



# NEWSLETTER

*Dedicated to the acquisition of forest open space and wildlife habitat on private lands within the San Bernardino National Forest in order to ensure lasting public benefit of the natural mountain environment.*

**Spring 2010**

## 800 ACRES ADDED TO U.S. FOREST LANDS

### Revolving Land Fund at Work

In December the San Bernardino Mountains Land Trust (SBMLT) successfully completed two major sales of outstanding wildland inholdings to the U.S. Forest Service.

Both the 640-acre Eagle Canyon property and the 186-acre Yaeger Mesa site had been held by the Land Trust for nearly five years before all aspects of the sale could be fully accomplished.



**The 186-acre Yaeger Mesa property was recently transferred to the U.S. Forest Service by the San Bernardino Mountains Land Trust. In this photo the former private inholding looks like two crop circles on the distant hill, but is actually a large fern meadow within a conifer forest providing excellent habitat for wildlife and a scenic destination for hikers.**

Sale proceeds go into the SBMLT revolving land acquisition fund, a special account that enables the Land Trust to buy critical forest landscapes for full conservation protection. The Land Trust now is negotiating on prospective new properties for purchase.

The decision of what new lands to buy is based on a detailed priority list compiled by SBMLT in coordination with the San Bernardino National Forest.

Eagle Canyon and Yaeger Mesa are in the Santa Ana Mountains of the Cleveland National Forest, which borders Riverside and Orange Counties.

These properties were gifted originally to SBMLT by the Trust for Public Land, a national land conservancy that partners with us on projects within the three national forests of Southern

California. The three forests partnership is called Save the Saints.

Eagle Canyon is located in the mountains above the city of Corona and provides added access on the east side of the forest that was previously landlocked to the Forest Service.

Yaeger Mesa posed a unique challenge to the Land Trust insofar as there is a 100-year-old mine through the mountain that needed to be enclosed for habitat protection and public safety. (See story on page 4).



Great Horned Owl

Photo by Margaret Spiess

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TO CONTACT the SAN BERNARDINO LAND TRUST

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**Your Membership Is Essential To Success!**

The Land Trust is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization. Your contributions are tax deductible

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***JOIN* this vital effort (or renew your support) with a generous contribution today**

**San Bernardino Mountains Land Trust** PO Box 103 Fawnskin, CA 92333 **-or-**  
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# PARTNERING WITH COUNTY SUPERVISOR NEIL DERRY

## HANNA ROCKS PROJECT

The San Bernardino Mountains Land Trust is coordinating with County Supervisor Neil Derry, whose 3<sup>rd</sup> District includes most of the mountain area, to work together on the Hanna Rocks project.



Site of abandoned Hanna Rocks subdivision, where SBMLT is working to acquire both donated and tax delinquent lots.

Hanna Rocks is an abandoned subdivision of undersized lots leftover from the early 1900s. It is a 40-acre stray patch of private land (northwest of Fawnskin) surrounded by public forestlands. The goal is to put it back into the National Forest.

### Supervisor Derry's Help

The Land Trust recognized Hanna Rocks as a problem 10 years ago, but until recently was unable to arrange a solution for a joint consolidation plan.

When Supervisor Derry learned of the issue last summer, he scheduled a meeting between his staff and the Land Trust to formulate a plan to address the problem. That was an important step forward, since the county owns a significant percentage of the lots. An requires a team effort to consolidate the remaining private lots.



Supervisor Derry

Prior to 1973 the county's real estate division acquired many of the lots, when a number of previous owners let their lots go for taxes. The pattern of defaulting has continued to recur up to the present as new owners, who obtain lots sight

unseen, abandon them when they realize the unusable circumstances of the inaccessible location. Until now, no further action had been taken, since the county had not followed-through on its earlier efforts.

When Supervisor Derry agreed to work with the Land Trust, it finally became possible to revive the long neglected project. With cooperative planning, we should be able to complete what was started so many years ago.

This isolated private inholding is located on a small dirt road in the rugged terrain near Hanna Rocks, which is a landmark pinnacle formation.

