



SAN BERNARDINO  
MOUNTAINS  
LAND TRUST

# Forest View

December 2020

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



Pebble plain plants at Moonridge Ecological Reserve

## Land Trust's Nature Reserves draw increased use as more people visit the forest for relief

The SAN BERNARDINO NATIONAL FOREST is the best mountain retreat in Southern California, but it has far too much private land within it –land that's zoned for development and threatens the forest's future integrity.

SBMLT seeks to buy as much of that land as possible to keep it natural. So far we've added 14,500 acres to the National Forest, while another 800 acres is owned by SBMLT itself, including six NATURE RESERVES.

### ARROWHEAD RIDGE, COYOTE ROCK and the PEBBLE PLAIN ECOLOGICAL RESERVE

In the past year of Covid-19 restrictions and sheltering in place orders, a lot more people have sought refuge in the great outdoors. As a result, SBMLT's forest sites are more heavily used than ever. One popular hike is on the Will Abell Trail at **Arrowhead Ridge** –a 1.8 mile loop that weaves through sloping scenic forestland.

All SBMLT hiking trails are in very scenic settings that were each rescued from urban development. The inter-connected loop trails on the 700-acre **Pebble Plain Ecological Reserve** offer prime scenic open space on moderate terrain for local Big Bear residents. The trail

at **Coyote Rock** is somewhat hidden (located behind Running Springs School), but climbs to an impressive and commanding summit, an actual prominent lookout rock, with connecting routes up to Mill Peak and to the USFS Exploration Trail on Keller Peak.

All these inspirational trails offer the best of the forest surroundings in the San Bernardino Mountains, and SBMLT is very glad that more people are now enjoying them.



Hiker on SBMLT Coyote Rock Trail



Kevin Kellems leads nature hike (photo by Dave Ficke)

## SAN BERNARDINO MOUNTAINS LAND TRUST

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***SBMLT*** is a charitable nonprofit organization dedicated to buying threatened forestland for greater protection of the **San Bernardino Mountains**.

## 25 years of saving land in the SAN BERNARDINO NATIONAL FOREST

Twenty-five years ago conservationists from Crestline, Lake Arrowhead and Running Springs met at the Antler's Inn to officially launch the *San Bernardino Mountains Land Trust*. They wanted a proactive organization that would help to buy private tracts of land mixed-in with surrounding National Forest lands. Otherwise, all the private land is fair game for incompatible urban development under the overly permissive policies of San Bernardino County.

A map of SAN BERNARDINO NATIONAL FOREST shows that thousands of acres inside its boundary are privately-owned and unprotected. To a passing sightseer these lands blend-in with the overall natural landscape, so it's easy to think they're part of the whole forest. That is, until one day the bulldozers arrive and turn a beautiful hillside into a new housing tract.

In the past 25 years SBMLT has been instrumental in protecting over 15,000 acres to preserve the unique forest experience for visitors and residents alike. We work with other nonprofits, with elected officials, with government agencies (like the Forest Service and California Department of Fish & Wildlife) and with many landowners willing to sell their private land for conservation. SBMLT has a strong track record of success over the years that's enabled us to effectively defend the forest against many of the constant threats to its ecological integrity. Wildlife especially benefits from this greater protection of its shrinking habitat.



# DEPT of FORESTRY BUYS CONSERVATION EASEMENT

## \$1 million Forest Legacy Grant awarded after 3-year processing period

The exceptional health and stature of tree growth at Arrowhead Ridge qualified this site for a unique FOREST LEGACY GRANT, which was fully awarded this month. As a result, the state of California now ensures permanent protection of all the native forestland onsite with a Conservation Easement –a special title deed that eliminates all development rights from the property.

The grant comes from the state’s Forest Health and Climate Investments Program, which receives funding from a special Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund. By protecting healthy forests, more progress can be achieved in reducing the adverse climatic effects of greenhouse gases.

### Premier Forest Setting

Arrowhead Ridge is the most outstanding of the few remaining privately-owned natural forest parcels in the resort community of Lake Arrowhead, where two thousand acres of forestland got converted into wall-to-wall subdivisions between the 1960s and the 21th Century.



Ancient big tree by Will Abell Trail

The SAN BERNARDINO NATIONAL FOREST is among the most heavily-used public lands in America, due to the mega-population of Southern California right on its doorstep.

Given the extraordinary stature, health and diversity of trees at Arrowhead Ridge, the site is recognized by professional foresters as the best example of a west-side Sierra Nevada mixed-conifer forest found in the San Bernardino Mountains. This type of forest is normally only found ranging from the Cascade region of Shasta County down to the southern Sierra in Kern County. The site’s scenic quality makes it an excellent and popular spot for hiking.



Arrowhead Ridge

### Magnificent Trees, Wildlife & Watershed

Because so much of Lake Arrowhead is residential, protection of its remaining open space is all the more critical. Magnificent trees, wildlife and watershed all inspired the Forestry Division of CALFIRE to designate Arrowhead Ridge for special status. The conservation easement prevents development of the site, and the sale proceeds enable SBMLT to rescue more land.

#### WILDLIFE:

Over 150 wildlife species occur at Arrowhead Ridge. The unique San Bernardino flying squirrel and rare southern rubber boa are two that exist only in the San Bernardino National Forest (nowhere else) and only within a very limited range. The site is also habitat for the California spotted owl.



