

Outdoors

in Orange County

Friends of Harbors, Beaches, & Parks Summer 2011

David Schlotterbeck



Dr. Dan Silver,
Endangered Habitats League

Bill Campbell,
OC Supervisor

Will Kempton,
OCTA CEO

Pat Bates,
OC Supervisor

Melanie Schlotterbeck,
FHBP Coalition Rep.

Jean Watt,
FHBP President

Unique Partnership Protects and Restores Land

By: Melanie Schlotterbeck

I am thrilled to relay the successes we've had this year with the Green Vision Project. Through the Renewed Measure M Environmental Mitigation Program nearly 900 acres have been protected (to date) and five restoration projects are moving forward. Below is an outline of how our successes came to fruition over the last six years.

In 2005, the 85+ member Green Vision Coalition decided to approach the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) to see what, if anything, could be incorporated into the Authority's ½ cent sales tax renewal, known as M2. M1, which was the first transportation measure, collected a ½ cent sales tax for 20 years allowing for improvements to our County's transportation systems (roads, freeways, transit, etc.) M2's list of projects includes similar benefits.

By 2006, a team of negotiators (Terry Watt, Garry Brown, Claire and Melanie Schlotterbeck) met with OCTA to pitch the concept of landscape level mitigation. Instead of doling out 5-8% for environmental review and mitigation for *each* freeway project—we asked OCTA to pool that same money and spend it comprehensively. Historically mitigation was spent project-by-project. With the concept of a programmatic approach, higher level mitigation would occur by pooling impacts and money.

This idea had benefits for all sides. For the conservationists, it meant that important properties on the Green Vision Map would be protected. For OCTA, it meant that the Authority

would receive streamlined permitting because of the comprehensive nature of its mitigation. For the Resource (Permitting) Agencies, it meant that the mitigation was more meaningful. For the Orange County taxpayers, it meant that their tax dollars would be spent more wisely.

In the end, more than 30 of the 85 conservation and community groups supported M2 because of its \$243.5 million "call out" for comprehensive mitigation. The Coalition then assisted OCTA by working to pass the measure. Supervisor Bill Campbell recently credited the Environmental Coalition with passing the measure, which required a two-thirds majority vote (66.67%).

In 2007, OCTA developed its Early Action Plan—a plan that allowed for early funding of projects. Included in the Plan was early money for this new Environmental Mitigation Program. That same year OCTA established the Environmental Oversight Committee (EOC) to oversee the program and make recommendations on the expenditures.

In 2008, the EOC developed criteria to evaluate proposed projects. These criteria included: property size, adjacency to existing parks, wildlife movement corridors, and habitat quality, among other things. At the urging of the Environmental Coalition, OCTA hired conservation specialists at the Conservation Biology Institute to evaluate remaining undeveloped lands. Since the program and its funds are tied to specific habitats and species being impacted by the freeway projects, this evaluation helped prioritize what

areas were extremely important and would therefore be excellent mitigation opportunities for OCTA's freeway projects. Once the properties were evaluated, the EOC, the Transportation 2020 Committee, and the full OCTA Board approved moving forward with the list of priority projects.

In fall 2010, the EOC approved six restoration projects throughout the County. These projects are in a host of watersheds to allow efficient processing of the regulatory permits associated with riparian (stream) impacts.

Beginning in spring 2011, four properties have been protected through this willing seller program. It is expected more properties will be purchased with this first round of acquisition funding.

Additional funding will be available for both restoration and acquisition over the 30 year life of the measure. New applications are due August 30, 2011 for the next round of restoration funding. Learn more at www.FHBP.org.

This unique partnership has led to impressive successes. As Charles Darwin once said, "In the long history of mankind, those who learned to collaborate and improve most effectively have prevailed." Now M2 and its Environmental Mitigation Program are an excellent example of how several entities can unite for a common purpose and were met with unprecedented success. We celebrated those successes in June.

The photo above shows conservation leaders with OCTA Directors and staff at the party. See the inside of the newsletter for project/property details.

Building on M2's Success via a Sustainability Plan

By: Melanie Schlotterbeck

Through another unique partnership—Orange County is the only region (so far) to have incorporated in its regional sustainability planning document—a natural lands acquisition strategy. This planning document outlines the various methods Orange County will use to implement a required reduction in vehicle miles travelled.

