From the Desk of the President

Roger Burford
AFMS President 2023-2024

In trying to decide what to write for this newsletter, I was stumped for a while, then I thought this may be a vehicle to help me get my feet on the ground and find out where AFMS and I stand.

I have reached out to most of the committee chairs and am happy to report that most have agreed to stay on for another year, which I appreciate very much. I still have a few to work on. I would appreciate it very much if the current committee chairs would confirm with me that you agree to stay on by sending me a quick email, so I don’t miss anyone. Please send your response to president@amfed.org or burfordroger21@gmail. We currently need someone to step up to be treasurer for AFMS. This would be someone willing to hold this position for more than a year to keep consistency in that position.

Now for a little information about the stones we have here in Louisiana that didn’t come from somewhere else. Our state mineral is a banded river agate, which originally formed within limestone coming from the states further to the north down the various rivers and creeks and settling onto the sand bars in Mississippi and Louisiana. While they are pretty, they are not native to Louisiana. We also have sandstone and ironstone, which I haven’t seen many rockhounds striving to put in their collections.

Louisiana does have many minerals which did form here. You may know that one is salt. We also have sulfur (element & mineral) and gypsum (mineral), which support numerous industries, but to me do not qualify as “rocks.”

Our state gemstone is a cabochon cut from the shells of Crassostrea virginica oyster, one of dozens of mollusk varieties. Anyone who has eaten oysters on the half shell can now look at the shell and say to yourself, “That would make a great pendant.” The idea to use oyster shells was developed to help the oyster industry here and to figure out another use for the shells that were and still are, in places, used to pave roads.

There is a stone that originally formed here but is no longer mined; the Louisiana Opal. This was mined at the Hidden Fire Mine from 1980 to 1983 when Ben Stevens obtained an exploratory lease on the area where the opal was found. No one would believe an opal could form here, but Ben proved them wrong when the stone was tested and proved to be a true opal. During the years the mine was open, Ben and his wife Lynn traveled around the country in their motor home to attend gem shows and try to sell their precious opal. But it wasn’t easy -- people were leery to buy a stone they had never heard of. They continued to travel to shows until Ben’s passing. Many years have passed, the mine is closed, never to be reopened, and people are finally recognizing this opal’s beauty and increasing rarity.

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My hometown of Ventura is officially named San Buenaventura, which some translate as “City of Good Fortune.” We invite you to seek your good fortune by attending the 2024 CFMS-AFMS Show & Convention being hosted May 24-26 by the Ventura Gem & Mineral Society. To keep tabs on the show and various resources (exhibitor applications, info on local hotels, things to do in and around Ventura, etc.), check in now and then to the official show website: www.2024cfms-afms.com. The website is a work-in-progress and will be continually refreshed with new info, forms, and updates.

As noted last month, in each issue of the AFMS Newsletter leading up to Show Time, we’ll present a different mermaid photo taken in Ventura. The person attending the convention who can correctly identify the specific location of each mermaid will receive a rocky reward at the show banquet. If we have tied scores, the winner will be drawn from a hat. And to keep things fair-and-square, I’ll likely have two prizes—one for locals and one for out-of-towners. That said, here’s my dog Tornjak sharing this month’s Ventura mermaid. Call him on his dog-phone, and he may reveal the location, which he visits every Monday morning and comes home with sandy paws. Photo by Jim Brace-Thompson.
Integrate Social Media into your Public Relations Mix

Jim Brace-Thompson, AFMS Public Relations Chair

Whether promoting your club as a whole or a single event like an annual show, social media is now a vital part of the marketing mix. On October 28, I held a little Zoom seminar entitled “Practicing Public Relations in the Age of New Media.” I invited both old hands and those entirely new at social media so we could all share questions and experiences and learn from one another. We had mostly newbies (like me), but a couple experienced pros (like Lora Hall) shared good insights and tips. Here’s a glimpse into our hour-long get-together.

First up, what is social media? While social media may be considered a new-fangled phenomenon by many in traditional rockhounding clubs, the phrase officially entered the dictionary nearly 20 years ago, in 2004. Here are examples of dictionary definitions:

- “Forms of electronic communications on the Internet through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content.”
- “Electronic means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks.”
- “Websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.”
- “Applications that focus on communication, community-based input, interaction, content-sharing, and collaboration.”

Every one of those definitions includes the word “share,” and all underscore interaction, community, and collaboration. Social media is much more active in comparison to traditional forms of media where info is presented by one person in a rather static way rather than shared, co-created, commented upon, etc. Rather than one person presenting, many people are engaging in a conversation. Thus, social media has features (“liking,” “sharing,” “linking,” “comment fields”) that spread content conversationally throughout a networked community and beyond.

