

# Hills For Everyone

## Friends of the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor

Newsletter No. 25

Summer 2011



## CHINO HILLS STATE PARK TO GROW!

A spectacular ridge has been protected next to Chino Hills State Park. The 296 acre Hayashi property majestically overlooks Carbon and Soquel Canyons where the two canyons come together. The land contains stunning ridge top views, walnut woodlands on its slopes, and streams at its base. Known by locals as "God's Chair," the property was purchased for \$2.96 million by the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) as mitigation for freeway expansion projects. It will eventually be added to the adjacent State Park, who in the interim will also manage the land.

OCTA's funds came from Measure M2, the ½ cent transportation sales tax measure passed by Orange County voters in 2006. Conservationists had negotiated language into the measure that did not add money but rather "called out" how to wisely spend the \$243.5 million already incorporated into the measure. Historically, mitigation was done piecemeal, on a project by project basis—a little ice plant here, a few trees there. With this new language, project impacts are pooled, as is the mitigation money, so that large swaths of land can now be purchased from willing sellers. With this new language, over thirty environmental groups endorsed the measure. OC Supervisor Bill Campbell and others credit the Environmental Coalition with passing the measure, which required a two-thirds majority vote (66.67%). Hills For Everyone was a member of this Coalition.



Claire Schlotterbeck

This idea had benefits for all sides. For conservationists, it meant that large important properties would be protected. For OCTA, it meant that the Authority would receive streamlined permitting because of the comprehensive nature of its mitigation. For the Resource (Permitting) Agencies, it meant that the mitigation was more meaningful over the long term. For the Orange County taxpayers, it meant that their tax dollars would be spent more wisely.

This unique partnership has lead to impressive successes. As Charles Darwin once said, "In the long history of mankind, those who learned to collaborate and improve

most effectively have prevailed." Now M2 and its Environmental Mitigation Program are an excellent example of how several entities, with seemingly divergent interests, can unite for a common purpose. We celebrated those successes in June with a party at the new Chino Hills State Park Discovery Center.

Shell-Aera's land in Orange County, north of Brea, is another property in the "high priority" category for Measure M2 funding. An appraisal is underway. (See Map on page 3)



David Schlotterbeck

Dr. Dan Silver, Endangered Habitats League  
Bill Campbell, OC Supervisor (3rd District)  
Will Kempton, OC Transportation Authority  
Pat Bates, OC Supervisor (5th District) & Committee Chair  
Melanie Schlotterbeck, Env. Coalition Rep. & Committee Vice Chair  
Jean Watt, Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks

# OIL DRILLING IN WHITTIER PARKLAND

In the fall of 2008, the City of Whittier signed an oil lease agreement with Matrix Oil giving the oil company permission to drill on city owned parkland. The funds to purchase the parkland came from Proposition A, a Los Angeles County measure that voters passed in 1996. Because the funds came from the Los Angeles Regional Park and Open Space District, the District must also approve the conditions of the drilling project. The land itself is managed by the Habitat Authority.

The original Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was released in October 2010 with the major analysis being done on three sites. When it appeared that a different consolidated site would likely be chosen, the City chose to recirculate the EIR to focus on this new preferred site.

Though the oil drilling project has “only” a 7 acre direct footprint, the impacts will be felt on the land well beyond. The narrow backcountry dirt access road to the Savage Canyon landfill that is currently used only by rangers for patrol, will be paved, widened and given a 10 foot wide fuel modification on each side for oil company vehicle use, for a total width of 40 feet. The drilling site is located in part of designated “core habitat”—a specific area deemed essential for the long-term survival and recovery of endangered or threatened species. It is also a nursery site for bobcats.

Concerned about the precedent setting nature of this project and the impacts to this sensitive land, HFE hired Shute Mihaly and Weinberger, the renowned environmental law firm, to comment on these EIRs.

As always, conservationists must weigh our comments to (1) gauge the politics of the situation, (2) improve the project if it ultimately goes through unchallenged, and/or (3) set it up to be ready to be challenged in court if the comments are ignored and mitigation is inadequate.

Though we are opposed to this oil drilling operation in protected parkland, if approval occurs, mitigation must be adequate. This would hopefully come in the form of funding for restoration, fire protection, wildlife movement enhancement (e.g. an overpass over Colima), and, above all, acquisition funding to provide permanent connectivity of Habitat Authority lands to the rest of the Wildlife Corridor to the east.



