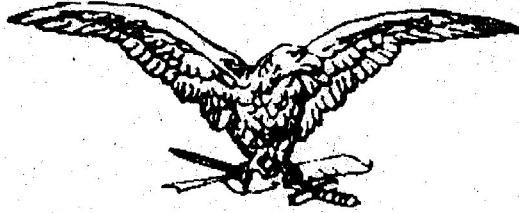


## LOS ANGELES TIMES EDITORIALS



JOHN P. PUERNER, *Publisher*

JOHN S. CARROLL, *Editor*

JANET CLAYTON, *Editor of the Editorial Pages*

### ORANGE COUNTY PERSPECTIVE

## Good Investment in Open Space

The state's purchase this month of 649 acres of wilderness in Coal Canyon was a welcome step toward preserving open space in a county that has seen much of its fields and wooded areas become housing.

The canyon property, south of the Riverside Freeway, helps link two large pieces of land in a fast-growing area. Wildlife experts say the corridor is needed to provide sufficient room for mountain lions, deer and other animals to roam. Assembling large parcels is increasingly difficult in an urbanized county.

The state Public Works Board this summer approved spending \$4.7 million as the last amount needed for the \$40-million purchase from a Newport Beach company. The company had received approval from Anaheim for construction of more than 1,500

homes on the Coal Canyon site but expressed willingness to sell to public agencies for less than the appraisal price. Orange County supervisors this year approved contributing \$1 million to the land purchase.

Another parcel, a bit bigger than 32 acres, is north of the freeway and also is considered vital to preserving the wildlife corridor. Public agencies and private conservation groups should explore the possibility of buying that tract as well.

The Coal Canyon land links Chino Hills State Park and the Cleveland National Forest. Together they account for nearly half a million acres, but the value of the land to wildlife preservation is increased greatly by leaving it uninterrupted by housing developments.