



SAN BERNARDINO
MOUNTAINS
LAND TRUST

Forest View

December 2023

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



Winter snowfall in San Bernardino Mountains

Forest open space for trails, wildlife & beauty

SAN BERNARDINO MOUNTAINS LAND TRUST'S major role in the acquisition of conservation lands throughout our forest has saved many of the best hiking areas, prime wildlife habitat and great scenic sites from being bulldozed. It's been a team effort between SBMLT and all our most trusty supporters and volunteers.

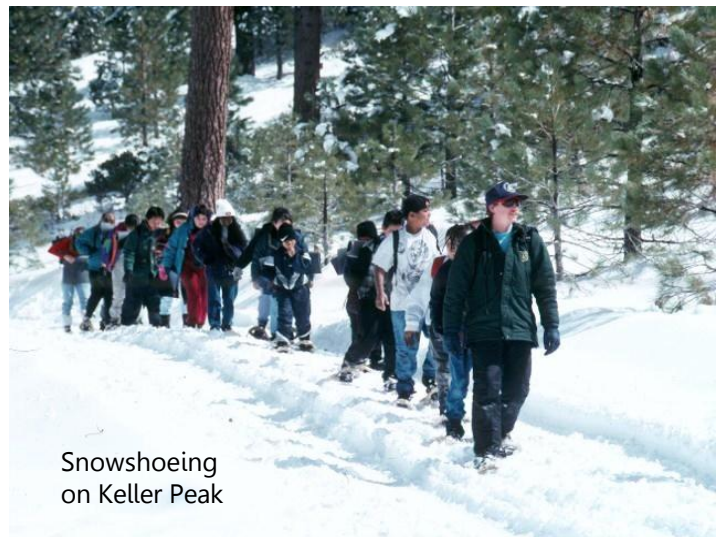
While SBMLT's successes have been truly outstanding, they've also been somewhat invisible, since each time we rescue an excellent landscape from ultimate destruction, nothing visible actually happens at the site ...an existing magnificent part of the forest simply continues to remain intact.

Only if we fail, and the developers suddenly bulldoze all the trees and landscape to add more houses ...only then does the average resident or visitor realize the terrible loss that has happened.

So, in order to be successful, it's essential to plan way ahead and to be vigilant, ever watching for a choice opportunity to take action at a moment when the timing is right. That's the real art, the commitment and public service of our Land Trust.

Historic Winter Snowstorms

Winter 2023's snowfall –lasting into April– was *the most* since the famous storm of 1938 –up to 12 feet or more in Running Springs and Green Valley Lake. Back in 1949, 1969 and the late 1970s there were similar conditions. Although difficult for the hilltop communities and the infrastructure, the total amount of moisture for the mountain watershed was a tremendous boost for the overall health of all the trees and vegetation of the forest.



Snowshoeing
on Keller Peak

Progress at Arrowhead Ridge & the Pebble Plain Reserve

SBMLT was established in 1995 to rescue threatened forest lands by adding them into the National Forest. Over 15,000 acres have been rescued so far. Since all lands aren't eligible for USFS ownership, SBMLT became a conservation landowner itself and manages two major forest preserves: one in Lake Arrowhead and another in Big Bear Lake –plus several smaller parcels.



PEBBLE PLAIN ECOLOGICAL RESERVE in BIG BEAR VALLEY.

The trail system at this 700-acre reserve got repaired after last winter's heavy snow. Also, the first phase of a 4-part fuel-clearing project of combustible underbrush (funded by an NRCS grant) got completed this fall. The 2nd phase will start in March to continue thinning out the thicker areas of flammable fuels. This past April an annual spring tour of the Sawmill Pebble Plain (the largest of its kind) was conducted

ARROWHEAD RIDGE.

SBMLT plans to add a conservation easement (CE) onto 94 new acres acquired in 2021. A conservation easement legally restricts future development on natural open space land. SBMLT ownership is one level of protection, but a CE adds an even more permanent safeguard. The state's Department of Forestry & Fire Protection, provides a program for this purpose. The process takes about a year to complete. SBMLT is also endeavoring to reclaim two small-acreage parcels that erroneously got put into the wrong ownership by the County.

by noted Big Bear botanist Tim Krantz and attended by 30 participants, many being certified biologists themselves. In October a representative of the state Wildlife Conservation Board, which largely funded the reserve's acquisition, made an official visit to inspect our progress. SBMLT is glad to report that various restoration projects designed to revive the once heavily damaged Horseshoe Pebble Plain are showing remarkable results. What had formerly been a dirt bike dust bowl is now an emergent botanical garden.

SBMLT is a charitable nonprofit organization formed to buy threatened forest lands for greater protection of the San Bernardino Mountains.



SBMLT acquired the first 80 acres of Arrowhead Ridge in 2011 and continues to eliminate scars of the onetime partial development at the site. All trails have been expanded and improved this past year.

