

# Ridge Lines

FALL - WINTER 2011 - 2012

OF THE BAY AREA RIDGE TRAIL COUNCIL

## Celebrating Five Miles in Sierra Vista Open Space Preserve



Views from the Sierra Vista Open Space Preserve are expansive. Photo by Stephen Joseph.

On October 22, the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council will dedicate 5.3 miles of scenic Ridge Trail in the Santa Clara County Open Space Authority's Sierra Vista Open Space Preserve. Located in eastern San José, contiguous to Alum Rock Park, the 1,676-acre ridgeline preserve is the quintessential Bay Area landscape of rolling grassland, oak woodlands, and riparian corridors. With elevations between 1,000 and 2,324 feet, it offers sweeping views of the southern San Francisco Bay and the Santa Cruz and Hamilton mountain ranges.

Initially, the trail is opening to hik-

ers and mountain bicyclists. The Open Space Authority is committed to open the trail to equestrians too, pending the opening of a new equestrian staging area and equestrian access route to the Ridge Trail.

Hikers and bicyclists can access the new trail from the Boccardo Trail, which links to the trailhead at Alum Rock Park via the North Rim Trail and Todd Quick Trail. In 2002, the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council dedicated the steep 1.5-mile Boccardo Trail, now visited by 13,000 trail users (hikers, cyclists, and equestrians) annually. Climbing 1,000 feet up a south-facing

slope, it terminates at an elevation of nearly 1,900 feet.

The newly constructed 1.3-mile Ridge Trail continues beyond the Boccardo Trail as a single-track four-foot wide trail. Called the Sierra Vista Trail, it traverses the hillside through grasslands, oak woodlands, and steep cliffs of sedimentary rocks, offering views into Penitencia and Arroyo Aguague canyons and downtown San José. This section of trail is an easy to moderate hike.

The trail then becomes the Calaveras Fault Trail when it changes from single-track to a ranch road. This four-

