

Hills For Everyone

Friends of the
Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor



Newsletter No. 30

Spring 2014

Brea Thinks There is Water to Waste



Melanie Schlotterbeck

The development proposal for the Madrona property, surrounding the two City-owned water towers, includes 162 executive ridgetop houses.

Despite the headline in the City's April newsletter "Statewide Drought Demands Water Efficiency," the Brea City Council appears poised to approve a housing project that uses five fold the amount of water the average Brea household uses. The water is needed to maintain the fuel modification slopes in this Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. Once a proud leader in saving the Wildlife Corridor, Brea appears to be descending into an old fashioned, lay waste to natural resources, business-as-usual mentality. After 15 years of stops and starts, landowner bankruptcies, ever morphing plans, Brea may approve the 162 unit Madrona project deep in Carbon Canyon next to Chino Hills State Park in May.

As a result of a legal settlement, Madrona (formerly Canyon Crest) is allowed to process the project under antiquated and now revoked 1985 planning rules. The project was approved by the Brea Planning Commission in 2008 and then appealed to the City Council. Near the conclusion of the hearings, the Freeway Complex Fire burned the site down. The original developer went bankrupt and the current landowner is also bankrupt and in receivership. The State of Idaho appointed a trustee to try to achieve entitlements to build.

We mounted a grassroots outreach campaign with yard signs and banners throughout the City. Many in the

northern part of Brea view this decision on Madrona as an indicator of how hard Brea will fight to save the Shell-Aera land that serves as the backdrop of Brea. How can Brea allow the removal of 1,400 oak and walnut trees on Madrona and then, with a straight face, ask Aera not to bulldoze its extensive oak woodlands? Residents in eastern Brea are dismayed by the additional ~1,600 car trips this project would bring on Carbon Canyon and Lambert Roads.

Project opponents assembled a cross-county team to make formal PowerPoint presentations to the City Council

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KEY FACTS UNCOVERED



Excessive Drinking Water Wasted

- Water use is five times higher than the average Brea household
- Excessive water is permanently needed to irrigate enormous manufactured slopes



Important Habitat Destroyed

- 1,400 oak and walnut trees will be removed
- Documented wildlife corridor constrained by fences and walls



Severe Fire Danger

- Site has burned 4 times in 30 years, making it likely to burn again
- Residents on this ridge top will be at greater risk because fire runs uphill 16 times faster than downhill



Risky and Limited Access

- Dangerous two lane curvy canyon road frequently closes
- Recent earthquake caused major rock slide that overturned a car

covering traffic, water, geology, finances, biology, public safety, fire hazards, and land use. These presentations can be seen on Hills For Everyone's YouTube Channel: <http://www.youtube.com/user/Hills4Everyone>. We even filmed the land hoping to convince the Council this beautiful area should not be bulldozed for an overly aggressive development. Instead the video may become the record of what once was there. Learn more at: www.StopMadrona.org.

The City Council began their own questioning in April. Councilmember Simonoff opposed the project for reasons of public safety, Garcia and Moore supported it as is. Then the two newest Councilmembers (Murdock and Marick) began a high stakes effort to improve the project by adding "conditions of approval"—essentially asking Madrona to

agree to these new conditions in order to secure their vote.