In 2008, SB 375 (Steinberg) was approved by the California Legislature and signed into law by then-Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. This law, known as the Sustainable Communities Planning Act, requires each Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to create a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) to reduce the number of miles driven by cars and light duty trucks. This law helps implement California's AB 32 legislation. AB 32 requires a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) to 1990 levels by 2020. California has been a leader in advancing legislation that tackles important topics like land use planning and climate change.

The MPO that oversees Orange County is the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG). Six Southern California counties are within the SCAG region, including: Ventura, Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Riverside, Orange, and Imperial. The SCAG region has more than 16 million residents, which is nearly 45% of the entire state's population. Interestingly, SCAG was specifically called out in the legislation and allowed to have its sub-regions (of which there are 14) create a local SCS that would be incorporated into the "master" SCS.

Orange County was one of two SCAG sub-regions, the other being the Gateway Cities, that chose to write its own SCS. The OC SCS outlines the current demographics, developed areas, transportation analysis zones, and more. It also incorporates Renewed Measure M's transportation projects and the recently adopted Regional Transportation Plan for Orange County. The OC SCS was produced by the Orange County Council of Governments (OCCOG) and its consultants.

OCCOG provided numerous opportunities for public input while it developed the OC SCS. It was one of these opportunities that Friends of Harbors, Beaches, and Parks Green Vision Coalition submitted a letter requesting a

Melanie Schlotterbeck



dialogue to include a natural lands acquisition strategy. Though the concept was initially met with mixed reviews, after continued discussions about its merits, the benefits and co-benefits were realized. Language was developed by the Coalition and submitted to OCCOG for inclusion in the OC SCS.

Twenty-six conservation and community groups endorsed the natural land acquisition strategy, which offers local jurisdictions the opportunity to preserve open space to (1) reduce vehicle miles travelled on the land should it have been converted to a developed parcel, and (2) allow native habitats to store and absorb carbon and other GHG emissions.

This approach has many co-benefits, including, it:

- builds on the existing effort between the environmental community, OCTA, Caltrans, and the Resource Agencies;
- allows local jurisdictions to align their planning priorities and land use decisions together with funds necessary to purchase and preserve natural lands; and
- allows for early implementation and mitigation opportunities, which offers immediate GHG emissions avoidance benefits.

The OCCOG and OCTA adopted at their June 2011 meetings the OC SCS, which included the natural lands acquisition strategy as one of many strategies to meet the mandates of SB 375. The document has now been sent to SCAG for incorporation into the "master" SCS. SCAG's public outreach will begin in August 2011 and the document will be available for public review and input this fall. The SCAG SCS will go to the state for final review and approval by the end of the calendar year.

We are proud to have developed the first natural lands acquisition strategy that both meets the mandates of SB 375 and protects important natural lands. Our work has been sent to others working on regional SCS's with the hope that they too can incorporate a regional open space strategy in their documents. We hope our acquisition strategy serves as a statewide model.

It is with great pleasure that we now celebrate this new partnership with OCCOG. In fact, it launches our next round collaborative efforts, with cities, on the implementation of this strategy.

Melanie Schlotterbeck



Sustainable Policies Document Released

By: Melanie Schlotterbeck

With limited time, fewer staff, and smaller budgets it can be hard for cities to justify spending time researching how to make the city more sustainable or even attend seminars to gain the knowledge about the hows and whys. It was because of this and other experiences with Orange County cities that Friends of Harbors, Beaches, and Parks (FHBP) decided to provide cities with the information on sustainability, new environmental laws, and showcase examples of cutting edge programs and policies that exist throughout the County.

Volunteers “adopted” cities in mid-2009. FHBP provided a sample list of potential innovative policies they were to research in their General Plan. The volunteers then researched the Plan’s elements looking for forward-thinking and exemplary policies. With the assistance of Terry Watt, a Green Vision Team member and renowned urban planner, the policies were consolidated to include the best of the best policies—policies could be exemplary as is or foundational to creating a great policy.

In June 2011, FHBP completed this two year project, which culminated in the creation of a 120 page full color General Plan Resource Directory. The Directory is separated in to chapters related to planning and the General Plan, environmental laws, climate change, and policy guidelines and examples. We wanted to make this easy for cities and the Directory allows a “copy and paste” approach to incorporate more sustainable policies. This project was made possible through a generous grant from the Boeing Company.

