



Hills For Everyone

Friends of the Wildlife Corridor

Newsletter No. 7

Spring 2003

Why is AERA Stalling?



The Unprotected Middle of the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor

By Dr. Jill Kowalik

AERA Energy has said it will entertain any reasonable offer to purchase its land located in the hills above Brea between Harbor Boulevard and the 57 Freeway. So what's the hold up? No public agency, such as California State Parks, can make a "reasonable offer" without an appraisal to determine the property's fair market value.

AERA's plan is to inflate the "fair market value" of the Missing Middle of the Corridor by getting it re-zoned for high-density housing. Currently its land is zoned "agricultural." Does AERA have a "right" to the rezoning? That depends on whether you believe that zoning decisions should benefit the residents of the affected community or communities, or whether zoning decisions should be made strictly for the bottom line of big corporations.

Elected officials still view residential development as inevit-

able and even mistakenly believe it generates revenue. But residential development does not pay for itself. Short-term revenue generated by development fees only covers a fraction of the total cost to a community in terms of services which must be provided later—namely, by taxpayers who are surprised to learn that they—not the developer—are responsible for financing the additional infrastructure (schools, water systems, police and fire protection, etc.) for housing development.

Developer Strategy

Once the approval for four housing units is in place, the price of the land escalates. Many developers have thus recognized that pursuing "entitlements" (city/county approvals to build housing

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S NOTES

In a remarkable display of unity, the cities of Brea, La Habra, La Habra Heights, and Whittier have all unanimously passed resolutions supporting full preservation of the AERA land through purchase by a conservancy or other appropriate agency. The governing bodies of Hacienda Heights and Rowland Heights have also passed similar resolutions. All of these resolutions are posted on our website at: www.hillsforeveryone.org. Click the AERA link on the homepage.

The mutual concern of cities surrounding AERA is understandable. AERA's 3600 unit project would bring an additional 36,000 vehicles a day to our congested streets and 2100 more children to our overcrowded schools. The regional quality of life should suffer with the loss of the scenic backdrop and disruption of the Wildlife Corridor. With these six governing bodies stepping into leadership roles, momentum for purchase of the land is more easily created and funding sources tapped.

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WHY IS AERA STALLING?

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in a way of artificially inflating the value of lands that have major geographic constraints (for example, landslides, pollution, poor access, earthquake faults—all problems that the AERA site displays.) These lands are frequently the targets of environmental interest.

“The Entitlement Game”

Developers are aware of the growing interest of Californians in preserving their landscape. The ‘entitlement game’ has thus become a mechanism whereby developers attempt to acquire permission to build housing tracts before negotiating a selling price for their land that may ultimately be bought with taxpayer dollars (in the form of State Park Bond money, etc.). When city or county governments grant housing “entitlements” in the face of overwhelming citizen objections to a project, they are in fact subsidizing private companies with public funds. In this way, city or county elected officials favor the financial interests of big developers over the financial well-being of their constituents— who get stuck with the infrastructure bill.

Political Will

Responsive and responsible public officials know that communities may have an alternate vision for the land use other than housing

developments. But it takes political will on their part to preserve these lands. Nothing helps them develop this will more effectively than citizen participation in the process. While many of us may feel that having influence in state and national politics is out-of-reach, local decision making is well within the sphere of the average resident. Let your voice be heard. The Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor has been preserved because residents up and down its boundaries have insisted on responsible decision-making from their local elected officials. Coordinated citizen action can make the preservation of our landscape a reality.

Want to Get in the Loop?

The next step in the planning process for the AERA project is release of the Notice of Preparation (NOP) of the Environmental Impact Report. If you want to be notified of this contact:

Los Angeles County Planning Dept. -
Daryl Koutnik at (213) 974-6461

Orange County Planning Dept. -
Chuck Shoemaker (714) 834-2166

WE NEED HELP!

If you are interested in helping Hills For Everyone with data entry, Please call 714-687-1555.

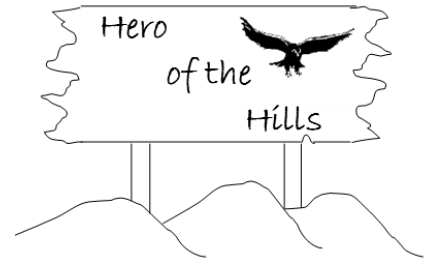
THINK ABOUT THIS....

We live near a treasure trove of rare and unique species, second only to the rainforest in variety. Iowa has no endemic species, species found only in Iowa. California has over 2200 endemic species, species found only in California.

Why, you ask? Iowa has a young terrain because it was realitvely recently glaciated and scraped clean. The flat landscape slows plant mitgration and that slows animal migration, since animals are dependent on plants as a food source.

On the other hand, California is an eden for plants and animals. Without the glaciers, species have had lots of time to evolve. Hills and canyons created by earthquakes have given the species a variety of places to settle. Add great weather to the mix and a wide array of endemic species have evolved.

We seem to feel remarkable ownership toward the rainforest. Whether we feel a similar commitment to the unique ness of our region remains to be seen as we try to hold on to the heart of the hills.



JOHN FRANCIS—SAN DIMAS

John Francis has been our non-profit attorney for 25 years. In that time he has safely steered us through the sometimes murkey waters of the non-profit world. John helps use incorporate, amend by-laws, and file the right reports. He has also provided a steady stream of newspaper clippings of interest from his home base in the San Gabriel Valley. And he has done this all pro bono. Thank you John!



