576-6640 website is www.swrcb.ca.gov/rwqcb4

New SEA Plan Due Soon

The County of Los Angeles is expected to release their newest version of a plan to expand the areas designated as Significant Ecological Areas in the next few weeks. The first draft plan released two years ago met massive resistance from landowners and recreation enthusiasts due to its broad & sweeping designations. The SEA designation severely limits use and activity on land so designated.

The County anticipates a year of public review, community meetings, and public hearings, with Board of Supervisors adoption in early 2005. We’ll keep you posted on the proposal and its impacts on outdoor activity throughout the County.

Our 4th Annual Ride

It was a glorious day for our annual trail ride through the Santa Monica Mountains. Of course, the night before was a bit iffy, what with the rain pouring down on the trails. However, it turned out that the trails were in great shape – no dust and not slippery. The weather really cooperated with a warm sun shining brightly, the morning dew glistening on the grasses and leaves, the fog clearly moving away, and the white clouds drifting across the beautiful blue sky. Could not have been a prettier day for riding. Horses were saddled and ready to hit the trail, feeling good and probably glad that the cool weather had finally arrived. Everyone was in good spirits. The California Highway Patrol were wonderful in stopping traffic so we could cross Las Virgenes Rd. After all, you know it’s not possible to get almost 100 riders across an intersection on one signal light cycle. Then we divided into 2 groups for a short ride and a regular ride. The short one rode into the Liberty Canyon area and meandered along the trail that parallels Malibu Canyon. The other riders headed to Paramount Ranch and were strung out through Malibu Creek State Park for a mile and a half. The hills were truly alive with horses. Returning to the staging area at Malibu Valley Farms, the riders were joined by another 25 hungry recreational friends and all enjoyed a wonderfully delicious Calamigos Ranch barbecue. It was a perfect ride to celebrate recreation - good weather, good trails, good horses, good food and good people.

Woody was a good sport to ride with us and to see our perspective. It was a great start and he’s working on his riding skills so he can continue to enjoy what we enjoy – equestrian access and use of our public lands.



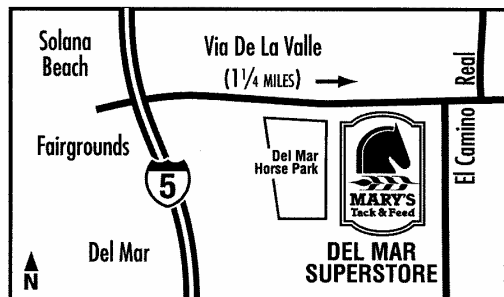
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Horse Boarding Ordinance in Limbo???

It's been over two years since Supervisor Mike Antonovich introduced a motion to the Board of Supervisors which would clear up some ambiguities in the interpretation of the County's zoning code with regard to backyard boarding. Despite numerous discussions with the Regional Planning staff no new draft is available for public review. While that is good news on the one hand, because it means the current enforcement efforts are suspended, it does little to encourage horsekeeping in our rural areas as long as no one knows what the new rules will be.

During our last discussion with the staff it was clear that not all of the changes would be supported by the equestrian community. Staff was dwelling on issues such as additional parking requirements, event control and reductions from the current allowable of eight horses per acre. As a practical matter none of these are issues for small boarding operations under five acres.

REC will be asking Supervisor Antonovich for his assistance in bringing this matter to a satisfactory conclusion without further delay.
