

THE CONEJO OPEN SPACE FOUNDATION NEWS

Spring of
2022

www.cosf.org



Spring Trail Work Day is coming up fast! The COSCA volunteer event will be held Saturday, March 19, at Wildwood Regional Park. More info directly below.

A Few Words from Our President

Welcome to Spring and all the new things it brings!

- One of the newer items is me, **Anne M. Russell**, the new COSF board president, as well as our new vice president **Tania Garcia** and secretary **Marcella Ketelhut**. All three of us were already on the board, so we're bringing a continuity of purpose to our roles. We also welcome two new board members, **Jerry Fehlman** and **Joyce Deprest Higgins**, who are filling vacant board seats.
- **Jerry Westby**, who has just completed three terms as COSF president, is owed enormous gratitude for his service, which includes developing and leading our scholarship program and successful Speaker Series. He will continue as a board member and will remain in his important role heading the scholarship program. Thank you, Jerry!
- We're excited about the return of the **COSCA Spring Trail Work Day** after a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic. It will be held at Wildwood Regional Park and we're hoping for a great turnout. Free lunch and prize raffle for all volunteers! [Get registered in advance!](#)
- **Trails Education Days** will also be back! After having been canceled in 2020 and 2021 this beloved children's event returns April 25—28. But we need your help. We're looking for volunteers help with this “crash course in open space education” for CVUSD 4th graders. If you're interested in taking part in **Trails Education Days**, please email us at ted@cosf.org.
- And, speaking of new developments, there's **our new climate**: Hotter and drier. See our story below for COSCA Analyst Anna Huber's take on the impact new weather patterns are having on our vernal bloom and our Conejo Valley landscape—and are likely to have in the future.

We're also looking forward to congratulating **new COSF scholarship winners**. On April 21, the COSF Scholarship Committee will announce the names of two Ventura County high schoolers who will be awarded our second annual scholarship for high-school seniors who plan on persuing an environmental-studies-related major in college. Watch for the good news!

Wishing you a joyful Spring in the open space!



President, Conejo Open Space Foundation

We Couldn't Do It Without You

COSCA relies on volunteers to help build and maintain trails, act as extra eyes and ears for the rangers, carry out educational programs and support the open space in many other ways. Please consider volunteering for a program that interests you.

COSF depends on open space supporters for donations that help fund COSCA volunteer programs and so much more. We greatly appreciate your generosity.

Donate

Volunteer



Does it seem like all the wildflowers are blooming at the same time this year? They are. Here, exuberant California poppies are a particular standout this spring.

Severe Drought Speeds Up 2022 Spring Bloom

“If you want to look at [wildflowers](#), hurry up and do it,” suggests Anna Huber, COSCA Analyst and resident plant expert. Because of the rainfall pattern this year—that is, the Conejo Valley got all of its winter rain in December 2021—the bloom cycle of the local wildflowers has sped up.

“What we’re seeing now is that **the onset of spring is accelerating**,” says Huber. “Plants are responding as if we’re already in late April or May, which is when we would normally see soil moisture declining.” However, because of the extreme drought California is experiencing, soil moisture is at historically low levels. December’s 9.25 inches of rain did little to relieve the larger problem of water-depleted soil.

Huber notes that the Conejo Valley normally gets rain in January and February that help it hit its historic average of 14 inches, but a persistent high-pressure system over the Great Basin this year has blocked storms from dropping any additional rain. Exacerbating the “force field” effect are warmer than normal ocean temperatures, a classic La Niña situation.

In the longer term, reduced rainfall will change our open space, Huber predicts: “We’ll see continuing mortality of oak trees and chaparral shrubs. Over time, we’ll probably see a shift to sparser, drier vegetation and shorter bloom cycles.”



Dr. Sean Anderson says that although much of the climate-change news for our area is grim, we should keep a smile on our faces.

Speaker Series Report: Dr. Sean Anderson Talks ‘Global Weirding’ in the Conejo Valley

For the first COSF 2022 Speaker Series virtual presentation on March 2, conservation ecologist Dr. Sean Anderson examined the multiple threats posed to the Conejo Valley by global warming—or “global weirding,” as he calls it.

