

# Outdoors

in Orange County

Friends of Harbors, Beaches, & Parks Summer 2016

Melanie Schlotterbeck



A linear park, Jardin De Los Niños, in Garden Grove

## Greening the Concrete Jungle

By: Melanie Schlotterbeck, FHBP

Just like infrastructure such as roads, libraries, powerlines, and water lines play a pivotal role in our civilized society—so do parks. While Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks (FHBP) often focuses its conservation efforts on wilderness areas, the reality is parks in urban areas are just as important to the human spirit and experience. The Boeing Corporation provided a generous grant for FHBP to study urban parks, specifically their locations and accessibility—and develop recommendations to improve the barriers that prevent access and use.

FHBP selected three park poor cities: Stanton, Westminster, and Garden Grove. These cities have well below the recommended standard for park acreage in proportion to the number of residents. We worked closely with each city to get details of their parks and park programs. After touring each park, we noted similarities in amenities offered, like barbeques, picnic benches, and active sports facilities (such as basketball courts, tennis courts, soccer fields, etc.). Some parks were quite unique, while others were a typical neighborhood park. The full study is available on our website: [www.FHBP.org](http://www.FHBP.org).

While the simple response to increasing access or reducing barriers is to say “just add more parks where they are needed”—that isn’t always achievable or it would likely have already happened. When a city is built out, there is literally no more room for parks. Instead, FHBP offered more than a dozen ways to bring park benefits into the city. The attractiveness of these ideas is that they can be replicated in any city. A few of our recommendations include:

### 1. Incorporate Community Parklets

A parklet is a temporary or permanent extension of the sidewalk that allows people to use the street for community space. Parklets present opportunities for art, greenery, bicycle parking, or demonstration areas. Restaurants, coffee shops, bookstores, and other neighborhood gathering places could provide space to create a parklet.

### 2. Bring Nature to the City

Numerous organizations already exist that can provide residents with a personal experience with wildlife ambassadors. These programs could educate the populace and increase their understanding and appreciation of nature by active, managed exposure to it.

### 3. Create Pop-Up Parks & Programs

Pop-Up Parks, an evolving concept, gets people outdoors and can breathe life back into an otherwise highly engineered environment. They can be set up as temporary locations for activities such as music education, rhythm and dance, calisthenics, yoga, libraries, bike shops, and more.

### 4. Offer Local Park Camping

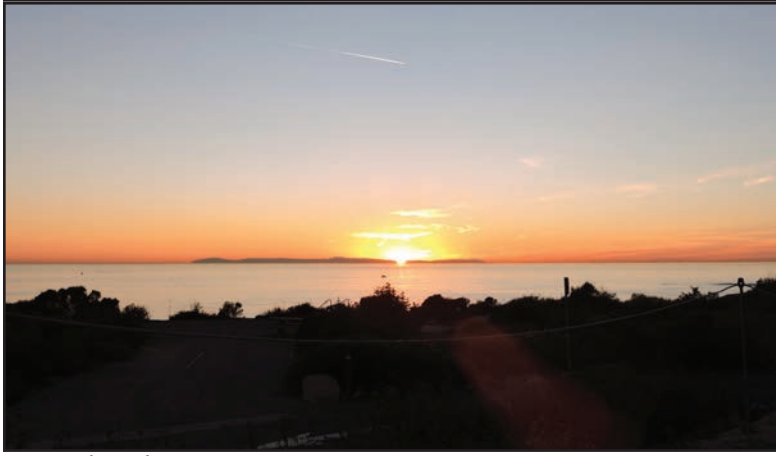
Based on the economics of park-poor communities, it is likely many residents will never have been camping. Cities could explore this idea and provide an Overnight Camp Out in one or more of the local parks. Partnering with recreational focused stores means free or highly discounted rental fees for camping equipment (like sleeping bags and tents).

### 5. Create Mobile Parks That Travel the City

By converting passenger vans into mobile focal points, cities could bring activities to the people. These vans could rotate locations, provide activity options (games, books, sports equipment, etc.), and with varying time frames. If you can’t create new parks by adding parkland, create new parks by bringing the recreational opportunities to the people.

The report contains these and many other recommendations. Cities should consider incorporating these ideas as funding is available. Conversely grants or partnerships may provide funding as well—be creative! FHBP aims to provide our leaders with unique, innovative, and replicable ways to increase green spaces locally. Residents will benefit from being engaged with their community and the outdoors. Our cities are well positioned to convert these opportunities into realities.

## Coastal Influences Grow



Melanie Schlotterbeck

By: Jack Eidt, FHBP

How did our present California Coastal Commission lose sight of its mission to protect our coast? Well, once again, money talks.

