

Hills For Everyone

Friends of the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor

Newsletter No. 18

Winter 2007



Diamond Bar Tells Shell-Aera "Come On Down!"

Shell-Aera Shoots for the Moon

Four years ago Aera Energy, a wholly owned subsidiary of Shell-ExxonMobil, submitted a development proposal to Los Angeles and Orange Counties to build 3,600 units in the undeveloped hills along the 57 freeway between Diamond Bar and Brea. We call this area the "Missing Middle" of the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor since thousands of acres of land have been saved on either side.

Shell-Aera owns 2,700 acres of unincorporated land in southeastern Los Angeles County and about 300 acres in unincorporated Orange County in Brea's Sphere of Influence. Shell-Aera's proposed project would not only sever the Wildlife Corridor and destroy important walnut and oak woodlands, but it would also add 40,000 vehicle trips a day to our already congested roads and freeways.

Los Angeles County Says No

Last spring the Technical Advisory Committee that oversees Significant Ecological Areas (SEA) for Los Angeles County turned down Shell-Aera's project. SEAs are a land use overlay required by L.A. County that demand special study and accommodation. Most of Shell-Aera's land lies within SEA-15. Because of the enormous impacts of the 3,600 unit project on the natural resources of the land, Shell-Aera was asked to redesign the project to bring it into compliance with the long



Shell-Aera's property from above Diamond Bar, looking southwest.

Melanie Schlotterbeck

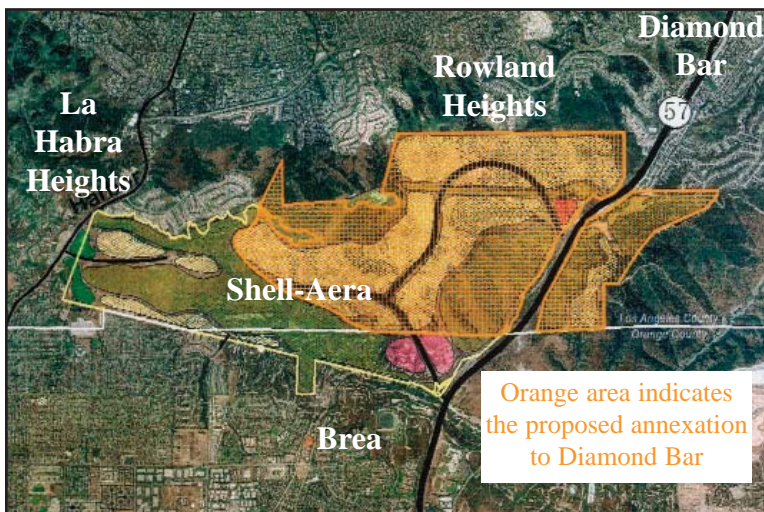
established rules for SEAs. This kind of project denial is actually a very rare occurrence.

Shell-Aera Finds a City Willing to Rip up the Hills

Rather than abide by the rules governing protection of L.A. County's valuable natural resources, Shell-Aera chose instead to go shopping for a development friendly city and found it in Diamond Bar. Despite being told that discussions were "preliminary" and "casual," we learned that on December 19th the Diamond Bar City Council would vote on formal resolutions to proceed with (1) an annexation into the City of 1,940 acres of the 3,000 acres that Shell-Aera owns, and (2) a development agreement approving 2,800 housing units and commercial centers. We understand Shell-Aera still intends to proceed with the rest of the project as well. (See the map to the left for annexation area).

Move the Golf Course

An integral part of this scenario is that Diamond Bar is attempting to increase its tax base. The City wants to relocate the County-owned Diamond Bar Golf Course that lies alongside the 57-60 freeways and then develop the existing golf course site into a commercial magnet. To this end the City is in escrow to buy two large parcels (270 acres total) contiguous to Shell-Aera's project in Rowland Heights for the relocated golf course. They



City of Diamond Bar

need about 100 acres of the Shell-Aera land to link the two parcels and get a flatter golf course layout in the hilly terrain. The two parcels are the Reed property and land owned by the City of Industry. (See map on lower right for details).

Taxpayer Giveaway

The annexation and development agreements that the Diamond Bar City Council passed on December 19th look like they could have been written by Shell-Aera. Among other things, Diamond Bar:

