



Hills for Everyone

Friends of the Wildlife Corridor

Newsletter No. 4

Spring 2002

Coal Canyon Saved!



The Thrill of Victory Completing Coal Canyon Biological Corridor: (pictured from L to R) Rick Rayburn, Chief of Resource Protection - State Parks; Claire Schlotterbeck, President Hills for Everyone; Geary Hund, Resource Ecologist Inland Empire District; Warren Westrup, Chief of Acquisitions - State Parks

By: Geary Hund

Described by conservation biologists as an acquisition of worldwide importance, Coal Canyon now permanently links the Puente-Chino Hills on the north to the Cleveland National Forest on the south. It also sets the stage for the unprecedented step of closing a freeway interchange, ripping out the pavement, and converting it to an underpass for wildlife and trail users.

On June 29, 2001 at 5 p.m., State Parks closed escrow on the last of the private parcels in the Coal

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President's Comments

This year the award winning citizen's group Hills for Everyone celebrates 25 years of protecting open space at the juncture of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. Our efforts resulted in the creation of the 13,500 acre Chino Hills State Park.

Twenty five years ago residents on the western side of the hills, in Whittier and La Habra Heights, likewise were organizing to save their hillsides. With the latest acquisition underway for Turnbull Canyon in Whittier, 4000 acres have been permanently set-aside for residents and wildlife to enjoy.

Realizing that both areas need to be linked together to maintain the long-term health of our common ecosystem, we joined forces in 1994. We are creating a wildlife corridor in the remaining open space in the Puente-Chino Hills. In our first effort working together we linked our hills to the National Forest at Coal Canyon.

But we need your help to succeed! Shell (AERA) has proposed 3600 houses in the heart of the corridor between Harbor Blvd. and the 57 Freeway. Nuevo Energy has proposed another 914 houses near Tonner Canyon.

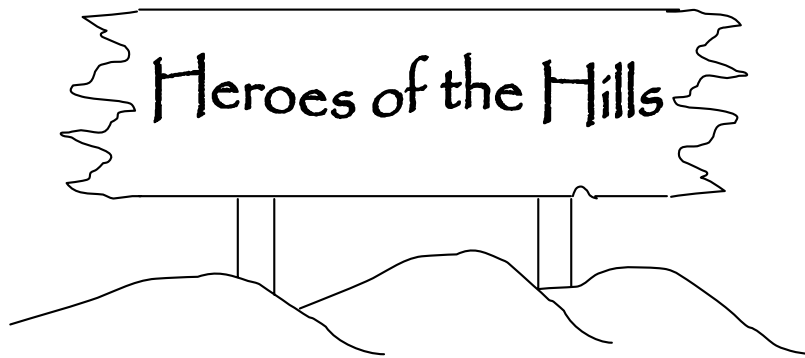
We need your financial assistance to battle these wealthy oil companies whose projects would sever the corridor and further overload our streets.

Hills for Everyone is a non-profit tax-deductible organization and a Boeing Matching Fund partner.

Much of this wonderful area has been preserved because people have defended the hills they love. Now we just need to finish linking up the beautiful lands in our backyards.

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Canyon Corridor. This moment was the culmination of over six years of a monumental effort to save this land. A river of life flows through Coal Canyon, helping to keep an area of more than 512,000 acres healthy and alive. Genetic exchange is maintained, seasonal and long-term movements can occur and now re-population after a natural catastrophe is possible.

The primary beneficiary of the corridor, Chino Hills State Park, is in the center of the southwest ecoregion, an area containing a greater diversity of plants and animals than any other area of comparable size in the United States.

Chino Hills State Park serves millions of people. Half the state's population resides within a short distance of the park. Its wild character and proximity to urban areas make it an ideal place for people to come to renew their spirits; and to get away from the frantic pace of modern life.

The preservation of Coal Canyon and Chino Hills State Park represents a tremendous public investment; it also represents the tremendous will and tenacity of a large group of dedicated people, people who care about our fellow creatures and about the future of humanity. The success of Coal Canyon will reverberate far beyond its boundaries. God bless each and everyone who had the vision, the courage and the determination to save Coal Canyon. Here's to Coal Canyon, a celebration of life!!!

Whittier Chuck & Mary Hanson
 Mary was founding President of Friends of Whittier Hills and is still their newsletter Editor. She has been active in hillside preservation as spokesperson for Save Our Hills battles in 1978 and 1981. Upon husband Chuck's retirement he assumed leadership of the group.

Hacienda Heights Jeff Yann
 Dedicated Sierra Club volunteer, active in opposing landfill impacts and restoring the San Gabriel River, Jeff has been instrumental in preserving the wildlife corridor. His civil engineering expertise has been useful in critiquing development plans in the hills.

La Habra Heights Jill & Bill Kowalik
 This dynamic duo filmed, wrote, and produced the 45 minute "Saving Open Space" video that aired on 15 public access channels throughout the corridor. The film is now part of the curriculum in four local universities and in the hands of every elected official in the region.

Diamond Bar Wilbur Smith
 A retired engineer, Wilbur has rallied support from his neighbors to preserve Tonner Canyon from the destructive freeway proposed by his city. He has also volunteered enumerable hours in the lawsuit against the City of Industry's proposed dams and reservoirs.

Brea Charla Hall
 This busy mother of four led the nearly successful citizen's hillside protection initiative in 2001. Charla's tenacious effort brought hillside protection to the forefront of her city's agenda. She was 72nd Assembly District "Woman of the Year in 2001."

Fullerton Connie Spenger
 The first activist to identify the need to preserve Coal Canyon back in 1986, Connie relentlessly volunteers her time to save other north Orange County landscapes: Tecate Cypress, Tonner Canyon and Coyote Hills.

