



Hills For Everyone

**Friends of the Puente-Chino
Hills Wildlife Corridor**

Newsletter No. 8

Summer 2003

Appraisal on Aera Underway



High density housing proposed here in Aera's Hidden Valley.

By Claire Schlotterbeck

At its July meeting, the Wildlife Corridor Conservation Authority (WCCA), accepted a \$20,000 grant from Hills For Everyone (HFE) to conduct an appraisal of the Aera land. Aera proposes building 3600 units on the hills between Harbor and the 57 freeway. Though Aera (Shell/ExxonMobil) has refused to allow access to the site where it has proposed these houses, Aera representatives recently pointed out that appraisers don't need to visit a site to perform an appraisal. Aera has mentioned on numerous occasions that they would entertain an offer but "none have been received."

Since no offer can be made by a public agency without an appraisal, the HFE Board strongly believes that an appraisal is an essential next step in securing public funding to purchase the land. HFE offered the grant to WCCA, a legal entity with staff, experience, and state agency contacts.

HFE asked WCCA that this appraisal be done in an expeditious manner with a deadline of November 1, 2003. The Board also requested that the appraiser have experience in this region, be familiar with large open space appraisals, have a good track record with approvals of their work by the Department of General Services, and comply with professional standards

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S NOTES

If you love the Puente-Chino Hills and the great R & B singer/songwriter Bonnie Raitt, we have an awesome opportunity for you! Bonnie Raitt has selected Hills For Everyone as the beneficiary of a fundraising event at her performance at the Cerritos Performing Arts Center on Saturday, August 9th. Check it out at: www.bonnieiraitt.com/ontour.php. She has linked to our website at the bottom of the page. We are also posted on the www.guacfund.org website.

We still have tickets available. For \$250 the evening includes great seats in the 4th, 5th, or 6th rows and a "Meet and Greet" with the artist after the show. We will also have an information table at the concert for people to learn more about saving our hills.

The tickets not only directly support our efforts but are also mostly tax deductible. To join us at this fun and high profile event call 714-996-0502.

Bonnie Raitt



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AERA APPRAISAL UNDERWAY
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for a complete summary appraisal.

HFE took this bold and costly step as a response to the dramatic results of recent polling that demonstrated overwhelming public support for preservation of Aera's land. A scientifically designed and valid sample of seven hundred residents of Brea, Diamond Bar, La Habra, La Habra Heights, Rowland Heights, and Whittier expressed significant growth related concerns. The polling results were revealed at the Whittier and Brea City Council meetings of June 17 by Dr. Robert Meadow, president of the firm that conducted the survey. The poll results have a confidence level of ±7% and they are posted at www.hillsforeveryone.org.

Residents favor preserving open space by very large majorities. By a whopping 5:1 margin, residents support public purchase of the Aera land rather than the 3600 units planned. Seventy six percent of residents believe that government should purchase the land for open space from Aera at its current fair market value. Fifteen percent support letting Aera develop according to its plan. Nine

percent don't know what should be done. Residents from each of the seven areas agree that preventing loss of open space and preserving undeveloped wildlife corridors will keep local communities attractive to new business and protect quality of life. Residents of Whittier, Brea, Diamond Bar, and La Habra Heights feel especially strongly that nearby open space increases property values.

Dr. Meadow said that residents support government paying to protect open space even if it means restrictions on development that create less profit for landowners. Seventy percent of residents in Brea, Diamond Bar, Hacienda Heights, Rowland Heights, and Whittier, say local government should use tax dollars to acquire open space to protect quality of life in the area. Residents also support using public funds to buy open space and they do not trust that private landowners can be counted on to preserve open space. While voters are respectful of private property rights, they reject by a margin of 69% to 29% that private landowners should be allowed to develop their land as they see fit for housing.

