



## **2023 Annual Membership Meeting Transcript**

Saturday, April 29, 2023  
Sacramento, California

### **Megan Wargo, Acting Executive Director and CEO**

All right. Hi, everyone. I'm Megan Wargo. I'm the acting executive director and CEO of Pacific Crest Trail Association. I use she her pronouns. Great to see all of you here tonight. Or afternoon. So I'd like to start our meeting off with sharing a land acknowledgment that was written by the Sacramento Native American Health Center, as well as an acknowledgment from the PCTA.

The history of the Sacramento area and the people is rich in heritage, culture and tradition. This area was and still is, the tribal land of the Nisenan people. Sacramento was a gathering place for many local tribes who have lived throughout the Central Valley and the foothills for generations and were the original stewards of this land. We would like to acknowledge the Southern Maidu people to the north, the Valley and Plains Miwok peoples to the south of the American River, and the Patwin Wintun peoples to the west of Sacramento River.

We would also like to honor the Wilton Rancheria, the only federally recognized tribe in Sacramento County. We acknowledge that we are standing on ancestral lands for this region's indigenous people. We also acknowledge that the entire Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail sits on the ancestral lands of various indigenous peoples who shared this natural space long before it was known as a recreational trail.

Some of these native people are still here today, despite all the odds against them. These Indigenous peoples have a livelihood and culture that depends solely on the state of nature and the gifts it's provided for them to survive. We ask that in all aspects of your life you strive to respect and honor those who lived in harmony with these lands before us and uplift and protect the nature that we have the privilege of experiencing every day.

Please take time to learn about the Indigenous peoples whose land you travel through on the PCT. PCTA's online map includes a layer showing the Indigenous homelands along the PCT, which may help guide some of your learning journey. It should be said that the map layer is imperfect, representing all native tribes, but the PCTA strives to continuously improve it as part of our journey.

And please consider supporting local organizations like the Sacramento Native American Health Center, which works to enhance the quality of life for Native American families by providing culturally competent and holistic care. You can find the health center by visiting [SNAHC.org](http://SNAHC.org) where you'll find information and donation opportunities. So thank you. And with



that, I'd like to start off our PCTA meeting and I'm going to turn it over to Kevin Bacon, PCTA board chair.

**Kevin Bacon, Chair, Board of Directors**

Thank you, Megan. First, I want to welcome all of you for coming to our annual meeting. Thank you for also for your continued support of PCTA. Your support and that of literally thousands of other members and volunteers is what powers our organization. We work to protect the trail and make its many benefits available to everyone in our community.

So again, thank you for coming. This is an official business meeting because the PCTA is a nonprofit organization organized under the California law. So we are going to go through a few minutes of the business meeting to comply with our requirements. PCTA is a nonprofit organization governed by California law. Our bylaws require us to hold an annual membership meeting each year for the purposes of transacting such business as may come before the meeting.

No meeting. No items were presented by the board for action at this meeting. Items might be things like amending the bylaws or something like that. We don't have any of those this year. We have a number of members who are joining us here today and I want to welcome the members in particular. We have no official business to transact, so we are not required to have a quorum at this meeting.

Nonetheless, per article 4, Section 4A of our bylaws, the record date for the purposes of determining which members are entitled to notice of any members meeting shall be the business day preceding the date on which the notice for that meeting is given. The notice was mailed in our Communicator magazine on March 6th and via postcard to members who don't receive the magazine on March 23rd, and the record date for determining membership was March 5 and an additional notice was sent via email on March 29th.

These notice dates are in compliance with our bylaws, which state in Article 4, Section 5, that notice shall be delivered not less than 20 nor more than 90 days before the date of such meeting. (Today's date.) Moving on to the results of our recent board election, as stipulated in our Bylaws, Board member elections are conducted only by written ballot sent to the entire membership.

Ballots were distributed to members in the Communicator magazine, which was mailed on March 6th. As of April 21st, 2023, we received 256 ballots from confirmed current members. As we received more than 50 ballots in total, the seven candidates receiving the greatest number of votes have been elected to our board for terms beginning this coming month. Directors serve three-year terms and can serve up to three full terms consecutively before they must leave the board for at least one year before being eligible to be elected again.

So here are the results of our recent election. First, Keith Dorsey, who was appointed by the board to fill a vacancy on the board in November of last year. He has been elected to a first

term with 231 votes. Sonya Fernandez, who was appointed by the board to fill a vacancy on the board in November, has been elected to a first term with 242 votes.

Carmen Ibarra, who was appointed by the board to fill a vacancy on the board in November, has been elected to first term with 246 votes. Ashley Martinez, who was appointed to the board to fill a vacancy on the board in November, has been elected to a first term with 236 votes. Rick Thalhammer has been elected to a third term with 250 votes.

Ginny Too, who was appointed by the board to fill a vacancy on November in November, has been elected to a first term with 241 votes. And lastly, Kevin Bacon has been elected to a second term with 250 votes. So those are your new board members coming on the board. Additionally, we have other board members we'll talk about in a minute who are continuing to serve on the board.

At this point, the official business part of the annual meeting has been concluded and we are adjourned and will continue with the rest of our presentation for this afternoon. Now, there are two things I'd like to cover in this part of it. The first concerns CEO succession planning. As you all know, last year at this time, our long time, 20 plus years are long time.

