



Mission Trails Regional Park News

A PUBLICATION OF THE MISSION TRAILS REGIONAL PARK FOUNDATION Vol. 33, Number 1, Summer 2023



MISSION TRAILS REGIONAL PARK FOUNDATION

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Dan Kimpel, Park Ranger
David Lee, Center Director

* Part time

Visitor and Interpretive Center
(619) 668-3281

MTRP Foundation (619) 668-3280

Email mtrp@mtrp.org

Web Site www.mtrp.org

Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation, Inc., established January 1988, is a non-profit public benefit corporation organized for the purpose of preserving, improving, and maintaining Mission Trails Regional Park.

Newsletter contributors:

Julene Snyder, Jennifer Morrissey, Taylor Crowley, MTRP Rangers

Design: Jayna McLeod



MISSION OF THE MISSION TRAILS REGIONAL PARK FOUNDATION

In partnership with the City of San Diego, preserve and protect the natural environment of Mission Trails Regional Park and provide and promote educational and recreational opportunities.

MESSAGE FROM Jennifer Morrissey, Executive Director



Earlier this year, there were days when we could see the flow of the San Diego River from the Visitor Center terrace. It was a rare occurrence that most of us had never seen. The ribbon of water winding through Mission Gorge was beautiful, and we waited with anticipation to see how all of that water would impact the park.

An upside was that it prolonged wildflower season, and while the hillsides didn't have the poppy blooms of 2019, Mission Trails' landscape had a yellow glow from the native sunflowers. We asked City staff for their perspectives on the benefits and drawbacks of the abundant rainfall, and you can read their insights in the "Water is Life" article.

It has taken some time to feel comfortable making big organizational decisions after the topsy turvy pandemic years. For more than 16 months, MTRP Foundation staff worked remotely, cautiously returning to work at the Visitor Center to reopen the facility with City staff. Little by little, we resumed in-person programs, and we're pleased to report that both the MTRP Foundation and the park's rangers welcomed field trips back to the park this school year.

The MTRP Foundation is experiencing an evolution of sorts. We successfully rebounded from the uncertain times and now have more staff than ever, 50% of which is comprised of education staff. We've launched two new youth education programs—Trail Tykes and Eco Ambassadors—which are helping us cultivate our next generation of environmental stewards.

Our organization's growth includes an important milestone. Last September we received our first grant for land acquisition — from the San Diego River Conservancy, a non-regulatory state agency — to expand the park and protect habitat. In May, San Diego City Council voted to support our land acquisition initiative and we are working closely with City staff to together grow the park in the East Elliott Community Planning Area, north of SR-52.

We are so grateful to have Lane MacKenzie as our Board President as we launch this new initiative. For more than 20 years, Lane served in the City's Real Estate Assets Department and spearheaded several land acquisition projects within today's MTRP. There are more than 600 acres in private ownership that could become part of Mission Trails, and parcels will be secured as funds are available. Thank you to all who support Mission Trails with donations and volunteer time. We treasure our community and look forward to what we will achieve together.

IMAGE CREDITS Cover: Angie Ollman; Inside cover: Jim Van Matre, Angie Ollman; Page 1: Wendy Esterly, Angie Ollman; Pages 2-3: Angie Ollman, Pages 4-5: Mark Foreman, Wendy Esterly, Angie Ollman; Pages 6-7: Nolan Rosik, Wendy Esterly, Angie Ollman; Pages 8-9: Angie Ollman; Pages 10: Glenn Perelson and Angie Ollman; Page 11: Caleb Hartmann, Bill Brothers, Mira Sandquist, Ruth Harrison, Kaitlyn Nguyen, Sandeep Dhar, Lily Santiago, Angie Ollman; Page 12-13: Angie Ollman. Page 14: Kei & Molly Textiles, Gerry Tietje



Top row (l to r): Micah Paul, Kathryn Ruiz, Randy Christison, Jessica Ulyott, Jenny Strickland, Sandy Woodhouse, Randy Cooper, Ranger Nate Collins, Ranger Steven Blankenship; Middle row: Santiago Lam, Robert Strickland, Sharlene Harness, Lucy Sapien, Sean Bennett, Josh Rey, Mary Elliott, Iiro Yrjola; Bottom row: Iridiana Osuna, Jill Molyneaux, Angela Tidmore, Sasha Helm, Iris Thompson, Alex Leszczynska, Sarah Kesty. Not pictured: Ranger Wendy Miller, Ranger Ivy Neff.

