



# The Riviera Association

May 2023

[www.rivieraassociation.org](http://www.rivieraassociation.org)

P.O. Box 4235 • Santa Barbara, CA 93140-4235

## President's Letter

Dear Neighbors,

A prudent piece of advice aspiring novelists often receive is “don't start out with the weather.” Write “It was a dark and stormy night,” and you'll lose your readers right there. The same advice should probably apply to a Riviera Association's president's letter, but what can I do? I am writing in the middle of our twelfth “atmospheric river” storm of the season. If you are like me, “atmospheric river” (AR) is a new term in your lexicon, although such events are not new to our area. The National Weather Service describes the AR phenomenon this way: “Atmospheric rivers are long, concentrated regions in the atmosphere that transport moist air from the tropics to higher latitudes. The moist air, combined with high wind speeds, produce heavy rain and snow upon landfall, especially over mountainous terrain.”

What is unusual this year, says the NWS, is the number and intensity of the ARs. Nearly 70" of rain have fallen on San Marcos Pass alone! This has brought us a full and spilling Cachuma reservoir, a few social-media-worthy photos of snow on our Santa Ynez Mountains, a demand for sandbags from those of us living on slopes, and a lot of

work for local roofers. While there have been losses of several trees, some local street flooding, and rock falls along Mission Ridge and Mountain Drive, we have experienced no major landslide nor any reported loss of life.

During the giant storm of January 9, those of us living along a swath of the APS corridor received an emergency evacuation order issued by the County's Office of Emergency Management. As it turned out, the order for our area was a mistake, but its issuance caused significant confusion among those who received it. (Your Riviera Association is working with local officials to help ensure that erroneous evacuation orders do not occur in the future.)

The storms have also affected the trails coursing through the mountain front country. Our varied terrain, from the sea to the mountains, lends Santa Barbara much of its renowned beauty. Easy access to mountain trails is as much a gift to residents as is access to beaches. Generally the trails lead the adventurer through canyons and beside the creeks running through them. Often, particularly in drought years, the creek beds are dry, except perhaps for some isolated springs.

This year, with these rains, the creeks are roaring. During a recent walk through Skofield Park, I heard the roar of Mission Creek well before I arrived at a vantage

point to view the white water foaming over rocks like a miniature Niagara. Awesome—really! But the storms have also taken a toll on the trails themselves, undermining them in some places and washing them away in others. It will take time and effort to render them in good enough condition for us to again experience the waterfalls, pools, and natural beauty we are fortunate to have in Santa Barbara's backyard.

In Santa Barbara we are also fortunate to have Raymond Ford, Jr., an expert on our great outdoors and the local trail system. Ray has written many guides leading hikers through local trails. His first book, *Day Hikes of the Santa Barbara Foothills*, published in 1975, was the first book I bought when I arrived in 1978. I proceeded to follow his instructions for every one of the hikes he so accurately described; the book remains on my shelf in easy grabbing range. Ray has updated it periodically since then, and he has since also written a guide to the back country. Since that first book, he has devoted much of his time not only to writing about the Santa Barbara trails, but also to improving access to them. He's designed trails, supervised trail construction crews, and led volunteers on cleanup efforts. We are delighted that Ray will be our featured speaker at our spring meeting this year. Please join us on **Sunday,**

**May 7**, as we learn from Ray about the trails and how we can preserve and enjoy them. I hope to see you there, and perhaps at the Rattlesnake Canyon trailhead, too.

Sincerely,

Shelley Bookspan  
President, Riviera Association

## Riviera Association Spring General Meeting

Sunday, May 7 • 4–6 p.m.

