

Outdoors

in Orange County

Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks Summer 2017



Baby geese in Carbon Canyon Regional Park

Parks Make Life Better For All of Us!

By: Melanie Schlotterbeck, FHBP

Naturalist John Muir once said, “When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe.” It is kind of like that loose string on your favorite sweater, you know that if you pull it—things will unravel and your sweater will never be the same. Interestingly, our landscape is no different.

Muir’s quote is embodied in our parkland. It doesn’t have to be a National Park or even a State Park to create an impact. Local and regional parks matter too. If you try to separate how our parks interact with us in an environmental, social equity, health, climate, quality of life, experiential, or any other way—you’ll find that the land exceeds its value in countless ways.

Last fall, the Boeing Corporation funded Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks (FHBP) to study more of the benefits parks bring to our communities. Instead of simply acknowledging our parks for the habitat and recreational values, we opted to dive deeper into other meaningful aspects. We culled the list down to nine topics. The factsheets will be released in July, but this article provides a sneak peak of what’s to come.

We asked, what value does a park bring to:

- **Water Quality:** Permeable surfaces, like those found in parks, improve our water quality and keep our oceans clean by

allowing water to be filtered upstream by nature and resorbed into the underground aquifer.

- **Urban Heat Islands:** Due to their natural state and vegetation, parks reflect rather than absorb the sun’s heat. In short, parks keep our communities cooler.
- **Daily Experiences:** With their many amenities, parks offer families and individuals of all kinds opportunities that they may not have had the chance to experience elsewhere—like seeing geese in a park. And the good news is that parks are also affordable and close to home.
- **Engagement in Government:** Parks offer residents the opportunity to become open space advocates and engage with local government in a direct and personal way. When you care about the land you are willing to invest your time to protect it.
- **Wildlife Corridor Connectivity:** Parks offer our plants and wildlife a way to continue thriving—especially when they are connected to a broader system of open spaces.
- **Carbon Sequestration:** Parks and the habitats they maintain remove particulate matter from the air and store heat-generating greenhouse gases within plants through their natural process of photosynthesis.
- **Quality of Life:** Parks provide places to play, relax, recreate, unwind, and enjoy the outdoors.
- **Environmental Education:** Parks increase opportunities for environmental education and promote a happier, healthier, and smarter generation of students.
- **Health and Well Being:** Parks provide places to reflect, to find yourself, and to increase your well-being.

With this in mind, we thank our tireless park advocates for ensuring parklands are preserved forever, to our decision makers for creating parks, and sometimes to developers and transportation agencies for setting aside parklands as well.

We all benefit from parks—near and far—going to them or just knowing they are there waiting for a visit.





DRAFT

A Green Vision for Orange County...

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

- | Acquisition Opportunities | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Active Conservation Project | Potential Conservation Land |
| Other Land Designations | |
| Public Conservation Land | Private Conservation Land |
| Public Not Protected | Easement / H.O.A. Land |
| Golf Course / Cemetery | Landfill |
| Military Land | Utility Land |
| Other Map Layers | |
| Nature / Education Center | Stream Corridor |
| Sacred Site | County Boundary |
| Watershed Boundary | Highway |

Data compiled from a variety of sources including First American Title, with input from OC Parks; the California GAP Program at the University of California, Santa Barbara; the California Resources Agency - Legacy Project (2003); the Cities of Break, Irvine, and San Juan Capistrano; and the California Protected Areas Database. © FHBP 2000-2016. All Rights Reserved.



Sully Miller, Orange (Map #1)

Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks (FHBP) has gone on record supporting preservation of permanent open space on the Sully Miller site in East Orange. This property is on our Green Vision Map and is located adjacent to the Santa Ana River's biggest tributary—the Santiago Creek. Nearly 100 acres of the site has been designated as permanent open space by four planning documents dating back to the 1970s. FHBP believes that those plans should be adhered to. Santiago Creek cannot be

isolated for preservation while the neighboring land is developed. The community defeated two development proposals because their input and site constraints were ignored. The project's Draft Environmental Impact Report is due out this summer. FHBP and residents will be watching this one closely.