This summer our Green Vision Team will meet with several cities to see if opportunities exist to add new sustainability components to the General Plan. We will also be providing copies of the Directory to all OC City Managers, Planning Directors, and City Council members and the County.

WHAT IS A GENERAL PLAN?

Planning—both short-term and long-term—takes into consideration social, economic, environmental, and transportation factors. State law requires cities to create a document that provides the blueprint for how a community develops and evolves. This document is called a General Plan. The majority of decisions concerning plans, policies, and projects are in the hands of the elected officials—on our City Councils and Boards of Supervisors.

General Plans explain where the schools, houses, industry, shopping, and other land use designations will go. Without this information, incompatible uses may be situated next to each other. For example, a mining operation neighboring a hospital or school may not be the most appropriate adjoining uses. Each General Plan is required to cover specific elements, including but not limited to: housing, transportation, land use, open space, noise, and safety.

DO CLIMATE CHANGE LAWS IMPACT GENERAL PLANS?

Yes! It is clear that California’s new climate change legislation will impact both General Plans and the

implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act. By mandating a reduction of greenhouse gases to 1990 levels by 2020 (AB 32) and then providing implementing legislation that ties transportation to land use planning (SB 375)—California is now primed to meet its goals.

WHAT DOES CLIMATE CHANGE MEAN FOR CALIFORNIA AND OC?

California has the potential to be significantly impacted by climate change for several reasons and this impacts how we plan for the future. First, California with its 1,100 miles of coastline is at serious risk when it comes to sea level rise. Second, California has just recovered from a multi-year statewide drought and the anticipated and available water supplies remain uncertain at best. Third, along with the rest of the nation, California will experience extreme weather patterns. Finally, much of California is facing significant and extended fire seasons, which have tremendous impact on both the natural environment and the developments nearby. In essence, we have planned all of our infrastructure (e.g., flood plains, water networks, transportation methods) on the climate being a certain way and now that climate baseline is changing.

Orange County also struggles with these same four impacts because it has 42 miles of coastline, our water supply has been curtailed, and the region is already experiencing both extreme weather events, and more frequent devastating wildland fires.

CAN I GET A COPY OF THE RESOURCE DIRECTORY?

Yes! The Resource Directory is available to the general public, agencies, and other non-profit organizations. Check out our website (www.FHBP.org) to buy your copy beginning August 1st.



Protected Natural Lands



Saddle Creek South

Size: 84 acres
 Closed Escrow: April 29, 2011
 Purchase Price: \$3.18 million
 Per Acre Price: \$38,000
 Interim Manager:
 Transportation Corridor Agencies
 Key Biological Attributes:
 Connectivity Oak Woodlands
 Contiguity Cactus Wren



Hayashi

Size: 296 acres
 Closed Escrow: May 18, 2011
 Purchase Price: \$2.96 million
 Per Acre Price: \$10,000
 Interim Manager:
 Chino Hills State Park
 Key Biological Attributes:
 Contiguity Riparian
 Grasslands Walnut Woodlands