One major ramification? Sharing, as compared to presenting, is a dynamic interaction. If your club wants to pursue social media (and you should), you’ll need someone experienced and dedicated who will always be “on call” to monitor and respond actively, which is a much bigger “ask” than a traditional newsletter or website. Because the need to respond can, at times, require pretty much constant monitoring, Lora Hall noted how her club involves three “moderators” to keep tabs on activity occurring on their Facebook page. Thus, one person need not feel overwhelmed, particularly during times of high activity, like an annual show. But the benefits are definitely worth the necessary attention. How so?

As a personal anecdote, my editor at Rock & Gem magazine posted on Facebook a 3-sentence snippet plus a photo from one of my articles and within 2 days it generated some 6,300 likes, 1,700 shares, and 245 comments. Within 2 days! Try doing that with hardcopy show postcards. Social media apps like Facebook...

- help you quickly communicate and market to a very wide audience pretty much for free;
- help build an audience by raising the visibility of your club and its posted activities as a message spreads not just through your own network but also through other networks linked to individuals in yours;
- enable you to use analytics tools to see how widely you’re reaching, what topics prove hot, and how you’re being perceived.

Counterbalancing these upsides, social media comes with challenges. Not least is the learning curve if you’re an old fogey like me and are new to much of it. That’s why it’s best to convince a young person who has grown up as a “digital native” to take charge of your social media efforts. That’s how things have evolved in my own local club, where 30- and 40-somethings have more-or-less taken lead in our Facebook presence. Other challenges include:

- Offensively negative or “revenge” posts that go viral.
- Constant and vigilant monitoring required, with speed of response essential.
- A time-sink if not managed well (and can become addictive in a not very healthy way).

As an example, consider the person who, in the midst of your annual show, submits a vitriolic post complaining he was ripped off spending $150 for a chunk of plaster billed as an authentic Moroccan trilobite by one of your show vendors. It’s best to address such a post right away, before negative vibes feed on the initial post and start to spread. An immediate apology and an offer to make it right can turn that lemon into lemonade in a very public way. What this example underscores is the need for a separate full-time Social Media Chair position within your club—something which EFMLS recently established at the federation level. (I hope to get copies of the job description and ORs for that new position to share in a future article.)

Social media also requires presenting your content a bit differently. Rather than using dense text-heavy content that might appear in a press release, consider...

- using a more informal, conversational tone;
- surrounding text with “rich” media (e.g., truly arresting images, pictures, videos);
- breaking dense text into snippets, bulleted lists, etc. (keep it brief; keep it visual);
- pairing content with questions to encourage feedback and maximize engagement.

In going with social media, there’s a list of potential platforms as long as my arm. To name just a few: Facebook, TikTok, Reddit, Instagram, Snapchat, Hootsuite, YouTube, Twitter, Discord, Tumblr, LinkedIn, Pinterest, JabbaJabba.

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Okay. I made that last one up. (Or did I?) Which are most relevant for our purposes as rock clubs? From what I’ve seen during the Zoom conversation and in talking with rock clubs hither and yon, the two most commonly embraced are Facebook and its affiliated Instagram, both owned by Meta. Facebook is a free social networking website allowing users (individuals and organizations) to set up a profile then connect with friends, families, and colleagues. Instagram is similar to YouTube in allowing you to share photos and video. One person in my club, for instance, takes brief promotional videos during our show to post as the show is in progress—for instance, sharing brief clips of a silversmith in action or activity at the kids’ booth or a line of people at the welcome booth raffle, visually showing what we offer and people having fun.

As a final word for this month’s column, which has already gone on far too long, I offer the following: Don’t throw out traditional media promotion! Some clubs say there’s no longer a need for newspaper or magazine or similar promotions in the age of online social media, but at our last Ventura club show, one family came from a pretty fair distance because they spotted our show highlighted (for free) in “Upcoming Events” in the print issue of WestWays travel magazine. So long as we live in a world with a diverse range of traditional and “new” media and audiences for both, social media should be just one part of a varied public relations mix attuned to what’s available and working within your own local community.

This foray touches on just a little of what we discussed in our Zoom meeting and just a little of the promises and pitfalls of social media for public relations. I hope to host further Zooms centered on more specific topics. In the meantime, if interested in viewing the hour-long video of the October 28 meeting, email me (braceth@roadrunner.com) and I’ll gladly share it.

Record Retention - What Are We Supposed to Keep? Jennifer Haley, AFMS Historian

The answer is, yes, but with keeping some important things in mind. The federal government has its rules for non-profit organization record retention keeping. However, they also want you to know that each state will have its own non-profit rules about what documents you need to keep.

Each of our federations are composed of multiple states. Each federation when it was founded was only required to register as a non-profit with only one of those states. When it comes to record keeping for our federations, each federation will need to contact the state they registered with to know what documents to keep permanently, and what documents need only be kept for a certain number of years.

This is also true for our societies. It’s very easy to find this information on the internet now, and the states have now learned to make this information easy to understand.

