

MOUNT DIABLO REVIEW

MOUNT DIABLO INTERPRETIVE ASSOCIATION

SPRING / SUMMER 2023 • MDIA, PO Box 346, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0346 • 925-927-7222 • www.mdia.org

Spirit of Mount Diablo: Building an Education Center in Mitchell Canyon

Mount Diablo is a majestic place, and each side of the mountain offers different opportunities for exploration and discovery. If you have made multiple visits to the park, you have probably found access via Mitchell Canyon in Clayton. This is the resplendent North Side of the park and a true representation of all that this mountain has to offer in a compact package. I grew up on the South Side of the mountain and still call this my home, so Mitchell Canyon was an elusive hidden part of the park for me. It wasn't until I started volunteering here that I truly experienced the lush diversity it offers. This place embodies the true *Spirit of Mount Diablo*.

As I began to expand my roles on the mountain, I fell in love with sharing my enthusiasm with the public as a docent at the visitor center in the canyon. We welcome roughly 35,000 visitors to Mitchell Canyon every year with a fraction of those venturing into our humble trailer. What you will find there is an eager volunteer staff and a 400 square foot space packed with wonderful displays, exhibits and posters detailing the myriad of flora and fauna you may experience once you step out onto the trail. The problem is not our passion for educating the public but instead an issue of space and accessibility, we have simply outgrown our little 25-year-old trailer.

As opposed to our more mainstream visitor center atop the Summit which attracts many first-time visitors, tourists and out-of-town guests, Mitchell Canyon is where our more regular visitors go to recreate and experience nature at its finest. Here we focus

our attention on guided nature hikes, classes, and educational experiences. The north side garners much attention during the spring with a bounty of wildflowers dotting the hillsides, birds returning from winter vacation, butterflies flitting about and new life springing forth all around. But the canyon offers great opportunities at all times of year for learning and discovering the complexities and wonders of the natural world.

The Mount Diablo Interpretive Association (MDIA) has been a park partner for nearly 50 years. An all-volunteer non-profit cooperative association, we have been tasked with helping visitors interpret, experience, investigate, appreciate, and conserve the mountain. Our motto of *Preservation Through Education* is paramount to our mission. Fittingly, the board of directors has identified the importance of creating a brand-new Mitchell Canyon Education Center. In late 2020 we began the planning process by enlisting the help of our stakeholders and



PROPOSED NEW MITCHELL CANYON EDUCATION CENTER, COURTESY OF WARE ASSOCIATES

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 3)

STORM IMPACT

by Cameron Morrison,
MDSP Supervising Ranger



THE SEEMINGLY UNRELENTING storms that pounded much of California for the first few weeks of 2023 had a profound impact on roads and trails throughout Mount Diablo State Park. Most of the 17+ miles of paved roads within the Park were built by the Civilian Conservation Corps back in the 1930s and early 1940s. Alongside the paved roads lies a

network of roadside culverts constructed of rocks quarried from within the park. The culverts are intended to keep water flowing under, rather than over the roadways and have proven adequate for the most part for the past 80-90 years. However, due to the amount of rainfall that we received in such a short period of time, some of the culverts became clogged with debris, and some were simply unable to handle the large volume of water. As a result, the water rushed over roadways, washing away large sections of asphalt in the process. This has caused us to create one-way traffic sections to keep vehicles and bicycles off the portion of roadway that is unsafe for travel.

In the backcountry, the storms obliterated large sections of fire roads and narrow singletrack trails which now follow the course that water created during the periods of most intense rainfall. We have also had several sinkholes appear weeks after the rain stopped.

Considering the damage that has occurred throughout the park, please follow all posted signs on our paved roadways that help ensure your safety. While exploring the backcountry on foot, be sure to hike within your abilities and be cautious of trails that are narrow and have uneven footing. While riding a bicycle in the backcountry, be sure that you are traveling at a safe speed, as many hazards cannot be recognized until they are right in front of you leaving you with little time to react.

A significant amount of storm-related damage to the park is going to require engineering and outside contractors to repair. As a result, it will take many months to complete the work, and we ask that park visitors be patient with temporary road closures, delays, and other construction-related work. Updates regarding road closures will be posted at www.parks.ca.gov/mountdiablo and on the Mount Diablo State Park Facebook page. 🌿

MDIA PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

by Stephen Smith



AS WE MOVE OUT OF WINTER and into the Spring and Summer seasons there will be many changes in the park. We started 2023 with some wild storms which left a path of destruction across much of the Bay Area and Mount Diablo was certainly not spared. Saturated

hillsides gave way to numerous landslides, rockslides, and road washouts. The effects of these storms will be felt long into the year. We are of course in a perpetual state of drought here in California and this is felt particularly in Mount Diablo State Park. We always hope for the replenishment of our springs which act as the main source of drinking water on the mountain, but even heavy winter rains aren't often enough to eliminate water shortages. As always, we ask that you come to the mountain adequately prepared with your own water supplies.

