

TPA Journal

Journal of the Torrey Pines Association

Winter 2005/2006

If the trees could speak

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Vol. 1, No. 2

Reach the Beach?

Not yet... Here's the story of a slippery slope

By Mike Gonzalez Jr., TPA Counselor

Over the years park officials and volunteers alike have grown used to fielding the most frequently asked question: "Where are the bathrooms?"

But that query has been replaced in the past year with a series of new ones:

"Is the Beach Trail open? When is the Beach Trail going to open? What's the problem? Why aren't they doing anything?"

In addition to serving as a board counselor with the TPA (and on the receiving end of your membership e-mails), one of my proudest roles is to also have the privilege of being a Park Aide under Supervising Ranger Jody Kummer and her rangers. We, along with the Docents on duty at the Visitors Center, have heard it all—especially this:

"Why don't you just go down with a pick and shovel and get it done?"

Not so simple.

Recently, on behalf of TPA and wearing all my various "hats," including that of simply being a guy who loves to hike, I made the rounds looking for explanations and answers. I quickly found out that to understand *why* it's first important to understand *who* is involved. They help to explain the what, where and when.

People protect the place

Torrey Pines lies within the State Park system's San Diego Coastal District, headed by Superintendent Ronilee Clark. It's her responsibility to ensure that every rule and regulation is adhered to and enforced by public and park staff alike. Reporting to her is North Sector Superintendent Denny Stoufer, a veteran lifeguard, administrator, and previous occupant of the Guy Fleming House. Together they work on Reserve matters with District Resource Ecologist

Darren Smith and Therese Muranaka, District Archaeologist. Collectively

and individually they have complete authority and jurisdiction as to what can and can't happen at the Reserve. If it's a trail, a rock, a shrub, a watershed, a bird, a lizard, and especially a tree they make the call as to its wellbeing and disposition.

And along those lines let's remember that Torrey Pines State Reserve is just that: a reserve made up of the Ellen Browning Scripps Torrey Pines Preserve, the Los Peñasquitos Preserve, and the Extension (a grove on the north side of Los Peñasquitos Lagoon, which is also a Preserve). This isn't a recreational park with picnic tables, baseball diamonds, and swing sets. This is a highly protected and invaluable living historical, archeological, geological, botanical resource.

As such, it begs that ever-present question: "What's more important? The place or the people?" We know it's a balance, but when it comes time to design, engineer, and perform major remedial work, such as repairs to the Beach Trail, all of the elements pertaining to *place* are addressed and answered first. The needs of the people who visit the Reserve take a backseat.

The studies begin

First, a study known as a "CEQA" (from California Environmental Quality Act) gets underway. It addresses the concerns of the superintendent and the Technical Services Department on matters of funding, labor force, trails maintenance, building codes, and upkeep. Then the



past

present

future

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President's Message

Calm returns to the lagoon mouth

It already seems so long ago that the mouth of Peñasquitos Lagoon was swarming with trucks, pile drivers, tractors, and orange-vested workers. For several years we lived with the construction of the new bridge, which proceeded in a timely fashion but still seemed to go on and on. Thousands of us who have long accessed the beach from the north parking lot have enjoyed that last stroll under the roadway and being greeted by rolling waves, a good sea breeze, and no other sound but surf. You might say it was like stepping into the ultimate plasma screen t.v.

Now that experience is back—and better than ever. The new bridge's graceful undercarriage seems to dance across the lagoon mouth in one grand jeté. The ugly forest of pilings is gone. The tide certainly seems to flow in and out with great alacrity (studies will prove this to be true or not, but for now anecdotal evidence is sure on the side of improved flow).

Birds gather in great numbers on the inland mud and sand flats near the bridge. Handicapped access now swoops down to sand in the form of two curving sidewalks. Bus stops are safe and out of traffic flow.

Could anyone have opposed such a pleasant turn of events?

Yes, your Torrey Pines Association at one time opposed this new bridge as it stands today. To be clear one last time before we lay this issue to rest forever: we opposed the WIDTH of this new bridge, a width that seemed unnecessary unless the entire roadway from the golf course area to Del Mar Heights Road is eventually made into a four-lane speedway, and that means making the "high bridge" four lanes as well. (We'll soon find out what happens there—the high bridge is Del Mar's conundrum.)

But past is past, built is built. Let's talk about it again in 75 years. —Peter Jensen

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TPA Journal is published four times a year by the Torrey Pines Association and distributed to current members, media, and other interested parties.

Your comments and articles are welcome.