SAN BERNARDINO MOUNTAINS LAND TRUST

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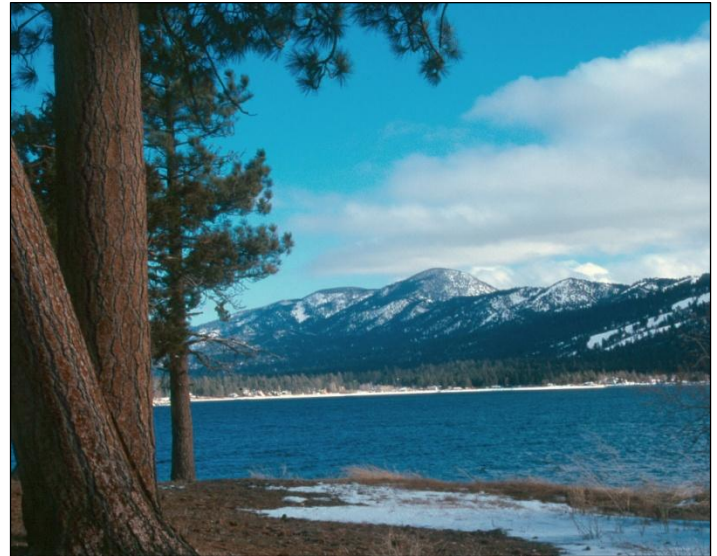
Update on Moon Camp & nesting bald eagles

SBMLT continues its effort to obtain LAND & WATER CONSERVATION FUND help

The SAN BERNARDINO MOUNTAINS LAND TRUST continues to coordinate with the local Forest Service and the Friends of Big Bear Valley to obtain funding necessary to acquire the 62-acre Moon Camp site.

The owner is open to a sale, if funds can be obtained. USFS Regional headquarters has twice nominated Moon Camp for *Land & Water Conservation Fund* funding and the Washington DC Office has agreed. But insufficient support in Congress means that an expanded letter-writing crusade is now needed to reach key elected officials and other sources.

Tall pines at Moon Camp are used by the famous bald eagles (Jackie & Shadow) for perching and foraging for food. Bulldozing that site for urban development would likely cause the eagles to abandon the area.



Big Bear Lake as seen from Moon Camp on the north shore. An LWCF purchase will avoid a major housing subdivision.

Majestic Bald Eagles of the SBNF

A much admired natural wonder of the San Bernardino National Forest is the proud pair of nesting bald eagles on Big Bear Lake's scenic north shore. Every winter this devoted pair assiduously nurtures their tiny new offspring through rain, wind and freezing snow, while the whole world gets to watch on live-streaming video.

Their habitat will be severely disrupted if a major new development is built on the Moon Camp site. SBMLT and partners are making every effort to broker a sale of this 62-acre site to the US Forest Service to save the eagles.



Nest-eye view of Moon Camp's forested surroundings in Fawnskin, where the County Ok'ed a subdivision.

SBMLT is a member of the *LWCF COALITION*, a national advocacy group that closely monitors the LAND & WATER CONSERVATION FUND's budget in Congress and works with groups like SBMLT in facilitating outstanding LWCF projects nationwide. The capitol-based Land Trust Alliance and other key advocacy groups in Washington DC can be counted on to help with Moon Camp as well.



Each year the famous Fawnskin eagles lay two eggs, and millions watch online as they hatch and grow. Protecting the birds against urban development is an added challenge.

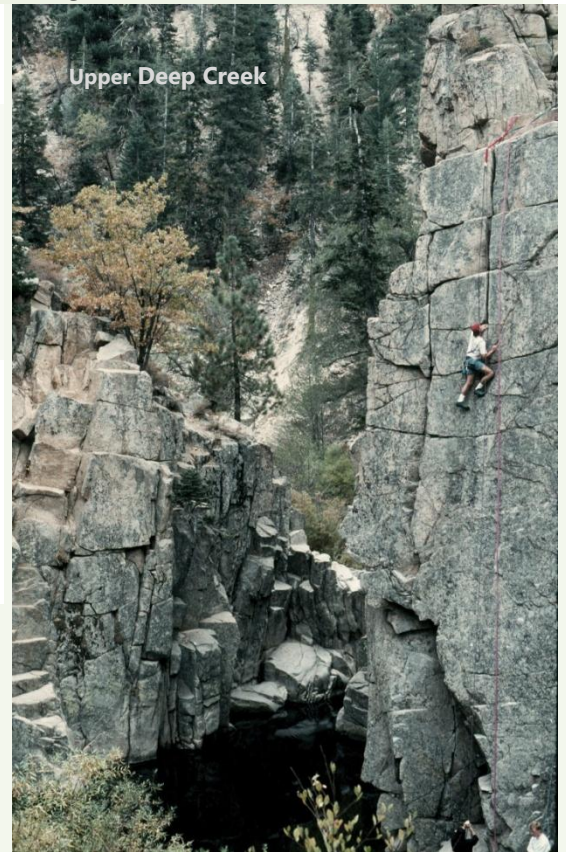
HIGHLIGHTS OF SUCCESSFUL LAND ACQUISITION PROJECTS

Looking back, SBMLT is grateful for the many outstanding places that have been saved by exceptional conservation efforts.

