By Melanie Schlotterbeck

Ten years ago, Jean Walt 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 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 console 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 waterbodies, as well as important educational facilities.

This map has been used in local, regional, and statewide conservation efforts. For example, the map has been used in the California Protected Areas Database (CPAD), which is the inventory of possible acquisition opportunities for the Renewed Measure M Environmental Mitigation Program. The CPAD release includes the Green Vision Map as an overlay feature. Future uses may include determining the carbon storage capacity of available natural lands for implementation of the Orange County Sustainable Communities Strategy (see Building on M2's success article).

Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks (FHPB) works to protect the natural lands, waterways, and beaches of Orange County.

By: Melanie Schlotterbeck

I am thrilled to relay the success we’ve had this year with the Green Vision Project. Through the Renewed Measure M Environmental Mitigation Program nearly 800 acres have been protected (to date) and fire restoration projects are moving forward. Below is an outline of how our success eventually fruited over the last six years.

In 2003, the 85-member Green Vision Coalition decided to approach the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) to see if, anything, could be incorporated into the Authority’s 97 sales tax revenue, known as M1, which was the first transportation measure, collected a ½ cent sales tax for 25 years allowing for improvements to our County’s transportation systems (roads, buses, transit, etc.). M2’s list of projects includes similar benefits.

By 2006, a team of negotiators (Terry Watt, Garry Brown, Claire and Lydia) went to OCTA to pitch the concept of landscape level mitigation. Instead of doing out 5-8% for eminent domain and feasibility mitigation for each freeway project—we asked OCTA to pool that money and spend it comprehensively. Historically, mitigation was spent project-by-project. With the concept of a program, approach, higher level mitigation would be provided.

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 (Purchasing) 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 35 of the 85 conservation and community groups supported M2 because of its $340 million “call out” for comprehensive mitigation. The Coalition then assisted OCTA by working to pass the Assembly Bill. Supervisor Bill Campbell recently credited the Environmental Coalition with passing the measure, which required a two-thirds majority vote (66%).

In 2007, OCTA established its Early Action Plan—a plan that allowed for equity funding of projects. Included in the Plan was early money for this new Environmental Mitigation Program.

In 2008, the EOC developed criteria to identify priority projects. These criteria included: property size, adjacency to existing parks, wildlife criteria to evaluate proposed projects.

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 application funding. Learn more at www.FHBP.org.

This unique partnership has lead 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.” OCTA 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, OCTA staff, and Green staff at the party. See the inside of the newsletter for project/property details.
Sustainable Policies Document Released

By: Melanie Schlottteck

Building on M2’s Success via a Sustainability Plan

In 2008, SB 375 (Steinberg) was approved by the California legislature and signed into law by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. This law, known as the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act (SCCPA), sets forth targets for the region to achieve “a long-term sustainable pattern of land use, development, and transportation.”

California has been a leader in advancing legislation that creates important policies on the Green Belt. In the fall of 2008, OCTA CEO Mike Wellborn and the Orange County Social Services (SCS) Board of Supervisors introduced the concept of a programmatic strategy. This was a departure from traditional mitigation and required OCTA to develop a Strategic Plan that would include a new Regional Open Space Strategy. The Regional Open Space Strategy (ROS) was incorporated into the OCTA Strategic Plan in 2010.

In 2010, OCTA launched a new sustainability program called the Great Park Environmental Permitting (GPEP) Program. This program was designed to help cities and the region meet the requirements of SB 375. The program includes a number of initiatives, including:

- The development of a Regional Open Space Strategy
- The development of a Regional Transportation Plan
- The development of a Regional Economic Strategy

The GPEP Program was launched in 2010 and has been expanded to include additional initiatives. The program has been successful in helping cities and the region meet the requirements of SB 375.

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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 its regional sustainability planning document—a natural lands acquisition strategy. This planning document outlines the various measures OCTA has taken to implement the natural lands acquisition strategy.

In 2008, SB 375 (Steinberg) was approved by the California State Legislature and signed into law by then-Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. This law, known as the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act (SCCPA), created the Orange County Safe, Complete, and Green (SCAG) region’s Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Planning Organization (MPO) to create a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) to reduce the number of miles driven and the region’s contribution to global climate change.

