



San Mateo Coast Natural History Association

Information on Becoming a Board Member

Background

The San Mateo Coast Natural History Association (SMCNHA) is a California State Parks Cooperating Association, founded in December 1990 to further the educational and interpretative initiatives of the State Parks along the San Mateo Coast. Like other such associations, it is a non-profit public benefit corporation—501(c)(3). Money raised by SMCNHA stays on the San Mateo coast to support parks on the coast, unlike money from park fees, which is sent to Sacramento for the general fund.

The mission of the San Mateo Coast Natural History Association is to enhance the experience of visitors to California State Parks on the San Mateo coast by:

- Promoting educational, volunteer, and park staff programs
- Maintaining and enhancing state park visitor centers
- Supporting programs that preserve biological diversity and historical/cultural integrity

SMCNHA serves all the State Parks in the San Mateo Coast Sector, which stretches from Thornton State Beach in the north to Año Nuevo State Park in the south. The SMCNHA Board works closely with the State Parks staff to align its activities and funding with each park's needs.

Funds raised by SMCNHA help the local State Parks build or restore interpretive centers and historic buildings, and to create and install interpretive signs and displays. SMCNHA funds a range of educational activities, including guided tours, nature walks, Junior Ranger and Junior Lifeguard programs, special events, programs for school groups, and the publication and dissemination of educational literature. It also supports State Park volunteers by providing funds for volunteer training and supplies for volunteer programs.

SMCNHA raises money from several sources: The largest amount comes from sales at bookstores located at Año Nuevo, Pigeon Point Light Station, and Francis Beach at Half Moon Bay State Beach. Money is also raised through firewood sales, donations (including online donations on the SMCNHA website), grants, and project management fees

Duties of a SMCNHA Board Member

The activities of SMCNHA are organized by a Board of Directors, including up to 15 members. Board members are responsible for:

- Attending regular board meetings, lasting approximately three hours, every other month
- Participating in other ad hoc board meetings, board retreats, and consultation via email
- Taking on additional duties as board officers, committee chairs, and other responsibilities as determined by the board, such as overseeing the SMCNHA bookstores and other fundraising activities and events

- Evaluating State Parks budget requests and allocating SMCNHA funds at an annual budget meeting and as needed throughout the year
- Ensuring that board actions and expenditures meet all legal and fiscal requirements
- Staying well informed about the State Parks on the coast and their long- and short-term needs

Knowledge and Skills Valuable for a Board Member

Board members are selected from a broad range of backgrounds and disciplines to provide the varied skills necessary for the board's mission and activities. Skill in any of the following areas would be desirable for a new board member:

- Leadership ability to help board members operate as a team and to ensure a successful cooperative relationship with State Parks
- Ability to work as a member of a team and cooperate to achieve common goals
- Familiarity with the local State Parks and willingness to learn more
- Experience with and interest in fundraising
- Fiscal and accounting background and ability
- Experience in merchandising, sales, and advertising
- Record-keeping skills suitable for keeping minutes and maintaining board records
- Writing and editing skills appropriate for helping in the production of such things as newsletters, press releases, board correspondence, and volunteer training materials
- Knowledge of or experience with the operations of other non-profit organizations
- Grant writing experience and knowledge of suitable grant opportunities
- Legal knowledge appropriate for advising on legal issues that may affect the board

What's Next?

To apply to become a SMCNHA board member, fill out and submit an application—available on our website: <http://sanmateocoastnha.org/pages/who.html>

If you still have questions about SMCNHA, you can learn more at the SMCNHA website at SMCNHA.org, or speak to one of the current board members, listed at <http://sanmateocoastnha.org/pages/who.html>.

For more information on Cooperating Associations, see http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=976.