Riviera Ridge Campus, 2130 Mission Ridge Road

Shuttle service to/from Mission Ridge & Tremonto parking lots

• Keynote Speaker: Ray Ford, Santa Barbara trails expert and author

Enjoy live music, local wines, gourmet appetizers • An art display by local artist Laurie MacMillan • A chance to win a spring bouquet or spa treatment

# Riviera Association Board of Directors

## Officers and Directors

Shelley Bookspan, **President**  
Jeff Byrne, **Vice President**  
John Mosby, **Treasurer**  
Michael Erickson, **Secretary**

## Directors

Christina Broderick  
Janis Clapoff  
Chuck Croninger  
Gayle Eidelson  
Paul Gertler  
Nancy Hassett  
Laurie MacMillan  
Richard Page  
Diana Washburn

## Committees

**Fire & Safety** Laurie MacMillan  
**Membership** Gayle Eidelson  
**Hospitality** Diana Washburn,  
Janis Clapoff, Nancy Hassett,  
Christina Broderick  
**Newsletter** Jeff Byrne  
**Streets & Utilities** Richard Page  
**Website** Michael Erickson  
**Parks** Chuck Croninger  
**Recruitment/Nominating**  
Chuck Croninger

The Riviera Association News,  
Vol. 114—May 2023, is a  
newsletter published  
semi-annually by:  
The Riviera Association  
P.O. Box 4235  
Santa Barbara, CA 93140-4235

# About the Riviera Association

Founded in 1930, the association is an all-volunteer, 501(c)(3) organization that works to maintain and enhance the distinctive character of the Riviera and the quality of life of its members. We educate and engage with our members on ways we can collectively improve our neighborhoods and increase public safety, focusing on areas such as zoning, density, policing, roadways, utilities, traffic safety, fire protection, and land use.

The association is primarily focused on addressing Riviera-specific needs and issues, but in some cases, we also work to educate our elected officials and advocate for Riviera interests at the city level. The following are examples of some of our recent accomplishments:

- Worked with Santa Barbara City Parks and Public Works to arrange for clean up at Franceschi Park and for clean up and beautification of the medians on APS.
- With the help of our District 4 Councilmember Kristen Sneddon, we educated Santa Barbara City Council and City Fire on the need for increased fire mitigation efforts on the Riviera, which led to decisions and additional resource commitments which were adopted and formalized in the updated Community Wildfire Protection Plan.
- Gathered and disseminated important information to our members on home hardening and other opportunities to reduce wildfire risks, including the benefits of forming Firewise Communities to better protect our neighborhoods.
- Along with Councilmember Sneddon, we worked to educate city leadership about the wildfire-related risks of allowing State Senate Bill 9 (SB 9) lot splits and duplexes on the Riviera, which helped to influence the council to prohibit SB 9 in our district.
- Organized and moderated a City Council District 4 candidates forum.
- Surveyed association members on key issues facing the Riviera and our city, drawing on the 140 plus responses in our discussion with city leaders to advocate

for improved fire safety, more affordable workforce housing, and preservation of our downtown character and aesthetic.

- Recruited eight members to serve three to six year terms on the association's board. *(If you are interested in serving on the board or its associated committees, please contact our president Shelley Bookspan at [shelley@rivieraassociation.org](mailto:shelley@rivieraassociation.org).)*

In addition, the association:

- Hosts in-person spring and fall meetings each year, and held virtual meetings during the pandemic. Recent speakers have included Jill Zachary of Santa Barbara Parks and Recreation, and Santa Barbara International Film Festival Executive Director Roger Durling.
- Continues to monitor Riviera parks and other public spaces for graffiti, and follows up with the city as needed to effect removal (usually within one to two days).



Chuck Croninger

Keep your eye out for survey markers around the Riviera.

## Join Us for a Riviera Geology Walk

We are in the process of finalizing plans for a fascinating Riviera geology walk on Saturday, May 27th. It will be led by our councilmember, Kristen Sneddon, who teaches Environmental Geology at Santa Barbara City College. Ever wonder how the Riviera formed, or where the faults are? Stay tuned: the time and place for this event will be announced at the association's spring meeting on Sunday, May 7th.

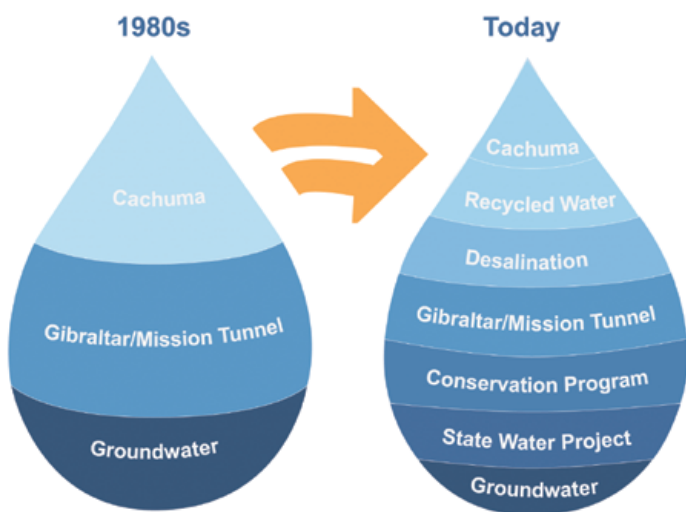
## Santa Barbara Water and Desalination—A Brief History