## WILDLIFE NEWS

If you find an injured songbird and want to help it, you can call (714) 964-0666 or visit <http://www.SongbirdCareAndEducation.org>. You would need to take the bird to the Fountain Valley home of an amazing woman who nurtures them back to health and releases them.

If you find an injured raptor (i.e. bird of prey) like owls, hawks, kites, etc. call Orange County Bird of Prey Center at (949) 837-0756.

The Department of Fish and Game also has a link that provides information on “licensed” rehabilitation centers for wildlife for each region in the state. Learn more at: <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/wildlife/rehab/facilities.html>





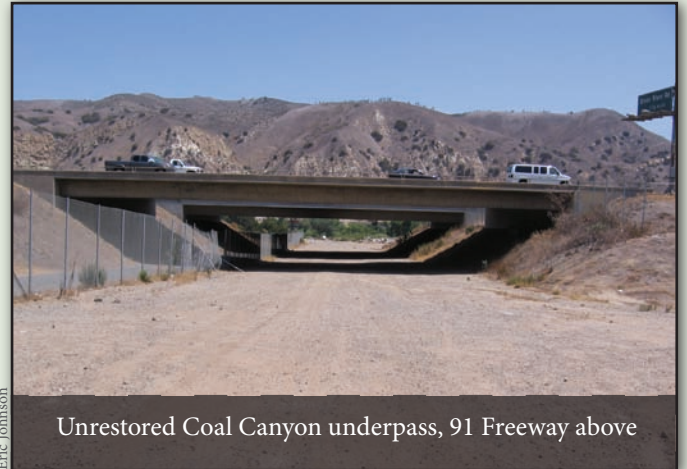
# COAL CANYON WILDLIFE LINKAGE AT RISK

Caltrans and the Riverside County Transportation Commission are planning to build yet another widening project on the Riverside Freeway near Chino Hills State Park in such a way that it will “take” parkland. The area has been ripped up by an assortment of projects for several years including the east bound widening of the 91 freeway by Orange County Transportation Authority, bank protection by the Army Corps of Engineers, realignment of the sewer line by Orange County Flood Control, flyover ramps for the north and south bound 71 and now this widening.

One particularly egregious part of the project is a massive exit ramp for the westbound 91 freeway at Green River. The current ramp was just completed a year ago and will now need to be torn out and, using parkland, replaced with a 20 foot tall elevated structure. The Army Corps plans a massive bank “enhancement” project by ruining 10.5 acres of State Park property. This will occur along a rare natural section of the Santa Ana River.

The functionality of Coal Canyon is already tenuous and the additional lanes will make it just

