



**COSF's inaugural Native Plantpalooza & Eco Fest on October 1 at Conejo Creek North Park attracted a crowd of native-plant enthusiasts. About 1,000 plants went to new homes that day, boosting Conejo Valley's biodiversity and resiliency!**

## A Few Words from Our President

Welcome to Winter! We're looking forward to cool weather hiking and native planting and hope you are too. Some exciting news for the new year:

- Mark your calendar for the COSCA Spring Trail Work Day on Saturday, March 18! Location is TBD, but we will be repairing trails and cutting back brush. Work starts at 7:30 a.m. There will be a free lunch provided by COSF at noon for all volunteers as well as a prize raffle. If you're interested in attending, [please register](#).
- We are thrilled to welcome returning board member Brendan Callahan. Brendan is director of the



bond program, sustainability initiatives, and the maintenance and operations department at Oak Park Unified School District. Learn more about Brendan in "Spotlight," below.

- We are reinventing our long-running "Where in the Conejo" contest as "You in the Conejo." Get a preview of what's changing and how you can participate in the story below.

Hope to see you at Trail Work Day, and outside enjoying the open space—and taking trail selfies!



President, Conejo Open Space Foundation

## We Couldn't Do It Without You

[COSCA](#) relies on volunteers to help build and maintain trails, act as extra eyes and ears for the rangers, carry out educational programs and support the open space in many other ways. Please consider volunteering for a program that interests you.

[COSF](#) depends on open space supporters for donations that help fund COSCA volunteer programs and so much more. We greatly appreciate your generosity.

[Donate](#)

[Volunteer](#)



Left to right: New COSCA rangers Keenan Carroll, Joe Neary, and Tim Hillman.

## Three New Rangers Join COSCA Ranks

The Conejo Recreation and Parks District has filled three of four new Park Ranger positions, bringing COSCA's total to 10 rangers, including Supervising Park Ranger Kory Prindle. Interviews with candidates were held in late July, and the 3 new rangers began their roles in late September. COSCA rangers are generalists, helping to maintain COSCA's 170 miles of trail and 12,700+ acres of open space, enforcing rules and regulations to keep trails safe, and assisting with rescues of injured and lost hikers.

Prindle says that with the increased staff size he is looking forward to doing more proactive preventive maintenance instead of just being able to address trail and open space issues as they pop up.

Meet your new rangers:

**Keenan Carroll**, local to the City of Thousand Oaks, previously worked on the Maine Appalachian Trail crew and did maintenance with the U.S. Forest Service. He then spent 4 years in positions with the Boulder [CO] Trail Crew and with the City of Denver maintaining its open spaces. His interests include backpacking, exploring the Sierras, and fishing.

**Joe Neary** previously worked as a contract COSCA open space technician. Prior to that, he served as a ranger with Ventura County Parks, worked with the Los Padres Forest Association, and volunteered with the Mountain Bike Unit (a bike patrol group in the Santa Monica Mountains). He is a lifelong Ventura County resident whose interests include surfing, mountain biking, photography, traveling and visiting breweries

**Tim Hillman**, another Thousand Oaks local, previously worked with CRPD as a recreation aide. He's been a camp counselor, a food and agricultural worker, and a park aide with California State Parks. Tim is a Cal Lutheran graduate, skilled in both carpentry and disc golf. He started the disc golf club at Cal Lutheran.

Please welcome Keenan, Joe, and Tim when you see them on the trails!

The new positions came about when staff members from the City of Thousand Oaks (Brian Stark) and CRPD (Tom Hare and Matt Kouba) presented justification for the additional hires to the leadership of their respective organizations. As a joint-powers agency, COSCA's budget is derived from the City and CRPD with each contributing equal amounts. Once the increases were approved in concept, they were incorporated into the City and CRPD's organizational operating budgets. Those budgets were then reviewed and approved in 2021 by the T.O. City Council and the CRPD Board of Directors.

There were 4 new ranger spots approved; the fourth position should be filled sometime in 2023.—*Joanie Reuben*





**Mountain biker Matt Morse talks trail safety and courtesy with fourth graders last April at Trails Education Days at Wildwood Park. Note the COSCA trail guidelines sign in background.**

## Need-to-Know Trail Info About Your New Bike

Board member Bill Miller is a bicycle-industry veteran, with 35 years of experience ranging from retail to manufacturing, product design and innovation. He now oversees training and development for internal and retail staff at Giant Group USA, in Newbury Park. Here, he shares some thoughts on making the most of your new mountain bike.

