

Hills For Everyone

Friends of the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor

Newsletter No. 26

Spring 2012



YOU CAN LEAD A HORSE TO WATER...

Our effort to preserve the Missing Middle of the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor was stalled in late 2011 when Aera Energy and the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) failed to reach agreement on terms for an appraisal. OCTA was in the process of appraising Aera's land, located north of Brea and south of Rowland Heights. Funding for the appraisal and potential acquisition of the Orange County portion of Aera's land would have come from Renewed Measure M, Orange County's transportation sales tax. This funding source already secured important natural lands next to Chino Hills State Park in 2011. These funds are intended to mitigate freeway project impacts.

Aera Energy LLC was formed in June 1997 and is jointly owned by affiliates of Shell and ExxonMobil. The company was seeking special treatment paid for by the taxpayers of Orange County. Claiming, on the one hand to not want to take taxpayer money (apparently forgetting the generous federal oil subsidies), this oil company nevertheless wanted to review the taxpayer funded appraisal even before the OCTA committee members had a chance to review it. Aera also wanted the opportunity to then withdraw from the process if it didn't like the appraised value. It goes without saying (or maybe it doesn't) that Aera could always have simply rejected any offer to purchase that OCTA might have made. This may have been an unlucky convergence of gamesmanship and the



holidays, but for now Aera is out of the running for Renewed Measure M dollars in this first funding cycle.

This is just the latest failure in a string of missteps by Aera. After having successfully leveled the hills on the western edge of Yorba Linda, Aera submitted its plans for the backdrop of Brea and Rowland Heights over 10 years ago. Since the property lies within a designated Significant Ecological Area (SEA) in Los Angeles County's General Plan, the 3,600 unit project needed approval by the County's SEA Technical Advisory Committee. When the committee requested major changes to the plan to better avoid harming the rare and disappearing oak and walnut woodlands, Aera withdrew the project in a huff. Five days before Christmas in late 2006 Aera next took its plan to Diamond Bar hoping to be annexed into that city. Part of the new plan included relocating the County owned Diamond Bar Golf Course next to Aera's housing project and then freeing the City to develop the golf course property into a mall. When even development friendly Diamond Bar couldn't stomach the massive bulldozing of the hills, conversations between the City and Aera ended in 2008.

For two years Aera has said it plans to resubmit a project to Los Angeles County. At this point they don't seem to be making too many friends in either Los Angeles or Orange County with their mixed messages. Since funding is available from other sources, one solution is for Aera to hire its own (state approved) appraiser to conduct a valuation at their own cost. This could smooth the way for a sale.

