

Council, conservancy join to save trails

I recently was contacted by Elaine MacDonald, who acted as president of the Antelope Valley Trails, Recreation and Environmental Council for 17 years. The Antelope Valley Trails Council was founded in 1980 by trail advocates Ed Skinner of Juniper Hills and Gloria Gossard, who wrote the Antelope Valley Press' horse column prior to her move to Tehachapi. Following the 1990 absorption of the Antelope Valley Heritage Foundation, the group's name was changed to AVTREC.

The organization has worked diligently to preserve green belts, open space and trails for hikers, bicyclists and horse riders here in our Valley.

For those who missed the excellent March 4 article by Alisha Semchuck, staff reporter for the Antelope Valley Press, as of the end of January, AVTREC has chosen to set aside its status as an independent group to become the Antelope Valley Trails, Recreation and Environmental Committee of the Antelope Valley Conservancy, with MacDonald maintaining her leadership as committee chairwoman, in addition to

In the Saddle

Valerie Zera AVinthesaddle@aol.com



becoming a director of the Antelope Valley Conservancy.

MacDonald urged me, "to let all our equine friends know that AVTREC is still active and the trail goals are the same, while having more power to attain land to save and protect our local trails and their connections."

While the organization always has worked to keep trails open, increase awareness of trails and has worked with Lancaster, Palmdale and Los Angeles County to map, protect and include trails in the planning of development projects and other such important tasks, the goal of maintaining open space has proved more elusive. But the Antelope Valley Conservancy actually can own land, and since AVTREC is a committee of the conservancy,

it finally can work as part of a local effort to preserve open space.

For example, at some point in recent years, approximately 4,000 acres across the top of the ridges at Ritter Ranch were donated to the Santa Monica Mountain Conservancy. See LAMountains.com, and under "select a park" choose Ritter Ranch for more information, including directions and a trail map.

I've never really understood how the Santa Monica Mountain Conservancy became involved. However, I'm glad that a bunch of very nice trails have been preserved in what is now called Ritter Ranch Park, at 4050 Elizabeth Lake Road, Leona Valley. But, think how much nicer it would be if such beautiful open space could have been entrusted into the hands of a local group, which, in my opinion, would make much better stewards for the land.

For example, although the Santa Monica Mountain Conservancy lists the park address on Elizabeth Lake Road in Leona Valley, their trail map actually indicates the park entrance is accessed by exiting Highway 14 at Sierra Highway in Acton, turning north, going to Shannondale Road,

turning right, continuing to Shannon Valley Road, taking another right, going to Shannon View Road, turning right, continuing to Telephone Road, going left and following this to the park entrance, which is *not* on Elizabeth Lake Road and not in Leona Valley.

AVTREC has a need for trail users to help map existing Antelope Valley trails using GPS. The best help comes from area trail users, since they know the routes better than anyone else. Long time AVTREC supporter and trail activist Marcy Watton is looking for volunteers who can do this. If you can help, call Watton at (661) 270-0333.

The Antelope Valley Conservancy can accept donations of trail easements from landowners. This means AVTREC can work with developers in the planning stages to include trails in future housing developments, so that trail connections will remain forever open as part of the Antelope Valley Conservancy.

More details about the Antelope Valley Conservancy, AVTREC and how you can support their efforts can be obtained at www.avconservancy.org. You also

may reach Wendy Reed, president of the board of directors of Antelope Valley Conservancy, at (661) 943-9000 or MacDonald at (661) 946-1976.

West Nile virus update

A neighbor informed me he found some mosquitoes in the last few days. Please check your property for places where stagnant water accumulates, since that is where mosquitoes breed. UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine recommends horses receive West Nile virus booster immunizations just before mosquitoes become active in your area and again just before mosquito season peaks. Remember, equine cases of West Nile virus are *not* occurring in horses which have received an initial series of two vaccines, one month apart, followed by regular boosters of West Nile virus vaccine.

Valerie Zera's articles have appeared in several California Equestrian publications. She is a member of Antelope Valley Trails, Recreation and Environmental Council. Write to her care of the Valley Press, P.O. Box 4050, Palmdale, CA 93590.