

**SAFE TRAILS WORKSHOP**  
**Thursday, September 26, 2013**  
**Duck Club, Irvine, CA**

**Workshop Notes**

**Keynote**

**Councilmember Nancy Gardner**  
**City of Newport Beach**

Her experience is mostly with water quality. As a child, her uncle was the Chief of Police for Newport Beach and a member of the Duck Club. Back in the day if you wanted to get outdoors you stepped outside and went. You could go all the way from Crystal Cove to Irvine Park to anywhere. Once the major developments began and people realized the open space was being converted—the effort to save the open space began. There were no rules in the beginning so people made up how to save open space as they went along. It is amazing what has been accomplished. Now we can be mentored through park veterans like Jean Watt. People want to be able to enjoy open space, but there are challenges with this. There is sometimes tension between the protectors and the users, but it sparks ideas of how to provide the type of environments we need and build support for open space.

**Workshop Notes**

**Public Safety Panel**

**John Gannaway**  
**OC Parks**

He oversees the operations of parks with wilderness and camping opportunities working directly with park rangers, resource specialists, capital improvement projects, public safety, including day-to-day operations and the annual budget. He's been a ranger for 16 years.

**Tim Perkins**  
**Orange County Fire Authority**

He is a crew chief for air operations, both on the ground and in the air. He noted that there are three types of calls related to trails. First, mountain bikers on single tracks/Edison roads that need to be extricated. Second, medical aid type issue (i.e., people don't anticipate how hot it will be, not enough water, get out on trails and need medical aid – shortness of breath, diabetic, etc.). Finally, those that are lost and injured. Quite a few calls of this nature come in for the Cleveland National Forest, Ortega Highway, Whiting Ranch, and Holy Jim Trail. The rescuers are trained on how to get on to single track trails and bring in treatment to the individual. There are four aircraft out of Fullerton that all carry full life support gear. They are able to do rescues at night.

The process of search and rescue includes four steps:

1. The Search – OCFA begins with various amounts of information (sometimes nothing). They utilize a mapping system and technology aboard Duke I.
2. Patient Identification – The patient is identified.



3. Access – Once the victim is located, the crew is lowered from the helicopter, where basic life support is given. The crew chief does a series of checks and then begins to lowering the rescuer into area. There is a lot of coordination from the air, but a lot of ground crew involved.
4. Extrication – When the rescuer reaches the patient they then begin extraction. The patient is loaded into the aircraft and then transferred to closest trauma center.

**Question: Can you describe your agency's role in public safety?**

John – Rangers are trained to be first responders. OC Parks receives assistance from OC Fire Authority (OCFA), local fire departments, and local police departments. Many of Orange County's parks are serviced by OCFA or local fire departments. Rangers are trained to make the first assessment of an injured individual and call for back up when needed.

Over the years OC Parks has expanded its training programs. Since 2005, there is now a Ranger Academy that lasts 18 weeks. This training covers all aspects of park operations from administration to maintenance. More and more of the workload is spent on administrative tasks and staff are responsible for all aspects of park management; from keeping the restrooms clean to tree trimming, etc. OC Parks relies on others to provide advanced medical care, etc. OC Parks now has a 24/7 dispatch service – if injuries occur they are notified immediately.

**Question: What are the types of trail related injuries you are dealing with on a regular basis?**

Tim – OCFA deals with various types of trail related injuries. The first type of injury is mountain bikers crashing and not being able to get out. Second type of injury is medical aid related (generally someone with predisposed condition). Most air rescues happen April thru December and at a frequency of two to three times per week.

John – OC Parks deals with a lot of minor injuries, small children falling off bikes, some people go too far out on trails and need to be transported back in, slips and falls. Every now and then they deal with major injuries, but mostly minor.

**Question: How often do you have biker/hiker collision accidents?**

John – OC Parks averages about 39 injuries per year. There are 36 slips, trips and falls per year and of those, most are bikers falling and getting injured. As far as number of hiker/biker collisions, they do happen but not very frequently.

Tim – OCFA doesn't keep records of the type of incidents from their calls. September is by far the busiest month for calls. He's noticed there are not too many collisions on single track trails, generally walkers/hikers stay on wider trails.