MATRIX OIL: NEXT STOP LA HABRA HEIGHTS

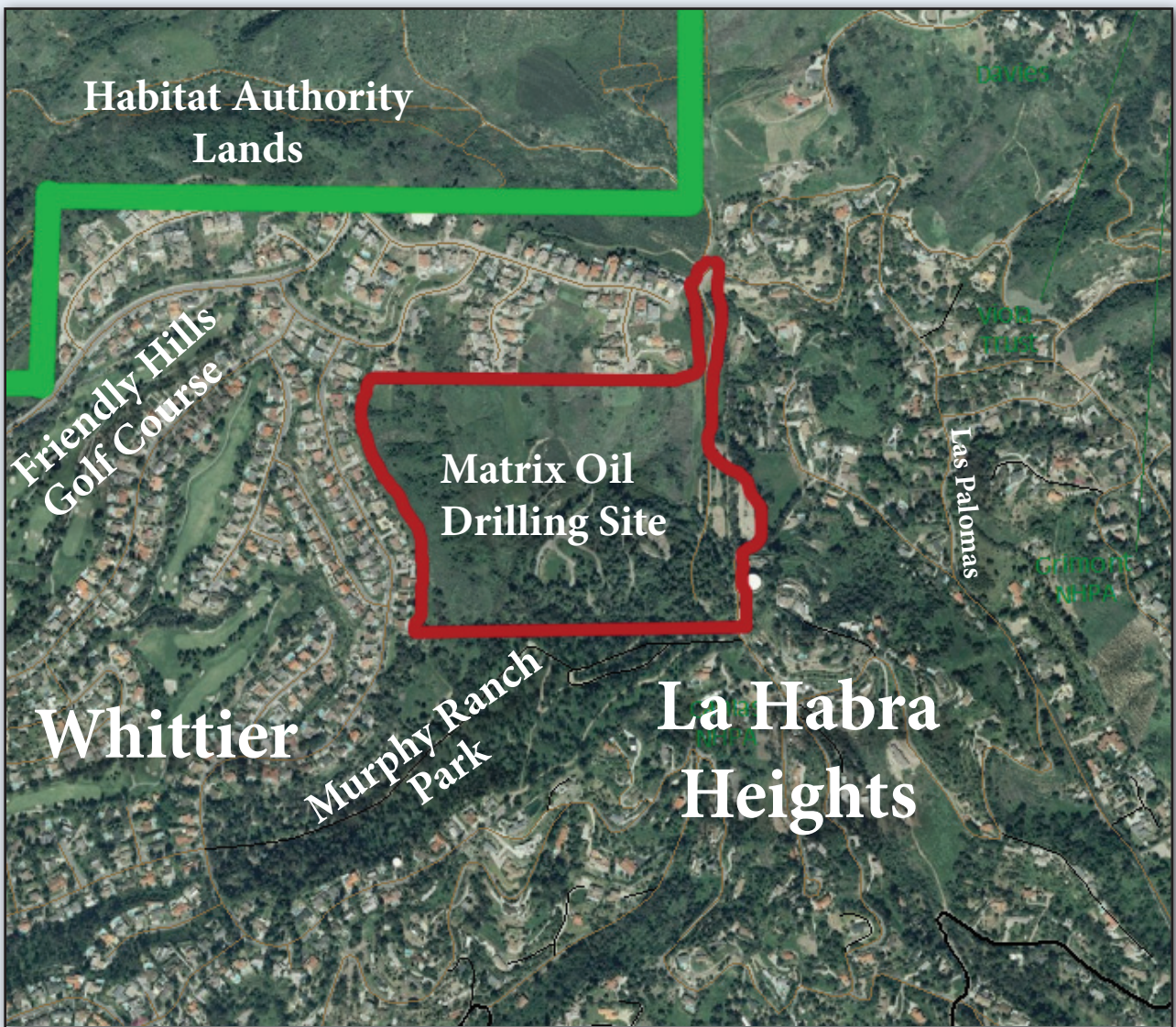
By: Eric Johnson

Earlier this year, Matrix Oil held a public meeting to discuss a proposed oil drilling and gas storage project on leased land from Sempra Energy on the western side of La Habra Heights. The project site is also abutted by Friendly Hills in Whittier to the west. It is south of Arroyo San Miguel trail, and north of Murphy Ranch Park.

Matrix Oil is proposing to pump up to 1,500 barrels a day with a maximum of 30 wells on 4 acres of a 70 acre site. They will be doing directional drilling up to 8,000 feet down, and it will involve some level of fracking. Fracking is a process by which highly pressurized fluid is injected into the ground to speed up the rate at which oil can be extracted. The property is currently zoned for oil and

gas extraction so Matrix is essentially updating and modernizing a dormant operation. Initially the company will be trucking out the oil at up to six trucks per day on Las Palomas, West and Hacienda Blvd.

Matrix is currently doing various technical studies and will be submitting its Conditional Use Permit application soon to start the process. The firm is hoping to satisfy the environmental review process with a Mitigated Negative Declaration. This minimal review essentially states that all project impacts can be fixed. Certainly, there will be numerous noise, light, and traffic issues that may warrant a full Environmental Impact Report, but we must await Matrix's formal application.



MATRIX OIL: ALLOWED TO DRILL ON WHITTIER PROTECTED LANDS

After a 3 ½ year planning process, in late November Whittier City Council, on a 5-0 vote, approved the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) and Conditional Use Permit allowing Matrix Oil to drill on the former Chevron property now owned by the City of Whittier as open space and managed by the Habitat Authority. The temptation of revenue seemed to make the decision a foregone conclusion despite the dangerous precedent and damage to the land.