AFMS Scholarship Foundation Sandie Fender, Foundation President

Are you working on your Honorees and student recipients? Remember that the AFMS show is in May of 2024. I know this is a busy time of year with many federations having changes in their officers. Please do not let our scholarship awards slip through the cracks.

Each federation receives one Honoree. That honoree then chooses the university or college for the student recipients.

I am asking for the email and snail mail addresses of the person in charge of the Scholarship for each federation. Sometimes it changes, and I can’t find an address for these people.

Do you know where the original copy of your Articles of Incorporation papers is for your society or federation? Some organizations keep these in a safety deposit box that is fireproof, and for the reason they’ll always know where it is. This is a good idea, but you need to remember who has the key for the box. Banks usually charge a hefty fee to bring a locksmith in. I was in a club many years ago that didn’t know where the key was, and the cost was $250 to get into the safety deposit box and rekey it.

Many of us store items for our federation or society. Sometimes these items get passed on to someone else to store. It’s always a good idea for a society and federation to keep an inventory list of where everything is.

I like the idea of there being manuals for officers and chairmen, whether it’s for a club or a federation. Over the years (for whatever reason) these can get lost. I also think it’s a good idea if someone on the executive committee has a duplicate copy as a backup. Everyone appreciates knowing what they are supposed to do and when; then they can enjoy their year as they do their annual work, and members can enjoy their club and federation more.

Wishing you all a wonderful year, and a wonderful time working together!
Ballet slippers, moon boots, fishing waders, tennis shoes, rain galoshes, baseball cleats ... golfing, basketball, and so many more activities have their own associated footwear. In other words, special footwear for special purposes. There is footwear for the stage, for walking on the moon with its dust and low gravity; footwear for wading in deep water and playing on a tennis court. There is no unique style of rock collecting shoe.

Think, if you will, of the rock, mineral, and fossil hobby specimen collecting activity. One might walk root-encumbered trails, cross the occasional stream, navigate a talus slope, climb some rocks, traverse far reaching sand dunes, shuffle through snow covered ground, ford muddy areas, or walk steaming hot sand.

Participating in our collecting activity requires being prepared for walking in a great many different conditions. The collector needs to be prepared for just about anything – with footwear to match those conditions.

While some mines and quarries have specific footwear requirements necessitating ANSI Code steel-toed shoes, most collecting localities leave footwear decisions up to the individual collector. In situations where the individual collectors choose their own footwear, there are a few recommended criteria for consideration such as:

- Use comfortable shoes
- Use shoes with suitable ankle support
- Select shoe soles with suitable traction
- Use shoes with the necessary arch support
- Make sure the footwear is durable

Consider the conditions to be encountered when collecting:

- Will there be steep slopes necessitating superior ankle support?
- Will water-proof or water-repellent footwear be needed?
- Will ground level collecting conditions be very hot, or cold?
- Will the collecting site embankments be very loose or firm material?
- Will rain be expected?
- Might a spare pair of boots be advisable to bring with one?

If a general, one-boot-for-all-conditions footwear is needed, a generic work boot may be suitable. Generally speaking, one should consider avoiding “flip-flops,” sandals, open-toed shoes, and shoes with decorations (such as rhinestones), as the decorations are likely to be scuffed off the shoe. Shoes that do not protect the foot are inadvisable.

Feet do us a great service — they deserve to be protected from harm.

Sometimes it can be difficult to find suitable footwear for small children. Their small feet can be injured rather easily. Specialty shoe stores sometimes carry durable boots for small children. When in doubt, small children should not be brought to sites where conditions can be problematic in assuring their safety.

The best advice is to use forethought and wisdom when selecting suitable footwear for collecting. Well-protected feet and boots with sole can serve one for a lifetime of enjoyable collecting.

Uniform Rules 9th Edition — New and Improved!

Our 2023 Uniform Rules Committee has just completed the update to the Rules for 2023, as per the discussion held at the annual meeting in Billings, Montana. I have promised these files to David Wayment (Publications Chair) and expect that he will send them on to the AFMS Webmaster for publication on the AFMS website. Supplemental information such as the Mineral Classification List, the Lapidary Material Names List, the Fossil List, and the Judging Worksheets have also been updated and included. I also provided David and the AFMS webmaster with a proposed listing format for the website. These rules will go into effect on January 1, 2024.

Judging Worksheets have also been updated and will be found at the same location.

Historically, the Rules grew and grew over more than 40 years, but little was ever revisited. The revisions of 2023 are the result of examining the complete text and editing it to fit the needs of today’s exhibitors and judges. The decision to present information in individual Division form was in response to the cry that the Rules were too big, and too intimidating to read.

Exhibitors still need to carefully read all sections pertaining to entering their exhibits in shows. Quality exhibits draw the attention of visitors, sparking interest in our hobby. It is hoped the simplification of the Rules will encourage more to try their hand at exhibiting in shows, and perhaps for some, to learn how to judge those exhibits.