In 1992, *Deep Creek* became a focal point of alarm over increased loss of forest wildlife habitat. Local residents formed a citizens coalition in 1993 –a precursor to establishing the Land Trust two years later. Over 400 acres in Deep Creek were saved and added to the SBNF. Deep Creek is now a federally-designated **WILD & SCENIC RIVER** and a state-designated Wild Trout Stream. Also the main watershed of the western San Bernardino Mountains.

Wildhorse Creek in Barton Flats was acquired in the 90s as was *Cajon Ridge* on the west side of Crestline. In the first decade of the new century, the *Gregory Property* in Twin Peaks was acquired with state funds. *Mission Springs*, an entire 640-acre section adjacent to the San Geronimo Wilderness, was added to the Forest ...followed by a thousand acres on *Yucaipa Ridge*.

In the second decade, outstanding sites like *Strawberry Peak*, *Arrowhead Ridge*, *Coon Creek*, *Coyote Rock*, *Metcalf Bay* and the magnificent 700-acre *Pebble Plain Reserve* all followed. All these sites (and others) have colorful stories of the difficult challenges to get them protected. They are all inspirational to visit and reflect on the impressive legacy of the Land Trust.



BRIEF HISTORY OF LAND USE AND OWNERSHIP IN THE SAN BERNARDINO NATIONAL FOREST

1850s: Statehood for California. The mountains now become US property. Mormons settle in San Bernardino and begin logging in order to build their new town, before being called back to Utah in 1860.

1860s: Gold in Holcomb Valley leads to mining claims, small settlements and ranching in Big Bear Valley. Railroad land grants and homesteading also privatize more land.

1883: Big Bear Dam is built, after 4,000 acres of railroad land plus private grazing land is purchased. The 1,500-acre lake sends water to citrus growers in Redlands.

1891: San Bernardino Forest Reserve (later called a National Forest) is established on federal land to protect the watershed from overgrazing.

1910: USFS builds Recreation Lease Cabins to encourage public use of the remote National Forest.

1920s: Lake Arrowhead is created for citrus growers in San Bernardino, but lawsuits prevent water export, limiting the lake to recreational use. The lake (plus 2,000 surrounding acres) remains in a single ownership.

1930-1950: The great depression and World War II mark a period of relative inactivity in the SBNF.

1950-1965: Crestline & Lake Arrowhead resorts grow popular while Big Bear remains less discovered.

1960s: Lake Arrowhead's 2,000 acres are bought by developers at a time before regulations exist to safeguard wildlife and open space. The County's laissez-faire supervision allows maximum urban density with substandard infrastructure and subdivisions that shut out the native forest. Soon the USFS is pressured to trade away its recreational cabins, fully divorcing Lake Arrowhead from the National Forest.

1988: The last 160-acre piece of USFS land in Lake Arrowhead (above Blue Jay Village) is traded to developers. Save Our Forest Association (SOFA) is formed to oppose land exchanges, which allow lands in the SBNF to be traded in exchange for lands acquired in northern California National Forests –a net loss for the SBNF.

1993: Deep Creek Coalition opposes a 300-acre subdivision in Deep Creek, and the land is acquired three years later by the USFS.

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)
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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

Hooray for the Mountain Thrift Shoppe

SBMLT is one of ten partner groups that manage the nonprofit *Mountain Thrift Shoppe* in Blue Jay Village (next to Jensen's Market). Volunteers from these groups handle all donations of goods, sort, price and display all merchandise and transact all sales. The store is open seven days a week. A Board of Directors, consisting of a representative from each group, oversees all the operations. SBMLT is represented by Peter Jorris, who is currently vice-president of the Thrift Shop Board.

The Thrift Shop helps sustain SBMLT's forest conservation work by contributing a \$20,000 share of the shop's annual revenue. Jorris manages the shop on Monday and Saturday mornings. Our current team of volunteers includes RENEE ROBERTS, HORTENSIA JURADO (our cashiers) plus POLLY SAUER, DIANE SUNDA, SHANNON CLAUSS and LINDA LEE JOHNSON as merchandise handlers. These volunteers provide a vital revenue stream for the Land Trust's conservation activities. Their services are

among the top contributions to the Land Trust, and their help is enormously appreciated as a welcome link in all of SBMLT's operations.

High quality merchandise at low cost at the Thrift Shop provides a beneficial and popular service to the mountain community. Likewise the greater Lake Arrowhead community lends key support to the Thrift Shop (and to all charitable organizations that run it) by donating excellent quality clothing and goods to the store and also by being customers as well and visiting often.

The Thrift Stop first began back in 1991, and SBMLT later became a member in June 2004.

If you live in the proximity of Lake Arrowhead and would like to volunteer to help the Land Trust on our Monday or Saturday shift (or possibly on another day),

You're welcome to contact Peter Jorris at 909-867-3536

-- or email SBMLT at info@SBMLT.net --

Pictured: Hortensia, Diane, Shannon & Polly with Peter



William Wordsworth (the great nature poet of England) relished the joy found in every "meadow, grove and stream –the earth and every common sight" of nature, which seemed to him as if "appareled in celestial light, the glory and freshness of a dream."

Our forests of the San Bernardino Mountains provide a rich treasure of nature's beauty, mystery, timelessness and tranquility.



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