To receive the TPA Journal via e-mail in PDF format (and help save paper and postage costs), or for archive editions, please contact TPA via e-mail at: pjensen@san.rr.com

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A special thanks to professional photographers Will Sooter (www.sharpeyesonline.com) and John Durant (www.johndurant.com)

Torrey Pines Association

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TPA Board meetings: Third Thursday of every month at 6:30 p.m. at the Lodge.

A new bridge to walk beneath

Remember the forest of old pilings? The rotten concrete falling from gothic rails? A shallow-water "playground" crowded with kids? Gone forevermore, as the lagoon mouth's new bridge opens to kudos and some sour grapes...Here's a last farewell to the old bridge and its multiple pilings, as well as the old popular lagoon-side beach and wading area (now closed to protect habitat). All that remains is one fragment (pictured) that shows the original construction date: 1932. Today's new bridge is a graceful swoop of arched concrete beneath a much wider roadway—which may (or may not) be fully utilized some day.



©John Durant

Historic Photos by Bob Lewis

Reach the Beach?

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Resource Ecologist reviews the study to address issues of endangered species, wildlife, re-vegetation, and other bio-mitigation matters. His directives prohibit the permanent reduction in population size, which means knowing where these items are and then demonstrating that work projects will not have a significant impact.

When the rains hit hard this past winter/spring, Darren focused on mapping sensitive plants, surveying for sensitive animals, biological monitoring, flagging, and providing documentation that repair work was not breaking any laws.

The invisible cannot be ignored

Next up? Therese, the archaeologist, reports: "We track all signs of human habitation for posterity, and make a record of human impacts that could be hurt by the trail's redesign and refurbishment. Since the rains we have had so many new sites show up—much more than the typical surveys we do annually. The trails crisscross over all of these cultural remains with no favoritism. Losing these sites to new staircases and barricades is not what state parks is all about... the people who left these ruins will never live again."

...the band-aid approach of cutting into the bluff is really unwise...

Work continues...but why not all the way?

What does the future hold for the visitor to Torrey Pines who wants to walk down to the beach from the upper parking lots and Lodge? SSR Kummer reports that Chief of Tech Services Brian Gaudet, who is charged with the construction process, is working well down the Beach Trail repairing paths and stairs. The Beach Trail/Broken Hill loop should be done by mid- to late December.

Does this mean we'll regain access to the beach? NO. It means visitors can go down as far as the Broken Hill Trail intersection and either head back up on the Broken Hill or back up the Beach Trail from whence they came.

So *when* are we going to be able to get down the lower "beach" or "goat trail" (as I like to call it)?

The fix may take years...to last years

Now it falls upon Superintendent Clark to determine the best way to rebuild safe long-term access to the beach—if this is what she decides the best course of action will be. Numerous ideas have been floated. Currently, Clark has commissioned a local engineering firm which specializes in the construction of hill and bluff access structures to develop ideas suitable for the lower beach trail.

Not all district staff members agree upon on the



best way to proceed. Ecologist Smith opined that we should simply leave the lower trail as it is and post a warning sign at either end. Responding to a recent query from the author, he pointed out, however, that this is his personal opinion and does not reflect that of the Coast District.

The timing? According to Superintendent Stouffer **we could be looking at from between three to five years before a design is selected**, engineered, permits applied for and granted, the various stages of funding completed, and the project built.

Many park visitors may think that this is just so much bureaucracy—that there must be a much simpler and direct path between points A and B...that already too much time has been wasted and not nearly enough done.

A plea for patience

Supt. Stouffer puts it this way: "This is a long-term process that commonly takes five years even with a relatively simple project. We all feel that continuing the band-aid approach of cutting into the bluff is really unwise from a resource protection point of view. [By doing so] we are virtually destroying a part of the resource to provide access to other parts of it. And it really does not provide the safety we would like our visitors to have.

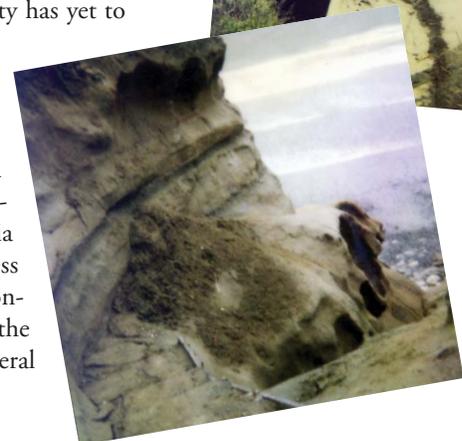
"While the design of the facility has yet to be decided upon, we anticipate it will provide access without high profile disturbance of the bluff, it will be sustainable year-round for at least 50 years, and require a minimum of maintenance. Those are the main criteria in the decision-making process before us as it stands now. We continue to ask for the patience of the TPA membership and the general public." ❧

Until a slide closed the trail almost a year ago, this was a common scene on the last few dozen yards to the beach

Comments? Questions?