If you are one of the millions of people who discovered—or re-discovered—cycling during the pandemic then you chose the right location: The Conejo Open Space has over 170 miles of multi-use trails that make you feel like you are deep in the wild. Here are a few thoughts for new riders on making mountain biking more fun for all.

### Stay HIP

The key to making your trail riding a great experience is being prepared. Think of the acronym HIP: Hydration, Inflation, and Protection.

**Hydration** is key, especially in our arid environment. Make sure you carry and consume about a 16 ounces of water an hour while riding in hot weather. (And when you're in Wildwood Regional Park and need a water refill, check out the two water stations COSF helped fund.)

**Inflation** keeps you rolling. There are several types of cacti as well as lots of other things that can flat a tire. So always carry a spare tube, something to inflate it with, and—most important—know how to use what you're carrying. Better to know when needed than needing to know!

**Protection**-wise, a CPSC-approved mountain-bike helmet is the bare minimum. (You can identify a mountain bike helmet because they typically have visors.) Long-fingered, padded gloves as well as eye protection are also a smart idea. Some riders go as far as wearing biking-specific elbow, knee, and/or shin pads.

Your independent local bicycle retailer can help you choose protective gear that fits you correctly (fit is a critical factor in safety).

## Trail Savvy

Now, on to the trails, the fun part! As Ernest Hemingway said, "It is by riding a bicycle that you learn the contours of a country best, since you have to sweat up the hills and coast down them."

Always be aware of other trail users...mountain bikes plus hikers plus equestrians plus runners plus earphones...and because mountain bikers cover more terrain faster, you are going to see them and that is awesome! Here are some basics:

- Use a bell on your bike to alert other users when approaching from behind or going around blind corners. COSF provides ongoing support for the bell boxes at main trailheads. If you don't have a bell, please take one and use it!
- Stop and/or dismount when approaching horses. As someone that grew up around them, I know it's always a good idea to say hi to the rider and speak with them. This helps the horse understand that you are human and not a predator.
- Give trail users headed uphill towards you the right of way when you're heading down. It's a lot harder for them to get going again than it is for you.
- Always follow the etiquette of the triangle shown in the photo above and yield to other users with a hello and a smile!—Bill Miller

Visit COSCA's [Trail Courtesy and Safety page](#) to learn more.





Love taking trail selfies? Get ready for our new "You in the Conejo" contest! Here, the COSF board: Tania Garcia (taking photo) and (l. to r.) Giancarlo Hamner, Anne Russell, Elayne Haggan, Steve Clark, and former president Jerry Westby.

## COSF Launches New 'Where' Contest for 2023

We're excited to announce a new twist on our popular "Where in the Conejo" contest, which tested your skill at identifying a specific trail or trail phenomenon shown in a photo we supplied.

**Now, with "You in the Conejo," we want to see you and find out how good you are at locating specific sights in our Open Space.** Each month in 2023, we'll post the name of something that you can find in the Open Space (for example, "an oak tree"). Then we want to see you in a selfie with it. The challenge will be in effect the entire month to give you enough time to complete it.

For the camera shy, it's okay to photograph just your hand or foot with the challenge subject.



Once you've taken a photo of yourself with that month's prompt, post it to social media and tag us, stating where in the Conejo Open Space you took it. It's also okay to include other people in the photo as long as we can see that you found the challenge subject.

**We're also giving out a new prize: A COSF t-shirt!** We will pick a winner at random each month from those who complete the challenge successfully.

A complete set of rules and the first challenge subject (hint: it's probably going to be an oak tree) will be published January 1 on our blog and emailed to previous contestants. Stand by!



**Spotlight on... Brendan Callahan**

COSF's newest board member, **Brendan Callahan**, a Thousand Oaks local, returned to Southern California in 2013 after attending college and graduate school on the East Coast, where he earned a B.S. in business administration from Boston University, an MBA from Georgetown University and an M.Ed. (in Educational Leadership) from The Broad Center. He ultimately moved with his wife Alyssa to the Conejo Valley. Brendan is director of the bond program, sustainability initiatives, and the maintenance and operations department at Oak Park Unified School District. Brendan previously served on COSF's board from 2019-2021.

**Tell us a little about how you spend your spare time.**

I enjoy hiking in our local open space with my wife and our two dogs, Ellie and Joy. I also like to play pickup basketball one or two times a week.

**What is your favorite thing about COSF?**

I really like that we offer sustainability scholarships to graduating high school seniors through their college careers. Encouraging and supporting the next generation of sustainability leaders is impactful.