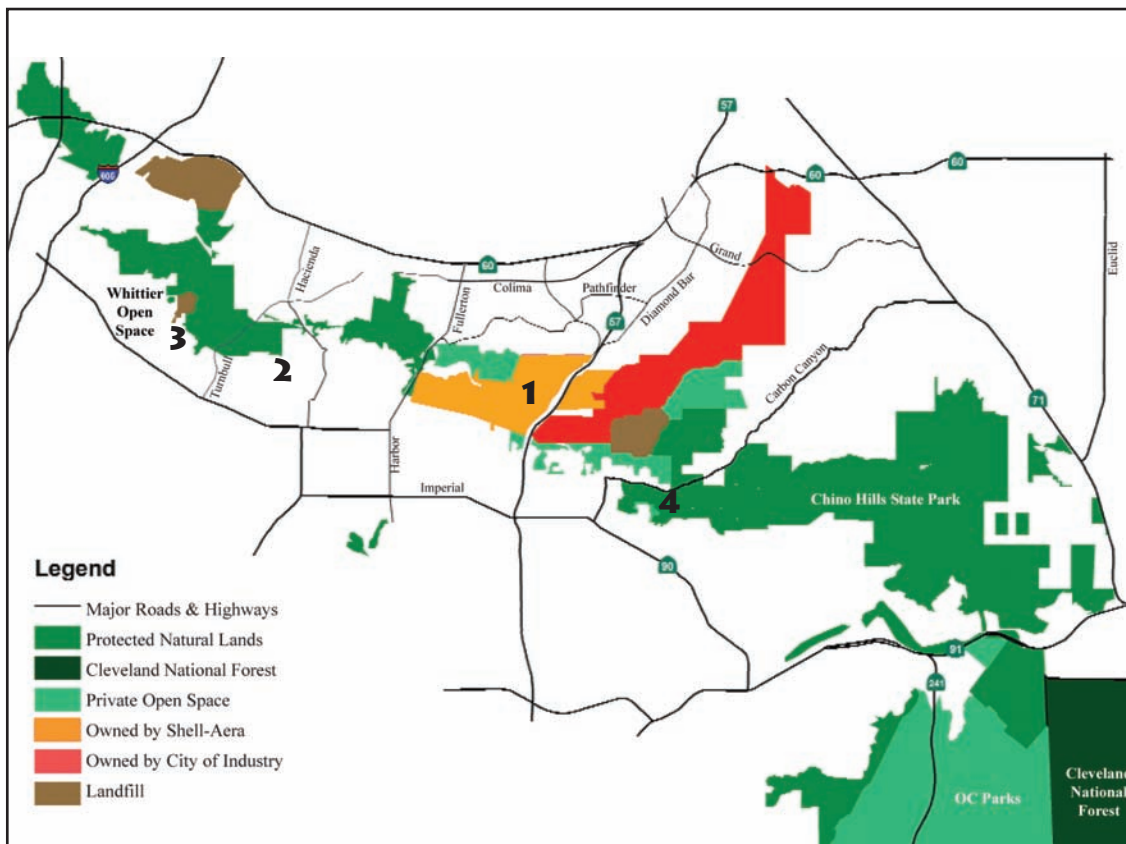
The Habitat Authority nevertheless achieved significant concessions in the approval process. Perhaps most importantly a conservation easement will be placed over the remainder of the former oil fields ensuring that this cannot happen again elsewhere on the protected land. Though the drilling project will use the North Access Road through the protected land to the landfill, restrictions have been placed on the hours of use of the road. Culverts will be installed to facilitate movement of vertebrates including rodents, reptiles, and amphibians.

The Habitat Authority will receive additional funding in a variety of ways:

- \$30,000 a year for Exotic Eradication/Habitat Enhancement.
- Up to \$15 million in acquisition funds which (after a feasibility study) may also be used to fund an underpass.
- \$50,000 a year during early phases to monitor compliance with mitigation measures.
- Restoration of nearly 70 acres.
- Funding to conduct multi-year, scientific studies to evaluate the wildlife movement patterns of bobcats and other wildlife species utilizing the Preserve.