Dr. Anderson, who chairs the Environmental Science and Resource Management Program at California State University Channel Islands, observes, **“We are in a new world now. We are in new territory here: It is unprecedented for us as humans.”**

Even as far along as our hotter, drier, more fire-prone new climate is, Dr. Anderson says, “We can absolutely still have huge effects on the outcome.” Among his suggestions:

- **Work to make cities and neighborhoods more resilient** by hardening against wildfire, using more clean and renewable energy, reducing water consumption, and reducing plastic waste.
- **Help natural systems such as open space be more resilient** by restoring native plants, and fostering wildlife distribution by preserving wildlife corridors.
- **Decarbonize energy systems**, that is, stop burning fossil fuels like oil, gas, and coal that increase atmospheric carbon dioxide – the cause of global warming – which is at an all-time high in human history.

If you would like to [view Dr. Anderson’s talk](#) “Conejo Valley’s Changing Climate: Current Threats & Paths Forward,” it’s available in the COSF website video library.



Speaker Series guest Jenn Guess, of the California Wildlife Center, talked about how wild birds and animals get injured and what you can do to help them survive.

Questions about Animals, Plants, or the Open Space? Visit Our Video Library

The quarterly COSF Speaker Series that features noteworthy experts discussing Conejo Valley wildlife, fire ecology, and other relevant topics is available via video for your viewing at any time.

Please visit our [Speaker Series page](#) to check out topics covered since the series went virtual in 2020. Some highlights include:

[“Wildlife in Our Neighborhood”](#) with the California Wildlife Center’s Jenn Guess.

[“Native Plants Demystified”](#) with Laura Pasetta, Jenn Rodriguez, Antonio Sanchez, and Brian Stark

[“Fire History, Climate Change, and Wildfire Recovery in the Santa Monica Mountains”](#) with National Park Service wildfire ecologist Dr. Marti Witter



Meet the Conejo Climate Coalition

The Conejo Climate Coalition is a grassroots organization that unites local environmental groups and Conejo Valley residents to advocate for action to prepare the Conejo Valley for climate-related challenges. The coalition was formed in November 2020 out of concern about climate and environmental impacts to Thousand Oaks and surrounding areas.

CCC's focus for 2022 is to provide input on the 2045 General Plan Update (GPU) and Climate and Environmental Action Plan (CEAP). [Housing, transportation, and energy infrastructure policies in GPU and CEAP](#) will impact the quality of Conejo Valley's air, water, and natural surroundings for decades to come.

CCC comprises a network of over 900 individuals, five official partner organizations, and numerous allied community groups and supporters. The group states, "It's an exciting time for envisioning and creating real local change towards a more healthy, just and resilient future!"

To get involved, [sign up for CCC's monthly newsletter](#), follow them on social media, and/or contact them directly to see how you can help.



Spotlight on...

COSF founding board member and past president **Elayne Haggan** has devoted an admirable 27 years to building and running the organization and is the longest serving board member. Born in Maine, Elayne has lived in the Conejo Valley since 1982. She was an original appointee to the Conejo Open Space Action Committee (COSTAC) and served there for two decades.

Tell us about yourself. I've been retired since 2014. In addition to spending a lot of time on COSF projects, I hike three to five times a week, and I like to read, cook, and stay up-to-date on current events ranging from local to world issues. My husband Tom Robbins and I are also very interested in Mid-century pottery, local art, and California Native American cultures.

When did you join the COSF board and why? I'm a founding board member of COSF, which we created in 1995 as a way to provide funding for COSCA events including Trails Education Days and Trail Work Days. I've stayed all these years because I truly believe in what we do.

Why is open space important to you? Spending time in nature is fundamental to my sense of wellbeing. I don't know how I would have survived the Covid years without our trails and open space.

What advice do you have for open space visitors to get the most out of their time there? Go to "trails less traveled." Turn off your phones. Listen to the birds and enjoy the breeze. Take the time to really look around, especially now that everything is green and wildflowers are in bloom.

What do you like to do in the open space? In earlier years, I was a mountain biker. Now I am on my way to having hiked every trail in the COSCA system. The Conejo Open Space Challenge is a great way to discover trails; every year the 10 Challenge hikes include one or two that are new to me.

What’s your favorite Conejo open space? The Conejo Canyons for sure. The area includes many miles of trails and lots of options for everything from easy to strenuous hikes. This year’s Conejo Challenge includes the most extreme: Elliott Mountain.

Is there any “secret” or underused open space that you think people should know about? An interesting area is the Lynnmere Trail starting at the end of Calle Yucca and ending at the Arroyo Conejo. The area includes diverse habitats and great views of Wildwood and the Conejo Canyons Open Space.