Trail Guide Graduation

Mission Trails Regional Park Trail Guide President Fred Kramer was a graduate of the first Trail Guide training program when it started in 1995, and has served as head of the volunteer group since 2000.

On April 1, a graduation celebration was held for those who completed the 10-week course, which began in January. Family and friends applauded the new graduates for their accomplishment.

To pass, graduates — who attended three-hour classroom sessions every Wednesday evening and three-hour field activities on Saturday mornings for three and a half months — took a rigorous final written test and were graded on a sample Trail Guide walk by a veteran guide. A training team of Trail Guides and rangers led curriculum that included guest lectures on subjects such as ecology, tracking, geology and Kumeyaay culture.

MTRP Foundation Board member Randall Christison signed up for the training to learn more about the park and its resources. To say he found the course exceeded his expectations would be an understatement.

“I knew it would be challenging, but the amount of prep time in advance of each class was significant,” he says with a rueful laugh. “For the geology class alone, I spent at least 10 hours preparing, and double that for botany. It was like a college class that you never took because everybody told you how dang hard it was.”

He’s proud that he and his cohort all passed — “after a significant amount of studying” — and looks forward to leading his own group through the park. He’s particularly taken with the opportunity to share his knowledge with young nature lovers, after going on several public hikes that included kids and adults. “The kids are so interested and inquisitive,” he says. “They were a delight to have along.”

When asked what sort of attributes make for a good trail guide, Kramer was quick to answer. “Successful trail guides love nature,” he said. “And they love being out at Mission Trails Regional Park.”

Those who’d like to get involved in the next training group — which is scheduled to begin in January 2024 — should email Ranger Chris Axtmann at CAxtmann@sandiego.gov.

Mission Trails Ranger Roundup

By hosting volunteer opportunities and engaging with the public, the park’s rangers create unique and safe environments for neighbors, scouts, newcomers and park lovers to learn about and give back to the park.

Park beautification volunteers focus on the general maintenance and improvement of MTRP’s most frequented areas, including the parking lots and major trailheads of Cowles Mountain, the MTRP Visitor Center, Old Mission Dam and East Fortuna Staging Area. These efforts focus on invasive species removal and mulch distribution, litter abatement, fence post repair, brush clearance and erosion control.

Throughout the school year, rangers and their partners at the MTRP Foundation educate and inspire thousands of students, one field trip at a time. In the 2022-2023 academic year, between the City and Foundation field trip programs, more than 7,000 students visited the park to learn about topics ranging from geology and the Kumeyaay, to ecology and botany. Mission Trails’ rangers also visit nearby schools, attend community outreach events and career fairs and work with local rec centers to create and promote additional programming.





Nature Lovers

Trail Tykes introduces littlest kids to the great outdoors



Every second and fourth Sunday and Monday, more than two dozen members of the 2-5-year-old set come to the Mission Trails Visitor Center ready to celebrate and learn about nature. And, of course, sing, dance and have fun.

During a springtime session that celebrated pollinators — specifically, the many wonders of bees — the kids gathered alongside their parents, grandparents and caregivers. While at first many clung to their adults, once volunteer Chrysanne Lowe pulled out her ukulele and invited the tykes to gather around her so that they could better participate, signs of shyness melted away.

Opening with the age-old favorite, “This Old Man,” Lowe’s animated engagement and joy was infectious. Her fellow volunteer and Trail Guide Nora Bodrian takes care to choose age-appropriate books — frequently finding great kids’ books available in both English and Spanish — to reinforce the importance of nature while celebrating the theme selected by Mission Trails Regional Park (MTRP) Foundation educators.

B is for Bee warmed up the crowd, but *Bumble and Bee* was a particular hit, with Bodrian voicing a pair of bees (the aptly named Bumble and Bee) while Lowe’s cranky Froggy voice evoked giggles from the appreciative audience. When the volunteers urged the kids to join them in a raucous waggle dance, they didn’t have to ask twice.

“We do this dance because bees wiggle and dance to tell each other there’s nectar nearby,” explained Bodrian. And also because little ones just love to get their wiggles and their waggles out whenever possible.