ED and CEO Liz Bergeron retired from PCA. Liz helped to build PCTA from a small organization with three employees into one that has over 40 staff now and a budget of over \$5 million. In many ways, PCTA today reflects what Liz was able to build over that long tenure.

When the board first learned of Liz's plans to retire, we began the process of preparing for new leadership. Our first step was to name a deputy CEO to work alongside Liz, so we had someone to step in when she retired. After extensive discussions, we selected our then director of land conservation, Megan Wargo, to serve as deputy CEO, and she had about eight or nine months to work alongside Liz in that role before Liz retired.

When Liz moved up her retirement age, it was a little sooner than we had expected. We named Megan to be our acting ED or CEO. She has served in that role since May of 2022. Megan has been doing an outstanding job as acting executive director and CEO. We've been very lucky to have such a skilled and dedicated person to lead PCTA over the last year.

Simultaneously with what we're talking about now, the board began the process of preparing a new strategic plan to replace the old 2018 to 2022 plan that was due for replacement. The board decided that it was best to complete the new strategic plan before deciding on a permanent CEO. We felt that we should first be clear about PCTA direction and then decide what we needed in a permanent CEO.

We have conducted extensive outreach in preparing our new strategic plan. We've had, I guess probably we've talked to more than 100 different people as well as collected input from a variety of other sources and surveys. We've been doing that over the past seven or eight months. We also included in that effort soliciting feedback on the qualities and qualifications for the leadership of the organization, both executive director and other leadership staff, including the board.

We'll be finishing our new strategic plan this summer, and after that, the board will make a decision on a permanent ED and CEO. So that's sort of where we're going on succession planning. The last thing I want to do is just say a few words of thanks to all the members of the PCTA board for their contributions. Serving on the board is not easy.

It's not a pleasure cruise. It's a lot of work. It involves preparing for and attending six meetings per year and numerous and I emphasize numerous committee meetings that go with being on the board. Four of our meetings are on Zoom. Two of them are in-person meetings. This has started during the pandemic and now sort of become the process we're trying to use going forward.

Board members bring their experience and expertise from their off-trail lives to help PCTA. Experience in Finance Law. Nonprofit organization management. Communications. Government relations and much more. And more importantly, they also bring a passion for the Pacific Crest Trail, and outdoor recreation, and a desire to make sure that the trail is there for future generations and people of all backgrounds:

Novices, section hikers, equestrians and thru-hikers. So the board does a lot of work behind the scenes. And I just want to acknowledge what they've done to help us get where we are today. Lastly, I want to especially thank two of our retiring board members, Chip Herzig and Tom Reveley Both have served on the board for three terms and have brought a lot to our work.

Chip in particular, I'll single out because he's been a much-needed contact with the Backcountry Horsemen, which is a group we need desperately to help us with our maintenance work out on the trail. So Chip has been a good liaison as well as being just a good general board member, asking, you know, asking the difficult questions that you need to ask to keep things on the right track.

The other person I want to thank is Tom Reveley. Tom served on the board for three terms. He also served as board chair in the past. Tom brought a lot of wisdom to me and to Rick and other people who served on the board over the years. He's he's a, I would say, a wise man. And we were very lucky to have him involved.

Just as one example of what he was able to do for us, he was instrumental in helping PCTA to create its Modern GIS (Geographic Information System), which helps us make many, many decisions and helps us do our work. He helped connect us with university people who had connections with the expertise we needed to do a GIS system. He also helped us make raise the substantial money we needed to to buy and implement the GIS.

It's become vital to almost everything we do from land acquisitions, trail maintenance and hiker information. So I want you to join me in a round of applause for Chip and Tom.

And now I'll turn it back over to Megan to go over a lot about our accomplishments in the past year.

**Megan Wargo, Acting Executive Director and CEO**

All right. Thank you. And it's been an honor to be in this acting role for the past almost year. I will admit that this right now is the hardest thing. And I know Liz knows that this is my least favorite thing, giving up a presentation in front of a microphone. So I'd like this to just feel like a conversation that the next part of our presentation here is really celebrating what happened in 2022.

And so you'll hear from me. I'll kick it off. But then we're going to hear from partners of the Forest Service and other staff members just really celebrating everything. We were able to accomplish together in 2022.

All right. So as we've kind of alluded to, 2022 was a big year of lots of transitions for PCTA. Our staff grew significantly in size based on the Great American Outdoors Act funding that we received. We held our first in-person annual membership meeting last April, along with our first in-person board meeting after the pandemic. So that was a big adjustment back to just doing in-person events.

We also, as Kevin mentioned, celebrated and said goodbye to Liz after 20 plus years of leading PCTA and really growing us into the organization and setting us up for what we've been able to kind of carry forward here. We recruited a new cohort of board members and also we embarked on a strategic planning process where we were really looking to more deeply engage our community in that process and take our time with it.

So speaking of strategic planning that kicked off last fall, we started it off with a community engagement process that had about 80 folks joining us online with another about 10 to 20 folks submitting survey results to really help us find our kind of high level strategic pillars that we were going to be building our strategic plan around. We heard in those sessions from volunteers, trail users, agency and nonprofit partners, writers, scientists and many more.