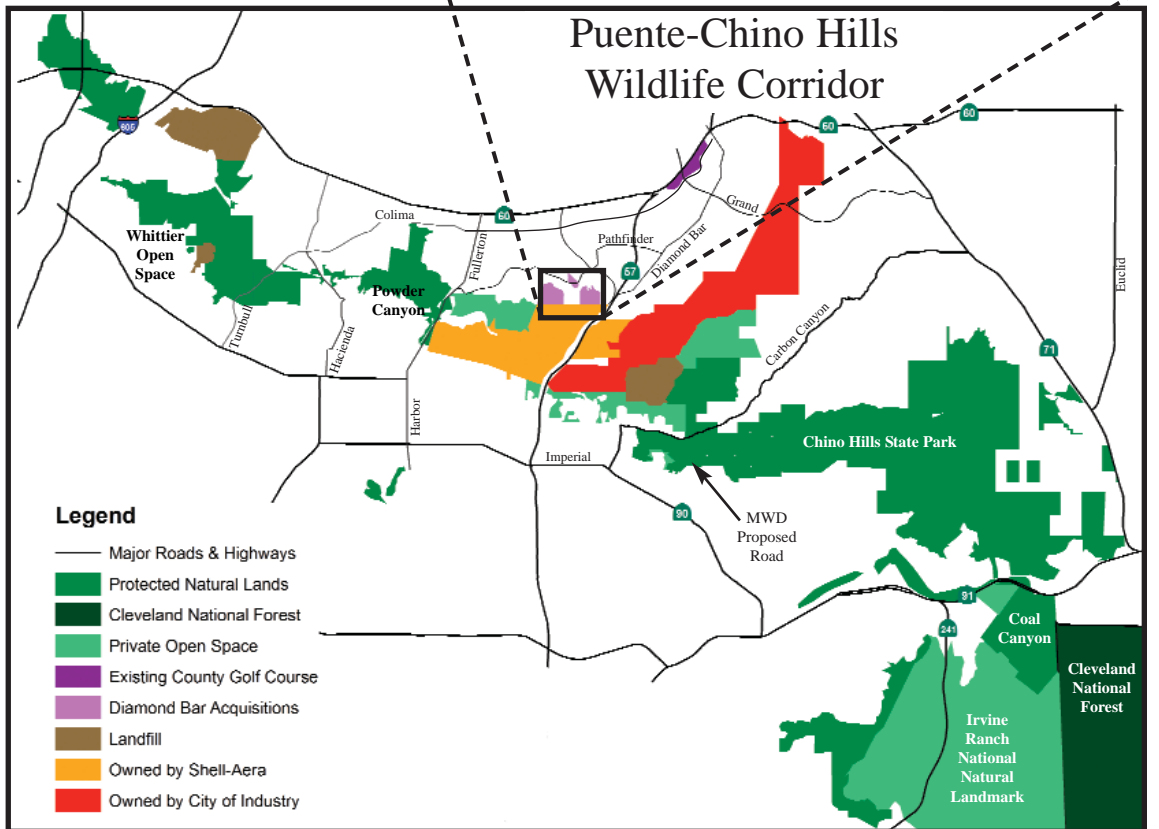
- has frozen the development fees for the next 25 years;
- is obligated to indemnify the developer against any negligence by the City in the entitlement process;
- is not allowed to back out of the agreement; only Shell-Aera is allowed to back out;
- gives full control of phasing of the project to Shell-Aera without requiring that essential public infrastructure be provided first;
- allows the City Manager and City Attorney to amend the agreement without public or Council review; and
- has agreed to let Shell-Aera propose amendments to the City's General Plan that will weaken the ridgeline protections and allow massive grading.

Diamond Bar claims this deal will add \$1 million a year to the City budget but the City has refused to release the economic analysis upon which its decision was based claiming it is still a "draft." So is their decision a draft?

Negotiations Delayed

As long as Shell-Aera is hopeful it can get a great deal in Diamond Bar, it appears unlikely they will talk to our negotiators to sell the land. We have worked very hard to identify funds to buy this land at fair market value. Shell-Aera has said in newspaper articles that they are willing sellers but then refuse to return our phone calls. Representatives from Aera Energy have also said they do not want to take taxpayer funds. Their reticence seems disingenuous at best. We do not recall them turning down the tax breaks and subsidies afforded Big Oil over the last five years.

This latest ploy threatens 30 years of conservation successes. For now, the door has closed on negotiations to save the land.



AVAILABLE FUNDING SOURCES FOR NATURAL LAND PROTECTION

- Los Angeles County Proposition A **\$10 Million**
- Statewide Proposition 84 - Clean Water, Parks, and Coastal Protection Bond Act **\$5.4 Billion**
- Orange County Measure M - for impacts to habitat caused by freeway projects **\$243.5 Million**

NEW ROAD PROPOSED THROUGH STATE PARK

In a rare circumstance, we find ourselves on the opposite side of an issue with the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR). State Parks staff is supporting a new road into Telegraph Canyon, the Orange County entrance to Chino Hills State Park. Hills For Everyone does not.

EARLIER OPPORTUNITY LOST

The Diemer water filtration plant, operated by Metropolitan Water District (MWD) is currently only accessed from the south side on Valley View. In the 1990's the area around the plant was developed by Shell-Aera in Yorba Linda. The City was so intent on approving the project that it failed to require any mitigation for the MWD truck traffic that would be going through this new and now built residential development. MWD itself failed to secure a secondary access for emergencies when it had the chance during the processing of this development. According to a Yorba Linda resident who lives nearby, now that homes are there, neighbors have been complaining about the trucks.

CARROT TO FUND VISITOR CENTER

Meanwhile State Parks has been planning its Visitor Center off of Carbon Canyon Road and is short money to fully fund and staff it. MWD already has filtration ponds near

the Orange County entrance. MWD has proposed two road sections through the State Park. The first part of the plan is to relocate an existing road easement to separate Visitor Center traffic from MWD trucks that go to the ponds. This relocation makes sense.

