

Hills For Everyone

Friends of the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor



Newsletter No. 13

Winter 2005

KUDOS TO BREA FOR FIGHTING TO SAVE THE HILLS

Rather than just spouting off about wanting to save the hills, the City of Brea is actually trying to do it. Brea's City Council is pursuing two lawsuits challenging the City of Industry's controversial purchase of the mouth of Tonner Canyon, land that lies in Brea's Sphere of Influence and not even in Industry's county. Although Industry has claimed to be preserving this ecologically important area as open space, many public documents show that Industry's true plan is to build reservoirs and a highway there instead.

Based in part on this hypocrisy and because Industry did not publish its notice in Orange County (the site of the project), one of Brea's lawsuits attacks the adequacy of Industry's compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The other suit seeks to set aside Industry's purchase, on the grounds that it involved a gift of Industry's funds to the seller. Records show that the 525-acre property, including valuable oil rights, was appraised for \$24.5 million and yet Industry paid \$22.5 million without any of those oil rights.

If Brea's efforts to preserve the land do not succeed, it may be due less to the merits of either of its lawsuits than to Industry's typical litigation conduct. With its deep pockets and with no one watching



how it spends money, Industry's "take no prisoners" bullying technique can bury court opponents in paper.

No matter what the final outcome of the lawsuits, Brea's efforts have already shed important light on the way Industry does business. We have to hand it to the 106 registered voters in Industry and its "elected" officials, they have the game down pat. Research by volunteers has uncovered some disturbing revelations.

By paying six land-use consultants an estimated \$370,000 a year to parlay with Supervisors, bureaucrats and decision makers, Industry tries to weasel its ideas into legitimacy. These consultants include former Senator Frank Hill, Anaheim Mayor Curt Pringle,

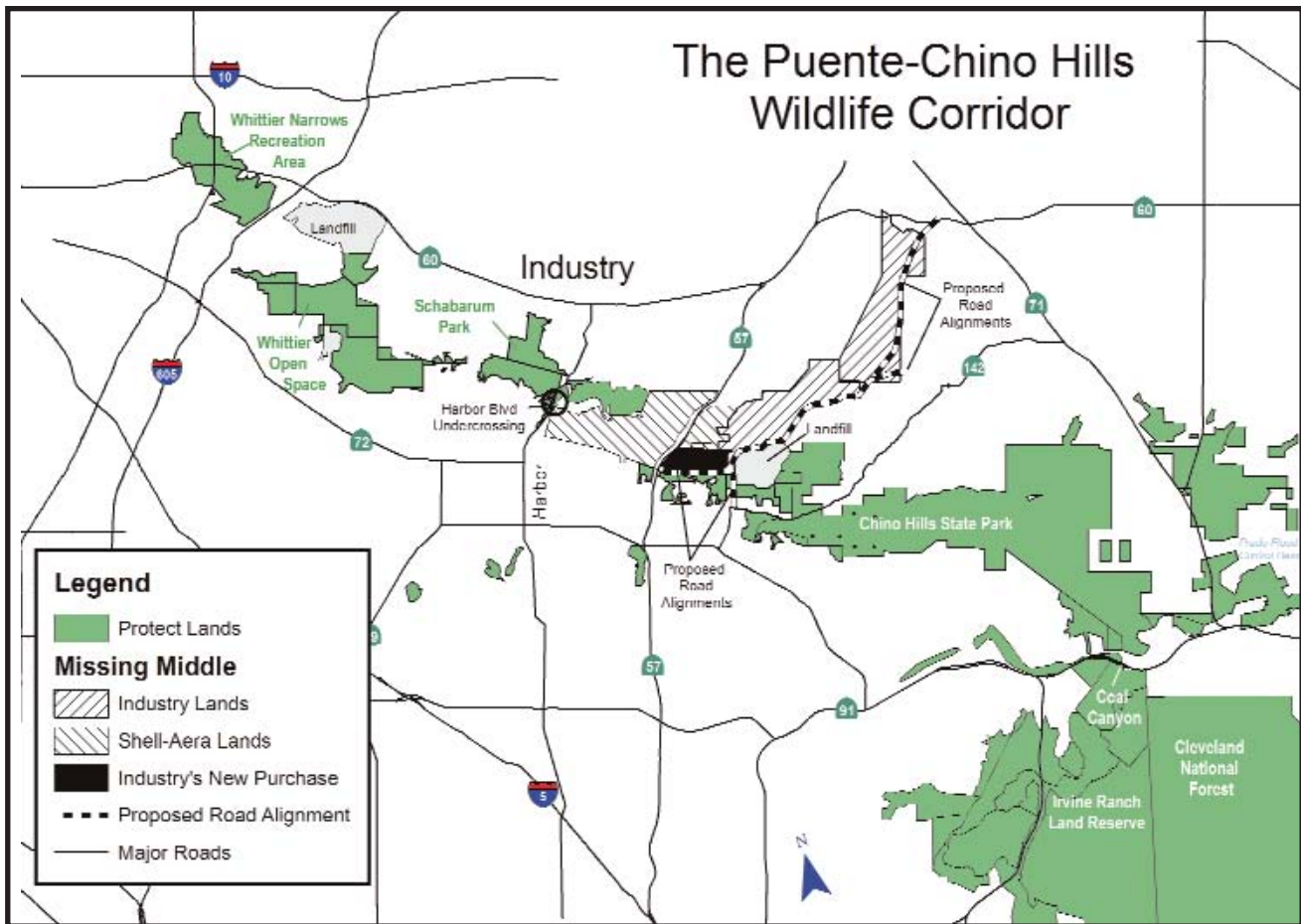
former Assemblyman Mike Roos, former Yorba Linda City Manager Art Simonian and lesser known feeders at the public trough, Joe Ruiz and Gary Neely.