The implementation of all of these measures is dependent on the resolution of three active lawsuits. In early March, the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) filed a lawsuit against Whittier accusing the City of breach of contract with the Authority. In 1995, MRCA sold the property to the City for open space and recreation in perpetuity.

AROUND THE CORRIDOR



NUMBERS ON THE MAP

- 1** - Shell-Aera
- 2** - LHH Oil Site
- 3** - Whittier Oil Site
- 4** - Discovery Center

UPCOMING EVENTS



APRIL 7TH

SkyWarn Training at Chino Hills State Park (Brea) 2 - 4:30 PM www.HillsForEveryone.org



APRIL 14TH -15TH

Green Scene at Fullerton Arboretum 9 AM - 4 PM (Saturday) and 10 AM - 4 PM (Sunday) Volunteers needed, www.HillsForEveryone.org



APRIL 21ST

Earth Day at Chino Hills State Park Discovery Center (Brea) 9 AM www.HillsForEveryone.org



APRIL 21ST

Habitat Authority Hike at Arroyo Pescadero Trailhead (Whittier) 9 AM www.HabitatAuthority.org



APRIL 28TH

Habitat Authority Reptile Workshop at Hacienda Hills Trailhead (Hacienda Heights) 9 AM www.HabitatAuthority.org



APRIL 28TH

Sierra Club hike at Coal Canyon (Anaheim Hills) 9 AM www.SaveTheWildlifeCorridor.org



MAY 5TH

Fire Safe Fair at Chino Hills State Park Discovery Center (Brea) 10 AM - 2 PM, including a live wildlife presentation www.HillsForEveryone.org



MAY 19TH

Habitat Authority Flowers Hike at Sycamore Canyon Trailhead (Whittier) 9 AM www.HabitatAuthority.org



MAY 19TH

Sierra Club hike at Seventh Avenue (Hacienda Heights) 9 AM www.SaveTheWildlifeCorridor.org



JULY 4TH

Country Fair 10 AM - 4 PM (Brea) Volunteers Needed, www.HillsForEveryone.org

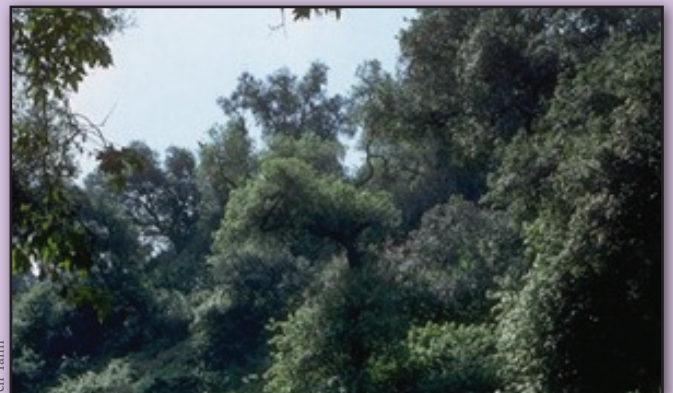
NATIONAL RECREATION AREA - WE COULD BE PART OF ONE!!

Concerned about the lack of parkland and recreational opportunities in her district and region, then Congresswoman Hilda Solis (current Secretary of Labor) incorporated language into federal legislation in 2003 to instruct the National Park Service (NPS) to conduct a special resource study to determine if the San Gabriel Mountains Watershed and River area were worthy of protection and inclusion as a new National Recreation Area (NRA). A Draft Report deemed the area worthy of inclusion in the National Park System because it met all of the requisite criteria.

Conservation groups supported an alternative which includes the San Gabriel Mountains and River as well as the western portion of the Puente-Chino Hills. The boundary for the new National Recreation Area would end at Harbor Boulevard and Fullerton Road despite the fact that most of the walnut woodlands which warrant preservation lie east of this road. Both of the two major landowners east of the boundary line, Aera Energy and the City of Industry, wanted to be left out of the future NRA

and therefore their lands have been omitted. We have asked NPS be allowed to add these lands in the future by Administrative Action.

