

Sonoma Mountain Journal

Volume 16, no. 1

December, 2016

***This year's Journal highlights
Sonoma Mountain's west side,
from Adobe Creek near Petaluma
to the North Sonoma Mountain
Regional Park.***

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The first peoples of southern Sonoma county, the Coast Miwok, placed *oona-pa'is* — Sonoma Mountain — at the center of the world, imagining its summit as an island in the primordial ocean at the beginning of time.

Geologists tell a similar story —that Sonoma Mountain's layers of volcanic and sedimentary rock, pushed upward by tectonic forces, rose from the depths of a shallow sea.



THE "ROCK RANCHES" OF PENNGROVE

Chuck Lucas

If you drive north along Petaluma Hill Road, just north of East Railroad Avenue and behind Bud's Meats, you will see a ranch strewn with rocks and boulders of various shapes and sizes, a scene reminiscent of the desolation of a moonscape. Originally the Barnes Ranch, it was known, along with several others, as a "rock ranch." Rock ranches were major suppliers of the basalt cobblestones that paved the streets of San Francisco and Petaluma. With the advent of the railroad, they soon became one of the largest businesses and employers in Penngrove in the late 1870's.

But how did those rocks get there? Basalt is an igneous rock that forms from volcanic lava. Sonoma Mountain is the eroded remains of the Sonoma volcanic pile which originated as lava and ash in the Pliocene era (5.4 to 2.5 million years ago). Millions of years of earthquakes, volcanic activity and the relentless attack by tree roots of and erosion, created the basalt debris that makes up Penngrove's rock ranches.

After its journey from the bowels of the earth, the basalt just sat there for a few million years until it was shaped into cobblestones by entrepreneurial Penngrove ranchers and businessmen. Although it is rare today to see a paved cobblestone street, cobblestones were a technological innovation. Roads were usually either muddy or dusty and ruts



would form that made them nearly impassable.

Some of the first cobblestones to appear in early San Francisco had been used as ballast for ships coming in from Europe. The earliest report of quarrying local rocks for San Francisco is from an 1857 article in the *Petaluma Argus Courier* that talks about a quarry just south of Petaluma. (This area is now a housing development and can be seen as you head south on 101.) After the railroad was opened from Petaluma north to Santa Rosa in 1869-1870, it was feasible to take the Penngrove stones by rail, load them onto scows, and ship them down the Petaluma River to San Francisco.

In 1873 San Francisco adopted cobblestones as the material of choice for their streets. Within five years, nearly 1.5 million basalt paving blocks (technically their "proper" name) were being shipped out of Petaluma annually. There were several quarries, or rock ranches, in

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Letter from the Chair



News from the Mountain

Meg Beeler

As I write, a subtle palette of yellows, browns, and greens washes across the flanks of Sonoma Mountain. Northern Flickers have returned. Young male Quails flock together in noisy bands. Horned Owls call to each other before dawn.

A Book on Sonoma Mountain!

An extra large donation to SMP this year gave us the opportunity to consider many wonderful projects. We honed these down to three: supporting a summer camp for local kids to spend time on and connect with the mountain; removing old fencing that hinders wildlife movement over the mountain; and writing a book that takes readers into the beauty and rich history of Sonoma Mountain.

The book was the winner. For now we've funded a planning and groundwork phase: to create a solid outline, find sponsors, and seek funding support. Our wonderful Steering Committee Vice-Chair Arthur Dawson is spearheading this project.

You'll notice a special box on your donation envelope where you can designate extra funds to support the book. Or you can use PayPal at www.sonomamountain.org. Please donate!

SDC Waiting Mode

At the base of the mountain, nearly 400 Sonoma Developmental Center residents and 1000 staff are in waiting mode.

A long-needed site assessment and comprehensive plan from the State will begin in 2017. Funding for monitoring and quality of life tracking for transitioning residents—as they move into community care—is approved. The SDC Coalition, of which SMP is a member, continues to work behind the scenes to support appropriate care placement for residents and preservation/transfer of 700 acres of open space.

People and Bears:

Access to Open Space on the Mountain

We continue to support and advocate for public access to the mountain. That access increased with the opening of the North Slope and East Slope Trails in 2014-15. This past year, 2016, has seen no big changes.

