

Outdoors

in Orange County

Irvine Regional Park Photo: Melanie Schlotterbeck, Avocet Photo: Marinka Horack

Irvine Regional Park

SAVE ORANGE COUNTY'S PARKS

By: FHBP Editorial; Jean Watt, President

You may recall the 2004/2005 Orange County Grand Jury issued a scathing report on the status of Orange County's Harbors, Beaches, and Parks (HBP). Entitled "From Riches to Rags," the Grand Jury stated that "once considered a premier park and recreation system, Orange County's Harbors, Beaches, and Parks, a division of the Resources and Development Management Department (RDMD), today has been wounded by underfunding, understaffing, and county bureaucracy." The County's response was to develop a new Strategic Plan to redefine HBP's values, vision, mission, goals, and strategies and then make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors.

A Stakeholders Advisory Committee was appointed by the County and many public outreach meetings were held throughout the County over a nine month period. Key issues that emerged were:

- Funding Regional Parks;
- Defining Core versus Non-Core Business;
- Stewardship of Open Space; and
- Increasing Open Space.

FHBP and nearly all others who participated actively in the Stakeholders Advisory Committee resolved that these key issues could only be met by a more autonomous HBP Department. Apparently forces in RDMD did not want this suggestion to see the light of day in the final report on the Strategic Plan.

In the midst of the planning process and just before Christmas, the Parks Director, who had



Yorba Regional Park

Photo by: Melanie Schlotterbeck

been even handedly guiding this process (and the Department) was summarily relieved of duty. The vulnerability of strong parks leadership was once again confirmed as was the Grand Jury's suspicions. The strong leadership of Robert Fisher 10 years earlier resulted in his firing as Parks Director and prompted the creation of FHBP.

Since the 1996 bankruptcy HBP has been a division under a larger department most recently named the Resources and Development Management Department (RDMD). RDMD is responsible for numerous and conflicting "divisions." Everything from Agriculture, Public Works, Flood Control, Roads, Planning and Development to Watersheds, Coastal Resources and Parks are under one roof. So funding for HBP (through voter approved property taxes) is subject to raiding for other purposes. Recommendations made by the HBP Department are also filtered through the RDMD Director on their way to the Board of Supervisors. We believe this gives HBP a vulnerability that now threatens to unravel the park system itself.

Given the recent effort to disrupt the leadership of HBP mid-stream of the Strategic Planning process, we continue to believe that decisions for HBP's well-being should not be filtered through other departments with contradictory interests. All organizations who care about our parks, including the Grand Jury, should be on high alert to protect the public's interest and large investment in the County park system.

For more information on this topic, please email Alice Sorenson at cowgirlali@aol.com.

THE YEAR AHEAD

January 2007 rang in an array of prospects affecting Orange County parks and open space. Though promising, these are challenged by development of vital open space lands and encroachment upon those already "saved."

PROPOSITION 84

Voters passed statewide this measure that contains over \$5 billion for competitive projects. Protection of the Santa Ana River is promised with a \$45 million allocation, at least \$10 million of which is directed to Orange County. Those projects that are most environmentally sensitive will more likely secure funding in the competitive program. For instance, the new term "Low Intensity Development" (LID) encourages projects using less concrete and more permeable soil thereby reducing rampaging flood waters down concrete spillways.

MEASURE M

The \$11.8 billion Orange County Transportation Improvement Plan (aka renewed Measure M) was also approved by voters in November. Thirty-three environmental grassroots organizations worked with the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) to provide "comprehensive" rather than piecemeal mitigation of environmental impacts of freeways. The Measure makes available a minimum of \$243.5 million for habitat protection, restoration, and management. The Orange County Green Vision Map, we hope, will help define potential mitigation properties.



Laguna Coast Wilderness Park.

Photo by: Melanie Schlotterbeck



Steward Ship

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The Imagine Series

A Before & After Look at Orange County's Treasures

By: Eduardo Cisneros

A recent study conducted by the California Center for Public Health Advocacy reports that the City of Santa Ana has the second-highest child obesity rate in California among cities of its size. Statistics further show that 34.4% of children in Santa Ana are obese or overweight and are experiencing an increasing rate of physical inactivity and Type 2 diabetes as a result. In addition to this, research on youth development highlights the fact that in densely populated urban areas, children need safe alternatives to gang participation and other negative activities.

There is growing evidence emerging from the public health arena that links the increasing rates of obesity to the increasing rates of physical inactivity. Experts explain that access to and availability of public facilities for physical activity plays a critical role in the prevention and treatment of obesity and overweight. Emerging evidence supports the creation and/or enhancement of parks and playground facilities, similar to those found in the enhanced photograph above right, as an intervention necessary in increasing physical activity and improving overall health and well-being of communities.

