

# Hills For Everyone

Friends of the  
Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor



Newsletter No. 39

Fall 2018

## Remembering the Fire And Our Resilience



Lee Paulson

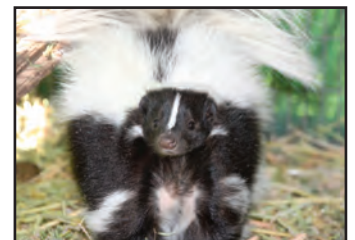
The 2008 Freeway Complex Fire burned in four counties and had major impacts on our homes, infrastructure, and natural resources.

On November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008, the devastating Freeway Complex Fire spread through the hills burning over 30,000 acres. Over 280 homes in Yorba Linda and Brea were damaged or destroyed and 95% of Chino Hills State Park burned. Following the fire, Hills For Everyone (HFE) embarked on a study to see what we could learn about the frequency of fires and causes. We ultimately produced a report of our findings. Knowing more about the causes and frequency helps inform how the natural lands are managed. It also shows where it is and isn't safe to put additional houses and what changes need to be made to reduce the number of fire ignitions. Our goal was to inform planners and decision makers about the wildfire risk and impacts.

In partnership with the Carbon Canyon Fire Safe Council and the Chino Hills State Park Interpretive Association, we are hosting a 10 year Freeway Complex Fire Commemoration Event to honor the losses, the devastation, new partnerships, and resources that went into fighting and recovering from this fire.

The event will take place at the State Park Discovery Center (4500 Carbon Canyon Road in Brea) from 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM on Saturday and Sunday, November 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>. Displays, videos, pictures, and maps will be available. Chino Valley Independent Fire District and Brea Fire Department will bring fire trucks to the event!

On Saturday, from 1:00 – 2:00 PM Nature of Wildworks will bring its rehabilitated wildlife to educate the community. Staff will answer questions on where these animals are found, what they eat, how to avoid interactions, and more. We know that the fire devastated not only our homes, but also the homes of the wildlife that live in the hills. The event and parking are both free. Kids of all ages are welcome.



All photos by Nature of Wildworks

# Esperanza Hills

The Orange County Board of Supervisors has again approved the Esperanza Hills housing project despite recent court victories by residents and conservation groups. The 340-unit project, which would be built on steep, fire-prone hills above Yorba Linda, has been blocked twice by the Superior and Appellate Courts, but the County has now approved it for a third time. Only Supervisor Todd Spitzer, in whose district the project lies, voted no.

Four conservation groups, including HFE, Endangered Habitats League, California Native Plant Society, and Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks have fought alongside residents to prevent damage to the State Park. Residents have carried the financial burden of these lawsuits.

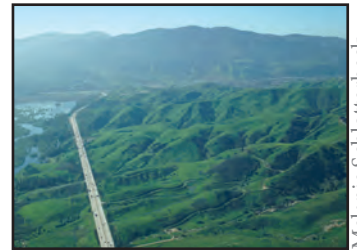
With a two-mile-long border the property shares with Chino Hills State Park, the site sits in a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone—the worst place to build houses. The site has already burned three times. Residents remember all too well the 2008 Freeway Complex Fire, which ravaged Yorba Linda neighborhoods. The water system failed. Fire trucks arrived late, if at all. Families were caught in gridlock while trying to escape the flame front.

Another lawsuit will be filed since the Supervisors have abandoned their duties to protect public safety and resources.

