

## 2010 California Trails and Greenways Conference

On Tuesday, April 20th, I loaded up my horse Buddy and my girlfriend Beverly Hayes and we headed out to represent CSHA at the California Trails and Greenways Conference in Cambria. After a 6 hour trip (with only occasional rain) we arrived at Montana de Oro State Park where we were staying.

The following day, Wednesday, Bob Gage and I participated with other equestrians, bicyclists, and hikers in the pre-conference Trail Sharing and Riding Workshop at the horse campgrounds. Due to the rainy, cold weather only a few others attended but they were a very receptive group.

During the next two days we met other trail enthusiasts, planners, advocates and various agencies from throughout California. If you wanted to know anything about trails, this was the place to be!

There were many sessions I would have loved to attend, unfortunately, they are only one of me so I had to pick and choose. Following are quick synopses of the sessions I attended.

***Trail Mapping with GIS/GPS for Trail Managers*** explained how GIS and GPS technology can be used to plan trails and for trail maintenance. From high-end computer programs to just using Google Earth and linking digital pictures trail managers can identify potential trails and maintenance issues.

***Engaging Youth in Active Recreation*** was a session that highlighted High School Mountain Biking clubs that started 10 years ago at Berkeley High School. It is a program that stresses the importance of self-esteem, self reliance, health, sportsmanship, and reduce chemical and computer dependencies. Youth are encouraged to volunteer on trail projects and get involved in trail meetings, etc. Mike Kelly, the presenter, stressed that the same type of program could be used for any type of trail user, be they hiker or equestrian.

***Funding is Over-Rated - Build Your Trail Anyway*** explained how to build a trail with little to no funding. The presenter referenced the Kokopelli Trail, a 142 mile trail through Colorado and Utah and the Tahoe Rim Trail, 165 miles, trails that were built in this manner. Basic points were:

- To get started you just need a vision and plan.
- Get some champions and volunteers.
- Reward your volunteers with food not plaques!!
- Once you get started, look for donations and grants and get organized so donors have something to give to.
- Branding is very important! Design a logo and use it on signage, maps, letterhead, announcements, etc. People learn to associate the logo to the trail!
- Build the trail in segments - build what you can when you can!
- Be sure to include loop trails and day loops.
- Partner and collaborate with agencies.
- Plan big events so donors, etc. feel ownership, e.g. trail segment openings, work days, picnics.
- Get business and community involvement; identify economic impacts to local businesses.

Remember road blocks are speed-bumps! Celebrate successes!

***Trail Partnerships - Doing Them A Different Way*** showcased how the non-profit organizations San Luis Obispo Parks & Open Space Trails (SLOPOST) and Central Coast Concerned Mountain Bikers (CCCMB), work with California State Parks in the San Luis Obispo area in a cooperative way that ends up with more available and sustainable trails than if each group focused on their own goals.

Their basic principles are:

- Recognize that conflict is goal interference. Only invest resources in cooperation and none in conflict.
- Have sustainable and (when feasible) more available trails.
- Have a trails committee chaired by State Parks to foster cooperation, communications and respect among the various trail user groups and State Parks.
- The trail committee includes trail user group leaders who can both represent user group interests and organize volunteer efforts to assist State park in fulfilling its responsibilities. The committee includes participation by park professional management, operations, and specialist staff to foster two-way understanding of agency goals and guidelines as well as trail user goals.

The primary goals of the trails committee are:

- Assist with the evaluation of trails and make recommendations on additions, abandonment, maintenance, and realignment to promote safe and sustainable trails for everyone.
- Identify and prioritize trail projects.
- Determine trail use designation (e.g. multi-use, hiking only, accessible, equestrian, etc.)
- Assist park staff to implement agency and committee approved project and maintenance efforts with user group volunteers and support.
- Have all effort go into mutually beneficial efforts.
- Assist with mitigation of trail maintenance issues through planning, trail design, signage, and monitoring with volunteers.

***Hearst Ranch Open Space Acquisition*** all the land you can see from Hearst Castle is now protected. American Land Conservations and California State Parks have negotiated with the Hearst Corporation for the 128 square mile (82,000 acre) cattle ranch on the coast, with 18 miles of coastline. It is the largest working cattle ranch on the California coast. The high points at this time are: Eliminate new resorts, limited development in Old San Simeon Village, protect the east side of the property with conservation/agricultural easements, and preserve the views and condition of the coastline on the west side.

While I was attending the sessions Beverly manned the CSHA information booth and spread the word about CSHA. It was interesting that although there were other equestrians in attendance, we were they only equestrian group that had a booth at the conference. We got a lot of questions from municipalities and trail developers about the trail requirements for equestrians.

Thursday night was a special treat with a trip to Hearst Castle! The State Park buses picked us up at the hotel in Cambria and took us to the visitors' center for dinner then up to the castle for special tours of the castle at night. What a sight!

Saturday was a joint trail event with SLOPOST and CCCMB at Montana de Oro. Approximately 35 equestrians, 20 bicyclists and a couple hikers broke into groups and rode together into the hills of the state park. Up single-track switch backs and down fire roads with no problems! After approximately 3 hours we all returned to the horse camp for a great barbecue and fellowship.

All in all, it was a great week! Enjoy the pictures!

Marie Grisham, CSHA TRAP Chair



Bev at the CSHA Booth



Trail Sharing Workshop

Joint Ride on Saturday



Hearst Castle at night