

# Outdoors

in Orange County

Friends of Harbors, Beaches, & Parks Summer 2012

Patrick Mitchell

## Federal and State Laws Ensure Conservation Success

Lawmakers and activists in the United States and California have been instrumental in protecting our natural resources, our public health, and our communities through creative legislation and voter-sponsored initiatives (VSI). Below are a few of the laws crafted at the federal (blue) and state (green) level that have aided in conservation of our natural resources.

### Clean Air Act of 1970

This federal law establishes national air quality standards to regulate hazardous pollutants released into our air and sets air quality targets for each state to improve the public health.

—Signed into law by President Nixon

### Clean Water Act of 1972

This federal law created the process for regulating pollutant discharge into what are known as “waters of the United States” and created the standards for the quality of surface waters (rivers).

—Signed into law by President Nixon

### Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) of 2004

This state law protects the state’s marine and near-shore marine life and habitats, limits human disturbance on marine ecosystems, and redesigns Marine Protected Areas along the coast.

—Signed into law by Gov. Davis

These laws create protections that allow us to safely swim in the ocean, enjoy our coastlines, maintain our quality of life, breathe clean air, improve how our communities grow, and much more.

**This summer we encourage you to celebrate 40 years of environmental laws and conservation victories.**

See a snapshot of Orange County’s achievements on the next page.

### California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970

This state law allows public agencies to make informed decisions about a proposed project’s environmental impacts and allows the public to provide meaningful input on proposed projects.

—Signed into law by Gov. Reagan

### Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973

This federal law provides for the conservation of threatened and endangered plants and animals (and their habitats) and creates a worldwide list of endangered species.

—Signed into law by President Nixon

### Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006

This state law (AB 32) sets the target to reduce the state’s greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020 through emissions reductions, market mechanisms, and other actions.

—Signed into law by Gov. Schwarzenegger

### National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969

This federal law created the framework ensuring all branches of government give consideration and protection to the environment prior to undertaking any major (federal) action that could impact our natural resources.

—Signed into law by President Nixon

### California Endangered Species Act (CESA) of 1970

This state law mandates any native species threatened with extinction or experiencing significant decline, leading to a threatened or endangered designation, will be protected.

—Signed into law by Gov. Reagan

### Coastal Zone Management Act of 1976

This state law made permanent a VSI that created the Coastal Commission to protect and enhance coastal resources for environmentally sustainable and prudent use by current and future generations.

—Signed into law by Gov. Reagan

### Sustainable Communities Planning Act of 2008

This state law (SB 375) requires that Californians reduce their vehicle miles traveled through regional planning and adopts reduction targets to be achieved by 2020 and 2035.

—Signed into law by Gov. Schwarzenegger

# A 40 year snapshot of some Orange County's conservation achievements...

**1970** Endangered Species Act passes. CEQA passes.

**1972** The voter-approved Coastal Act passes.

**1973** The 4,000 acre Starr Ranch property, nestled in the foothills of the Santa Ana Mountains, becomes Orange County's first sanctuary.

**1975** After a decade of lawsuits 750+ acres of Upper Newport Bay are protected as an ecological reserve in the Southern California's largest coastal wetland.

**1978** The first acquisition of the now 20,000+ acre Laguna Coast Wilderness Park is completed with the preservation of Sycamore Hills.

**1979** Crescent Bay Point Park is preserved by a national conservation organization using Land and Water Conservation Funds.

**1980** Prop. 1 passes with \$285 million for parks.

**1981** Crystal Cove is protected in the California State Park System and is later listed on the National Register of Historic Places for its vernacular architecture.

**1984** Prop. 18 passes with \$370 million for parks.

**1987** The first acquisition for Chino Hills State Park begins, stopping a proposed international airport, and the hills are declared an official state park five years later.

**1988** Prop. 70 passes with \$776 million for parks.

**1989** The 25 acre Talbert Marsh had its tidal flow restored when a man-made dike was breached with ocean water.

**1990** The nation's first Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP) was established in central and coastal Orange County.

**1996** The Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project is established to accelerate the restoration of the region's wetlands—from Santa Barbara to Mexico.

**1997** Prop. 12 passes with \$2.1 billion for parks. Prop. 13 passes with \$2.1 billion for clean water.

**2000** Coal Canyon was the state's first acquisition to protect a wildlife corridor which connected the Puente-Chino Hills to the Santa Ana Mountains.

**2001** Prop. 40 passes with \$2.6 billion for parks. Prop. 50 passes with \$3.44 billion for clean water.

**2002** A lawsuit over zoning near Cook's Corner was won, leading to the property's eventual preservation by the Transportation Corridor Agencies.

**2003** After a lengthy battle to preserve the 509 acre Barham Ranch site, the property was purchased and added to the Santiago Oaks Regional Park.

