The Next 20 Years

By: Michael Wellborn, FHBP

It is an honor to have been elected as the new President of FHBP. Over the past 10+ years as a board member for FHBP, I have had the opportunity to work closely with our talented staff, to protect the lands and waters of Orange County, reach out to our partners, and have involvement in preservation in the Orange County Flyway. That our finite natural resources will require conservation actions, as well as a few steps backward. The wave whereby local non-profits realized a need to think more broadly and regionally. The formation of FHBP in 2003, and the establishment of the FHBP Trust in 2012, and continued work by our strategic partners, like the Bolsa Chica Conservancy, the Friends of Bolsa Chica, the Friends of the Huntington Beach Wetlands, and the Amigos de Bolsa Chica, and others, will continue to be on the front lines objecting to these proposals.

We must continue to be the stewards of the natural lands, waterways, and beaches of Orange County. To work with the County for a Tree Preservation Ordinance. You can bet FHBP will be at the table supporting these efforts. The more broadly and regionally. The formation of FHBP in 2003, and the establishment of the FHBP Trust in 2012, and continued work by our strategic partners, like the Bolsa Chica Conservancy, the Friends of Bolsa Chica, the Friends of the Huntington Beach Wetlands, and the Amigos de Bolsa Chica, and others, will continue to be on the front lines objecting to these proposals.

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Sully Miller, Orange (Map #1)
Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks (FHBP) has gone on record supporting preservation of permanent open space on the Sully Miller site in East Orange. This property is on our Green Vision Map and is located adjacent to the Santa Ana River’s biggest tributary—the Santiago Creek. Nearly 100 acres of the site has been designated as permanent open space by four planning documents dating back to the 1970s. FHBP believes that those plans should be adhered to. Santiago Creek cannot be isolated for preservation while the neighboring land is developed. The community defeated two development proposals because their input and site constraints were ignored. The project’s Draft Environmental Impact Report is due out this summer. FHBP and residents will be watching this one closely.

West Alton Project, near Irvine (Map #2)
Construction of the central segment of the wildlife corridor, next to the Great Park, is underway soon yet the corridor is in jeopardy as it approaches the foothills above Irvine Blvd. Orange County’s West Alton project proposes a dense high-rise (3-7 stories) of 800+ apartments on both sides of a narrow existing stretch of the corridor. The Draft Environmental Impact Report did not consider that this piece of the corridor is already mitigation for impacts to Borrego Creek by a road project, and that the mitigation plan calls for a functioning wildlife corridor in perpetuity. Genetic mixing between coastal and inland wildlife must be restored, or our coastal wildlife will disappear over time. Laguna Greenbelt is leading the way to prevent this. FHBP supports the connection between the coastal parks and the Cleveland National Forest.

Los Cerritos Wetlands, near Seal Beach (Map #3)
The amazing Los Cerritos Wetlands is located near where the San Gabriel River meets the sea. Wetlands are an important part of our functioning coastal ecosystem. They naturally clean our water, provide important habitat for our wildlife, and act as part of the Pacific Flyway for bird migrations. Approximately 500 acres is all that remains of what was once a vast wetlands complex, now degraded due to years of oil and other exploitation. But the tide is turning for these wetlands, because thanks to local activists, now half of the wetlands are protected in public ownership, with more on the way. That doesn’t mean we can let up on our advocacy; we know the remaining parts of Los Cerritos Wetlands are constantly under threat of inappropriate use. The Los Cerritos Wetlands Land Trust is spearheading this effort and FHBP supports their great work.

OC Fairgrounds, Costa Mesa (Map #4)
Orange County’s important public asset (the Fairgrounds) is in the spotlight again. With overwhelming public support, the sale of the OC Fairgrounds was stopped in 2012. Now it’s time for the residents to weigh in with their vision for this historic town square and ways to make it a statewide model facility using innovative and efficient technologies. The Orange County Fair Board has directed staff to work on the development of a 10 year Master Site Plan. The Fair Board has been hosting ocfair.com/public-information/master-plan/.

Esperanza Hills, above Yorba Linda (Map #5)
Residents in Yorba Linda have been advocating for the protection of 469 acres in the steep hills in county territory above Yorba Linda. The project is adjacent to Chino Hills State Park. The latest blow to their effort occurred on May 9th when the County Board of Supervisors voted 4-1 (Spitzer voting no) to approve the Esperanza Hills project. In all our fights against projects we’ve never seen the home district Supervisor overridden like this—it was unprecedented. FHBP supported the effort by becoming a co-plaintiff in several ongoing lawsuits against the project applicant and County. The original suit won on failure to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. Several items were appealed by residents hoping for a different outcome. A third legal challenge is now focused on the May 2017 decision. The fight continues.

