



The Bonita Highlander

January 2026

Horses Break Out! Run Free in the Highlands!!

Two mischievous horses decided to checkout the Bonita Highlands a few weeks ago and created some excitement in the neighborhood as well as putting some of our experienced horse wranglers to work.



The two troublemakers made a break for freedom while their owners were out of town and proceeded to parade up Country Trails to Central where they pranced in the streets halting traffic and bringing folks out of their homes to watch and take pictures. With an audience in place, the two moved to the grassy area at Central and Wild Oats Lane and kicked up their heels for a bit. Kat Vargas, a long-time Highland resident, was the first to report the situation and worked hard to assist with traffic control and keeping an eye on the situation. Drivers were very cooperative, pitched in to slow traffic down and reroute it to protect the horses, and were an appreciative audience (some kids named the horses).



Julie Peck, a former resident of the Highlands, stopped her car and immediately began trying to assist with wrangling them up. She was quickly joined by Daniel and Barbara Diaz, Highlands's horse owners and aficionados, who responded to the scene with harnesses, bridles and a big bag of carrots. But the four-legged critters were disinterested and more excited about the taste of freedom. They quickly discovered a trail and headed down it towards Corral Canyon where they spent the next several hours in the canyon evading all the efforts of those trying to round them up as well as an animal control officer.

The Animal Control Officer was onsite for about an hour with no luck at which point she said she was calling it a day as there is no leash law for horses and they clearly were not in any danger in the canyon. She took off leaving Daniel, Barbara, and Julie to figure it out. And figure it out they did!

Four plus hours after the initial breakout, the two were captured and led back to their home by the trio.

The afternoon escapades brought traffic to a halt, neighbors out of their homes to watch and volunteer to help, and created great entertainment for a Monday afternoon. The event also was noted on several social media sites with the general agreement that we are lucky to live in Bonita where horses are our friends and part of our community!

HUGE SHOUTOUT to Daniel and Barbara Diaz as well as Julie Peck and Kat Vargas!



Sharing the Open Space and Trails — Safely!

As we head into the new year, our Open Space, Green Belts, and Trails continue to be a cherished part of our community — great for exercise, relaxation, and connecting with nature. As more families with children move into the Highlands, we find more residents enjoying the Open Spaces, Green Belts, and Trails on foot, bicycles, horseback (our remaining equestrian friends), and now electric bicycles (e-bikes). As such, it's more important than ever to review the rules and etiquette that keeps everyone safe when outdoors enjoying the Bonita Highlands.

Quick Recap — Trail Right-of-Way and Etiquette

Bonita Highlands is part of the San Diego County Trail System, and so our BHHA Trails follow the same multi-use guidelines:

- Horses Always have the right-of-way — horses are “flight” animals and can spook easily from sudden movements or loud noises.
- Hikers yield to horses.
- Bikes (including e-bikes) yield to hikers and horses.

When you encounter a horse:

- Stop, move to the side of the trail, and let them pass.
- Speak calmly to alert the rider (especially from behind).

Keep dogs leashed and under control — leashing is the law and prevents close encounters that could startle a horse or scare people, especially children.

For all users: Announce your presence politely (e.g., "On your left!" for bikes), slow down around corners or blind spots, and take your trash home with you (including dog waste bags—don't leave any of it on the Trail or in the Open Space!).

These simple courtesies prevent accidents and preserve the peaceful, family-friendly atmosphere our Bonita Highland's Open Space, Green Belts, and Trails are known for.

Tips for Safe E-Bike Use (If Class 1 or 2)

- Stay under 20 mph whenever operating in the Open Space or on Trails—slow down for others.
- Use a bell or voice to alert hikers/horses.
- Wear helmets (required for minors statewide, strongly recommended for all).

Follow the same etiquette as traditional bikes: yield to horses and hikers.

Let's continue working together to keep our trails safe and enjoyable for everyone.

If you have questions about the use and/or safety about the Open Space, Green Belts, Trails, rules, or suggestions, please reach out to the BHHA Board or Staff — we value your input.

Thank you for being Courteous Trail Stewards!