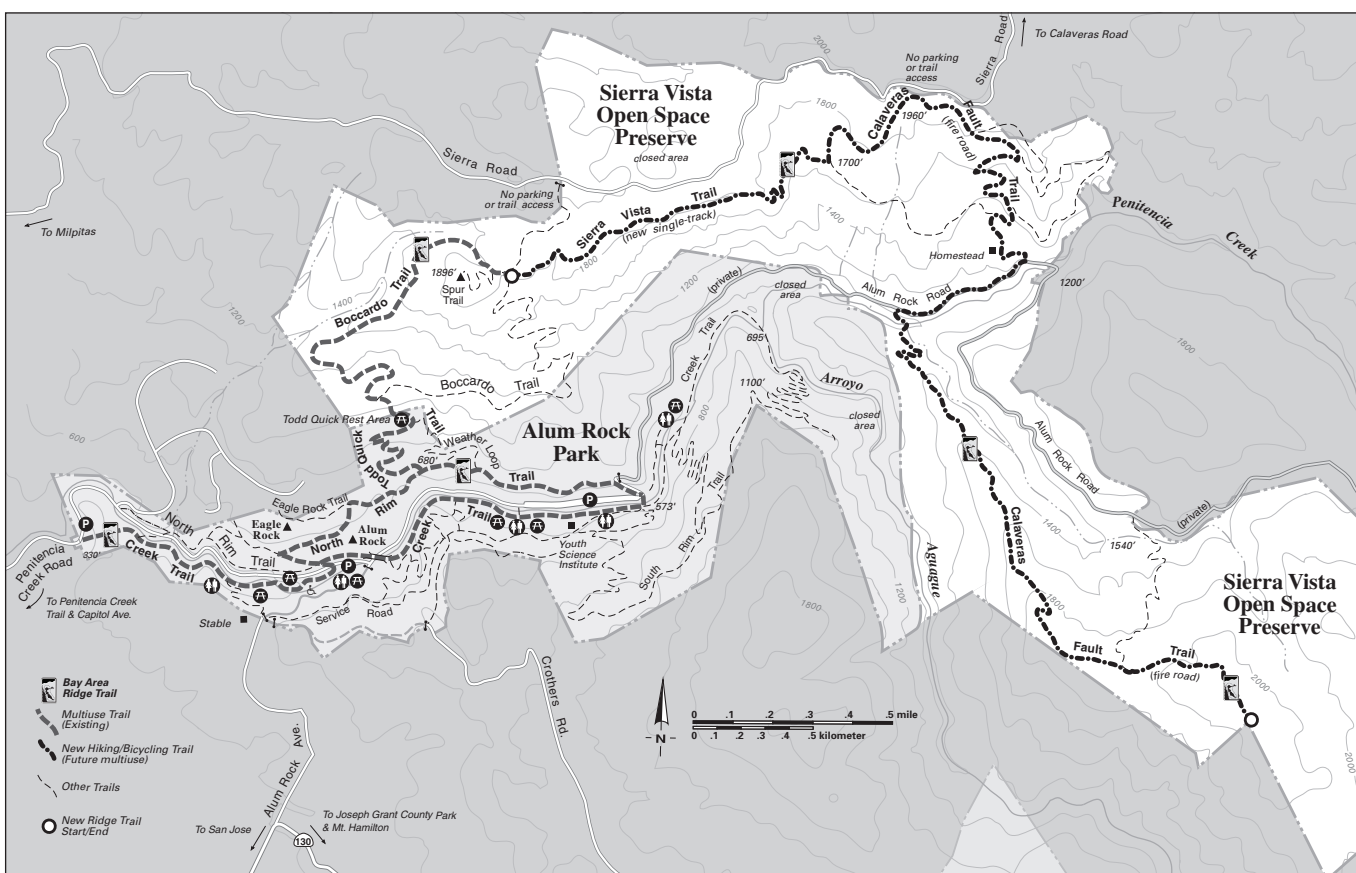
mile, moderately challenging section passes through chaparral and oak-bay laurel woodland; just beyond an old homestead, the trail follows private Alum Rock Road for a quarter-mile before crossing Penitencia Creek and becoming a fire road again. The trail ends at a superb viewpoint near the southeastern end of the property. A 1.5-mile gap remains between this terminus and the Ridge Trail in Joseph D. Grant County Park to the south. To hike or bike from the Eagle Rock parking lot in Alum Rock Park to the end of the trail and back is a challenging 14 miles!

The Sierra Vista Open Space Preserve is relatively new: between 2000 and 2005, the Santa Clara County Open Space Authority acquired four properties and a conservation/trail easement to create the preserve. The authority just finished construction of the Sierra Vista Trail this fall and also completed minor grading on the Calaveras Fault Trail to improve drainage and make it accessible for patrol vehicles.

The Bay Area Ridge Trail Council, with Coastal Conservancy funding, provided two grants to the project, totaling about \$118,000. The first grant in 2005 funded trail planning; the second grant, made this year, paid for the construction of a fiberglass bridge (65 feet long and 6 feet wide). The Open Space Authority paid for all other improvements.

Sierra Vista Open Space Preserve not only offers exceptional recreational opportunities, but it also protects the Penitencia Creek water-

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Map by Ben Pease.

pitch in get dirty build trail make friends  
**REI - Ridge Trail Service Day!**  
 Saturday, November 5, 2011

SEE BACK PAGE FOR MORE INFORMATION



# COUNCIL NEWS

## REI Grant Supports Our Volunteer Program

This summer REI awarded the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council a generous \$25,000 community grant for our work supporting outdoor stewardship, including volunteer efforts to build and maintain the Ridge Trail. This work includes coordination of the *REI-Ridge Trail Service Day*, our regionwide volunteer event to be held for the fourth consecutive year on November 5 (see back page). REI granted \$4.2 million this year to nonprofits across the country that work to preserve and maintain natural spaces through active volunteer programs. Every year, REI designates 3 percent of its previous year's operating profit to its annual grants program. We are grateful to REI for its steadfast support of the Ridge Trail!