By way of background, voters passed a 1972 initiative (Proposition 20) creating the California Coastal Commission. The Legislature, in 1976, adopted the Coastal Act which made the Commission permanent and established the rules of development, impacts, and access to our coastline.

The Commission includes 12 voting members appointed by the Governor, Senate Rules Committee, and the Speaker of the Assembly—each gets four appointments.

The mission of the Coastal Act is to protect the coast for present and future generations through thoughtful planning and environmental regulation by using science, public participation, and intergovernmental coordination. Unfortunately, through aggressive lobbying by development interests, the Commission seems to have lost sight of this mission.

Four cases exposed how secret meetings between Commissioners and project lobbyists led to decisions rendered in their favor. Called ex-parte communications, these conversations would have been legal had they been disclosed in advance. This lack of disclosure prompted legislation to ban ex-parte communications. Along with many other organizations, Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks supported this legislation, but the bill died in the California Legislature.

The four cases in question include: The Ranch hotel rehabilitation in South Laguna's Aliso Canyon, a 30-unit live-work project in Laguna Canyon, a spent radioactive fuel pellet storage facility on the beach at San Onofre Nuclear Power Plant, and a residential development on the Central Coast at Pismo Beach. In March 2016, the Commission ignored public outcry and fired the well-regarded Executive Director without providing concrete public reasons. Hence, confidence in the Commission's ability to properly enforce the Coastal Act for the 1,100-mile shoreline has dwindled among the environmental and social justice communities.

Whether the Legislature has success moving to reduce corruption and improve transparency at the Commission, it remains incumbent upon the community to speak out at hearings and participate in the process. Our system doesn't work without the public keeping their interests front and center in land use and development battles. Let's hope this changes!

## FHBP's New Tree Ordinance



Melanie Schlotterbeck

By: Gloria Sefton, FHBP

When Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks (FHBP) discovered that Orange County does not have an ordinance to protect native trees in unincorporated areas (the only county in the Southern California Association of Governments region that doesn't), we went to work to craft one.

The draft Orange County Protected Tree Ordinance, submitted to the county for consideration in June 2016, outlines a permitting process to be undertaken before certain trees can be damaged or removed. The goal of the ordinance is to protect Orange County native trees—including oak, sycamore, walnut, and Tecate cypress—and exceptional specimen trees that are a link to our county's natural heritage.

Even with rampant development ongoing in Orange County, the county still is rich with precious—but dwindling—natural resources, and native trees are some of the most valuable. Trees provide oxygen release, carbon sequestration, and crucial habitat for wildlife. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the cooling effect of a young healthy tree “is equivalent to ten room-size air conditioners operating 20 hours a day.” Clearly, the cooling effect is something we need as temperatures soar to record-breaking highs. Of course, trees also lend beauty and charm to the landscape and enhance the value and character of the communities where they exist.

With the county's “Orange is the New Green” initiative to “green” the zoning code, the draft tree ordinance is a perfect complement to the county's refreshed focus on the environment and sustainability. It can also become a model for cities to adopt.

Unfortunately, these days, all trees are severely stressed by drought, infestations, fires, and development pressures. The ordinance provides a uniform permitting process for documenting and protecting trees, and, if necessary, removing trees with appropriate, verifiable replacement measures.

The Orange County Protected Tree Ordinance was drafted with the support and collaboration of FHBP's conservation allies: the California Native Plant Society–Orange County Chapter, Sea & Sage Audubon Society, the Cavity Conservation Initiative, Saddleback Canyons Conservancy, Rural Canyons Conservation Fund, Hills For Everyone, and Canyon Land Conservation Fund. With broad support from these prominent conservation groups, FHBP is hopeful that the county will quickly mobilize planning and legal resources for a public process so that the tree ordinance is adopted without delay.



# Out of the Ashes



Melanie Schlotterbeck

By: Jean Watt, FHBP

When Orange County filed for Chapter 9 protection on December 6, 1994, it became the largest municipality in U.S. history to declare bankruptcy. It swept like a firestorm through county government, raising havoc with many departmental budgets—notably OC Parks (then named Department of Harbors, Beaches and Parks [HBP]).

Many of us had worked alongside HBP for years as vital lands were acquired and dedicated to the county for operation and maintenance. Now, the future of the growing park system was threatened. While we wrung our hands, the second and third bombs dropped. The HBP Department would give up an approximate \$164 million by 2016 and, in restructuring to save money, the Director, Robert Fisher, was fired.