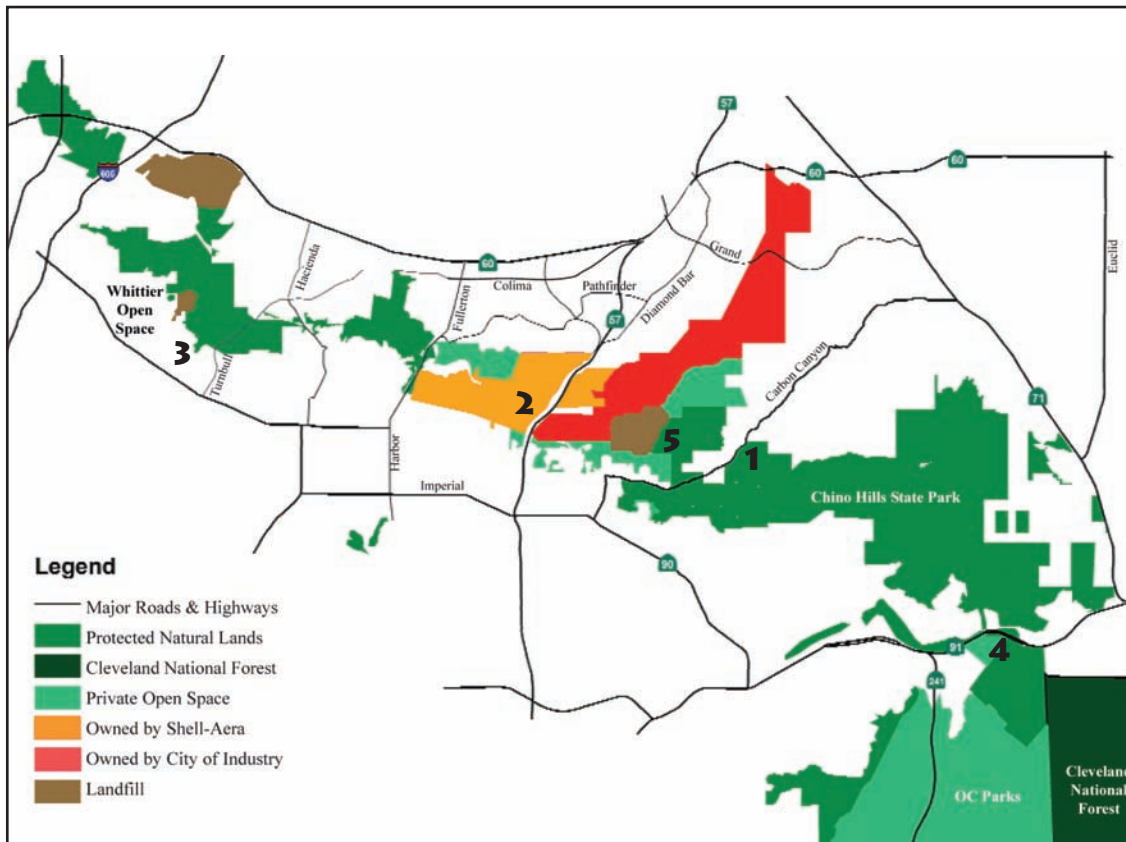
that much more difficult for wildlife to be willing to cross under the freeway. The under crossing is the only migration route for wildlife between our Puente-Chino Hills and the Santa Ana Mountains. Over ten years after land on both sides of 91 freeway was added to the State Park, at great taxpayer expense, Caltrans has yet to fulfill its promise to revegetate the underpass to encourage wildlife movement. The additional stresses from numerous projects from the area further undermine that vision.



Eric Johnson

Unrestored Coal Canyon underpass, 91 Freeway above

## AROUND THE CORRIDOR



### NUMBERS ON THE MAP

- 1 - Hayashi
- 2 - Shell-Aera
- 3 - Oil Drilling Site
- 4 - Coal Canyon
- 5 - State Park Fire

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS FOUNDATION

Through its Park Champions Program, the Foundation will be hosting a work party on Saturday, September 17th from 9 - 1. Volunteers will restore the *Hills For Everyone* sign and trail in Chino Hills State Park. Both were damaged in the 2008 Freeway Complex fire and the winter rains that followed. For more information visit [www.calparks.org/parkchampions](http://www.calparks.org/parkchampions).

## HABITAT AUTHORITY VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION

On September 24th at 9 AM, the Habitat Authority will host a Volunteer Orientation Breakfast at the Whittier Community Center located at 7630 Washington Avenue. Trainings will be held on the following three Saturdays. For more information and to fill out an application contact Helen Cohen at [hcohen@HabitatAuthority.org](mailto:hcohen@HabitatAuthority.org) or call 562-945-9003.

## FALL HIKES

The Habitat Authority volunteer docents host hikes on the third Saturday of each month. Visit the Authority's website for specific locations: [www.HabitatAuthority.org](http://www.HabitatAuthority.org).

## SIERRA CLUB HIKES

Join other hikers on any of these outings and become familiar with everything our hills have to offer. The Puente-Chino Hills Task Force (PCHTF), a volunteer group within the Sierra Club, organizes the hikes. The PCHTF is working towards the preservation of the Wildlife Corridor as an island of beauty and biological significance in a sea of urbanization. The hikes should appeal to people who want to stay in shape, are eager to enjoy the outdoors, and want more information about their hills and wildlife.

Hikes for Fall 2011 are all on Saturdays at 9 AM.

Arroyo Pescadero  
Lower Aliso/Scully Ridge  
Powder Canyon  
La Vita Trail  
Rim Crest

October 22nd  
November 19th  
December 10th  
January 21st  
February 11th

For more info on each site visit:  
[www.SaveTheWildlifeCorridor.org](http://www.SaveTheWildlifeCorridor.org)



## STATE PARK FIRE

July 7th brought much angst to residents of Carbon Canyon when a seemingly small fire that was supposedly 100% contained took off into the State Park. Eventually it burned over 500 acres. This same area has burned eight times in the last 33 years. Concern has grown every year over the frequency of fires in the Chino Hills area. Fires are now "type converting" the rich woodland, sage, and chaparral habitats into highly flammable, non-native grasses.

