



From: Eva Guerrand-Hermes <evaghermes@mac.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 18, 2024 8:27 AM
To: Das Williams; Darcel Elliott; sbcob; Supervisor Das Williams; Joan Hartmann; Bob Nelson; Steve Lavagnino; laura@lauracapps.com
Cc: Hodges, Daryl - FS, CA; Arnoldi, Ugo; Neels, David; Hartwig, Mark; saludcarbajal@gmail.com
Subject: County Action: Hot Springs Trail

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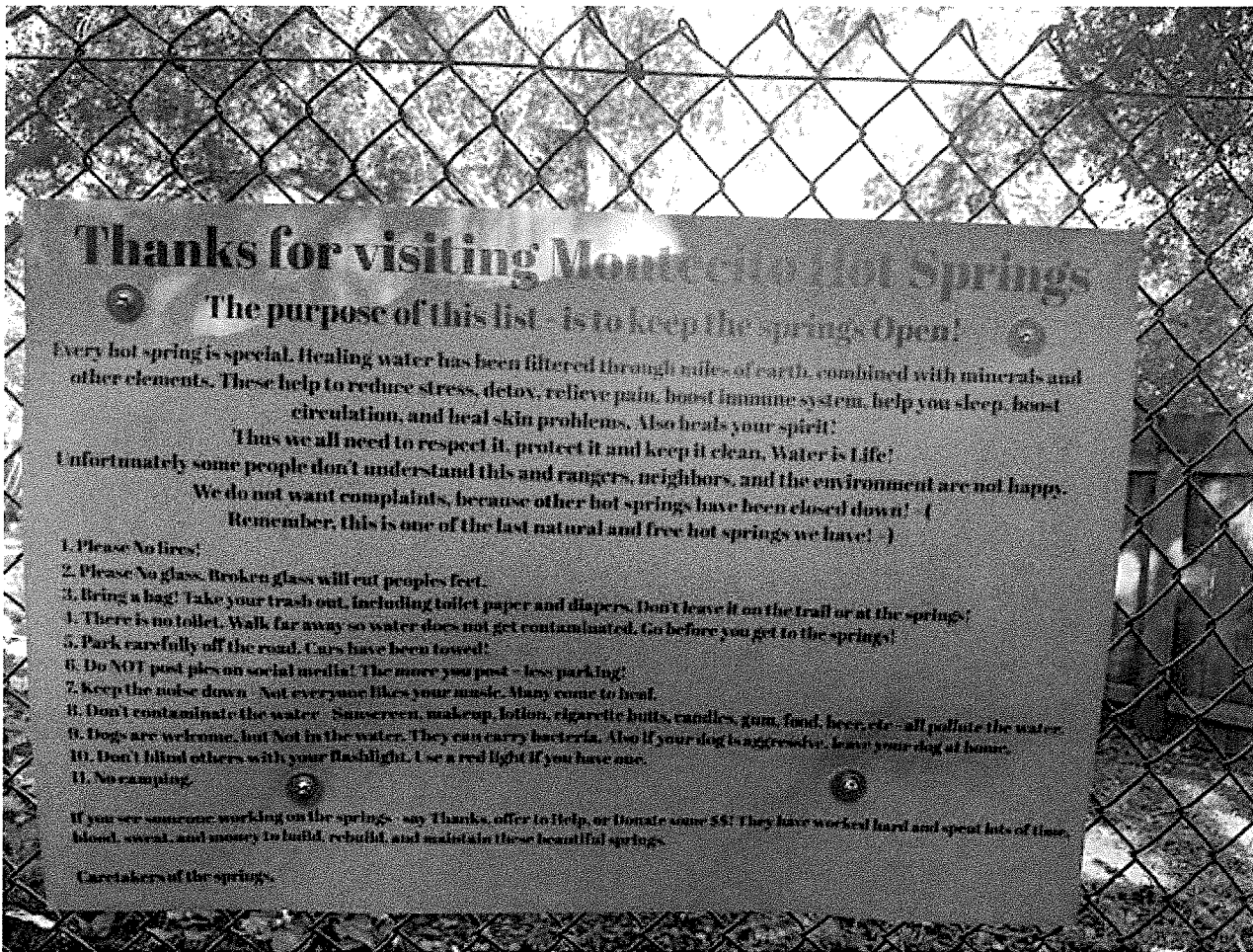
Dear Das,

You were alerted on Saturday by Santa Barbara District Ranger Daryl Hodges of the U.S.F.S. that there is an illegal posting on SB County Park land at the Hot Springs Trailhead by a group presenting themselves as the "Caretakers of the springs."

