



EmpowHER Campout

By Laura Torres

NPCA's efforts to develop more outdoor leaders and advocates often starts at the community level, long before we meet with our elected officials, by introducing people to the wonders of national parks. EmpowHER is a program that recognizes that women, and especially women of color, are often leaders in their communities. When brought together to camp, connect and explore, we provide a launching point for them to continue learning about the outdoors and supporting each other along a journey of building confidence, leadership and advocacy.

March's EmpowHER campout at Red Rock Canyon Park, managed by the Mountains Recreation & Conservation Authority, provided 12 women with technical outdoor skills, while also giving them the time to reflect on the power of their voice and to set personal goals. Part of what makes this program so special is that it provides a safe space to share challenges and fears. The women feel heard; they feel compassion for one another and receive a tremendous amount of support to be brave and bold in the pursuit of their aspirations on and off the trail. Moreover, the feeling of sisterhood creates a network that they can rely on into the future.

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Park Service Leads Woolsey Fire Recovery Efforts

By Dennis Arguelles

The Woolsey Fire burned nearly 100,000 acres of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreational Area in just two short weeks last November. The most devastating fire in the recreation area's history, it impacted 88 percent of the National Park Service-managed lands in the park, much of which provided critical habitat for protected and endangered species. Western Town at Paramount Ranch—a National Historic Register site and iconic filming location—was also destroyed, as were a joint NPS/UCLA research center, ranger housing and other critical park facilities. In all, over 600 park structures burned, as did hundreds of homes and businesses in the surrounding communities.

In the aftermath of the fire, NPS helped mobilize a Burn Area Emergency Response (BAER) Team, an interdisciplinary group tasked with assessing sites that could be impacted by future erosion and debris flow. BAER efforts helped minimize threats by prescribing and implementing emergency treatments that reduced threats to life and property and prevented further degradation to natural and cultural resources. The work proved useful in helping local communities

and land management agencies prepare for what turned out to be one of the wettest Southern California winters in decades. The rain, while needed, posed additional threats to the burn areas by increasing the chance for landslides.



The BAER effort demonstrates the critical role NPS plays in the aftermath of such disasters and highlights its potential to assist other areas in and around the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, particularly if the proposed "Rim of the Valley" expansion is successful. The expansion will add more than 193,000 acres to the park and greatly enhance the

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Top: Vibrant yellow wildflowers covering Corral Canyon, Malibu, California in Spring 2019, four months after the Woolsey Fire of November 2018 destroyed this area. ©Andrew Konieczny | Dreamstime **Above:** Devastation caused by Woolsey Fire, November 2018 ©NPS

FIELD REPORT

Summer 2019

Pacific Regional Office Staff

350 Frank H. Ogawa Plaza • Suite 1100
Oakland, CA 94612
415.728.0839

Ron Sundergill

SR. REGIONAL DIRECTOR

Neal Desai

DIRECTOR OF FIELD OPERATIONS

Chris Boone

REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

Kati Schmidt

ASSOC. DIRECTOR OF MEDIA RELATIONS

Shareeka Spooner

SR. COORDINATOR

John Garder

DIRECTOR, GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

Julie Hogan

ASSOC. DIRECTOR, FOUNDATION RELATIONS

Barstow Field Office

400 S. 2nd Ave. • Suite 213 • Barstow, CA 92311
760.957.7887

David Lamfrom

DIRECTOR

California Desert Field Office

61325 29 Palms Highway • Suite D
Joshua Tree, CA 92252
760.366.7785

Chris Clarke

PROGRAM MANAGER

Los Angeles Field Office

1055 Wilshire Boulevard • Suite 1660
Los Angeles, CA 90017
213.482.0642

Dennis Arguelles

SENIOR PROGRAM MANAGER

Laura Torres

OUTREACH MANAGER

Sierra Nevada Field Office

1295 N. Wishon Avenue • Suite 104
Fresno, CA 93728
559.385.6148

Mark Rose

FIELD REPRESENTATIVE

NPCA Membership Services Team

800.628.7275 • npca@npca.org



npca.org

LETTER FROM THE SENIOR REGIONAL DIRECTOR

Fire, Rain and Hope

By Ron Sundergill

This Field Report covers numerous issues, including the devastating impact of fire on Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA).