Next on the list of items to bring into this century are updates to “Guidelines for Exhibitors” and “Guidelines for Judges.” The goal is to post these documents on the AFMS website sometime in 2024. The original works are excellent guides and should be read by all interested parties.

From the Desk of the President

Our state fossil -- a petrified palm of the genus *Palmoxylon* -- did not produce a true “wood” composed of cellulose and lignin. Instead, it was a plant that resembled a modern palm tree with a trunk made up of parenchyma, a fibrous support material that surrounded hollow tubes of the plant’s vascular structure known as xylem and phloem. These tubes transported water, nutrients, wastes, and other materials throughout the plant. It is mostly found in the western part of the state, about 100 miles from the current coastline. Petrified palm can be used to make some very pretty cabochons and comes in several colors. You can also find petrified wood in rivers and streams all over the state.

I hope this information helps you understand why those of us from Louisiana are rock starved and how proud I am that you have given me the opportunity to act as your president.
2023 AFMS Rockhound of the Year Recipients

Judi Allison, AFMS RoY Chair

Here are the AROY honorees submitted for the December issue of the AFMS Newsletter. What a fabulous collection of rockhounds! Do remember to send us photos of the honorees if you have them!

(Photograph at left is Judi Allison, our sweet AFMS RoY Chair.)

Eastern Federation
The Central Pennsylvania Rock and Mineral Club honors Renee Kowalchik as its 2023 Rockbuster. Renee started 2023 as a new member of CPRMC and quickly joined the ranks as editor of our club newsletter, The Rockbuster. She has attended most field trips throughout the year, including one to the Gap Nickel Mine where it poured rain most of the day. She stayed strong and kept rockhounding until the soaking wet end. Renee, always finding something awesome, has been in multiple Dirtman Reports. Being on most field trips she is able to write about them in The Rockbuster, and when not on a club trip, has written about her own rockhounding trips. A true rockhound, Renee enjoys collecting all types of specimens, whether rock, fossil or mineral! Thank you Renee for sharing your enthusiasm. Submitted by Andrey Eppig, CPRMC President

Northwest Federation
Hatrock Gem and Mineral Society recognizes Karli Cook as their American Federation Rockhound of the Year. Karli has been working hard to create and maintain a Junior program and has given of herself and donated much time and effort to this endeavor. When no one else was available, she helped another member set up and conduct a meeting involving wire wrapping rings. Karli even donated some material for the activity. She tirelessly volunteered during the setup and running of our show. She stepped in and represented our club as Director at the Annual meeting when our director was unable to attend. Karli is a very willing and gracious member of the club, giving of herself to others and acknowledging others’ input and value. Thanks, Karli, for all you do! Submitted by Executive Committee

California Federation
Calaveras Gem & Mineral Society is honored to have Shelley Bierdsmen selected as Rockhound of the Year for 2023. Shelley grew up in Dixon, CA and currently lives in Mokelumne Hill with her husband Bill and children, Ricky and Bo. While taking care of Bill’s mother, his brother offered Shelley and family a two week respite care. Bill had spent time with his dad in the Nevada desert exploring and enjoying the desert. Bill & Shelley decided that would be a great way to get away with their children. They purchased some rockhounding books and took off exploring. This was the beginning of her adventure into rockhounding and all the things that can be done with the rocks she was finding. Shelley & Bill attended a Calaveras Gem & Mineral tailgate and then attended their first club meeting, which happened to be the famous Thanksgiving pot-luck. She was hooked. She has become an integral part of the fabric of our club. She and Bill are shop stewards and have expanded shop hours and the number of days the shop is open. She is the Queen of the kid’s section for our annual show, helping another member set up and conduct a meeting involving wire wrapping rings. . Karli even donated some material for the activity. She tirelessly volunteered during the setup and running of our show. She stepped in and represented our club as Director at the Annual meeting when our director was unable to attend. Karli is a very willing and gracious member of the club, giving of herself to others and acknowledging others’ input and value. Thanks, Karli, for all you do! Submitted by Executive Committee

Jeff Dengrove has been an outstanding and generous member of Del Air Rockhounds Club, Inc since 2007. He has been our field trip chair the entire time and has always been our Vice President since 2018. An avid field collector, Jeff has traveled all over the western states and many other areas of the county as well as several international destinations looking for unique rocks and specimens. He always brings back some rocks for the club and is our go to guy to tumble and provide the set-up, the running and the tear down of the event, and this is true of past years as well. He often attends club work parties, coming early and working hard. He has led club programs, notably how to present a showcase and the useful tools and tricks that he has discovered over the years. He has led club Field Trips and held club Chairmanship positions. The current Board of the AVGMC proudly submits Jeff Whitck for the CFMS Honor of Rockhound of the Year for the continuous and dedicated support he has given to the Antelope Valley Gem and Mineral Club. Submitted by: Jim Biltz, Vice President

