

# Hills For Everyone

## Friends of the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor



Newsletter No. 23

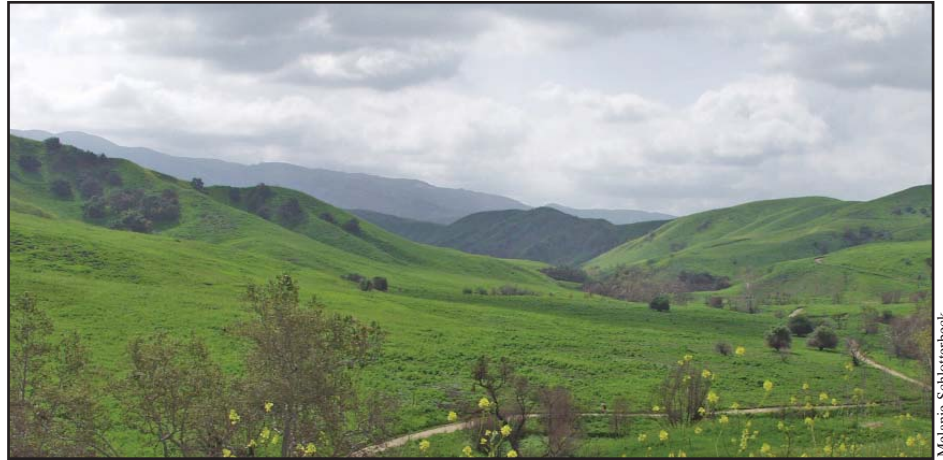
Summer 2009

## NATURE CLOSED?

At the end of May, Governor Schwarzenegger proposed eliminating all General Fund support for State Parks. In response, the Parks Department developed a closure list. Chino Hills State Park was among the 220 state parks targeted. The only parks that would be left open were ones that generated enough direct revenue to run themselves or ones that were precluded from closure by deed restrictions or requirements for public access (like many beaches under the Coastal Act).

We can only imagine what prompted the Governor's desire to gut the oldest state park system in the world. California invented the idea of State Parks. In fact, the first State Park was Yosemite. During the Civil War the federal government asked the state to care for Yosemite, to protect it from timber, mining and grazing interests that were tearing it up. When the federal government was able to take it back, as a national park, California relinquished control. But the experience gave the state an idea - some places, for their beauty, their natural resources or their history tell a story about our state that is worth holding on to. The first official State Park became Big Basin Redwoods. This park was also on the closure list.

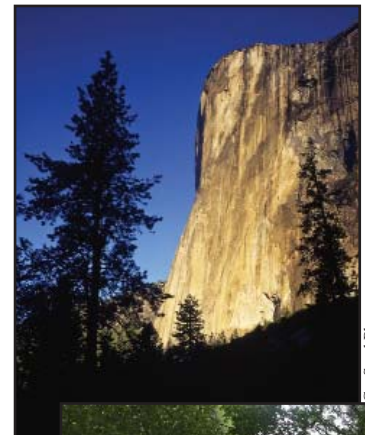
After hearing of the Governor's plan, park advocates from across the state sent 80,000 faxes in the first week. The faxes poured in all summer. By late July, more than



Chino Hills State Park, Yosemite and Big Basin Redwood State Park are all important to our park system.

60,000 Californians took action online and sent letters to legislators and the Governor. Soon the Governor backed off his draconian proposal to eliminate all funding. However, eventually cuts by the Legislature and the Governor will be enough to cause the full or partial closure of approximately 100 parks. This may be better than 220 parks, but it is a dangerous precedent for our "protected" natural and historic resources. How this unfolds for our particular park remains uncertain. The Park could close several days a week.

During the budget battle, an old partner stepped forward. Right after the initial proposal, the federal government warned California that any parks that had received federal Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF) could not be closed. One of the terms for accepting the funds was that the state would provide public access. Chino Hills State Park did, in fact, receive some LWCF for acquisitions in the 1980s.



There is no doubt that the public outrage turned the tide on the proposal to close most parks. Parks users, local governments, and the business community came together to make the case that parks are not an economic drain but rather an economic pump. And they feed our souls as well.