Ferber Ranch

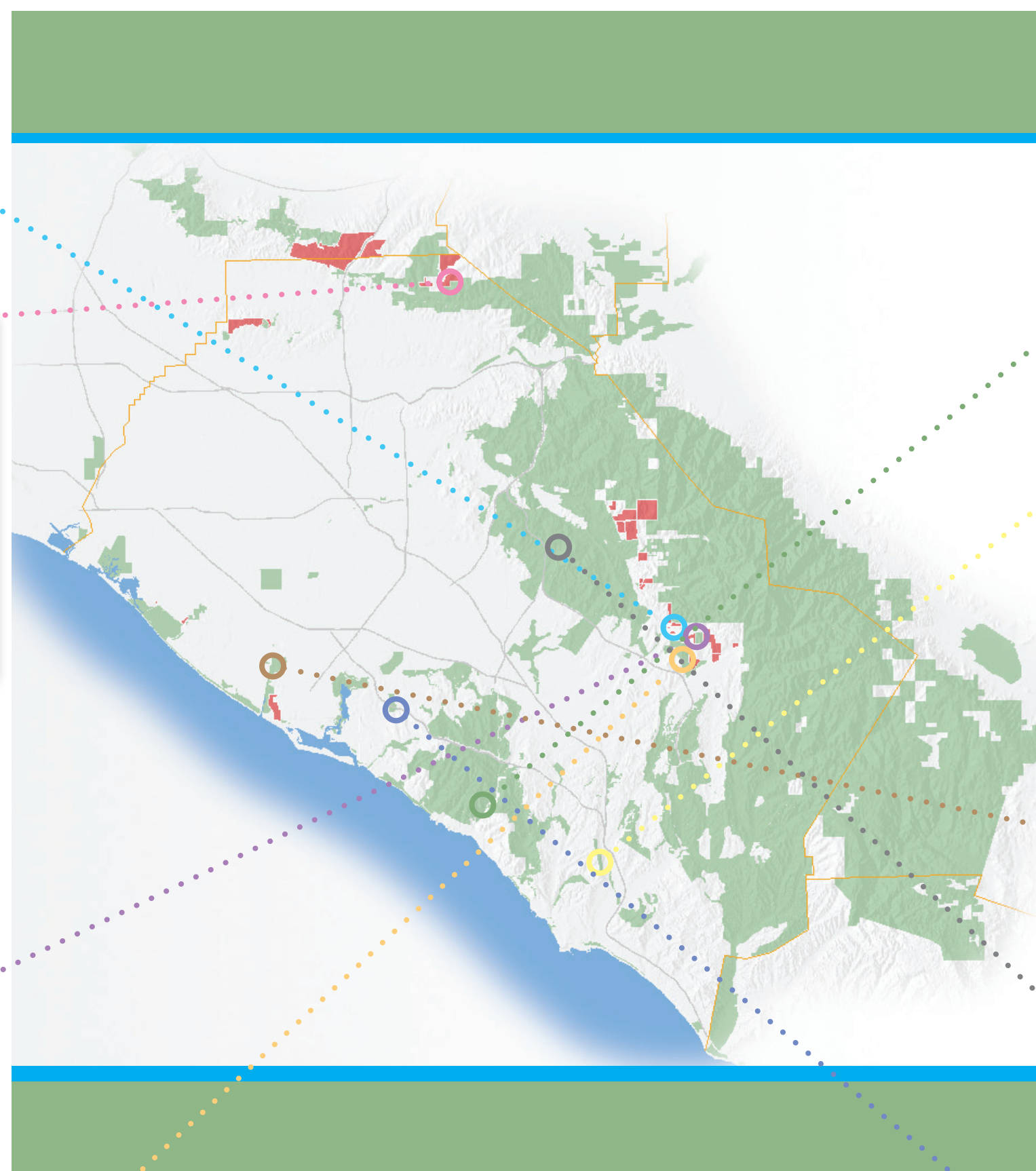
Size: 399 acres
 Closed Escrow: May 31, 2011
 Purchase Price: \$12.76 million
 Per Acre Price: \$32,000
 Interim Manager:
 OC Parks
 Key Biological Attributes:
 Reserve Size Coastal Sage Scrub
 Contiguity CA Gnatcatcher



O'Neill Oaks

Size: 119 acres
 Closed Escrow: May 31, 2011
 Purchase Price: \$4.29 million
 Per Acre Price: \$36,000
 Interim Manager:
 OC Parks
 Key Biological Attributes:
 Contiguity Coastal Sage Scrub
 Chaparral Sycamore Woodlands

Milestones in the OCTA Environmental Mitigation Program



Working with OCTA has been "ground breaking" (so to speak), establishing a mitigation program dealing with the critical nexus of land and habitat impacts and freeway expansion. Instead of arguing different project effects, the program allows environmentalists and transportation planners to work together to preserve important habitat while improving mobility.