On the West slope, Petaluma-owned Lafferty Ranch, encompassing 270 acres northeast of the city along Sonoma Mountain Road, still lacks public access.

On the East slope, the hoped-for addition of 700 acres of SDC to open space and the wildlife corridor will be the most significant expansion we can expect for a while. Both bears and porcupines have been captured on remote cameras at Sugarloaf, Hood Mountain, and Pepperwood Preserve to the east and north. About eight years ago, bears were sighted along Adobe Creek in Petaluma. We expect to hear of bears on the mountain soon, if they're not there already!

BELDEN BARNs PROJECT ALERT!

Along narrow Sonoma Mountain Road, and adjacent to the North Sonoma Mountain Regional Park and Open Space Preserve, **yet another proposal to create a winery, creamery, tasting room and event center** is moving along.

The Belden barns commercial project would impact both the Sonoma Creek watershed and the wildlife corridor. It threatens the integrity and rural quality of one of Sonoma County's most scenic roads, one that longtime SMP member Bill Kortum wanted to see designated as a "Heritage Road." **The larger issue is expansion of commercial/industrial production into rural/agricultural lands.**

Updates at:

www.protectsonomamountain.org/

SDC Updates at:

www.transformmsdc.com

Development issues on the radar:

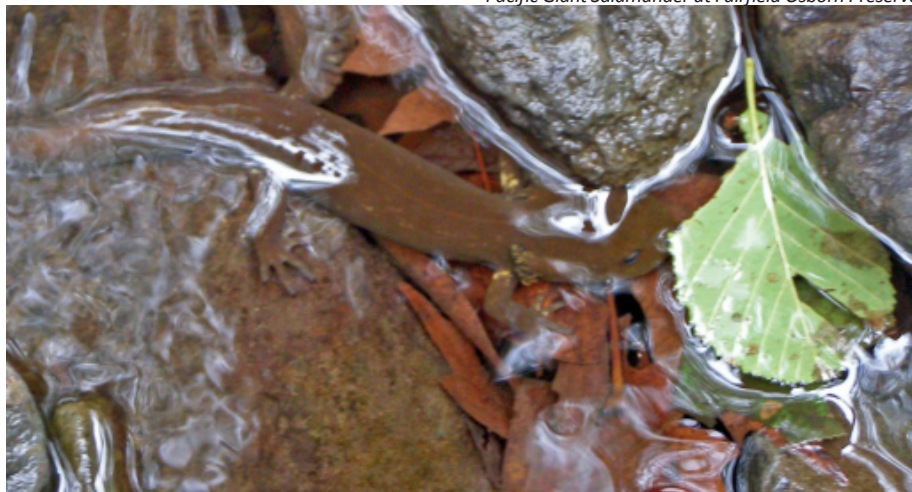
www.votma.org/pub/htdocs/onradar.html

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***"It takes more than one lifetime
to save a mountain."***

—Mickey Cooke, SMP Founder
& Steering Committee member

Pacific Giant Salamander at Fairfield Osborn Preserve



Lafferty Ranch: A Snail's Journey

Matt McGuire
Friends of Lafferty Park

On January 31, 2013, the Friends of Lafferty Park (FLP) and the City of Petaluma filed a quiet title lawsuit with the Sonoma County Courts to eliminate any question that there is legal access to Lafferty Ranch from Sonoma Mountain Road. The court's initial ruling was that the Friends did not have standing to sue, and the City's standing was limited, because the historic right of way belonged to the county.

To date, the county has so far been unwilling to join the suit. But rather than appeal, which remains an option, two and a half years ago, FLP and the City initiated a mediation process with two of Lafferty's adjacent neighbors and strongest opponents: Kimberly Pfendler, widow of Peter Pfendler, and Drs. Rick and Rich Tavernetti, father and son. These are the two neighbors who in the past have asserted that in order to reach the historic entrance gate to Lafferty from Sonoma Mountain Road the public would have to cross their property. (The Friends and the City point to the legitimate, recorded rights of way that extend back in time to the 1880s as proof of our access.) The expectation was that the process might take a year or so. Unfortunately, we are still awaiting tangible results.