The entire area was burned over in the 2007 Butler II Fire. Because of the separate ownerships of the remaining lots in the subdivision, this will be a long-term project that only an organization like the Land Trust is capable of accomplishing.



Hanna Rocks site after the 2007 wildfire

Hanna Rocks is not the only situation of this kind. There are other so-called "lost subdivisions" to be found scattered about in remote areas of the National Forest, where inaccessibility and fire danger render the substandard sites unsuitable for development.

If the collaborative effort on the Hanna Rocks venture proves successful, the Land Trust and the county will consider tackling more of these difficult projects together. The Land Trust appreciates Supervisor Derry's commitment to find solutions for complicated land use problems in the forest.



# VOLUNTEERS ASSIST IN MAJOR LAND TRUST PROJECT

## 🛠️ BAT GATE CONSTRUCTED AT MINE ENTRANCE 🛠️



**Welder John Norman completes a steel bat gate enclosure**

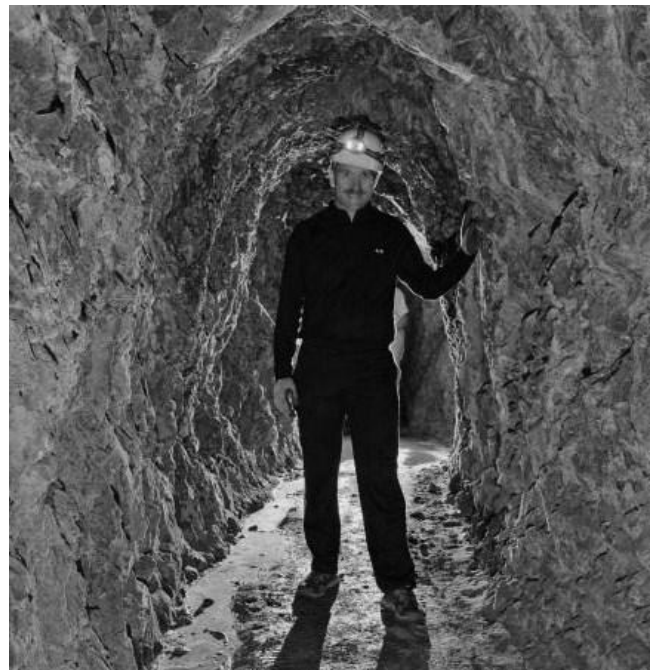
As a pre-condition of the sale to the Forest Service of the Yaeger Mesa parcel, the San Bernardino Mountains Land Trust agreed to construct so-called “bat-friendly” gates at both outlets of the 100-year-old mine that runs through the mountain. The narrow tunnel extends about 2,000 feet from end to end.

Bat gates are intended to protect unique cave habitat and reduce liability of potential hazards. They are locked except for authorized entrance and special circumstances. The project posed a huge challenge, because the mine was 1.5 miles from the trail head and up a steep overgrown canyon. Over two thousand pounds of materials and equipment had to be hauled up by hand.

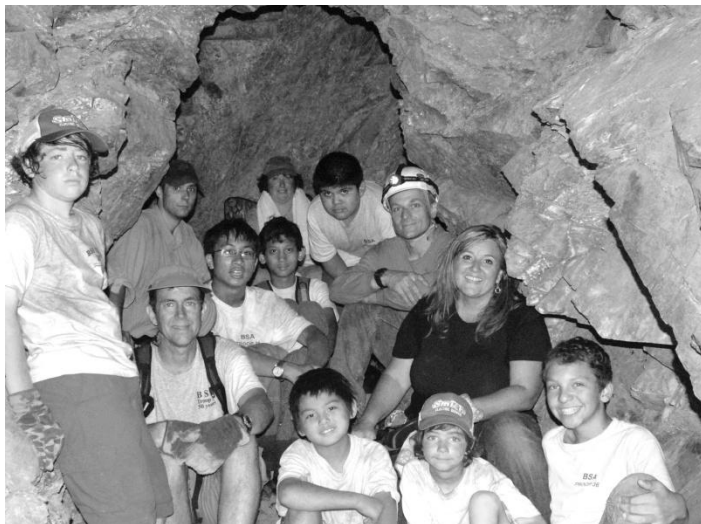
The Land Trust was able to enlist the expert assistance of the Southern California Grotto, an organization of highly experienced caving enthusiasts.