The \$500,000 a year that Industry pays to six (yes SIX) lobbying firms, helps remind legislators of what Industry's 106 registered voters want.

Industry can protect its fiefdom and litigate against those who would dare oppose its expansion, by utilizing four law firms to the tune of about \$800,000 a year.

By hiring a major PR and campaign firm for well over \$900,000 a year Industry can conduct push polls and focus groups to make a bad idea sound good.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



INDUSTRY SUIT
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Documents show Industry's efforts to build dams near the Whittier earthquake fault date back to 1972 and are as recent as August 2004. Three decades of purchases in Tonner Canyon have all been outside of Industry's jurisdiction. But by pretending to buy the land for open space, Industry has avoided the scrutiny required under CEQA. When the time is right, Industry will likely propose a "better" use for Tonner Canyon, such as massive dams and a new Inland Empire Freeway.

Conservationists have long opposed a road in Tonner Canyon, since it would sever the Wildlife Corridor and add road capacity for the massive 3600 unit Shell-Aera project. Nonetheless, a few disgruntled residents of Brea's new Olinda Ranch development at the toe of the

landfill want a road there. They say a road in Tonner should be used as a new access to the landfill. They don't see it as the first leg of a new highway funneling traffic into Brea. Documents show that Industry has approached Orange County repeatedly for just such a road. Shortly before a recent Orange County Planning Commission meeting to determine the fate of this road, this small disgruntled band miraculously found the wherewithal to afford a PR campaign that inundated much of North Orange County with slick letters, door hangers, postcards and professional callers urging uninformed recruits to support a road in Tonner Canyon. The leaders of this "citizen's" group refused to answer the simple question, "Did the City of Industry provide the funds?" This refusal became an answer in and of itself.

Stay tuned!

OUTCOME OF THE HEARING...

Industry's money was not enough to win over the O.C. Planning Commissioners. Supporters of open space who oppose Tonner Canyon Road showed up at the Planning Commission hearing and pointed out that when Olinda Ranch residents purchased their homes, they signed disclosures acknowledging the likelihood that the landfill would stay open for many more years. This helped pull the rug out from under their argument that they had been blind sided by the proposed extension. **The Planning Commission did not support a new road, certified the DEIR and sent it on to the O.C. Board of Supervisors.**

A SERIES ON WILDLIFE IN THE HILLS

LEARN ABOUT WILDLIFE

Residents who want to save our hills come from many different perspectives -- people who are tired of congested streets, parents who are concerned about overcrowded schools, seniors who worry about overextended emergency services and families who simply like nature and wildlife.



M. Schlotterbeck

Iowa's landscape is relatively flat and has no unique species.