We also examine the rain-storms, both bad and good, which equally affect our parks.

Raining down on us right now is a troubling proposal from the administration which would open federal lands in California—including lands near Yosemite and Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks—to oil and gas leasing.

There is also the good, life-giving rain, which has delivered a super bloom in sections of parks across the region.

But today we report on a different type of bloom, the blossoming effect that NPCA



park field trips have on younger people who are experiencing beautiful national park sites for the first time. What's more, they're turning this new-found passion into action to protect these places. As NPCA continues its work to establish an LA-based Young Leaders Council, we are seeing a metaphoric bloom that is just as amazing as the flowers.

I take great hope in the fact that new leaders are emerging

to work on protecting the California desert from the Cadiz water mining operation. These young leaders are also campaigning to greatly expand the SMMNRA, one of the best urban national parks in the world.

We endured the fire, felt the rain, and we now experience hope as the bloom arrives in various forms.

Above: Ron Sundergill

Park Service Leads Woolsey Fire Recovery Efforts



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management of open spaces, wildlife habitat and cultural resources in the region. NPCA is working to pass the Rim of the Valley Corridor Preservation Act (H.R. 1708/S. 774), introduced by Rep. Adam Schiff and Sen. Diane Feinstein earlier this year.

Schiff's bill received a hearing from the House Natural Resources Committee in April, and its passage remains a priority for NPCA in the current legislative session.

Above: Map of areas burned by the Woolsey Fire. Map by NPS-SAMO Fire GIS.

Another Shot at Halting Cadiz

By Chris Clarke

California has another shot at halting the proposed Cadiz water mining project, which would siphon 16 billion gallons of groundwater each year from underneath national parks and monuments in the Mojave Desert, drying up critical desert springs.

SB307, introduced in the California Legislature by state Senator Richard Roth (Riverside), would require state agencies to conduct a thorough review of Cadiz's likely effects on the delicate ecosystems of Mojave National Preserve and Mojave Trails National Monument. In April, the bill won approval by the state Senate's Natural Resources and Water Committee; in May, the Senate's Appropriations Committee sent the bill to the Senate floor



for a vote in late May. We are optimistic that SB307 will continue to do well in the Legislature.

Ordinarily, the kind of environmental assessment mandated by SB307 would be performed by federal agencies under the National Environmental Policy Act. But Cadiz, whose former lobbyist David Bernhardt recently won confirmation as Secretary of the Interior, was spared that legally required review when Bernhardt's Interior Department reinterpreted a 19th century railroad law to exempt Cadiz from review. NPCA is challenging Interior's decision in federal court, in a case set to begin hearings this June in Los Angeles. Stay tuned for updates.