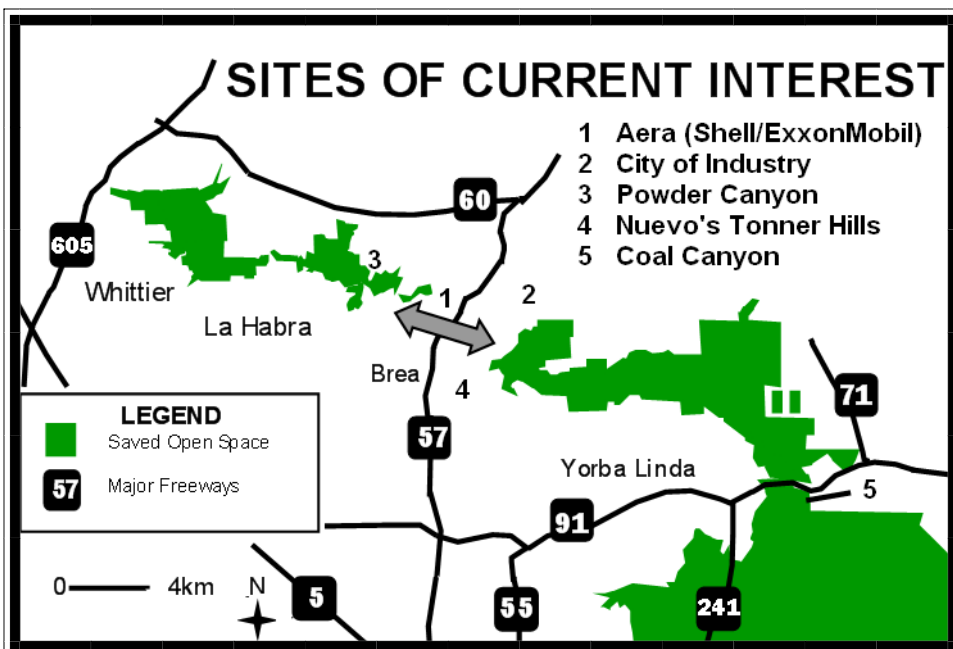
BOTHERSOME
BULLETINS
TONNER APPELLATE
COURT DECISION

By Jeff Yann

On June 26, the Second Appellate District entered a unanimous opinion on the appeal by Sierra Club, WCCA, and others in the lawsuit against the City of Industry in the purchase of land formerly owned by the Boy Scouts. The court found that Industry's purchase of Tonner Canyon was legal, in that they bought it for a valid city purpose i.e. construction of a water reservoir.

However, the court also found that no California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review was required for this acquisition, since the reservoir is speculative and may never occur. What the court is saying, in effect, is that any city, with sufficient cash reserves, can buy any piece of open space anywhere in the State for any speculative purpose it chooses without following the procedures required by CEQA. All it needs to do is commit to maintain that land under some definition of open space for a foreseeable period of time. Industry's definition of undeveloped open space is questionable in that, at the same time this opinion was being written, Industry was accepting the grading of seven acres of its land, located within a Los Angeles County Significant Ecological Area, for development of 49 luxury houses in Tonner Canyon.

The Appellate Court decision, while restricted by the Court from use as a legal precedent in other cases, still sets a dangerous precedent in that it allows a significant weakening of CEQA to stand. Sierra Club's Angeles Chapter's Executive Committee has already taken a position opposing this decision and is seeking support of other parties for possible future action relative to this decision.



UPLIFTING UPDATES

SIERRA CLUB JOINS FIGHT FOR THE HILLS

We welcome the addition of the newly formed Puente-Chino Hills Task Force of the Sierra Club to the effort to protect our hills. Chaired by Rowland Heights resident Mike Popovec, the Task Force worked closely with HFE to activate residents to attend the meetings on the Aera Energy project in May. Given the short notice regarding the meetings by Orange and Los Angeles Counties we needed to divvy up the work to generate good turnouts and we did!!

