

Hills For Everyone

Friends of the
Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor



Newsletter No. 36

Spring 2017

Precipitation, Poppies, People, and Problems



Melanie Schlotterbeck

Unprecedented crowds on Upper Aliso Trail were there to view the poppy bloom.

The winter rains, though welcome, brought with them some problems for Chino Hills State Park. The rains were so heavy that most Park trails were closed for extended periods of time. Bridges on trails and roads were washed downstream. The soggy clay soils took a long time to dry out, and can be easily rutted if users come back too soon. State Parks must be able to provide emergency services to visitors, so until access could be re-established, the Park remained closed, frustrating many trail users.

The heavy rain also brought forth a huge poppy bloom. A blogger got the word out—and the Park was suddenly inundated with visitors. The resulting mobs caused gridlock on the narrow park road. Visitors trekked cross country to see and traverse the poppy fields—ignoring designated trails. They walked through riparian

areas where endangered species nest. They picked the wildflowers. Everywhere they walked—they killed the next generation of poppies. It was pretty discouraging. Perhaps if they knew how much work goes into saving land, they would not be so disrespectful of it and so self-indulgent.

But still, the beauty of the poppy bloom was inviting and stunning. Large swaths of orange hillsides were replaced with purple lupine and Canterbury bells. There were dozens of different wildflowers in bloom. The State Park's newly hired interpreter, Ian Bernstein, did his best to provide information to the hordes of people. Stop by and meet him at the Discovery Center in Brea (4500 Carbon Canyon Road) or better yet, stop by and sign up to become a volunteer. They sure need the help, especially now that the State Park has been discovered.



All photos by Melanie Schlotterbeck

Loss of A Leader

We are reeling from the traumatic loss of a dear friend to the cause of protecting our region. Jeff Yann, a deeply engaged activist from Hacienda Heights, died in a snorkeling accident in Hawaii. A longtime leader in the Sierra Club, Jeff also served on the Advisory Board to the Wildlife Corridor Conservation Authority. Early on in the effort to connect our hills into a backbone of open space, he put his analytical skills to work to figure out how to prioritize our actions. He brought then Democratic state Senator Hilda Solis on board the effort to save Coal Canyon in Anaheim Hills and Yorba Linda. Working with Republican Assembly member Dick Ackerman, together they provided the political will to save the now famous wildlife connection. Jeff also analyzed the massive reservoirs that Industry has proposed in Tonner Canyon. He demonstrated that Industry needed to build 12 tall saddle dams along the sides of the proposed reservoir to prevent inundation of existing neighborhoods. Jeff loved hiking, all things nature, and stepping up to the plate whenever asked. What will we do without his wonderful community spirit and brilliant mind? Please keep his family in your thoughts.



Melanie Schlotterbeck

Honoring A Leader

Congratulations to Bob Henderson, who was recently honored by the Whittier Audubon Society at its Annual Dinner. Bob recounted the many long term individual and community efforts that have resulted in the preservation of nearly 4,000 acres in the Puente Hills. He also spoke of the recent visitorship counts that have shown nearly a million visitors a year to the Puente Hills Preserve.