QUOTE OF THE QUARTER

By Charles Lindbergh (9-30-73):

I believe our civilization’s latest advance is symbolized by the park rather than by satellites and space travel. In establishing parks and nature reserves, man reaches beyond the material values of science and technology. He recognizes the essential value of life itself, of life’s natural inheritance irreplaceably evolved through earthly epochs, of the miraculous spiritual awareness that only nature in balance can maintain.

As our civilization advances, if our follies permit it to advance, I feel sure we will realize that progress can be measured only by the quality of life—all life, not human life alone. The accumulation of knowledge, the discoveries of science, the products of technology, our art, our social structure, all the achievements of mankind have value only to the extent that they preserve and improve the quality of life

That is why I say that parks symbolize the greatest advance our civilization has made yet.

UPLIFTING UPDATES

ROOM TO ROAM—91 FWY

For the first time in state history CalTrans permanently closed a freeway underpass to help wildlife movement. In early December, activists and government officials gathered to celebrate the bulldozing that would make it possible.

When completed, wildlife, hikers, and horseback riders will be able to safely move between our hills and the Santa Ana Mountains.



Assemblywoman Lynn Daucher spoke at the celebration.

NEW CITY COUNCIL FRIENDS

Recent elections in La Habra Heights and Brea have added supporters of the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor to those two city councils. Fred Klein was re-elected to the La Habra Heights City Council and Bruce Douglas was elected to his first term. In Brea, John Beauman was elected to Brea's City Council for his first full term. They all expressed their support for preservation in their campaign literature.

Photo Credits: 1. M. Schlotterbeck
2. CA State Parks



CalTrans announces permanent closure of the on and off-ramps along the 91 Freeway at Coal Canyon.

ACQUISITIONS UNDERWAY

The Habitat Authority is currently negotiating a number of small acquisitions in the narrowest part of the Wildlife Corridor between Whittier and La Habra Heights. One parcel was recently even donated to the Authority.

Mitigation funds from the Puente Hills Landfill provide the revenue stream needed for purchase and permanent protection of the land. The same opportunity exists at Brea's Olinda Landfill. The County of Orange is planning to expand that landfill operation for another eight years, until 2021.

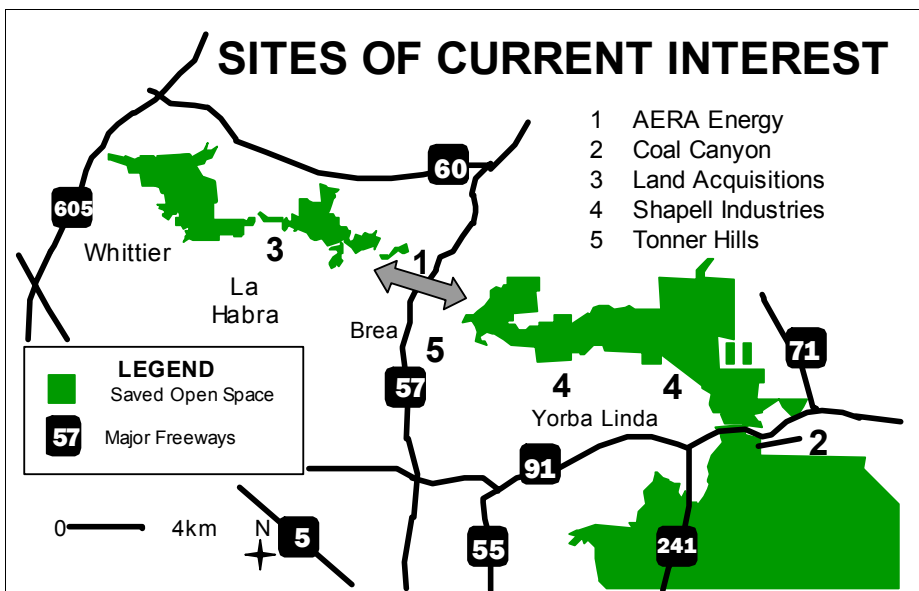


Freeway signs eliminate reference to Coal Canyon.



Asphalt has been removed and fencing re-aligned to guide wildlife under the freeway.

THE ANSWER TO FALL'S QUERY:
Ted Bryan of Brea correctly identified the Coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma coronatum*)



BOTHERSOME BULLETINS

CREEKSIDE DESTRUCTION

Have you ever wondered how the cliffs east of the 57 Freeway between Brea and Diamond Bar were formed? They are an excellent example of how a natural creek is impacted by development upstream. Erosion from housing construction has downcut the channel by increasing the stream flow, speed, and debris. The creek is so deep that the 20' tall trees in the bottom aren't visible.

SHAPELL—YORBA LINDA

In a last minute vote before a new council majority was elected, Yorba Linda approved a 1000 unit housing project in the hills. Shapell's project was allowed twice as many houses as the General Plan permitted. As residents circulated a referendum to overturn the council vote, Shapell sent four city-wide mailers claiming the referendum would kill a new high school. The referendum fell 270 signatures short.

NUEVO—BREA

The Orange County Board of Supervisors approved the 795 unit Tonner Hills project that lies above the hills of Brea east of the 57 Freeway. The project lies in Brea's Sphere of Influence. Nuevo originally filed the project with Brea but, according to City staff, Nuevo took their project to the County for approval once they saw that Brea was enforcing its tougher ridgeline and hillside protection ordinances. In mid-December, Hills For Everyone filed a lawsuit challenging the adequacy of the Environmental Impact Report. This marks our first lawsuit in 25 years.

ARTISTS' CORNER

"Winter Wonders"

Artist:
Phil Marquez



Cliffside Cows

To submit your artwork, send it to: info@hillsforeveryone.org
Next Theme: **Best Place in the Hills**

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Leave your name and address
on the voice mail.



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