**Question: What should you report when you call 911 regarding a trail emergency?**

Tim – Try to relay as much detail as possible. Trail names have different names to everyone. Franko Map seems to be most used, so OCFA relies on those. He recommends that bikers and hikers use these maps. Cell phones, which he encourages all to have with them on the trail, can relay the lat/long of where you are. If OCFA gets the lat/long they can fly directly from Fullerton and can come within feet of where you are. Sometimes it is also helpful to identify what you see around you (i.e., rock outcropping, the ocean, a specific building, etc.)



John – OC Parks generally just gets the name of the trail. Sometimes there are several parks with that trail name. It is important to identify the facility name—what park are you in? Calls to 911 go straight to OCFA, but they still need to know what part of the county you are in (north, south, coastal, etc.). OCFA relies on OC Parks to determine the best way to get into park.

**Question: What can be done to improve trail safety?**

Tim – Be cognizant of the weather and let people know where you are going. On trail systems you can get lost, so it is important to know where you are going. Have your Franko map with you, your cell phone, and carry lots of water. Without shade and protection you can easily become dehydrated. Always carry your cell phone with you on the trail.

John – Make sure you are prepared, know the park, apply sunscreen, make sure someone knows where you are going to be and what timeframe you're going to be gone. Know your limits. People get into trouble when they push their limits. Trail users should bring water and extra food. Keep in mind trail safety, always be courteous to others, and be on the lookout. User groups need to work together. Trail courtesy goes a long way.

**Question: How many emergencies relate to rattlesnakes or wildlife?**

Tim – He can only speak to 911 calls and those types of incidents are a small percentage.

John – Since 2008 there have been seven accidents with dogs. In 2002, non-dog related wildlife incidents were two. Injuries with dogs in 2008, there were 38, they average six per year. Insect bites account for two per year. There are usually six dog bites per year.

Tim – They've encountered several issues with dogs being found deceased on trails. They've also aided in a couple of horse rescues. For example, a few equestrians started in Ortega and went to the Main Divide. OCFA ended up in a rescue situation where they hoisted two horses from Horsethief Trail... it was a 12 hour rescue.

**Question: What solutions, strategies or programs are in place to help with trail conflicts?**

John – Education is key. Having staff out on trails and being seen is helpful. OC Parks discusses proper etiquette, being prepared, and being courteous. Ranger walks/campfire programs are also good avenues. Remember to be safe and courteous, the parks are for everyone.

Tim – Keep safety in mind first and foremost. Additionally, know the park you are in and always take a cell phone. Don't just think about weather, think about wildlife. There are numerous sightings of mountain lions. Again, let people know where you are going, take your cell phone, and know the park.

**Question: What is lat/long?**

Tim – It is latitude/longitude. If you have an iPhone 4S, there is a compass application available. It has the lat/long coordinates available in it. There are different coordinate systems available, but OCFA can put anything into their system. Other options include Google Earth maps, iMaps. Anything close to lat/long will get OCFA to you.



**Question: Are there any other trail solutions you would like to see in Orange County?**

John – Laguna Canyon Foundation has done a great job with the trail signs. It shows “You are here” and they put signs out on the trails with maps. When Whiting Ranch first opened the captain worked to develop emergency access maps. They were set up in ¼ - ½ mile quadrants. This system has worked wonders to help within 20,000 acres (Irvine Ranch lands). OC Parks has hired a new GIS manager. That person is systematically incorporating emergency access into the county maps.

Tim – CELL PHONE! Have it with you always.

**Workshop Notes**  
**User Group Panel**

**Rich Gomez**

**Equestrian Trails, Inc. 357**

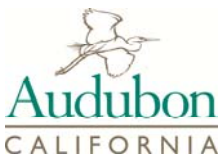
ETI is a local group within a national organization with about 2000 members. They have assisted with the acquisition and preservation of trails. This horse club focuses on riding horses and discussing issues and concerns. Sharing trails is important part of our lives and everyone in the area. Whether you are out there to ride, hike or bike – everyone has a unique experience. The best experience is feeling like you’re the only person on the trail. If you’re on horseback you feel like you’re in the wilds of Montana. It is a great gift and privilege to ride. His club works with O’Neill Regional Park in particular. Trail maintenance is scheduled regularly. Like other user groups they strive to have others enjoy this type of trail experience, i.e. focused on youth. They have regular events that expose kids to horses. It is a play day with light competition and activities like cattle sorting and penning events.

They do try to spend a lot of time on education. ETI needs to relay how you should behave on a horse. Sometimes people get the feeling that it’s their land. Just because you are on a huge horse and six feet up doesn’t mean you own the trail. The club has a lot of discussions about this. Some do disregard and doesn’t feel it applies to them. They also focus on common courtesy. Know that equestrians want to hear your concerns, comments and questions. He offered to take back to club any concerns and we can address issues together.