# Prado Raceway

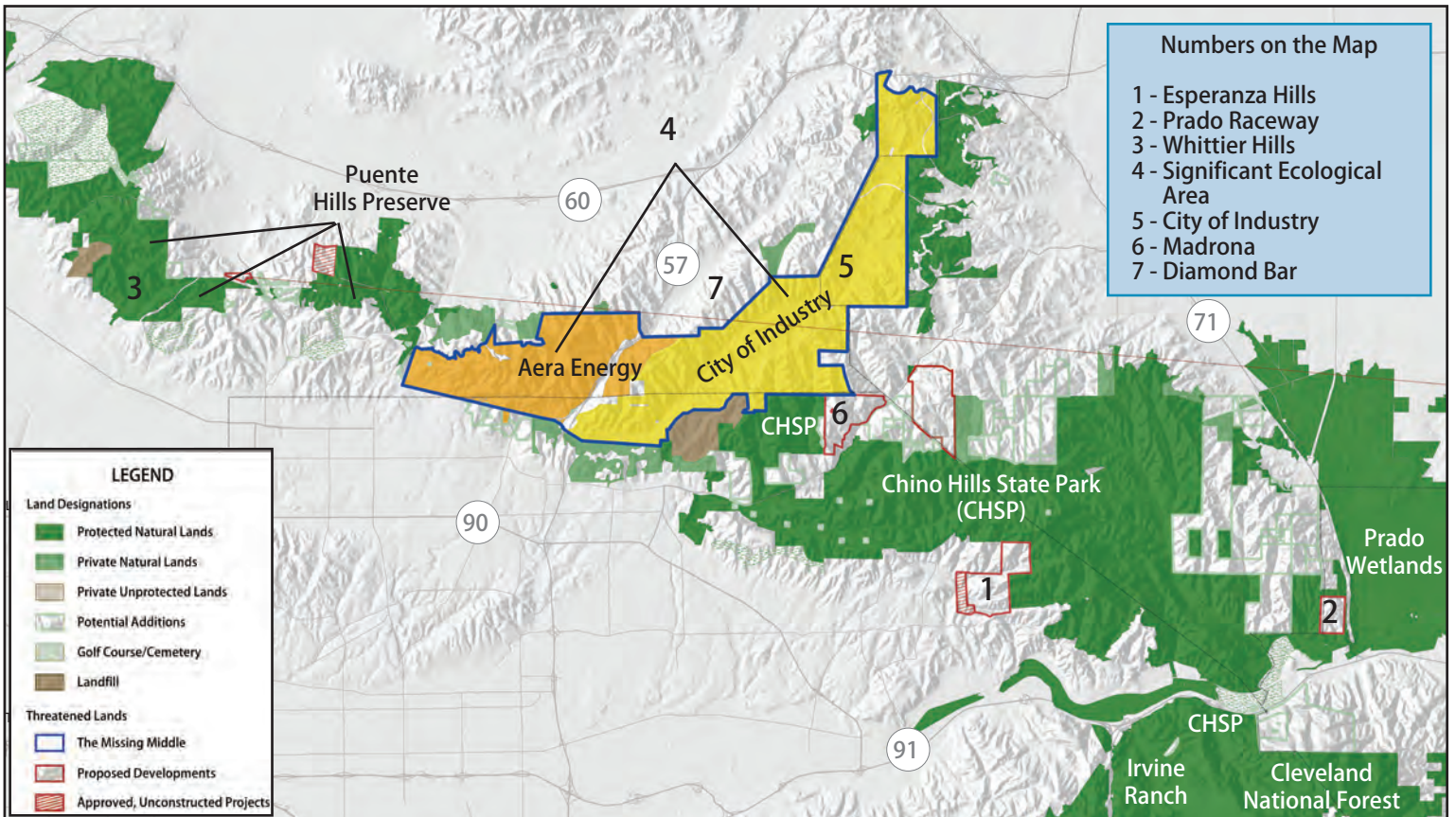
Landowners have proposed an off-road vehicle raceway at the juncture of the 71 and 91 freeways. HFE and concerned residents toured the site this summer. Debris from mining has filled a canyon where the racetrack will go. Fencing can contain the off-road vehicles, but not the noise they make. The loud sounds will certainly spill into Aliso Canyon. The operators are hoping for a permit for the entire site once the mining operation on the north ends. The public will not know the ultimate configuration of the land, yet the owners want the permit anyway—a virtual blank check.

The biggest challenge will be access to the site. If you enter from the north (Chino Hills) you will turn right into it. However, when you want to go home, you will need to turn right and either go east on the 91, exit at Serfas Club Drive and loop back up to the 71 freeway north, or you can turn right and get on the 91 freeway heading west, exit at Green River and loop up to the 71 north. Add in trailers for the off-road vehicles and you will have a brewing traffic mess. The area, as viewed from above, is also a connector to the Prado wetlands.



Melanie Schlotterbeck

# Mapping the Corridor Projects



## Welcome Back, Bob!

Former HFE Board member and current Chair of the Puente Hills Habitat Authority has returned to the HFE Board amidst honors. He received the Whittier Audubon Conservationist of the Year award earlier this year. More recently, at the 30th anniversary of the Whittier Conservancy, he received the Lifetime Achievement Award. He is credited with leading the governmental effort to save nearly 4,000 acres on the western side of the hills.



## Whittier Oil Drilling

The controversial plan to drill on Habitat Authority land has come alive again. Multiple and complex litigation has thwarted the effort for years. A recent Appellate Court decision removed most of the obstacles to drilling, but there are still many steps that would have to be taken. For one thing, the agreement between Matrix Oil and the City of Whittier has now expired. The Whittier City Council has not discussed whether they wish to take up the issue again. If they decide to consider it, it will have to be put on the Council agenda and reviewed in open session.