— Jack Eidt, Director of Planning
 Wild Heritage Planners

Restoration Projects



Big Bend

Size: 5 acres
 Restoration Price: \$87,500
 Watershed: Laguna Canyon Channel
 Project Sponsor:
 City of Laguna Beach
 Key Biological Attributes:
 Upland Coastal Sage Scrub
 Riparian Woodland



City Parcel

Size: 53 acres
 Restoration Price: \$1.5 million
 Watershed: San Juan Creek
 Project Sponsor:
 City of San Juan Capistrano
 Key Biological Attributes:
 Upland Coastal Sage Scrub
 Oak Woodland
 Native Grassland



Fairview Park

Size: 23 acres
 Restoration Price: \$2 million
 Watershed: Talbert Channel and
 Greenville/Banning
 Project Sponsor:
 City of Costa Mesa
 Key Biological Attributes:
 Wetland
 Willow Scrub
 Native Grasslands



Irvine Ranch

Size: ~500 acres
 Restoration Price: \$1.5 million
 Watershed: Santa Ana River
 Project Sponsor:
 Irvine Ranch Conservancy
 Key Biological Attributes:
 Coast Live Oak
 Sycamore
 Riparian



UCI Reserve

Size: 8.5 acres
 Restoration Price: \$325,000
 Watershed: San Diego Creek
 Project Sponsor:
 Nature Reserve of Orange County
 Key Biological Attributes:
 Cactus Scrub



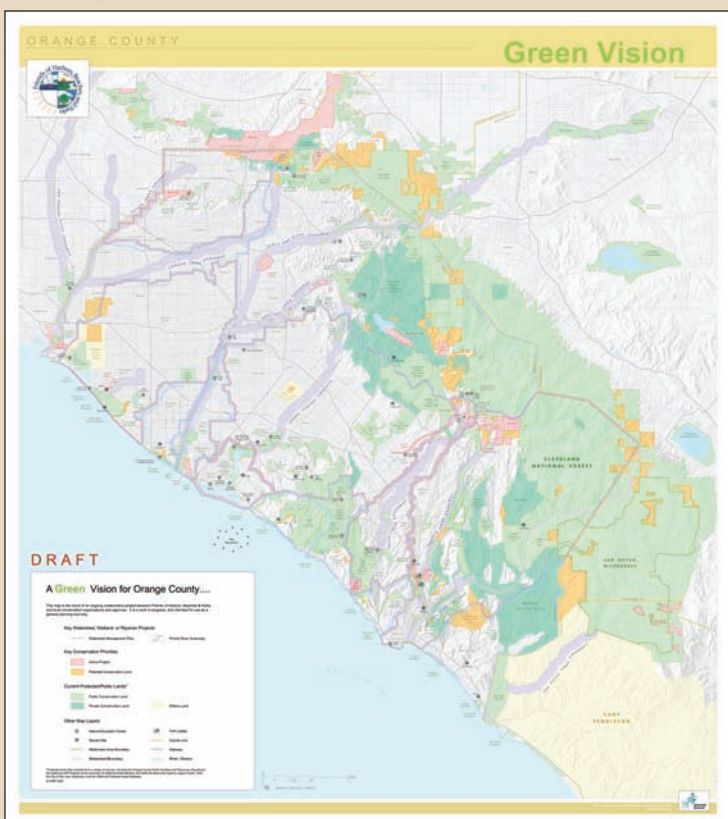
Celebrating 10 Years of Conservation Planning

By Melanie Schlotterbeck

Ten years ago, Jean Watt both an activist and co-founder of Friends of Harbors, Beaches, and Parks went from group to group asking what piece of land are you trying to protect? The answers to this question and Jean's laying the groundwork, set the stage for the now well known Green Vision Map. This year we celebrate her efforts and the 10 year anniversary of the Green Vision Map. Understanding what properties are at stake in the world of conservation has really made an impact on regional preservation efforts.

The Green Vision Map documents the conservation target lands in Orange County and it lays out the knowledge and vision of the 85 organizational members of the Green Vision Coalition. This map is used to show the areas already protected, to outline lands that are considered important for acquisition or restoration, to show wetlands and watersheds, as well as important educational facilities.

This map has been used in local, regional, and statewide conservation efforts. For example, the map's contents have been used in the California Protected Areas Database and was used as the baseline inventory of possible acquisition opportunities for the Renewed Measure M Environmental Mitigation Program (*see cover article*). Future uses may include determining the carbon storing capacity of available natural lands for implementation of the Orange County Sustainable Communities Strategy (*see Building on M2's successes article*).



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*works to protect the natural lands, waterways,
and beaches of Orange County.*

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