#### WILDLIFE CORRIDOR:

The property is a key link in a major county-designated wildlife corridor –the main migration route in this sector of the forest for large mammals like deer, bear, and mountain lion between north and south parts of the National Forest.

#### WATERSHED VALUES:

Three seasonal streams shed off of Arrowhead Ridge into the adjacent waters of Grass Valley Creek, which is one of two major tributaries to the Mojave River. About 500,000 acre feet of water flows yearly into the Mojave from the local mountain watershed.

**SBMLT looks forward** to coordinating with CALFIRE in the long-term management and preservation of the excellent forest and wildlife habitat at the Arrowhead Ridge site.

# Congress approves Great American Outdoors ACT in 2020

## ~ Increased Funding for LWCF ~



### Where does the Money come from?

LWCF funds are derived from off-shore oil leases, i.e. royalties paid to the U.S. Government by various corporations for the privilege of extracting publically owned mineral resources from U.S. waters. In turn, the government uses LWCF's share of these royalties to re-invest in improving public National Parks and Forests.

In the past LWCF's share, which totals \$900 million per year, depended on the whims of Congress as to how much actually got used for its intended purpose. Too often the majority of funds got siphoned away and diverted to unrelated projects, thus leaving behind only unpaid IOUs in the LWCF account.

For the second time in two years, Congress passed key legislation on the **LAND & WATER CONSERVATION FUND (LWCF)**, a revenue source for National Parks and Forests to buy private lands inside their boundaries. The program is a major part of SBMLT's mission and work.

After 50 years, LWCF expired in 2015. But last year it finally got re-authorized and reinstated by Congress, though its funding method, unfortunately, remained arbitrary and unreliable.

Now, this year in March LWCF's longtime revenue source (i.e. offshore oil royalties) was made permanent with the passage of the Great American Outdoors Act.



*The Deep Creek wild trout stream was the focus of SBMLT's original LWCF project. Many fly-fishing clubs were involved in helping to save 300 acres of forestland and 1.5 miles of Deep Creek between Running Springs and Arrowbear in 1996*



Bald eagle habitat could be improved by LWCF projects

LWCF is the best monetary source for buying critical forestland to patch up major gaps in our local San Bernardino National Forest. SBMLT was originally created to maximize our local use of LWCF.

### How does LWCF help SBMLT & the SBNF

There are many private landowners within the San Bernardino National Forest, who'd like to sell their land for conservation purposes. But without *all three* factors (SBNF, LWCF and SBMLT) there'd be no conservation buyers to purchase those lands, which greatly need to be protected to avoid further fragmenting the forest.

The Forest Service provides the buyer, LWCF provides the funds and SBMLT does everything else to make sure that deals get done. That includes working with elected officials on allocating LWCF funds and with landowners willing to sell. It also means understanding every detail of the complex federal real estate transaction procedure. LWCF was the major reason why SBMLT started up in the first place. Now, the restored *full funding* of LWCF is a renewed cause for celebration.

# Remarkable makings of a Pebble Plain Ecological Reserve

From 2014 to 2020

In six years, the once badly damaged landscape between Bear City, Upper Moonridge and Sugarloaf has undergone a significant transformation.

Where once there were aggressive unrestrained motorcycles and off-road vehicles regularly scarring up the landscape, there now are scenic nature trails for hikers to enjoy.

Where formerly there was rampant trash dumping and destructive timber theft and illegal camping, now there is a very healthy and attractive forest. These are all positive signs of a remarkable and welcome turnaround that enhances the whole community.



Explaining the rules of the new ecological reserve to dirt bikers



Areas of pebble plain habitat that were once trampled by off-road vehicle abuse are now reviving thanks to the new management of the area as an ecological reserve and the helpful monitoring by neighboring volunteers.



Couch and debris at dump site

Enormous credit goes to the many surrounding neighbors, who have volunteered, and to the help of the local *Inland Empire Resource Conservation District*, which has funded major fencing and other boundary control projects. These restraints have allowed nature to heal itself over time. As a result,

it's been possible to establish a 700-acre ecological reserve.

## WILDLIFE RETURNS

As the motorcyclists, 4-wheelers and dumpers have gradually all gone elsewhere, neighbors have noticed that wildlife is steadily returning. Motion cameras have recorded bear, deer, bobcats, burros, coyotes and, recently in November, a roving mountain lion. SBMLT is grateful to see the reserve in such a healthy condition.

**HELP SUPPORT** *the* **SAN BERNARDINO MOUNTAINS LAND TRUST**

**MAIL** your donation **TODAY** *with the FORM below*

- **or** - **visit our website to make an online gift at [www.SBMLT.net](http://www.SBMLT.net)**

## Your Membership is Key to continued Success!

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

My contribution is:

- Forest Supporter (\$50)
- Mountain Guardian (\$100)
- Mountain Hero (\$250)
- Forest Champion (\$500)
- Other Donation (\$ \_\_\_\_\_)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Join *the* LAND TRUST (or renew your support) with a generous contribution today**

**San Bernardino Mountains Land Trust PO Box 490 Lake Arrowhead, CA 92352**



Snow Valley  
(SBMLT photo)



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