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MORE FIRES, BUT SMALLER FIRES, NEAR CHINO HILLS STATE PARK OVER LAST SEVEN YEARS

Brea, CA. – The regional conservation non-profit released an update of its study of wildfires in and near Chino Hills State Park. The first research project spanned 97 years and included 103 documented wildfires, while the new study added 51 more fires in just seven years. Though fires are a natural part of the ecosystem, there is nothing natural about the size and frequency of the fires destroying our wildlands year after year. A more natural fire regime for our habitat lands is every 30 to 150 years. Instead, portions of the land are burning every eight months. With the Park burning so frequently, we are losing the natural resources we set out to protect.

“Understanding where, how, and why fires are starting near Chino Hills State Park is essential to planning for the protection of resources and homes,” comments Claire Schlotterbeck, Executive Director of Hills For Everyone. “The information provided in this report is a useful planning tool not only for us, but also for decision makers, fire agencies, utility companies, and transportation agencies.”

The updated report documents the fire perimeters, points of origin, causes, and (if known) weather conditions for fires that burned in, adjacent to, or near Chino Hills State Park between 1914 and 2018. The top three most identifiable causes of wildland fires in the Study Area are: arson, automobiles, and fireworks.

“It is clear that the 91 Freeway, with one-third of the fires burning there, is a major contributor to our region’s devastating losses,” says Schlotterbeck. “Most recently, the Canyon 1 and Canyon 2 Fires in 2017 wreaked havoc on the habitat lands and destroyed many homes.”

This Study called “104 Years of Wildfire History Near Chino Hills State Park” is available on the Hills For Everyone website, along with interactive digital map layers, viewable in Google Earth:

www.HillsForEveryone.org.

The Study Area includes portions of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino Counties with a focus on Chino Hills State Park. Other areas of concern include the Rimcrest entrance to Chino Hills State Park in Yorba Linda and Carbon Canyon Road in Brea. With 11 fires along the 57 Freeway in just three years, a new hotspot has been identified.

“Looking at the statistics, more and more fires are breaking records. Statewide, a third of California’s most devastating fires occurred in the last two years, with recorded history going back to 1932,” continues Schlotterbeck. “These precedent setting fires should give pause to our decision makers when considering developments in very high or high fire areas—but the opposite is true in Orange County where another 340 houses were approved in the fire-prone hills above Yorba Linda, with just one way out for residents.”

In this latest report, Hills For Everyone also recaps what actions have occurred since the original write up and makes new recommendations as well. Schlotterbeck confirms, “We will work closely with fire, transportation, and natural resource agencies to protect the landscape from continued wildfire assaults, but the work cannot be completed without our decision makers, fire agencies, and residents help and funding to implement safety measures.”

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Hills For Everyone is a non-profit organization that created Chino Hills State Park and works to preserve the unique and disappearing landscapes of the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor.