

The Fremont Peak Observer

— Bringing Astronomy to the Public —

Vol. 40, No. 3

Fall 2023

President's Message



Pat Donnelly, Rob Hawley, Lenore Edman

Let me begin this message by reporting that FPOA has a new contract with the California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR). I signed the contract on September 8. This new contract is for five (5) years with the option to renew the contract for another five (5) years. The contract will become official upon signature of the California Attorney General (AG). For the general membership, for those volunteering or reserving pads, the most important new provision is a requirement to sign two (2) liability waivers; DPR and FPOA. Personally, I am happy that this item is now behind us. I can now concentrate on astronomy.

Moving on, It's September again, and the Sun has entered the constellation Virgo. This means that the Autumnal Equinox is almost upon us. The equinox is not a day; it's the time when the geometric center of the Sun aligns with the Celestial Equator. For northern California, the equinox will



Star trails over FPOA, Chanan Greenberg

2023 Fall Program Dates

Saturday Evening Programs

October 7, 14, 21

Solar Programs

October 7, 5-8p

October 14, 8 am – Special Eclipse Program

Volunteers, please send a [48-hr reservation](#) to [schedule@](#) and arrive by 7am.

Board Meetings

Oct. 7

Please check our web [Schedule](#) and [status](#) for updates

occur on Friday evening, September 22 at 11:49 PM. Interestingly, even though the Sun has passed through the equinox point, the Sun is still above the horizon for more than 12 hours, due to the refraction of the sunlight by the Earth's atmosphere. One will have to wait until Tuesday, September 26 to experience a day with equal amounts of daylight and darkness. After that, the days will be shorter than the nights for the following six (6) months.

On Tuesday, September 12, DPR Diablo Range District management graced the observatory with a visit. Included in the group was the District Superintendent himself. Rob Hawley and I were there to show them around and answer questions.



Rob gave a presentation on the history and operation of FPOA and the observatory followed by a Q&A session. I showed the District Superintendent the repair to the fence next to the bathrooms. I believe it was a good meeting. The management in Livermore now understands FPOA programs and our contributions to the local park.

I am happy to report that, following some road maintenance, FPOA has been able to conduct most of our evening and solar programs this year. We have also been able to conduct four (4) special programs on non-public program nights. This year has been quite successful to date.

This September is quite important to astronomy and folklore. On September 29, the “Harvest Moon” will rise in the east shortly after sunset. By definition, the “Harvest Moon” is the full moon closest to the Autumnal Equinox. This full moon will be especially interesting to view, since it will occur less than two (2) days after the moon reaches perigee (the point on the Moon’s orbit when it is closest to the Earth). The moon should be a bit bigger than usual opposed to the lunar apogee very close to Oct. 14th that will shape the annular eclipse. Go out and see the big moon and visit FPOA on Oct. 14th to see the little new Moon!

PD

2023 New Contract with State Parks

Rob Hawley, Pat Donnelly, Lenore Edman

Following Pat’s intro, let me add some details about our new contract with DPR. We revisit the process every five to ten years, and each time, the state has revised its contract requirements. Each time, we do our best to reintroduce what makes us

different from so many other organizations working inside the state parks system.

In past contracts, the focus was on services we provide to the parks system rather than a description of how we work as an organization. This time we were able to include a much more accurate accounting of our activities.

Here are some of the highlights of the new 5-year contract for the Observatory:

- The Observer program is now recognized in the contract
- We now have a formal basis for the SETI experiment and our members’ only SBQ
- We clarified that the FPOA area does not provide public parking beyond ADA

Because of the extensive changes to the contract template, we had the opportunity to write 21 pages that provide background for our programs. With added background, the DPR folks in Sacramento should better understand our unique character and the need for our contract template updates.

The contract now gives us explicit authority to instruct parents to manage their kids. Looking at the faces of parents during the new safety lecture, I can see that the picture of the snake has impressed the need to not let young kids run loose.¹

Our update also preserves a number of items in the current contract such as a guarantee that the state will not claim ownership of Astro images taken by our members.

The contract has some new provisions whose impact will depend on how the state chooses to implement these:

¹ I have also heard that people are no longer coming down the ladder incorrectly since seeing the edited picture of Rob in a heap at the bottom of the ladder.

- FPOA program volunteers are required to sign a second [State-created liability waiver](#). We offered our own customized Member Contract as an alternative, but the state requires both. Program volunteers received an email for the new waiver. We do not believe Observers are affected, even if they attend program nights.
- We may be required to provide background checks on volunteers if DPR requests it. The contract includes some language to lessen the likelihood, but the possibility exists.

RJH, PD, LE

ETE

Facilities



Eric Eglund

The east ramp and lower fence are whole and coated again, and ready for the coming El Niño. Many thanks to our volunteers who completed the work in good faith toward the future obligations of our contract in progress.



Following sage advice and experience, I sanded, primed, and painted all the fence posts and rails before installing. Posts have a gravel base and concrete collars through the local limestone. The original concrete post settings fell apart with my electric demo hammer on slow speed. Tap-tap-tap, that's all it takes. The hammer doesn't have

the required inertia at higher speeds. I hope the original crew had one.

Thanks Rick, Michael, and Mark who also helped demo, procure, and install new fence posts while Pat, Rob, and Mateusz primed and double-coated the east ramp helped with fence rails, and Mateusz cleaned up the bench with the belt sander.