A counting song, “The Bees Go Buzzing (Hoorah! Hoorah!)” was a big hit, particularly when Lowe reached her favorite verse: “The bees go buzzing eight by eight / The little one stops to pollinate.” Bodrian pointed out that pollen is “like fairy dust.”



A nearby classroom had been set up by educator Robin Kendall with craft supplies so that each tyke could color paper plates yellow, cut out their sunflower petals and glue sunflower seeds to the center. Afterwards, participants were invited to do a nature walk around the Visitor Center to look for native sunflowers.

“This is the first experience of hiking for a lot of kids,” said Lowe. “While they may be too little to remember exactly what they did here today, what’s most important is that they recall that they came to the park and had fun.”

The free program, presented and funded by the MTRP Foundation, has been a hit for kids and adults since it began in spring 2022.

Learn more and register for this free program at mtrp.org.

Catching the Spark

BIRDING ENTHUSIASTS
KEEP THEIR EYES AND
EARS WIDE OPEN



Millie Basden discovered her “spark bird” — what avian aficionados call the particular bird encounter that first sparked their passion for birding — alongside her future husband more than four decades ago. She still gets a thrill recalling that day.



“We took a trip to the Texas Gulf Coast and were in the town of Rockport,” she recalls. “We had a free day and saw a sign about taking a boat to look for whooping cranes and decided to go. At that time, they were very endangered and there were only about 60 or 70 left in the wild. I think we saw most of them that day doing their courtship dance, which was very beautiful.”

The volunteer Trail Guide leads bird walks at Mission Trails Regional Park (MTRP) the third Friday of each month alongside fellow Trail Guide and MTRP Foundation board member Cindy Cornelius. Other volunteers lead a free Birding Basics course at the Visitor Center the last Saturday of the month with bird walks for beginners taking place on the third Saturday of the month.

Given that the park is an oasis in the middle of an urban area which allows wildlife to thrive, it's important that visitors respect and observe the natural world around them. While Basden has spent much of her life as a birder, her love of nature goes beyond the ornithological.

“I’m really interested in the whole thing. I like lizards, snakes and insects and their interactions. I’m interested in how things relate to each other; in how their lives intersect and benefit one another.”

Locally, the winter of 2023 was a banner season for American Robins, which don’t typically flock in large numbers to the region.

Clockwise from top right: A yellow-breasted Chat; a Least Bell's Vireo; a birder photographing an American Robin.



At left: Black-headed Grosbeak
Below: MTRP Trail Guide Millie Basden leads a bird walk.

"The number of American Robins in San Diego was definitely a spectacle that caught the attention of many people," Basden says. The nomadic birds tend to go where conditions are good, and for a reason no one knows, this year San Diego was the place for them to be.

"We had thousands of robins in the county, where normally we might have a hundred. There's no doubt it was an exponential increase, but it's not unheard of. The same sort of thing was recorded in the 1970s, the 1960s and the 1950s. It's been a while since numbers that large had been seen in the county, but it shouldn't be a big surprise, because they are

nomadic. But it was different and fun to see. It was definitely eye-catching."

Now that the robins have moved on, Basden says the summer is a great time to view a number of interesting birds. "At one point, the Least Bell's Vireo was almost decimated by habitat loss, but the park provides a safe haven and riparian habitat like that along Kumeyaay Lake. Hearing the Vireos is a real treat," says Basden. "It's heartening to see an endangered species thrive in the park."

Other summer visitors of note include the Yellow-breasted Chat. "We know they're out there because they're loud and vocal, but finding them can be a challenge. If we're lucky and get to see one,

they're striking, with their bright yellow chests. They're only here for a few months during the summer."

Basden also recommends that visitors keep an eye out for Black-headed Grosbeaks, who have a big, chunky beak. "The males have a black head and wings with kind of a rusty color and some yellow on their undersides. They're a pretty bird and they sing very nicely."

Of course, with close to 200 species of birds attracted to the various park habitats, these are just a few recommendations for those who are looking to ignite a spark of their own.

"Just pay attention to the birds," says Basden. "Listen to them sing."



Water is Life

A WET WINTER AND SPRING MEAN A GREEN AND COLORFUL MISSION TRAILS

By mid-March, more rain had fallen in San Diego County than the entire previous year. While the abnormally wet winter season was a bit of a shock to locals, for the rangers and staff of Mission Trails Regional Park (MTRP), the aftermath has presented both opportunities and obstacles.

