



The Trail Companion

Fall 2003

Trail Center Volunteers Begin Much Needed Work at Mt. Sutro

By Dave Alderman

On October 18, the Trail Center gathered at Mt. Sutro for the first in a series of projects to improve the trail system there. UCSF owns the Mt. Sutro area, which is underused, partially because trails need a lot of work. On a Saturday, in the middle of San Francisco, not a single person hiked past our work crew.

The weather was beautiful, and nine volunteers worked to clear the brush and improve the tread on the top half of the North Ridge trail. We widened the trail, clearing back the thick ivy and blackberry brambles, and cleared several small fallen trees.

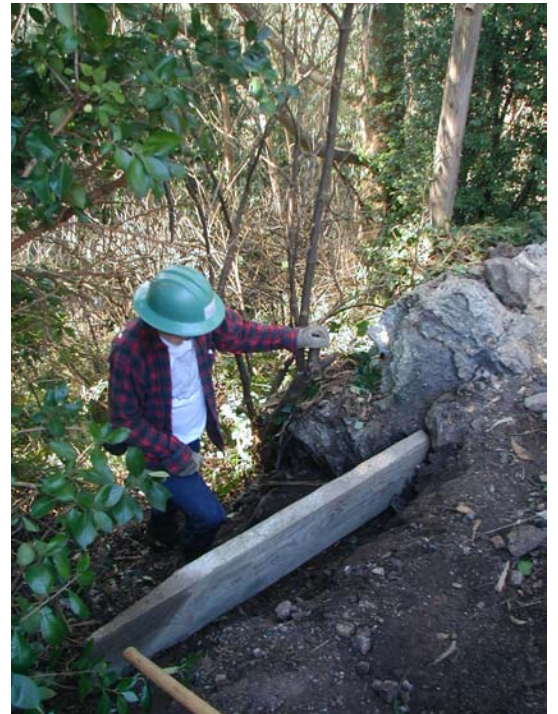
The most difficult section involved chipping away at a large boulder and building a rock step. After much pounding with a pick mattock, we were able to clear a path that allowed easy passage around the rock. We also built a short retaining wall to shore up the trail. With luck, in a couple more workdays we will have a complete, hikable path to the top of the mountain.

Special thanks to Orlando Elizondo and the all the others who helped

organize the project. Thanks to Orlando for providing dessert for lunch, and to Glenn for making an emergency run for retaining wall supplies.

Many thanks to the volunteers who came: Scott Heeschen, David Croker, Hank Magnuski, Craig Dawson, David Alderman, Ben Pease, Robert Grow, Ed Alderman, Orlando Elizondo, Dexter Lee, and Glenn (sorry, I didn't get your last name).

Keep your eyes open for our next work date at Mt. Sutro. We hope to see you out there!



Dave Croker sizes up a retaining wall at a recent build at Mt. Sutro. Photo by Scott Heeschen.

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The Trail Center

The Trail Center is a non-profit volunteer organization formed in 1983 to provide and promote quality non-motorized trail opportunities for all people in San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Alameda and San Francisco counties. The Trail Center works with government agencies, outdoor enthusiasts and other interested parties to create and manage an interconnected network of trails for the five-county region. The Trail Center publishes *The Trail Companion* and organizes trail building, repair and mapping projects.

The Board of Directors meets every month on the second Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the Peninsula Conservation Center.

Board of Directors

David Alderman, David Croker, Rich Feldman, Bruce Hartsough, Scott Heeschen, Aparna Kapur, David Kison, Hank Magnuski, David Taylor, Robert Tracey, and Dawn Woo

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Book Review: Building Better Trails

By *Scott Heeschen*

I'm always on the lookout for new books or publications related to trail building. Early on in my volunteer work with the Trail Center's Crew Leader Training Committee, the Committee charged me with writing a trail building bibliography. There was no World Wide Web at that point, so about all I had to go on were references in the back of the few trail building books in the Trail Center collection.

Of the few books that were in the reference pages, only a few were still in print. I think I only managed to find two new books, one of which only partially addressed trail building. Even now, there aren't that many books on building trails, so as I was going through the Trail Center's mail and came across a postcard from the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) advertising their trail manual, titled Building Better Trails, I immediately ordered a copy.

It's a short book (72 pages) that reads very quickly (easily under an hour) and only costs \$10 (free shipping). It's also available as a very large downloadable file for free (check out www.imba.com). IMBA and Interbike, which sponsored the book, seem to be focusing on getting the word out rather than making money off this work, and I say more power to them.

For those of you unfamiliar with IMBA, they were formed 15 years ago in response to threatened trail closures to mountain bikes. They felt that if mountain bikers were involved in constructing and maintaining trails,

they would gain clout in land management discussions and more trails would remain or become open to mountain bike use. They seem to be making good progress. The foreword of this book claims that IMBA members annually contribute half a million volunteer hours and construct more than a thousand miles of trail open to bikers, hikers and equestrians worldwide.