**Steve Larson**

**SHARE Mountain Bike Club**

SHARE Mountain Bike Club of Orange County focuses on the sport of mountain biking and sees an opportunity to promote outdoor recreation and conservation. They do this through providing fun and safe experiences, promoting ethical riding behavior, and trail work. The goal is to advance the sport of mountain biking through several avenues: riding responsibly, stick to the facts, and teach trail skills. SHARE is the local chapter of the International Mountain Biking Association and was originally formed in 1988 in Crystal Cove where user conflicts were rampant. They are still working at it today there and in other places. One potential solution is a “bell box” that allows mountain bikers to affix a bell to their bike that helps “inform” other trail users of their presence. The average age of the membership is 50 and they are now focused on bringing in youth. October 5<sup>th</sup> there will be an event offered by SHARE at Irvine Regional Park.



**Dick Newell****OC Trackers**

OC Trackers was formed by scientists, biologists, rangers and naturalists that enjoy looking at animal sign. Trackers look for footprints in the dirt. This makes trail use and location important. Trackers tend not to like to be on the same trails with lots of people (or bikes or horses) because they wipe out the trails and tracks. He works with all land managers and provides tracking training.

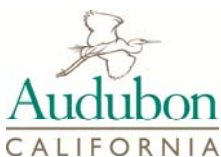
**Alison Wenster****Into the Wild OC Trail Run**

On trail runs you can cover a lot of distance and one main concern is not enough trail names or signs. More signs with mileage would be helpful as well. They've also found that single track trails and blind curves pose a big problem. Education is needed to focus folks on increased safety. You need to let people know you are coming up behind them. You need to announce yourself but if people have ear buds in that doesn't work. She recommends that if you're on single track remove one of your ear buds. Her research shows that Google Maps are not necessarily in sync with other maps. Some areas are actually places that are impassable. Another idea she mentioned is to place more trash cans at major intersections. In fact, trail runners don't mind picking up trash but would like to have trash cans along the way so they don't have to carry it. She's noticed folks cutting new and unwanted trails. She recommends creating barriers by erecting plastic fencing, using large logs, or installing prickly pear cactus. Another idea is to create an extreme mountain biking park to get them more adventurous folks off the trails and then improve safety for all.

**Suki Reed****OC Hiking Club**

The OC Hiking Club has a lot of data and understands what is going on from a hikers perspective. The Club's goal is to empower all ages of hikers. Its Trail Guardian Certification trains individuals on how to manage other trail users. They also do wilderness awareness and volunteer training. From the perspective of a hike – visiting natural areas allows them to be in their sanctuary. Their primary reason to be out in nature is to make the connection with nature – for rejuvenation. With over 10,000 members they have a lot of photographers. In fact, they have 1,000 wildflower photographers. The Club goes well beyond Orange County and experiences many other areas. Looking back there used to be hundreds of miles of fields and now there is a lot of pavement.

From the surveys done with our membership there are conflicts with all user groups: equestrians, dog walkers, birders, etc., but unfortunately most of the time it's the mountain bikers. She likes mountain bikers but there is a problem. The Club has a process to notify fellow hikers if you see a snake: yell SNAKE! The same applies for a mountain biker. If you see one, yell MOUNTAIN BIKE and then leap to one side. Mountain bikes are at the top of the most dangerous list for hikers. They seem to be getting more aggressive. It feels like predator and prey – and as prey we are defenseless. She recommends teaching mountain bikers leadership skills, because they are not leading in a way that provides for trail usage for all. The Club would be happy to assist with this training effort.



**Question: The most expensive solution is law enforcement. How do we work together? Let's talk about speed.**

Steve – The number of trail conflicts are very small considering number of miles people ride. They have taken a lot of time to educate bikers and they get through to them. Mountain bikers, when you see them, today are pretty courteous to horses – we do the best we can with hikers, others. Ear buds are definitely a problem. People walking four to five across the trail is also a problem. SHARE has focused its energies on clinics, festivals, and awareness days. Hikers – their club is huge and it's the biggest user out there. Bikers second largest user group. There have been conflicts, but those things happen.

**Question: What is the best way to encourage responsible behavior?**

Steve – Education and things like group rides.