For well over a decade, Antelope Valley Gem & Mineral Society member Steve Whittck’s contributions to our club have been substantial and far reaching. He is our club’s Master Cabochon Maker as attested to by all the awards his showcases have won in competition, including both CFMS and AFMS Shows. During his membership he has taught dozens and dozens of fellow members how to use lapidary equipment, especially the Genies, and that includes me. When it comes to field trips, he always brings back some rocks, which he donates to the club; a five gallon bucket of Kokoweevee cave onyx here, a five gallon bucket of San Simeon Creek Agate Agate there. He always seems to bring something interesting to our General Meetings which he shares with other members. Once he brought in a sea shell he had submerged in CLR, a cleaning fluid, which dissolved all the calcium and left all shell artifacts, mother of pearl. More than once he has come to a meeting with “some spare cabochons” he had made to be offered as door prizes that evening. At all three of our club’s main events, The Poppy Festival, The Antelope Valley Gem & Mineral Show, and then The Antelope Valley Gem & Mineral Show, Steve is always present and busy with the set-up, the running and the tear down of the event, and this is true of past years as well. He often attends club work parties, coming early and working hard. He has led club programs, notably how to present a showcase and the useful tools and tricks that he has discovered over the years. He has led club Field Trips and held club Chairmanship positions. The current Board of the AVGMC proudly submits Steve Whitck for the CFMS Honor of Rockhound of the Year for the continuous and dedicated support he has given to the Antelope Valley Gem and Mineral Club. Submitted by: Jim Biltz, Vice President

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Venturing to Ventura — The Channel Islands & Mermaids — Part 3 of more to come!

Cheryl Neary, AFMS Past President

The Channel Islands

Remember the Chumash and the tomol from Parts 1 and 2? If you’ve just joined this venture, the Chumash are one of the native tribes who settled around Ventura. Their transportation was by tomol, a type of boat this coastal tribe used for crossing to the Channel Islands, where they would hunt and fish. Their trip would have taken at least a day.

The tomol was central to Chumash heritage. In 1976, a contemporary group built the first tomol in almost 150 years, based on historical accounts of tomol construction. The Helek - meaning Peregrine Falcon - was paddled from San Miguel to Santa Rosa to Santa Cruz. In 1996, a 26-foot long tomol named Elye’wun (pronounced “El-E-ah-woon”), was built and made an historic crossing from the mainland to Santa Cruz. Elye’wun is the Chumash word for Swordfish. (See https://www.nps.gov/chis/learn/historyculture/nativeinhabitants.htm)

The Channel Islands are located across the Santa Barbara Channel, approximately eighteen miles west of California. Of the eight distinct islands, five of them form Channel Islands National Park. Each of the five islands — Anacapa, Santa Cruz, Santa Rosa, San Miguel, and Santa Barbara — have unique stories to be shared, along with their ocean environment and marine life that ranges from microscopic plankton to the largest animal to live on Earth - the blue whale. San Nicolas and San Clemente are two more of the Channel Islands and are owned by the U.S. Navy. Santa Catalina Island is largely run by the Island Conservancy.

Congress created Channel Islands National Park in 1980. The purpose was to establish a long-term ecological monitoring program, preserve these resources, and provide for your enjoyment. The archeological and cultural resources of the area span a period of more than 13,000 years of human habitation.

The Channel Islands are biologically diverse with nearly 2,000 plant and animal species. Like the volcanic archipelago Galápagos Islands of Ecuador, South America, the Channel Islands’ isolation has allowed evolutionary processes that changed the genetic material of the population. Over time, altered genes, traits and new species have been the results. There are 145 species of flora and fauna that exist only at the Channel Islands. Each island’s isolation has allowed evolution to proceed independently. Consequently, each island offers unique subspecies that are not typically found on the mainland.

If you remember, Charles Darwin visited the Galápagos in 1835, and it was from his observation of the Galápagos’ species that he later developed his theory of evolution and published On the Origin of Species. Darwin and a scientific contemporary, Alfred Russel Wallace, proposed that evolution occurs because of a phenomenon called natural selection.

The Channel Islands host 20 endemic animals, including aquatic, terrestrial and birds. (See https://cirweb.org/native-animals). Two animals found only on the Channel Islands are the Channel Island Fox and Island Scrub Jay. The Channel Island Fox is found on six of the eight channel islands, with each island having a separate subspecies. Although they have descended from the mainland gray fox, the island fox is one-third smaller than its mainland ancestor and is the largest native mammal on the Channel Islands. At 12 to 13 inches in height and 4 to 5 pounds, the island fox is about the size of a house cat, with a lifespan up to 15 years.

It is believed that the island fox arrived on the Channel Islands through rafting during the last ice age or that humans brought the gray foxes over from the mainland, and they evolved into the smaller species. The Chumash Indians, who are native to the Channel Islands, considered the island fox to be sacred.