Mark Berninger, the Natural Resource Manager of the City of San Diego's Open Space Division, leads a team that's charged with a variety of habitat protection duties, including monitoring threatened species in the region as part of the Multiple Species Conservation Program, which includes 86 different species of plants and animals.

"Having a really wet year means that there was a great expression of both native and non-native seedbanks, along with the invasive plants that come along with that," he explains. "We've seen a huge increase in plants like black mustard and crown daisies, as well as invasive grasses."

Berninger and the "small but mighty" team of two biologists and three interns — alongside nine different ranger district staff and several non-profits — work to maintain, manage and monitor San Diego's 28,000+ acres of open space lands.

"I'm always trying to get the word out that San Diego has the largest urban preserve system in the lower 48 states," he says. "It's something that no other large city in the United States has. We have an existing and continuing commitment to open space in the City of San Diego. It's a passion of

mine to preserve that for the future and for our kids and our kids' kids."

He says that a number of rare and endangered native plants are doing well this year. Among them is the typically rare San Diego thornmint. "It's having a banner year. We're seeing multiple thousands of plants in a successful restoration site, that prior to restoration only had less than a hundred plants." The MTRP Foundation recently received a second grant from SANDAG to continue and expand the park's thornmint restoration project.

The San Diego golden star is also having a great year, Berninger says. "This plant grows from a little underground bulb, and great rains allow all of the small bulblets to grow and bloom. Not all the bulblets will flower in drought years, but this year we've seen an exponential increase in flowering stalks over the past drought years."

And when more of the smaller bulblets are produced, the species is better able to expand and sustain itself.

Park Ranger Dan Kimpel has been coming to the park since he was a child. "I grew up coming here before I could walk. I was either on my parents' backs or in a stroller," he says. When he first started in his role as a ranger four years ago, it happened to be another surprisingly wet winter that caused an explosion of blooming flowers.

"From a land management perspective, there are pros and cons to there being more rain than typical years," says Kimpel. "The extra rain helps when it comes to



San Diego golden star

planting plants, since we don't have to go back again to water them. Trail work becomes easier because the ground is more saturated, which makes it easier for us to dig deeper and move dirt around. For example, there were some switchback drains that we in-sloped on Cowles Mountain. If it wasn't a wet year, we realistically may not have been able to dig as deep by hand."

There are other ways that an abundance of water can make life a bit easier for rangers. "When we have really high-flow water and rains, it can help some of our water diversion drains actually clean themselves out," Kimpel explains. "With



Scan the code to watch the "Water is Life" short film or go to www.mtrp.org/waterislife.

medium rains, the water doesn't travel fast enough, and it brings silt that collects in the drains. But some of our drains are designed so that when high-flow water hits them, the silt that's already gathered in that drain washes out."

Keeping visitors from going off-trail in the park is always a concern, and when things are dry, there is coastal sage habitat that can be particularly vulnerable. "If visitors do it just once during the really dry months, their footprints can kill anything underfoot," he says. "Later, invasive plants come in."

But the wet spring has made the park more verdant, which is objectively a good thing. "From a recreational perspective, and for my own job enjoyment, the park is beautiful," Kimpel says. "It's awesome seeing all the flowers and it makes me happy and other people happy. I love seeing all the 'trailies' out here and seeing everyone enjoying the flowers and the greenery of the park."

Park Ranger Heidi Gutknecht agrees. "The additional rains we had this winter and spring have enabled a great wildflower year, with large swaths of flowers in different areas of the park." She is particularly struck by the profusion of California and San Diego sunflowers. "They've exploded all over the place; you can see shades of yellow and gold blanketing the slopes from afar. We even had a bloom of Turkish Rugging (a native

spine flower) on the slope east of the Jackson parking lot, and some Peninsular Onion along Father Junipero Serra Trail, both of which haven't been seen in the park since the super bloom of 2019."

But the flip side is a massive increase in weeds throughout the park. "The mustard looks like it is on steroids this year, with giant stands of its light-yellow flowers rivaling those of the wildflowers," says Gutknecht.