Yorba Linda Dirk & Tricia Darling
 When Shapell Industries proposed the deletion of open space and housing density 2 1/2 times what is allowed in the General Plan, Dirk and Tricia began the effort to establish a new grassroots organization called Saving Open Space.

Chino Hills Nancy Wells
 A former realtor, who sold the very first parcel to Chino Hills State Park in 1981, this dogged, clever resident uses her expertise and research skills to inform decision makers about the wisdom (or lack thereof) of development proposals.

DO YOU KNOW OF OTHER

CONSERVATION HEROES IN THE HILLS?

Please email their names with a brief description of their efforts to:

webserver@hillsforeveryone.org

Visit us at
www.hillsforeveryone.org

Did you know?

Our hills are famous for their natural resources.

- * U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has designated our hills as part of "Critical Habitat" for the threatened California gnatcatcher.
- * World renowned scientists have described our hills as a Global Hotspot of Biodiversity (highly valued but threatened by development).
- * Our hills are listed as a California Missing Linkage by the San Diego Zoological Society, Fish and Game, State Parks, et. al.
- * Los Angeles County has proposed establishing all of the hills as an expansion of Significant Ecological Area - 15 in their General Plan.
- * One of the West's Best State Parks by Sunset Magazine (May 2002).

UPLIFTING UPDATES

ROUND TWO: JUDGE SIDES WITH CONSERVATIONISTS (Tonner Canyon - Diamond Bar)

Judge Janavs upheld the heart of the conservationists' lawsuit filed against the City of Industry's purchase of Firestone Scout Reservation land. Bolstered by support from the Attorney General's office, conservationists claimed Industry's purchase was illegal. If Industry bought the Scout land to build a dam and reservoir on it and on their adjacent Tres Hermanos parcel, they violated the California Environmental Quality Act. If they acquired the land to preserve it as open space, they violated part of the Government Code that restricts a city's extra-territorial power. The City will be hard-pressed to find a way out of this dilemma.

Furthermore, Industry's ongoing

ownership of the Tres Hermanos Ranch is now in jeopardy. At the first substantive hearing, held late last year, Judge Janavs ruled that conservationists could not retroactively attack the Agency's purchase of that parcel some 23 years ago. But she did rule the Agency is illegally spending redevelopment funds outside the city's territorial jurisdiction by maintaining Tres Hermanos.

This is very important because if Industry can't legally spend money to improve or maintain the Ranch, it can't very well continue to own the parcel or to use it as a site for a future dam and reservoir. So the stakes in the litigation for Industry are now very high. By continuing to litigate, Industry is not only forced to defend their legally questionable scheme to build the dam on the

Firestone parcel, but they are also jeopardizing their continuing ownership of the Tres Hermanos parcel.

The original lawsuits were filed because two years ago the Los Angeles Council of Boy Scouts sold 2/3 of their Firestone Scout Reservation to the City of Industry's Urban Development Agency. Conservationists quickly challenged the purchase. The Scouts are included in the lawsuit not out of malice but because they are considered an "indispensable party."

In Round One last June, Industry conceded that their redevelopment agency's purchase of land (that was neither blighted nor in their city limits) was illegal. In a greased process they rescinded the Agency's purchase and had the City itself immediately buy the land. The next hearing will be held May 17.

ROSE HILLS FOUNDATION LAND TO BE SAVED

(Turnbull Canyon - Whittier)

Following a huge public outcry at the cemetery proposal by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles for the Rose Hills property, landowners and conservationists quietly entered negotiations for

sale to the Puente Hills Landfill Native Habitat Preservation Authority. In March 2002, the Habitat Authority announced that 951 acres have been placed in escrow for conservation.

This parcel links together numerous other lands already permanently protected. Many thanks to newly re-elected Whittier Councilman Bob

Henderson, Andrea Gullo, and the Rose Hills Foundation for having the patience to put this deal together.

Overwhelming numbers of Hacienda Heights residents also rose up to support preservation of this area. By announcing and attending multiple meetings, residents made themselves heard and more land was saved.



BOTHERSOME BULLETINS

Shapell Industries (Yorba Linda)

This developer has proposed two and a half times as many houses as is currently allowed in the city's General Plan. Houses also have been proposed on what is now zoned Open Space. This area has some of the steepest and most unstable slopes in the city. This ridgeline not only serves as the visual backdrop to the City but is also contiguous with Chino Hills State Park. Up until now it had been proposed for dedication to the park.

Shell /AERA (La Habra Heights / Brea)

AERA Representatives filed their 3600 housing proposal in Los Angeles and Orange Counties. This massive project would add about 36,000 daily vehicle trips onto local streets. The land is the backdrop of north Orange County and part of Los Angeles Significant Ecological Area - 15. Driving north of Brea on the 57 freeway, you can catch a glimpse of this beautiful oak and walnut woodland on both sides of the freeway.

Nuevo Energy (Brea)

Having poured \$270,000 into the campaign to defeat the Brea citizens' hillside protection initiative last year, Nuevo submitted their development plans to the County of Orange for approval. Nuevo has proposed 914 homes on the northeastern backdrop of Brea on lands polluted with residue from a century of oil drilling. They intend to keep over 200 active oil wells on the land. Nuevo has also proposed a road over the backside of the ridge that would disrupt the only wildlife linkage between the Puente and the Chino Hills under the Tonner Canyon Bridge of the 57 Freeway. The Environmental Impact Report was released April 25, 2002.

Artists' Corner



Two interpretations
of the theme:

"IT'S IN YOUR HANDS"



Artists:
(Above) Luan Nguyen
(Right) Jeff Ahrens

To submit your artwork, send it to: webserver@hillsforeveryone.org
Summer Issue Theme: Summer Pleasures

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Friends of the Wildlife Corridor

Save the Wildlife Corridor