The island scrub-jay is found only on Santa Cruz Island. The island scrub-jay is larger, darker blue in color, and has a distinctive call compared to the California scrub-jay. It is believed that this species diverged from the wide-spread California scrub-jay nearly 150,000 years ago. Island scrub-jays are monogamous and may stay with a mate for their entire lives.
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There are two types of transportation available to visit the islands - via water or air. Air transportation starts at approximately $1,200.00 per person – so, many of us attending the convention will not be flying the friendly skies to the Channel Islands! Water transportation is available from Ventura or Oxnard via Island Packers.

The travel time to the various islands is as follows:
- Anacapa - 1 hour
- Santa Cruz - 1-1.5 hours
- Santa Barbara - 3 hours
- Santa Rosa - 3 hours
- San Miguel - 4 hours

At this point, I am considering venturing to the largest and most visited of the five islands, since the weather is usually pleasant with highs in the 60s and lows in the 50s, and there is a more frequent ferry schedule. The ferry has both indoor and outdoor seating and bathrooms. Santa Cruz offers a topographic variety of beaches, mountains, canyons, and one-of-a-kind wildlife. It has two landing areas: Scorpion Anchorage, which according to what I read has been closed since 2019 and Prisoner’s Harbor, located in the northern part of the island.

The island of Santa Cruz is in Santa Barbara County and lies 20 miles west of Ventura. At approximately 24 miles long and up to six miles wide, Santa Cruz is the largest island in California. It reminds me of the island I reside on in New York, as far as size is concerned. Long Island is about 120 miles long and 23 miles wide and includes Kings (Brooklyn), Queens, Nassau, and Suffolk Counties. Long Island is the largest island in the contiguous United States.

Wouldn’t you like to venture to the island to see Diablo Peak, the tallest peak on the Channel Islands at a height of 2,450.00 feet? Or visit one of the largest sea caves in the world at Painted Cave? Plus, this island has the greatest number of flora and fauna of all the islands and is the only place the scrub-jay is found.

I will need to plan when I will be arriving - pending if there is a Uniform Rules for Competitive Display judges training class that fits around this excursion - and book my seat on a boat!

The last I checked pricing is as follows:

**Santa Cruz Island Day Trip Fares**

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<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Round Trip Day Trip Fare</th>
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<tr>
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<td>13-54 Years</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Under 3 Years</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**The Mermaids**

Could it be that one of the rare species from the Channel Islands swam back to the mainland and landed in Ventura? Is this species memorialized in the statues at Soter Point in Ventura Harbor? (Hint, hint!)

The species I am referring to are the mermaids!

Soter Point is named after retired businessman Andy Soter who, along with his friend and community activist Sam Povar, convinced the City of Ventura to let them renovate and beautify the city and memorialize their loved ones - Andy’s daughter Andrea and Sam’s wife Oriana.

The mermaids were a gift from Alec and Tatjana Benke, who emigrated from Kazakhstan to California. The flute-playing mermaid was placed in 2010 at Soter Point and later joined by the cello-playing mermaid in 2017. Benke fell in love with the mermaids and purchased them in 2005. They had been placed under a tarp and, with his wife encouraging him to do something with them, he donated them and built the pedestals on which they sit. The flute-playing mermaid’s plaque reads “From Russia with Love.” These iconic landmarks were indeed proof of the cooperative effort to beautify a community through the efforts of private citizens working with public agencies of the Ventura City Council and the Coastal Commission.


[Editor’s note: This is a visual treat! Take a look.]

**What is a mermaid you ask?**

- It is a mythical sea creature often described as having the upper torso of a woman and the tail of a fish. Stories of mermaids have existed for thousands of years in numerous coastal to desert cultures. The English word “mermaid” is from the Old English word “mere” for the sea and “maid” - a young woman or girl.

- In different cultures the mermaid is symbolic of life and fertility or can be an omen for storms, disasters, and luring sailors to their deaths. The mermaid is viewed in some cultures as either a beautiful, seductive maiden or a monstrous sea creature.

- Archeologists have found 5000-year-old and older accounts of Oannes, a male fish-god, in Mesopotamia. An early legend appeared in Syria around 1000 BC, as discovered by archaeologists who found figures of the goddess Atargatis on ancient temples, statues, and coins. The legend goes that Atargatis dove into a lake to become a fish, but the gods would not allow her to give up her great beauty, so she became a mermaid – half beautiful woman and half fish.

- Mermaids often appear as figureheads on the bows of ships. Many sailors believed that mermaids appeared the sea, ensuring good weather and safe travels back home.

- It is a theory that the legends of the mermaid were from sailors away at sea for long lengths of time mistaking manatees as a woman!

- It is noted that Olaus Magnus, an early mapmaker, used sea monsters (including mermaids) to signify dangerous waters of the oceans - where shipwrecks were frequent.

- Today, mermaids have evolved into symbols of ocean conservation, marine species conservation and the sustainable care of the ocean’s ecology.