Poseldon, Huntington Beach (Map #6)
FHBP has worked with many environmental organizations to oppose the proposed Poseldon desalination project in Huntington Beach. With its ocean intake pipes, Poseldon proposes infeasible protections to billions of fish eggs, mature fish, and other marine life and, as a by-product of its reverse osmosis desalination processes, the project will discharge highly saline wastewater into the coastal zone. This project will harm the fragile coastal environment. And, let’s face it, conservation and other solutions make Poseldon unnecessary. Privatizing water, our most precious resource, is bad policy. We find the intrusion of the private, for-profit, out-of-state corporation proposing to sell extremely high-priced and unneeded water very troubling. We will continue to work with others to stop this poorly planned water project.

Project Updates

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Conservation Successes

By: Melanie Schlotterbeck, FHBP

As the last issue went to press, the Orange County Planning Commission considered a Tree Preservation Ordinance. The Commission usually has opposition on their agenda items, but this time they heard supportive testimony and voted unanimously to initiate the Ordinance for the County’s unincorporated areas. FHBP has had a hand in this new initiative. When we discovered that Orange County did not have a protected tree ordinance (the only county in the Southern California region that does not), we collaborated with our conservation allies to craft a concept for the Ordinance’s consideration.

After suffering the ravages of a multi-year drought, plus infestations and fires, trees need our help for their survival. Trees release oxygen, store carbon, and provide crucial wildlife habitat. Trees lend beauty and charm to the landscape and enhance the value and character of communities. Trees also have tremendous cooling effects. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, a young healthy tree’s cooling effect “is equivalent to ten room-size air conditioners operating 20 hours a day.”

The County acknowledged the encroachment of development on tree-rich areas and the importance of protecting these areas. Now with a consulting firm engaged to develop the Ordinance, the County will take a current inventory of all tree species and recommend trees to be protected. According to County staff, “The project will include a robust public outreach effort to ensure stakeholders are provided the opportunity to review and comment on the proposed Ordinance language and regulations.”

The County set a tentative schedule that includes community workshops and a draft ordinance and environmental documents in the fall, with public hearings to take place in December 2017. It is a new and unique partnership that this milestone was achieved.

The good news is there is more money to be had. After a non-wasting endowment is established to fund the permanent stewardship of these protected lands, additional funds will be available for more projects to meet the voter approved Ordinance. You can be FHBP will be at the table supporting the effort and guiding the expenditures.

Tree Ordinance Progress

By: Gloria Soto, FHBP

In May 24th meeting, the Orange County Planning Commission considered a Tree Preservation Ordinance. The Commission usually has opposition on their agenda items, but this time they heard supportive testimony and voted unanimously to initiate the Ordinance for the County’s unincorporated areas.

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The Last 20 Years

By: Jean Watt, FHBP

The next 20 years for FHBP has all the earmarks of success with Michael Wellborn taking over as President and Gloria Soto as Vice President. I couldn’t have hoped for more.

Mike comes with a knowledge of how government works, having been an employee for the County of Orange for his work life—and better yet, experienced in non-profit administration as he still serves as President of the California Waterfowl Network. He’s a great guy with a big smile and a great attitude—and a perfect leader for our group.

Gloria became a lawyer partially because of her interest and involvement in preservation in the Orange County canyons where she lives. She is co-founder of the Saddleback Canyons Conservancy and brings a wealth of serious commitment and knowledge to our Board. I can just be a helper—what could be better than that?

Thinking back to the first 20 years, a few things stand out. There was an onset of serious environmentalism by local (and national) non-profits in the 1970s, with new federal Clean Air and Clean Water laws, new state General Plan and environmental quality laws, and with the advent of the Coastal Commission and Coastal Conservancy.

Twenty years later, the 1990s brought on a new wave whereby local non-profits realized a need to think more broadly and regionally. The formation of FHBP in 1997 exhibited this need for broader constituencies and collaboration. The most phenomenal and helpful thing to me was the formation of the state’s Southern California Wetland Recovery Project in 1998—about 30 years late in the scheme of things, but it set the stage for that long to run the ship of state. So after many people spent their love working to save coastal areas in Upper Newport Bay and Baja Chica, the state finally acknowledged the need to save our precious wetlands, marine nurseries, and stopping off places for the Pacific Flyway.

