

# MORE MESA PRESERVATION COALITION



## MMPC e-Update

March-April 2015



### [What's Happening About Potential Development On More Mesa?](#)

*As far as we can tell, all is quiet.*

### [Please Join Us!](#)

Over the past 25 years, for MMPC and our predecessors, there has been a cadre of knowledgeable, thorough and professional allies standing with us; a group of wonderful lawyers and legal professionals. We speak of the Environmental Defense

Center (EDC), organized as a nonprofit corporation providing legal counsel to other nonprofit organizations. They are the only such public interest environmental



**environmental**  
DEFENSE CENTER

law firm between Los Angeles and San Francisco. During the 15 years since MMPC's founding, EDC has championed our mission and represented us splendidly in all matters legal and otherwise.

EDC hosts a classic and fun event on the second Friday of most summer months. This local gathering is their famous TGIF party; a great venue to meet large numbers of like-minded folks; "the environmental choir." We are extremely proud to announce that MMPC will be a sponsor of this event in May of this year. Our presence will not only demonstrate our support, but express our heartfelt thanks to EDC for all their years of legal counsel and advice. Please consider supporting EDC by attending this event

**The May TGIF will be on Friday, 8 May from 5:30 to 7:30 at 906 Garden Street in Santa Barbara. The \$15 entry cost includes two drink tickets and hors d'oeuvres. For more [detailed information](#) go to EDC's TGIF page.**

### [You Can Help ...](#)

#### **Ask Us!**

You probably noticed that we do not have an "Ask the President" feature this month. We purposely decided to leave out this section in order to highlight this month's call for help, and also clear up something that is puzzling us.

We wonder why although almost 900 supporters get this update every month, we don't seem to get a proportional number of requests for

number of requests for information. So this month you can help us by asking us questions (preferably hard ones) about ...

- \* Any aspect of our work
- \* Legal protection of MM
- \* Unfamiliar terms
- \* Our award winning website

... or anything else that has been puzzling *you* about More Mesa or MMPC.

Thanks so much

*Valerie Olson*  
*President, MMPC*

***It is the mission of the More Mesa Preservation Coalition to preserve More Mesa, in its entirety, for all time. We've been at it since 2000.***



*Buckeye - Watch for more on butterflies next month!*

**SEE YOU at EDC ON MAY 8TH!**

**This Month on More Mesa: Maybe kite chicks this year?**

The White-tailed Kite, MMPC's signature bird, is a "California Bird Species of Special Concern". It has this designation because the White-tailed Kite is at risk of disappearing completely, and is currently only found in a very few places in California; one prominent area being the Goleta Valley. And within the Goleta Valley, More Mesa is one of the most prolific with regard to kite breeding and nesting. This is because More Mesa provides a bountiful habitat for many of these beautiful raptors.



Photo by Barry Rowan

*A kite parent transfers prey to one of its offspring ... while the second complains loudly about it. (Photo by Barry Rowan)*

A nesting pair of kites requires 150 acres of grassland to produce a clutch of healthy chicks. However More Mesa's 265 acres routinely support more than a single pair. In fact in most "average" rain years, we have the largest number of nesting pairs in the entire Goleta Valley. Generally it is common for us to have two or three nesting pairs, and in one incredible year, we had four nesting pairs! (See [Vieja Kites](#) paper on our web site.) When water is plentiful, the grasses grow, the rodent population has plenty of seeds and the kites then have ample prey to feed their young. In especially prolific years we often have double clutching at one or more nests, and have recorded up to 12 chicks in a given year!

Not even the lowest of these chick counts has been seen for the past three drought-years. For example, last year not a single chick was observed and only one lone pair of kites appeared to be living on More Mesa. However, there is some hope for this year. We have had an exciting sightings report of a pair of kites on the west side of More Mesa living on a nest site, guarding that site and also rearranging its material. We will keep you posted as the "courting season" progresses. To learn more about kites, click on the [Kite paper](#) in the

progresses. To learn more about rices, click on the [rice paper](#) in the "Birds" section of our web site.

## [The Past: T. Wallace More Defends His Land](#)

In the last More Mesa Update we left T. Wallace More in a stagecoach on his way to evict squatters from his Sespe Ranch. Why were the squatters there in the first place? As it turned out a Government review of the More sale (1855) revealed that the original Mexican Land Grant had been forged and that the 25,361 acre property More thought he purchased was actually only 8,861 acres. Legal and procedural wheels began to grind in the hopes that some equity could be achieved with regard to More's purchase. But as soon as the Homestead Act was passed in 1862, squatters moved en masse onto More's property. Their expectation was that the disputed acres would soon be offered under the terms and conditions of the new Homestead legislation.

More tried repeatedly to dislodge the squatters from the land he had labored on and improved for 17 years. In the course of these actions, and as we reported in the last issue, his reputation was severely compromised when various stories surfaced about his attempts to remove the squatters. Some of these were true and some not. These stories even led to More filing a libel suit against the San Francisco Bulletin; one which he technically won. However this case further injured his reputation when the monetary settlement awarded to him was literally a pittance.

After arriving on the stagecoach, T. Wallace set about beginning the legal battle to remove these unlawful users of his land. He had been at Sespe for two weeks when, around midnight, an organized band of masked squatters set his hay barn afire. More rushed out in his nightclothes in an attempt to save his livestock and was greeted with a volley of bullets; fourteen of which, according to the Ventura County coroner, met their mark.

As a result of this brutal and sensational murder, one that shocked the entire state of California, T. Wallace, one of our earliest and most famous Yankee pioneers, was gone!

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