What are your hopes for the future of COSF and/or the Conejo Open Space? I hope that COSF can continue to bring value to the Conejo community through our Speaker Series events, scholarship program, newsletters, outreach, and much more. I also hope that our open space will thrive despite climate change.

Any other thoughts or words of wisdom? We are extremely fortunate to have more than 150 miles of trails in the COSCA system. I encourage all who use the trails to become active stewards in protecting and caring for this remarkable resource.



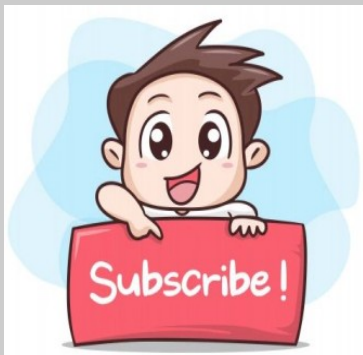
Wildwood Regional Park Picnic Area #4 has a new water station, as documented here by COSCA Tech Mike McGurk. Plans are underway to install more.

News In Brief

- **Explore and win prizes!** Starting March 1, the [Conejo Open Space Challenge](#) got underway. The “challenge” is to hike, bike, run, or ride 10 designated trails by May 31 and document your adventures with photos or GPS tracking. Participants who complete all 10 segments in the 11th annual Challenge are eligible to win gifts, given at a special completion event, courtesy of COSF, COSCA, COSTAC, and local business sponsors. [Download a map](#) of the Challenge trails and get started; it’s not too late!
- **COSCA rangers get new digs.** COSCA has relocated its ranger operations to the Cameron Center at 288 Greenmeadow Dr, in Thousand Oaks. The newly improved space is conveniently located near the popular Los Robles trail system. Plans to hire three new rangers have slowed, however, due to lack of

availability of new trucks. New vehicles and new rangers should be on board by July.

- **Join a benefit wildflower hike on March 20** with Speaker Series guest Laura Pasetta as she guides a [hands-on hike filled with wildflowers](#) in Simi Valley. Pasetta will talk about the best field guides and apps for Identifying local wildflowers, finding, identifying and photographing flowers, their medicinal and culinary uses, and basic botany and phenology (the study of how season and climate affect lifecycles). A portion of the \$35 ticket cost benefits Mission Monarch.
- **Congratulations, Linda Parks!** In January, Linda Parks, the Ventura County Supervisor from the Second District, was elected Chairperson of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for a one-year term. Supervisor Parks is a past mayor of the City of Thousand Oaks. A leader in open-space preservation, she has helped to preserve thousands of acres, including the Upper Las Virgenes Canyon Open Space Preserve at the western edge of the San Fernando Valley. She was instrumental in creating laws protecting open space and farmland (SOAR and “Parks Initiative”). A founder of the nonprofit plant nursery Growing Works, Parks also developed a first-of-its-kind wildlife corridor zone to protect wildlife in Ventura County and has been an advocate for the Annenberg Wildlife Bridge at Liberty Canyon.
- Congratulations to the winners of our most recent “Where in the Conejo” contests! Our knowledgeable entrants correctly identified a native plant seedpod and two local trails in the January, February, and March competitions. This season’s winners of a \$25 gift card are: **Zachary Russell, Elise Wilson, and Robert Angstadt**. If you would like to be added to the “Where” contest email list, go [visit our website](#) and sign up.
- Have a comment, correction, story idea or other **input for the newsletter**? Let us know! Email us at newsletter@cosf.org



If you would like to have this newsletter emailed to you quarterly, along with other occasional messages about our activities, subscribe here.

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Want to Volunteer? Here’s How!

The COSCA Volunteer Corps has many ways for residents to help maintain and preserve the open space that surrounds our beautiful Conejo Valley. By joining with others, we can make sure that the trails, canyons, and ridgelines will be enjoyed by visitors for generations to come. You can read about the specific volunteer opportunities below, and you can submit a request to volunteer, noting your specific interests, [here](#).

- [Adopt-a-Trail Program](#)
- [Bike Bell Box Replenishment](#)
- [Trail Watch Program](#)



- Trail Ambassador Program
- Trail Work Days
- Trails Education Days



The Conejo Open Space Foundation was formed in 1995 to promote and maintain the open space and trail system of the Conejo Valley and to educate residents as to their roles as custodians and protectors of the open space and the environment. Our [web site](#) illustrates ongoing Conejo Open Space programs supported by the Foundation that help preserve and protect our precious open space.

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