We'll share them on our web site and in the next TPA Journal. Please send to: tpajournal@san.rr.com

A closed Beach Trail is nothing new, as these photos from 1993 prove. Heavy erosion and bluff failure have been a challenge for many generations of trail builders in the Preserve

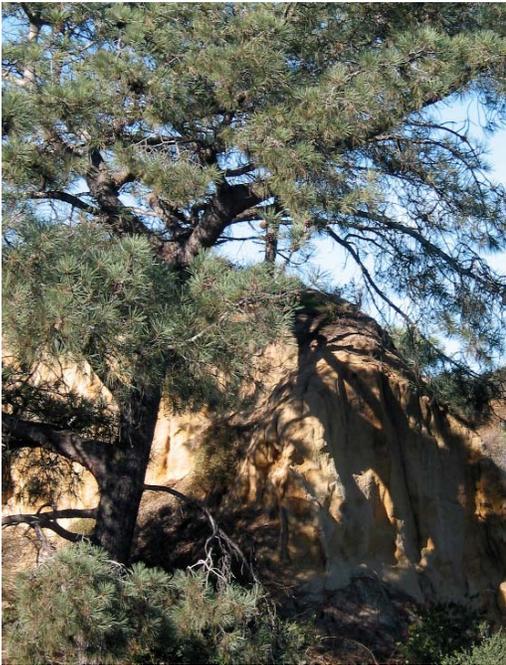


"View From the Sand"

Thoughts and Perspectives from a Torrey Pines Lifeguard

By Ed Vodrazka

In the late spring of 2004 Jenny and I had been awarded the privilege of being allowed to live in the Guy Fleming House. Three weeks into our residency we were treated to an awesome display of the power of nature. Just before dawn one morning, we heard the sound of a massive tree losing its grip with the earth. It began slowly with the distinctive chorus of smaller branches snapping. As the tree began its precarious, slow-motion fall, a low-pitched rumble started as roots pulled from the ground. The massive trunk gained momentum toward the earth, and larger and larger limbs snapped like crisp gunfire in the darkness.



Gentle giants...or are they? Our correspondent still wonders what happened one unforgettable night at the Guy Fleming House

Jenny and I sat bolt upright just before a final thunderous explosion of energy as the massive trunk slammed to earth and broke into sections. Thousands of dried twigs and smaller sticks were thrown from the branches, rolling across the concrete just outside our bedroom window like pencils, the smallest of twigs falling to earth like millions of tiny raindrops. Eventually, the only sound left was that of our fear-laced breathing.

Calling on my wry sense of humor, the first words out of my mouth were, "Did you hear that?" Her laughter broke the tension. Soon after, she suggested I go outside to see if there was any damage to the house, and whether or not our cars had been

squished under the weight of that massive trunk. I feared the worst as I got up, put my shorts on and grabbed the flashlight...

When I was young, I spent several of my formative years traveling in Asia. The goal of my youth in those endeavors was to discover the wild mysteries that surely could be found along those exotic back roads. Even there, events of the paranormal were rare. In three solid years of moving about, I came away with only one experience that was truly "unexplainable"...and that's another story. The irony of it all is that sometimes you can search the far reaches of the world for the unknown, and then find it in your own back yard.

When we had moved into the Fleming house I asked the previous tenant, Denny Stoufer, if he

had ever experienced any events that were odd or unexplainable. In a home with such a long and rich history, I felt it was plausible that there might be some kind of remaining "influence" from the hundreds of amazing and creative human beings who had lived in it for the past 80 years—so much life force, so many formative experiences. Denny admitted that he certainly felt a "presence" from time to time. I shared this with Jenny and we tried to maintain a sensitive awareness to the subtleties that might occur in our time here.

The last thing we ever expected in the form of a communiqué from the paranormal was a dramatic message from the Torrey pines themselves. To assume that there is no communication within the "spirit realm" of the world of botanical beings might not be wise...

