

Hills For Everyone

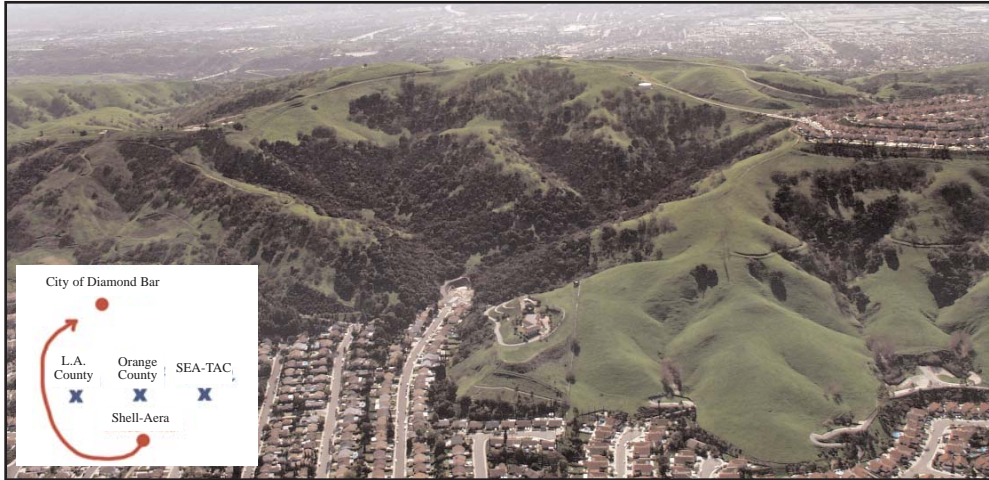
Friends of the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor

Newsletter No. 17

Fall 2006



Shell-Aera's End Run Around You!



Shell-Aera's property from above Rowlands Heights.

Photo by Melanie Schlotterbeck

Remember the promises? Shell-Aera will listen; they will keep us informed; they will “factor in our input;” they will protect the Wildlife Corridor.

Forget that. Shell-Aera is going for the gold. Now that its project has been turned down at the very first approval step, Shell has picked up its ball and is heading to Diamond Bar. The hope is to be annexed by a city with less environmental scrutiny than L.A. County.

In April, Shell-Aera's plan for 3,600 houses hit a big snag when SEA-TAC, the Los Angeles County Technical Advisory Committee that oversees Significant Ecological Areas (SEA) determined that it's plan was not compatible with the rules governing SEA's. This review of biological resources is required by the Los Angeles County General Plan for land, like Shell-Aera's, that has been designated a biologically rich landscape in unincorporated areas.

Though admitting that its land has connectivity value to the Wildlife Corridor and that it contains on-site

natural resources (e.g. oak and walnut woodlands), Shell-Aera is apparently choosing another more pliable avenue for approval. Rather than respect the opinion of numerous qualified biologists who reviewed the project, Shell-Aera has entered into discussions with the City of Diamond Bar for possible annexation of much of its 3,000 acres. Since SEA designations do not apply to land within city boundaries, Shell-Aera is betting on easier approval by Diamond Bar. There is even talk about moving the county line to annex lands currently located in Orange County!

The Hillside Open Space Education Coalition composed of the cities of Brea, La Habra, La Habra Heights and Whittier and the communities of Rowland Heights and Hacienda Heights met in early August to discuss this emerging challenge. At that meeting, Shell-Aera project manager, George Basye, admitted that they are indeed in “preliminary discussions” with Diamond Bar but there is “nothing final.”

We Just Didn't Know...

By: Claire Schlotterbeck,
Executive Director, HFE

In 1980, at my very first meeting of Hills For Everyone (HFE) I was assigned the task of raising \$1,200. A judge ordered HFE to pay attorney's fees to the City of Yorba Linda when our lawsuit was dismissed because our pro bono attorney failed to file a timely response. I didn't know much about Hills For Everyone, the area or even where to start but somehow we managed to pay off the fees \$100 a month for a year.

On what grounds was the lawsuit filed? I can't really even say because I wasn't involved when it was filed. But, I do know why the land in question was so important. It was ridgeline land. If it was lost to housing tracts, those homeowners would be overlooking the valleys in the interior of the State Park – not exactly “hills for everyone” but rather hills and views for the lucky few.