Ninety percent of the attendees at the meetings wore the "Preserve Open Space" stickers provided by the Sierra Club. The stickers were a mute but effective reminder of what most people wanted. Jointly we gathered many signatures for eventual presentation to the Supervisors in whose districts this project lies: Orange County Supervisor Campbell and Los Angeles County Supervisor Knabe.

IN THE NATIONAL NEWS

Struggling to Link Land for Cougars—National Geographic Today Television show of May 21, 2003.

"A successful example of a wilderness corridor can be seen ... on the eight lane 91 Freeway. Coal Canyon is a model for getting animals from Point A to Point B. Coal Canyon used to be asphalt, this whole area used to be an underpass ... More than a thousand homes along with gas stations and restaurants were slated for development at the Coal Canyon exit... The underpass is now a wildlife corridor for mountain lions and many other animals and is currently being restored to its natural state."

LA HABRA HEIGHTS COUNCIL URGES SALE

The La Habra Heights City Council passed a resolution on a 4-0 vote (one absent) to urge LA County to sell its surplus land to the Habitat Authority for preservation. The two bulldozed pads abut Harbor Blvd. and lie within LHH city limits, which are the eastern most boundary of the Habitat Authority jurisdiction. Aera is counting on accessing Harbor Blvd. through this County-owned land.

NEW EQUESTRIAN CENTER OPENS

The Habitat Authority used Puente Hills Landfill mitigation funds to build a new staging area and equestrian center near Powder Canyon. Habitat Authority Chair Bob Henderson presided over the dedication ceremony that was held March 29th. Supervisor Knabe and Senator Margett joined the ribbon cutting event. The new trailhead is friendly to both children and the physically challenged.

LAWSUIT SETTLED

Just before the hearing was held on our challenge to the adequacy of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) of Nuevo Energy's Tonner Hills Project, we reached an out-of-court settlement. This 800-acre project with 795 houses will sit on hills above Lambert Road in Brea's Sphere of Influence. During the EIR review, we were able to prevent a planned access road into Tonner Canyon. This road would have jeopardized the wildlife crossing under the Tonner Canyon bridge since there is no other place wildlife can safely cross the 57 freeway from the Chino Hills to the Puente Hills.

The agreement was not easy to achieve since Nuevo refused to make changes that would have lowered density or that would have required them to get new approval from the Board of Supervisors. We did achieve a redesign that enhances habitat, restricts lighting into Brea Canyon, and protects that canyon from views of houses. In addition, we derived a cash settlement that will allow us to more aggressively protect the lands in the "Missing Middle."



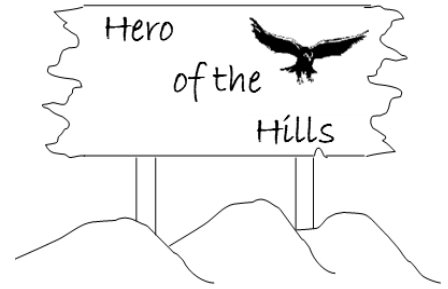
The Habitat Authority sponsored a ribbon cutting for the new center.

ARTIST'S COMMENTS

I have enclosed a copy of a watercolor that I was inspired to paint in 1980... I have been awed and spiritually revived by so many places and moments between the Santa Ana River and Carbon Canyon, and the neighboring hills, that I can't possibly proclaim "The Best Place in the

Hills." The picture ... is one of many views from my "gateway" to the wonders I have found in these hills and was painted at the dawn of the preservation of them, for Everyone. —Tom Warner

(Tom is a long time resident of Sleepy Hollow in Chino Hills and an early HFE Board member).



MILT BURDICK

This Brea resident has been a loyal, active and "in the trenches" supporter of efforts to save the hills and canyons around Brea. Milt's feistiness and tenacity in informing decision makers and rousing the public is well known.



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ARTIST'S CORNER

Theme: "Best Place in the Hills"
Artist: Tom Warner



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

WANT TO BE REMOVED FROM OUR MAILING LIST?

Please call 714-687-1555. Leave your name and address on the voice mail.



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