**Question: How many accidents are happening with biker-hikers on the trails?**

Suki – With 11,000 members and more than 100 hikes per month—they are happening daily. Unfortunately most of the incidents are not reported. Certain trails are no longer used by hikers because there are so many bikers... so they just stay away. To help reduce conflict every group has a leader and the leader is trained and has leadership skills.

**Question: Is there an argument for setting aside a park for extreme mountain biking?**

Alison – I think it's a good option, but bikers want new trails all the time. Safety on the trails and solutions are important. But we all know that the question is how do we tell the general public? A few solutions could be handing out flyers with rules to provide them with an education. Maybe some trails should only be for mountain bikers. Sadly, some new hikers/runners may not know which trails are dangerous and that can increase the conflict.

Rich – One of the biggest problems is equestrian only trails. Is that the spirit of the trails? There are no mountain bike only trails. What can be done about that? We understand they want extreme trails so perhaps there should be an area set aside. The Edison trails need to be shared and trail users need to show courtesy. OCTA is working on trails and individual groups will be responsible for their own group. It comes down to educating members of each user group. One person needs to be responsible and let the group know. They each need to know the restrictions, conditions, and keep common sense at top of mind. Leadership is critical. Notion of individual trails is expensive but perhaps a good approach.

**Question: What is the feasibility of trails designated for specific uses?**

Dick – Property managers throughout the county have trail designations. But there are always one or two that don't follow it, but it does happen. Property managers do have a handle but we need to support them.

Steve – We would love to have our own land to ride. Maybe we implement an "odds and evens" days for user groups. But the population makes this restrictive. We don't want to ride on all trails. For example riding through a river bed is not fun. Trails with jumps would be great.

Suki – The issue is that there are more people than land. In some places maybe favored by mountain bikers an area can have parallel trails – one for hikers and another for bikers.



**Question: What are the impacts of trails on resources?**

Rich – There’s a balance that needs to be found. Everyone wants to provide as much space as possible. Trails are what convert people to activists. We want to save habitat and species but maybe the trails do need to be widened. This happens a lot in national parks. Here in OC perhaps we need to widen the trail.

Norberto – We need advocates for resources and need better funding for our parks.

**Workshop Notes**  
**Land Manager Panel**

**Melanie Beck**  
**National Park Service**

Her work focuses on the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties. They’ve implemented numerous management strategies but the biggest challenge is lack of staffing. They’ve tried to implement the “low hanging fruit” solutions like rotating short messages at trail heads that provide, in one glimpse, information to the trail users. Signage is often vandalized. Rangers have issued numerous citations but the judges, when the citation goes to court, it gets thrown out. The Park Service is also offering volunteer patrol programs. They hope that this helps exert peer pressure with those behaving poorly. It seems there is a big problem between older and younger mountain bikers—they are not seeing eye to eye.

**David Pryor**  
**California State Parks**

State Parks has done the typical activities like putting up signs and giving citations, but they still see surprising issues. He questioned if, through their education efforts, they are actually getting through to the people that need it most? They work closely with San Onofre and San Diego Gas and Electric to repair trails. State Parks depends on everyone’s help. Edison wants 60 foot wide easements and so Parks tries to minimize this. They need to leave more habitat since this is the main value of the park – it is habitat. As more and more roads/trails are created/used they lose the core values of the park. They welcome responsible trail users but have a responsibility to protect the parks. There are irreplaceable resources that simply can’t be destroyed by improper use. He is most concerned about the advent of new “toys.” For example, in Big Bear they are now utilizing the ski runs during the summer for new adventures. They are taking 700 or more people up to the higher elevations. This type of activity can be unsafe and creates erosion and trail destruction.

**Dave Raetz**  
**Irvine Ranch Conservancy**

The Irvine Ranch Conservancy’s (IRC) viewpoint is across a larger landscape because they partner with OC Parks, City of Irvine, and the Orange County Transportation Authority. Access issues run across all sectors. We used to have large wilderness areas and now it is more people and less land. Pieces of property that someone looked at for preservation came with rules and protections. Each landowner has specific rules to work under to preserve the land. Meanwhile there has also been an increase in the



public's desire to come into these areas. If no one goes there, no one will appreciate the asset. How do we balance this?