Santa Barbara is a very special place to live, with our mild year-round climate, easy access to ocean and mountains, and endless range of recreational activities. Our community is also blessed with a reliable, potable water supply, managed by the City of Santa Barbara, and designed to meet the health and safety needs of our residents.

The quest for water supply development has not been an easy one, subject to recurring droughts that have stretched the limits of available water resources. Through skillful engineering, careful planning, and prudent management, the City of Santa Barbara has successfully taken on this challenge over the last 100 years, building a diversified water supply portfolio that will help prepare the city for inevitable droughts in the future.

Figure 1, below, shows the progress over the past forty years. The permanent addition of an oceanwater desalination plant is the latest step the city has taken on this development journey.

Figure 1.  
City of Santa Barbara Water Supply Sources: 1980s vs. Today



Source: [santabarbaraca.gov/government/departments/public-works/water-resources/drought-information](https://santabarbaraca.gov/government/departments/public-works/water-resources/drought-information)

Historically, the city recognized that in order to accommodate development, a secure water supply was essential, and in 1910 filed its appropriation of Santa Ynez water rights, which led to the building of Mission Tunnel in 1911 and Gibraltar Reservoir in 1920. Located in the upper portion of the Santa Ynez River, this reservoir had an initial capacity of 14,500 acre-feet, but siltation over the last 100 years has reduced the capacity to about 4,000 acre-feet.

Recognizing the diminished capacity and eventual loss of Gibraltar Reservoir due to siltation, the city negotiated a pass-through agreement in 1989 with other water agencies sharing in the use of Cachuma Reservoir. The agreement allows the city to store “Gibraltar” water in Lake Cachuma based on a

hydrological model that will preserve the availability of Santa Ynez water, even with the ongoing siltation of Gibraltar.

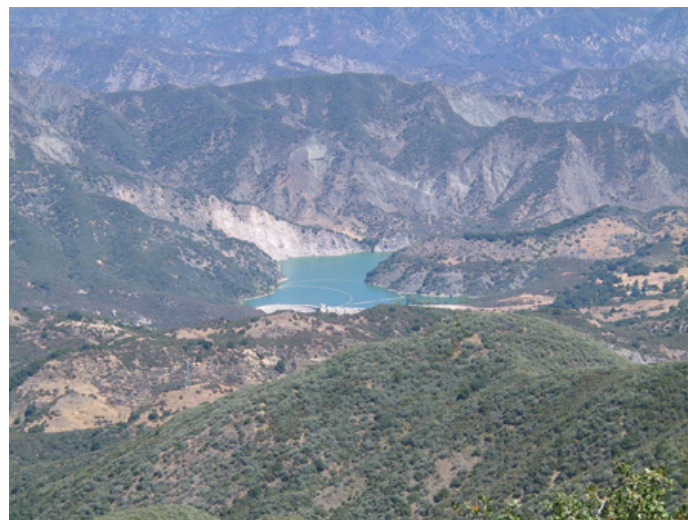
With the increase in development and water use after World War II, city, county, and south coast water agencies participated with the US Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) in the 1950s construction of the Cachuma Reservoir, including Bradbury Dam, the Tecolote Tunnel, and the South Coast Conduit. The city has a 32% allocation of Cachuma water, which is delivered to the Cater Treatment Facility (North Las Positas) and eventually also serves the communities of Montecito, Summerland, and Carpinteria. The city took the initiative to build a regional facility that it owns and operates, with financial participation from the Montecito and Carpinteria Water Districts.