She, her colleagues and volunteers have definitely been keeping busy. "During the first few months of the year, my Habitat Restoration Crew added many additional native plants to the restoration areas at the East Fortuna Staging Area, and in the southeast corner of the grasslands," she says. "The soil was nice and soft from the rains, which made it much easier. Now we're focusing on removing the non-native invasive plants that are thriving because of all the rains and encroaching on those native plants."

She adds, "As with all things, you can't have the good without some bad. While I'm sure the extra rains enable extra plant growth, and have been great for all the resident wildlife, but it's also

caused a lot of erosion and trail damage that Ranger Dan's Trail Improvement Crew has had to address."

Berninger says among the native plant success stories that he's witnessed this year is that of the dot-seed plantain. "This little plant is vitally important," he explains. "This is the one and only host plant for the Quino-Checkerspot Butterfly, which is another rare and endangered species."

He adds that Mission Trails's vernal pool species have also benefitted from the winter rains. "Species endemic to San Diego and nowhere else — like San Diego button celery, San Diego mesa mint and San Diego fairy shrimp — have flourished in the vernal pools on the west side of the park," he says.

"These pools are also home to the imperiled Western Spadefoot Toad; the wet winter has allowed them ample time to complete their lifecycle, which relies almost exclusively on vernal pools. Many toadlets have been seen hopping around the cracked and drying soils around the pools."

Berninger reiterates that those that love the park can do their own part to protect it. "For as big of a city as we are, to have these vast tracts of open space right in the middle of a city is really something special. It adds to the quality of life for everyone that lives here."



Dot-seed plantain





On the Right Path

**Teen ECO AMBASSADORS
Inspired to Do Something Great**

Spring is typically the season of rebirth and growth, which was richly apparent throughout Mission Trails Regional Park (MTRP) this year. But beyond the abundant evidence of blooms and propagation outdoors, a new sort of blossoming has been occurring for a group of nature-loving young people.

A new MTRP Foundation education program — dubbed Eco Ambassadors — connects teens to conservation efforts and inspires them to explore careers involving the outdoors. The idea was conceived by MTRP Foundation staff, with program implementation from Foundation staff Alissa Lustgarten and Brian Moehl.

The inaugural cohort is a group of 20 high school students who were selected from nearly 100 applicants. The group met on Sunday afternoons this spring to learn from those with expertise in subjects like biology, soil ecology, meteorology, sustainability, wildfire science and environmental and climate science.

"I really, really enjoy this program," says 18-year-old River Shepherd, a senior at Canyon Hills High School. "Being with a group of people who have a buzz of excitement for the outdoors is great. And I really like hearing that excitement from older people and learning how I can follow in their path to do something great."

Applicants from 42 different San Diego County schools applied to the program and 12 schools are represented within the cohort. The program — which is generously funded by SDG&E — is free, and high schoolers are encouraged to apply for the next round of sessions, which begin in the fall. The grant provides shuttles to and from the park for those students who need it, so that lack of transportation isn't a barrier to participation.

Mark Berninger — the Natural Resource Manager for the City of San Diego Parks and Recreation Department, Open Space Division — was a featured speaker who gave the teens an overview of the path that led him to his current role.

"I wear many different hats," he said. "I'm a senior planner, a supervisor, a field biologist, a permitting specialist, a climate action plan advisor and a subject matter expert. Today, I get to do my favorite parts of the job as an educator and advocate."

In the course of his presentation about the importance of protecting rare species in San Diego, he talked about efforts to conserve and preserve natural resources which includes monitoring the populations and potential impacts to more than 86 separate species of plants and animals as well as the environmentally sensitive lands they live in.

Berninger gave a detailed overview of the history of San Diego's Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP), which is described as "a comprehensive, long-term habitat conservation



planning program that covers approximately 900 square miles (582,243 acres) in southwestern San Diego County.”

“Currently our preserve system includes almost 51,000 acres, of which 27,000 acres are open to the public,” he explained. Among the nature preserves he and his team of biologists are responsible for maintaining are Mission Trails Regional Park, Los Peñasquitos and Otay Valley, where they monitor more than 65 separate endangered plant populations and nearly 1,000 federally protected vernal pool wetlands.

On a subsequent Sunday, the Eco Ambassadors learned about the career paths and field experiences from SDG&E professionals in the fields of meteorology, sustainability and wildfire science.