The group is emboldened enough to ask for cash donations, to, in their own words, "build, rebuild, and maintain" these un-permitted pools, which are illegal stream bed alterations on federal lands.

Beyond misinforming the public about purported health benefits of the pools, the sign is a clear self-indictment of the multitude of unresolved problems related to the illegal bathing pools dug into Hot Springs Creek, that we have been alerting you to for two years now, including:

1. **Fire Danger** to the entire community given the presence of fire rings, campfires, cigarettes and even torches.
2. **Health Risks** to the community due to human waste and bacteria in pools, dogs in pools, trash left both on trail and on resident's private properties.
3. **Environmental damage** and disruption to surrounding habitat due to continual digging in creek bed, human waste, bacteria, dogs, cigarette butts, gum, lotions, insecticides, etc. in the un-permitted pool area.
4. **Threat to community safety** through illegal alcohol and drug use on trail. Neighbors continue to witness aggressive behavior and there have been numerous break-ins and thefts reported.



Das, would you please confirm this sign has been removed by the County?

The establishment of the illegal, un-permitted pools as a landmark destination, in the absence of any law enforcement to the contrary, is exacerbating already strained law enforcement and fire personnel, putting our community of hikers, residents and first responders at risk, and damaging the surrounding habitat and environment.

Montecito Fire Chief David Neels has been alerting us to the grave fire dangers related to the pools. Three weeks ago, Chief Neels was alerted of an active campfire started by an individual camping at the site of the pools. Chief Neels was forced to hike up personally to remove the individual after 24 hours.

Over Memorial Day weekend, five individuals **with lit tiki torches** hiked up the trail. They marched from the trailhead with the flaming tiki torches at 10:30 p.m. through the County Park. Again, firefighters had to hike to the illegal bathing pools to stop the torch-bearers. Montecito Fire called on the Sheriff's Department for backup and protection, but no law enforcement was available. Find below a picture of one of the five tiki torch fuel containers confiscated by the fire department at midnight.

As they do with all other County Parks, the County should simply **enforce the closure of the park after sunset**, something we have been requesting for two years now.

Further, last week I called the Sheriff Communication Center to request more consistent squad car presence on upper Hot Springs on weekend nights. The possession or use of cannabis inside a National Park is prohibited, yet there is a consistent presence at the pools. We encounter intoxicated pool goers near our house and on the lower trails on most weekends, in the evenings into the late night.

Beyond the illegality, the disregard for basic regulations consistently endangers our personal safety and that of our community. This is unacceptable, especially in view of past devastating fire experiences such as the Tea Fire and the Thomas Fire.

I also want to alert you to the graffiti (images below) on the water pipes running along the trail leading to the pools, containing messages as:

"Fuck the System"

"COPS ARE MEAN"

"Rent is theft in a stolen world"

"DEATH to GOD, BANKS, LANDLORDS"

"CAPITALISM = DEATH... REVOLT"

"End Wage Slavery"

This aggressive messaging is compounded by the aggressive language and behavior often demonstrated by individuals accessing pools.

Given the host of issues, we ask that the County implement the following basic support and precautions to support the safety of our community:

A full **Park Ranger** with the ability to issue citations is imperative at the Trailhead to monitor this closing, along with the closing of the gate at sundown. The current ranger, sponsored by residents, has no power to ticket or tow. I am still hopeful that you will follow through on your promise to provide true ranger supervision at the Park entrance following the recently passed County budget.

We ask you to **close the trailhead gate at sundown** at the Hot Springs Trailhead, in line with park closure protocol across the County.

We ask that you support **enforcement through citations and towing** as well as **consistent squad car patrols** on weekends.

The Post fire of Los Angeles, fueled by the build-up of vegetation of the rainy season, has already burned over 15,000 acres the last three days, foreshadowing a dangerous and prolonged wildfires season.

We ask that you take urgent action.

Sincerely,

Eva