So it was really engaging and a really fun process to join those groups and get to hear folks that engage with the PCT in so many different ways having a conversation about its future this past March and this actually just kind of last week, we wrapped up our second round of engagement with stakeholders starting to think about strategies into how we would implement towards those kind of bigger vision goals.

And going into the month of May. We're going to be using all that feedback we received to do a draft of our strategic plan with the board and staff, really taking that feedback and building it into a plan. In June, we are planning to release our draft strategic plan with an opportunity for anyone in the community to engage with an online survey to provide feedback on the draft with hopefully being able to take that feedback in and July produce our final strategic plan.

So with that, I'm going to jump back to kind of more of our 2022 celebration and talk about our our financials. So we had 3.7 million in private contributions last year. And I'd like to thank all of our donors and members for their support. Private contributions made up 65% of PCTA's financial support and 1.7 million in federal grants.

This is an increase from what you may have seen in previous years, and that's because the Great American Outdoor Act funding that came in to help us with deferred maintenance on the trail. So combined, that's 5.4 million in revenue for 2022. Another piece and we can go to the next one. So another piece of the puzzle here is our volunteer service.

So we had over 67,000 of volunteer service in 2022, which was valued at 1.7 million. These hours are a valuable contribution to the trail. We could not keep the trail maintained and open for folks if we didn't have those volunteers out there helping us. So in total, looking at that volunteer contribution and the financial support, that was 1.7 million complete, we did.

I will mention that in 2022 we did have a slight deficit, which means we had more expenses than we did revenue. That was a planned deficit because we were using some funds that the board had approved us to use from prior years that we had raised and that was for special projects like strategic planning. If you're interested in seeing more details on our financials, there are annual reports that have more.

And then online you can find our audited financials.

All right, we're good. So kind of getting into our conservation and land conservation work for 2022 picture engaged heavily in the 30 by 30 initiative, which is both a federal initiative and in the state of California, specifically the state of California, we participated with local and statewide nonprofit and agency partners, as well as tribes in in this idea of how do we work to protect 30% of our lands and waters by 2030.

And and in these efforts, the PCT is a really unique resource, and PCTA a really unique voice, because we have many groups that we work with that know deeply, you know, one specific area along the trail. But when you think about the importance of really protecting landscapes within climate change regimes, you really need to think outside of those specific boundaries and the PCT is a resource that stretches all the way through the West Coast.

(We can go to the next one.) So we have a couple of maps here just to kind of illustrate the importance of to being at the table and really talking about how we get our entire corridor protected. So the map that you see on what would be your left is important areas for conservation defined by the Wilderness Society.

And I know it's a little hard to see, but running right through the middle of all of that green, which is the important conservation areas, is the PCT. And then if you look at the little pull out there that's in Oregon, the PCT is a little dotted line that connects these green blobs, the the snakes and blobs theory of conservation, really technical term.



So those areas, the national parks, the national forests, the wilderness areas, those are critical to the biodiversity that we're trying to protect, especially as we see climate change being, you know, throwing species for a loop, having to do lots of adaptation, but having those big protected areas isn't enough. We have to have ways for species to adapt, to move, to also intermingle so that we don't get species isolation.

And the PCT and the protection of that corridor is that one link, in some places, between those big protected areas. So we have been really engaging heavily in these conversations both to see what we can do and working with our partners to make sure that the PCT is running through a resilient landscape, but also as part of our work to protect the whole PCT corridor.

So kind of zooming into that a little bit more, I can share just some of the highlights we had from our land protection program in 2022. So we had three properties that were transferred over to the Forest Service for permanent protection of the PCT. And one of them is Picayune Lake. This is in the Shasta Trinity National Forest in Northern California.

And this property included 320 acres that went to the Forest Service and about 1.2 miles of the PCT. And this is thanks to I don't know where Hank is, but Hank and Cindy and Larry, who were conservation buyers who stepped in to buy this property when it went up for auction, which just was happening too quickly for anybody else to step in and get it other than a private buyer and appreciate their partnership.

I would love to share just a fun story in Last summer we did a celebration up at the the cabin there and were hosted by Hank and Cindy and Larry. And not only was it just an amazing group of Forest Service partners, PCTA, and just a lot of folks from the community that had a just a long-term connection to this property.

But Hank also scooped a whole group of thru-hikers off the PCT for a most unique trail Angel opportunity. It's it's trail magic that I don't think many thru hikers will get to experience where they were scooped up off the trail, brought to this beautiful lake to take a swim, and then presented with a whole group of people that were having a big celebration that included a take a cake that was topographically shaped to the property thanks to Hank's daughter.

So we have a lot to live up to for our next celebration on land acquisitions. Yeah.

So we can go to the next one. So another property, Piute Mountains. This is ten acres that went to the Sequoia National Forest. And this property is one where the PCT was out of its easement. So legally, we were going to have to put the PCT back onto a dirt road if we weren't able to buy the property from the landowner.

So this was another big win because it means the PCT stayed where it is most scenic and most enjoyable to be. We can go to the next one. And finally, the Soledad Canyon property. This is five acres that went to the Angeles National Forest in Southern California. It includes about a 10th of a mile of the PCT.