Santa Ana, like many other urban cities in California, lacks an adequate amount of parks and open space and is facing various social and health issues as a result. The City, which approximates 17,000 acres in it's entirety, contains only 373 acres of park space. These numbers equate to only approximately 0.9 acres for every 1,000 residents.



Latino Health Access (LHA), a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, is working to convert a vacant dirt lot into a safe space for the surrounding community. In fact, nearly 2,000 people live in the apartment building directly adjacent to the park. This community resource, once finished, will provide community residents a safe-haven to relax, exercise, and build a sense of community in an otherwise hectic, overcrowded urban area. The Latino Health Access Community Center and Park is critical to the City's ability to combat obesity and violence by offering families and children a safe place to spend time together and get fit. However, this alone cannot tackle the epidemic.

LHA is working with The Trust for Public Land (TPL) and the City of Santa Ana to address the need for more open spaces like this one. The City of Santa Ana needs a comprehensive strategy to provide more spaces for children to exercise safely after

school hours and weekends. LHA is currently working with the City in the construction of the LHA Park and community multi-purpose facility on what currently is a vacant lot. Increasing park and open space in Santa Ana should be considered a viable and effective measure to combat the City's increasing rates of obesity and physical inactivity.

Sources:
Overweight Children in California Counties and Communities: Orange County, California Center for Public Health Advocacy, 2004.

Creating or Improving Access to Places for Physical Activity is Strongly Recommended to Increase Physical Activity, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, January, 10, 2004.

City of Santa Ana Community Development, January, 22, 2007.
www.ci.santa-ana.ca.us/cda/documents/DistrictManagerProgram.pdf



Photo and Photo Morph: Melanie Schlotterbeck

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Saddleback Canyons Conservancy www.SaddlebackCanyons.org
Santiago Creek Greenway Alliance www.SantiagoGreenway.org
Santiago Creek Watershed Preservation & Restoration Project
www.SantiagoCreek.org

Santa Ana River Watershed Alliance
www.SantaAnaRiverWatershed.org
Sea and Sage Audubon www.SeaAndSageAudubon.org
Sierra Club - Angeles Chapter www.Angeles.SierraClub.org
Sierra Sage of South Orange County
www.Angeles.SierraClub.org/Sage/
Silverado-Modjeska Recreation & Park District www.SMRPD.org
Santa Ana Mountains Task Force
www.Angeles.SierraClub.org/ocosc/SAMTF.htm
Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project www.SCWRP.org
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Surfrider National www.Surfrider.org
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Birds of a feather..

Be a part of Friends of Harbors, Beaches & Parks.

Help our practical, realistic projects make Orange County a better home for all of us.

Your help, large or small, is deeply appreciated.



Yes! I want to help Friends of Harbors, Beaches & Parks.

FHBP contributions are tax-deductible. Donors receive newsletters and other information on our conservation activities. Please check the category you wish:

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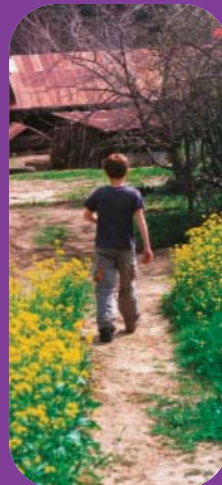
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Please clip and mail to: FHBP, P.O. Box 9256, Newport Beach, CA 92658

Holtz Ranch Up For Sale!

The beautiful 320 acre Holtz Ranch in the Silverado Canyon area of the Cleveland National Forest is up for sale. The 106 year old Ranch is home to a Juaneno Indian camp, well established wildlife corridors, and the federally endangered Southwestern Arroyo toad. Four different developers have run up against grassroots opposition, very complex water issues, and a possible permanent delay to the current housing project due an endangered species not addressed in the pre-planning phase of development. For 35 years local residents have sought conservation alternatives for this rare and breathtaking site. Canyon Lands Conservation Fund is currently seeking funding to acquire this important land.



Holtz Ranch

Email eamador@ucageneral.com

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Nix Nature Center Nearly Complete

The James and Rosemary Nix Nature Center will open to the public daily beginning Saturday, March 17, 2007. As the Laguna Canyon Wilderness Park's new headquarters, the Nix Nature Center will be the gateway for recreational users to explore a vast network of linked trails throughout Laguna Coast, Crystal Cove State Park, and City of Irvine Open Space Preserve South. The Nature Center's picture windows frame four main views into the surrounding parkland, challenging visitors of all ages to consider the wilderness from various perspectives. An easy 1/2 mile loop trail encourages visitors to appreciate the Park's natural beauty. The Nature Center will be open daily from 9AM - 4PM and there is a \$3 parking fee, but admission to the Center is free.