I changed out the red incandescent fence lights for LEDs. They're a deeper red, but increased brightness won't be an issue for our observers who don't need the fence lights following our programs.

Support



Thanks to those who renewed. FPOA receives most of its income from our Memberships. Most annual members are now Observers. We still need your support. Contributions cover publications, phone, insurance, rent, etc.

Please consider volunteering, it's great fun and a service to our community. Please see the [back page](#) for details.

Please send Observer articles to the [editor](#) by December 1st.

Membership Renewal



To join or renew, please select from the list of options on our [Membership page](#) and pay via PayPal or mail a check to:

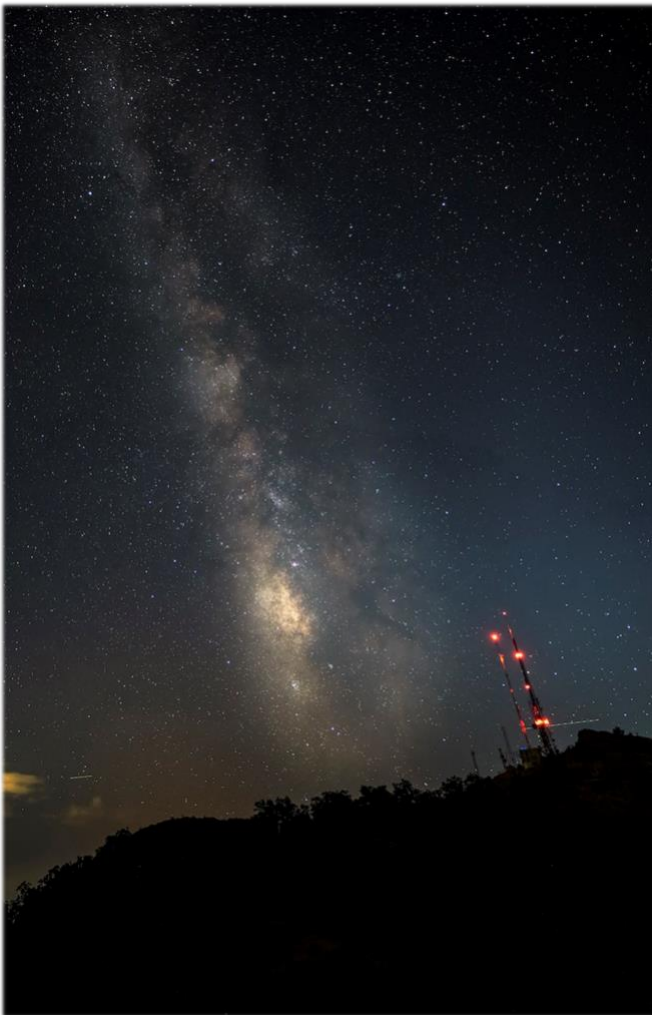
FPOA Membership
c/o Rob Hawley
1233 Hillcrest Dr.
San Jose, CA 95120



Gallery



Photos from top right: Evening racoon, our Rangers remind us - **Be sure to leave the restroom doors closed**; Buddha's rays from a sunset cloud; Chanan Greenberg: M10, M8-The Lagoon Nebula, M16-The Eagle Nebula, Milky Way sweeps the Peak; StarBQ lecture and avid members.





Pat and Rob set up the 10" SCT on the Losmandy mount, weather moved in but the program succeeded

Observing Reservations



Please send the following information
48 hours in advance to:

schedule at fpoa.net

- Member name
- Reservation date
- Estimated arrival time
- Duration of stay
- Number in party
- Vehicle description and license plate
- Specific observing site request (pad)

**Reminder – 48-hour notice for Observer
Access is non-negotiable**

Please, No 'last minute' requests

We lease access to the FPOA area from the State. Our agreements with the State require we give 48 hours' notice for all visitors. Observer members agree to the 48-hour notice per the liability contract.

Public Program Volunteers



- Complete the updated [2023 liability waiver](#) and return to *membership at fpoa.net*.
- Also, please email name, vehicle, and the program date to *schedule at fpoa.net*.

Fremont Peak Observatory Association

Box 1376, San Juan Bautista, CA 95045

Inquiries *info at fpoa.net*

Schedule *schedule at fpoa.net*

Membership *membership at fpoa.net*

Editor *editor at fpoa.net*

Treasurer *treasurer at fpoa.net*

Website: fpoa.net

Facebook: [fpoa.observatory](https://www.facebook.com/fpoa.observatory)

Twitter: [fpoa_info](https://twitter.com/fpoa_info)

Observatory: (831) 623-2465

Officers and Directors 2023

President	Pat Donnelly
Vice President, IT	Windell Oskay
Treasurer, IT	Rob Hawley
Secretary	Lenore Edman
Instruments	Ron Dammann
Facilities	Loren Dynneson
Editor, Facilities	Eric Eglund
	Chris Angelos
	Tom Kellogg
	Jeff Shapiro

Instruments and: Schedule	Ron Dammann
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Membership and: Distribution	Rob Hawley
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Website	Rob Hawley Windell Oskay
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Directors Emeritus	Kevin Medlock Denni Medlock
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Dates and Delivery

Members, The Observer is now sent by email and posted on our website at [FPOA Observer online](#) Please send email updates to *membership at fpoa.net*.

The *Fremont Peak Observer* publishes four times a year following Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall. We welcome articles and photos from our members. Please email those to *editor at fpoa.net* by Mar. 1, June. 1, Sept. 1 and Dec. 1 in plain text or Word format.