## New Ridge Trail T-Shirts for Sale!

The Bay Area Ridge Trail Council has a brand-new t-shirt in men's and women's sizes! Wear our new heather-grey t-shirt to show your support for the Ridge Trail. Buy your \$25 t-shirt or get one for a friend on our website at <http://bit.ly/ShopRidgeTrail>.

## Board and Staff News

In October, the North Bay Leadership Council will present a "Paint the Community Green" environmental stewardship award to our longtime chair **Bill Long** for his leadership in open-space preservation, trail development, and wastewater recycling. The awards program "recognizes the importance of leadership to galvanize collective good intentions, create the momentum necessary to move forward toward effective solutions, and help foster a culture of leadership in our region." Bill has volunteered for the Ridge Trail for 19 years, serving as chair for nearly 11 years! His environmental work also includes serving on the governing boards of the San Francisco Bay Trail, the Marin Open Space Trust (MOST), and the Novato Sanitary District.



Bill Long

We are pleased to welcome **Matt Zinn** to our board. Matt is an avid hiker, trail runner, and mountain bicyclist. He is an attorney with the firm of Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger LLP, with a background in land use, environmental, and public agency law, as well as conservation easements. Matt is the father of two small children and has a keen interest in engaging the next generation in trails, outdoor recreation, and environmental stewardship. He has enjoyed both the *Cruz* and several *Ridge to Bridge* events; the last two years he was the top fundraiser in the *Ridge to Bridge* fundraising *athon*.



Matt Zinn

Bay Area Ridge Trail board member **Karen Collins** stepped off the board and joined our advisory council. We appreciate Karen's contributions to the organization since she joined the board in 2007. She served on the governance committee and each year organized a hearty team of hikers to participate in *Ridge to Bridge*. She also organizes an annual fundraising hike for the Ridge Trail, hosted by Marin County Supervisor and Ridge Trail Advisory Council Member Steve Kinsey.



Karen Collins

A Ridge Trail supporter made an anonymous contribution in honor of Office Manager **Martha Benioff**, with special appreciation for her close coordination with former San Mateo County Committee Chair Bill Smith, who passed away last year. Martha has been a dedicated Ridge Trail staffer for 10 years!



Martha Benioff

The Ridge Trail Council is saddened by the sudden passing of **Frank Morris** in August, who served on our board from 2003 to 2010, and then on our council of advisors. Frank also served on the Solano Land Trust board and was a dedicated advocate for conservation and recreation in Solano County. He especially loved Lake Solano and generously shared his passion for this place as a docent and guide.

## Stanford Takes on Ridge Trail Project

Volunteers from the Stanford Graduate School of Business Alumni Consulting Team (ACT) have agreed to work with the Ridge Trail Council and will craft a plan to improve our outreach and marketing efforts. One of the largest pro bono resource providers in the San Francisco Bay Area, ACT donates approximately \$3 million worth of strategic management consulting services annually. Please contact us at [info@ridgetrail.org](mailto:info@ridgetrail.org) if you would like to help in our outreach to both supporters and people who don't yet know about the Ridge Trail, and watch for upcoming issues of eNews to read about further developments.

## Sierra Vista, *continued from page 1*

shed, home to a number of protected species such as the red-legged frog, tiger salamander, golden eagle, mountain lion, bobcat, and grey fox. Black-tailed deer, red-tailed hawks, American kestrels, coyotes, turkey vultures, rattlesnakes, and gopher snakes are commonly seen on the property. Cattle grazing will continue as part of an effort to reduce invasive plants and restore native species.

The preserve is open from 8 AM to sunset, with access through Alum Rock Park, which is closed on Mondays. The trail may be closed during the rainy season; for the trail's current status, visit [OpenSpaceAuthority.org](http://OpenSpaceAuthority.org).

