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## News From California Geographic Alliance

Monday, September 14, 2009 8:22:35 AM

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## Geographic Connection

### News of the California Geographic Alliance

September, 2009 - Vol 1, Issue 10

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**Reminder!!**

Now is the time to register your school for the [National Geographic Bee](#)!

Registrations are

**due by October 15th.** Find the instructions for registering your school [here](#).

**Join Us Online!**

Welcome to all of our new followers this month!

Become a Fan on our new [Facebook Page](#). We'll be posting links and sharing ideas throughout each month. Don't miss out on the latest news.

## Director's Message

**California Burning**

Late Night host Johnny Carson once quipped that things in Southern California were just fine because "mudslides are putting out the fires." Carson was not only funny, but he understood physical geography.

Six mountain ranges ring the City of Angels: Santa Monica, Santa Susana, Tehachapi, San Gabriel, San Bernardino, and Santa Ana. To these add the lesser Simi, Chino, San Joaquin, and Palos Verdes Hills. They collectively erupt from the coastal plain that gently slopes to the Pacific. The mountains provide diverse habitat for wildlife, melt coastal fog, trap smog, and are favored home sites of both rich and poor.

The dense chaparral and pine blanketing these hills burns more frequently than any other biome. The famed Mediterranean climate covers only two percent of the world's land surface, on our west coast, in Chile and Argentina, Southern Africa, parts of Australia, and the coastal areas surrounding the Mediterranean Sea.

Every 20 to 50 years, depending on the weather and site (slope, aspect, and soil), maturing chaparral grows so dense that even in wet years, water stress triggers a release of plant oils that increase susceptibility to fire. Most often the arid Santa Ana winds, lightning, sparks from rockfall, human mistakes or outright arson ignites the blaze.

The smoldering Station Fire is the now largest in Los Angeles County history, and as Carson correctly predicts, primes the denuded hills for rainy season mudslides. It remains



a cultural conundrum that some of our most valuable SoCal real estate is also the most prone to natural disaster.

*Photo: The Station fire near Big Tujunga Canyon Road. (Luis Sinco / Los Angeles Times)*

*Stephen*  
Dr. Stephen Cunha

Still More Back to School Tips

**TC Lynn Jones** tells us about one of her favorite early-in-the-year activities:

I like this icebreaker during the first week of school. Using the now-famous and happy video of [Matt dancing his way through the world](#), 8th graders form teams to jot down as many names of the places Matt visits as they can.

Students watch the video first, without an assignment. Students then form teams and devise a strategy for collecting names (because they appear and disappear quickly). Show the video again. Usually students will ask for one more round to complete their lists.

Next, students in pairs choose which places they'd like to find and research. Using atlases, they locate the site, write it on a sticky, and place it on a large world map (pull-down or bulletin board). Next they use internet sites, like the [CIA World Factbook](#), to flesh out some interesting information about the place to share with the whole group.

Possible discussions that emerge from this task are, why did Matt go there?, why did you choose to research that place?, make generalizations about where Matt went, are there regions Matt avoided?, is there a pattern to his travels?, do you like the song?

For more info on Matt's project: <http://www.wherethehellismatt.com/>

Is [YouTube](#) blocked at your site? It is still possible to show YouTube videos in your classroom. You will need [RealPlayer](#) on both your home and school computers. At home, download the most current version of [Real Player](#) (you just need the free version). Once it is installed on your computer a button to download videos will appear when you watch them in YouTube. Download the video and save it to a jump drive or memory stick. You can now take it to school and play it on your computer there. Alternately, you could download the video at home, then run the video through a conversion service such as [Zamzar](#) to save it as a .wmv file so the video can be played through [Windows Media Player](#).

### Protecting Our Parks



The [California State Parks Foundation](#) is closely monitoring the state budget situation and actively pursuing avenues to help keep ALL of our parks open.

The September 11, 2009 update on their website reports that [SB 679](#) is now on it's way to the Governor's desk. The bill contains provisions that mandate park lands be used ONLY for park purposes.

Also, even though there is no official list of parks slated for closure, there are ample opportunities for Californian's to [take action](#) to let legislators know the importance of our parks.

### Exploring Maps



*This tip comes to us from **Regional Coordinator Roz Zisch**.*

This is an assignment I used in middle & high school as an introduction to geography. I'm always surprised by the lack of map reading skills youth have. My collection of maps ranges from wilderness to city to historical to air traffic. The more

the merrier & the weirder the more engaging. Roz

If there is space, post the maps for a "walk about". If not, have them take one at a time & exchange when finished. This usually takes one class period.