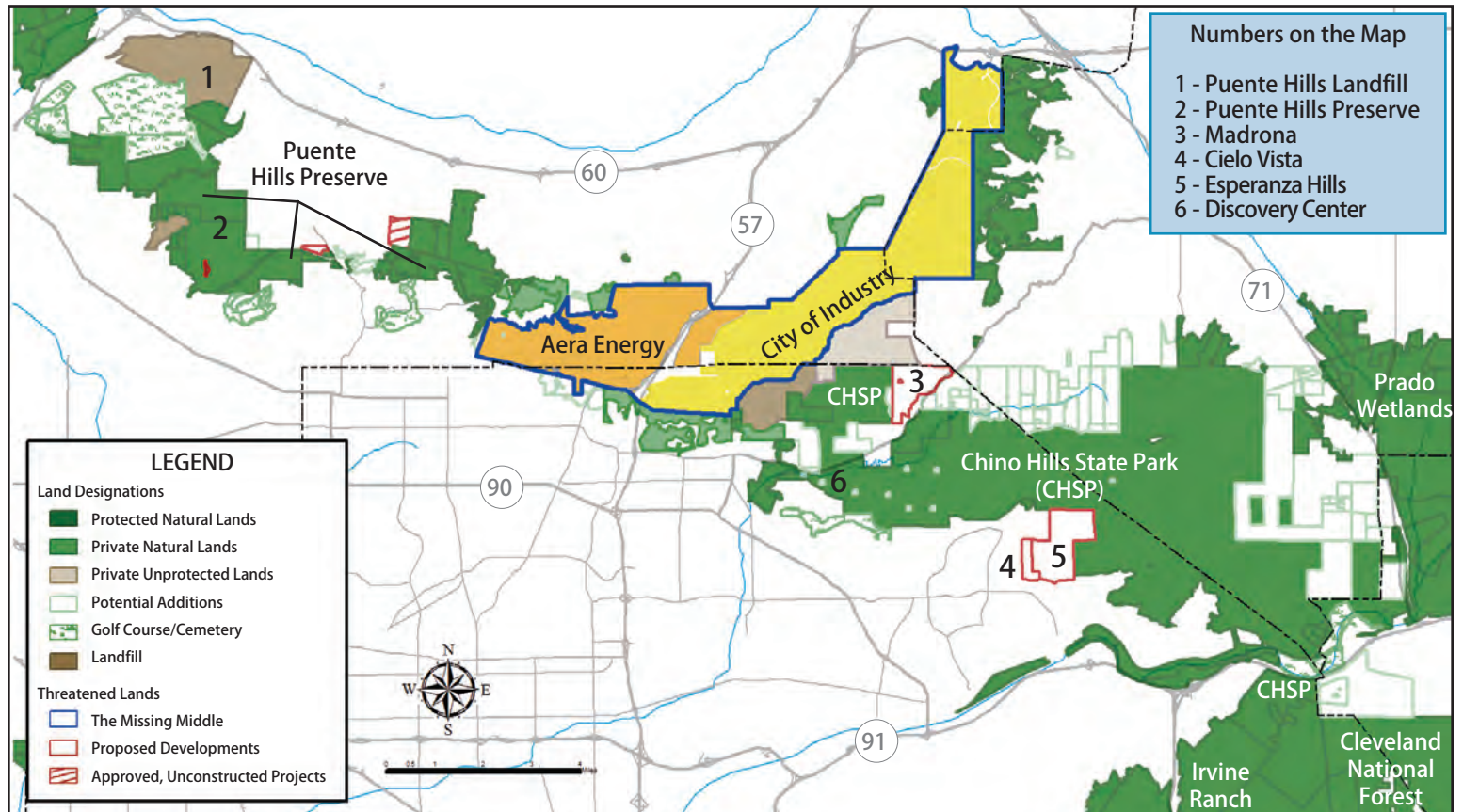
Some of the conditions requested were questionable: making roof top solar an option (it already is) and putting a tot lot in a pocket park (with the project situated in a mountain lion corridor). Other conditions were headed in the right direction, but did not address the public safety issues we uncovered.

If Madrona agrees to all of the conditions, the votes will be there to entitle the project. But with the added delay and expense inherent in these conditions Madrona may not be able to sell the land for development. With the land entitled, it would also become too expensive for conservation groups to buy. Most politicians don't work toward a lose-lose. Stay tuned for more information on this important decision.



The development would require the removal of 1,400 oak and walnut trees, add ~1,600 more cars to Carbon Canyon and sits on land that is steep and unstable.

Mapping the Corridor Projects



Another Battle in Yorba Linda

Over the Christmas holidays, environmental review documents were released and community meetings were held on two projects in county territory above the City of Yorba Linda. Cielo Vista proposes 112 houses on 87 acres (photo shown right), while the adjacent Esperanza Hills project proposes a whopping 340 houses on 460 acres.