Although the process has been frustrating, there has been some progress. The mediation has addressed issues such as the general level of use, the alignment of trails, and potential restrictions to protect the neighbors' privacy, as well as the biological resources present on Lafferty. The goal has been to identify potential resolutions to neighbors' concerns to avoid protracted litigation once the City proposes an actual project to open Lafferty to the public. Despite the slow progress, our pro bono attorneys feel the mediation is soon to reach a critical point



that will test whether the parties can reach a mutually agreeable resolution.

Although it behooves the neighbors to maintain the status quo, they have agreed to not object to site visits by local high school and college classes interested in surveying or doing remedial work on Lafferty. In fact, The Friends recently won a small grant from the Rose Foundation for Communities and the Environment for water related issues, and we are beginning discussions with local high school administrators and science teachers to see where we can collaborate on studies and constructive activities on Lafferty.

Likewise, earlier this year, FLP organized hikes on Lafferty to clean up damage and remove trash left by pot growers who had

hundreds of plants growing in several areas of Lafferty. The pot grows have been going on for at least two years, tapping into the waters of Adobe Creek and damaging steep slopes. Of course, this kind of environmental exploitation and abuse would not happen if our park was open to the public.

Many Lafferty supporters see the injustice of the complaints from neighbors who wish free use of their own properties but who want to put major constraints on the public's use of its own property. The Friends know that public access will actually enhance habitat and environmental conditions on Lafferty with a rational use plan.

We, the Friends of Lafferty Park, hope that by the time this article is published, there will have been substantial progress made. If so, we will be pleased to report back as much as we can, as soon as we are allowed under the confidentiality terms of the mediation. As this multi-decade effort drags on, and we all feel great frustration, we continue to remind ourselves to take inspiration from our friend Bill Kortum, who always said, "Don't back down and don't give up." That is what we plan to do.



Rock Ranches

Continued

Penngrove during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. They included the Davis, Roberts, Lynch, Hardin and Barnes Ranches (now the Brian Ranch on East Railroad); all but the last now serve as namesakes for modern-day roads.

Most of the quarry workers were young northern Italian immigrants, but there were also men from Ireland, Wales, Scotland and Sweden. In 1962, Bill Kortum interviewed quarryman A.J. Camozzi. Then in his late 70's, Camozzi detailed the laborious work of the men who used only hand tools to shape millions of paving blocks. To the enlightened eye of a quarryman, rock is much like a piece of wood with a grain and a cross grain: "First your tool is sharp, like a razor, and you mark the stone, where you are going to hit it. Then you tap in on one end and you give it the biggest hit where you are going to split it. You find where the grain is and you drill a square hole to the grain."

