

REC NEWS

RECREATION & EQUESTRIAN COALITION

President's Message

You'll be pleased to know that your quick response to my e-mails, about the County's possible change of policy with regard to the boarding of horses, has had the desired impact. As a result of your communications to the Board of Supervisors, REC representatives met recently with staff from Regional Planning and deputies from Supervisors Yaroslavsky's and Antonovich's offices.

After a thorough discussion of the issue and of the negative reaction that would be forthcoming from the equestrian community if the County persisted in their efforts to require a Director's Review or a Conditional Use Permit for the boarding of horses, everyone agreed that the real desire was to make the process simpler, not more difficult.

REC has offered, and the County has agreed, to draft a new motion for the Supervisors that will clearly state the policy of the County, including the specific language to be reviewed by the Planning Commission for proposing changes to the current boarding ordinance. Thank you to everyone who responded to my request for assistance.

Unfortunately, things are not going so well for many equestrians elsewhere in the County. As you will read in this newsletter, the anti-horse zealots are making headway on a number of fronts. We need to respond with an overwhelming show of support for all horse owners. Please help by writing, faxing and e-mailing the elected officials now.

Ruth Gerson

2nd Annual REC Trail Ride - October 20th

The response to this year's ride has been tremendous. It will honor three outstanding friends of recreation Liz Blackwelder, Darrell Readmond and Linda Palmer. This annual "Celebration of Recreation" is going to be just plain fun. The enclosed flyer has details. If you would like to attend but not ride, please do so; and if you'd like to help out, that would be great, too. Call Ruth at 818-919-1236 or Annette at 818-706-2960. We hope to have you join us on October 20th.



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Guest Editorial - Ed Khmara

For many years I have been hearing about water quality in our mountains, especially as it effects the Santa Monica Bay. Traditionally, these concerns revolved around the issue of sewage spills, septic system malfunctions, etc. But now I'm hearing the question of water quality discussed in terms of waste from the horses kept on the few rural areas still existing in the Santa Monica Mountains. Nobody wants to say it directly, but the implication is "the fewer the horses, the better the water quality." Well, I'm no expert on water pollution and its causes, but I think we should all consider the following:

There is less livestock living in the Santa Monica Mountains today than there has been for probably four hundred years. Look at the place names around us (especially the housing developments). Almost all of them are punctuated by the word "ranch." Think of North Ranch, Ahmanson Ranch, Morrison Ranch, Lang Ranch, etc. Even in my youth, what we now call Westlake was called the Russell Ranch. And that's what it was, a working cattle ranch. Drive along Las Virgenes Road and visit the old ranch house that's now a place to show children what life used to be like out here. This whole area was once a vast grazing land for cattle, horses, goats, and sheep. So ask yourself this question: Do you think the water quality two hundred years ago, or one hundred years ago, or even fifty years ago, was worse than it is today?

If in fact the water quality was less polluted then than now, if the bacteria counts were lower then than now, if the quality of the water in Santa Monica Bay was better then than now, then simple logic tells us that it isn't our horses that are causing the problem, because there were a lot more of them around then than now.

Maybe it's overflows of human sewage, or the run-off from the fertilizing of countless lawns, or maybe the spewing residue of thousands and thousands of cars, or the decaying mountains of organic and synthetic rubbish in the land fills, or Well, it might be a lot of things. But unless the water quality is a lot better now than two hundred years ago, it isn't horses.

Planning Commission Hearing on North Area Plan Implementation

REC representatives attended the Regional Planning Commission hearing and spoke for changes in the proposed implementation ordinances for the North Area Plan. Unfortunately, the Commission adopted the plan without changes and forwarded it to the Board of Supervisors for adoption in October.

REC specifically asked that livestock and agriculture be recognized for their historic, cultural and ongoing role in the mountains; that the process for establishing B&B's be simplified to encourage low-impact, overnight accommodations in the mountains; that the construction of single family homes in the RR (Resort Recreation) zone not be a permitted use; and that the boarding of horses continue as a permitted use in the A-1 zone. Your letters to the Board of Supervisors would be most helpful. The documents may be viewed on the County web page at <http://planning.co.la.ca.us/smmnap>.