The project required extensive planning with many trips to the mine to take measurements, trim back poison oak and attach climbing ropes for scaling two steep cliffs in the narrow canyon. Each expedition also included a recreational tour through the colorful intriguing mine.

After ordering all the materials, which included 1,600 pounds of steel angle bars, an entire weekend was set aside to transport everything to the site and construct the first bat gate. Heavy welding equipment, generators and bags of cement were hoisted up the canyon by hand.



**Caver Marc Heins conducts tour of the mine tunnel**



**Boy Scouts and parents at the entrance of the Yaeger Mine**

Forty volunteers participated, including about 15 Boy Scouts and leaders. Eight-foot lengths of angle iron were brought up one by one, each on the shoulders of two hearty backcountry strongmen. The Boy Scouts and two of their mothers helped carry up cement in 20-pound bags in backpacks. Everyone got a tour of the mine.

Construction was started late on the first day and completed near the end of the second day. The welding team consisted of experienced members of the spelunking group. The steel gate was built to professional specifications provided by the Forest Service. Two weeks later the second smaller entrance, where a tiny stream flowed from the mine, was enclosed with a stainless steel culvert and gate. Each project was inspected by a Forest Service official.

# OPPORTUNITY FOR INPUT BY SBMLT MEMBERS

The mission of the San Bernardino Mountains Land Trust is focused on land protection opportunities throughout the mountain area and national forest. Our local forest serves one of the largest population centers in the entire country and faces enormous pressure for continued urban expansion inside the national forest. Every threatened piece of open space that we save is vital, because the healthy balance of the forest is already overstrained.

The Land Trust benefits from the involvement and input of our members and supporters. We would like to create more opportunities for input on decisions about the various lands to be protected. With greater participation, we may also be able to accomplish more.

With this aim in mind, we will be reaching out to interested members to help us gather more input from the different mountain communities. Gradually the Land Trust would like to organize small conservation committees in each of the many communities like Crestline, Twin Peaks, Arrowhead, Running Springs, Green Valley Lake, Fawnskin, Big Bear Valley, Forest Falls, and Idyllwild.

If you are interested in helping in a particular area, you are welcome to contact our executive director as described on page 2. We will also send out an e-mail notice to those members, who have provided us with their e-mail address. Having greater participation in each area can make a big difference.



## SBMLT STAFF PROFILE

### Projects Manager, Kevin Kellems

The San Bernardino Mountains Land Trust is fortunate to have Kevin Kellems as a key member of the organization's two-person part-time staff. As the Projects Manager for the Land Trust, Kellems' chief function is identifying the top acquisition sites, prioritizing each project and carrying out all of SBMLT's complex real estate transactions.

Kellems brings to this challenging job an excellent combination of practical talents, scientific education, and local knowledge. Having grown up in the Big Bear Area, he has great appreciation for our unique mountain environment and has hiked throughout the entire area.

Kellems has a degree in Biology from California State University at San Bernardino and understands the ecology, habitats and species of the local forest.

He is also well versed in real estate, having perfected his skills during ten years of work with the Land Trust (five of those as a volunteer).

Kevin's extensive knowledge of local mountains and remarkable talent for conservation real estate enables him to work exceptionally well with both the Forest Service and private landowners.

Thanks to Mr. Kellems, the Land Trust has become a very effective organization for improving forest protection in these popular mountains.



Kellems views a project site



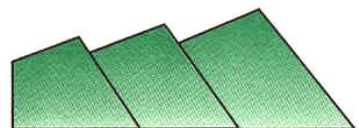
Kellems is adept at reading and producing maps





Black bear knocks at the window of a local Fire Lookout Tower.

Photo by George Morey



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