

April 27, 2017

Mr. Mendel Stewart, Field Supervisor
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office
2177 Salk Avenue, Suite 250
Carlsbad, CA 92008

RE: Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) Natural Community Conservation Plan/Habitat Conservation Plan, Orange County, CA; Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement and Habitat Conservation Plan

Dear Mr. Stewart:

We have reviewed the Natural Communities Conservation Plan and Habitat Conservation Plan (Conservation Plans) and associated state and federal environmental review documents (Environmental Impact Report [EIR] and Environmental Impact Statement [EIS]) as outlined in the Federal Register Notice from Friday, March 31, 2017 (Vol. 82, No. 61, pp.16054-6: FWS-R8-ES-2017-N021, FF08ECAR00000-FXES1140800000-178). We are writing to offer our full support for Alternative 2 (the Proposed Plan) of the EIR/EIS.

By way of background, a coalition of environmental and community groups supported the Orange County Transportation Authority's (OCTA) Renewed Measure M (M2) in 2006 because of its inclusion of a programmatic mitigation component. The Environmental Coalition remains actively involved in the planning, creation, and implementation of this innovative Environmental Mitigation Program.

We were pleased to see unanimous support and approval by the Environmental Oversight Committee, the OCTA Highways Committee, and the full OCTA Board for the Conservation Plans and environmental documents in November 2016. This letter reaffirms our support the Mitigation Program, Conservation Plans, and environmental documents. We continue to support Alternative 2 (the Proposed Plan) of the EIR/EIS.

The inclusive, transparent, and science-based process is a model for other agencies throughout the state and nation. To this end, the Environmental Coalition remains committed, collectively and individually, to staying involved, including but not limited to providing feedback on future Resource Management Plans for the stewardship components of the remaining two properties: Hayashi and Aliso Canyon.

Additionally, to OCTA, the Resource Agencies, and Caltrans we applaud your efforts to design a thoughtful, defensible, and flexible Conservation Plan and Implementing Agreement for this Mitigation Program that aligns with the promises made to voters over 10 years ago. This piece of the commitment is nearly complete. We look forward to more landscape level acquisitions once the endowment is built.

We also look forward to continuing our partnership and building the non-wasting endowment for the Preserves for the permanent management of these conservation lands.

Thank you for your commitment to this program and the accomplishments to date. Congratulations on a job well done.

Sincerely,

Amigos de Bolsa Chica • California Oaks Foundation • California Cultural Resource Preservation Alliance • Canyon Land Conservation Fund • Chino Hills State Park Interpretive Association • Earth Resource Foundation • Endangered Habitats League • Friends of Coyote Hills • Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks • Friends of Newport Coast • Hills For Everyone • Inter Canyon League • Inland Empire Waterkeeper • Laguna Canyon Conservancy • Laguna Greenbelt, Inc. • Latino Health Access • Newport Bay Conservancy • Orange County Interfaith Coalition for the Environment • Orange County Coastkeeper • Planning and Conservation League • Saddleback Canyons Conservancy • Silverado-Modjeska Recreation and Park District • Stop Polluting Our Newport • The Conservation Fund • The Nature Conservancy • The Trust for Public Land • Wild Heritage Planners • Women For

cc: Director Michael Hennessey, OCTA Chair
Director Lori Donchak, EOC Chair
Darrell Johnson, OCTA
Kia Mortazavi, OCTA
Dan Phu, OCTA
Monte Ward, Consultant to OCTA
Jonathan Snyder, USFWS
Dave Mayer, CDFW