**References**

[https://www.rmg.co.uk/stories/topics/what-mermaid#:~:text=One%20of%20the%20earliest%20mermaid,top%20half%20of%20human%20form.](https://www.rmg.co.uk/stories/topics/what-mermaid#:~:text=One%20of%20the%20earliest%20mermaid,top%20half%20of%20human%20form.)

[https://mermaidsofearth.com/on-the-origin-of-mermaids/](https://mermaidsofearth.com/on-the-origin-of-mermaids/)
Quick Tips for Editors
Linda Jaeger, AFMS Editor

The AFMS Bulletin Editors Advisory Committee is composed of the seven regional BEACs plus two members at large. Each regional BEAC runs the Bulletin Editors Contest for their federation, then sends their top three winners from each category to the AFMS Contest.

Do you know YOUR Regional BEAC? Here they are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regional Federation</th>
<th>BEAC</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</table>

Your regional BEAC will have the revised guidelines and score sheets that are required for the 2024 contest. All the same information will be on the AFMS website by the time you read this!

Now — Let’s Write Some Sparkle!
(excerpted from my “Quick Tips” article in the AFMS Newsletter, January 2010)

There is really no formula for writing great articles, but when we let our personalities shine through our writing, we get readable articles that will sparkle. Here are some suggestions for adding pizzazz.


2. Vary the length of your sentences, making some short and some compound. Ask a question to introduce a topic.

3. Keep paragraphs fairly short. Reading is easier on the eyes if there is a nice amount of “white space” within and around an article.

4. Make your reader laugh by using humor or irony. It’s okay to poke some fun at yourself!

5. Use the “active voice” by turning “being verbs” into “doing verbs.” Instead of writing, “Metamorphic rocks were formed from the pressure of our hands on colored pieces of playdough,” write: “We ‘made’ metamorphic rocks by pressing colored pieces of playdough into a ‘rock’ with our hands.”

6. Write as if you were talking to a friend about the subject. This makes your article “friendly” and easier to read.

7. Use positives instead of negatives. Instead of saying I did not remember, say I forgot. Many times, the positive is shorter and easier to understand than the negative.

8. Be specific. This gives your reader a “mind” picture of what you said.

9. Leave out repetitions of the same idea and unnecessary words (i.e.: in fact, in other words). A good sentence will get your idea across to the reader in one try. Leaving out unnecessary words keeps the reader from having to hunt for the idea.

10. Use a short, attention-getting title. This grabs the reader’s attention by making him curious about your subject. You can start with the title or come up with it after you have written your article.

References:


(Clip art above from Discovery Channel School Image Gallery. ©2003, permission to use for educational, not for sale publications granted.)
Hi, I am Walt Beneze, and I am privileged to be the AFMS show consultant again for the year 2023.

As the show consultant, I can help by providing you with the necessary meetings and events list during your show. More importantly, I am a clearing ground for all upcoming Federation Convention dates. Since the AFMS officers come from all the Federations and are expected to be at the AFMS meeting, avoiding any conflicting dates with the AFMS convention is very important.

Please keep me informed as soon as you know the date and location of your next convention so it can be published in the AFMS newsletter. Thank you.

Editor’s Note: See updates below for Eastern Federation, 2025, for Midwest Federation, 2024, 2025, & 2026, and for Rocky Mountain Federation 2025.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>California Federation</th>
<th>Eastern Federation</th>
<th>Midwest Federation</th>
<th>Northwest Federation</th>
<th>Rocky Mountain Federation</th>
<th>South Central Federation</th>
<th>Southeast Federation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2024 AFMS/CFMS</td>
<td>Hickory, NC</td>
<td>East Peoria, IL</td>
<td>Hermiston, OR</td>
<td>Oklahoma City, OK</td>
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<td>Ventura, CA May 24-26</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>August 24-25</td>
<td>May 10 - 12</td>
<td>Oct. 25 - 27</td>
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<td>2025 AFMS/EFMLS</td>
<td>Lincoln, NE</td>
<td>Grand Junction, CO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hickory, NC 3/2025</td>
<td>April 5-6</td>
<td>Sept. 19-21</td>
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<td>2026 St. Charles, IL</td>
<td>May 23-24</td>
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Purpose of the AFMS:
To promote popular interest and education in the various Earth Sciences, and in particular the subjects of Geology, Mineralogy, Paleontology, Lapidary and related subjects, and to sponsor and provide ways to coordinate the work and efforts of all interested persons and groups; to sponsor and encourage the formation and international development of Societies and Regional Federations and thereby to strive toward greater international good will and fellowship.

The AFMS Newsletter is normally published monthly except January, July and August by the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies.

Each Regional Federation Club is entitled to receive three (3) copies of the AFMS Newsletter. These are usually sent to the President, Federation Director and Editor.