Nix Nature Center

Visit www.LagunaCanyon.org

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Progress on Blue Ribbon Task Forces

Several Santa Ana River Task Forces have been created via DP Myers' efforts. First, the City of Huntington Beach has finished its public outreach and discussion session. The Council received the report and considered its adoption in February. Second, the City of Newport Beach has selected the members of its Committee and has scheduled its first meeting to introduce the vision plan process and set goals. Their first meeting was at the end of January. Third, the City of Costa Mesa has also had its first meeting in January with its enhanced committee of new appointees. DP Myers will soon be leaving the Wildlands Conservancy and another staff member will assume responsibility of his River projects.



Santa Ana River

Visit www.WildlandsConservancy.org

3

Shell-Aera Looking for Approvals

Shell-ExxonMobil's land development arm, Aera Energy proposed a 3,600-unit development project along the 57 freeway. When Los Angeles County turned the project down because of the damaging impacts, Aera went shopping for a development friendly city and found one in Diamond Bar. During Christmas week, the Diamond Bar's City Council stealthily voted to proceed with an annexation of 1,940 acres of the 3,000 acres that Aera owns and a development agreement for 2,800 units and commercial centers. Diamond Bar appears to be over its head since nearly all of the conditions favor the big oil owner of the land. We are working with the citizens in Diamond Bar to stop Aera's efforts.

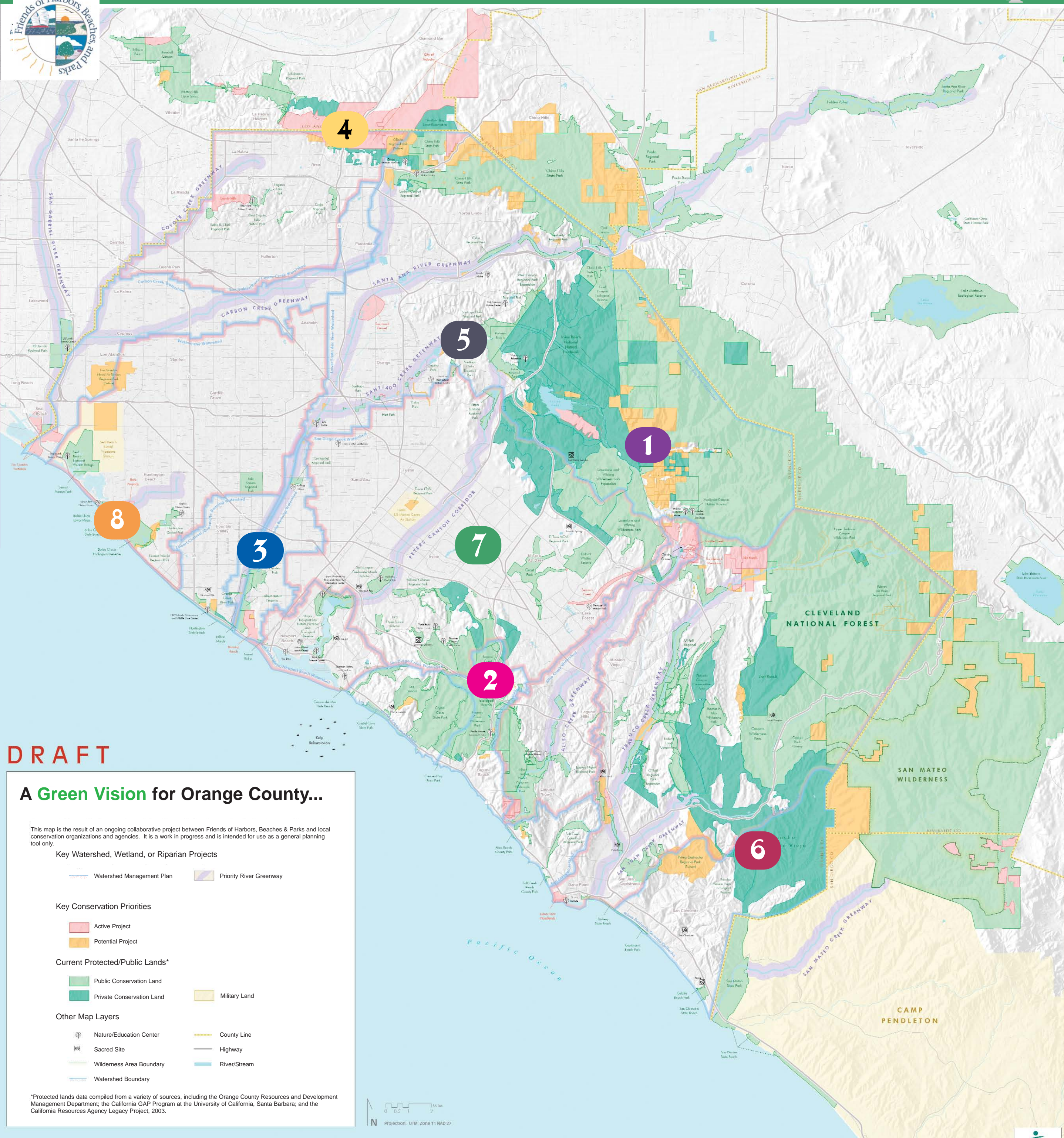
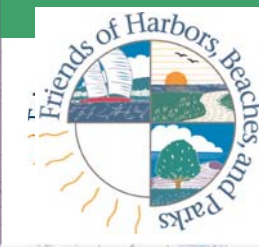