Being a part of a National Recreation Area brings no land use authority since all land use decisions remain local. Instead it brings potential financial support and NPS expertise in trails and interpretation of our public lands. The final recommendation is due out later this year. Congressional action is necessary for implementation of any plans.



Jeff Yann

CORRIDOR UPDATES

EDISON'S TERRIBLE TOWERS

In December 2009 the California Public Utilities Commission (PUC) approved Edison's Tehachapi Renewable Transmission Project which adds tall new towers and cuts through most of the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor. Soon after approval, Edison leapfrogged construction and quickly built the new highly controversial 500 kV towers on a small existing easement through neighborhoods in the City of Chino Hills. The drawings on paper did not do justice to what the massive towers would actually look like. The new towers sparked an uproar in the City causing residents to organize and hammer the PUC and Edison. Under attack for the apparent lapses in oversight by the PUC in the PG&E gas explosion in San Bruno in late 2010, PUC President Peevey came to see the new towers near 185 homes. He was disturbed by what he saw.

As one of only two remaining commissioners from the earlier decision, and as the overseer of the project, in November 2011 he ordered SCE to look at other alternatives to the towers in the neighborhoods, including undergrounding and the Alternative 4CM route through the State Park that the City of Chino Hills developed with Hills For Everyone. Convinced that the construction and maintenance impact outweighed the reduction of towers and roads in that route, the Department of Parks remained opposed to the Park Alternative, essentially removing it as an option. Edison and the City embarked on an Alternative Dispute Resolution process but reached a stalemate. The PUC will now consider the City's appeal.



GOLDSPOTTED OAK BORER

If you love oak trees, please pay attention. A tiny invasive bug, the goldspotted oak borer, aka GSOB (*Agrilus auroguttatus*) is decimating the largest oak trees in much of rural San Diego County. An adult GSOB is a dark green, bullet-shaped beetle usually around 10 mm long (nearly ½ inch) with three gold spots on each of its wings. However, the adult form does not pose a threat as much as GSOB larvae, which bore into the bark of the oak and create large galleries where they feed on the tree causing major damage to the oak's cambium. The cambium is a tree tissue that is vital to oak growth.

Researchers are working to contain the infestation before it spreads northward. Their biggest concern is that as the dead oak trees are privately harvested, the wood will be sold as firewood and carried out of the county allowing new colonies to be established.

Visit the <http://ucanr.org/sites/gsobinfo/> to learn more.



WEBCAMS DELIGHT

The ongoing saga of a widowed mother barn owl with 5 chicks is captured on a web cam in south Orange County.

<http://www.StarrRanch.org/blog/barn-owl>

Also entertaining and famous in their own right are the Decorah bald eagles. Wisely building their nest near a fish hatchery in northeastern Iowa, the pair have laid three eggs this year.

http://www.farmyou.com/falcon_cams/index.html

YOU CAN HELP THE HILLS

SHOPPING AT RALPH'S CAN SUPPORT THE HILLS

If you are a Ralph's shopper, please enroll your Ralph's card to continue to support HFE when you shop. Our organizational number for this program is NPO #91199. Go to: 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. Thank you!

GOOD BYE TO GOOD FRIEND, ELDEN HUGHES

With saddened hearts we learned of the passing of Elden Hughes in December 2011. He was a long time Whittier resident and steadfast supporter of preservation of our hills and his beloved desert. Elden's humor, wit, common sense, and uncommon dedication to caring for our exquisite American wilderness heritage encouraged all who knew him. For us he was "a friend who came in first when the whole world went out."



Claire Schlotterbeck

A SHOUT OUT TO BOEING & MARY GLASER

Mary Glaser, Boeing employee and avid runner, participated in a walk/fundraiser for her company. She won the chance to designate a non-profit to receive some of the funds that were raised. We are so grateful she picked Hills For Everyone! Thank you Mary and Boeing.



Courtesy of Boeing

Claire Schlotterbeck of Hills For Everyone is holding the Boeing donation, while HFE supporter Mary Glaser stands behind her.

POWERPOINTS AVAILABLE

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

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.

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