## Significant Ecological Area Ordinance

Los Angeles County is moving toward approval of a new ordinance that would further constrain land use in sensitive parts of unincorporated areas. Much of the 3,000 acre Shell-Aera land between Brea and Rowland Heights is in a designated Significant Ecological Area (SEA). Additional portions of Aera's land may be added to the SEA. All of the former Boy Scout Reservation, now owned by the City of Industry, is also in an SEA.



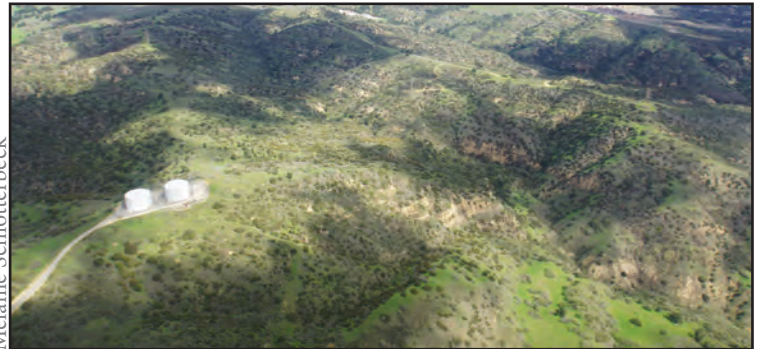
Melanie Schlotterbeck

## City of Industry

Industry has apparently finally given up on its plans to put a massive solar farm on Tres Hermanos, the land it owns in Upper Tonner Canyon. It spent \$20 million to find out that the company they contracted with had squandered the funds. Now the City of Industry is working with the Cities of Chino Hills and Diamond Bar, in whose jurisdiction the property lies. Chino Hills is the big player since it controls 1,750 acres of the 2,400 acre site. Had the solar farm proceeded, it would have been under the jurisdiction of the California Public Utilities Commission. Now, any agreement reached that includes local control will be a better outcome for those of us working to save the land.

## Madrona

The City of Brea complied with the Court order and rescinded the approvals of the 162-unit Madrona project in Carbon Canyon. The land is now for sale. This acreage connects the State Park into Tonner Canyon and Los Angeles County. We are now working toward acquisition of this important corridor.



Melanie Schlotterbeck

## Diamond Bar General Plan Update

Diamond Bar residents have organized an effort to monitor and “green up” the changes proposed in the Diamond Bar General Plan. Their group, Responsible Land Use, a non-profit corporation, is actively involved in the General Plan update process because they believe a community's most precious assets are its natural open spaces. Preserving the remaining natural open spaces, and focusing on smart, infill development that keeps traffic congestion from getting worse makes both economic and scientific sense.

They have proposed general plan language changes and engage in respectful education to ensure that Diamond Bar's new General Plan language accurately reflects these goals. Learn more at: [www.ResponsibleLandUse.org](http://www.ResponsibleLandUse.org)



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## Email Updates

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

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## Three Easy Ways to Help

1

The holidays are soon approaching and if you shop on Amazon, use [AmazonSmile.org](http://AmazonSmile.org) naming Hills For Everyone as your charity of choice. We'll receive a portion of the proceeds for all eligible sales.



2

Register your Ralphs award card (after September 1st). Go to [Ralphs.com](http://Ralphs.com), click on Community, Community Contributions, then Participant, and register there. Our new organization code is IC960.



3

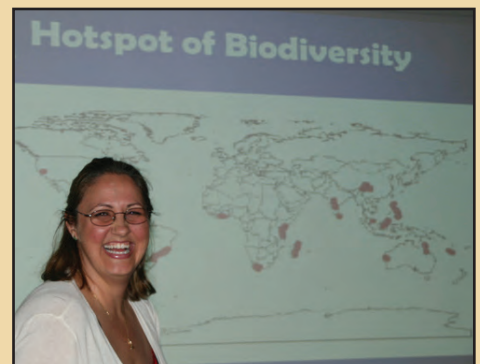
Through the generosity of a supporter, HFE is now a registered participant in Patagonia's One Percent For The Planet program. This program connects dollars with doers by linking businesses, individuals, and non-profits to help create partnerships that protect the planet.



Member businesses pledge to give one percent of their net profits to the non-profit of their choice. We are hoping for more support!  
[www.OnePercentForThePlanet.org](http://www.OnePercentForThePlanet.org)

## PowerPoints Available

Hills For Everyone representatives provide interesting presentations to local groups, clubs, and organizations. Topics may include biodiversity, achievements, threats or possibilities, the State Park's history, and/or the fire history of the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor. Schedule a presentation by emailing us at: [info@HillsForEveryone.org](mailto:info@HillsForEveryone.org).



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