Melanie Schlotterbeck

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# BIG EDISON TOWERS HEADED THROUGH THE WILDLIFE CORRIDOR ONE WAY OR ANOTHER

Two years ago, Southern California Edison (SCE) began the approval process before the California Public Utilities Commission (PUC) to upgrade over 160 miles of power lines that would bring wind energy from the Tehachapis to the Inland Empire.

The process of approval is unique to the PUC - in that two processes parallel each other. The project not only must comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), but with PUC guidelines and hearing processes as well.

One of the last segments in the alignment is proposed to go through the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor in the area of Edison's existing right of way (ROW). In some cases, Edison would need to take additional ROW from protected lands owned by the Habitat Authority for its new towers. In all cases across the hills, the new towers will be taller since they will be upgraded from 220 kV to 500 kV.

One of the final legs of this segment is also proposed to go through neighborhoods on existing ROW in Chino Hills. The residents of these areas objected to the fact that Edison was planning to build a much higher voltage line than what was originally built on the 150' easement. According to the City, this would be the only place in the western world where a 500 kV line is placed in an existing neighborhood on such a narrow easement.

The City chose to spend considerable time, effort and city funds to fight this proposal. They hoped to find an alignment that would send the lines through



Claire Schlotterbeck

Chino Hills State Park instead and would be appropriately mitigated with significant funding for the Park. A key issue was the placement of a switching station which is needed to join the existing 500 kV line in the Park with the proposed new line into the Park.

HFE agreed to meet with the City, listen to their issues and understand how their proposals impacted the Park. Discussions proceeded, questions were answered, multiple site visits were taken, and internal deliberations led us to conclude that, if properly mitigated, and if various existing lines were relocated outside of the Park, a route through the Park could benefit the Park. This is due in large part to the fact that existing towers could accommodate the new 500 kV line.

One problem remained. In our view, the only feasible route, 4C, contained a fatal flaw - the placement of the switching station in a highly sensitive area within the watershed of the Park. Since we designed the State Park along ridge line boundaries to protect the watershed and the viewshed, this proposed siting would have irreparably damaged both. Instead we proposed a new site and a modified alternative was born, 4CM. Both the City and Hills

For Everyone (HFE) supported this proposal to the PUC.

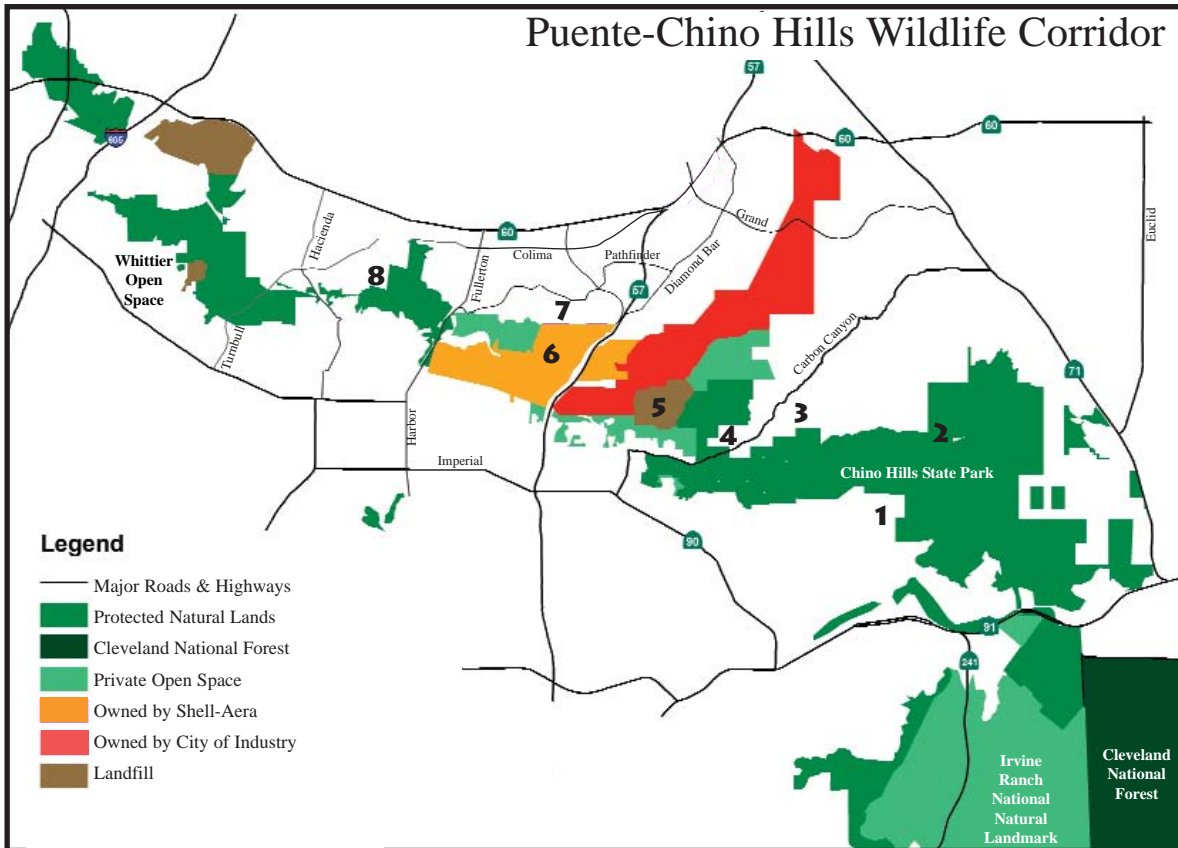
Depending on the final engineering, relocated lines and the new route through the Park would result in the removal of 3-9 towers, 1.6 miles of transmission line, 17-38 acres of ROW and over ½ mile of spur roads. Several other environmental groups have signed on in support of our proposal including the Natural Resources Defense Council, two Sierra Club Chapters, and the Endangered Habitats League. The State Parks Department itself remains unconvinced but available to listen.