Horses Under Siege in Many Areas of County

Horses are under attack on a surprising number of fronts in the western parts of Los Angeles City and County. In Sullivan Canyon, the Los Unified School District is evicting the Riding Club from the site that they have leased for the last 30 years, so that they can sell the site for development. At Will Rogers State Historic Park, disgruntled former concessionaires have mounted a “preservationist” campaign to kick out all the boarders and convert the site to an “interpretative” park only. In Chatsworth, equestrians are battling the City Council of Los Angeles over the conversion of equestrian designated land to non-horse development. The Coastal Commission staff is trying to remove horses from every location where oak trees are present. In Triunfo/Lobo Canyon, the County has halted the processing of all equestrian related building permits, and with the support of Supervisor Yaroslavsky, has proposed the wholesale conversion of the very limited recreation land into residential development.

These efforts are not unrelated and not coincidental. The anti-horse battalions have been working in the trenches for years, and their work is beginning to pay off. We need to organize a regional counter-attack, or we may face the extinction of this culturally historic activity. REC has regularly questioned political candidates about their views on recreation and horse issues; and we have circulated those responses. We hope that you can now see just how very important it is that you elect those who support recreation and equestrians.

New County General Plan Workshops

The County Regional Planning Department recently conducted a series of workshops designed to solicit input for the development of a new Countywide General Plan. This plan will look at setting new goals for land use, circulation, housing, safety, noise, water and conservation & open space. The Department has prepared a list of 35 draft goals to begin the “brainstorming.” The draft goals can be found on the County web page at generalplan@planning.co.la.ca.us. This is the first, preliminary step in a process that could take as long as two years to complete. Your input is important. Remember to promote the equestrian lifestyle at every opportunity.

Submit your comments to the:

Department of Regional Planning
General Plan Development Section
320 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Phone: (213) 974-6417

Fax (213) 626-0434

Email: generalplan@planning.co.la.ca.us

Thoughts for Building A Barn or Horse Facility

This very moving and compelling letter was written by Ray to express his frustration and the real toll imposed by those in government who use their power position to thwart the dreams and goals for the rural way of life.

It's All Just Politics - But It Hurts Real People

Today, I laid off a friend, a great family man, a protector of our freedoms, and a man who cares about doing what is right. I laid him off because after 18 months Los Angeles County still has not issued permits for a small equestrian center at the corner of Kanan Rd. and Triunfo Cyn. Rd., a location that is zoned for this use.

Jose Sahagun spent 21 years in America's Navy. Of his three sons, two serve in the military and the third son is attending College. Without going into detail, Mr. Sahagun's daughter is, by necessity, precluded from enjoying all of the fruits of life that most of us take for granted; and his wife has never fully recovered from an accident 2 years ago. As the sole breadwinner for his family, Mr. Sahagun is also responsible for his father-in-law, who is an Alzheimer's patient in Ojai, and for his mother-in-law, who needs constant medical attention a minimum of 3 times a week, and sometimes 4 or 5 times a week.

Jose and I worked together following the regulations of LA County to the "T." We wanted to do it right. Starting in February 2000, we began the permit process. It was painfully apparent from the proposed anti-horse zoning by Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky that recreational and equestrian opportunities in the Santa Monica Mountains were under attack from the Board of Supervisors. However, we forged ahead, and we obtained approval, in concept, from the Department of Regional Planning. We submitted plans to Building and Safety, and we addressed their concerns for erosion, hydrology, soils and structural safety for barns. In short, we submitted every report required by the County. Then we addressed our own ethical concerns, which meant that we worked with Heal the Bay to provide a center that would be state-of-the-art with respect to Best Management Practices (BMP's) to mitigate anyone's concerns about water quality. In addition, we landscaped and placed vines in potential fire areas with short native grasses and poppies for cover crops. We provided parking for the Tri-Valley Special Olympics. With regard to Triunfo Creek, which has remained untouched and pristine, we continue to cooperate with the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project and the UCLA Department of Environmental Health Sciences to monitor the watershed so that the streams and beaches are just a little bit better.

Today, I walked past the corrals to where Mr. Sahagun was working. Trail riders on horseback climbed the hills to enjoy the country experience; the creek glistened in the sun; flowers bloomed with abandon; grapes grew on the hillside; and I thought, "What a beautiful place - thanks, Jose." I also thought back to two years ago when there was junk and debris everywhere; hobos lived there who actually committed murder; and graffiti was taking over. It was then that I met Jose Sahagun.