Subscription information, distribution questions and address changes should be sent to the AFMS Central Office. Subscriptions are $5.00 per year. Checks should be made payable to “AFMS” and sent to:

Cheryl Neary
AFMS Central Office
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Patchogue, NY 11772-1008
516-449-5341 <centraloffice.afms@ gmail.com>

Content: Letters, Editorial Comments, Submissions
Any questions or other communication concerning the content or format of the newsletter should be sent to the Editor:

Linda Jaeger
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<AFMSeditor@gmail.com>

Deadline: 5th of the month preceding publication
Material in this Newsletter may duplicated for non-commercial purposes provided credit is given this publication and the author. For commercial use, the individual author(s) must be contacted for approval.

Reminder — No AFMS Newsletter in January.
Deadline for February is January 5, 2024!
AFMS Land Use Policy

1. Adherence to the AFMS Code of Ethics assures compliance with most statutes and regulations governing collecting on public lands and encourages respect for private property rights and the environment. Clubs are urged to read the AFMS Code of Ethics at least one meeting every year, to publish the Code frequently in the club newsletter, and to compel compliance on club field trips.

2. Individuals and clubs are urged to write their elected representatives and land use management agency supervisors regarding issues of rule making, legislation and enforcement affecting field collecting of minerals and fossils.

3. Individuals and clubs are urged to join and support activities of the American Lands Access Association (ALAA), a sister organization with responsibility for advancing the interests of earth science amateurs with legislatures and land use management agencies.

4. The AFMS will receive a report from ALAA at its annual meeting.

5. The AFMS endorses the principle of multiple use of public lands as a guarantee of continuing recreational opportunities.

6. Wilderness and monument designations are inconsistent with the principle of multiple use. In view of the vast amount of public land already designated as wilderness and monuments, future such designations should be minimal, taking into account the increased demand for recreational opportunities, including rockhounding, created by a growing population.

7. In furtherance of the principle of multiple use, the AFMS believes that laws, regulations and rules established by relevant governmental authorities should be designed to allow freest possible access to all public lands, coupled with minimal restrictions on the recreational collection of minerals, fossils, gemstone materials and other naturally occurring materials.

8. A right to collect minerals and fossils on public lands should be protected by statute.

9. The AFMS urges its members to work with any or all government authorities to achieve a good working relationship in order to improve the public image of recreational collectors.

AFMS Code of Ethics

I will respect both private and public property and will do no collecting on privately owned land without the owner’s permission.

I will keep informed on all laws, regulations or rules governing collecting on public lands and will observe them.

I will, to the best of my ability, ascertain the boundary lines of property on which I plan to collect.

I will use no firearms or blasting material in collecting areas.

I will cause no willful damage to property of any kind—fences, signs, buildings.

I will leave all gates as found.

I will build fires in designated or safe places only and will be certain they are completely extinguished before leaving the area.

I will discard no burning material—matches, cigarettes, etc.

I will fill all excavation holes, which may be dangerous to livestock.

I will not contaminate wells, creeks or other water supply.

I will cause no willful damage to collecting material and will take home only what I can reasonably use.

I will practice conservation and undertake to utilize fully and well the materials I have collected and will recycle my surplus for the pleasure and benefit of others.

I will support the rockhound project H.E.L.P. (Help Eliminate Litter Please) and will leave all collecting areas devoid of litter, regardless of how found.

I will cooperate with field trip leaders and those in designated authority in all collecting areas.

I will report to my club or Federation officers, Bureau of Land Management, or other authorities, any deposit of petrified wood or other materials on public lands which should be protected for the enjoyment of future generations for public educational and scientific purposes.

I will appreciate and protect our heritage of natural resources.

I will observe the “Golden Rule,” will use “Good Outdoor Manners” and will at all times conduct myself in a manner which will add to the stature and public image of rockhounds everywhere.

Stardust Minerals

Terrell William Proctor, J.D.
1st Place AFMS Adult Poetry 2013
From The Backbender’s Gazette, 9/2012

Want to see minerals from outer space?
Go to your mirror—look at your face.
The Universe when created, was just gas,
billions of years, in time would then pass.
Slowly gases, did accumulate.
Gaseous clouds, did reformulate.
From the gases, elements arose.
Elements today, on charts in rows.
Elements attracted one another,
in large masses, they came together.
Forming huge galaxies of the stars,
from which came the Sun, Earth and Mars.
Today as you go out, on a dig
just keep one thing under your wig.
Stardust is in everything you see
Quartz, gold, and silver....and you and me.

HUBBLE Bright Shining Lizard Star, From www.NASA.gov
AFMS Committees: 2023-2024

Here is the list of Committee Chairs for 2023-2024. You can contact these people if you need information, have questions, or want to share ideas with them. Please note that the @ sign in the email address has been replaced by the word "at" to foil bots that collect email addresses.

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Parliamentarian
Evan Day
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Cheryl Neary, Vice President
Mary Bateman, Secretary
Barbara Ringhiser, Treasurer