Every day we see articles about the need for wildlife corridors and yet Hills For Everyone continues working toward that end. Thank goodness for the early forward thinking people who led these charges in Orange County. And thank goodness for all the groups now who form partnerships allowing FHBP to continue pulling it all together with our Green Vision Map and Green Vision Coalition. Much more conservation progress is yet to come!

The Next 20 Years

By: Michael Wellborn, FHBP

Nobody could have guessed that we’d find ourselves in 2017 partnered with the Orange County Transportation Authority and catalyzing the construction of 13 freeway project improvements, but we are. We are celebrating because 12 years ago FHBP spearheaded an effort to make these improvements a landscape-level conservation program. Unusually freeway projects reduce construction impacts one project at a time. Because of our negotiations, they now do it comprehensively (all together).

In a monumental lift, FHBP coordinated a coalition of conservation and community groups to support a transportation sales tax measure because the Authority agreed to spend environmental dollars more meaningfully. So far, the Authority has permanently preserved 1,300 acres in Brea, Silverado and Trabuco Canyons, and Laguna Beach. They’ve also worked with project sponsors throughout the County to restore lands in places like Fairpark, Bobo Chica, the Irvine Ranch lands, Aliso Creek, and Chino Hills State Park. Ultimately more than 36 conservation and community groups supported the measure; called Renewed Measure M, because of the great benefits of the mitigation program. This marked the first time in Orange County that conservation groups supported a transportation measure. This funding source allows park advocates to continue protecting important landscapes throughout the County.

This comprehensive approach used science and mapping to determine the most important lands to protect. In fact, FHBP’s Green Vision Map became the starting point for conservation opportunities. After landowners were contacted and opted into this willing-seller program, scientific evaluations of their lands occurred. On June 20th, the Authority, Caltrans, state and federal permitting agencies, and the conservation community celebrated the completion of the Conservation Plans. We offer our congratulations and step appreciation for the hard work involved. It is because of these unique partnerships that this milestone was achieved.

The good news is there is more money to be had. After a non-wasting endowment is established to fund the permanent stewardship of these protected lands, additional funds will be available for more projects to meet the voter approved Ordinance. You can be FHBP will be at the table supporting the effort and guiding the expenditures.

More at: www.Facebook.com/FriendsofHBP
Conservation Successes

By: Melanie Schlotterbeck, FHBP

We have been so pleased to see the impact of FHBP's recent efforts. Over the past year, we've made major strides in protecting critical habitat and expanding access to the outdoors. Our work has been recognized by numerous partners, who appreciate our dedication to creating sustainable solutions that benefit both people and nature.

Tree Ordinance Progress

By: Gloria Sefton, FHBP

At the May 24th meeting, the Orange County Planning Commission considered a Tree Preservation Ordinance. The Commission usually hears opposition on their agenda items, but this time they heard supportive testimony and voted unanimously to initiate the Ordinance for the County's unincorporated areas.

The Ordinance will protect trees and ensure that new development does not harm existing trees. It is a major step forward in protecting our regional parks and open space, benefiting both people and wildlife.

The Last 20 Years

By: Jean Watt, FHBP

The next 20 years for FHBP have all the earmarks of success with Michael Wellborn taking over as President and Gloria Sefton as Vice President. I couldn't be more optimistic for more.

FHBP Vice President, Gloria Sefton, at:

gloriasefton@gmail.com

The Next 20 Years

By: Michael Wellborn, FHBP

Nobody could have guessed as the new elected as the President of FHBP. At the same time, I am intensely aware of the legendary accomplishments from Jean Watt's career, including many more still to come!

Over the past 10+ years as a board member for FHBP, I have worked to ensure the determination is set to maintain the regional parks and trails in Orange County. I am truly grateful for the support of our members. FHBP is a proactive and effective organization which has the capacity to protect the lands and waters of Orange County, reach out to our associated organizations with support and collaboration opportunities, and to expand our outreach efforts.

The recent years have seen some major steps forward in conservation actions, as well as a few steps backward. The current grading of oak laden billboards for the remote Saddleback Regional Park is not possible. FHBP Board of Directors

Michael Wellborn, President
Gloria Sefton, Vice President
Vikki Swanson, Treasurer
Helen ... Zembal

Newsletter Committee
Jean Watt, Editor
Claire Schlotterbeck, Editor
Melanie Schlotterbeck, Design and Layout
By: Melanie Schlottbeck, FHBP

Natural John bluede once said, “When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe.” It is kind of like that loses string on your favorite sweater, you know that if you pull it—things will unravel and your sweater will never be the same. Interestingly, our landscape is no different.