Jose volunteered to finish the erosion control project prior to our October 15th deadline. We

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hugged one another and took in with our own eyes what he had accomplished and how we had done it right - something that generations of people can see and experience. He said this was part of God's plan.

Now, I reflect on the RR-L zoning (Zev's anti horse proposal), that was pulled off the shelf but replaced by good sounding initiatives that each contain another obstacle to the horses. Amid the rapidly changing County environment was the North Area Plan, the proposed Woodlands Ordinance, the draft General Management Plan for the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area by the National Park Service (that had 1 reference to horses and no references to private recreation providers in a several-hundred page report that is a plan for the next 20 years), the proposed CSD for Triunfo Canyon, and the proposal that the entire Santa Monica Mountains be declared a Sensitive Ecological Area (SEA), both the developed and undeveloped lands.

At this point, it is clearly obvious, even to the most trusting of citizens, that all of these plans usher in a "look but don't touch" philosophy for seventeen million people within an hour's drive of experiencing the Santa Monica Mountains. It is clear that all of these plans are meant to dissuade anyone from creating or experiencing a moment that brings you back to the land. Permits are delayed, expenses are ongoing and increasing, and CSDs and other types of restrictions are introduced continually throughout the years to prevent or make something prohibitive.

Jose, I'm sorry. This wasn't my plan - politicians say they want recreational opportunities available for the people, but the reality is different. Getting permits for a couple of barns has been a nightmare without end. Come back anytime with your grandkids to look at what we were able to do, the little we were able to save. Thanks for being part of it.

Sincerely,

Ray Stewart

REC Defends Sepulveda Basin Recreation Land

REC has written to the Los Angeles & San Gabriel Rivers Watershed Council to express grave concern over their proposal to take 300 acres of high intensity recreation land in the Sepulveda Basin and convert it into wetlands with water from the local sewage treatment plant.

REC's letter said, "We consider it the height of arrogance for the Los Angeles & San Gabriel Rivers Watershed Council to advocate literally "stealing" the very limited amount of recreation land we currently have in order to eliminate algae in the Los Angeles River. Thousands of people have worked tirelessly in the last two decades to establish parks, trails, campgrounds and other recreation facilities, including millions of dollars in voter approved bonds to finance them, for the benefit of everyone in Southern California. Frankly, we are tired of supporting money for parks and open space, only to have the land taken away and public access denied in the name of environmental protection."

Anyone wishing to write the Watershed Council may contact the President, Dorothy Green at 111 Hope Street, Suite 627, Los Angeles, CA 90012.

REC Challenges Coastal Commission in Topanga

In a strongly worded letter to Coastal Commission Chair, Sara Wan, REC protested the statement of a staff planner who told the Los Angeles Times, “ We want horses to be removed from oak tree areas.” REC also questioned the necessity of the Coastal Commission’s imposition of “mitigations” that would require fencing outside the drip line of every oak tree in the proximity of horses.

“We want horses to be removed from oak tree areas”
Coastal Commission Staff

Our letter stated, “We are not aware of any scientific studies that have documented any threat to oak trees due to the proximity of horses. Nor are we aware of any hearings, public notice or deliberations on the part of the Coastal Commission at which a decision was made to begin excluding horses from oak tree areas.” It was also stated, “Oak trees are the single most plentiful tree in California. They are neither threatened, rare or endangered. It raises the obvious question of the reason for the strong anti-horse bias of your organization.”

This apparently “new” policy of the Commission staff should not be taken lightly. It is only the first wave in a long series of attacks on the equestrian community that can be anticipated from planning agencies. Everyone is encouraged to write Coastal Commission Chair, Sara Wan, and express your outrage at this offensive, unsupported position. Send comments to Sara Wan, Chair, California Coastal Commission, 22350 Carbon Mesa Road, Malibu, CA 90265 and cc: copies to Clerk of the Board, California Coastal Commission, 45 Fremont Street, Suite 2000, San Francisco, CA 94105-2119. Phone (310) 456-6605 or (415) 904-5200 Fax (415) 904-5400