And yeah, another great win for the PCT. This one, if you are familiar with where the Golden Spike is along the PCT. This is just up trail from that. And with that, I'd like to turn it over to Lindsey Steinwachs, PCT Administrator for the U.S. Forest Service.

**Lindsey Steinwachs, U.S. Forest Service PCT Administrator**

Hi, everyone. Lindsey Steinwachs. She her pronouns and I just wanted to take a moment to thank all of the PCTA employees and staff and board members. I have been in my position for just over a year and a half now and it has been a wild ride... as Megan just mentioned a lot's going on, a lot of funding opportunities, a lot of work getting done and that has come with a lot of conversations, some hard moments.

And I am just so thankful for all of the staff leaning in and building relationships quickly. And I just I couldn't be more thankful to have people to work with every day. I just know that everyone is just as passionate and willing to look down, put, put in some hard work. So just thank you, everyone. I'm really grateful to come to work each day and work with all of you.

So with that, I will go to the next slide. So as I talked about hard moments, I was just having a conversation before this in that the new normal is especially in California here, but I know also in Oregon and Washington that we have a lot of natural disasters going on across the entire West Coast. And so specifically, I wanted to touch on storm damage and disaster recovery.

These are two initiatives right now that are around and the Forest Service and specifically disaster recovery. I'll just touch on was something that came out in 2022 and we were able to capture \$1.5 million to actually put into our agreement with PCTA to assist with doing trail maintenance and repair along the PCT through several actually a couple hundred or a little over 120 miles of the PCT that was impacted through wildfires through the 2020 and 2021 fires, including the Dixie, the Calder, the Tamarack, and I think the River complex and so that I'm just showing this picture.

We've had so many impacts and just wanting to be able to get out there to ensure that those trails are the trail is passable in those areas. And then storm damage is a new, I knew initiative, an opportunity for funding that just came about in the last couple of months and specifically that's been focused on all of the storms and the heavy rains that we've been having throughout California.

So specifically at this moment, we haven't identified the the amount of funding that is likely or possible to come to the PCT, but that's because we're waiting for a lot of the PCT to melt out. And I'm just going to share this this picture up here in the upper right, this is a new what I'm calling the Grand Canyon of the PCT.

Unfortunately, this is the PCT crossing on a private easement and this was a small route two years ago. It was we knew something could happen. But with the monsoonal rains in southern California on the southern Sierras, we now have a 50-foot wide and 30-foot deep gully across



the PCT here. And so this is just showing impact of what can happen on the trail and what we likely will see more and more even on our public lands as we see, you know, the snowmelt now have.

And, you know, also that impacts from the heavy rains that we've had in Southern California. So we are currently working with all of our forest staff as they're doing assessments on the different lands. So with that, let's go to the next slide. Next I'm going to go into the wildfire crisis strategy. So in 2022, the Forest Service announced the ten year wildfire crisis strategy.

And this in 2022, they announced ten landscapes. And then in 2023, just in January, they announced an additional 11 landscapes that were priorities for protecting communities that are at risk from wildfires, and also to improve the resilience of those forests that are in that wildfire crisis or the wildfire interface. So this map over here and I apologize for it being small here, but this is the picture overlaid with the different the different landscapes for the wildfire crisis.

And this is that that blob theory, again, as Megan mentioned, wherever you see a landscape, essentially the PCT does run through most of them. So right now I am engaging at a very high level to figure out how we're at the table through these large landscape projects that are going to be underway in the next couple of years.

Some of the landscapes, specifically the 2022 landscapes that were identified, are already doing fuels management work and that work is underway. And so with those projects, we're really going to be engaging with that implementation. Can we provide information on how to best apply fuels prescriptions within the corridor of the T to to ensure that the scenery and the landscape is protected and managed in a way that aligns with the nature and purposes?

And then in these landscapes that we're identified in 2023, we have more of an opportunity to engage in that planning process early on, I think. Next slide and the last the last big thing that's come out, we've been doing a lot of action plans and strategy is, as you might have noticed, is the Forest Service Equity Action Plan.

And this was just rolled out this past year. And let's go to the next slide. So PCTA is undergoing strategic planning and the Forest Service, as you have noticed, we are also undergoing a big change. This action plan is really focused on many high level actions and strategies so we can have systemic change to provide more equity not only with our employees, with tribes as partners, but also the public.

And so some of all of these acronyms, it's so unfortunate. Forest Service, I apologize, but a couple of these are really key. So specifically, we have a Great American Outdoors Act that's also investing in our infrastructure and our partnerships that Megan already mentioned. But we also have really great changes to the granted agreements to try to add more equity so that partnerships that are less developed or from underserved communities.

They have a reduced match requirement. So there's certain small process changes within the Forest Service we're trying to make to ensure that we can provide more opportunities not only with businesses and partners, but also with communities. And specifically, they also touch on

the wildfire crisis down there on the right. So a lot of work and part of what we're trying to do is with strategic planning, with the equity action plan is how do we bring those to planning and strategies together to ensure that, you know, our partnership is in alignment and that we're moving out on these really important processes together.

So one exciting thing that is happening in June is we are going to be bringing on a resource assistant that will be working underneath me and that position is really focused on volunteer services and communications, specifically through the diversity equity and inclusion lens so that we can invest back in our volunteers and our volunteer services program and our communications to ensure that we're moving out in a very, you know, hand in glove manner with the PCTA to ensure that, you know, we are really representing our community and supporting them and creating a safe space.