**2004** MLPA passes.

**2005** A legal settlement results in the preservation of 140 acres of the Upper Newport Bay bluffs—home to six rare or endangered species.

**2005** Residents in the canyons begin an annual fundraiser, the Tree Huggers Ball, to promote the protection of the canyon-way of life and important natural resources.

**2005** A legal victory on CEQA and General Plan grounds stopped the Saddle Creek development, setting the stage for its eventual preservation in 2011.

**2006** Thousands urge the Coastal Commission to deny the application to build a six lane Toll Road through the middle of San Onofre State Beach.

**2006** For the first time in county history, more than 30 conservation groups support a transportation sales tax with more than \$500 million included for the environment.

**2008** SB 375 becomes law.

**2008** AB 32 becomes law.

**2010** The restoration of the Magnolia Marsh was complete, including full tidal influence with an observation deck and boat dock for on-the-water tours.

**2010** The state declares that the Orange County Fairgrounds are no longer for sale and activists continue to make headway with the Fair Board.

**2011** Led by OC conservationists, the Southern California Association of Governments adopts a six-countywide conservation policy—the second in the state.

**2012** Supported by an environmental coalition, the Orange County Transportation Authority protects 950 acres and funds 11 restoration projects.

**2012** Urged by environmental leaders, the OC Council of Governments adopts a conservation policy, the first of its kind in the state, in its regional planning document.



## DRAFT

### A Green Vision for Orange County...

This parcel-level map is the result of an ongoing collaborative project between Friends of Harbors, Beaches & Parks and the 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

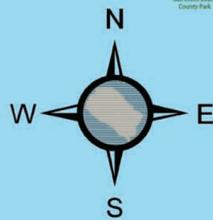
#### Other Land Designations

- Public Conservation Land
- Private Conservation Land
- Public Not Protected
- Easement/H.O.A.
- Golf Course/Cemetery
- Landfill
- Military Land
- Utility Land

#### Other Map Layers

- Nature/Education Center
- Sacred Site
- Watershed Boundary
- Stream Corridor
- County Line
- Highway

Data compiled from a variety of sources, including the 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 San Juan Capistrano and Irvine, and the California Protected Areas Database.



Detailed descriptions of the categories used in this map can be obtained from the Friends of Harbors, Beaches, and Parks website at: [www.FHBP.org](http://www.FHBP.org).

Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic  
Datum: North American 1983  
Last Update: June 2012

## Green Vision Map Gets Needed Overhaul

Since 2000, the Green Vision Map has laid out the collective vision of conservation and community groups. The Map shows existing protected lands—protected through public and private means—as well as properties that groups consider a high priority for conservation and other less critical but potential conservation sites. It has in essence become a wish list of what conservation advocates want to see in Orange County's regional open space system.

The map has been updated yearly with input from the Green Vision Coalition. The Coalition, which consists of more than 80 conservation and community groups, has united to support the Green Vision Project's mission, which is to find and create funding for parks, water quality, and open space.

Several years ago, Friends of Harbors, Beaches, and Parks (FHBP) was able to acquire parcel level data for the map, including Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego Counties. Originally the map was updated by "drawing" in the properties, a technique known as heads-up digitizing. This was a less accurate method to display property information, but it got the job done while it was needed. With new parcel-level information for the region, the map more accurately reflects ownerships, locations, acreages, and such.

The Map and all of its associated data is housed in a specialized mapping program called ArcGIS. This is a geographic information system (GIS). With accurate data and new software the FHBP team was able to convert the previously heads-up digitized version of the map into a highly accurate map. Amazingly, the County of Orange alone has over 600,000 parcels, which were combed through to create the new map, shown left.



With this most recent update the Coalition members were contacted on numerous occasions to ensure properties were on the map and categorized appropriately. This updating process also allowed FHBP to establish guidelines for what properties get included on the map and for what reasons (i.e., culturally significant sites, endangered or threatened species, rare habitat types, etc.). With this latest revision, every property on the map is supported by at least one organizational member of the Coalition.

In addition to establishing guidelines, we added new property categories since open space can come in a variety of forms—protected public parkland, lands managed by conservation organizations, and more. With this overhaul the team realized animals, birds, and plants use other types of undeveloped lands and corridors to nest, forage, sleep, and raise their young. Consequently this revision has several new land designations that were created, including: utility lands, golf courses and cemeteries, homeowners' association lands, easements, and publicly owned but not protected lands.

For more information on the land designations and the criteria for adding properties to the Green Vision Map, visit the FHBP website: [www.FHBP.org](http://www.FHBP.org).