The suggested mitigation package would include funding for acquisition of the remaining ridgelines and added connectivity, habitat restoration and the removal of another seven miles of inactive lines in the Park. These lines were supposed to be removed by Edison after a 1982 settlement with HFE, but Edison never complied.

Edison is fighting our proposal doggedly. Apparently it wants to establish the precedent that building 500 kV lines on 150' ROW is acceptable because other plans are in the offing.

Both the CEQA process and the PUC process will proceed into the fall.

## Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor



### NUMBERS ON THE MAP

- 1 - Murdock
- 2 - Powerlines
- 3 - Arundo Spraying
- 4 - BBQ Event
- 5 - Olinda Landfill
- 6 - Shell-Aera
- 7 - Rowland Heights
- 8 - Pacific Heights

### OLINDA LANDFILL FUNDS

The City of Brea and County of Orange reached an agreement on funding to mitigate impacts due to the expansion of the Olinda Alpha Landfill. The County plans to expand the landfill horizontally and vertically within the existing boundaries. This will extend the landfill's life by eight years. The County will pay the City \$10.5 million plus \$1.50 per ton of solid waste received after 2013 to be used to offset the impacts of landfill operations on the community.

Originally, most of this funding was to be used to mitigate the impacts of this landfill on the natural lands that surround it. However, Brea seems intent on becoming dependent on these special funds for General Fund use. So, instead of making a sizable down payment on the Shell-Aera land that could save the backdrop of Brea, city officials are looking at spending it on pet projects not related to landfill impacts.

### MURDOCK PROPERTY

One county "island" (i.e. land not within a city boundary) lies above the recently burned neighborhoods of Yorba Linda. Collectively known as the Murdock property there are actually several different land owners and two different projects that have been put forth. The 80-unit "Cielo Vista" project on 83 acres on the western side appears to have stalled out. However, another project, on the 524 acres to the east, is slowly moving forward. This project proposes executive housing on land bordered on two sides by the State Park.

### PACIFIC HEIGHTS

This decades long saga continues with a proposal for 47 homes on 114 acres with a single access point at the end of Apple Creek Lane. The site sits within the Powder Canyon Significant Ecological Area (SEA #17). Even so, the project would require moving over one million cubic yards of dirt.

Learn more about the project at: <http://planning.lacounty.gov/case>. Type project number 92-027 into the search case archive window.