In 1973, the Montecito and Goleta Water Districts declared a water shortage condition and curtailed the issuance of water meters for new service connections. Santa Barbara—with its diverse portfolio of water supplies—did not have to take this action, and it was not until the 1987–1991 drought that the city constructed a new water reclamation facility at its El Estero Wastewater Treatment Plant. This reclamation facility continues to offset the use of potable drinking water with production and use of about 1,000 acre-feet per year.

The 1987–1991 drought also gave notice to all south coast water agencies that their reliance on local groundwater and Santa Ynez River water supplies would not be sufficient. The severity of

### Did You Know?

After a large rain event in our back country watershed on February 24, 2023, water was running into Lake Cachuma from the Santa Ynez River at over 13,000 cubic feet per second. This is equivalent to an impressive 5.8 million gallons per minute. If only we had the ability to hold on to more water!



Gibraltar Reservoir had a capacity of 14,500 acre-feet when built in 1920, but due to siltation it currently only holds 4,000 acre-feet.

© Michael Beam



© Tom Ploch

Recent rains have filled Lake Cachuma to the point that its Bradbury Dam is spilling water into the Santa Ynez River.

drought conditions caused the passage of two key water-related ballot measures in 1991, including approval by Santa Barbara County and the city to build the Coastal Branch of the State Water Project. Also approved by the city was the building of the Charles Meyer Desalination Plant at a cost of \$47 million (with financial assistance from the Goleta and Montecito Water Districts), providing a permanent water supply source. The desal facility had the ability to supply up to 10,000 acre-feet of water per year, providing a reliable water source to Santa Barbara during excessive drought periods. The desal plant remained in long-term standby mode from 1991 until 2017, as the supply of water from other sources met the city's demand.

Due to the exceptional drought conditions in 2011–2015, reactivation was approved by the city council at its July 2015 meeting and in May 2017, the city began distributing desal water into the water system at a capacity of 3,125 acre-feet per year. The cost to restart the desal plant was approximately \$72 million, funded by a twenty-year, low-interest State

Revolving Loan. The desal plant is currently producing about three million gallons of water per day, fulfilling approximately 30% of Santa Barbara's water demand.

The city and the Montecito Water District began negotiations on the regional use of the desal facility in 2015. This drought had exposed the vulnerability of Montecito's water supplies and its overreliance on the State Water Project, which over the previous decade had failed to provide sufficient water allocations in consecutive years.

The city and Montecito executed a 50-year Water Supply Agreement with deliveries of 1,430 acre-feet each year to Montecito. The cost to operate the desal facility, at its current 3,125 acre-feet-per-year capacity, runs over \$4.2 million annually, but the plant can be put in standby mode during rainy periods to reduce operating costs. The water delivered to Montecito can come from whatever source the city deems available, and Montecito pays the city about \$4.5 million each year, which is actually higher than the desal plant's

annual operating cost. With Lake Cachuma currently full, the cost of water to Santa Barbara is considerably less than desal water but Montecito will continue to pay the desal rate.

In the fall newsletter, we will continue our discussion of water and desal in Santa Barbara, describing how the desalination process works and highlighting local conservation efforts that have helped to further strengthen the city's water supply. —*John Mosby*

### Worth Noting

For reference information, the City of Santa Barbara has provided an excellent online resource on the history and activity of the Charles Meyer Desalination Plant. Much of the information in this article has been sourced from that website. Additional information has been obtained from sources familiar with the history of the desal program, including Tom Mosby, former general manager of the Montecito Water District.

## How to Reduce Your Risk of Fire, and Your Insurance Expense



© Michael Held/Unsplash

The Santa Barbara area has a long history of fires, so it's important to make sure you do all you can to keep the area where you live as safe as possible. Firewise USA has created a program which will make your home and property safer, and may also help you save money on your homeowners insurance. You and your neighbors can participate in this program through the Santa Barbara Fire Safe Council.

If you could participate in a group that took a couple hours of your time per year, making your neighborhood safer and potentially saving you money on your homeowners policy, would you do it? Such a program is being spearheaded by the Santa Barbara Fire Safe Council, and there are already Firewise neighborhoods across the US. Locally, Firewise USA communities are operating within Mission Canyon and in the Eucalyptus Hill area.