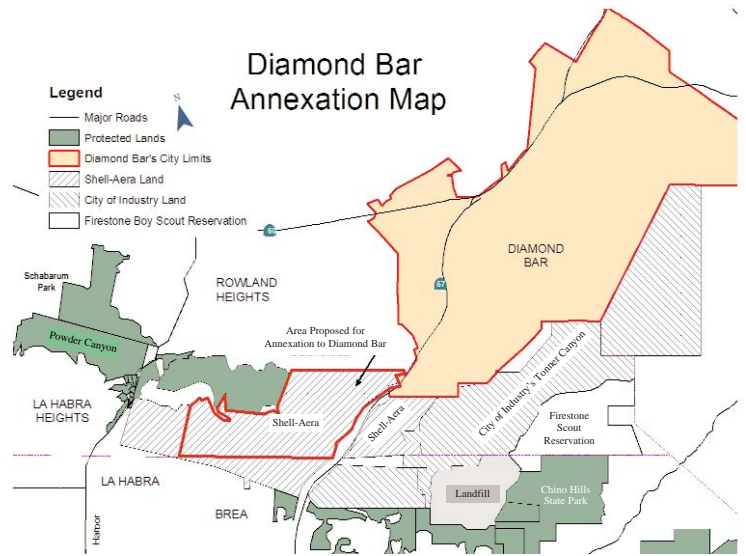
Over the next 26 years we kept our eye on this parcel of land. From participation in the General Plan update, to speaking at hearings until 2:30AM, to advising on a referendum, we used many tools as we engaged in the democratic process.

Finally just three weeks ago the state's Public Works Board approved the donation of this ridgeline land (1,262 acres) to Chino Hills State Park. The developer has also created an endowment fund for permanent maintenance of the land.

There is an important lesson here. Give the hardest jobs to the people who just don't know it can't be done, and they will figure out a way to do it. Tenacity counts!

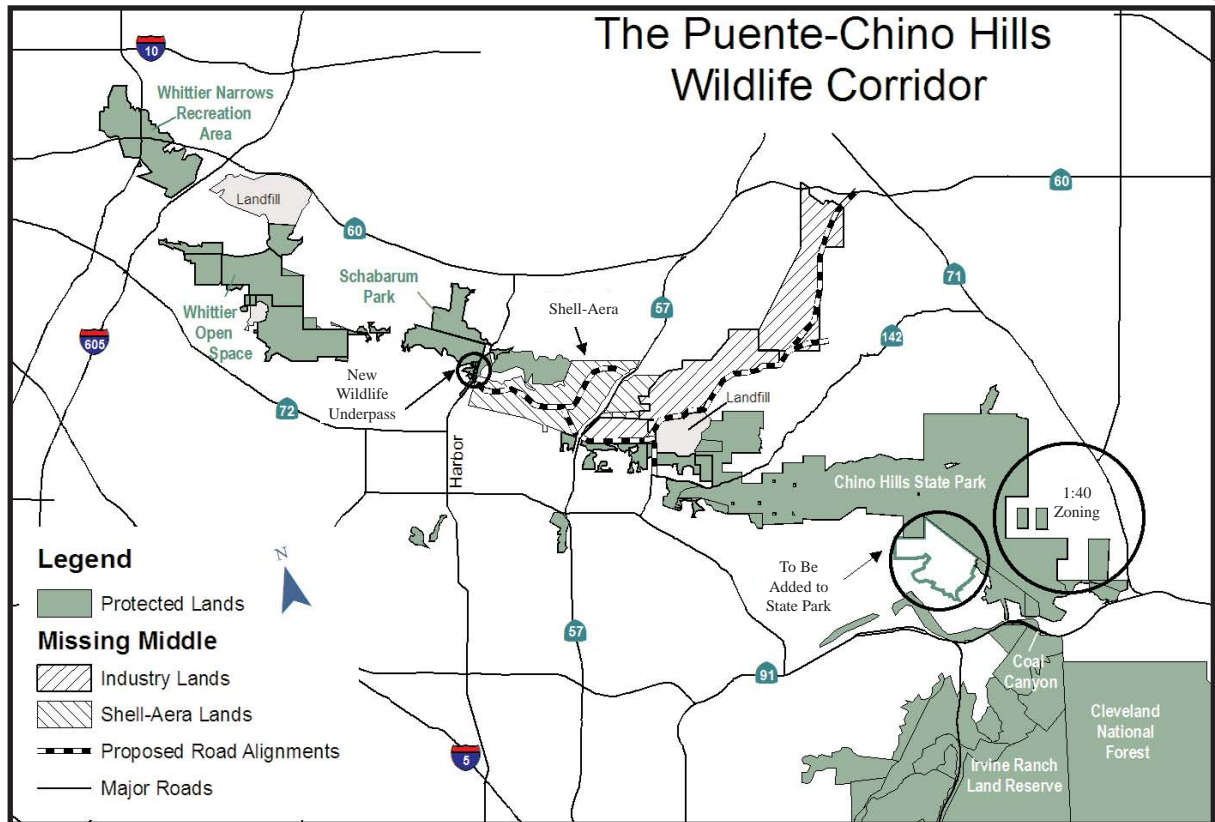
It is well known that Diamond Bar is hurting for tax revenue because it is already heavily residential without a solid tax-generating industrial/commercial base. At a meeting in Chino Hills on July 31, 2006 regarding Tonner Canyon, Diamond Bar Mayor Carol Herrera remarked “more housing doesn’t help Diamond Bar.” Rather, she wants to see more commercial projects to help fund city services for existing residents. So it will be interesting to see how the deal with Shell-Aera will be justified since it would add thousands of new houses to this already financially strapped city. It will also add tens of thousands of more daily car trips flowing onto our streets and freeways.