West Alton Project, near Irvine (Map #2)

Construction of the central segment of the wildlife corridor, next to the Great Park, is underway soon yet the corridor is in jeopardy as it approaches the foothills above Irvine Blvd. Orange County's West Alton project proposes a dense high-rise (5-7 stories) of 800+ apartments on both sides of a narrow existing stretch of the corridor. The Draft Environmental Impact Report did not consider that this piece of the corridor is already mitigation for impacts to Borrego Creek by a road project, and that the

mitigation plan calls for a functioning wildlife corridor in perpetuity. Genetic mixing between coastal and inland wildlife must be restored, or our coastal wildlife will disappear over time. Laguna Greenbelt is leading the way to prevent this. FHBP supports the connection between the coastal parks and the Cleveland National Forest.



Los Cerritos Wetlands, near Seal Beach (Map #3)

The amazing Los Cerritos Wetlands is located near where the San Gabriel River meets the sea. Wetlands are an important part of our functioning coastal ecosystem. They naturally clean our water, provide important habitat for our wildlife, and act as part of the Pacific Flyway for bird migrations. Approximately 500 acres is all that remains of what was once a vast wetlands complex, now degraded due to years of oil and other exploitation. But the tide is turning for these wetlands, because, thanks to local activists,

now half of the wetlands are protected in public ownership, with more on the way. That doesn't mean we can let up on our advocacy; we know the remaining parts of Los Cerritos Wetlands are constantly under threat of inappropriate use. The Los Cerritos Wetlands Land Trust is spearheading this effort and FHBP supports their great work.



OC Fairgrounds, Costa Mesa (Map #4)

Orange County's important public asset (the Fairgrounds) is in the spotlight again. With overwhelming public support, the sale of the OC Fairgrounds was stopped in 2012. Now it's time for the residents to weigh in with their vision for this historic town square and ways to make it a statewide model facility using innovative and efficient technologies. The Orange County Fair Board has directed staff to work on the development of a 10 year Master Site Plan. The Fair Board has been hosting

stakeholder meetings. Planning will continue for the balance of the year for this 150 acre site and event venue. FHBP has been involved throughout the years and we encourage you to get involved too. Learn more and add your comments on the Master Site Plan by visiting: ocfair.com/public-information/master-plan/



Esperanza Hills, above Yorba Linda (Map #5)

Residents in Yorba Linda have been advocating for the protection of 469 acres in the steep hills in county territory above Yorba Linda. The project is adjacent to Chino Hills State Park. The latest blow to their effort occurred on May 9th when the County Board of Supervisors voted 4-1 (Spitzer voting no) to approve the Esperanza Hills project. In all our years of fighting projects we've never seen the home district Supervisor overridden like this—it was unprecedented. FHBP supported the effort by becoming a

co-plaintiff in several ongoing lawsuits against the project applicant and County. The original suit won on failure to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. Several items were appealed by residents hoping for a different outcome. A third legal challenge is now focused on the May 2017 decision. The fight continues.



Poseidon, Huntington Beach (Map #6)

FHBP has worked with many environmental organizations to oppose the proposed Poseidon desalination project in Huntington Beach. With its ocean intake pipes, Poseidon proposes infeasible protections to billions of fish eggs, mature fish, and other marine life and, as a by-product of its reverse osmosis desalination processes, the project will discharge highly saline wastewater into the coastal zone. This project will harm the fragile coastal environment. And, let's face it, conservation and other

solutions make Poseidon unnecessary. Privatizing water, our most precious resource, is bad policy. We find the intrusion of the private, for-profit, out-of-state corporation proposing to sell extremely high-priced and unneeded water very troubling. We will continue to work with others to stop this poorly planned water project.



The Last 20 Years



Melanie Schlotterbeck

By: Jean Watt, FHBP

The next 20 years for FHBP has all the earmarks of success with Michael Wellborn taking over as President and Gloria Sefton as Vice President. I couldn't have hoped for more.

Mike comes with a knowledge of how government works, having been an employee for the County of Orange for his work life—and better yet, experienced in non-profit administration as he still serves as President of the California Watershed Network. He's a great guy with a big smile and a great attitude—and a perfect leader for our group.

Gloria became a lawyer partially because of her interest and involvement in preservation in the Orange County canyons where she lives. She is co-founder of the Saddleback Canyons Conservancy and brings a wealth of serious commitment and knowledge to our Board. I can just be a helper—what could be better than that?

Thinking back to the first 20 years, a few things stand out. There was an onset of serious environmentalism by local (and national) non-profits in the 1970s, with new federal Clean Air and Clean Water laws, new state General Plan and environmental quality laws, and with the advent of the Coastal Commission and Coastal Conservancy.