Protecting the hills because of their natural resource value is how conservationists have saved 17,000 acres from development. There is no such thing as a statewide Bond Act that saves land just because it reduces traffic. But there are statewide Park Bond Acts that save land because of natural resource values. In an ongoing series we will be providing information about why our hills are worth saving and have qualified for funding over the years in previous Park Bond Acts.

FROM THE GROUND UP

We live in an ancient landscape. Californians like to think of themselves as fresh, innovative and cutting edge, but this "Southwest Ecoregion of the California Floristic Province" of ours is an old landscape. It's old for many reasons. For one thing, no glaciers scraped their way into the terrain here and then left the bedrock lifeless upon their retreat.

The plants and animals that live here with us have had a long time to evolve. That gift of time gave them a chance to differentiate into an astonishing array of species. Throw in the warm Mediterranean climate and you have both a crucible and an Eden for unusual and rare creatures. The gift of geologic uncertainty (earth-



quakes) provided species with many opportunities to change. This calliope of movement created hills, mountains and slopes that allowed

Warm climate, varied terrain help create varied habitats.

plants and animals to move around into new niches creating lots of endemic species (species found nowhere else). California has over 2800 endemic species. By comparison, flat and "recently" glaciated Iowa has none.

There is no other place in the country that has a

backbone of 10,000-foot high mountains so close to the coast. We live atop rocks that are nine million years old and some that are compressed into a new form with each new earthquake. Scientists assure us there is no other region of comparable size in the nation that has greater biodiversity than we have right here in southern California.



J. Hansen

Bobcats use the terrain to their advantage.

Smack dab in the middle of this remarkable natural landscape and this highly engineered human landscape, lie the Puente-Chino Hills. Local lore maintains that untold treasures still lie buried in the hills but in reality the treasures lie above ground: along the streams, walnut woodlands, oak forests, grasslands, coastal sage scrub and chaparral where rare wildlife still abide. Coastal California gnatcatchers, herds of mule deer, golden eagles and southwestern pond turtles are among the rarities that inhabit the region.



A federally threatened California gnatcatcher. Photo by: A. Ing

If topography literally lays the groundwork upon which so many life forms emerged, ocean influenced weather and temperate climate open the door.

HILLSIDE UPDATES

HARBOR BLVD. UNDER CROSSING

WHERE'S HOSEC?

The Hillside Open Space Education Coalition (HOSEC) may remain low key until Shell-Aera's Draft Environmental Impact Report is released. Until we see more detailed plans there is not much to educate the public about. HOSEC is the cross county cooperative effort to save the hills that act as a buffer between Los Angeles and Orange Counties. It includes the cities of Brea, La Habra, La Habra Heights and Whittier and the unincorporated communities of Hacienda Heights and Rowland Heights. HOSEC hopes that by empowering people in these communities, that the public can have greater influence on the outcome of development projects. They are asking for associate and affiliate members. Visit the Hills For Everyone website for updates.

With funding and approvals in place, the Habitat Authority and the L.A. County Department of Public Works is in the process of building a wildlife underpass under Harbor Boulevard in the City of La Habra Heights. This wildlife underpass will allow an increase of genetic exchange and foraging capabilities among wildlife and will reduce roadkill along Harbor Boulevard. By ensuring safe passage for wildlife, motorists as well will be protected from collisions with migrating animals.



A typical wildlife underpass.

SHELL-AERA'S PLAN

Shell-Aera's proposal for 3600 housing units, three commercial centers and a golf course is going through the approval process very slowly. L.A. County is not quite sure why the project is delayed so much. We suspect its proposal has created an array of negative impacts that cannot be mitigated. The plan would carve up the hills, add 40,000 car trips a day to our roads and sever the Wildlife Corridor. Shell-Aera is cooperating with the City of Industry and is hoping Industry's Tonner Canyon highway becomes a reality quickly.



Shell-Aera's hills seen from the 57 Freeway.

M. Schlotterbeck

NEW BOARD MEMBER

HFE welcomes new Board Member Dr. Karl Reitz, a long time professor at Chapman University. Karl is Chair of the Department of Sociology as well as a Professor of Mathematics and Sociology. The father of four lives in Brea with his wife Michele and family.

FIRST TIME RECIPIENTS

If you are receiving this newsletter for the first time, you either donated funds, participated in an HFE hike, signed a petition or asked to be added to our mailing list. If you wish to be removed from the list: call 714-687-1555 or email us: info@HillsForEveryone.org and give us your name and address.



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