If you and a couple of your neighbors are interested in being organizers, a representative from [SBFireSafeCouncil.org](https://www.sbfiresafecouncil.org) will assist in identifying your "community" boundaries and making a risk assessment. Together you'll develop a plan for your first three years' activities. A community must consist of at least eight homes, but many more can be included.

Each year an educational meeting is scheduled, in conjunction with Firewise and/or Santa Barbara City Fire, on topics such as fire behavior, identifying vegetation to be removed, fire extinguisher use,

etc. Annually, your community members estimate the quantity of vegetation they have removed from their properties, the hours they've spent on fire prevention work in their yards, and the dollar cost. The organizer compiles these numbers, sends the yearly application in, and that's it for the year. The risk assessment only needs to be updated every five years.

Each neighbor may discuss the possibility of a premium reduction with their insurance agent. Currently, California Fair Plan, Mercury, State Farm, USAA, and several other companies give discounts to Firewise Community members. For a full list visit [insurance.ca.gov](https://www.insurance.ca.gov), then click on the photo which has the caption, "Being safer from wildfires can help your insurance."

Talks are in progress to bring seven more companies into this program during 2023, but saving money is only one of many Firewise benefits. You'll decrease neighborhood ignition hazards, learn how to harden your own home, and feel more connected to your neighbors. Firewise

USA likes to say that prevention is a lot easier than intervention!

For more information or to start your application, visit [sbfiresafecouncil.org](https://www.sbfiresafecouncil.org) or email [community@SBFireSafeCouncil.org](mailto:community@SBFireSafeCouncil.org).  
—Laurie MacMillan

### Worth Noting

To obtain Firewise recognition:

1. Form a committee that represents at least eight homes in your neighborhood.
2. Conduct a neighborhood risk assessment with Santa Barbara City Fire or Fire Safe Council staff.
3. Create a three-year action plan.
4. Submit an application online (the Santa Barbara Fire Safe Council can help).

**Annually, organize an educational event, and collect residents' information to be submitted on the yearly application.**

## Skofield Park—A Riviera Treasure

One of the things that I enjoy most about researching and writing articles are the unexpected discoveries, like the ones I learned about at Skofield Park. Located at 1819 Las Canoas Road, Skofield Park is nestled high in the foothills of the Riviera, featuring grassy meadows, walking and hiking trails, native trees, huge boulders and unique views of the Santa Ynez Mountains. Skofield Park covers thirty–five acres and offers playing fields, horseshoe pits, picnic areas, and hiking and walking trails. The park's picnic areas may be reserved in advance for group functions or special occasions.

Located in part of the Mission Canyon Creek watershed, its landscape was at least partially formed by ancient debris flows. These huge landslides that occurred thousands of years ago brought



Diana Washburn

large sandstone boulders which floated like corks on top of the mud and water, settling among the folds of the hillsides and in the creek beds.

Skofield Park was originally owned by Ray Skofield, a prominent businessman in Santa Barbara. In the

1930s the park was used as a base camp for Los Rancheros Vistadores (“visiting ranchers”), an exclusive men’s equestrian organization Mr. Skofield cofounded. Los Rancheros Vistadores is an invitation-only social club considered one of the most elite equestrian organizations in the world. Members and guests have included Edward Borein, Thomas M. Storke, Clark Gable, Ronald Reagan, and Walt Disney, with his horse (Minnie Mouse) of course! But that’s another story for another time.

In 1954, Mr. Skofield sold the land to the city for use as a park and he moved his ranch to the more rural Santa Ynez Valley where the 700 members of the Rancheros Vistadores continue to meet today.

Skofield Park is also considered a Shangri-La for bouldering, comparable to Fontainebleau in France. You might ask, as I did, what is bouldering? Well, I learned that bouldering is a term for rock climbing. There are even names for the various boulders such as the Pissoir, Slab, and Cracked boulders, just to mention a few. Boulders are rated for their difficulty level and special characteristics. Competitions are held all over the world. Who knew!

Spring is a wonderful time to visit the park. The creeks are flowing past green meadows and wildflowers are in bloom. You might come across someone bouldering, or an occasional wild turkey—it’s worth a visit. —*Diana Washburn*

Sources: Wikipedia, *The Santa Barbara Independent*.



Diana Washburn