Of course, there are many benefits to these deluges, in our Spring season you are going to see lush green hillsides and likely dense populations of wonderful wildflowers. The abundance of water in our streams and ponds not only make for some beautiful photographs and calming sounds, but they also provide additional sources of water for our wildlife which will thrive in health and population this year. On the flip side of all this growth, particularly in the fauna, is that there are increased fuel loads in the dry vegetation during our hot and dry summer months. Extra caution and preparedness are necessary as wildfire dangers may be particularly high.

It's always such a conundrum as both beauty and destruction accompany wet winters. Please get out there and enjoy everything the seasons have to offer while exercising appropriate caution and care for our ever-evolving ecosystem. 🌿



PARK STAFF WORKING ON NORTHGATE ROAD DAMAGE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Spirit of Mount Diablo: Building an Education Center in Mitchell Canyon

visitors to create a concept that takes advantage of the grand space we have available. As a result, we hired the architectural firm Ware Associates to create a master plan for the Mitchell Canyon site, and now in 2023 we are fundraising in earnest to reach our \$3 million goal.

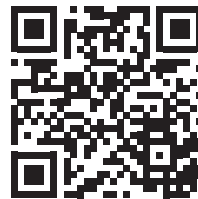
The new Education Center is being rebranded as just that, a facility focused on education. Not only will the experience of our regular visitors be enhanced with a state-of-the-art 1500 square foot building highlighting the plants, animals, history, and relationship to Native Americans, but school groups will also benefit from the planned changes. Both MDIA and the State Park have long identified the need for better access in educating school groups. The nature of our winding mountain roads precludes the safe travel of school buses to places like Rock City or the Summit. Mitchell Canyon provides a flat and safe travel route for better access. With the redesign of our small parking areas, we will be able to offer school bus drop-off zones, turnarounds, and improved parking. I am extremely excited about building the outdoor pavilion which will provide a covered meeting and gathering space for school groups during the quieter weekdays as well as for families, recreation groups and individuals on busy weekends. And the whole facility will be ADA accessible providing equal access for all.

Both indoor and outdoor spaces will contain classroom and multimedia space offering a beautiful spot to attend our many nature hikes, including our ever-popular tarantula hikes in the fall, wildflower hikes in the spring, and nature hikes in winter. Since the indoor center is typically closed to the public during the week, our outdoor pavilion will offer a wonderful space for rotating exhibits and maps so that those who do venture to the canyon on quiet weekdays can still enjoy and learn. The building location will be moved slightly so that our wonderful Native Plant Garden will be on full display as will the view of the mountain behind it. The garden will integrate with the entire educational experience to give all visitors a chance to enhance their appreciation of the natural experiences they are about to enjoy as they embark upon their journey down

the trail. The structure has also been designed as a timely model for energy-efficient environmentally responsive building practices in urban-wildfire interface zones.

Mount Diablo State Park recently celebrated its Centennial in 2021 which makes this the perfect time to reimagine the next 100 years. Building a new Mitchell Canyon Education Center which matches its ideal location and opens access to everyone in our community is a wonderful way to inspire future generations to promote and protect this natural treasure. To see this project realized it is imperative that we raise the funding necessary and in late 2022 we began in earnest to raise funds toward our goal of \$3 million.

There are so many great resources available to you for learning more about this fantastic project. Primarily you can visit www.mdia.org and click the link on the homepage to our Educational Center info page. You can get there directly by scanning the QR code included in this article. The website has many great photographs and renderings of the Mitchell Canyon site, detailed information about LEED certified green building practices for this project, our goals for educational outreach to students and youth groups and information on how you can contribute. We are always happy to answer any questions you may have, just shoot us an email at MCEC4me@gmail.com and we will get right back to you.



So please join me in accomplishing our mission of Preservation Through Education by supporting this crucial project. Donate Today!

