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OC Conservation
Committee



Sea &
Sage Audubon



Newport Bay
Conservancy
Our mission is to protect and
preserve Upper Newport Bay



July 10, 2020

Submitted via email to Michelle.Steel@ocgov.com

Chair Michelle Steel and Supervisors
Orange County Board of Supervisors
333 W. Santa Ana Blvd., 5th Floor
Santa Ana, CA 92701

RE: Parks and the Pandemic

Dear Chair Steel and Supervisors:

We are writing on behalf of the Green Vision Coalition to commend your decisions allowing parks to remain open during the pandemic, and we also thank OC Parks staff for their service during these uncertain times. Keeping parks open and accessible has been beneficial, needed, and widely supported by the community at large.

By way of background, the Green Vision Coalition was formed in 2000 by Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks as a way to consolidate and unite the voice for parks, water quality, and open space. We have more than 80 conservation and community groups that support this collective mission. The signatories to this letter support the appropriate recreational access to the OC Parks system during the pandemic and future park acquisitions.

As you know, the pandemic has brought to everyone's attention the need for quality recreational spaces and wilderness lands. Further, the ability of the OC's park system to provide that much needed outdoor time when

physical distancing is necessary has been a clear mark of achievement. Our parks have shown us that they are a community asset to the residents nearby. As a side note, for the safety of current and new park visitors, we support the pro-active closures of unauthorized trails that are unsafe, poorly located, and may lead to emergency rescues of unknowing visitors.

Based on what we've seen—because of the stay at home orders—our parks became ever more popular, saw significant increases in use, and offered a respite for those just trying to get out of the house and stay safe. It is our individual and collective goal to remind you that parks have this intrinsic value all the time—but it was illustrated best during the pandemic.

If ever there is a question about whether additional funds should be spent to acquire, restore, or maintain our parklands, we urge you to remember this moment—a moment where the public descended on the park system to enjoy nature, to stay healthy, and to find a little peace among the pandemic chaos. But, parks are valuable with and without a pandemic. And, parks are part of the fabric that make our communities feel like home, increase our quality of life, and should continue to be an asset the Board invests in now and in the future. Every opportunity that presents itself to the County for expanding the park system should be taken seriously—especially in our urban communities where parks are less prevalent. Further, any opportunities to increase park staff and training would also benefit our public, the natural resources, and the parks system.

We are always available for questions you may have about recreation, parkland, and its continued funding and operation—so, please reach out to the Green Vision Coordinator, Melanie Schlotterbeck, at 714-779-7561.

Sincerely,

Mike Wellborn
President
Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks

Dan Silver, MD
Executive Director
Endangered Habitats League

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Chair
Sierra Club, Hobo Aliso Task Force

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