



CATALINA ISLAND CONSERVANCY

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Catalina Island Conservancy to Work with Marines to Enhance Sustainability on Roadways

Innovative Readiness Training Project to focus on quantity of surface runoff

Avalon, Calif. – Catalina Island Conservancy is proud to once again partner with the United States Marine Corps' 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing through the Department of Defense Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) program to bring troops to Catalina Island to restore sections of roadway, improving long-term sustainability. Reducing sediment loss, uncontrolled storm water flows and improving accessibility are important for roadways that will endure long into the future.

“Climate change models for Catalina predict the Island will likely experience more variable weather conditions in the future than what we see today. Among other things, this could result in flashy stormflow,” said Conservancy Director of Conservation Operations Laura Minuto. “We want to proactively incorporate best management practices on our landscape to be stewards of the Island and sustain the natural beauty that Catalina possesses.”

Updated practices keep in mind the importance of topsoil and the natural hydrologic characteristics of watersheds, mitigating damage to both the landscape and the road. Environmentally sound modern practices will help ensure better management of water flow than century-old infrastructure that does not always take into account the natural drainage system of the Island.

“A very large benefit of a properly-engineered system would be the improvement of adjacent vegetation health by promoting infiltration and reducing sediment transport,” Minuto added. “The most important thing to consider is sediment loss. With the specific biology of our Mediterranean soil, once it gets disturbed it is difficult for it to come back.”

Restoring roadways for better water management means there is more water available for the plants and animals of the Island. The restoration will also improve the safety of roads during weather events.

“Some roads have been here around a century. We’re restoring them now so that water goes where it’s intended to go so that we can manage it better into the future,” said Conservancy Chief Operating Officer, Tim Kielpinski. “This will improve sustainability on the Island and we are grateful that we found a fantastic partner.”

This project improves the sustainability of the roads which are critically important for safety and access across the island.

“This project is a great benefit to the Conservancy and the Marines. We like to call it a win-win. As a not for profit and without a tax base, the Conservancy must find creative solutions to difficult infrastructure issues on Catalina Island,” said Conservancy President & CEO Tony Budrovich. “We have worked with the Marines on another IRT project and know their work to be exceptional and at the same time allows them to train on mission critical topics key to their future needs.”

Around 45 Marines will spend several weeks restoring sections of Middle Ranch Road and Airport Road on Catalina beginning in April. During this time there will be temporary road closures. The logistical challenge allows Marines, including the project lead of Marine Wing Support Squadron 373, to exercise all of their capabilities.

“We have a mandate: to maintain readiness. This is a great opportunity where we can deploy our people and deploy our equipment to what we consider an expeditionary environment,” said Major Bryan S. Peterson, Operations Officer, MWSS-373, MAG-11, 3rd MAW. “The scope of work is something we could find ourselves doing in a future conflict. This is an opportunity to exercise everything we are supposed to be doing.”

Marines will be stationed at Airport in the Sky with living facilities in the hangar at ACE Clearwater Airfield.

For more information about Catalina Island Conservancy’s conservation programs, visit CatalinaConservancy.org.

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About the Conservancy

Formed in 1972, the Catalina Island Conservancy is one of California's oldest land trusts. Its mission is to be a responsible steward of its lands through a balance of conservation, education and recreation. Through its ongoing efforts, the Conservancy protects the magnificent natural and cultural heritage of Santa Catalina Island, stewarding more than 42,000 acres of land and more than 60 miles of rugged shoreline. It provides an airport and 50 miles of biking and 165 miles of hiking opportunities within its road and trail system. The Conservancy conducts educational outreach through two nature centers, its Wrigley Memorial & Botanic Garden and guided experiences in the Island’s rugged interior. Twenty miles from the mainland, the Island is a treasure trove of historical and archaeological sites. It also contains numerous rare and endangered animals and plants. The Island is home to more than 60 species that are found only on Catalina. For additional information, please visit www.catalinaconservancy.org.