And so I think that's all I have. Thank you, everyone, and I will pass it to Justin.

### **Justin Kooyman, Acting Director of Trail Operations**

Good afternoon. Okay. Thank you. Just making sure folks are awake. All right. Good afternoon. I'm Justin Kooyman, PCTA's Acting director of trail operations. I use he/him pronouns. Good to talk with you all a little bit about our trail operations program from this past year and take a few peeks kind of into 2023 in terms of what we have going on.

So to start, I'm going to (perfect timing. Thank you.) start by talking about two significant and positive planning efforts, kind of management projects, and the first is the PCT Foundation Document. The foundation document is a Forest Service document that PCTA had the great opportunity to collaborate and participate in the development of the document of it. In it engaged federal land managers, PCTA staff, PCTA volunteers, and the larger PCT community had opportunity to engage and provide input.

And the foundation document kind of serves as a companion to the PCT Comprehensive Management Plan, and it fills in some gaps. A couple of key things is, one, it provides a clear nature and purpose statement for the PCT. Why? Why is the PCT designated National Scenic Trail now? We have a nature and purpose statement that ties directly to the national trail system.

It also identifies the key fundamental values and resources that need to be considered when the agency or anyone is going through some sort of planning process or a project level decision. So this document will be used in the future to help ensure that the nature and purposes of the PCT are protected in future planning efforts. Next slide. Thanks.

The next planning effort I want to highlight it's another agency process, but that PCTA had the good fortune to participate in is the Sierra and Sequoia National Forest Plan revisions. Every national forest has what's called a forest plan that provides overall guidance and management direction for the forest and various resources through through that given unit, the Sierra and

Sequoia started their plan revisions of somewhere around 2013, same time as the Inyo National Forest.

Some folks in this room might know that the Inyo finalized their plan in 2019, but due to changing conditions specifically massive tree die off in the southern Sierra, these two forests went through a second round of draft plans. So after a long planning process getting slowed up by the pandemic, we're expecting final decisions this year with these two plans.

And one thing that's particularly exciting is they're poised to be the second and third National Forest to have a PCT management area, a.k.a a corridor which will provide another layer of management direction guidance for ensuring that the PCT experience is conserved. So next slide, please. So shifting gears a little bit to talk about our volunteer programs, quickly show a hands how many folks in this room are volunteers in one form or another?

Awesome. Now I realize everyone in this room probably deserves a round of applause and hopefully that will happen at some point. But I don't think during my presentation. Just kidding. So a little bit about our volunteer programs. You know, 2022 was really a year of kind of rebuilding and reengaging as we continue to come out of the pandemic.

Just a few quick statistics to tease that point out. In 2021, we facilitated just over 57,000 volunteer hours last year that was bolstered up to 67,000 hours. In 21, we engaged with 1,291 volunteers last year that was bumped up to 1,384. And last but not least, in 2021, we maintained 571 miles of trail and last year that was increased to 629 and next slide, in terms of reengaging with more volunteers, one of the best programs to look at is our trail skills College.

A lot of folks here I recognize in the room have attended events, have helped train at events. Thank you for all your time in service. These events, the last time they were held was 2019 and everything went virtual after that due to the pandemic. So in 2022, for the first time in three years, we had 342 participants engage in seven different trail skills colleges.

Five of them were held for the first time since 2019. One in Southern California was the first time after a seven-year absence. And then we held our first Eastern Sierra Trail Skills College last year. So that was exciting. And as of two weeks ago, we already have 307 people registered for three Trail Skills Colleges for 2023, and the other ones are going to come online soon.

So we're almost already at our 2022 level and should could easily exceed that this year. So Lindsey talked a little bit about the Great American Outdoors Act. This is a piece of legislation that was enacted in 2020 with the goal of addressing deferred maintenance across our public lands. Congress has fortunately appropriated hundreds of millions of dollars to the federal land management agencies to address deferred maintenance.

Some of those dollars are coming to the PCT, and fortunately, PCTA has the opportunity to put some of those dollars to work. So a couple of highlights from last year. We hired three regional trail stewardship coordinators. These are three-year positions full time, year-round, and their

primary focus is to support our volunteer programs and our core crew partners in tackling deferred maintenance.

And last year we accomplished 15000 hours in California, 5000 hours in Washington. We maintained 187 miles with GAOA dollars, reconstructed 15 miles. And for 2023, we've now hired two more regional trails stewardship coordinators to continue tackling deferred maintenance. So we hope to do even more work in Oregon and Washington in this coming year. Last thing I'll talk about briefly is wildfire recovery.

Lindsey touched on this as well just a little bit. And we're asked all the time, what are we doing about the trail through these areas that that have burned? And so I think most folks know we've we've had a lot of fires burn either near across. Yeah, well over the PCT over the last three years. And we are using GAOA funds as well as other grant moneys to to tackle maintenance.

And in 2020 we put a substantial amount of effort into the PCT across the Dixie Fire in Northern California through the Hay Press, fire up in Northern California, and some folks that remember the lion's head fire from 2020 in the PCT was closed for a significant amount of time. We were able to work with the local forest service for a bunch of time and resources into the trail, making the trails now open and passable for for this season.

And the last thing I'll say along those lines is for 23, we are planning a number of projects and crews to get in and continue maintaining the trail through these burned areas. And additionally, regional representatives and other local staff are working with local managers to address some of the impacts of wildfire suppression near the PCT. Within the corridor.

So with that, thanks so much for your time and I will turn it over to Jack Haskel. Thanks, Jack.

### **Jack Haskel, Trail Information Manager**

Hi, everybody. It is great to be here once again. My name is Jack Haskel. I'm the trail information manager for the Pacific Crest Trail Association. I help trail users and work on lots of different projects that I'll tell you about. It is an honor. First slide, please. I don't have too many slides. I'm going to build off of the story of wildfires.

My telling of it is largely about what happened last year and some really good things that came of it. Some of it is that the Pacific Crest Trail community is strong. It is trail town based. It is government, local government, federal government. It is the Pacific Crest Trail Association. So last July, as happens often, there were a bunch of wildfires in northern California in the Klamath Mountains.

July 29th, one of them that wasn't so close to the trail called the McKinney fire really blew up and sent a huge column of scary smoke in the dark across the PCT. This is July 29th, when northbound thru-hikers and normal backpackers and everybody is out in the mountains. Potentially thousands of people in that area. They made wonderful decisions.

The hikers knew to evacuate and the communities gathered around and helped make that happen. So big thanks to both Jackson County and Siskiyou County. The Rogue Valley Transportation District sent busses to trailheads search and rescue, local community volunteers who maybe did not have a strong connection to the trail. People are proud of the Pacific Crest Trail, and the hikers are out there understanding that they're they have some responsibility in this.

Another great story is where PCTA comes in for the McKinney fire. I went to bed at maybe 10 p.m., scared, woke up at 4 a.m. and learned that there had been hundreds of people evacuated from the trail. It was great. Everyone was safe. Later on that same summer, we had two large detours one in central Oregon, largely around the Cedar Creek Fire.

one at the northern terminus. Identifying detours takes a time, and it doesn't always happen. It takes partners who know dirt roads and side trails and are willing to do this work in partnership with PCTA. It takes GIS and the capacity to do it. Last year, two 100+ mile detours where long distance hikers were able to continue on their journey safely, having a fantastic time.

Next slide, please. A lot of last year of my time was also spent on the PCT long distance permit for trips 500 miles or more. It's a lot of behind-the-scenes work. Really proud that we recoded pretty much everything. A new data structure for an improved experience for the public that people could link their permit with their partner so best friends could start on the same day.

Really great work and that's that two-step process. It it's the type of work that maybe only happens every ten years if you can do it. And I'm proud to say because of all of your support, we were able to do that good work. Those are some of the improvements on the front and the back end. So what the public sees and what PCT staff use is really very important.

The permit is kept at the same 8000 permit limit. No changes there that is set by the Forest Service and the government. We administer the permit on behalf of the government. Next slide, please. Then this year. This year is it's going to be like last year. Last year there was a lot of fires and a lot of challenge and people rising to meet that challenge.

This year you all have heard or got wet because of the storms. 31 atmospheric rivers in California, record breaking snow in the High Sierra, deep snows almost everywhere else. And there's thousands of people either already out on the trail or planning their backpacking trips that will be starting in the next couple of months. I'm hearing every day from dozens of people who are enjoying the Pacific Crest Trail and making wise safety decisions.

I think this is a year of flipping and skipping. Try trying to figure out, well, what's within my risk tolerance. And it's working pretty well so far. We hope that everyone continues making those safe decisions. So thank you all for supporting this work energy.

**Angie Williamson, Director of Philanthropy**

Hello, I'm Angie Williamson. I'm director of Philanthropy. And next slide. I just want to welcome you all here. I know you've been here for an hour, but welcome and thank you so much for coming. It's really great that we get to see so many faces that we that have come to these meetings so many times and new faces as well.

And I just wanted to share that here in the room today we have PCTA members, volunteers, partners, board staff and even a few former board and staff who've come to join us. So we're really grateful for all the ways that you are contributing and part of this organization. And I think I'm going to take a moment. We're going to give a round of applause for all of us.

Next slide. Megan already did give some of our financial numbers, and I just wanted to call out, though, that behind that private support, 14,700 members across 50 states and across the world. Really, it's so exciting to continue to see how popular the trail is, both nationally and internationally. Next slide. So you've heard, of course, about a lot of the challenges, the opportunities.

And I just want you to know that your support truly matters. We can't do this without all of you. And there are so many ways that you are giving back to the trail as donors and members you are giving to PCTA through your membership dues. You're contributing to our special campaigns through grants and sponsorships, and many of you are also asking your workplace to match your donations, which really, really helps to double the giving.

You're so many of you are volunteering out on the trail to in the office, stuffing letters, making medals for thru-hiker finishers and in so many different ways. And you are sharing your photos and your stories with PCTA and with the community, which continues to just share what a special place this is. In many of the photos we're using in this slide and in this slide slideshow before were contributed by our community.

And we couldn't do these wonderful presentations and inspire people without all of those wonderful gifts of talent. And then also there are those who contribute by sharing their experience with others and helping people prepare for what's out there, what to expect on the trail. And I just want to say we're really happy to have Jeff Schaffer here with us today.

And Jeff is one of the original authors of The Wilderness Press Guidebooks, which was the original guide to getting out on the trail long before the Internet. And it was published 50 years ago. So, Jeff, please stand. Thank you. Thank you for coming. Okay. And all that hiking! And Jeff, Jeff is going to be around and he'll be here.

And if you brought your guidebooks, he's happy to sign them or just chat with about all the wonderful history behind the Wilderness Press guidebooks. All right. Next slide, please. I also wanted to just highlight a new program for our philanthropy team is that we are now able to offer a free estate planning service for all PCTA supporters. And that will help, helps our donors and other volunteers help you provide for your loved ones and ensure that your legacy is coming through your estate, through your values.



And that is something that you can come and talk to me about if you're interested in learning more. I also wanted to just say thank you to all of our Legacy Society members. We have several here today and the Legacy Society members have included PCTA in their estate plans. So I appreciate that and I will be around for more information.

And we also have some more information on the back table there. And so that is it for my presentation. And I'm going to turn it back over to Megan.

**Megan Wargo, Acting Executive Director and CEO**

All right. We're in the final stretch, so if I could ask all the PCTA staff that are here with us to either stand up, raise your hand, and just want to share a thank you for not only (yes) not only pulling together a really wonderful event today, but for everything you do every day to inspire people to get out there and be on the PCT and explore our public lands.

Also, before we get into our questions, we're going to have a session where we can do some question answer. If you heard nothing from this presentation, this is really important. When you got here, you should have gotten a door prize ticket. If you haven't, after we do the question and answer, staff will have them our registration desk in about 20 minutes.

After we finish our our question and answer, we will do a prize drawing from many of the corporate sponsors that shared some awesome prizes with you all here today. So with that, I will open it up for questions and you can raise your hand and I will repeat questions through the microphone. Yeah.

So. All right. So the question was around the bridge washout on the San Joaquin. And I would like to invite Jack or Justin up here to answer that one. As far as just reroutes.

**Jack Haskel, Trail Information Manager**

Great question. So this is a very important bridge on the John Muir Trail section of the PCT. There's we've have had meetings on this subject. We are going to be aligning with the agencies to make public recommendations broadly out towards the West on Sierra National Forest. Those trails are not suitable for use for detours. So are going to be looking towards the east and there are some challenging cross-country trails that hopefully people will not be taking because of the danger and the sensitivity of use in those cross-country areas.

So that leaves Bishop Pass and Paiute Pass, and there's complicated considerations around increased use on those trails. Permit systems, keeping people safe, all of that. Also, at the same time, there needs to be the focus on building a new bridge. And I'm happy to say that talented people, it's a high priority. We don't know what the timeline will be and May is here.

So we're everyone's keenly aware that people are seeking information. So it will be coming hopefully soon.

**Megan Wargo, Acting Executive Director and CEO**

All right. Any other questions? Yeah, on that one slide, when...

You talk about Oregon and Washington.

Yes. So the question was and Jack, you should come back up.

**Jack Haskel, Trail Information Manager**

I wrote that slide. Yes.

**Megan Wargo, Acting Executive Director and CEO**

So do you want to repeat the question?

**Jack Haskel, Trail Information Manager**

So the question was, we saw that there were 31 atmospheric rivers that hit California and Oregon and Washington were not spared. Yes. So oftentimes the atmospheric river doesn't hit just California broadly, Oregon has very deep snowpack, about 200% of normal average. Northern Washington is more like a normal year. Southern Washington is a heavy year. It sort of paints a picture of very remarkable snows in California tapering out towards the north.

And this year, one piece of something I've never seen is how deep the snow in Southern California was. Really very remarkable. Southern California's snowpack.

**Megan Wargo, Acting Executive Director and CEO**

Yeah.

(Audience member asking a question)

**Lindsey Steinwachs, U.S. Forest Service PCT Administrator**

Yeah, I think you were asking a question about the North Yuba. I believe that that was on the wildfire crisis strategy slide. Yep. So those landscapes, those aren't specific to the city. Those are areas where based upon risk analysis and research, those are areas that landscapes that the Forest Service is going to prioritize fuels management and fuels reduction.

That's a burn. Yes.

No, but it would be it would be bad if it did. And so those landscapes we're prioritizing really proactive landscape level fuels reduction in those areas to try to combat any devastating wildfires in those areas. So it's likely and actually, I'm reading in the summer Communicator (plug for the summer Communicator), there's going to be a more in-depth article that talks

about the wildfire crisis strategy and how the PCT and other recreation infrastructure is kind of playing into and fits into those fuels management project.

So you'll learn more in the summer Communicator.

**Megan Wargo, Acting Executive Director and CEO**

All right. I don't know how we're doing on timing. Maybe one more question. Yeah, we can do two more. I saw two hands there, so we'll do Hank, and then we'll go to the update on Oh, Hank So the question was update on to Tejon Ranch. Yes. So where we are right now is leading into the pandemic. We were having regular meetings with the the ranch working on.

And this is for those that might not have the background. There's a conservation agreement on Tejon Ranch, one of the largest, if not the largest private ownership in California, to move the PCT, which would be about 37 miles of the PCT off the aqueduct onto Tejon Ranch, which is an absolutely fabulous, gorgeous place to walk through.