Left: Cadiz entrance sign ©Chris Clarke | NPCA

EmpowHER Campout Women Uplifting Each Other on the Trails and Beyond

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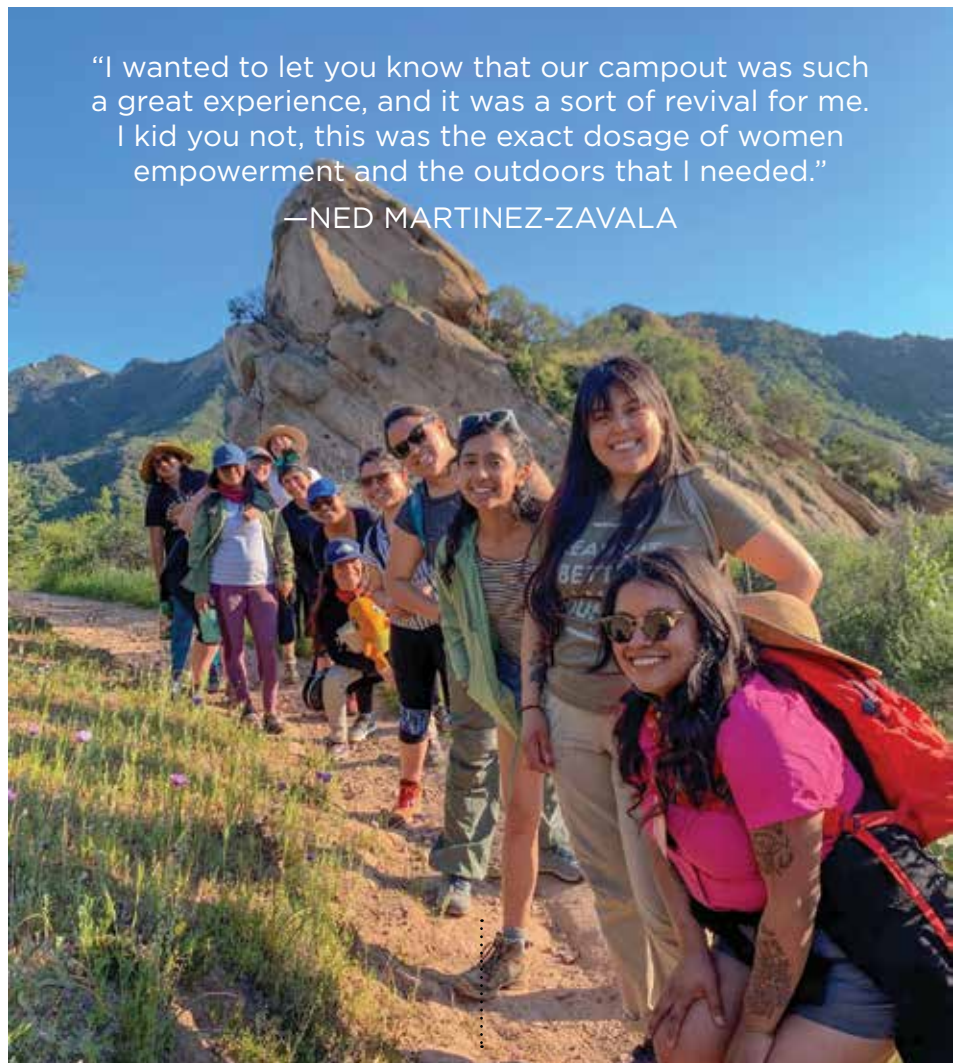
Three participants who are also members of our LA Young Leaders Council—Cassie Gogreve, Maricela Rosales and Sally Garcia—have helped sustain the group's energy by utilizing social media to continue sharing resources and support with the rest of the group. Sally and Maricela then joined NPCA's annual Lobby Day in Washington, D.C. in early April, ensuring that our events are moving advocates full circle from the trails to the halls of Congress.



Above: Getting close to departing after many conversations, walks, a backpacking basics by REI and some delicious meals we pause for a group picture and celebrate the importance of the female voice because we are powerful. ©Maricela Rosales **Right:** Sally Garcia leads an interpretive hike about the local ecosystem at Red Rock Canyon before sunset. ©Maricela Rosales

"I wanted to let you know that our campout was such a great experience, and it was a sort of revival for me. I kid you not, this was the exact dosage of women empowerment and the outdoors that I needed."

—NED MARTINEZ-ZAVALA



NPCA Helps Secure Major Clean Air Victory in California

By Mark Rose

It's no secret that three of California's most famous national parks—Yosemite, Sequoia and Kings Canyon—suffer from some of the worst air quality of any parks in the nation. This is why NPCA's Sierra Nevada office has focused its efforts on a coalition-driven grassroots campaign to pressure state agencies into cleaning up the regional air pollution originating in the neighboring San Joaquin Valley. Following a successful NPCA-led lawsuit that helped push the California Air Resources Board (CARB) to act, we now have a clearer path toward obtaining this goal. In January, CARB finally approved a long overdue plan to significantly lower emissions of regional fine particulate matter (PM2.5) by 2025.



