Extra Credit - Monument Peak Hike

Important Considerations before Hiking:

* Tell your parents where you are going. Give them a copy of this paper, so in case something happens, they can help rangers locate you.
* Go with someone (it’s more fun and safer). Take your parents (they will enjoy it) or a friend. Your dog is allowed on the trail and will enjoy the walk. Great for kid brothers and sisters (family event?).
* Take cell phones.
* Take plenty of water.
* Remember, this is high elevation. If you go in the afternoon, it could get cold and windy at the top. You may want to tie a sweater around your waist.
* Always watch out for rattlesnakes.
* Follow the directions for the trail.
* Think about taking a lunch and relaxing for a while at the top.

Hiking Distance: About 2.6 miles round trip (You could probably go up and down in an

hour and a half, if you didn’t stop “to smell the roses”). My advice: go slow and enjoy being in the beautiful outdoors.

Difficulty: Easy to moderate.

**Notes of interest:** This hike takes you to the highest elevation in that portion of the

Cleveland National Forest (6,271 feet). It gives you a panoramic view east into the Anza-Borrego Desert. On a clear day you can actually see the Salton Sea. San Diego is riddled with **Ecotones**. This is a classic example of an ecotone – a transition area between two adjacent but different ecosystems. You will see a sharp contrast between miles of desert on the bottom, and the piney woods and chaparral along the way and at the top.

Driving to the trailhead: From interstate 8 east, exit at Sunrise Highway, S1, and

head north. Just past mile marker 25 (at about 25.2), there is a large parking area off the road (on the right) with the trailhead for Big Laguna Trail.

Parking: You will need an Adventure Pass to park anywhere in the Laguna Mountain

Recreation Area. They are $5 for a 1-day use and can be purchased at the Ranger Station in Alpine (3348 Alpine Blvd), or the gas station off of the Pine Valley off-ramp (just North of the freeway). Alpine and Pine Valley are on your way out to the Laguna Mountains.

Trail Directions (FOLLOW CAREFULLY): From your parking spot, find the Big Laguna

Trail (signed). Hike about .5 miles east, uphill to a junction with the Pacific Crest Trail. Turn left and continue uphill, counting your paces as you go. After about 800 steps, you will get a glimpse of microwave antennas ahead. This is an important clue. At the next sharp left bend, you will continue straight and diverge onto an “informal” trail (kind of like an offramp off the existing trail. Soon the path bends to the right and you hike up to and around a fenced laser-research facility to join a paved access road (too bad humans had to be involved …). Follow the road to monument peak summit where the vista of earth and sky spreads far and wide.

To Confirm Extra Credit: Take some pictures (at the trailhead? at the top?) Write a

short, one paragraph reflection. Was it fun? Who did you go with? What did you think of the desert view below top? Does it look like an ecotone to you?