Both project sites burned to the ground in the 2008 Freeway Complex Fire—for the fourth time. This is important because the latest fire science says that the best way to predict where the next fire will burn, is where it has burned before.

Both sites would evacuate onto streets that were already gridlocked in 2008 with residents fleeing the fire. The ludicrous new emergency evacuation plan will require “phased evacuation.” In the face of a flame front moving forward 14 football fields a minute (as reported in the After Action Report by the Orange County Fire Authority), who is going to wait their turn to evacuate?

This portion of the hills is also known golden eagle foraging habitat, contains federally endangered species, and lies adjacent to Chino Hills State Park.



Melanie Schlotterbeck

With the ongoing assistance of Hills For Everyone, residents in Yorba Linda have organized to fight these projects. They hired an attorney and divvied up sections of the EIR to comment on. Residents also convinced the Yorba Linda City Council to hire their own experts to comment on the projects at a cost of \$38,000. Sadly, those comments were more edits than substance.

The County is responding to the comments and the residents are in the process of continuing to awaken their neighbors. For more information visit their website at www.ProtectOurHomesAndHills.org.

Habitat Authority to Celebrate 20th Anniversary

Formed in 1994 to be the recipient of mitigation funds for the expansion of the Puente Hills Landfill in Los Angeles County, the Habitat Authority manages nearly 4,000 acres of important natural lands. As canyons were being destroyed for additional capacity at the landfill in the hills near Whittier and Hacienda Heights, one dollar a ton was set aside to buy and save other nearby lands.

The Habitat Authority is now celebrating its 20th anniversary as a government park agency. During the past two decades the Authority has:

- Purchased 1,888 acres in the Puente Hills;
- Conducted restoration of 179 acres of native habitat, and is in the process of restoring an additional 30 acres (209 in total); and,
- Has conducted outdoor educational programming for over 13,000 people from local communities.

Join the Habitat Authority and its partners for the 20th anniversary celebration on Saturday, September 27, 2014. To kick off the celebration early here are ways you can get involved:



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Complete a Preserve Passport, which challenges you to engage in three outdoor activities that are good for you, your family, and the environment.

Enter into the Celebrating 20 Years Photo Contest. Residents in Orange and Los Angeles Counties can submit up to three photographs of the Preserve lands for the contest.

Learn more about the event at: www.HabitatAuthority.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.



Hills For Everyone
P.O. Box 9835
Brea, CA 92822-1835
www.HillsForEveryone.org

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Progress in the Park

Here are some recent updates from Chino Hills State Park:

- The new paved (all-weather) road at the Bane Canyon entrance into the Park is expected to open in March 2015.
- The Discovery Center exhibits are once again moving toward completion. (See photo below)
- The Park is now open daily 8:00 AM - 7:00 PM.
- With the retirement of District Superintendent Ron Krueper, State Parks promoted Park Superintendent Kelly Elliott into the position. Congratulations! Her replacement is Ryann Gill.
- With the three big storms in late winter the existing and troublesome erosion issue on North Ridge Trail was exacerbated. North Ridge is now closed between Telegraph and Gilman Peak.

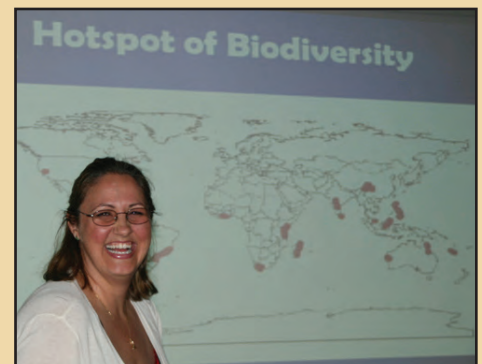


Claire Schlotterbeck

PowerPoints Available

Hills For Everyone representatives provide interesting presentations to local groups, clubs, and organizations. Topics may include biodiversity, achievements, threats or possibilities, and fire history of the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor. Schedule a presentation by emailing us at:

info@HillsForEveryone.org.



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