“I now realize how many jobs in nature are out there. This program has made me surer that I’ve made the right decision and am heading exactly where I want to go.”

Former wildland firefighter Carrie Bowers gave the ambassadors a deep dive into her journey to her current role as fire science meteorologist. “I work with our fire coordination team, who helps bring our electrical crews out to fires to fix anything that may have burned up and make sure everybody’s safe,” she explained.

After her presentation, she led a brief field trip out into the park which prompted a discussion between Bowers and the Eco Ambassadors



Above: The inaugural Eco Ambassadors participants

Below: Mark Berninger, at left, pointing out an item of interest to Eco Ambassadors

about the various ways to measure moisture in vegetation and assess potential fire danger and ways of lessening potential devastation.

Colin Turner, an 18-year-old senior from Granite Hills High School, finds a lot of value in the program, particularly since he’s clear on where his future lies. “I’m dead-set on becoming a game warden for the state of California.” He expressed surprise at how engaging he’s found the Eco Ambassador program. “I learned a lot more than I expected to,” he said.

Poem Perry, a 17-year-old senior from West Hills High School, is heading to UC Santa Cruz after graduation and plans to major in ecology and evolutionary biology. She says what she’s learned since becoming an Eco Ambassador has helped her become more certain that she’s on the right path.

“I now realize how many jobs in nature are out there. This program has made me surer that I’ve made the right decision and am heading exactly where I want to go.”



Pictured (top to bottom): Guests enjoy the photo contest entries; Ruth Harrison walks to the podium to accept her Best in Show award; Padre's Shooting Star entry by Glenn Perelson



Photo Contest Highlights the Unique Beauty of Mission Trails

Since 1993, the MTRP Foundation has staged a photo contest to allow park users to share their unique perspectives of Mission Trails, an 8,000-acre City of San Diego open space park. This year, 283 individual entries were submitted by photographers of all ages. The 105 highest-scoring images were on view at the Visitor Center.

The Foundation hosted an opening reception and awards ceremony on May 11 for the contest, and invited the community to gather on the Visitor Center's terrace to celebrate and honor those whose photos were selected as finalists. District 7 Councilmember Raul Campillo joined the Foundation in announcing each category's first, second, and third place winning photographs, as well as the overall best-in-show.

Many thanks to this year's MTRP Photo Contest jurors: Julia Dixon-Evans, Mark Foreman, Ramon Galindo and Rick Wiley. The 2023 Mission Trails Regional Park Photo Contest has been generously supported by grants from the City of San Diego.



From wide expansive landscapes to the tiniest details, MTRP Photo Contest entries captured the essence of Mission Trails.

Selected entries, clockwise from top left, by Caleb Hartmann, Bill Brothers, Mira Sandquist, Ruth Harrison, Kaitlyn Nguyen, Sandeep Dhar, Lily Santiago

Bottom photos: Contest participants and supporters at the awards reception. View all of the qualifying contest entries at mtrp.org/photo-contest-2023/



Celebrating MTRP's Volunteers

In March of 2023, City of San Diego staff and the Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation hosted an appreciation dinner and awards ceremony for the park's volunteers. At the event, Councilmember Raul Campillo (District 7) presented a proclamation naming March 18, 2023 as Mission Trails Regional Park Volunteer Appreciation Day in the City of San Diego. Following a buffet dinner, more than 40 volunteers received awards for their dedicated service.

Longtime volunteers Terry Gaughen and Fred Kramer received awards for their 30 years of service. Fred is president of the park's volunteer Trail Guides and is also on the MTRP Foundation Board. Terry is the park's honorary horticulturalist and can be found out in the park among the plants or behind the wheel of his trusty green pickup truck.

We thank each and every one of the park's more than 100 active volunteers for continuing to make Mission Trails an incredible resource for the community to enjoy.

Volunteer opportunities at the park cover a wide range; there is truly something for everyone. Outdoors, volunteers can join one of the trail crews, including park beautification, habitat restoration and trail maintenance.

