Safe Trails Workshop

SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS

National Park Service

Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area

Land Manager Panel

Trail Use Challenges and Management Suggestions

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Backbone Trail, Zuma to Latigo – J. Sager

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Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area

- A unit of the National Park System; established in 1978
- Covers approximately 153,250 acres from Griffith Park to the Oxnard Plain
- Land ownership mixture of 55% protected parkland and 45% private lands

Santa Monica Mountains & Vicinity

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Numerous Recreational Opportunities: The SMMNRA Trail Network

Why Protect SMMNRA?

- 53%: To provide habitat for plants & animals
- 22%: To provide recreational opportunities
- 22%: Both habitat and recreation

Nearly 500 miles in public network.

Trails	286 mi.
Roads (Unpaved/Paved)	198 mi.

Trail Use Patterns

Morning	64%
Afternoon	35%
Evening	21%
Weekends	73%
Weekdays	26%
Summer	72%
Fall	56%
Winter	52%
Spring	63%
Median Hours Spent on Trail	2
Median Visits per Month	4

Visitors drove an average of 27-34 minutes to reach trails.

Most common uses: hiking, horseback riding, and mountain biking.

Trail Use Designation		Visitor Survey User Activities (July 2002, Western Area)	
Multiple Use	60%	35%	Mountain Biking
Hiker/Equestrian	20%	5%	Horseback Riding
Hiker-Only	20%	60%	On-Foot: Hiking, Jogging, Dog-walking, etc.

Charts are from SMMNRA Recreational Visitor Survey, 2002

Heavy use: Trail network is within an hour's drive of 1 in every 17 Americans.

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NPS Mission Statement

"….to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

Trail Use Management Policies

- Recreation is resource-based, and must not damage natural and cultural resources.
- Only hikers (without pets) may go off public trails unless area is closed to general public.
- Special Use Permit is required when group size exceeds site-based thresholds.
- Designation of mountain biking on trails requires public environmental review process and approval by Superintendent or promulgation of notice in Federal Register.

SMMNRA partner agency missions are similar and compatible with NPS.

Ocean View from Ray Miller Trail /Backbone Trail System   S. Matsuda

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Trail Use Challenges

User Conflicts

User Attitudes toward Others

Approximately 30% of users had "no problem" with other users, and for the most part, users viewed other users favorably or were neutral. 70% of users, however, cited the following problems.

- 28.1%: uncooperative behavior
- 24.9%: leaving animal wastes
- 22.2%: littering
- 20.5%: collisions or injury
- 20.5%: startling people
- 19.6%: damaging plants
- 17.7%: frightening wildlife
- 14.9%: making too much noise
- 6.3%: scaring horses

"Suicide" Trail

Social Networking Website Outings

Illegal Jumps and other Technical Challenge Constructs

Mishe Mokwa Trailhead 2004

Using Rain-sodden Trails

Wildlife "Trail" Kill

Cheeseboro Canyon Trail

Barn Owl, Albertson Mtwy Bypass

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Trail Use Management Strategies

Increase Signage.

- Relatively easy-to-achieve management strategy.
- Consider rotating messages on sandwich board sign-holders at trailheads.
- Provides initial education on rules/regulations.
- Provides defense in court for issuing citations.
- Visitors may not read sign text or may vandalize signs.

Increase Park Ranger Presence.

- Encountering or expecting a ranger changes user behavior.
- Budget constraints on employing enough rangers.
- Overloaded courts – citations tossed.
- Other priorities – i.e. marijuana gardens, fire-fighting call-outs.

Trail Rules

Obey posted designations for bicycling, dog walking, and horseback riding.

- All resources and park property are protected. Collecting, disturbing, or defacing resources prohibited.
- No motor vehicles, except authorized vehicles.
- Hunting, traps, and weapons prohibited. Possession of firearms subject to state and federal laws.
- No smoking or fires.
- Camping by permit only.
- Organized events and filming by permit only.
- NO DOGS unless signed as permitted. Where permitted, dogs must be on leash not to exceed six feet and under control.
- Bicycles and horses, where permitted, must be under control at all times. Maximum speed is 15 mph or safest speed for trail conditions.
- No galloping horses. No grazing or free-trailing horses. Do not leave horses unattended or tied to trees or other natural resources.
- Share the trails safely. Bicyclists yield to equestrians and hikers. Hikers yield to equestrians. Equestrians pass other users at a walk.

Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area

National Park Service · Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy · California Department of Parks and Recreation · Mountains Recreation & Conservation Authority

In case of emergency, call 911 or Angeles Dispatch 661-723-1620. For general park information, call 805-370-2301. Online park information: www.nps.gov/samo

Title 36 U.S. Code of Federal Regulations CA Public Resources Code Sections 5003, 5008, and 33211.6 MRCA Ordinance No. 1-2005 (as amended)

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Trail Use Management Strategies

Use Volunteer Patrol Programs to Expand Presence and Report Observations.

- Many enthusiastic volunteers.
- Implement "Trail Watch" program.
- Exert "peer pressure" on rogue members of user groups.
- Volunteers cannot issue citations.
- May exacerbate user conflicts in some situations.
- May affect public relations of advocacy groups.

Educate Visitors of All Ages.
- Instill an environmental stewardship ethic.
- Train visitors on trail etiquette.

Update Agency Rules and Regulations.
- Increase fines.
- Establish rules/policies to manage "leaderless" group outings.

Mounted Volunteer Patrol

Mountain Bike Unit

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The End

Thank you

Backbone Trail

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