What is embedded in our parkland. It doesn’t have to be a National Park or even a State Park to create an impact. Local and regional parks matter too. It’s easy to separate how our parks impact us in an environmental, social, health, climate, quality of life, recreational aspect—any other way—you’d find that the land exceeds its value in countless ways. Last fall, the Boeing Corporation funded Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks (FHBP) to study more of the benefits parks bring to our communities. Instead of simply acknowledging our parks for the habitat and recreational values, we opted to dive deeper into other meaningful aspects. We called the list down to one topic. This article provides a sneak peak of what’s to come.

We asked, what value does a park bring?

Water Quality: Permeable surfaces like those found in parks, improve our water quality and keep our oceans clean by allowing water to be filtered up through and recharged into the underground again.

Urban Heat Islands: Due to their natural state and vegetation, parks reflect rather than absorb the sun heat. In short, parks keep our communities cooler.

Daily Experience: With their many amenities, parks offer families and individuals a kind of opportunities that they may not have had the chance to experience elsewhere—like seeing a park in a park. And the good news is that parks are also affordable and close to home.

Engagement in Government: Parks offer the public the opportunity to engage in a dialogue with local government in a direct and personal way. When you care about the land you are willing to invest your time to protect.

Wildlife Corridor Connectivity: Parks offer our plants and wildlife a way to continue thriving—especially when they are connected to a broader system of open space.

Climate: The vegetation and soils they maintain remove particulate matter from the air and store heat.

Quality of Life: Parks provide places to play, relax, recreate, unwind, and enjoy the outdoors.

Environmental Education: Parks increase opportunities for environmental education and promote a happier, healthier, and smarter generation of students.

Health and Well Being: Parks provide places to reflect, to find yourself, and to increase your well being.

With this in mind, we thank our parks advocates for their hard work and dedication to parks. We also thank our supporters and supporters for making it happen. We all benefit from parks—now and far—going to them or not knowing there are there waiting for a visit.

Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks (FHBP) works to protect the natural waters, wetlands, and parks of Orange County. Learn more at www.FHBP.org

Who are We?

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Glenda Stofa, Vice President
Vikki Swanson, Treasurer
Helen Ingalls, Secretary
Jean Watt, President Emeritus

Supporting Organizations
Laguna Canyon Conservancy
Laguna Greenshow, Inc.
Stop Polluting Our Newport

Newport Bay Conservancy
St. Mark Presbyterian Church
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Claire Schlottbeck
Danny Yee
Dr. Jack & Nancy Skinner
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Jan Watt, Editor
Claire Schlottbeck, Editor
Michael Volunteer, Designer
Design and Layout

Find us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/FriendsFHBP

Parks Make Life Better For All of Us!

By: Mike Littman, FHBP

That our finite natural resources in Orange County sustain pressure from continual use was foremost in the minds of the organizations that formed the Orange County Stewardship Coalition (STC) in 2012. STC is a complement of land managers to address the problems associated with trail misuse. The situation is obvious to nearly everyone who uses our trails—and many who don’t.

Protection of the resources while preserving access is a time consuming and costly pursuit. In October 2016, the STC released a fact sheet outlining costs associated with off-trail use. The data was obtained in a survey that included cities, public entities, agencies, and conservancies at the local, regional, state, and federal level. The results document that abuse from impacts to habitat, there is increased risk and liability for land managers, and impacts to the public’s investment. Funding restoration, for example, may cost as little as $3,000 per acre or as much as $65,000 per acre. Sensitive habitats like coastal sage scrub and riparian areas are more complex and therefore more costly to restore.

The public’s pocket book is impacted when trail signs are damaged and must be replaced, and trail technology to track illegal use must be put into place. Land managers are forced to divert funds from habitat restoration and other related projects to maintain existing trails and resources.

The Next 20 Years

You can rest assured that FHBP will be tackling the next 20 years for FHBP has all the earmarks of success and growth. We are thankful for our constituency, agencies, and conservancies at the local, regional, and state level who have recognized the importance of working together to preserve our natural resources.

This group of open space activists has achieved. My intention is to present the problems associated with trail misuse. The situation is obvious to nearly everyone who uses our trails—and many who don’t. It is time our decision makers focused on creating a sustainable future instead of continuing to allow projects to use our natural resources.

ENERGY & CLIMATE

Our first four decades of work has already provided the public with the trail network they now enjoy. Toward that end, this year FHBP offered a series of successful walks. We opted to span the spectrum of locations and topics. Funded by the Boeing Corporation, these hikes offer a unique opportunity to engage the public, provide needed trail stewardship, and enjoy some of our parks in a responsible manner.

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