Your Map Reading assignment

§ There are 20 maps.

§ With a partner, examine 10 of the maps.

§ Write your answers out.

1. Name of the map
2. What was the purpose of the map?
3. Who would use it?
4. Would it have a use in the \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the subject of the class you are teaching)

How?

5. Two things you learned while reading it



Start preparing now for  
**Geography Awareness Week, November 15-21, 2009!**

*Get Lost in Mapping: Find Your Place in the World*

Go to [GeographyAwarenessWeek.org](http://GeographyAwarenessWeek.org) and

--Get lost in maps: big & small, high-tech & low-tech!

--Take the test: Is your school global?

--Get wired: Help students see how mapping technologies are reshaping how we live and learn

--Teach about the world in new ways: Explore standards-based lessons

--Celebrate! Get tips and resources to host a GAWeek event, including FREE National Geographic downloads and materials

Help give students powerful global knowledge!

[GeographyAwarenessWeek.org](http://GeographyAwarenessWeek.org)

**Announcing: DC Summit**



# My Wonderful World.org

A National Geographic-led campaign

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*Newsletter Coordinator's Note: This is the official announcement from National Geographic Student Expeditions.*

Imagine showing your students our nation's capital through the eyes of a National Geographic explorer, photojournalist, or scientist. How would they see things differently? What would they learn?

National Geographic Student Expeditions is proud to announce [DC Summit](#), a series of week-long programs for middle- and high-school students and their teachers in Washington, DC this spring.

Summit activities are designed to reflect National Geographic's unique approach to exploration and education, focusing on geography awareness, conservation, planet stewardship, and storytelling. We encourage students to apply the same spirit of active inquiry and engagement that National Geographic explorers, photographers, writers, and scientists use around the world. As part of the program, DC Summit will supply a wide variety of fundraising ideas to help students raise money for the trip. For every ten students who attend, their teacher accompanies them free of charge.

Specifically, we seek teachers who:

- \*Are excited to lead a group of students interested in science, social studies, history, or language arts/journalism
- \*Are looking to engage alongside their students during a week in DC
- \*Think that even bus time can be an opportunity for learning
- \*Intuitively know the difference between being a "traveler" and being a "tourist"
- \*Have traveled with students previously, either on programs of their own design or with other organizations
- \*Are excited to participate in a National Geographic Student Expeditions program that encourages a new generation of explorers

Additionally, a limited group of teachers selected from a nationwide applicant pool will be invited to attend a free, expense-paid weekend in Washington, DC Oct. 23 - 25, 2009 to learn more about DC Summit and our instructional approach, meet National Geographic explorers, editors, and leaders, and help shape the [2010 DC Summit](#) program. This is a terrific opportunity for professional networking and development. Due to their existing relationship with National Geographic, Geography Alliance teachers will be given first consideration. A more detailed description of the Conference and application process is available at the [DC Summit website](#).

#### Education and the Environment Initiative Draft Curriculum Available



New curriculum resources are available for K-12 teachers through the [California Education and the Environment Initiative](#). The 2003 initiative required that Environmental Principles and Concepts be created and integrated into K-12 standards across the core subjects. In turn, curriculum units would be developed, giving teachers an "alternative strategy for using their adopted instructional materials." [Final draft curriculum is now posted](#) and available for public comment. If you're interested in making comments, please use the form provided on the EEI website.

#### Upcoming Events



##### **National Council for Geographic Education**

San Juan, Puerto Rico  
September 23-27, 2009  
Check out all the details at NCGE's [conference page](#).

##### **Geographic Literacy in the 21st Century**

Institute dates: Thursdays, 9/24, 10/8, 10/22, 11/5, 11/19, 12/3  
Time: 4:00 - 7:00

Location: CSU Dominguez Hills

The Dominguez Hills Region of CGA is sponsoring a fall institute, Geographic Literacy in the 21st Century, for Grade 3-5 teachers.

Participants will experience activities and games to teach the Five Themes of Geography in the upper elementary grades. Participants will also become familiar with up-to-date websites and technology to enhance geography instruction. Each participant will receive literature books and other resources for teaching geography.

The registration fee is \$25; one semester unit is available for an additional \$45 fee. Please contact Diane Hembacher at [dhembacher@csudh.edu](mailto:dhembacher@csudh.edu) for a registration form.

## Regional Coordinator's Contact Information



When you're looking for assistance, don't hesitate to contact your regional coordinator. She can get you materials, help put on geography workshops or assist you in setting up a family geography night and much more!

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