

1,057 people turn out to Parks Commission hearing!

Last night, we turned out well over 1,000 people to a special State Parks Commission Hearing in San Clemente to find out what the public thinks about the proposed Foothill-South Toll Road extension through San Onofre State Beach. We overflowed the 500 person auditorium, spilled out of the large overflow room with the live-feed, and swarmed the lobby. Eventually, the fire marshal stopped letting people into the Community Center and a line formed all the way down the block of folks waiting to get in. Then, we took our sign-in sheets outside to make sure we signed in everyone waiting! The reporters did not get an accurate picture of the HUGE crowds outside since they were still focused on giant crowds inside! In the end, we signed in 1057 people opposed to the Foothill-South Toll Road.

To generate the large turnout for this hearing, we implemented a targeted, repetitive direct mail campaign, phone banks, campsite-to-campsite, and beach towel-to-beach towel outreach, tabling, and a hike/paddle-out. Special thanks to my colleagues Owen Bailey, Elizabeth Lambe, and Sierra Club's Coastal Director, Mark Massara who spent countless hours helping prepare for the hearing and without whose participation we would not have been nearly as successful. Below is a summary of the mail and activities we did leading up to the very successful hearing.

45 days before the hearing

STATE PARKS COMMISSION HEARING IN SAN JOSE

Working with our coalition partners at the State Parks Foundation, Natural Resources Defense Council, and Endangered Habitats League, we attended the Parks Commission hearing in San Jose to participate in an information session for the Commission about the proposed toll road extension through San Onofre State Beach. The Commission was overwhelmingly supportive and agreed to come down to San Clemente to tour the park and hold a hearing to find out what the public thinks about the proposal. One of the things we did (to put a human face on the issue) was to bring 5 large posters of photos with handwritten personal notes from families who camp at the San Mateo Campground.

CAMPSITE-TO-CAMPSITE- OUTREACH

Starting in August, key volunteers and I spent EVERY Saturday going Campsite to Campsite at the San Mateo Campground to educate campers about the threat of the Foothill-South Toll Road. We encouraged them to sign our postcards, pose for a Polaroid photo of themselves holding "Save the San Mateo Campground" sign and send a personal note to the governor. We also told them about the upcoming hearing and asked them to attend. Over 10 weeks of campsite outreach, 28 volunteers spoke to 1008 campers! We collected 653 postcards and 97 photo-cards with handwritten notes to the governor and Polaroid photos of 347 campers.

TABLING AND SURF CONTEST OUTREACH

We continued our regular tabling at the Farmer's Market and Art Fair leading up to the hearing. However, our single biggest tabling day was the Boost-Mobile Pro Surf Contest at Trestles Beach. We used the opportunity to set up a booth along the trail down to Trestles to talk to surfers and surf enthusiasts about the effect the toll road will have on Trestles Beach. In order to encourage people to stop and sign a postcard, join our activist list, and get their picture taken for a photo-card, we decided to offer people a free "Save Trestles, Stop the Toll Road" T-shirt in exchange for their participation. By noon, six activists working the morning shift at the booth had collected photo-cards of 397 people and passed out just as many T-shirts! In the live broadcast of the surf tournament on Surflife.com, the cameras revealed the audience as a sea of people wearing our Save Trestles T-shirts! Because the event is so popular our two lead volunteers were in line to park at the event at 4:30AM. Good thing they are surfers and are used to getting up early!

3 weeks before the hearing

CAMPER MAILER

We had to wait until the Parks Commission officially "posted" the announcement about the upcoming hearing before we could send out any notices or mailers. But, we immediately planned a strategic mail campaign to reach our target audience multiple times. The first thing we did was a Public Record Request from state parks for the names and addresses of everyone who camped at the San Mateo Campground this year. We designed our first mailer to focus on the impacts of the toll road on the park, and specifically the campground. The mailer featured some of the great photos we collected during our campsite-to-campsite outreach. We sent the mailer to all the folks who camped at the campground this year, in addition to everyone on our list that we had recruited from the campground, and a targeted list of members of the California Parks Foundation local members.