The Shell-Aera land is currently not even in Diamond Bar’s Sphere of Influence (SOI). According to the Los Angeles Local Agency Formation Commission, the agency responsible for approving the annexation, Shell-Aera and Diamond Bar could apply for the SOI change and the annexation in one fell swoop.



If, indeed, this annexation of the Shell-Aera land to Diamond Bar moves forward, it is cause for concern. Diamond Bar’s Council has not supported protection of the natural lands in our hills. Several Councilmembers who have close ties to the City of Industry (that owns 5,700 acres in the adjacent Tonner Canyon) also arouse suspicion.

With gas prices soaring, why buy gas from Shell and ExxonMobil? They have pumped hundreds of millions of dollars worth of oil out of the Puente-Chino Hills and now want to flood our streets with traffic from a wildly ambitious plan for houses.



CORRIDOR EVENTS - MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Sat., September 23, 11AM Living with Wildlife

The popular "Living With Wildlife" program will be held at the La Habra Heights Community Center. The Puente-Chino Hills Task Force of the Sierra Cub will be co-sponsoring this event with the Habitat Authority. Meeting live animals and learning about their habitats, personalities and needs is a favorite for families with children. Learn more at: www.SaveTheWildlifeCorridor.org.



Sat., October 7, 8AM - 2PM Wilderness Day

This annual Chino Hills State Park event will feature opportunities for new or experienced hikers to learn about wilderness safety. Learn from experts on how to read a map and compass, use a radio and what to pack for a day hike to keep you and other hikers safe! For more information, call Ranger Stephen at 951-780-6222.



Sat., November 18, 8PM Meet the Meteors

The first ever Astronomy Campfire and Campout is scheduled to coincide with the annual Leonid Meteor Showers. Local astronomer, David Kary will provide expertise during a 8PM campfire. The State Park is a perfect location to view the shooting stars since it is very dark, so guests are invited to camp in the Park to watch the pre-dawn show. Camp sites are first come, first served. A nominal fee will be collected for campers the night of the event. Learn more about the event, by visiting: www.ChinoHillsStatePark.org.



NEW BOOK ON SANTA ANA RIVER

Finally there is a book that details Southern California's most extensive watershed: The Santa Ana River Guide: 110 miles on Southern California's Largest River System. This guide reveals both the wild and urban sides of this waterway and covers the River's natural and human history, and current conditions. Planning an outing on the River? Use the guide book to reach more than one million acres of natural lands and open space accessible from the River, including Chino Hills State Park. The book's author, Patrick Mitchell, includes a call to action for further protecting and restoring the River. Scheduled for release in late September, this book can be ordered in advance from:

www.WildernessPress.com.

Article and photo by Patrick Mitchell



NEW HFE BOARD MEMBER BEV PERRY

We are sorry to see Board Member Dr. Karl Reitz move on (and away) to central California. We are deeply grateful for his wise counsel.