We hope this plan will ensure the air quality within and surrounding these three parks will finally begin meeting the federal PM2.5 health standards established more than 20 years ago. Unfortunately, despite numerous hard-fought improvements to the plan, it still relies on roughly \$5 billion in unsecured

state incentives and contains no plan B should the state fall short of what is required. Going forward, NPCA will continue its push to see the plan effectively implemented and the relevant deadlines met. For more information on air pollution in our parks visit nPCA.org/pollutedparks.

Top Left: Haze gathers in Yosemite Valley ©Mark Rose **Top Right:** Haze obscures Kings Canyon's mountains in the distance ©Mark Rose

New BLM Fracking Proposal Threatens California's Parks

By Mark Rose

Since joining the Department of Interior, former lobbyist and current DOI Secretary Bernhardt has fiercely pushed for more fossil fuel development throughout the west in an effort that threatens numerous national parks. California is now on the list of states endangered by this pro-drilling philosophy following a new proposal by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). This proposal—seeking to open up over 1 million acres to new oil and gas leases from California's central coast eastward through the San Joaquin Valley and southern Sierra Nevada foothills—

could result in the development of new hydraulic fracturing (fracking) wells on the doorsteps of 11 national park and national forest sites, including Yosemite, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.

Fracking is linked to air, water and climate pollution, yet this proposal willfully ignores these threats in favor of the administration's fossil fuel priorities. Moreover, many of the public lands and communities falling within or adjacent to this planning region already suffer from some of the worst air and water quality in the nation. BLM recently released a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for this proposal, and

the public now has until June 10th to provide public comments. The staff of NPCA's Sierra Nevada and Los Angeles Field Offices will continue their diligent work to build a broad group of national and local partners focused on keeping new oil and gas development away from our public lands, endangered ecosystems and overburdened communities. For more information on the proposal and to submit comments, please visit <https://tinyurl.com/y8x4f5cf>.

Below: Oil fields outside of Bakersfield, CA ©Matt Abele 2019.



Travel with Us

By Jared Dial

Join us on one of our small-group educational adventures, where you'll hit the trails or explore via small-ship cruise. Land tours are limited to just 16 participants plus two guides and include meals, accommodations and on-trip transportation.

See the full lineup of NPCA trips at npca.org/trips.

Zion and Beyond

September 28–October 4, 2019
October 26–November 1, 2019

Travel under the regular tourist radar this fall as we explore the less-traveled trails, vistas and cultural sites of three iconic Southwestern national park sites: Bryce Canyon National Park, Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and Zion National Park.



Seasons of Yosemite

September 22–27, 2019
October 13–18, 2019

The largest trees in the world and picture-perfect Yosemite Valley reign on this journey that transcends time and retraces the steps that inspired naturalist and philosopher, John Muir.



Joshua Tree and Death Valley

November 4–9, 2019

Explore the startling, surreal and sublime landscapes of Joshua Tree and Death Valley as you head deep into the heart of the Mojave Desert.



Top: Hiker overlooking Zion Canyon ©Tobinakehurst | Dreamstime **Middle:** Yosemite waterfall reflection in water ©Pettys | Dreamstime **Bottom:** Racetrack Playa in Death Valley National Park, California ©Tobkatrina | Dreamstime



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FLOWERS, WHALES AND ADVOCACY

By Laura Torres

The Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area represents the closest national park unit to Los Angeles and a gateway for many families to the broader national park system. This spring, we organized a trip for families from the San Fernando Valley to Point Dume, in the recreation area's coastal zone. The purpose was to learn about grey whale migration and share the parks' beauty with the families. The amazing flower bloom taking place at the time also allowed us to discuss engaging with the outdoors responsibly. While the families lived less than 30 miles from Point Dume, none of the participants had previously visited this site. Thrilled by the opportunity to see grey whales, seals and other wildlife so close to the city, the families were enthusiastic about future opportunities, which fueled a conversation about protecting our public lands and working together to build a greener future. Part of that discussion centered on identifying and acknowledging the barriers to park access. Most importantly, the families walked away with a sense of increased ownership and responsibility for protecting these places for future



generations. This was our second outing with the group, and our next activity will include a Civic Voice Workshop to help further develop their skills and confidence as park advocates.

Above: Enjoying the beauty of the flower bloom during a short hike. ©Laura Navar



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