OUTREACH TO OTHER "FRIENDS OFPARK" GROUPS

We learned from the State Parks Foundation that the Foothill-South Toll Road threat to San Onofre State Beach is just one of 35 non-mission threats to state parks throughout California. San Onofre is the 5th most popular state park, and the toll road is the worst threat to any of the parks. So, we thought it would be a great idea to get letters from "Friends of" groups for other state parks regarding the bad precedent that would be set for ALL state parks if the toll road is allowed to go through San Onofre. Working closely with the California Parks Foundation, we collected 14 letters from different state park groups throughout California asking the governor to stop the Foothill-South Toll Road from harming San Onofre State Beach, and prevent a horrible precedent from being set for all California State Parks.

2 weeks before the hearing

SURFER MAILER

Trestles Beach is a world class surf beach, known to the surf community as the "Yosemite of Surfing." Therefore we continue to receive great response to our outreach to the surfing community about the pollution and contamination the toll road would bring into the San Mateo Creek that flows into Trestles. We designed this mailer to target surfers and featured photos of some of the surfers we met during our tabling at the Boost-Mobile Surf Contest. We mailed the piece to the members on our list we had recruited while tabling at the beach, and to a targeted membership of the Surfrider Foundation.

HIKE AND PADDLE/OUT MAILER

Our campaign always has organizing meetings prior to big hearings. This helps create buy-in for folks to attend the hearing, and enables us to send an additional mailer and have an additional event to remind folks about the hearing. For this hearing, we thought it would be great to actually offer a tour of the proposed toll road alignment, and then work with Surfrider Foundation to host a "Paddle-Out" at Trestles. The hike and paddle-out served the purpose of the organizing meeting, but also helped generate some additional media, and allowed folks to have a nice time outside. In the spirit of John Muir, we believe that by showing folks what they might lose, they would be more willing to attend the hearing and work to protect it. We mailed invitations to the hike and paddle-out to campers, surfers, and community members. I was able to get an AP reporter to cover the event and she even sent a photographer who got some great photos and the story resulted in multiple media hits throughout California, the US and even internationally.

One week before the hearing

"YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE" MAILER

A week before the hearing we sent a mailer to our members with a message on the cover from Coastal Director Mark Massara that we have the power to protect San Onofre State Beach. Our

members have been working hard for years, writing letters, attending hearings, even making trips to Sacramento. This mailer outlined what a great job they have done, and encouraged them to keep up the great work by attending the Parks Commission Hearing. We explained that this hearing presented a unique opportunity for folks to directly urge Governor Schwarzenegger's appointees to defend our park, community, and beach from the proposed Foothill-South Toll Road. We sent this mailer to all of our great hard-working activists.

HIKE AND PADDLE-OUT EVENT

The Saturday before the hearing, 203 people participated in our hike and paddle-out! We invited former Deputy Director of State Parks, Dick Troy (who we have featured in our mailers) to lead the hike along the proposed toll road route through the park. We met at 8:30am in the Trestles Beach parking lot, and gave folks a light breakfast of bagels, doughnuts, and coffee. It was a perfect clear day, and by 8:10 am, 45 people had already arrived for the hike! By 8:35 we had 153 signed in for the hike! We split the hike into two groups, so that half of the people went on the walk with Dick Troy and the other half were ably led by activist and Mayor of Aliso Viejo, Karl Warkomski. The groups arrived at the beach at about 10am, where some of the hikers quickly changed into their wetsuits and grabbed their boards to participate in the Paddle-Out with Surfrider Foundation. It was an incredible sight to see 75 surfers hit the waves in "Save Trestles" T-shirts and waving Save Trestles banners. The AP photographer even paddled out with the group!