Shell-Aera

Visit www.HillsForEveryone.org

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Orange County



DRAFT

A Green Vision for Orange County...

This map is the result of an ongoing collaborative project between Friends of Harbors, Beaches & Parks and local conservation organizations and agencies. It is a work in progress and is intended for use as a general planning tool only.

Key Watershed, Wetland, or Riparian Projects

- Watershed Management Plan
- Priority River Greenway

Key Conservation Priorities

- Active Project
- Potential Project

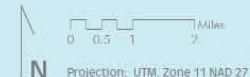
Current Protected/Public Lands*

- Public Conservation Land
- Private Conservation Land
- Military Land

Other Map Layers

- Nature/Education Center
- Sacred Site
- Wilderness Area Boundary
- Watershed Boundary
- County Line
- Highway
- River/Stream

*Protected lands data compiled from a variety of sources, including the Orange County Resources and Development Management Department, the California GAP Program at the University of California, Santa Barbara; and the California Resources Agency Legacy Project, 2003.



Green Vision Map

Santiago Creek Restoration Efforts



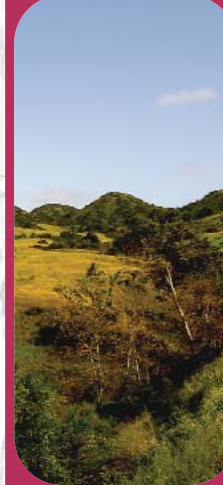
Santiago Creek

The Santiago Creek Watershed Preservation & Restoration Project was formed in 2005 to address land use policy and ecological function from a watershed-wide perspective. We seek to preserve the ecological integrity of the entire Santiago Creek Watershed through community outreach, partnerships, identification of valuable acquisitions, and habitat restoration. We are concerned about land management of the Irvine Ranch; the Trabuco District of the Cleveland National Forest, including private inholdings in the Forest; as well as unincorporated Orange County; county regional and wilderness parks; and land in Villa Park, Orange, and Santa Ana. We hope creative and sustainable plans are incorporated along Santiago Creek.

Visit www.SantiagoCreek.org

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Update on Rancho Mission Viejo



Rancho Mission Viejo

Significant natural habitats in Rancho Mission Viejo (RMV) and the O'Neill, Thomas Riley, and Caspers County Parks, will be protected as a unified nature reserve with adaptive management. The land will guard endangered species and ecosystems in proximity to RMV's planned 14,000 homes, 5 million square feet of commercial and office space, and a 16-mile toll road extension. The County, and several environmental groups, approved an RMV land use plan, leaving 75% of the 23,000 acre Ranch as protected. Wild Heritage Planners is working with the OCTA and others to address significant deficiencies in the RMV traffic plan.

Visit www.SaveTrestles.org

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San Diego Creek Plan Moves Forward



San Diego Creek

The San Diego Creek watershed, which drains the foothills to Newport Bay, has been a priority management area by the Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board. A lawsuit required compensatory mitigation for the least Bell's vireo. Over the past three years, a vision statement was developed that strives for a balance between flood control and habitat in the Creek, as the Creek has been found to harbor endangered species of birds and animals, including least Bell's vireo, southwest willow flycatcher, California coastal gnatcatcher, and the Pacific pond turtle, among others. You can help by attending the bimonthly meetings and getting on the email list for notification.

Email JonV3@aol.com

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Step It Up 2007 - Saturday, April 14



Caring for Creation

The Orange County Interfaith Coalition for the Environment will be hosting a site for Step It Up 2007 National Day of Climate Action on Saturday, April 14. This event is just one site throughout the nation and gives us the opportunity to ask our leaders to "Step It Up -- Cut Carbon 80% by 2050." Join us at the Huntington Pier and walk up Main Street to City Hall. Prior to the event we hope to deliver letters to each mayor of each city in Orange County, requesting support for programs and other actions that reduce our carbon footprint and emissions. Learn more at www.StepItUp2007.org for more information and to register.

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