### HABITAT AUTHORITY

The Habitat Authority which manages and protects land across the Puente Hills is looking for volunteer naturalists who love nature and enjoy working with children and adults. The Authority has planned an orientation breakfast for Friday, September 18th. Three additional Friday mornings will be required to become fully trained.

For more information and to apply please email Helen Cohen [hcohen@habitatauthority.org](mailto:hcohen@habitatauthority.org) or submit a completed application form at [www.HabitatAuthority.org](http://www.HabitatAuthority.org).

# SHELL-AERA DEVELOPMENT AND ROWLAND HEIGHTS

By Eric Johnson, Chair  
Puente-Chino Hills Task Force of the Sierra Club

The community of Rowland Heights needs our help. Let me tell you why.

It was the proposed Shell-Aera development of 3,600 houses in the hills north of Brea and south of Rowland Heights that led to the creation of our Task Force. If houses are put on these 3,000 acres as Shell-Aera plans, it would sever the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor, leaving the Puente and Whittier Hills as biological islands.

After processing through LA County, Shell-Aera was told by the County to redesign its project. So instead of doing that, it took the project to the City of Diamond Bar and asked them to annex the property. The community of Rowland Heights was understandably upset by this encroachment into what they saw as their sphere. This, along with other issues, led the residents of Rowland Heights to want to control their own destiny. So a number of residents started to gather the signatures to put Cityhood on the ballot. After an ultimately unsuccessful first effort, they are trying again.

If Rowland Heights successfully becomes a city, it would help us keep the Shell-Aera property as open space. This is because the Shell-Aera property would be included in the new City of Rowland Heights. Shell-Aera would have to get any development approvals from the new city. This is helpful to our cause for two reasons. First, it would delay any possible review of the project for a couple of years as the new city formed and got its financial and operational house in order. Second, if Shell-Aera decided to wait around, we feel that this oil giant would get a much tougher reception from a City of Rowland Heights than they would from the City of Diamond Bar.



So if you are able to help, this is very important. Residents need help in three areas:

- Going door-to-door with a precinct list of registered voters to gather signatures.
- Phone banking to encourage people to sign the signature list.
- Checking signatures against the official records. For more information, go to: <http://www.rowlandheightscity.org>

A Sierra Club day of support is scheduled for door-to-door signature gathering on Saturday, September 12th. Check this website for further details: [www.SaveTheWildlifeCorridor.org](http://www.SaveTheWildlifeCorridor.org).

## AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME

Congratulations to newlyweds Bill and Cathie Kowalik. As you may recall, Bill was the producer of our DVDs Saving Open Space I & II. Our thanks go to them as well as they made a significant monetary contribution to Hills For Everyone by registering with the "I Do Foundation."

This non-profit organization was created in 2002 and works closely with corporate and nonprofit partners. The I Do Foundation links engaged couples with a host of charitable giving options at their wedding, from party favors to gift registry. Their motto is "Celebrate Generously." It is their vision that, in time, charitable giving will become an integral part of the culture of weddings and other life events. By incorporating a charitable focus into life celebrations, they help families establish a pattern of giving that will last a lifetime. Go to: [www.idofoundation.org](http://www.idofoundation.org)

## SIERRA CLUB HIKES

The Puente-Chino Hills Task Force (PCHTF), a group within the Sierra Club, organizes hikes around the hills. Below is a list of a few upcoming hikes offered by the Task Force:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>
November 14	Powder Canyon (Rowland Heights)
December 12	Seventh Ave. (Hacienda Heights)
January 9	Hellman Canyon (Whittier)
February 20	La Vita Trail (Brea)

## UPDATE ON FIRE IMPACTS

The public's desire to assist the State Park in its recovery from the November 2008 Freeway Complex Fire was evident in attendance figures. Over 430 park supporters came on Earth Day to pitch in. Several weeks later, a Sierra Club sponsored event brought 45 hikers and mountain bikers together to rebuild a bridge burned in the fire. All of the bridges in the Park are located in San Bernardino County and they all burned. That County, however, did not seek a Federal Disaster Declaration since no houses were lost. So further bridge repair currently relies on volunteer efforts.