We also welcome new Board Member and former Brea Mayor Bev Perry to the Hills For Everyone Board. Her long standing interest in both transportation issues and conservation will bring further



Photo by Bev Perry

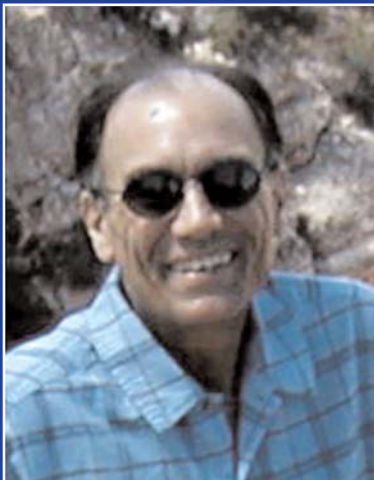


Photo by Jackie Shelton

JOHN SHELTON

With his sense of humor, charm and unassuming nature, he lit up the room when he walked in. John Shelton, former Chino Hills State Park Ranger and Supervisor extraordinaire won the John Drury Award in 2004, the highest award the State Parks Department gives its employees. John's integrity, professionalism, brilliance and above all, his humor, gave State Parks a great presence in this region.

John was the first planner for Chino Hills State Park and established the first cordial relationships with neighboring cities. He helped the City of Chino Hills General Plan Advisory Committee understand the importance of zoning a portion of the land in their new city as "rural" - allowing one housing unit per 40 acres. John is one reason why the hills along the 71 Freeway south of Butterfield Ranch are still beautiful and undeveloped. We missed him when he moved to Sacramento to work on statewide legislation. We miss him even more now that his struggle with liver cancer has ended.

HELP THE HILLS AT THE POLLS!

Two ballot measures offer potential funding for acquisition of the Shell-Aera land that would save our hills and our communities from the influx of another 40,000 vehicles.

Proposition 84 – YES

The statewide Clean Water, Parks and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006 has been endorsed by a bipartisan list of heavy hitters, including Governor Schwarzenegger. To cobble together funding from various sources in this initiative, we will exercise political muscle, like we did in the effort that occurred with the acquisition of Coal Canyon in 2001. Learn more on 84: www.CleanWater2006.com.

O.C.'s Measure M – YES

Hills For Everyone, along with 28 other environmental groups, has endorsed the 1/2 cent sales tax renewal, Measure M. At least \$243.5 million is allotted for habitat acquisition, restoration and management in the freeway component. Normally freeway mitigation is done on a small scale, piecemeal basis, but this measure allows for large-scale and biologically meaningful mitigation. Habitat impacts are likely to occur with the widening of the 91 and 57 Freeways, jeopardizing the long-term health of the Wildlife Corridor. Our hills therefore may qualify for funding.

Proposition 90 – NO

Prop. 90 is an initiative funded by wealthy New Yorkers. Though advertised as reform of eminent domain, hidden in the fine print are far-reaching provisions that will cost taxpayers billions of dollars and remove local control. The measure allows anyone to claim that a new law or regulation causes them "substantial economic loss."

So anytime a law is passed to protect our neighborhoods, manage development, protect air and water quality, restrict undesirable businesses or enact new consumer protection laws, property owners can file a lawsuit, and claim economic loss.

Prop. 90 undermines the ability of local communities to decide what types of projects get built in their neighborhoods, the businesses that locate in a neighborhood and how a community decides to grow.

NEWSLETTER RECIPIENTS

If you wish to be removed from this list call 714-687-1555 and give us your name and address or email us at: info@HillsForEveryone.org.

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Hillside Happenings

IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME!

Once the Harbor Blvd. wildlife under crossing was complete, biologists predicted it could take up to six months for deer to use the tunnel. Deer are usually wary of long dark confined areas. But only nine days after being officially declared "open," the first deer was spotted moving from La Habra Heights eastward toward Shell-Aera's land. Since then many other wildlife, from rabbits to coyotes, have been photographed using the new safe passageway.

Photo by Habitat Authority



**Please sign, stamp
and send the enclosed
postcard urging
Shell-Aera to
become willing sellers.**

**Want Shell-Aera to make an end run
around you? Neither do we!**