The October 22 Ridge Trail dedication will take place at the top of Sierra Road, about 3.5 miles east of Piedmont Avenue in northeastern San José. Join us for the ribbon-cutting ceremony and a variety of guided hikes and rides! Check our website for last-minute details or subscribe to our eNews to get updates about the dedication.

— Elizabeth Byers

## THE VIEW FROM HERE

Dear Friends,

I always look forward to fall in the Bay Area! In San Francisco and near the fog-cooled coast, "summer" doesn't usually arrive before September. And of course, in warmer inland areas, trails that are blazing hot in August become more pleasant while the days are still long. This is a roundabout lead-in to saying... I hope you have plenty of opportunities to take advantage of our lovely fall climate and visit more of the Ridge Trail in the weeks ahead. And in case you need any encouragement or inspiration, check our website for maps and tips or come join one of our upcoming great events:



When was the last time you celebrated the opening of a brand-new trail? We'd love to have you join us and the Santa Clara County Open Space Authority on October 22, when we'll dedicate the **Sierra Vista Ridge Trail** – more than five new miles in Santa Clara County. This is the longest trail segment we've dedicated in several years. Opening this beautiful, long-awaited trail allows this land to be accessible to the public for the first time. As we go to press, event plans are still taking shape, so check our website for details.

Another can't-miss fall event is the **REI-Ridge Trail Service Day** on November 5. We deeply appreciate outstanding support from REI headquarters, all Bay Area REI stores, and our awesome park partners. This year we're co-hosting a dozen trail work parties, spread all around the Bay Area. Hundreds will come out to "pitch in, get dirty, build trail, and make friends." I hope you'll come too!

Recently, the council rolled out a new **strategic plan** to guide the organization over the next few years. It was inspiring to revisit the bold vision of our early champions, to consider our progress so far, and to explore strategies for overcoming challenging obstacles and propelling us forward. We are also applying new focus to our most challenging long-term trail gaps—what we're calling the "last 100 miles"—and are developing area-specific strategies to make progress and retain future connectivity options. Stay tuned for future updates.

Happy Trails,  
Janet McBride  
Executive Director

## ON THE TRAIL

### Volunteers Turn Out to Repair Ridge Trail



Photo by Cathy Moyer.

Over a weekend in June, Volunteers for Outdoor California (V-O-Cal) brought out nearly 100 volunteers to work on the Ridge Trail in 4,020-acre Sugarloaf Ridge State Park. Volunteers, including the Sonoma County Trails Council, repaired a mile-long stretch of trail with severe drainage problems by removing brush, constructing retaining walls, replacing water bars, and building 40 drain dips to help move water off the trail during the rainy season. This section of trail is near a new backcountry campground (also built with help from V-O-Cal) that enables trail users to make multiple day trips on the Ridge Trail. In addition to the 2.7-mile Ridge Trail, Sugarloaf Ridge State Park contains 25 miles of scenic multiuse trails. The Ridge Trail Council is grateful to both V-O-Cal for organizing the work-party weekend and all the volunteers who came out to care for the trail!



Trail users in the Sierra Vista Open Space Preserve will feel on top of the world. Photo by Stephen Joseph.



## Progress on North Slope Sonoma Mountain

Over the summer our Trail Steward John Aranson worked with the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, Sonoma County Regional Parks, and the Conservation Corps North Bay (CCNB) to prepare four miles of the North Slope Sonoma Mountain Ridge Trail for construction this fall. This trail section is part of the new 4.5-mile long Ridge Trail that will be dedicated next year. John worked with the crew to brush the trail and



The North Slope Sonoma Mountain Ridge Trail will open next spring. Photo by John Aranson.

install erosion control, and Sonoma County Regional Parks then hired a contractor to build the trail. The trail will harden over the winter, and is expected to open in 2012. This exciting work is the biggest trail project happening in the North Bay!