Adding insult to injury, the state shifted historic state tax burdens to counties, municipalities, and special taxing districts. HBP's budget was raided to pay this debt as well.

All of us in the non-profit world, focused on the future of special places like: Upper Newport Bay, Laguna Canyon, the Canyons, and the Puente-Chino Hills to name a few, were put to the test. There was so much more to do to preserve the environmental heritage of the county and serve the growing population.

From this devastation Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks, Inc. was formed. We devised six objectives:

1. Promote a network of citizens and organizations supporting HBP in providing outdoor recreation to residents, now and into the future.
2. Promote safe, well-kept parks and open spaces: urban parks, wilderness parks, wetlands, streams, beaches, and trails.
3. Closely monitor the county budget to assure effective, efficient use of park and open space funds.
4. Complete and implement the Master Plan of Regional Riding, Hiking, and Equestrian Trails.
5. Provide education for interested residents, visitors, and FHBP members on what's needed to care for and expand parks and trails.
6. Fundraise to assist HBP programs and acquisitions.

Now, as the 20 year raid on OC Parks by the bankruptcy ends, FHBP is ready to celebrate its 20 year anniversary. Out of the ashes has grown a whole new perspective and commitment—the Orange County Green Vision.

# Conservation Plans Turn 20



Melanie Schlotterbeck

By: Dr. Dan Silver, Endangered Habitats League

When adopted, the Central Coastal Natural Community Conservation Plan / Habitat Conservation Plan (NCCP/ HCP) was the first comprehensive “multiple species” plan of its type. Designed to resolve economic conflicts with the Endangered Species Act (ESA), it helped to save the ESA from a Congressional assault. But it was highly controversial, as it linked both preservation and loss of habitat to development.

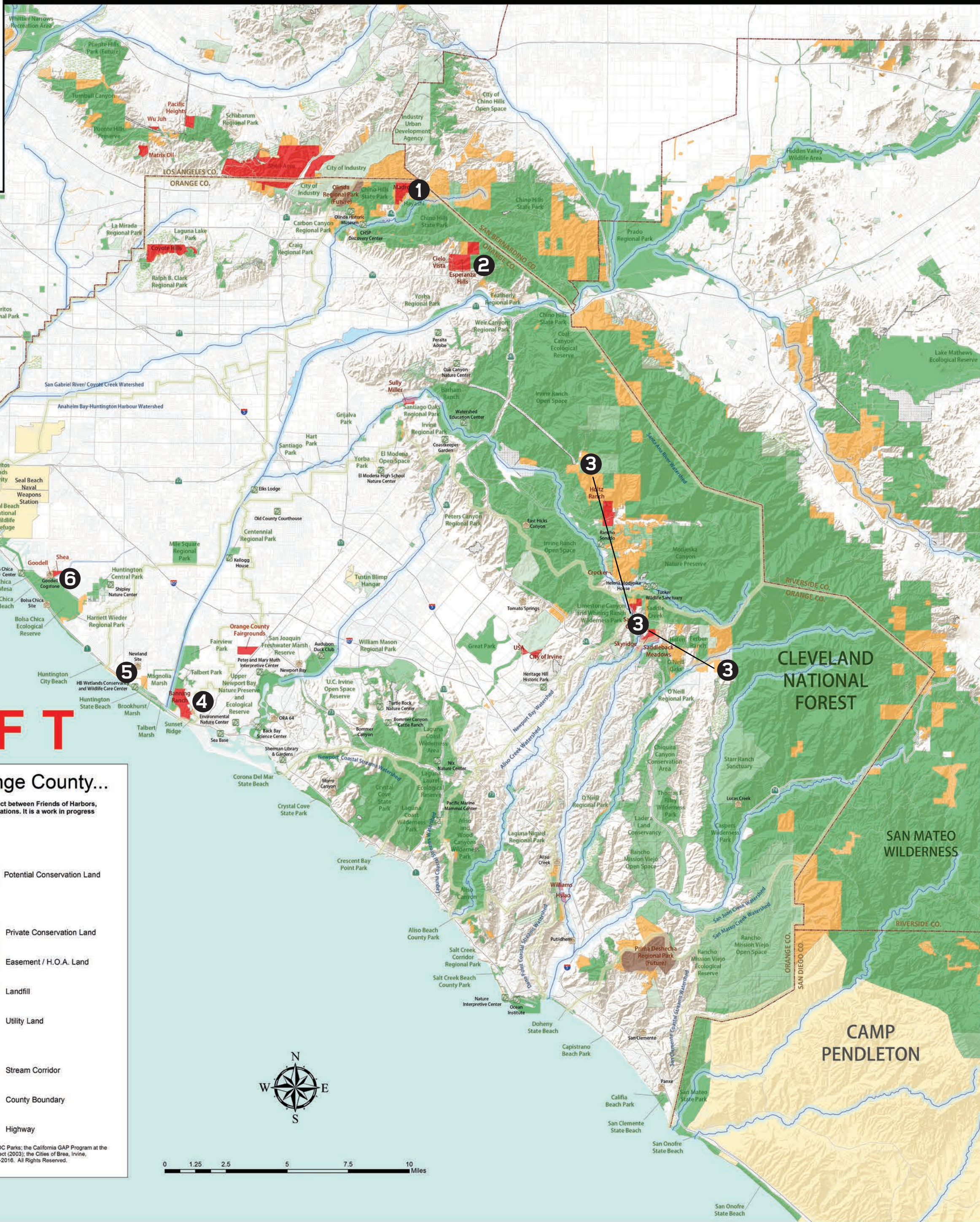
Strengths of NCCP/HCPs are that they are science-based, go beyond mere mitigation, and require public funding to acquire lands that actually “recover” species on an ecosystem basis. As state-federal-local partnerships, they also harness the land use authority of local government in the service of conservation, instead of just converting land to development. As the NCCP/HCPs have spread up and down the state, they have often been the best conservation option for urbanizing locations.