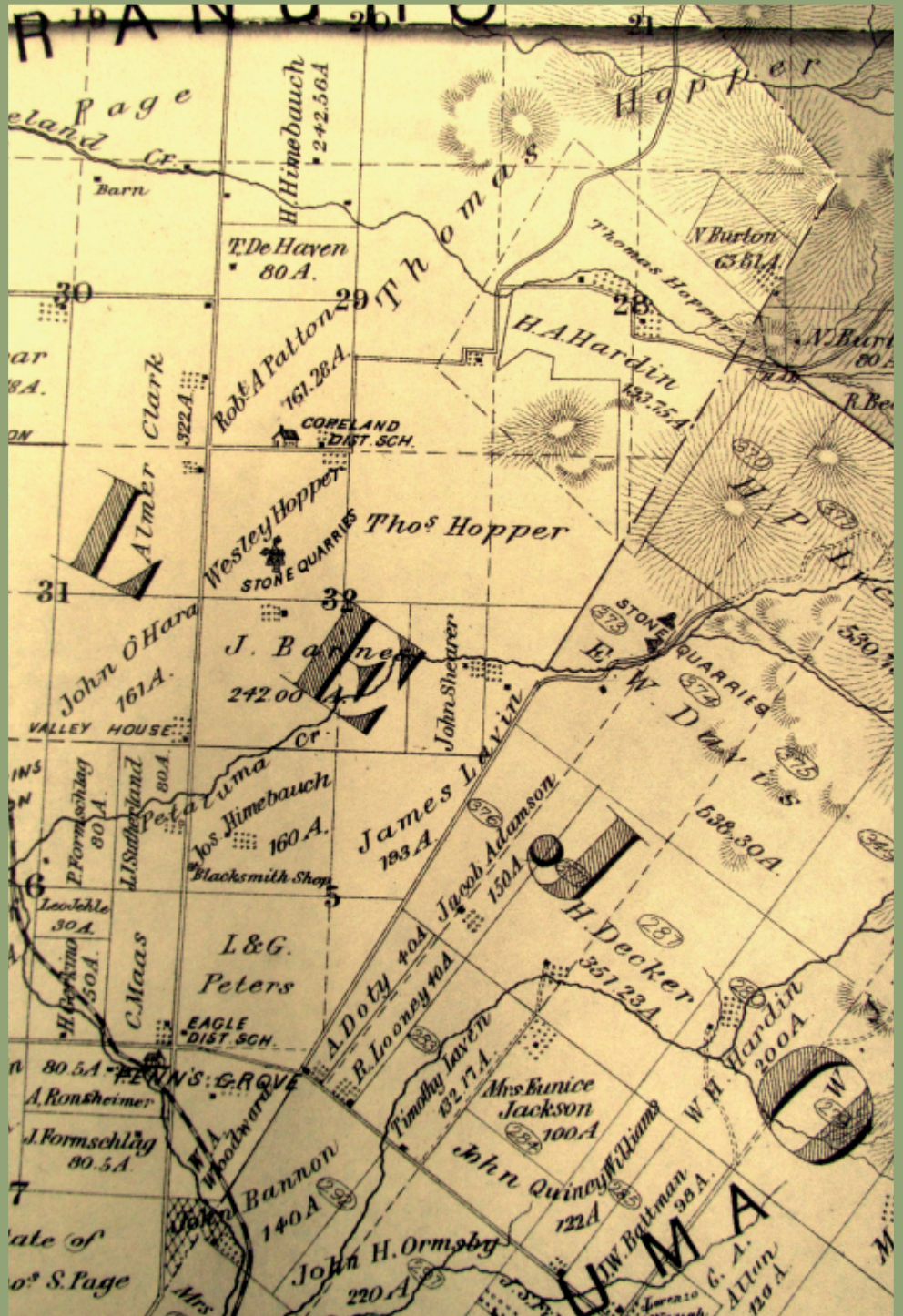
It was all piece work and they worked as a team, each doing what they did best. It took a man two years of working with the stones to become a "finisher." "If the stone was good," said Camozzi, "you could make two hundred a day, and at three and a half cents that was seven dollars. If it was bum stone, maybe you only made one-hundred-and-fifty. I made six or seven dollars a day many times, but at the end of the month I didn't have no money."

Teams of mules or horses would haul the finished basalt paving blocks down to the sidings of the San Francisco & Northern Pacific railroads. Loading took place in downtown Penngrove at the tracks on Main Street and also at Goodwin's Landing at Old Redwood Highway and Ely Road; then it was taken to Petaluma and transferred to scows at Haystack Landing. Eventually the use of cheaper materials like cement and asphalt, as well as the arrival of the automobile doomed the cobblestone industry, but

Penngrove area in 1877.

Note "Penn's Grove" and railroad tracks at lower left; Petaluma Hill Road extends directly north from Penn's Grove. "Stone Quarries" are identified on the Davis and Hopper properties in the map's middle section.

(detail from *Thompson's Historical Atlas of Sonoma County*, 1877)



not before it made its mark on the history of Penngrove. As Camozzi said more than fifty years ago, "the art is gone" and the quarry men, the mules, the wagons and the scows have all gone the way of the cobblestone. But evidence of their

existence and a once vital industry can still be seen along the rural roads of Penngrove.

adapted from an article that originally appeared in *Penngrove Proud*

Adobe Creek Hatchery

Arthur Dawson

The United Anglers of Casa Grande is a non-profit educational organization which promotes environmental awareness and activism through hands-on habitat restoration supporting the survival and recovery of federally threatened Chinook salmon and steelhead.

Founded in 1984, United Anglers students operate a state-of-the-art conservation fish hatchery on the Casa Grande High School campus in Petaluma, learning a range of relevant skills through practical application and intensive environmental curriculum.

The hatchery is open for tours and encourages individuals and groups to visit.



Students welcome the opportunity to share their experience, knowledge, and passion for the environment and its preservation. The hatchery is in full operation for nine months each year, but tours can be scheduled any time

For more information on this inspiring program, visit: www.uacg.org/

Join Us in 2017!