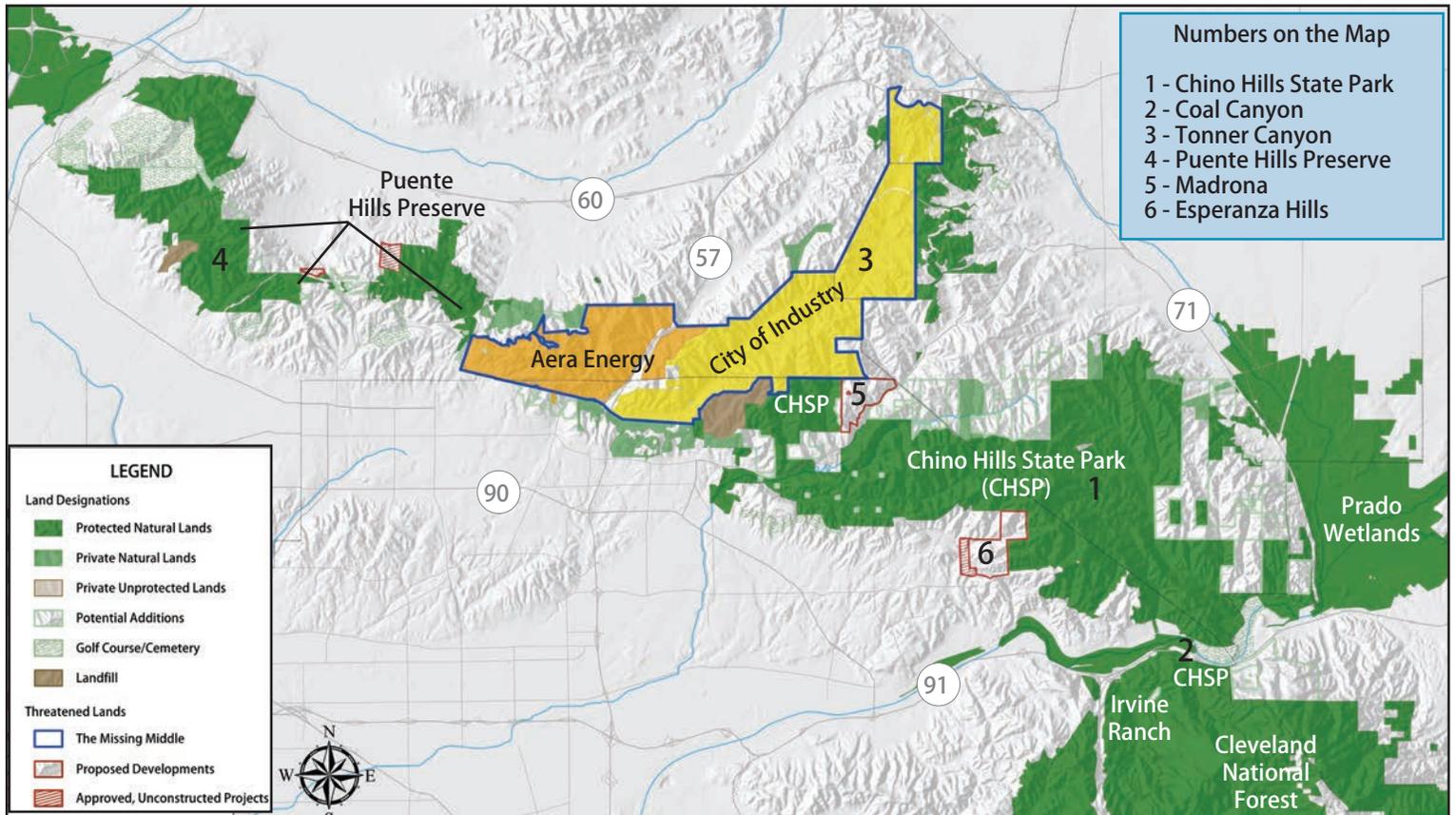


Bob Henderson & Claire Schlotterbeck



(Left to right) Mike Hughes and Claire Schlotterbeck (Hills For Everyone); Andrea Gullo (Puente Hills Habitat Authority); Dave Cowardin (Whittier Open Space planner); and Mary Hanson (Friends of Whittier Hills).

Mapping the Corridor Projects



Madrona—A Light at the End of the Tunnel?

It has been a long, rugged battle fighting to protect an important wildlife corridor connecting the Carbon Canyon area in Brea to Tonner Canyon in Los Angeles County. In 1999, a developer proposed a large housing project



Melanie Schlotterbeck

on 367 steep hillside acres in Brea. Through legal action he was able to prevent Brea from being able to apply new, more restrictive land use rules for his hillsides.