So we were in active conversations around the the trail easement that's required to move the trail over there as well as in most places. When the PCT goes through private land, we're talking about a mile and it's just access, getting people across the property when you're talking about 37 miles on private land. We're also talking about and water.

And so it's a pretty complicated conversation around a trail use easement, right of way easement. So those conversations were actively happening. The pandemic shut down some of those conversations because where we were was we were at a place where we needed to do some on the ground campsite work and trailhead work with landscape architects from the Forest Service and bringing people together.

So we're restarting that. But it's during the pandemic we had a turnover in our Forest Service administrator, so bringing new staff up to speed there; Tejon Ranch also had turnover in their staff as to who had been working with us closely. So it's a long way of saying it's still a priority, but we're it's taking a little while to get it ramped back up after the pandemic and the changes and just all sorts of staff in different locations.

So but thank you for the question. All right. One last question.

Is there any outstanding issues anywhere in the mountain biking camps that...

Okay, yeah, the question was about just kind of outstanding issues with mountain bikers and trespass on the PCT And I don't know Justin and or Lindsey, if one or both of you want to take that one.

**Justin Kooyman, Acting Director of Trail Operations**

Okay, sounds great. That's great. Rochambeaux from afar. Yeah. Thanks Jan, for the question. So the city is closed to mechanized transportation specifically for the, the possession of a bicycle on the PCT is prohibited by Forest Order and BLM orders. Well, in terms of I don't know that I can speak to any issues with specific groups, say mountain biking groups, etc. but yes, there is still illegal use of the PCT, illegal mountain bike use and we're constantly grappling with strategies through education, trying to rally some support for enforcement as well.

It's it's a tough challenge. I wish I had a much better answer for you. Go ahead.

The best avenue for us to trail.

Mm hmm.

Yeah. Pushing those people and how to get them to.

Yeah, that's a great question. Thanks. There's a couple of things you can do. One is, yeah, I would report incidents and observations of illegal use of the PCT to your regional rep in this case, Connor. You can also go on to the Forest Service website and fill out an incident report form there. It starts to document cases of mountain bikes on the PCT in terms of engaging with the mountain bikers.

And you know, it's like engaging with, with anyone, right? I mean, the conversations can go one way or another. I've talked with mountain bikers over the years. They're like, Oh, hey, sorry, turn around. Others who are not quite so hospitable to my message. So uhh, and plenty of colorful things being said, etc.. But so I—hard to give generic advice—but I don't think there's anything wrong with simply reminding folks that this is a trail that is only open for hiker and equestrian traffic and for good reason.

You know, there's safety and experiential impacts to hikers and equestrians. So yeah. Lindsey, you think?

**Lindsey Steinwachs, U.S. Forest Service PCT Administrator**

I think the only thing I will add, I want to give kudos specifically to Anitra Cass and Connor Swift. Both of their regions. There have been increased project proposals on Forest Service lands for new trail developments for specific, more mountain bike centric trails that aren't on the PCT but might cross the PCT or in close proximity to the PCT.

And they've just had really great response from collaborating with those project proposals and with the Forest Service to suggest ways to mitigate, you know, either hiding the trail, moving the trail slightly, making very clear signage, recommendations. And so I just really want to give kudos that we're trying to be proactive in that development and proposal process as well so that, you know, we can plan these trails.

Obviously, we want to maximize recreation opportunities. Mountain bikes can cross on a trail across the PCT, not on the PCT. And so we just want to we're trying to be more thoughtful about how do we interact with mountain bike accessible trails around and within the PCT corridor and being thoughtful about how maybe those crossings could encourage mountain bike trespass and being a lot more thoughtful in those regards and minimizing crossings if possible.

So I just want to give kudos to the PCTA staff and obviously I'm having those conversations internally at a higher level and especially areas where we do have very known mountain bike incursions, but just really appreciative of PCTA staff and their proactive response to those project proposals. Yeah, okay.

**Justin Kooyman, Acting Director of Trail Operations**

I have one more chance. Yeah, just going off that. Thanks Lindsey. I forgot to mention that building off that. I do think it's important for folks to know that PCTA is supportive of all forms of recreation on our on our public lands. And with that, as we engage on these projects, we really want to help the mountain bike community.

I'm an avid mountain biker myself, not on the PCT, of course, but can appreciate the need to have good recreational opportunities. And so by by engaging in those projects, hopefully we're helping, you know, create better bike recreation opportunities that negates the need to ride on the PCT in the first place. And sometimes there's what I observe is kind of like this deep default trespass, which not suggesting that makes it okay, but you've got some trails here, some trails here.

The only way to connect it is oftentimes the PCT. So if we can work on projects and, support projects where there's other ways to connect to larger trail systems and loops for for mechanized use that alleviates the need to be on the PCT in the first place. Then hopefully it's a win win for all communities.

**Megan Wargo, Acting Executive Director and CEO**

All right, Thank you. We're going to wrap this up. Please feel free if you have other questions to find PCTA board and staff members. We've got snacks and refreshments and we'd love to have you stick around. And just 20 minutes. Is that our timeline for, uh, so and if you stick around for at least 20 minutes, you'll be here for the prize draw.

So thank you for coming.