## Annual Ride & Hike Celebrates 10 Years

From August 31 to September 5, the Tilden-Wildcat Horsemen's Association (TWHHA) and Metropolitan Horsemen's Association sponsored its 10th annual six-day East Bay Hills Benefit Ride & Hike on the Ridge Trail, with 75 participating. Three years ago, the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council worked to add hikers

to the event—this year 44 hikers participated! Hikers and riders were mostly on different trails during the day, but they shared meals and stories, and enjoyed entertainment together each evening.

Starting at Crockett Hills Regional Park, the hike covered more than 40 miles of the Ridge Trail, ending at Cull Canyon Recreation Area. Riders could travel as many as 100 miles over six days (and hikers could hike up to five days), although both hikers and riders could choose the days they wanted to participate. The event was fully supported, with all meals and campsites included, and camping gear shuttled between campsites.

In the evenings, participants visited the Chabot Space Center, viewed a drill-team performance, and heard presentations from a naturalist and from Bob Coomber, who has hiked all of the East Bay trails in his wheelchair.



The East Bay Hills Benefit Ride & Hike serves up gourmet food! Photo by Richard Freidman.

After last year's hike and ride, hiker Jan Neufeld wrote about hiking at the event: "The views are consistently lovely to stellar and it's easy to fall in love with the Bay Area for more reasons with every step."

## SAVE THE DATES!

### REI-RIDGE TRAIL SERVICE DAY

**Saturday, November 5, 2011**

See back page for details.



Service Day volunteers at the Pinole Watershed in 2010. Photo by Dena Justice.

### RIDGE TO BRIDGE 2012

**Saturday, April 28**

Don't forget to mark next year's *Ridge to Bridge* on your calendar! The Bay Area Ridge Trail Council hosts this fun annual hike and ride in Marin County every spring. The trail features spectacular views of the Pacific coastline, Marin Headlands, Sausalito, the Bay, San Francisco, and the Golden Gate Bridge. Not only is this signature Ridge Trail event fun, but it also raises money to complete the Ridge Trail. Visit [RidgeTrail.org](http://RidgeTrail.org) for details!

### NEW EVENT!

**Explore the Ridge Trail in the South Bay**

**Saturday, May 19, 2012**

The Ridge Trail Council is proud to announce a new hiking and riding event! This hike/ride will highlight the Ridge Trail across Santa Clara Valley, and offer gorgeous views of the Santa Cruz and Hamilton ranges, the South Bay, and San José. Wildflowers will be in bloom! There will be challenging hikes and rides of about 25 miles with lots of climbing, as well as more moderate and family-oriented outings. Details are still being finalized. Want to help plan the event? Contact [volunteer@ridgetrail.org](mailto:volunteer@ridgetrail.org).

Gary Fitts, president of TWHHA, wrote about his first time participating in this event: "If you're used to competitions, as I was, I could hardly believe how good it felt to relax, sleep in, ride at any pace and along any route (even the recommended one), and then enjoy better food and evening programs than anything I have seen at an endurance ride."

This Labor Day tradition has raised more than \$150,000 for the Ridge Trail and other East Bay trails over the past 10 years. Volunteers for Outdoor California provided the kitchen and prepared many of the meals this year. We appreciate the horsemen's associations, the participants, and all the volunteers who made this event possible!



Equestrians on the McDonald Trail, near Bort Meadows, one of the East Bay Hills Benefit Ride and Hike camping sites. Photo by Lavonne Nicolai.





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Hikers at Ridge Trail Cruz. Photo by Julie Noblitt.

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**Join the Ridge Trail Council and REI November 5 for Trail Service Day**

Hundreds of volunteers are expected to build and restore the Ridge Trail on November 5 — *REI-Ridge Trail Service Day!* In a regionwide collaboration, each Bay Area REI store will join with local land managers to host volunteer work parties on a nearby section of the trail, with Chipotle generously feeding volunteers (where restaurants are available) with their tasty burritos.