We received a grant to study fires in the hills. With data received from CalFire and others, we've mapped the point of origins for 59 fires since 1967 and also fire perimeters for 62 fires since 1914. Unfortunately we do not have a point of origin for each perimeter nor a perimeter for each point of origin. In total we documented 96 fires in and around Chino Hills State Park. The average fire size is 4,302 acres, while the largest fire recorded was 41,285 acres (the Green River Fire of 1948). The results of this study will be released this fall.



Duane Thompson

Claire Schlotterbeck



# CORRIDOR UPDATES

## ARUNDO

The last remnants of the invasive *Arundo donax* plant are on the hit list for Carbon Canyon with more spraying and then physical removal of the remaining biomass (dead plants) this fall. The success of this project has prompted the Chino Valley Independent Fire District to embark on the clean up of Carbon Creek in Sleepy Hollow where, among other things, twelve 50-70' tall highly flammable fron-laden palm trees have been allowed to grow. (See photo below)

Dialogue that emerged during the *Arundo* removal project has led to this new effort to restore the creek. The Fire District was under the mistaken impression that it would be difficult to get approvals for such extensive vegetation removals in a streambed from the Department of Fish and Game, but conservationists urged them on. The broad science-based support will help the District garner funds and approvals for the project.



Jim Powderly

## CELEBRATIONS

The new State Park Discovery Center enjoyed a “soft” opening (i.e. it was not quite ready) on Earth Day April 16th. Volunteers turned out in droves and the parking lot was nearly full. They added some “hardscape” in the form of placing rocks around the facility.

Brea Mayor Pro tem Don Schweitzer welcomed the crowd. State Park District Superintendent Ron Krueper presented HFE and Park Founder Dave Myers and current HFE Executive Director Claire Schlotterbeck with a memento of the successful drive to remove many Edison towers from the Park.



Melanie Schlotterbeck



Melanie Schlotterbeck

## A WORK IN PROGRESS, BUT OPEN FOR BUSINESS

At long last the Chino Hills State Park Discovery Center at 4500 Carbon Canyon Road in Brea has opened its parking lot and restrooms for business. The facility will generally be open Tuesday - Friday

through September 30th. Beginning October 1st the Discovery Center will be open Friday - Monday. However the entire Park will be closed Tuesdays - Thursdays due to budget cuts.



Claire Schlotterbeck



Claire Schlotterbeck

# YOU CAN HELP THE HILLS

## TIME TO RENEW RALPH'S COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTION CYCLE

Thank you to all those who signed up for Ralph's donation program online. Ralph's current yearly cycle will end August 31st. 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.

Go to: [www.Ralphs.com](http://www.Ralphs.com) click on Services, click on Community Contributions, near the bottom of the page click on "For Participant Questions, click here" and then click the "enroll" button.

*Note: There is no pre-registration! This means that you cannot register for the new term until September 1, 2011 or after.*



### EMAIL UPDATES

If you have not heard from us lately via email please be sure we have your correct email address by emailing us at: [info@HillsForEveryone.org](mailto:info@HillsForEveryone.org).

### HILLS FOR EVERYONE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## USE YOUR CREDIT CARD, HELP SAVE THE HILLS

Donate your change to support Hills For Everyone. We are supported by SwipeGood - a platform that allows hillside supporters to enroll your credit or debit card and "round up" all your transactions automatically thereby donating the change to Hills For Everyone. Depending on how much you charge in a month a typical "round up" donation is about \$20 -- but you can control the amount.

This opportunity is by far the simplest way for you to support us. Sign up your card, round up your purchases, and donate the change to preserve and protect the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor.

To enroll or learn more about SwipeGood go to: <https://SwipeGood.com> click on "Charities" type in "Hills For Everyone" in the search bar and click on the "Sign Up" under the Hills For Everyone description.

Donate via **SwipeGood**

### POWERPOINTS AVAILABLE

Free PowerPoint presentations to interested groups on the successes, threats, and possibilities for the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor are available. Email [info@HillsForEveryone.org](mailto:info@HillsForEveryone.org)



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