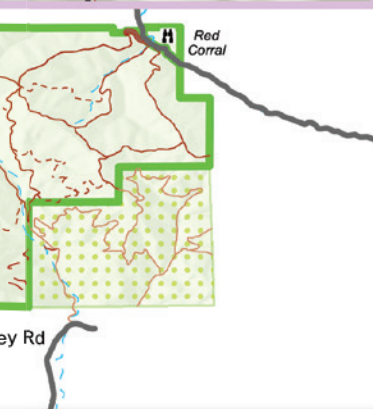
—By Steve Smith 



PROPOSED NEW MCEC, COURTESY OF WARE ASSOCIATES



Camping at Mount Diablo State Park



Mount Diablo has three designated family camping areas and five group camps:

JUNIPER CAMPGROUND (36 sites, elevation 3,000 ft.) Located approximately two miles below the summit, on Summit Road, Juniper is known for its fantastic views. Three campsites meet accessibility (Americans with Disabilities Act) standards. **Reservations available.**

LIVE OAK CAMPGROUND (23 sites, elevation 1,450 ft.) Located one mile above the South Gate Entrance Station, off South Gate Road. Live Oak is near Rock City, where one can explore rock formations. **Reservations available.**

JUNCTION CAMPGROUND (6 sites, elevation 2,200 ft.) Located where South Gate and North Gate meet at the Ranger Station. This campground is situated in an open woodland area. **Available on a first-come, first-served basis only.**

GROUP CAMPS are Buckeye, Barbecue Terrace, Wildcat, Stagecoach, and Boundary. Each campground is primitive with running water (subject to availability) and pit toilets. Barbecue Terrace is equipped with horse ties for equestrian use. RVs are not allowed in the group camping areas. **Please check the state park website for status.**

- All campgrounds are provided with picnic tables, fire pits or stoves, potable water (subject to availability) and restrooms. Showers are available at Juniper and Live Oak campgrounds at no additional charge.
- The campgrounds are mainly designed for tent camping, but can accommodate RVs up to 20 ft. in length. No hookups and dumping stations are provided.

Camping Procedures

Make reservations up to six months in advance using the ReserveCalifornia website at reservecalifornia.com. To view a map of the campgrounds and for additional info, please visit mdia.org/camping.

Check-in time is 2:00 p.m. Check-out time is 12:00 noon.

During the fire season (generally May to October) the park is subject to closure due to extreme fire danger. Campers must call the park at 925-837-2525 or 925-837-0904 one day prior to their arrival to confirm park status.

General Rules

- Alcoholic beverages are prohibited in the park.
- Eight people and two vehicles maximum per campsite.
- Each juvenile (under age of 18) must have written permission from his/her parents (with parent's phone number) prior to camping without adult supervision. Phone verifications will be attempted.
- Quiet hours are from 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.
- No electric generators from 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 a.m.
- Firewood gathering is prohibited.
- Fires must be in stoves or fire pits provided. **NO GROUND FIRES.**
- Campfire restrictions are in effect during the fire season. Check fire conditions for appropriate use (see page 6).
- Campers are locked in the park overnight from sunset to 8:00 a.m. For emergencies dial 911.
- Quiet—noise must not carry beyond your immediate campground or picnic area.


Group Camps

	NIGHTLY USE FEE	CAPACITY CAMPER	VEHICLES
each	\$65	20	7
y	\$65	20	7
	\$100	30	10
	\$100	30	10
e	\$165	50	17

STAFF CLEARING WINTER STORM DAMAGE



SEE ALSO THE SUPERVISING RANGER'S COLUMN ON PAGE 2

 Fire Danger Reading	FIRE DANGER CHART					
	Wood fire permitted in stoves and BBQ pits (designated picnic and campsites)	Use of Compressed Logs	Use of Charcoal	Use of Self-contained Stove	Cigarette Smoking ¹	Park Closed ²
LOW	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO
MEDIUM	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO
HIGH	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO
HIGH WITH RED FLAG	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO
VERY HIGH/EXTREME	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES

¹ THE PROHIBITION OF SMOKING UNDER HIGH FIRE DANGER INCLUDES SMOKING WITHIN A VEHICLE.
² PARK CLOSURE APPLIES TO ALL HIKERS, VEHICLES, BICYCLISTS (MOUNTAIN AND ROAD), AND HORSEBACK RIDERS.

Fire Danger: How Will It Affect You?

- When permitted, fires must be in stoves or provided fire pits.
- Never leave a fire unattended.
- Extinguish all fires prior to departure.
- Ground fires are not permitted.
- Firewood gathering is prohibited.
- Report all wildfires immediately. Call 911.

Astronomy on Mount Diablo

The Astronomy Program is presented by Mount Diablo State Park, Mount Diablo Astronomical Society (MDAS), and Mount Diablo Observatory Association. For more details, go to Mount Diablo Astronomical Society's website, www.mdas.net, and click on Event Calendar.