But MWD has also proposed building a new road from the ponds, one mile up the steep south wall of Telegraph Canyon, to its hilltop plant. Though MWD touts it will be used for emergencies, it will actually also be used each day for employees and deliveries. This new road will impede traffic on Carbon Canyon Road (rated level "F") for an estimated 20 MWD employees who will use the shortcut to the plant through the Park.

Having successfully fought for 20 years to keep a County road out of Telegraph Canyon, we were dismayed to learn that DPR is supporting both roads in this proposal. With the sizable chunk of funding that MWD has offered, DPR can establish an endowment for staffing and furnishing the Visitor Center.

ROADS RUIN PARKS

In our view, interrupting the serenity of this canyon and ripping up



Metropolitan Water District

the walnut woodlands it contains is not worth the money MWD has offered. Building a Visitor Center should never come at the expense of the land or the Park experience itself. Selling out the natural resources of the Park ostensibly so people can better understand the resources of the Park is not good public policy. It makes all of the land vulnerable to the latest need expressed by outside agencies that have not planned well. It further encourages bad planning because these agencies know, in a pinch, they can make a deal with State Parks.

The Draft Environmental Impact Report was just release. Comments on it are due April 9th.

To express your opposition to this road, email Ted Jackson tjack@parks.ca.gov.

TAKE ACTION TODAY!

Our updated DVD *Saving Open Space II* has been showing on public access channels in Brea, La Habra Heights, and Whittier. It will soon be showing on the Time Warner public access channel as well.

Our deepest gratitude is extended to Dr. Bill Kowalik for his "above and beyond" effort on this educational and inspirational video.

If you want to receive a free copy of the DVD, please email us your snail mail address to: info@HillsForEveryone.org. We are offering these free DVDs to hillside preservation supporters, but donations are always welcome.

The Puente Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor, stretching 31 miles from Whittier to the Santa Ana Mountains, is a unique urban wilderness in the middle of one of the most densely populated regions in the world.

Development proposals on 6,000 acres in the middle of the Wildlife Corridor threaten to fragment the 18,000 acres already saved. This video shows the importance of preserving this wonderful open space for animals, people and the quality of life in the Los Angeles Basin.

"We need open space to maintain the sanity of our culture."

Dr. Kevin Starr
Author and President
Former California State Librarian

I can't more at
www.HillsForEveryone.org
www.SavingTheMissingMiddle.org

Saving Open Space II was produced as a public service in 2006. (45 Minutes)

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Saving Open Space II
The Missing Middle
of the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor

Hills For Everyone

CORRIDOR EVENTS - MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Sat. & Sun., March 24 & 25

Nature's Notes

A Campfire will be held at the Rolling M Ranch in Chino Hills State Park, accessed via the Chino Hills entrance. It will begin at 8:00 PM.



Irvine Ranch Land Reserve Trust Naturalist Evelyn Brown will provide expertise on native birds. She'll even test your ability to distinguish bird calls. Arrive early with your lawn chairs and blankets to sing campfire songs!

Following the Campfire, a Camp Out, costing \$10 per person and benefiting the Chino Hills State Park Interpretive Association, will be held at the nearby Equestrian Staging area. Campsites are first come, first served and you MUST REGISTER AND PRE-PAY for your campsite to be reserved. Space is limited and demand is high for this fun event.

For more information or to register, visit: www.ChinoHillsStatePark.org.

Sat. & Sun. April 21 - 22

Green Scene

This popular annual event at the Fullerton Arboretum is held over Earth Day weekend. It runs Saturday, April 21 from 9:00 - 5:00 and Sunday, April 22 from 10:00 - 4:00. The Arboretum is located near Yorba Linda Blvd. and Associated Road on the Cal State Fullerton Campus.



We will have a booth there and need volunteers to help staff it!

Habitat Authority News

The Habitat Authority is planning to release a draft of its Resource Management Plan this spring. It will be posted at www.HabitatAuthority.org by April or May and it will include a trail map. Many studies have been conducted to determine the status and variety of natural resources including bats, birds, butterflies, and small mammals. A survey was also conducted of the park users to find out who uses the parkland and for what activity.

The Arroyo Pescadero trailhead will be open by February 26. Keep a look out for the animal tracks embedded in the Arizona stream crossing.

Saturday, April 21

Earth Day

The California State Parks Foundation and Southern California Edison will partner to provide materials and support for this annual event. Participants will work to bring amenities to the group campground area. Contact Ranger Grant at 951-780-6222 if you or your group wish to help.



Spring means babies are being born... keep a watchful eye out for some of our favorites.



Melanie Schlotterbeck

Presentations Available

Presentations to interested groups on the threats and possibilities for the Wildlife Corridor are available.

Email us to schedule a presentation: info@HillsForEveryone.org.

NEWSLETTER RECIPIENTS

If you wish to be removed from this list, call 714-687-1555 and give us your name and address or email us at: info@HillsForEveryone.org.

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Want Diamond Bar to approve 2800 houses, adding 40,000 more cars as they bulldoze the 57 hills? Neither do we.