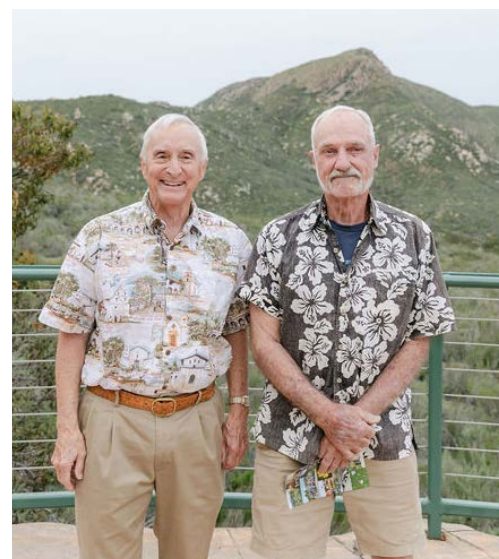
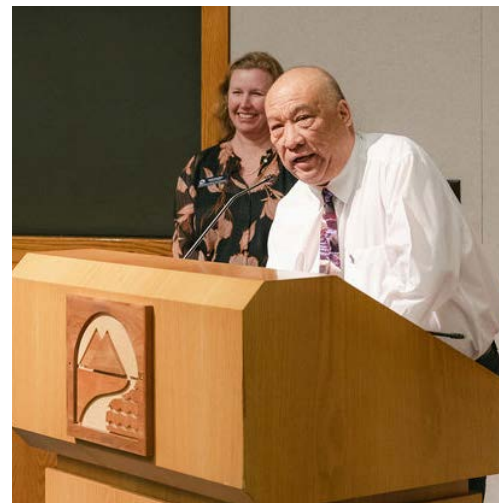
In addition to outdoor service, there are indoor volunteer opportunities at the park to consider. The MTRP Foundation needs volunteers to staff the front desk and Gift Shop. These public-facing volunteers provide trail advice, answer questions about the park and help guests explore the Visitor Center's offerings. The Foundation especially needs volunteer help on the weekends. And for those interested in educational programs, the Foundation's children's story time and craft program, Trail Tykes, welcomes new volunteer readers.

To volunteer at Mission Trails, visit mtrp.org/volunteer.



Above: MTRP Volunteers mingle on the terrace and take in the view of Mission Gorge

Below: Jennifer Morrissey, Executive Director of MTRP Foundation, and Andy Field, Director of the City of San Diego's Parks and Recreation Department with the MTRP Volunteer Day Proclamation.



Clockwise from top left: Councilmember Raul Campillo (D7), MTRP Ranger Heidi Gutknecht and MTRP Ranger Aide Steven Blankenship; David Lee and Janet Gavaldon announce the volunteer service awards; Fred Kramer (left) and Terry Gaughen marked 30 years of volunteer service; MTRP Foundation Board member Bruce Folkmann among fellow volunteers at dinner; volunteers at the service award presentation.



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Special Treasures from the Gift Shop

The MTRP Gift Shop is a treasure hidden in plain sight in the Visitor Center. A one-stop shop for those who appreciate unique finds, the well-curated selection includes a variety of nature-inspired products that range from magnets, stickers and cards to Mission Trails branded hats, sweatshirts and T-shirts.

The MTRP Foundation prides itself on supporting small businesses and individual artists, carrying special treasures from makers across California, other parts of the U.S. and Baja. Most recently, the Gift Shop began carrying wares from Kei & Molly Textiles, a small business that employs immigrant and refugee people in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Kei & Molly's towels, sponge cloths, tote bags, cards and stickers feature their bold designs and bright colors.

Stop by the Visitor Center to peruse the Gift Shop in person, or shop online at www.mtrpstore.org. All proceeds support MTRP.



Generous Grant Includes Matching Donation Opportunity



This spring, the Gerald T. & Inez Grant Parker Foundation — which supports nonprofit organizations in their efforts to improve life for all San Diegans — made a grant of up to \$100,000 to the Mission Trails Regional Park (MTRP) Foundation.

The grant includes a \$25,000 one-for-one matching challenge. Funds from new and lapsed donors will be matched by the Parker Foundation dollar for

dollar. The deadline for these donations is December 31, 2023.

"We're thrilled to have received this grant from the Parker Foundation and encourage the MTRP community to help us meet this \$25,000 matching goal," said MTRP Foundation Executive Director Jennifer Morrissey. "Those who love the park and want to see it continue to thrive can make a gift to help us move initiatives forward that preserve, protect and improve Mission Trails. A donation of any size helps."



SCAN HERE TO DONATE