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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 9, 2021

Governor Newsom Signs Bill to Expand Popular Chino Hills State Park

Brea, California—Reversing more than a decade of stagnation wherein the California State Park system did not grow, Governor Gavin Newsom changed course by signing a bill that will grow Chino Hills State Park, an urban wilderness park at the juncture of Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Los Angeles Counties. Senate Bill 266, sponsored by Hills For Everyone, was signed into law on October 9th. The bill requires the California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to accept the transfer of approximately 1,530 acres contiguous to Chino Hills State Park. This acreage expands the park by more than 10%.

SB 266 is the third attempt to get the bill through the Legislature. The bipartisan and bicameral effort was led by Senator Josh Newman (D-Fullerton) and Assemblymember Phillip Chen (R-Diamond Bar) along with their respective staffs, Hills For Everyone lobbyists at Tratten-Price Consulting, local cities and agencies, and 32 conservation groups across California. The bill had no documented opposition in the Senate or Assembly.

The acquisition of these critical lands, which protect important habitats and ridges, also builds on the east-west connection from the 14,107-acre State Park to the 4,000-acre Prado Basin,” states Claire Schlotterbeck, Executive Director of Hills For Everyone—founders of Chino Hills State Park. “We are grateful to our many partners including interim stewards, the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) and transaction specialists at The Conservation Fund.”

Last year, Governor Newsom issued Executive Order N-82-20 which sets the goal of protecting 30% of California’s lands and coastal waters by 2030. An estimated eight million acres still need to be protected to reach that goal statewide and that must include acquisitions from DPR, the largest public land manager in the state. These new acquisitions set the Parks Department on a path of once again growing its system which hosts 77 million visitors a year and became even more fundamental to a healthy and recovering California during the pandemic.

“SB 266 will help California reach its goal of preserving 30 percent of the state’s land and coastal waters by 2030,” said Senator Josh Newman (D-Fullerton). “The expansion of Chino Hills State Park will protect precious open space for our beautiful area, an environment that hosts the most biodiversity in any of the lower 48 states.”

The 1999 General Plan for Chino Hills State Park documents lands prioritized for preservation, including the eastern ridgeline, which until recently had mostly been in private ownership. Without the eastern ridgelines under preserved status, the land could have been developed—destroying the viewshed for people and the water quality for wildlife. Since the mid-1970s, these lands were always envisioned for inclusion in the State Park.

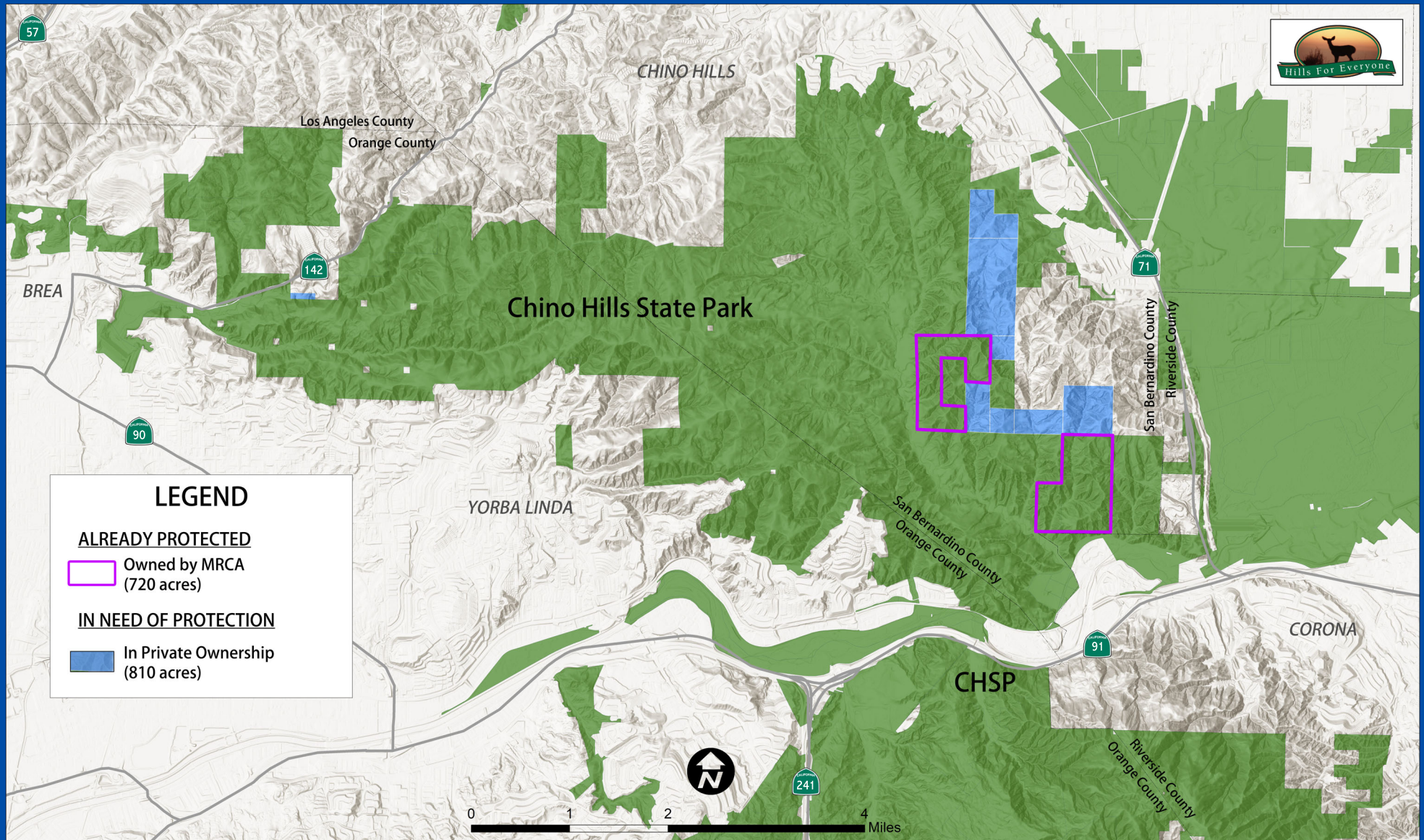
Additionally, State Parks will finally be in compliance with a settlement agreement it reached with Hills For Everyone and the Metropolitan Water District in 2008 to preserve walnut woodlands that were impacted when an access road to the District’s Diemer Water Treatment Plant was built through a portion of the Park.

Of the 1,530 acres included in the bill, 720 have already been protected and are now owned by MRCA. Currently, Hills For Everyone team members are working to finalize more transactions and secure funding. The overall strategy is to have the final two phases completed by 2024 and then added to the State Park. See the attached map for the progress to date.

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*For more than 40 years, **Hills For Everyone** has worked to preserve the unique and disappearing landscapes of the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor.*

Natural Lands Included in SB 266 (the Chino Hills State Park Expansion Bill)



Data Provided by Department of Parks and Recreation; First American Title; OC Parks; and Orange County Transportation Authority.
Map Last Updated September 2021

Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic
Datum: North American 1983
Scale: 1:60,000