It should come as no surprise that the book is oriented towards mountain biking trails. Some concepts may also apply to trail runners as well, since they discuss the "flow" of trails – maintaining the general nature (open or flowing vs. tight and technical) of the trail. Abrupt changes from open to technical will promote quick braking, which may lead to more erosion. There's also an appendix in back which discusses technical challenges and how to construct them (something that's typically avoided for hiking trails).

Also, I think the book does a better-than-average job of addressing different user groups and their trail needs and wants. This is probably due to the environment in which IMBA was formed, where they needed to get along with the existing trail use groups, or risk being banned from open space areas. The book also stresses good trail etiquette and sustainable trails, perhaps also due to IMBA's background.

The bulk of *Building Better Trails* does a good job of describing general trail construction and techniques, along with lots of good advice for avoiding erosion problems. I even learned a new technique, grade reversal, for helping to route trails and minimize

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Trail Center Continues Work at McNee Ranch



Dave Croker, David Alderman and Robert Grow look on as Darwin Poulos takes out some nasty brush. Photo by Hank Magnuski, September 13, 2003.

Roots, and Dips, and Dogs...Oh My!

By Tim Oren

A small band of a dozen volunteers met on July 12 to take on further repairs to the Gray Whale Cove Trail in McNee Ranch State Park. Given the heat of the day, it was lucky that we were working on the only shaded portion of the trail, at the South en-

trance and above the access road.

This portion of the trail is heavily used by hikers and runners, whose path had become obstructed with water damage, and encroaching tree roots and branches.

By the end of the day, the roots were gone or covered with fill, and all of the branches had been trimmed neatly back. Water ruts in two places were filled with broken stone to prevent further erosion, and the trail rerouted around the damage. Drain

dips were also added in to prevent future damage.

Ranger Chet Bardo pronounced the refurbished trail segment a great improvement. In addition to trail repairs, some of our volunteers also participated in the rescue of a dog that had been overcome by heat exhaustion while walking with its people on the Pedro Road. You never know what a wheelbarrow will be handy for!

Whacking Grass in September

By Hank Magnuski

The Trail Center went to back to work for the third time at McNee Ranch State Park on September 13, 2003. The work day started with the initiation of a new site supervisor, our veteran crew leader Pat Oren, taking charge and running the build for the first time.

Old Pedro Road, as described in the Summer 2003 edition of *The Trail Companion*, used to be the main connecting link between Half Moon Bay and San Francisco, but fell into disuse when the Devil's Slide route for US 1 opened up. Much of the paved surface of this old road remains, but the drainage in many places has been blocked, and water washing over the outer edges of the road has caused severe erosion damage. In some places, the water erosion has narrowed the road to a tiny footpath. If left unmaintained, major sections of the trail would eventually wash out, block-
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September Work at McNee (cont.)

ing access for the many hikers and bikers who use this path.

Our main objective for the day was to clear the inside ditch and drainage along the road, re-establishing the flow to the culverts or runoffs that were still present.

A week prior, Tim Oren, Pat Oren and Hank Magnuski surveyed the site, and marked approximately twenty locations where work needed to be done.

Some spots were simple cleanups, but others required more engineering in that mudslides or other fill encroached onto the road, and plant life, including substantially sized trees, were growing where the path used to be.

And then there was the Pampas Grass. This non-native plant jumps at the chance to root where the soil has been disturbed, and seems to especially like the drainage ditches. A major activity of the day was to clear Pampas from obstructing the drains, and a special team was assigned just to whack away at the plants.

Old Pedro Road affords some beautiful views of ocean, and it was a beautiful day to work, but by early afternoon the heat wore us down and we had to quit a little earlier than planned. Nevertheless, we finished approximately half of the twenty marked spots, and opened up several spots in the trail that had been really narrow.

Many thanks to the fifteen volunteers who participated, especially Jill Forester who called in local residents for the event. And kudos to Pat for a job well done.

Our next build at McNee is scheduled for December 6th, where

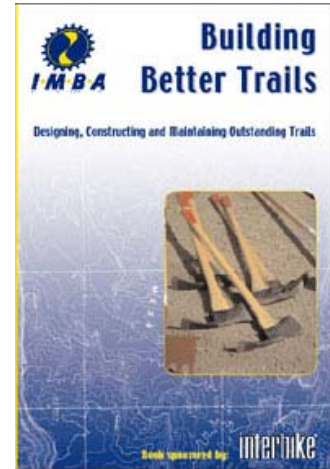
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Book Review: Building Better Trails (cont.)

potential erosion problems. It's essentially a large-scale version of drain dips or swales.

One problem that occurs on long stretches of steeper grade trails is rutting – if water starts to collect on such a trail, it tends to start flowing directly down the trail (a nice path of least resistance). This will start eroding the trail tread and will cause a small channel to develop. Over time, that channel helps collect the water flow and keeps it flowing quickly. This causes even more erosion, which helps develop a larger channel, which causes more erosion, which ... you get the picture. The Trail Center will often install drain dips (essentially a small “up” on a downhill section) along stretches of these kinds of trail, which help to shunt water off the side and prevent water from gaining more momentum. Grade reversals take this to the next level, dealing with larger lengths of trail and are taken care of in the trail planning phase.

This book sometimes just briefly touches on some subjects, which is mostly okay - it is not intended as the ultimate source of building trails. However, there are times when the level of detail seems very inconsistent. The page on bridges has ten tips, going into great detail on material selection, but at the end it says to consult a bridge expert or the Forest Service for their construction guide. Similarly with the half-page on



culverts – they include some tips on installing a culvert, but not much information on how to actually do it. These two examples seemed like they were thrown in as after-thoughts. I'm nit-picking here, and honestly, our own Crew Leader Manual doesn't even address bridges or culverts due to their complexity. Done incorrectly, they can cause major problems, and they may deserve their own books.

Building Better Trails does not discuss tools or their usage much, if any, but refers readers to the very comprehensive guide published by the US Forest Service, Hand Tools for Trail Work.

I'd easily recommend this book to anyone interested in trail construction or mountain biking. However, as with any book of this kind, it's best to supplement its reading with some actual hands-on experience with knowledgeable experts.

we will tackle erosion on the upper half of Old Pedro. After that there are connector trails to be restored from the Martini Creek entrance to the Gray

Whale Cove trail.

Mark you calendars for the next build. We can use all the help we can get!

Important Trail Center Announcements

Crew Leader Training Returns!

Yes, that's right! After going several years with no crew leader training sessions, we're starting it up again. This will be a scaled-down version of previous trainings and will focus on the technical aspects of building trail. We will discuss safety, tools and their usage, tread construction, drainage, finishing and route planning/flagging. This one-day class is geared primarily towards people who would like to help lead crews with the Trail Center, but it will also be a good education for people interested in knowing more about what goes on during one of our workdays.

We will be holding the training at Mt. Sutro in San Francisco, the site of our October trail build, on November 15 from 10am to 4pm.

We'll only be able to handle a limited number of students, so register early. We will give priority to active trail building volunteers.

The fee is \$30, which will be waived for members and active volunteers. Students will get a copy of our Crew Leader Training Manual, quality instruction from trainers with an average of 10 years of experience building trail, and refreshments afterwards.

Please contact the Trail Center office one week in advance, (650) 968-7065, if you are interested in attending. You may also RSVP via email at outreach@trailcenter.org.

Annual Meeting, Volunteer Appreciation and Tool Party!

We're 20 years young and we're celebrating! Our Annual Meeting, Volunteer Appreciation and Tool Party will be taking place on Saturday, November 22, at Scott Heeschen's house at 275 Carlyn Ave. in Campbell. Please RSVP to the Trail Center office ((650) 968-7065) one week in advance.

From noon to 4pm we'll give our tools and trailer the tender loving care that they so richly deserve. After another year of hard work on Bay Area trails, the mattocks and pulaskis need sharpening, all the tools need de-poison-oaking, and the trailer typically needs some cleaning. Don't worry if you have no experience, we're happy to teach!

After the tools have been taken care of, we'll have pizza and a brief business meeting at 4:30, followed by entertainment at 5:30. Everyone's welcome for any portion of the event – no need to sharpen tools for your supper, we're happy to have the company.

As part of the business meeting, we need to elect folks to our Board of Directors. Over the last several months, several people have joined the board and have been helping out. Now's your chance to make them official! If you don't plan on attending, please return the following proxy ballot (must be signed to be official) to the Trail Center office at

**Trail Center
3921 East Bayshore Rd.
Palo Alto, CA 94301**

Also, the Board of Directors currently has a number of vacancies. We are especially looking for candi-

dates who have financial, publicity or organizational skills. The Board meets once a month. If you would like to be considered for a position on the Board or would like to nominate someone, please contact us before the meeting.

And no, it's not required that your name be David to join the Board!

2003 Trail Center Board of Directors Official Ballot

Please circle or mark your approval:

Entire Slate

David Alderman

David Croker

Rich Feldman

Bruce Hartsough

Scott Heeschen

Aparna Kapur

David Kison

Hank Magnuski

David Taylor

Robert Tracey

Dawn Woo

Write-in _____

Signature:

Date:

Upcoming Events

Crew Leader Training

November 15, 2003 - Saturday (RSVP required)

Volunteer Appreciation, Tool Party and Annual Meeting

November 22, 2003 – Saturday

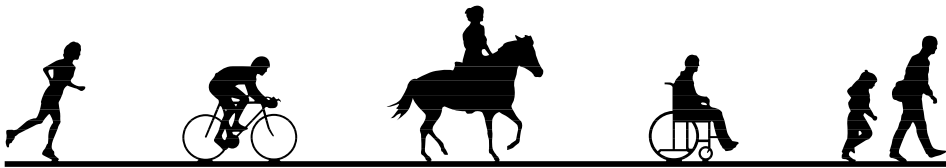
Old Pedro Road Trail Maintenance - McNee Ranch State Park

December 6, 2003 – Saturday

Trail Build - Pescadero State Beach

January 10, 2004 – Saturday

For directions and further information, email outreach@trailcenter.org, check www.trailcenter.org or call (650) 968-7065. Not receiving our email newsletter, [Trail Center News & Upcoming Events](#), yet? You're missing out on the most current announcements, news and alerts. Email tcnews@trailcenter.org to sign up today!



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