Happy Trails,
Bonita Highlands Board of Directors

Community Reminder from the U.S. Fish and Wild Life

Feeding Wild Animals Can be Harmful to Them and to Us!

Most wild animals have a normal and natural diet that does not include commercial processed foods which has various kinds of additives which can prove harmful to wild animals. Additionally, commercial processed foods are normally containerized in various metals and plastics, both of which can be harmful to wild animals. Plastics are especially harmful to wild animals just as they are to our pets; be we can take care of our pets daily — we can't do that for wild animals!. Wild animals that accidentally eat plastics, which do not dissolve in the digestive track, can fill up their stomachs and cause them to become malnourished, get sick, and die. Even though on occasions we may see wild animals like opossum, raccoon, coyotes, etc., in our trash, the commercial processed food they may be getting into is not designed for their dietary track or health.

Wild Animals Can Become Too Friendly, Maybe Even Dangerous — They are Wild !

Wild animals that have routine access to commercial processed foods, can get used to it, and in its absence can become aggressive if they don't have it — checkout the stories of the wild bobcats, mountain lions, and bears in the local mountains. Closer to home are the numerous coyotes that don't seem to be the least bit afraid of humans, but are definitely dangerous to our pets, especially if left unattended.

Wild Animals Might Expose You to Disease

Interacting with/feeding wild animals always comes with a risk of exposing you to various types of diseases that the wild animal may have, including hantavirus and rabies.

Wild Animals Can Cause Property Damage

There have been several instances of soil erosion issues caused by rodents burrowing near feeders and causing hillside instability. Some of this soil instability caused by rodents have been the reason for the recent expensive repairs to a number of our brow ditches in the Highlands.

Bottom Line, please don't feed the wild animals in the Bonita Highlands, it can generate property, pet, and/or personal safety issues for the neighborhood and the homeowners, and could result in an appropriate safety fine to help protect the Highlands.

Final BHHA Annual FY Budget Review

The Third and Final BHHA Annual FY Budget reading will be at the next monthly BHHA Board Meeting on January 13, 2026. During this meeting the Board of Directors will do one last review of the FY Budget and BHHA Reserve Study, approve both and approve the corresponding 2026-2027 Annual Assessment amount. All Homeowners interested in learning about the BHHA budget process are more than welcome to attend this Board Meeting!

The Bonita Highlander is the monthly newsletter of the Bonita Highlands Homeowners' Association (BHHA), a California non-profit corporation. The Newsletter is distributed (postage paid) or emailed to each residence within the Bonita Highlands. Information for publication should be send to the recording Secretary & Editor, Mary Ellen Phillips at bhighlanderhoa@gmail.com by the 15th of the month, for publication the following month. The Association reserves the right to edit any copy submitted for publication.

**BHHA
PO Box 458
Bonita, CA 91908-0458**

The BHHA documents, forms, meeting minutes and notices can be found on its website:
bonitahighlands.org



The Bonita Highlander

5073 Central Ave. #458
Bonita, CA. 91908 - 0458

PRST-STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Chula Vista, CA
Permit No. 171

The next monthly BHHA meeting will be held on Tuesday **January 13, 2026 at 6:00 PM**, in person at the Bonita Sunnyside Fire Station. All homeowners are welcome to attend.

1. Call to Order, Roll Call, Introduction of Board members, Pledge of Allegiance, Announcement of the Next Meeting, Adoption of Minutes from the last monthly meeting.
2. Homeowner appearances for appeals to notices, fines, or requests for structural alterations.
3. Homeowner Open Communications.
4. Committee and Staff Reports: ACC-A (SCRs), ACC-C (violations), Financial Officer, Open Space Chairperson, and BHHA Communications.
5. Old Business: BOD Election Update, Final Budget Review,
6. New Business: New Assessment Decision
7. Community Items of Interest.
8. Board Member Comments.
9. Adjournment.
10. Board Executive Session (if required).



The BHHA Board of Directors (BOD) welcomes and encourages e-mail and letters from homeowners. Any letter sent to the Board may be published in this newsletter. Any opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the author or other contributor, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the BOD or any Staff Member.