California Recreational Trails Plan

The State of California has recently issued a new draft plan for the development of recreational trails throughout California. REC is preparing comments to be submitted to the Department of Parks. Your help is needed to encourage State Parks to adopt a horse friendly document. At this time, the public has been given only 45 days to respond, with the public comment period ending October 24th for postmarks and email. Many people have requested a 120-day extension to allow sufficient time to read, compare, research and digest the information in order to make an informed and worthwhile comment. You can obtain a copy of the plan at parks.ca.gov. Please send your comments to Statewide Trails Office, Dept. of Parks & Recreation, PO Box 942896, Sacramento, CA 94296 or email them to kmcko@parks.ca.gov> Our comments will be included on our soon-to-be updated website, and you may use them in your response.



REC Assisting Park Service to Survey Private Recreation Providers

In an effort to help the National Park Service develop a General Management Plan that accurately reflects the level of recreation services provided by the private sector in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, REC has agreed to identify as many of the facilities as possible - camps, restaurants, lodging, stables, grocery, fishing, equipment rental, conference facilities, etc. If you would like to be included in this inventory, please contact us at ruth@gotorec.org.

We have mailed a survey to recreation providers to collect data on the types of services, the number of visitors and the location of each service. This information is vitally important if we are going to assure the availability of quality recreation services in the National Recreation Area. If you receive a survey, please return it promptly. If you know of anyone to whom we should send a survey, please let us know so that we don't miss anyone.



Our Friends in Sullivan Canyon Urgently Need Your Help and Support

After 30 years of leasing out the Old Ranch Road School site for a community-wide riding facility (a site that was otherwise never used) the LAUSD, Los Angeles Unified School District, has decided to evict the horse people and sell the property for development. Eviction is set for October 31st, so your immediate help is greatly appreciated.

This property has been used as a riding facility since before the 1932 Olympics. It is the only facility of its type on the west side of Los Angeles. It is a critical link in the shrinking network of equestrian facilities in Southern California. The Sullivan Canyon community has raised \$2 million in private pledges to buy the land. That is the value the District's appraiser put on this 8.5 acres of open space.

The School Board has dollar signs in their eyes and believe that land speculators will pay over \$12 million. Senator Shelia Kuehl, Assemblywoman Fran Pavley and Councilwoman Cindy Miscikowski all support the continued use of this property as a riding facility.

This is another one of those occasions when we have to band together to help our fellow equestrians in their desperate effort to acquire this important riding facility for the community. Please let the School Board Members know your opposition to evicting the horse people and selling for development. Contact Caprice Young, President of Los Angeles Unified School District at caprice*young@board.lausd.k12.ca.us.



2nd Annual Trail Ride to
Celebrate Recreation
October 20, 2001

**A ride that celebrates recreation and honors 3 outstanding friends of our recreation community
*Liz Blackwelder of LaCanada • Darrell Readmond of Aqua Dulce • Linda Palmer of Calabasas***

For many, many years each of them has worked long and hard to obtain trails and to keep trails, especially for horses. They have been our trail guardians, watching out for problems and handling them as they came along. We owe them a great debt of gratitude for their tireless and longtime commitment to preserving trails and to ensuring that they are safe and accessible. As volunteers, they have shown what can be accomplished with goals, principles, focus and tenacity, as they often persevered through red tape and difficult people. Please join us to honor and to thank these fine citizens for all they have done for equestrians and recreation.

DATE: October 20, 2001 **TIME:** 10:00 a.m. - Ready to Ride **REGISTRATION:** Check in time 7:30 - 9:30 a.m.

STAGING AREA & PARKING: Malibu Valley Farms in Calabasas, 2200 Stokes Canyon, (off Mulholland, just East of Las Virgenes Road/Malibu Canyon). Also, plenty of parking for big rigs in pasture on Mulholland

RIDERS: Under 18 years must be accompanied by adult. No dogs, No stallions, Red ribbons on kickers

NON-RIDERS: Join us to socialize, eat, or help with the event

DONATIONS: \$25 includes lunch and REC hat

LUNCH: BBQ by Calamigos Ranch BBQ at 1:30 p.m.