The Central Coastal Plan was not the “game changer” that subsequent plans were in San Diego and Riverside. It built upon existing conservation accomplishments on Irvine Company lands, such as in Laguna Canyon, but it did set aside new gnatcatcher habitat, improved connectivity, and very importantly, provided a unified management regime. The entire reserve system is now called the Nature Reserve of Orange County. Unfortunately, the San Joaquin (73) and Foothill Toll Roads (241) have now bisected both sections of the preserve, causing irreparable impacts.

Later, a complementary HCP was approved for the Rancho Mission Viejo to the south, and links between the plans in Trabuco Canyon were successfully filled in by Orange County Transportation Authority's Measure M2 mitigation program. Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks, along with Endangered Habitats League negotiated the M2 mitigation program in 2005. And, the success of Central Coastal Plan clearly set the stage for the huge dedication by The Irvine Company of its North Ranch, which now forms much of an expanded Central section.

With the passage of time and with new plans experiencing delays before adoption, momentum has slowed down. But most worrisome is the loss of political support, as reflected in reduced funding for land acquisition. That said, this NCCP/ HCP has contributed to Orange County's environmental legacy and is worth celebrating on its 20 year anniversary.





## 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 Brea, Irvine, and San Juan Capistrano; and the California Protected Areas Database. © FHBP 2000-2016. All Rights Reserved.

0 1.25 2.5 5 7.5 10 Miles



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).

Articles: 1 & 2 Claire Schlotterbeck, 3 Melanie Schlotterbeck, 4 Jack Eidt, 5 & 6 Mike Wellborn

Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic  
Datum: North American 1983  
Last Update: February 2016

## Project Updates

### Madrona, Brea (Map #1)

Developers have eyed Carbon Canyon in northeastern Brea for decades. Yet, the cost of extending infrastructure in the steep canyon and onto the overloaded two lane road, have impeded these efforts. One developer, a bankrupt insurance company in Idaho, nevertheless received approvals from the Brea City Council for 162 houses in June 2014. The Madrona project would have taken out 1,400 oak and walnut trees and placed homes on a fire prone ridgetop that burns every seven years. Environmental groups like Hills

For Everyone and Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks filed suit challenging the project citing an inadequate Environmental Impact Report and violations of planning law. In November 2015, Judge Robert Moss overturned the project approvals. The landowner, not the city, appealed the decision in January 2016. The wait continues.



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### Esperanza Hills, above Yorba Linda (Map #2)

Residents in Yorba Linda barely survived the 2008 Freeway Complex Fire. In fact, over 280 of them lost their homes. During the fire many were stuck on gridlocked streets unable to evacuate safely. So when a developer proposed adding another 340 houses deeper in the hills and next to Chino Hills State Park, residents organized. The land is in county jurisdiction. After Supervisor Todd Spitzer led the approval of the project, residents filed suit against the county and the developer in July 2015,

challenging the adequacy of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and project approvals. In June 2016, Superior Court Judge Cluster agreed with the residents and found the EIR to be inadequate, overturning all project approvals. Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks joined this lawsuit as a co-plaintiff.