Twenty years later, the 1990s brought on a new wave whereby local non-profits realized a need to think more broadly and regionally. The formation of FHBP in 1997 exhibited this need for broader constituencies and collaboration. The most phenomenal and hopeful thing to me was the formation of the state's Southern California Wetland Recovery Project in 1998—about 30 years late in the scheme of things, but it takes just about that long to turn the ship of state. So after many people spent their lives working to save coastal areas in Upper Newport Bay and Bolsa Chica, the state finally acknowledged the need to save our precious wetlands, marine nurseries, and stopping off places for the Pacific Flyway.

Everyday we see articles about the need for wildlife corridors and yet Hills For Everyone continues working toward that end. Thank goodness for the early forward thinking people who led these charges in Orange County. And thank goodness for all the groups now who form partnerships allowing FHBP to continue pulling it all together with our Green Vision Map and Green Vision Coalition. Much more conservation progress is yet to come!

The Next 20 Years



Michael Wellborn

By: Michael Wellborn, FHBP

It is an honor to have been elected as the new President of FHBP. At the same time, I am intensely aware of the legendary accomplishments from Jean Watt's career, including many more still to come!

Over the past 10+ years as a board member for FHBP, I have grown to enjoy the determination and the successes that this group of open space activists has achieved. My intention for the coming years is to encourage the Board to continue to protect the lands and waters of Orange County, reach out to our associated organizations with support and collaboration opportunities, and to expand our community outreach efforts.

The recent years have seen some major steps forward in conservation actions, as well as a few steps backward. The current grading of oak-laden hillsides for the remote Saddle Crest housing project near Cook's Corner is a vivid and painful reminder that we still have work to do.

Other conflicts continue with the equally poorly conceived development proposals at Banning Ranch in Newport Beach and Esperanza Hills outside of Yorba Linda. Yet the strong public concern in these communities has been heartening. It builds momentum for responsible, appropriately-located development while being balanced with dedications of open space to maintain the long-term health of our unique habitats and fantastic recreational opportunities.

The horizon timeline for dubious infrastructure proposals of concern includes the notorious, unnecessary, and expensive Poseidon desalination plant in Huntington Beach and the re-emerging extension of the 241 toll road by the Transportation Corridor Agencies in South County. FHBP will continue to be on the front lines objecting to these proposals and suggesting appropriate alternatives that would better serve the residents and rich natural heritage of Orange County.

You can rest assured that FHBP will be tackling the county's (and sometimes the region's) most critical policy issues. It is time our decision makers focused on creating a sustainable future instead of continuing to allow projects to use outdated planning and sprawl into our sensitive lands. And, we'll simultaneously be advocating for additional park funds through opportunities like the Park Bond Act. Your ongoing support is critical to transforming these challenges into success stories. We can make them happen. And we genuinely appreciate every step forward that you take with us!

Conservation Successes



Orange County Transportation Authority

Melanie Schlotterbeck

By: Melanie Schlotterbeck, FHBP

Nobody ever would have guessed that we'd find ourselves in 2017 partnered with the Orange County Transportation Authority and celebrating the construction of 13 freeway project improvements, but we are. We are celebrating because 12 years ago FHBP spearheaded an effort to incorporate a landscape-level conservation program. Usually freeway projects reduce construction impacts one project at a time. Because of our negotiations, they now do it comprehensively (all together).

In a monumental lift, FHBP coordinated a coalition of conservation and community groups to support a transportation sales tax measure because the Authority agreed to spend environmental dollars more meaningfully. So far, the Authority has permanently preserved 1,300 acres in: Brea, Silverado and Trabuco Canyons, and Laguna Beach. They've also worked with project sponsors throughout the County to restore lands in places like Fairview Park, Bolsa Chica, the Irvine Ranch lands, Aliso Creek, and Chino Hills State Park.

Ultimately more than 30 conservation and community groups supported the measure, called Renewed Measure M, because of the great benefits of the mitigation program. This marked the first time in Orange County that conservation groups supported a transportation measure. This funding source allows park advocates to continue protecting important landscapes throughout the County.