SAN CLEMENTE MAILER

The toll road agency has attempted to divide the community by threatening people who live in the north part of town that if the toll road didn't go through the state park, it would have to go through their houses. To try and prevent an organized community contingent to show up at the hearing to support the alignment through the park, we designed a mailer specifically for our activists in San Clemente that spoke to the fact that the toll road agency was presenting a "false choice" for residents. The mailer featured former mayor, Stephanie Dorey and quotes and photos of local community members who described the TCA's actions as scare tactics, and urged residents to reject the politics of fear and demand better transportation solutions that don't threaten people's homes OR their parks.

Week of the hearing

S'MORE MAILER

The final mailer we sent the week of the hearing, was designed for folks to write their comments on, and bring to the hearing to wave as a sign. Because the toll road threatens to ruin a very popular campground, we thought it would be fun to bring back great camping memories by using the camping tradition of s'mores. The mailer sign featured a S'more and read, "Stop the Foothill South Toll Road – We deserve S'more choices" We sent this final mailer to all of our activists, campers and surfers and it arrived in mailboxes just a day or two before the hearing. A pdf of the mailer is attached.

PHONING

We implemented both paid and volunteer phoning to help with turnout. We ran a phone-match against lists we mailed to in order to maximize the phone numbers we could call and to ensure the phone numbers were up to date. The day before the hike and paddle-out, we used a message from Dick Troy, former Deputy Director of Operations for State Parks, asking people to join him on the hike on Saturday. Messages were left on people's answering machines while they weren't home. We did the same thing the week of the hearing, but we used two different messengers. We had Stephanie Dorey, former mayor of San Clemente deliver the message to our members in San Clemente that they should attend the hearing and oppose the Foothill-South Toll Road and protect their homes AND their park. For everyone else, Coastal Director Mark Massara left a message asking folks to join him at the hearing and help protect our park and

Trestles Beach from the proposed toll road extension. Special thanks to Owen Bailey for coordinating the phone match and automated messages.

Additionally, we ran a volunteer phone bank the week of the hearing. 20 volunteers called through our entire activist list of 1200 people during 8 hours of phoning the week of the hearing. As a result of our phone banking, we knew leading up to the hearing that we had at least 178 confirmed attendees.

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE FOOTHILL-SOUTH TOLL ROAD - EMAIL

About a week before the hearing, we received notice that the TCA had sent an email to their supporters encouraging them to attend the State Parks Commission Hearing and speak out in favor of the road. The TCA's document was filled with half-truths and exaggerations about how little the toll road would actually affect the park. We used the opportunity to "correct" the TCA's email and sent it out the day before the hearing to our 1700 member email list. The corrected email is pasted at the bottom of this report.

RESULTS

The day of the hearing we had 14 volunteers on hand to staff 3 different stations as people arrived. Owen Bailey was again instrumental managing the volunteer sign-in activities. The first station was the sign-in table, where we made sure to sign in every person, we kept track of who signed in because they could not receive a coveted "Stop the toll road" sticker unless they had signed in. The second station was great fun, we invited people to have their picture taken with a cardboard cut-out of Governor Schwarzenegger holding a "we deserve s'more choices" sign, and then write a personal handwritten note to the governor. The 3rd station was our s'more making station! We rented the community center kitchen and cooked s'mores to give to the crowd. We handed out almost 300 s'mores to the parks supporters. They were a great hit, especially as the hearing continued on late into the night.

Eventually, the community center was so full, that the fire marshal refused to let any more people in. As a result, a line formed out the door all the way up the block! At that point, we took our campaign outside so we could sign in and give stickers to the hundreds of people still waiting in line. We also took our photo-card team outside and they began taking photos of everyone in line and having them write personal notes to the governor. AND, our s'more making crew was kind enough to hand deliver s'mores to the folks waiting in line!