There Are 45 Bike Turnouts in The Mount Diablo State Park

Mount Diablo is a popular cycling destination. Bike turnouts allow cyclists to pull over to the right so that motorists can pass safely without crossing the double line. Cyclists must use bike turnouts when followed by a vehicle. Please drive safely when in the park.

Explore Mount Diablo Online

MDIA.org, the website of the Mount Diablo Interpretive Association, is your go-to resource for all things related to Mount Diablo State Park. Whether you're looking for great hikes, points of interest, or a list of seasonal wildflowers, you will find a variety of interactive online tools to help you better plan your visit and enjoy the park before, during, and after your stay. In addition to practical up-to-date information about emergency closures, camping, and visitor center hours, our newly expanded website also includes online guides to Mount Diablo's unique flora, fauna, and geology. For those looking for park souvenirs, clothing, or printed books and field guides, our online shop is quick and easy to use. And if you're interested in volunteering in the park or becoming a member of MDIA, we've got a tab for that too.

Visit MDIA.org today to learn more!

- Videos and podcasts about the park, <https://www.mdia.org/events/archiveall>
- Directions, admission fees, and park information
- Campground, picnic, and visitor center information
- Guide to popular hikes (by level of difficulty)
- Schedule of events and activities
- Guide to butterflies of Mount Diablo
- Guide to wildflowers of Mount Diablo
- Guide to birds of Mount Diablo
- Natural history webinars
- Convenient search feature
- Online store and membership information
- Learn about volunteer opportunities



For more information about volunteering, email volunteer@mdia.org or leave a phone message at 925-927-7222.

Become an MDIA member today!



Use your smart phone to join now or shop online.

<https://mount-diablo-interpretive-association.square.site/>

SIX LEVELS OF MEMBERSHIP:

Senior (55+)	\$15
Student	\$15
Individual	\$25
Family	\$40
Contributing	\$100
Lifetime	\$500

PRODUCTS:

- Maps
- Nature Guides
- Hiking and History Guides
- Clothing
- Bicycle Jerseys



Park Rules

You are responsible for obeying these and other Park rules

- **All Features of the Park Are Protected!** Do not remove or disturb plants, animals, or geological features.
- **Park Hours:** Opens at 8 a.m. and closes at sunset. Visitors should be in their vehicles heading out at sunset to avoid being locked in.
- **No Alcohol:** All alcoholic beverages are prohibited in the park.
- **Vehicles/Bicycles Speed Limit:** 15 to 25 mph on park roads, 15 mph in campgrounds and picnic areas. All vehicles must stay on the pavement and are prohibited on trails and fire roads.
- **Bicycles** are allowed only on paved roads, fire roads, and designated trails. Check at the Ranger Station for current regulations.
- **Drones or Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS)** are prohibited.
- **Skateboards**, rollerblades, rollerskates, and gravity-propelled devices are prohibited.
- **Dogs:** Must be on leash at all times when out of your car; must be in tent or a vehicle at night; and must stay in developed areas—they are not allowed on trails or fire roads.
- **Fires:** Restrictions in effect during season. Check with a Ranger. Fires must be in fire pits or barbecues provided—no ground fires.
- **Emergencies:** Dial 911.
- **Fireworks** are prohibited.
- **Firearms**/airguns and hunting are prohibited.

Mount Diablo State Park Phone Numbers

General information..... 925-837-2525
Summit Museum 925-837-6119
Junction Ranger 925-837-6129
TTY Relay Service..... 711

MAILING ADDRESS:
(NOT FOR VEHICLE ACCESS)

Mount Diablo State Park
96 Mitchell Canyon Road
Clayton, CA 94517-1500



California State Parks supports equal access. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the Contra Solano Sector Office, 925-673-2891. This newsletter is available in alternate formats by contacting 925-673-2891.

Rules of the Road for Motorists and Cyclists



Share the roadway with all Park users.

- Drive at or below the posted Park speed limits.
CALIFORNIA VEHICLE CODE 22350*
- Pass with sufficient visual clearance
CALIFORNIA VEHICLE CODE 21751 *
- Do not pass on blind curves.
CALIFORNIA VEHICLE CODE 21752(A)*
- Give bicyclists 3 feet clearance.
CALIFORNIA VEHICLE CODE 21760(b)*
- Yield to equestrians.
CALIFORNIA VEHICLE CODE 21759*

*MINIMUM FINE: \$238

Understanding Trail Signs



TRAIL SIGNS IN THE PARK FOLLOW California State Parks' uniform format. The name of the trail you are on is specified in relatively small horizontal type near the top of the sign. The name that appears vertically in large type (another trail but sometimes a destination or park boundary) identifies the termination of that particular trail; note the word "TO" in small letters. The mileage to that end point is specified at the bottom.