This law helps inform the plan, while the OCTA does not want to cause more traffic or more cars on the roads. This law forces OCTA to develop its own SCS that is consistent with the state’s Regional Transportation Plan required by the feds. The OCTA MPO developed its SCS, the Green Vision Coalition, in 2010.

The Green Vision Coalition decided to approach the Coalition and submit to OCTC 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 by (1) reduce vehicle miles travelled on the land should it be converted to a developed parcel, and (2) allow native habitats to store and absorb carbon and other GHG emissions.

The OCTC and OCSC 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 OCTC 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 in the fall. The SCAG SCS will be completed by early 2012 and approved by the end of the calendar year.

We are now illustrating the idea that the OCTA is solving the problem of greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles. Our SCAG SCS, the OC SCS, supports the need to create a sustainable transportation system. We are working with local jurisdictions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles by (1) building active transportation systems, (2) creating bike and pedestrian trails, and (3) allowing for implementation, coordination, and implementation opportunities, which offers immediate GHG emissions benefits.

The OC SCS and OCSCG public outreach began in August 2011 and the document will be available for public review and input in the fall. The SCAG SCS will be completed by early 2012 and approved by the end of the calendar year.

The OCTA will now develop the first natural lands acquisition strategy that both meets the mandates of SB 375 and protects important natural lands. Our work has been focused on (1) creating a template for other SCAG SCS, and (2) allowing for open space strategy, which offers the best opportunities to incorporate a regional open space strategy in their documents. We hope our acquisition strategy serves as a model for the OC SCS.

It is with great pleasure that we now celebrate this new partnership with the OCTA. In fact, the OCTA is the only region (so far) to have incorporated the natural lands acquisition strategy into its regional planning document. This planning document outlines the various measures OCTA has taken to implement the natural lands acquisition strategy.

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, OCTA can respond to it. OCTA worked with the Green Vision Coalition to create a sustainable transportation system. OCTA has worked with local jurisdictions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles by (1) building active transportation systems, (2) creating bike and pedestrian trails, and (3) allowing for implementation, coordination, and implementation opportunities, which offers immediate GHG emissions benefits.

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Milestones in the OCTA Environmental Mitigation Program

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  

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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
Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks (FHBP) works to protect the natural lands, waters, and beaches of Orange County.

By Melanie Schlotterbeck

I 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 free restoration projects are moving forward. Below is an outline of how our successes continued to fruition over the last six years.

In 2008, the FHBP member Green Vision Coalition decided to approach the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) to see if, anything, could be incorporated into the Authority's 10-year sales tax renewal, known as M2, which was the first transportation measure, collected a ½ cent sales tax for 25 years allowing for improvements to our County's transportation network (roads, bridges, transit, etc. M2's list of projects included similar benefits.

Funding for the conservationists, 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 35 of the 85 conservation and community groups supported M2 because of its $340 million "call-out" for comprehensive mitigation. The Coalition then assisted OCTA by working to pass the measure, which required a two-thirds majority (88.67%). In 2007, OCTA developed its Early Action Plan—a plan that allowed for early implementation and mitigation of a project. Included in the plan was a summary report on this new Environmental Mitigation Project. By mandating a reduction of greenhouse gases to 1990 levels (Permitting) Agencies, it meant that the OCTA could then move forward with its projects in a more sustainable way.

In June 2011, FHBP completed this two year project, the Green Vision Team member and renowned urban planner, jean's laying the groundwork, set the stage for the now co-founder of Friends of Harbors, Beaches, and Parks Communities Strategy (see article 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 success article).

Supporting Organizations

Friends of Great Park Environmental Conservancy & Wildlife
Friends of the Great Park
Friends of Orange County Natural Landmarks (FOCL)
Great Park Foundation
Great Park Conservancy
Friends of the Orange County Great Park
OCTA Environmental Mitigation Program—both short-term and long-term—takes planning of this and other experiences with Orange County cities that are necessary to purchase and preserve natural lands; and examples. We wanted to make this easy for cities and the Resource Agencies; allows for early implementation and mitigation projects are in the hands of the elected officials—on our City develops and evolves. This document is called a General Plan.

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