TRAIL ROUTES: 2 choices: 1 1/2 hour ride (short one) or 3 hour ride

DIRECTIONS: On website www.gotorec.org or page 588 in Thomas Guide

RSVP & INFORMATION: Ruth Gerson (818) 991-1236 or Annette Trisler (818) 706-2960 or email: <ruth@gotorec.org>

SPONSORS: Gwen Allen, Bill & Inger Hogan, Bob Boone, Robin Rick - Old Agoura Realtor, La Canada Flintridge Trails Council, ETI - Corral 36, ETI - Corral 22.

Would you like to add your business or name as a sponsor for \$100 to be listed in flyers, newsletters and website?

We appreciate an RSVP so we know how much food to prepare, how many hats to order and how many horses to expect.

REC Mission Statement

The mission of the Recreation and Equestrian Coalition (REC) is to inform the public and policy makers about access to and the use of diverse recreational opportunities available throughout Los Angeles County and the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. REC will protect and defend the region's rich natural diversity and promote public/private partnerships to preserve and expand visitor-serving recreational facilities.

Registration Form: REC Trail Ride for Recreational Access & Use - October 20, 2001

Please make donations payable to REC. You can send to P.O. Box 245, Agoura Hills, CA 91376 or bring it with you to the event.

NAMES _____

PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ ZIP _____

LUNCH _____ # of RIDERS _____ Please list names of riders on the back if more than 2 in group

Can't make the ride, but here's a donation \$ _____ Ride, Lunch, Hat @ \$25 per person, donation \$ _____

RECREATION & EQUESTRIAN COALITON

Membership Form

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE (home) _____ (work) _____

FAX _____ (EMAIL) _____

I can help with...

Phone Committee _____

Attend Hearings _____

Organize Events _____

Distribute Flyers _____

Other _____

MEMBERSHIP LEVEL

Individual \$25 _____

Family \$50 _____

Organization \$100 _____

Business \$250 _____

Donation _____

REC Hat \$12 _____

Total \$ _____

Please mail your check payable to: REC • P.O. Box 245 • Agoura Hills, CA 91376

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Are You A REC Member Yet?? - - Time To Renew or Join

REC membership is growing rapidly. Your \$25 annual membership is the primary source of our funds for REC activities. It supports the coordinating efforts to protect public access to public lands, the education of policy makers and the public, and the newsletter for spreading the word about problems and notifying you of hearings and meetings. If you are not now a member of REC, we'd like to count you as one of our supporters. Send your street or e-mail address to ruth@gotorec.org or to PO Box 245, Agoura Hills, CA 91376, or leave us a phone message at 818-991-1236, and we'll send you a membership application. We appreciate your support in preserving our equestrian and outdoor lifestyle by attending events and through financial donations.

Send Us Your E-Mail

REC is remodeling and upgrading its website and E-mail capabilities. Please send us your email address so we can contact you quickly when urgent issues arise. You can still choose if you want to receive future newsletters and legislative notices by e-mail or by snail mail. Let us know your preference, or make a note when you send in your membership.



How to Contact REC: Ruth Gerson, President

Phone (818) 991-1236; fax (818) 889-4540 Visit REC’s website at:

Email <ruth@gotorec.org> www.gotorec.org

How to Contact the Board of Supervisors

Board of Supervisors 500 W. Temple Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90012

SUPERVISOR	Phone	Fax	Email
Michael Antonovich	213 974-5555	213 974-1010	fifthdistrict@bos.co.la.ca.us
Don Knabe	213 974-4444	213 626-6941	don@bos.co.la.ca.us
Zev Yaroslavsky	213 974-3333	213 625-7360	zev@bos.co.la.ca.us
Yvonne Burke	213 974-2222	213 680-3283	seconddistrict@bos.co.la.ca.us
Gloria Molina	213 974-4111	213 613-1739	molina@bos.co.la.ca.us

How to Contact the Planning Commission

Regional Planning Commission
 320 West Temple Street Los Angeles, CA 90012
 (213) 626-0434 Fax
 Email <lstark@planning.co.la.ca.us> or
 smmnap@planning.co.la.ca.us>

How to Contact the National Park Service

401 W. Hillcrest Service
 Thousand Oaks, CA 91360
 (805) 370-2300 Phone (805) 370-1850 Fax
 To visit the Plan: www.nps.gov/samo
 email: samo_gmp@nps.gov