Flashlight in hand, I went outside to survey the damage. After checking the area around the house, both roofs, down the driveway and then out to the roadway, I went back inside. Jenny was anxiously awaiting my report. She interpreted the shocked expression on my face that the damage had been extensive. That was not the case.

Not only was there no significant damage to report...there was no fallen tree.

Of course she didn't believe me when I told her, and I don't blame her. Minutes later she joined me outside and together we surveyed a large perimeter around the house. No tree.

The old Zen koan asks, "If a tree falls in the forest and there is no one there to hear it, does it still make a sound?"

I'm not sure about that one, but my wife and I can certainly attest that even when a tree doesn't fall at Torrey Pines State Reserve...it can still make a heck of a lot of noise!



Lifeguard Ed Vodrazka

"the only sound left was that of our fear-laced breathing"

Drawing A Line In The Sand

A look back on the Carmel Valley Road Enhancement Project...with construction soon to begin

By Adam Gevanthor

The Carmel Valley Road “Enhancement Project,” as it is termed by the City of San Diego, is similar to a line drawn in the sand. It appears visually out of place, as any other major roadway would appear in an area of magnificent coastal resources. However, as with the line of sand that softens with the ebb and flow of the tide, the CVREP was “softened” by community input and a consensus building task force facilitated by the city. This task force, consisting of a diverse group of special interests, came together with one goal in mind: the future of this corridor. The resulting recommendations shaped the project that’s scheduled to begin this January.

While the Carmel Valley Road (CVR) project may not seem an enhancement to some, or even at home within the Los Peñasquitos Lagoon Preserve viewshed, it is a far better project now than it was before community input and involvement.

Now, instead of a mere road widening and drainage improvements, CVR appears to be (at least in part) the enhancement project it was trumpeted to be.

The process, while not perfect, did result in a number of project improvements. For example, the CVREP now contains traffic calming features such as intersection pop-outs planted with native plant materials (south side) and plantable pockets on the north side. These pop-outs visually shrink the pavement width. This has been proven to slow traffic, and will appear to soften the roadbed edges, preventing what would have otherwise been an unbroken line of parallel parking. Enhanced paving and cross walks at major intersections, designed to relate to colors visible in nearby sandstone formations, will contribute to traffic calming through changes in pavement color and texture, causing drivers to take note. Understated community signs will provide subtle thresholds to the Del Mar Terrace Community. These will alert drivers to the fact that they are entering a neighborhood rather than simply traveling on a thoroughfare to the beach.

Lighting will be limited to shielded fixtures that are approximately 10 feet shorter, fewer in number, and lower in wattage than city engineers would have otherwise specified. The result is a plan that contains pedestrian-friendly streetlights that limit unwelcome light intrusions into residences and the lagoon environment. Bulb wattages will be minimized to promote safety while supporting a ‘dark sky’-friendly environment.

While the city would have preferred to have a



Soon to change: the existing C.V.R. roadway

four-lane regional collector, CVR will now only contain two lanes—with painted turn pockets at intersections. The typical cross section width is 59.5 feet from Via Mar Valley to Via Donada, 43.5 feet from Via Donada to Via Grimaldi, and 41 feet from Via Grimaldi 400-feet eastward. These cross sections will consist of two 11-foot travel lanes, painted turn medians, striped bike lanes in both directions, and parallel parking in selected areas. In spite of Torrey Pines Association objections, the south side will contain parking between planting pockets that will extend somewhat past the Via Donada intersection. Beyond that, there will be no on-street parking provided. The parking that is provided will help minimize adverse parking impacts to adjoining residential areas caused by commercial land uses.

A 4-foot-wide graded shoulder provides pedestrian access along the lagoon while a 5-foot-wide concrete sidewalk provides access along the north side of the roadway. The enhanced lagoon-side pedestrian corridor, anticipated in the Torrey Pines Community Plan, will not be a part of this project due to the sensitive wetland impacts that would have occurred.

Author Adam Gevanthor is a former TPA Counselor and landscape architect who lives in the Del Mar Terrace neighborhood.

**Editor's note: According to Torrey Pines Association Counselor Diana W. Bergen, despite these steps along Carmel Valley Road to mitigate light intrusion, the City of San Diego has still not accepted the greater Del Mar Terrace community as a "dark sky" area. Bergen, a landscape architect, lives in the Terrace neighborhood. She also adds: "...the city refused to comply with its own approved and adopted street design guidelines. With community pressure they have conceded to include many design elements but the project still falls short of City of San Diego approved street design guidelines when it comes to safety: specifically near the McGonagall intersection and along the Sea Point section of the project, [where] ... the road is wide and invites faster moving traffic. Also, this section of the road has a curve where street parking is encouraged. Fast cars, curves and children do not mix."*

Wish sadness...