By the end of the night, we had filled 4 huge display boards with colorful photos and moving comments from 702 park users, surfers, residents, environmentalists, business people, elected officials, grandmas, and kids asking the governor to please protect our state park from the proposed Foothill-South Toll Road.

Inside, the meeting room was packed with virtually everyone wearing our stickers. The commissioners accepted testimony from 75 people, though they had received over 100 speaker slips. Due to the late evening and the fact that some of the commissioners had to leave, they had to cut off the public comment. However, everyone who spoke gave eloquent, passionate, and thoughtful testimony and received an enthusiastic supportive response from the crowd as they talked about the importance of stopping the toll road and protecting San Onofre State Beach, Trestles, San Mateo Campground and the South Orange County quality of life.

Ultimately, the Parks Commission decided to direct staff to draft a resolution in support of protecting the park from the proposed Foothill-South Toll Road. They are expected to discuss and vote on the resolution at the next Parks Commission meeting in Tahoe City in two weeks.

Brittany McKee

We're the Friends of the Foothills Coalition and we want to point out some of the inaccuracies in the TCA's document below.



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Dear Friends,

This is your best opportunity to the State Parks Commission to stop the Foothill-South Toll Road.

Important State Parks Commission Hearing Nov. 3 in San Clemente

On Thursday, Nov. 3, California State Parks and Recreation Commission will hold a public hearing on the Foothill-South alignment at 10:30 a.m. in the auditorium of the community center in San Clemente, 100 North Avenida Seville. Presentations on the project and testimony are included on the agenda. The official notice of the hearing and website link are posted below.

I encourage you to attend this meeting, especially if you feel strongly about traffic relief for the I-5 in southern Orange County.

San Onofre State Park is located along the northern boundary of Camp Pendleton. The state park property is leased to the federal government. The lease, which was granted in 1971, allows the federal government to grant easements through the park for roads. Foothill-South was placed on the Master Plan of Arterial Highways in 1981, and the San Mateo campground-off-ramp from I-5--was built in 1989.

TCA neglects to mention that the State Park's lease prohibits such a road from "unreasonably interfering" with the campground and the park. Environment a top priority to TCA and federal resource agencies when designing alignments So why is a highway built?

The Foothill-South alignment through the state park area has been carefully designed to avoid sensitive habitat like the mouse, the San Mateo campground, and has also been designed to tuck along the hills at a lower elevation than San Mateo to reduce views and noise from the roadway.

How do you "tuck" a four lane highway?

While it would be great to avoid the leased state park land, other solutions to the area's growing traffic problem are available to the community. An alternative to reconnect the toll road to I-5 at Avenida Pico would remove 763 homes and 106 businesses through the middle of San Clemente. Widening the I-5 would remove 838 homes and 382 businesses and would require reconstruction of all interchanges between the El Toro Y and the county line at a cost of \$2.4 billion--an amount that is not being paid. Doing nothing about the traffic problem means increased traffic on I-5 with traffic levels similar to the gridlocked 91 Freeway in the next 20 years, and no alternative route.

These are scare tactics. We can't find impartial evidence.

Traffic is the problem > A toll road is a temporary and very expensive Band-Aid that won't solve our traffic problems.

Traffic is bad now, and traffic on I-5 through San Clemente is expected to increase 60% by 2025. We've worked for the past 10 years with federal resource agencies such as the the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the Environmental Protection Agency and the California State Department of Transportation and Engineers to thoroughly analyze eight alternatives to balance traffic relief and biological and wildlife resources.

Eight alternatives? Then why are we only hearing about two--either through a park or through a toll road? The State Parks and Recreation Commission advises the governor on matters involving the State Park system. **Your presence at this meeting will show the commissioners that you care about San Onofre State Park, but that you also care about the community of San Clemente.** Yes, please attend and just say NO to both alignments!

Important facts

The Foothill-South alignment around the city DOES NOT take any campsites at the San Onofre campground. The State Parks Department has said that they would be forced to abandon the