



ENFIA Interpreter

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A Message from the President

By Stan Trevena

Are we there yet?

One of my favorite things about the Carson Pass Information Station is that we are “literally” on the Pacific Crest Trail. The older I get, and the more people I meet hiking it, the more I wonder why I never knew about it earlier in my life.

I’ve been hiking around the Carson Pass area for almost 30 years now. I got on as a docent after I retired. This is when I discovered and became fascinated with the PCT. One of the things I love about my involvement as a volunteer docent at the station is my interactions with PCT hikers. I truly love their stories. Many of them have some aspect of danger experienced while traversing the Sierras. I’ve

heard stories of falling into rushing water while making a crossing, traversing steep ice fields with crampons and an ice axe, scrambling across rocky passes and crawling under fallen trees. The best stories are always about surviving dangerous situations on the trail. I bought a sticker two years ago at the Farmer’s Market up in Midtown Sacramento that simply says, “But did you die?”. I have it on the back window of my truck and often show it to PCT hikers who have told me their danger stories. They always laugh and want to know where I got it. I really need to see if I can track that vendor down to sell that sticker at the station.

My wife and I have a practice of following a few PCT hikers on YouTube every year. It’s fun to follow hikers, especially if you are lucky enough to meet them at the station. We always bring an assortment of trail magic up with us when we volunteer

at the station. We have been following two YouTube PCT hikers from the start this year, “Rach and Dan Outdoors”. We like their style of talking at the start of each video for a few minutes, their trail footage always gives the viewer a good feel of what they see while hiking, and they close each video with a short recap of their progress. Mark Sandperl posted their video for the day they visited Carson Pass Information Station on Facebook (it was their “day 80” on the PCT). They were talking as they approached the station saying that it was known for good trail magic. Edi Barrow, Secretary on the Board of Directors, had baked blackberry bars for her trail magic that day. They complimented the trail magic on their video for that day, and mentioned the bars.



Three of these PCT hikers have YouTube channels for their hike that we've watched.

Why have I picked this as the theme of this article? As President I get a lot of emails. Many are from the various systems we use; scheduling, membership, vendors, and the one used for online donations to ENFIA. I had my email on my screen while working on some paperwork when I heard a beep a few weeks back. I glanced up and saw a message about a donation. I opened it and first noticed the message, “Thank you for the trail magic at Carson Pass!”. I then glanced down and saw that a PCT hiker had donated \$500 to ENFIA! That is not a normal amount, especially from a PCT hiker. We must have really made his day on that visit to our station.

This season I have had so many compliments from PCT hikers about the docents at Carson Pass. So many say that some of the best trail magic they've had so far was at Carson Pass. Some say it's been many days since they've had trail magic when they hit our station. Bringing up trail magic on a day you are working is not required. Many docents really enjoy bringing it, and seeing the reactions of the PCT hikers as they open a box or cooler and smile as they grab a cold drink and snack. Donations in general seem to be up this season at the station and online.

People visiting the station comment on how helpful and friendly our docents are, how nice our little store is, and how it's a great place to just hang out for a while and take a break. This has been especially true since we installed the shade sails. We bought the first one, Laurel Gromer donated the second one, and Julia Russell just brought up another one about a week ago. The station is built on the kindness of our docents.

This is all about you. As a docent you are the face of ENFIA at the station. I love watching docents helping a kid pick out a puppet or find a book. We've got several people who bring dog biscuits and ask hikers if their dog would like a cookie. So many visitors are helped at the map table with hiking recommendations and permits for camping. Also when you're out on the trail for a hike in uniform and help people asking you questions, you always get a thank you and a smile. It all adds to the reputation and allure of the Carson Pass Information Station and Carson Pass Wilderness Management Area. Our visitor counts and sales this season speak to our attraction to people getting out for a hike, or passing through on the PCT.

So, thank you for everything that you do as a docent to make our corner of the Eldorado National Forest a

popular destination for people to enjoy and explore the outdoors.

Fall Business Meeting and Docent Appreciation Lunch

We are starting to plan our Fall Business Meeting and Docent Appreciation Lunch. We are currently narrowing our choices on a venue. It appears that this year's event will be somewhere on Highway 50 in the Placerville area. We will send out information as soon as we lock in the location.

We will also be putting out a call for people who want to throw their name in for a position on the ENFIA Board of Directors or who want to be considered for a volunteer position to work behind the scenes in support of the station. Last year we restructured the positions so that no one person should feel like they have a full-time job. We are going to be taking that further and launching a few new positions next season.

Keep an eye out for the announcement and try to make it to this important meeting in October. It's a great way to close out a great season at Carson Pass.