For our **quarterly meetings** on January 25; April 26; July 26 & October 25 at the Sonoma Ecology Center, Sonoma Developmental Center campus. (Call 996-9967 for directions)

Lend a Helping Hand

Are you a photographer or nature writer? We welcome contributions to our website! Email (meg@megbeeler.com) your:

- Sonoma Mountain photos
- Stories about the mountain and its creatures or anything you find interesting!

For our **Facebook** page:

- Visit us at: www.facebook.com/sonomamountain
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Donate

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Sonoma Mountain Preservation's Current Board
from left: Arthur Dawson, vice-president; Pat Eliot, Secretary;
Jack Nisson, treasurer; Meg Beeler, president.

The Mystery of Gravity Hill

Chuck Lucas

The television philosopher, Rod Serling, creator of "The Twilight Zone," once opined, "that not everything that meets the eye is as it appears."

A phenomenon exists on Sonoma Mountain in Penngrove that seems to defy Newton's Law of Gravity and makes me think of the Firesign Theatre's adage, "Everything you know is wrong." At one spot, cars appear to roll uphill from the bottom of a dip in the road. Can't happen you say? Any plumber will tell you water runs downhill. Likewise, cars don't roll *up*-hill. Unless you live in Penngrove.

Grab the family, pile into the transporter and be prepared to suspend belief in



everything you thought you knew. Shortly you will be, in Serling's words, "traveling through another dimension, a dimension not only of sight and sound but of mind; a journey into a wondrous land whose boundaries are that of imagination." Next stop, Gravity Hill.

To get there, take Lichau Rd uphill from Roberts Road. Be careful not to be so distracted by the beautiful views that you drive off the edge. Gravity is only suspended at one point on the mountain. You can't run from Newton's laws, which are strictly enforced everywhere else.

Keep going past the second cattle guard and continue until you come to an iron gate on the right with a sign that reads "Gracias Santiago." At that point you will see a small descent which rolls down into a bowl and

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Fairfield Osborn Preserve

A Community Resource
Paving the Way to an
Environmentally-Ready Generation

Claudia Luke, Director

On Sonoma Mountain, philosophy and engineering students stand under an oak tree tinkering with a robot that slowly clammers up a wire and into the canopy. Nearby at a bend in Copeland Creek, a group of 4th graders gather around community volunteers to peer at mayflies under a magnifying glass. A quarter mile down the trail, a group of artists fashion sculptures from twigs and rocks.

You are at Sonoma State University's (SSU) Fairfield Osborn Preserve.

The Osborn Preserve is part of SSU's preserve network – over 4200 acres - that prepares students of all ages, backgrounds and interests to take on today's most pressing environmental challenges. The Center for Environmental Inquiry, which oversees the 3 preserves, makes these experiences possible by collaborating with faculty, teachers, businesses, and community organizations.

Students study regional challenges from all angles. As our economy and culture have created the challenges that we see around us today, the solutions will only be possible by engaging businesses, politicians, philosophers, educators and artists.

The Waters Collaborative – one of four community-based inquiry programs run by CEI – is funded by the Sonoma County Water Agency. Over 400 students and 20 faculty from a wide array of disciplines work alongside community partners to address water management challenges. Political science and history students study changing community perspectives and attitudes about water. Engineering and computer science students work with the City of Rohnert Park on early flood warning systems. Environmental studies students investigate how to stop the spread of non-native species that choke out fish habitat.

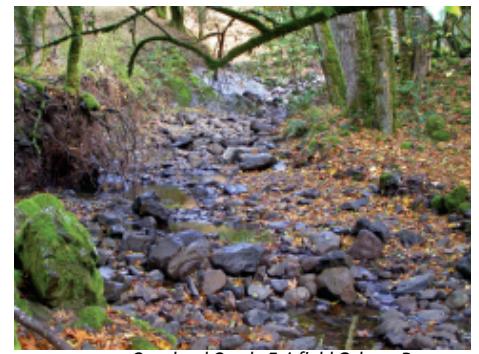
Our goal is to create an environmentally-ready society, one where all sectors are

skilled at working together and have the motivation and skills to get involved.