**Is there any “secret” or underused open space that you think people should know about?**

I'm going to go outside the Conejo Valley on this. My dad introduced me to backpacking above Lake Sabrina (outside of Bishop on the Eastern Sierras; see photo above) to a series of glacial lakes. He remembers doing this backpacking trip as a teenager, so it was neat to experience it with him more recently. We've done this trip twice, and my sister joined for the second trip. Permits are required, but it's spectacular.

Closer to home is the Mishe Mokwa Trail to Sandstone Peak. This peak is the highest in the Santa Monica Mountains and produces incredible, panoramic views. Just be careful on the ascent at the top — it can be slippery.

**What are your hopes for the future of the Conejo Open Space?**

I hope more people can get outside and enjoy the benefits of living near such great trails and open space. It seems like we are in perpetual motion and never quite able to finish everything on our growing to-do lists, but going outdoors and experiencing nature gives us that pause that we all need and deserve.





On September 20, COSF board members joined a crowd to get a construction update on the Wallis Annenberg Wildlife Crossing. At center: COSCA Board Chair/Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Chief Deputy Director Rorie Skei and National Wildlife Federation's Lauren Gill and Beth Pratt. COSF has contributed over \$21,000 toward the crossing's construction.

## News In Brief

Join a free **Open Space Appreciation Hike**, held monthly on the second Saturday of the month, courtesy of Conejo Parks & Rec! No pre-registration required. Rain, fire, or red-flag alerts cancels. A responsible adult must accompany hikers under 18. For more info call CRPD at (805) 495-2163. This season's hikes will be:

- January 14, **Doubletree to Cheeseboro Canyon**. Moderately strenuous 6.5-mile loop (4 hours).
- February 11, **Western Dos Vientos Loop**. Moderate 5-mile loop (3 hours).
- March 11 **Potrero Ridge**. Moderately strenuous 5.5-mile out-and-back (3.5 hours).
- April 8 **Southwest Ahmanson Ranch/Cheeseboro Canyon**. Moderately strenuous 5.5-mile loop (3.5 hours).

**COSF is grateful to the local businesses that have supported us with donations of**

**products and services in 2022. They are:**

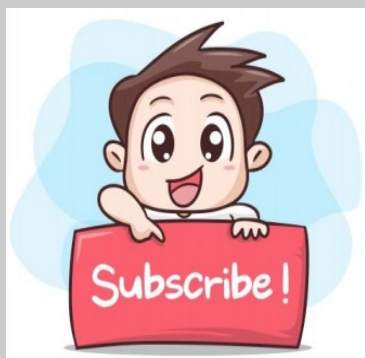
- Angeleno Wine Co.
- Conejo Parks and Recreation District
- Giant Bicycle, USA
- Island Packers
- Italia Deli & Bakery
- Los Robles Hills Winery
- Malibu Family Wines
- McKinney Family Vineyards
- Michael's Bicycles
- National Wildlife Federation
- Row House Westlake Village
- Trader Joe's
- Sprouts
- Whole Foods

**COSF would also like to thank the organizations that provided cash gifts or grants this year. They are:**

- Carlson Building Materials Co.
- Coalition for Clean Air
- Comerica Bank

Congratulations to our yearend winners of the “Where in the Conejo” contests! Our knowledgeable entrants correctly identified the Santa Rosa Trail, a bee-predator-butterfly mash-up, and a drainage area on the Bowfield Trail in the October, November, and December competitions. This season’s winners of a \$25 gift card are: **Christine Elowitt, Alicia Di Rado, and David Filgas.** If you would like to be added to the email list for the new 2023 "Where" contest, go [visit our website and sign up](#).

Have a comment, correction, story idea or other **input for the newsletter?** Let us know! Email us at [news@cosf.org](mailto:news@cosf.org)



If you would like to have this newsletter emailed to you quarterly, along with other occasional messages about our activities, subscribe here.

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## Want to Volunteer? Here's How!

The COSCA Volunteer Corps has many ways for residents to help maintain and preserve the open space that surrounds our beautiful Conejo Valley. By joining with others, we can make sure that the trails, canyons, and ridgelines will be enjoyed by visitors for generations to come. You can read about the specific volunteer opportunities below, and you can submit a request to volunteer, noting your specific interests, [here](#).

- [Adopt-a-Trail Program](#)
- [Bike Bell Box Replenishment](#)
- [Trail Watch Program](#)
- [Trail Ambassador Program](#)
- [Trail Building and Restoration](#)
- [Trails Education Days](#)



The Conejo Open Space Foundation was formed in 1995 to promote and maintain the open space and trail system of the Conejo Valley and to educate residents as to their roles as custodians and protectors of the open space and the environment. Our [web site](#) illustrates ongoing Conejo Open Space programs supported by the Foundation that help preserve and protect our precious open space.

## Follow us on social media



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