Another Way of Recovering from the 2021 Caldor Wildfire

by Lester Lubetkin



A brushfield in the Caldor Fire eight months after the fire (May 2022) where all of the vegetation was consumed. Photo by Alice Cantelow

If you were out within portions of the Caldor Fire shortly after the wildfire was put out, and then have returned to those areas in the last year, you were probably amazed at how much brush has returned, particularly in areas that



Deerbrush stump sprouts 2 1/2 years after the Caldor Fire (June 2024). Photo by Lester Lubetkin

were “brush fields” prior to the wildfire. It is hard to fathom how some of those plants could have grown that big, starting from seeds that survived the fire. Well, for many of the plants, particularly some of the

chaparral species, they didn’t start from seeds, but rather *stump-sprouted* (the more technical term is *facultative seeders*, meaning they are able to grow back from burl or from seeds).

You might have seen how oak trees sprout new shoots from their roots or *burls* right at the base of the trunk when the main trunk is affected. After time, the dead central trunk either falls or decays, and we are left with a ring of trunks, often referred to as a “fairy ring”. Or maybe you have



The main trunk of this black oak was killed by the Caldor Fire, but the burl at the base is sprouting new shoots (June 2024). Photo by Lester Lubetkin

seen coastal Redwood stands that have been burned or logged, and seen similar “fairy rings” of stately Redwoods encircling an ancient stump. These are examples of stump-sprouting.



Three oak trunks rising from an underground burl, likely due to the original tree trunk being killed by a wildfire. Photo from calpoly.edu

Some plant species are **obligate seeders**, meaning that they can only grow from seeds. To get established, they either require that a seed source already be present in the soil or that seeds are carried into the area, then with rains and other required conditions (such as cold temperatures, fire, etc.) the seeds may germinate, send down fragile roots and eventually become established (if there is sufficient soil moisture to survive that first summer).

In contrast, stump-sprouters are able to take advantage of the plants existing root system and the energy stored in near-surface burls or **lignotubers**. This is a highly successful strategy used by these plants to respond in “fire-dependent” ecosystems across the Sierra Nevada

and other parts of the State. These plants can put up small shoots and leaves shortly after the wildfire passes, sometimes even before Fall or Winter rains have come. By the end of the first year after the wildfire, these shoots can be one to two feet tall with robust leaves collecting more sunshine.

In the Caldor Fire scar, we see several species of *Ceanothus* (California lilac), including Mountain whitethorn (*Ceanothus cordulatus*) and Deerbrush (*Ceanothus intergerrimus*) that have the ability to stump sprout. Black oak (*Quercus kelloggii*) and live oaks are also stump-sprouters and can be found sending shoots up five feet or more already.

Manzanita has more diversity. About one-third of manzanita species across the State have the ability to resprout after a wildfire from a burl at the base of the main stem. In the area of the Caldor Fire, Greenleaf Manzanita (*Arctostaphylos patula*) is the main



Greenleaf manzanita sprouting from a root burl in the Caldor Fire scar, June 2024. You can see the original manzanita trunk extending above the new leaves and sprouts. Photo by Lester Lubetkin

stump-sprouting manzanita to be found. In contrast, Whiteleaf Manzanita (*Actostaphylos viscida*) does not stump-sprout, but rather is an obligate seeder, and so is only just starting to show up in prior chaparral fields that are already dominated by Ceanothus, Greeleaf Manzanita and other stump-sprouting brush species.

Understanding and appreciating these strategies plants use to recover from wildfires helps us to realize that there is a place for fire in the forest and that many plant species have adapted to wildfires. However, when wildfires recur too frequently, many of these strategies used by plants may not work - if the fires are too frequent, there may not be an adequate bed of seeds built up for obligate seeders to return. And if the fires are too intense, the burls or lignotubers of stump-sprouters may not be robust enough to support the new shoots. We need to stay within the fire return intervals that the plants have evolved with to ensure we have healthy and sustainable forests and ecosystems.

Retail Spotlight

By Kellie Trevena

One day while we were up at the Placerville Ranger District, we heard they had a contest for a shirt design. A ranger at the station had submitted a design to the contest and won. We really liked the look of the shirt, and we had been looking for a few new shirts that were specific to the Eldorado National Forest. I asked if we could use the design for a shirt we

could sell within the Eldorado National Forest.

We were given permission to use the design, and we reached out to one of our vendors. When the test shirt was finished, we were happy with the look. When we delivered the first batch of shirts to the Placerville Ranger station we were told about the inspiration for the shirt. We were told that it is good forest management to have space between trees, some separation. This practice helps to slow the spread of wildfires and allows the trees to grow better. Some of our other items also demonstrate this forestry practice.

Now often when you look through a forest you can actually see the trees.

You can find these shirts at all six of our retail locations in the Eldorado National Forest; Amador, Carson Pass, Crystal Basin, Placerville Ranger District, Georgetown, and the Supervisor's Office in Placerville.