Unfortunately, our society is not well prepared to face those challenges. The current generation has the lowest levels of personal connection with nature than at any other time in history, spending 63 hours a week with digital media at the expense of outdoor experiences. "Very few students have ever slept under the stars. Some are afraid to come to the preserve," says Osborn Preserve site manager Suzanne DeCoursey. "One of the most important ways to motivate students is to connect them with the land. Once they are inspired by Sonoma Mountain, students want to get involved in finding solutions."

Many of the projects at the Osborn Preserve are creating a new understanding of the mountain. In addition to Waters, Sonoma State students and faculty are participating in collaborations around art, education and technology. The Nature!Tech Collaborative promotes understanding how technology can be applied to help resolve environmental challenges. At the Preserve, students are building and maintaining a sensor-to-screen network that gathers data on atmospheric conditions, wildlife movements, microclimate and other variables. Pacific Gas and Electric has supported many student projects, including a remote sensing data set with ultra-high resolution topography that is being used to better understand the erosive geology of Sonoma Mountain.

Sonoma State's activities at the Osborn Preserve build on its 44-year legacy in environmental education. The Preserve was established by The Nature Conservancy in 1972 through a land gift from William and Joan Roth and named in honor of Joan's father, Fairfield Osborn. In 1997, the property was transferred to SSU with the stipulation that it be used only for education and research. Since that time, the Roths have continued to donate lands to SSU, most recently in 2014, bringing the total property to 450 acres and including the 2,300-foot northern ridgeline of Sonoma Mountain. Throughout this period, the Osborn Preserve's naturalist training program has trained over 1500 university



Copeland Creek, Fairfield Osborn Preserve

students and community members and introduced over 30,000 school children to the wonders of Sonoma Mountain.

Fairfield Osborn's books, published in late 40s and early 50s, warned that the earth's resources are limited and that the web of life could be broken by thoughtless action. He would be pleased that the Osborn Preserve has become a resource for connecting us to nature and repairing our mistakes.

The Fairfield Osborn Preserve is open to anyone engaging in education, research or the arts. Saturday hikes led by student naturalists are 10-2 most Saturdays in the Spring and Fall. See the Center's website for details: www.sonoma.edu/cei.

Gravity Hill

Continued

then rises again like a small valley. If traffic is clear, stop the car at the bottom of the incline. Then release the brake. The car will begin rolling uphill. Of course that can't really happen – right?

Steven Hawking and other physicists have described quantum singularities as: "events in space/time where the structure of the universe completely breaks down and the physics that operate everywhere else no longer function." Yikes. Could we have a quantum singularity right here in Penngrove?

I have researched. I have Googled. They say that it is some sort of optical illusion but you couldn't prove that by me. Unfortunately, I have not been able to locate a scientist to explain what is happening here on the mountain. *All I can rely on is my lying eyes.*

North Sonoma Mountain Regional Park & Open Space Preserve



North Sonoma Mountain Ridge Trail

Arthur Dawson

Opened just last year, North Sonoma Mountain Regional Park and Open Space Preserve is Sonoma County's newest park and offers the first public access to this part of the mountain. Its 820 acres offer spectacular views over a large swath of Sonoma County and beyond.

The entrance to the park is at 5297 Sonoma Mountain Road, about three-quarters of a mile east of Pressley Road. It's a 15-minute drive from Glen Ellen and 20 minutes from downtown Santa Rosa. From the parking lot (\$7 fee), the Ridge Trail quickly descends among ferns and redwoods to the Redwood Grove Picnic Area by the South Fork of Matanzas Creek (0.1).

From there it climbs to open grassland overlooking Bennett Valley, then continues upward through oak and bay forest to the Bennett Valley Overlook (1.9). One of the rewards of the Ridge Trail are the slowly changing views as it rounds the upper shoulder of the mountain, slowly shifting from Santa Rosato the northwest around to Sonoma Valley and the Mayacamas to the east.

Eventually the trail reaches the boundary of Jack London State Historic Park (3.7). You can turn around here, or continue downhill on the Hayfields and Mountain Trails all the way to the Jack London park entrance (8.1). Shuttles are occasionally available between the Regional and the State Park. (Check online for availability)

Note: bikes are limited to the first two miles of the Ridge Trail.
No restrictions on hikers or equestrians.

Wheelchair access from parking lot to the Redwood Grove Picnic Area.



Sonoma Mountain Preservation

5850 Grove Street Sonoma CA 95476
Web site : sonomamountain.org

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