This comprehensive approach used science and mapping to determine the most important lands to protect. In fact, FHBP's Green Vision Map became the starting point for conservation opportunities. After landowners were contacted and opted into this willing-seller program, scientific evaluations of their lands occurred. On June 20th, the Authority, Caltrans, state and federal permitting agencies, and the conservation community celebrated the completion of the Conservation Plans. We offer our congratulations and deep appreciation to all entities involved. It is because of these unique partnerships that this milestone was achieved.

The good news is there is more money to come. After a non-wasting endowment is established to fund the permanent stewardship of these protected lands, additional funds will be available for more projects to meet the voter-approved Ordinance. You can bet FHBP will be at the table supporting the effort and guiding the expenditures.

Tree Ordinance Progress



Melanie Schlotterbeck

By: Gloria Sefton, FHBP

At its May 24th meeting, the Orange County Planning Commission considered a Tree Preservation Ordinance. The Commission usually hears opposition on their agenda items, but this time they heard supportive testimony and voted unanimously to initiate the Ordinance for the County's unincorporated areas.

FHBP had a hand in this new initiative. When we discovered that Orange County did not have a protected tree ordinance (the only county in the Southern California region that does not), we collaborated with our conservation allies to craft a concept ordinance for the County's consideration.

After suffering the ravages of a multi-year drought, plus infestations and fires, trees need our help for their very survival. Trees release oxygen, store carbon, and provide crucial wildlife habitat. Trees lend beauty and charm to the landscape and enhance the value and character of communities. Trees also have tremendous cooling effects. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, a young healthy tree's cooling effect "is equivalent to ten room-size air conditioners operating 20 hours a day."

The County acknowledged the encroachment of development on tree-rich areas and the importance of protecting trees countywide. Now with a consulting firm engaged to develop the Ordinance, the County will take a current inventory of all tree species and recommend trees to be protected. According to County staff, "[t]he project will include a robust public outreach effort to ensure stakeholders are provided the opportunity to review and comment on the proposed Ordinance language and regulations."

The County set a tentative schedule that includes community workshops and a draft ordinance and environmental documents in the fall, with public hearings to take place in the December 2017 to January 2018 timeframe.

FHBP is gratified to have initiated this action and pleased with this initial progress. We are poised to assist the County and look forward to final adoption of the first protective tree ordinance for Orange County.

Questions regarding the Ordinance may be submitted to FHBP Vice President, Gloria Sefton, at: gloriasefton@gmail.com.

Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks (FHBP) works to protect the natural lands, waterways, and beaches of Orange County. Learn more at:

www.FHBP.org



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We Are Getting People Out!

By: Amy Litton, FHBP

That our finite natural resources in Orange County sustain pressure from continual use was foremost in the minds of the organizations that formed the Safe Trails Coalition (STC) in 2012.



Melanie Schlotterbeck

STC seeks to complement efforts of land managers to address the problems associated with trail misuse. The situation is obvious to nearly everyone who uses our trails—and many who don't.

Protecting the resources while preserving access is a time consuming and costly pursuit. In October 2016, the STC released a factsheet outlining costs associated with off-trail use. The data was obtained in a survey that included cities, public entities, agencies, and conservancies at the local, regional, state, and federal level. The results document that aside from impacts to habitat, there is increased risk and liability for land managers, and impacts to the public's investment. Funding restoration, for example, may cost as little as \$3,000 per acre – or as much as \$160,000 per acre. Sensitive habitats like coastal sage scrub and riparian areas are more complex and therefore more costly to restore.

The public's pocket book is impacted when trail signs are damaged and must be replaced, and trail technology to track illegal use must be put into place. Land managers are forced to spend money fixing impacts, instead of maintaining the existing trails and resources.

The Safe Trails Coalition encourages everyone to safely enjoy the trails. Toward that end, this year FHBP offered a series of successful walks. We opted to span the spectrum of locations and topics. Funded by the Boeing Corporation, these hikes offer a unique opportunity to engage the public, promote good stewardship, and enjoy some of our parks in a responsible manner.

Our first hikes were at the Little Corona tidepools, Carbon Canyon Regional Park, and Mason Regional Park. Our fourth and final hike is scheduled at Bolsa Chica Ecological Preserve in July. They've been so successful that our last hike is already at capacity. We are contemplating offering these again in 2018.

Audubon California, Laguna Canyon Foundation, Sea & Sage Audubon, Sierra Club, and FHBP are founding members of the STC. There are over 30 support organizations. Learn more at: SafeTrailsCoalition.org.

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