We learn of the passing of Winston Boone, a Counselor of the Torrey Pines Association and a true gentleman. Our hearts go out to his family and many friends.



Talons above Torrey Pines...can you identify these accomplished hunters oft-seen in the Reserve?

Osprey, Peregrine Falcon, Red Tailed Hawk (female named Nike)

PROTECT THE PINES—BECOME A MEMBER

Membership benefits include free parking at the Reserve (except at North Beach) and a subscription to "TPA Journal." (No free parking with the "Friend" Annual membership.) Make check payable to Torrey Pines Association and send to P.O. Box 345, La Jolla, CA 92038.

- Friend annual, \$25
- Individual Annual, \$45
- Family Annual, \$75
- Contributing Annual, \$250
- Individual Life, \$500
- Patron Life, \$1,000

For more information, e-mail membership chair Mike Gonzalez, Jr. at gonzojr@san.rr.com

News from the Reserve

Sea to Sea Trail debuts, and a movie hits the sand

By Mike Gonzalez Jr.

An ambitious plan to create a trail from the Pacific Ocean through Borrego Springs and on to the Salton Sea—hence the name **Sea to Sea Trail**—is on track and taking shape. November 3, in the Torrey Pines North Beach parking lot, which is the western terminus of the trail, a news conference was held to announce that the project is roughly 75% complete.

"It traverses beach, coastal lagoon, chaparral, oak groves, lakes, mountain forest and desert. Few places on earth can match such a variation in so short a span" said Jim Hagey, president of the non-profit Sea to Sea Trail Foundation. "The trail goes through what is widely considered the richest bird migration area in North America."

"We have along way to go" said Denny Stoufer, North Sector Superintendent, "but it's a wonderful thing."

The concept of the 114 mile trail has been kicked around since the '90s, but now the first trail marker has been ceremoniously placed by dignitaries including City Councilman Scott Peters.

Tina Terrell, forest supervisor for the Cleveland National Forest, said all trails are vital because of the fragmentation of the county. "We have a vast amount of land that is being broken up," she said

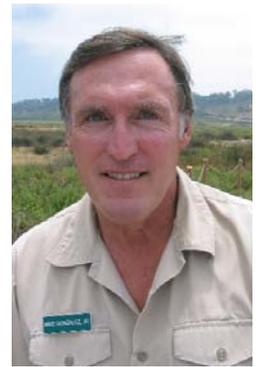


"Connectivity is needed for people."

As the various stages of the trail are completed they will be open, depending upon the location, to hikers, bikers, and for equestrian use. Additionally, many sections will be handicapped accessible.

For more information go to: www.seatoseatrail.org.

Supervising Ranger Jody Kummer arranged one of the more unique events in the annals of Torrey Pines on October 22: **Volunteer Appreciation Movie on the Beach Night**. A huge screen was erected on Lifeguard Tower 1, audio/visual and generator equipment trucked down to the beach, and we all wined and dined in our beach chairs to the background of crashing surf while watching an old Henry Fonda flick "*The Man Who Understood Women*," with Leslie Caron. But the real star of the show was Torrey Pines State Reserve itself which served as a location for the film, stand in for a fictional coastal area of southern France. In the final moments Henry falls surely to his death from the Guy Fleming Trail down to the waters around Flat Rock but miraculously manages to recover, reunited in the arms of his on-screen amore. To complete the experience? A real movie popcorn machine manned (as if he had been doing it his whole life) by Ranger Mike Winterton. It was a wonderful success and Jody has promised an encore performance. ✂



TPA Counselor and seasonal park aide Mike Gonzalez, Jr.

TPA *Journal*

past

present

future

Who we are...

The Torrey Pines Association was founded in 1950 to encourage public interest in, and support for, the preservation of the rare Torrey pine trees and their scenic refuge. Since then it has played an active role in:

- achieving State Reserve/Preserve status
- assisting in the acquisition of additional acres of native trees
- funding educational exhibits
- publishing informational and educational materials

- managing memorial funds
- renovating the Fleming house for use as an on-site ranger's residence
- monitoring the overall welfare of the site

We invite you to join with us in our ongoing efforts to preserve and protect the rare Torrey pines and their scenic refuge by becoming a member of the Torrey Pines Association. Please visit our website or contact us by mail for more information on membership levels.



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