We need to look at how to adaptively manage the recreational component with the resource protection component. To this end, IRC evaluates the land's resiliency over time. Sometimes the land is "closed" for certain seasons allowing wildlife to flourish. Many strategies to come into play. Additionally, the Conservancy is looking for partners not "user groups." Because many groups are just that—users—and they are not contributing to land and giving back. For example, SHARE does a lot of trail work. OC Trail Run promotes responsibility to its runner. We need to push beyond and change the mentality of OC from user group to partner. Some type of messaging or encouragement to return values. We need leadership within community to promote this change. Hans Rey is involved in one of the leading groups of IMBA but also a leader of the RADS of Laguna – a very destructive group. As leaders we have to set an example. This summer in Bommer Canyon five illegal trails showed up in the span of just one week. Clearly we need to push this message to the broader community – not just the people in this room.

### **Andrea Gullo**

#### **Puente Hills Habitat Authority**

The Habitat Authority has provided maps at public locations like local libraries and online. They also have an active volunteer trail watch program. When volunteers come back from being on the trails they login to a password protected site to post their findings. Volunteers also hand out dog cards that explain why it's important to keep your dog on a leash. They've also done trail watch shifts at the different preserves to help modify the behavior of trail users by handing out flyers on trail etiquette. Additionally, they used this opportunity to inform trail users of the opportunity to become a trail watch volunteer. To become a volunteer requires extensive training. The Authority has found that the most effective solution is ranger enforcement. The biggest problem on the Authority trails is over use. They are currently working to determine the preserve's carrying capacity. The goal is to determine how best to address this as a land manager.

### **Dr. Danielle LeFer**

#### **Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy**

The Palos Verdes Conservancy manages 200 acres of open space on the Peninsula. The land includes numerous sensitive species including cactus wren and California gnatcatcher. They've done over 100 acres of habitat restoration and created a trail plan. New acquisitions allow for 900 acres of contiguous open space. These lands have conservation easements. Their goal is to have sustainable trails, reduce habitat fragmentation (i.e., trail switchbacks created too much damage so the idea was thrown out), and stop all unauthorized trails. They now have a program established to redirect people to useable trails. They have redesigned the trail system and come up with sustainable trails while closing off others. In addition to removing bike jumps, they are restoring unauthorized trails by planting vegetation with brush. Vandalism still seems to be a problem on the land. They created a program called "Adopt a Spur Trail" where the volunteers watch for activity on the spur trail and replant/repair the trail when it gets damaged. They are implementing signage approaches to get people's attention that remind them about appropriate behaviors. They've collaborated with rangers to identify where the main problems are located. The Trail Watch volunteers help focus the rangers. This program just started in August 2013. They constantly need funding because it is expensive to do this work.





**Question: Are permits required for large groups to access/utilize the parks? Do you use this opportunity to educate people?**

David Pryor – We try to limit the impact and analyze carrying capacity of the land to determine what is appropriate at any one time.

Melanie Beck – Most of our sites are limited to 50 people or 12 cars. The NPS has the ability to connect with the leader so that they can assign conditions. That’s well and good, but the leader can show up with 12 or 100 cars via MeetUp. They are starting to implement stricter timeframes, but NPS is struggling nationwide.

**Question: Levels of activity/public use have grown at an exceptional rate. Should trails and parks have capacity limits? If so, should the parks be closed?**

Melanie Beck – The NPS did a pilot survey last fall of park users which showed growth of nine times compared to four times in previous surveys. The next step is determining carrying capacity. Everyone has different goals based on their mission, here it is to preserve and protect for biological conservancy. Therefore, we are going to have to seriously look at this issue. We may need to consider closing on the weekend or limiting specific user groups. We will have to do this to fulfill our mission.

**Question: Are parks dealing with homeless issues?**

David Raetz – We have run into homeless individuals and work with the landowners. The biggest problem is the fire danger associated with homeless camps. Additionally, many homeless individuals have mental problems so we try to get them the appropriate help.

**Question: What percentage of your trails are wheelchair friendly?**

David Pryor – Crystal Cove State Park was adopted as it was. El Moro Canyon and new areas are all ADA accessible. By law we have to comply but the old trails are pretty steep.

Melanie Beck – Only a few of our trails are ADA accessible: Malibu State Park and Leo Carillo both have new trails. One of the constraints of the land is that the trails go up vertically really quickly. We are bound by Federal and State rules.

Dave Raetz – There are ADA compliant trails in Bommer Canyon. New ADA rules state that disabled individuals are allowed “devices” into park with any type of mechanized vehicle they have, i.e. motorcycle, land rover, etc. The challenge is that areas that were previously closed to this type of mechanized traffic could now be required to accommodate these types of vehicles. The law was poorly written.