In 2008, after many stops and starts, the developer came forward with a plan to build 165 houses and take down 1,800 oak and walnut trees. It was approved by the Planning Commission on a 3-2 vote. The decision was appealed to the Brea City Council by HFE Board member and former Brea Mayor Bev Perry. Hearings were underway when the entire site burned down in the 2008 Freeway Complex Fire. It turns out the site had burned down three times before that in the last 30 years.

The original developer went bankrupt and the new developer came back with a revised plan and a revised Environmental Impact Report (EIR). In order to stay in the game, all of these reports needed to be analyzed by HFE. A new City Council approved the redesigned and

slightly diminished project (162 units) in June 2014. HFE, along with three other environmental groups, filed a suit claiming the EIR was inadequate and the project violated state and local land use laws. In November 2015, OC Superior Court Judge James Moss agreed. Two months later the developer filed an appeal but, significantly, the City of Brea did not join the appeal. On March 22, 2017, a panel of three judges heard the oral arguments in the appeal. A decision will be rendered by the end of June.

The cost of a lawsuit is daunting. The core team that sustained the fundraising effort included volunteers Jebb Harris, Eric Johnson, Duane and Luz Thompson, HFE Board Member Bev Perry, and consultants Melanie and Claire Schlotterbeck. Now we all wait.



Jebb Harris

Esperanza Hills—A Decision in May

In June 2015, the Orange County Board of Supervisors approved the 340-unit Esperanza Hills project in county territory next to Yorba Linda and Chino Hills State Park. Residents and four environmental groups (including Hills For Everyone) sued and won the lawsuit. The County was ordered to revoke all approvals. The developer took the legal loss as an opportunity to revise the project.

He proposed a new massive 500-foot long, 165-foot high bridge to straighten out his problematic access road, which had two hairpin turns. He also proposed limiting daily access points to just one exit which emptied onto a road that had been gridlocked in the 2008 Freeway Complex Fire. The developer claimed this bridge needed no further environmental analysis since a 26-foot long and 13-foot high bridge had already been analyzed in the EIR. County Supervisors weren't buying it, especially after being confronted with a scale model comparison of the two bridges made by a high school student, the son of a team member. The Board sent the project back to the

Planning Commission, specifically telling them to consider a secondary daily access point, a reduced density, and further review the new bridge. The Planning Commission considered the revised project and yet a third rendition of the bridge, and voted 5-0 to require two daily access points—much to the developer's dismay.

The Supervisors will consider the project again on Tuesday, May 9th at 1:30 PM (10 Civic Center Plaza, Santa Ana). Please consider attending and wearing a red shirt.



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Three Easy Ways to Help

1 If you shop at Amazon, shop through AmazonSmile.org naming Hills For Everyone as your charity of choice. We'll receive a portion of the proceeds for all eligible sales.



2 Register your Ralphs award card (after September 1st). Go to Ralphs.com, click on Community, Community Contributions, then Participant, and register there. Our organization code is 91199.



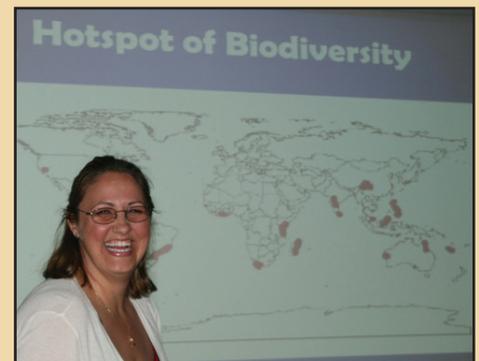
3 Through the generosity of a supporter, HFE is now a registered participant in Patagonia's One Percent For The Planet program. This program connects dollars with doers by linking businesses, individuals, and nonprofits to help create partnerships that protect the planet.

Member businesses pledge to give one percent of their gross income to the non-profit of their choice. We are hoping for more support!
www.OnePercentForThePlanet.org



PowerPoints Available

Hills For Everyone representatives provide interesting presentations to local groups, clubs, and organizations. Topics may include biodiversity, achievements, threats or possibilities, the State Park's history, and/or the fire history of the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor. Schedule a presentation by emailing us at: info@HillsForEveryone.org.



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