## Non-Traditional Partnerships Prove Successful

As one can gather from the "snapshot" of achievements on the outside of this newsletter, the Orange County conservation community can be proud of its many successes. These victories came because of the willingness and ability of conservation groups to rise to the challenge, think creatively, and establish new partnerships. Many challenges have arisen especially in recent times—from a state bond freeze that tied up conservation dollars, to a flailing economy that has dried up funding and donations for conservation work, to shrunken budgets at local and regional levels. To address these challenges, we've had to get innovative.

One of these moments of innovation has come through partnerships with entities we normally wouldn't work with, known as "non-traditional" partnerships. These partnerships have been formed by both non-profits and agencies. **Orange County Supervisor Patricia Bates** (5th District) is the chair of a Coastal Coalition tasked with coordinating and sharing information related to the coast. "For me, the opportunity for people with a common interest to come together and share their points of view is the way to make progress on issues as large as the coast. Our coast and beaches are a significant part of our unique quality of life and we look forward to continuing our collaborative efforts to promote, protect, and enhance these resources," says Bates.

Another partnership that has led to impressive achievements was collaboration with the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) to create, design, and now implement a regional comprehensive mitigation program tied to the Authority's ½ cent transportation sales tax, Renewed Measure M. "The OCTA Freeway Environmental Mitigation Program is an innovative approach to help conserve our natural habitat while planning for current and future freeway improvement projects," said **OCTA CEO Will Kempton**. "The collaborative effort between OCTA and the Environmental Coalition has been instrumental in the success we have enjoyed for this program and preserving our legacy for future generations."

Not surprisingly these non-traditional partnerships have led to even more partnerships. Over 14 months ago, Friends of Harbors, Beaches, and Parks (FHBP)

began discussing a possible conservation strategy, which we hoped would be included in the County's Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS). The Orange County Council of Governments (OCCOG) worked closely with FHBP and the conservation community to include this feature, which ended up being the first policy of its kind adopted in the state. "The conservation strategy supported by OCCOG was a success on two important levels. First, the collaborative approach and abilities of the Friends of Harbors, Beaches, and Parks was outstanding. The overall effort was a model on how public agencies and non-profit organizations, who may have differences on some issues, can work together to achieve mutually desired outcomes," relays **OCCOG Chair Peter Herzog**. "For the strategy itself, it built upon an existing county-wide conservation program included in Renewed Measure M. Contrary to what some may say, Orange County is leading the way on strategies such as this and what it may mean to our environment."

Building off this success and at the urging of OCCOG, FHBP began discussing a six-county wide conservation strategy that could be incorporated into the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Regional Transportation Plan and SCS. Following Orange County's example, SCAG too adopted a conservation strategy. "For many years, Orange County has been a leader in balancing the needs of the community with environmental stewardship through strategic conservation and restoration programs," comments **Orange County Supervisor Bill Campbell** (3rd District). "The inclusion of the OC SCS Sustainability Strategy H in the RTP/SCS adopted by SCAG is evidence of our community's strong commitment to ensuring a balance between development and environmental mitigation to protect the quality of life we have come to appreciate in this county."

We have enjoyed these new partnerships and are pleased with the outcomes that have resulted. We've gained an open dialogue, creative solutions, and can better appreciate one another's view point. Here's to many more years and successes with partners—both traditional and non-traditional.

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](http://www.FHBP.org)



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## Safe Trails Committee



Orange County is home to an amazing collection of regional parks and wilderness open space with direct access to our National Forest and State Parks.

Friends of Harbors, Beaches, and Parks recently formed a Safe Trails Coalition to help promote and ensure that Orange County's regional trails and open spaces are safe for all visitors, and provide a quality experience for recreational users, while protecting the region's exceptional natural resources.

This regional coalition is comprised of individuals with expertise in land management, wilderness and regional park management, environmental advocacy, hiking, biking, and equestrian activities. Coalition members have extensive, hands-on knowledge related to the county's parks and open spaces. Our goal is to work with various land managers and user groups in order to foster responsible use of the extensive network of regional trails in Orange County. If you or your organization would like to join this effort please contact us at: [info@FHBP.org](mailto:info@FHBP.org).

## Mitigation Program Status

The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) received voter approval in 2006 to move forward with its Renewed Measure M transportation sales tax. A comprehensive mitigation program was included in the measure that more than 30 conservation and community groups supported. Over the last few years, we've seen the implementation of that program progress.

To date, OCTA has acquired nearly 950 acres of important habitat lands and has funded the restoration of 11 different protected sites that improve native habitat and encourage the recovery of sensitive species. These are substantial achievements for this transportation agency, the environmental coalition, and the agencies that issue permits.

OCTA is currently working on creating a Natural Communities Conservation Plan and Habitat Conservation Plan (NCCP/HCP) as the conservation oversight tool for the mitigation program. It is expected the draft NCCP/HCP will be available for public review in August 2012.

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