Rose Leavitt



Rose Leavitt



Rose Leavitt



Melanie Schlotterbeck

## HAPPY TO SEE THE ARUNDO LOOKING SO SAD

Good news mounts on efforts and funding to remove *Arundo donax*, the nasty, invasive, stream-clogging non-native bamboo-like weed that has plagued Carbon Creek for decades. Streams are supposed to act as natural barriers in the spread of fire - but during the Freeway Complex Fire, the highly flammable thick stand of Arundo carried the fire upstream.

The City of Brea stepped forward with \$25,000 in water quality funds which allowed the first spraying to occur with a short acting but highly effective herbicide. Authorities are still trying to get permission (or any response) from the owner of the La Vida Hot Springs property. All other impacted landowners have agreed to allow spraying on their land. The Santa Ana Watershed Association took responsibility for spraying on private lands while Cal Trans sprayed on its right-of-way.

Recently, the Carbon Canyon Fire Safe Council received a \$40,000 grant from Cal Fire. This will allow continued treatment of the Arundo over the next several years. It is good to see the plants looking so sickly, but we must obtain the cooperation of the La Vida property owner before the eradication effort can ultimately be successful.



Arundo growing after the fire.

Claire Schlotterbeck



Arundo slowly dying after the spraying.

Claire Schlotterbeck

## THANKS TO WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED

Many thanks to Valerie and Vince Sinex at Wild Birds Unlimited in Yorba Linda for their ongoing support through donations of merchandise that can be sold at our tabling events. Please visit this great store that has new items celebrating and feeding our skyward friends. Visit them online at: [yorbalinda.wbu.com](http://yorbalinda.wbu.com).



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## RALPH'S COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTION CYCLE

Thanks to all those who signed up for Ralph's donation program online. The current yearly cycle ends and to continue to support HFE when you use your Ralph's card you will need to sign up again online starting September 1st. Our organizational number for this program is NPO #91199.

Thanks to...



# Hills For Everyone BBQ and Beer "Fun" Raiser

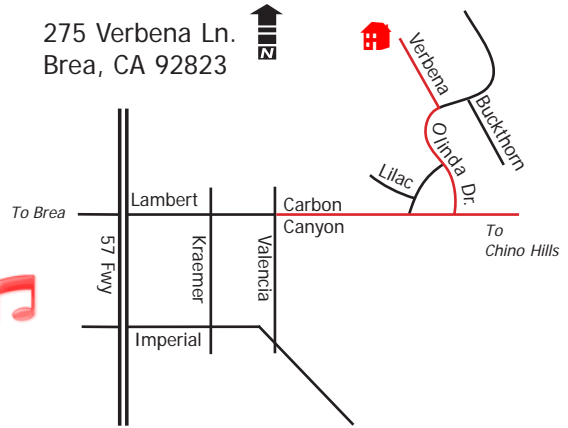
You are invited to a BBQ and Beer "fun" raiser to support our effort to protect the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor for everyone, forever.

The event features: a BBQ dinner, drinks (beer, wine, or sodas), wild animals and live music!

Ticket prices are **\$50 per person**. (*Adults only please.*) Make checks payable to Hills For Everyone and mail to: P.O. Box 9835, Brea, CA 92822-1835 or pay online by credit card. Tell us whether you want a tri-tip, chicken or veggie dinner.

## Map to BBQ

275 Verbena Ln.  
Brea, CA 92823



**Saturday, September 26  
from 4 - 8 PM**

*Bring some friends  
for a fun evening!*

**Space is limited and tickets must be purchased in advance.**

Call 714-687-1555 for more information or visit: [www.HillsForEveryone.org](http://www.HillsForEveryone.org)

## POWERPOINTS AVAILABLE

Looking for a program for your service club, scout troop, church group, homeowner association, or environmental club? We offer free programs, full of pictures and interesting, insightful information and we can design it based on what you want to learn about - wildlife, land use, park history, etc. Call 714-687-1555 to arrange one for your group.

## NEWSLETTER RECIPIENTS

If you wish to be removed from this mailing list, call 714-687-1555 and provide your name and mailing address or email us at: [info@HillsForEveryone.org](mailto:info@HillsForEveryone.org).

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