

For Immediate Release:

High School Cross Country Runners create Annadel Trails Project. Kids are demonstrating that everyone can help care for Annadel and not just use it.

Santa Rosa -- August 12, 2016

A coalition of six Sonoma County High Schools and the Empire Runners Club have teamed up with the [Sonoma County Trails Council](#) (SCTC) to provide overdue trail maintenance in Trione-Annadel State Park (Park) and formed the Annadel Trails Project. The volunteer workers are led by the SCTC who operate under the guidance of local California State Park staff.

Although Park users love the experience of getting away from it all, the trails have declined in the past decades and now resemble rock strewn obstacle courses. One coach, concerned about the demise of the trails and tired of seeing his students injured during practice runs, decided to take action. Greg Fogg, Head Coach of the Cross Country/Field & Track at Maria Carrillo High School, reached out to the Executive Director of the Sonoma County Trails Council, Ken Wells. Christy Hirsch, a doctoral student working on her dissertation in organizational leadership, recognized the project as a research opportunity so Greg, Ken and Christy teamed up to organize a plan involving volunteers from six local High School cross country running teams (Montgomery, Cardinal Newman, Maria Carrillo, Santa Rosa, Roseland Prep, and Sonoma Academy) and the Empire Running Club.

According to Neill Fogarty, Supervising Ranger of Trione-Annadel State Park, the Park hosts 12-13,000 people per month in the park of all types - hikers, mountain bikers, runners, equestrians, bird watchers and more. The Park has over 45 miles of official trails. Due to State budget cuts, the Park has had limited ability to maintain the trails, so volunteer organizations like the SCTC have been doing nearly all the trail maintenance. "Volunteers are the glue for the Park," says Neill Fogarty. Currently the SCTC dedicates trail maintenance and construction for several parks in the county and devotes the 3rd Saturday of every month to Annadel. Unfortunately, at this rate it will take decades, if ever, to catch up with all the necessary trail repairs.

"The combination of poorly aligned trails, very erosive soils and years of no maintenance have resulted in an awesome amount of work to keep Annadel's trails useable. I'm excited by this new group of trail users stepping up to help improve the trails. With their youthful energy and hard work, they are setting an example for their peers and doing something really significant to protect the park we all love," explained Ken Wells, ED of the SCTC.

"It's a great project, with an opportunity for the runners to "give back" to the park they value and use quite a bit for training, it also gives all the kids a heightened sense of accountability and contribution to the environment. With the guidance of SCTC Executive Director, Ken Wells, these kids are gaining a real valuable appreciation for their park!" Greg Fogg, Head Coach, Cross Country, Track and Field of Maria Carrillo High School.

Several students stepped up to help with the promotion of the project. Cecilia Avelar and Allie Ahern, recent graduates of MCHS and Joshua Chang, Sophomore at MCHS conceived the name Annadel Trails Project (ATP) and the logo. ATP has special meaning for the kids as ATP also stands for Adenosine Triphosphate, the major energy currency molecule of the cell. Energy is a

focus for distance runners. The kids are bringing energy to the maintenance of these trails. Demonstrating by action, kids are challenging other users to not just use the park, but to give back by clearing ditches and removing weeds and poison oak.

“We hope to spark a larger trend of users committing time, talent and resources to the support this beautiful park that has such convenient access for so many. However, because Trione-Annadel is so well-loved, well-used, and receives limited maintenance, the trails are in deteriorated shape. By pulling together, volunteering and contributing support for trail maintenance we can all help reverse the Park’s degeneration and work toward restoration of this amazing natural resource.” Christy Hirsch, volunteer helping organize the ATP.