Melanie Schlotterbeck

### Foothill Communities, Unincorporated (Map #3)

To maintain the rural character of our canyon communities, two plans were created by the County of Orange: the Foothill/Trabuco Specific Plan (F/TSP) in 1991 and the Silverado-Modjeska Specific Plan (Sil-Mod Plan) in 1977. These plans guide appropriate development in the canyons, but recent actions by the Orange County Board of Supervisors, including amendments to the F/TSP to facilitate the Saddle Crest development, have started to unravel those Plans. The county took a new position that the Sil-Mod Plan isn't

legally enforceable, although a recent legal analysis funded by canyon conservation groups concludes that it is indeed enforceable. Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks united with other local groups to ensure the integrity of the Plans to preserve these unique rural areas and the biological and recreational resources they provide.



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### Banning Ranch, Newport Beach (Map #4)

Coastal Southern California's last privately owned open space may be paved over by 900 homes, a resort hotel, shops, and restaurants. The Newport Banning Ranch combines a rare convergence of diverse topography with habitat for wildlife and protected sensitive plants. Furthermore, it has unique potential for wetland rehabilitation. The more recent history of oil drilling contaminated much of the soil and the developer lacks a cogent cleanup plan. The proposal includes digging a football field full of oil-contaminated soil

and stockpiling it in the wetlands for years. Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks joins the Banning Ranch Conservancy—and many others—to support the preservation and responsible site clean up. Join us September 7-9 at the Newport Beach Civic Center when this project is heard by the Coastal Commission.



Steve Neumann Banning Ranch

### Poseidon Plant, Huntington Beach (Map #5)

Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks (FHBP) has gone on record opposing the construction of the proposed Poseidon Desalination Project. With its ocean intake pipes, Poseidon would suck in billions of fish eggs, mature fish, and other marine life and, as a by-product of its desalination processes, will discharge highly saline wastewater back into the coastal zone. Of great concern is Poseidon's enormous demand for energy to operate the plant. FHBP is opposed to this private company selling over-

priced water and the obvious conflict with the best interests of our local coastline and Orange County Water District ratepayers. Join FHBP, Coastkeeper, the Sierra Club, and many others in opposing this unneeded overpriced fiscally irresponsible project at the September 7-9 Coastal Commission hearing.



Steve Mueller

### Goodell Acquisition, Huntington Beach (Map #6)

In May, the Bolsa Chica Land Trust and The Trust for Public Land announced a major conservation milestone along the coast. The highly coveted 11.1 acres, known as the Goodell property, is inching closer to acquisition with a willing seller. The property overlooks the Bolsa Chica wetlands and is just one of a few remaining parcels non-profits have yet to secure to finish the original vision for the mesa and wetlands. The particular site includes a 9,000 year old archaeological cogstone, which will

remain protected forever through this conservation effort. Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks tracks the high priority conservation areas in and around Orange County through its Green Vision Map. With a little hard work, this active conservation project will convert to parkland on the 2017 Green Vision Map!



Steve Mueller



**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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## Staying on Trails = Saving \$\$\$

By: Melanie Schlotterbeck, FHBP

Orange County has many attractions including its natural lands. Understanding that our natural resources are finite and these lands receive sustained pressure from continual use prompted the formation of the Safe Trails Coalition. Audubon California, Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks, Laguna Canyon Foundation, Sea and Sage Audubon Society, and Sierra Club founded the Coalition to find the balance between recreational uses and resource protection. The Coalition will soon release a factsheet focusing on the financial costs associated with trail misuse and abuse.

Confidential surveys were sent by the Coalition to land managers at the local, regional, state, and federal level. The respondents included public entities, cities, agencies, and conservancies.

After tabulating the results, the most revealing information was the extensive costs involved with the public's use, and sometimes abuse, of the parkland:

- Some land managers reported costs up to \$18,000 per year associated with tracking illegal trail use.
- Some reported expenditures of up to \$25,000 per year for trail technology like counters and cameras.
- Adding trail signs (such as mile markers and restoration signs) on average cost \$112 each.

When trail misuse occurs, land managers must fix the problem by restoring the habitat.

- Simple restoration projects may cost as little as \$3,000 per acre, while complex ones can cost upward of \$160,000 per acre.
- Sensitive habitats like coastal sage scrub/cactus scrub and wetland and riparian areas cost much more to restore and generally include threatened or endangered species.

In short, our Coalition study concluded that creating and using social/volunteer trails has impacts to habitat and therefore the public's pocket book. Many of these costs only exist because of unauthorized access/trail use. This forces land managers to spend money fixing these impacts instead of maintaining the existing resources and amenities. All but one of the surveyed land managers are funded (all or in part) by your tax dollars. Be a part of the solution, not the problem.



Melanie Schlotterbeck

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