Working with the Ridge Trail Council and REI, ten public parks agencies and four nonprofit partners will host the service day in twelve locations around the Bay Area. Following our motto, volunteers will “pitch in, get dirty, build trail, and make friends!” Last year, 500 people enjoyed working on the trail on *REI-Ridge Trail Service Day*. Volunteers do not need prior experience, and park staff provides all tools and project supervision.



This year we have an especially diverse range of projects: volunteers will work on some of the newest sections of Ridge Trail, and some sections dedicated more than 20 years ago. Some projects will have just 20 volunteers and some as many as 100.

Three work parties will be building new Ridge Trail: EBMUD will be rerouting trail in the Pinole Watershed to bypass an old steep ranch road and create a

more sustainable and enjoyable alternative route; the Santa Clara County Open Space District will put finishing touches on the Sierra Vista Ridge Trail, scheduled to open October 22; and California State Parks will build a boardwalk over seasonal wetlands in Annadel State Park. Volunteers will also be giving some tender loving care to older sections of the Ridge Trail, including the Miwok Trail in Marin County and Sweeney Ridge in San Mateo County, which both offer stunning views of the Pacific Coast.

This year, we are excited to not only be partnering with REI and public parks agencies, but also with several nonprofits: Sutro Stewards in San Francisco, Sonoma County Trails Council in Santa Rosa, and Skyline Wilderness Park Association and Napa Trail Alliance in Napa. These non-profit/volunteer groups help to preserve, maintain, and build trails, especially where public parks agencies are stretched thin. Working with the Sutro Stewards, we will help route future Ridge Trail off of city streets and into the picturesque UCSF Mt. Sutro Open Space Preserve.

Through its stewardship program, REI strives to “ensure that the next generation has a connection to the natural spaces we all enjoy today.” REI’s goal is to inspire its “employees, members, and customers to join in volunteer efforts to preserve and protect open spaces.” Thanks to support from REI—including its community grant to the Ridge Trail Council for outdoor stewardship—as well as invaluable leadership from our park partners, and ongoing financial support from our donors, we are able to organize volunteers to get out and work on the trail. We depend on volunteers to help build, restore, and maintain the Ridge Trail!

See below for a full list of work-party locations. To sign up for REI-Ridge Trail Service Day, visit our website at [RidgeTrail.org](http://RidgeTrail.org). Don’t wait too long to sign up—some locations fill up fast. See you on the trail!



pitch in get dirty build trail make friends  
**REI - Ridge Trail Service Day!**  
Saturday, November 5, 2011

**Work-Party Locations**

- UCSF Mt. Sutro Open Space Reserve, San Francisco, with the Sutro Stewards and REI San Francisco
- Mt. Tamalpais State Park, above Mill Valley, with California State Parks and REI Corte Madera
- Annadel State Park, Santa Rosa, with California State Parks, the Sonoma County Trails Council, and REI Santa Rosa
- Skyline Wilderness Park, Napa, with Skyline Wilderness Park Association, Napa Trail Alliance, and the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council (no REI store)
- Crockett Hills Regional Park, Crockett, with East Bay Regional Park District and REI Concord
- Vallejo - Benicia Buffer Trail, Benicia, with City of Benicia and REI Brentwood
- Pinole Watershed, Pinole, with East Bay Municipal Utility District and REI Berkeley
- Alum Rock Park, San José, with City of San José and REI Dublin
- Sierra Vista Open Space Preserve, San José, with Santa Clara County Open Space Authority and REI Fremont
- Santa Teresa County Park, San José, with Santa Clara County Parks and REI Saratoga
- Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserve, above Palo Alto, with Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District and REI Mountain View
- Sweeney Ridge, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Pacifica, with Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy and REI San Carlos



A happy REI-Ridge Trail Service Day volunteer last year at the Pinole Watershed. Photo by Amber Hoffman.