



# Outdoors in Orange County

Dana Point Headlands

## ACRE BY ACRE

### A Story as Strong as Steele

By: Jean Watt

We need to celebrate each step and each acre along the Green Vision Path and applaud those whose concern for the future makes them true leaders. There is no doubt that the quest to save natural resources is right. "Green Infrastructure" is a commonly used phrase as it is recognized that open land and open space uses are vital to the local and global society. Everyday America loses more than 4,000 acres of open space to development and the rate of conversion is faster all the time. Many conservation activities are haphazard, reactive, site-specific, and narrowly focused. Funds for conservation efforts are often cut.

No wonder that we believe strongly in our Orange County Green Vision, its mission, and its projects. No wonder that we applaud the private philanthropic leaders who help to create a nurturing society and sustaining future for Orange County.

#### STEELE FOUNDATION ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARD

This year the Harry and Grace Steele Foundation has stepped along the Green Vision Path with major contributions. Since 1953, the Steele Foundation has been responsive to increasingly complex circumstances that define the "public good." The trustees have felt a commitment to use their resources to bring about positive change in the lives of people and in the fields of education, medicine, the arts, children, religion, social welfare, and the environment.

Over the years, the Foundation has contributed more than \$150 million primarily to Orange County programs and institutions. Recipients have been chosen within the guidelines, set forth by Founder

Grace C. Steele, "the Foundation should help people help themselves."

It all began when Harry Steele owned a small electrical manufacturing company in Los Angeles from which he built U.S. Electrical Motors - acquired in 1962 by Emerson Electric Company for \$50 million in stock. In 1953, Grace and her children formed the present Harry and Grace Steele Foundation. In the last decade, current family trustees, Audrey Steele Burnand and Betty R. Steele, became increasingly concerned about conserving precious natural resources and environmental education to ensure stewardship in the future.

In keeping with FHBP's belief that the "public good" is entwined in good environmental stewardship, the Foundation's last major gifts represent a huge step toward that end. In December 2005, with a grant of \$15 million, the Steele Foundation made possible the perpetual preservation of the 29.4 bluff-top acres at Dana Point Headlands by the Center for Natural Lands Management. In 1840, Richard Henry Dana, in his book, *Two Years Before the Mast*, called it "the only romantic spot in California." Now the Steele Foundation has taken steps to ensure that it never changes. "It has been a long cherished wish of our family to provide future generations of Californians an unspoiled, beautiful venue with a magnificent view of the Pacific. We made this grant to preserve forever an inspiring piece of the beautiful California coast and of California's history," said Audrey Steele Burnand, daughter of the late Harry and Grace Steele.

More information about Dana Point Headlands and the Steele Foundation is available from Tom Wilck [twilck@cox.net](mailto:twilck@cox.net).

#### ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION A TOP PRIORITY

In March, 2006, the Steele Foundation made their final major grant of \$4.5 million to the Environmental Nature Center (ENC). Consistent with Grace Steele's guidelines to "help people help themselves," education has always been a top priority. As a final gift before dissolving the Foundation, trustees Audrey Steele Burnand and Betty Steele, decided the remainder of the Foundation's funds should go to the Nature Center.

"The Steele Foundation represents true charity - most people want their names up in lights, but not them," said



Students at the ENC enjoy learning about nature. Photo by: Lori Whalen

the Foundation's attorney Wilbur Layman. The 34 year-old ENC is a cause close to the family member's hearts. The Center, a 3.5 acre nature preserve containing 15 California native plant communities, serves as a unique outdoor classroom for thousands of students each year. "More and more children are being kept away from anything natural," said Foundation President Burnand. "It's important for children to learn what nature does."

The gift to the Nature Center will truly help to sustain this important environmental educational facility. Since being spun off by the school district, the ENC is a private facility owned and operated by a non-profit Board of Directors. With this gift the Board can kick off a "Raise the Roof" campaign so necessary indoor/outdoor facilities can be provided and, importantly, build an endowment fund to sustain its growth and success in the future.

It is with true gratitude that we applaud the Harry and Grace Steele Foundation and its legacy of true caring and giving in Orange County.



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PROJECT UPDATES

ORANGE COAST RIVER PARK  
GATEWAY DESIGN

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Headlands Photo: Bill Almes, Avoca Photo: Marinka Horack

# The Imagine Series

## A Before & After Look at Orange County's Treasures

By: Melanie Schlotterbeck

In our last newsletter, we displayed a current photo of the Santa Ana River and what the River could look like if we used a little imagination. The goal of the Imagine Series is to capture what some of the region's lands look like in their current state and then graphically show what these landscapes could look like in a restored, more natural state. The focus of this newsletter's Imagine Series photo is a 3,000 acre property that lies at the juncture of Orange and Los Angeles Counties. Land on both sides of the 57 Freeway in north Orange County, just past the Tonner Canyon off ramp, have been proposed for development.

Aera Energy, a wholly owned subsidiary of Shell-ExxonMobil, has proposed 3,600 houses on its land. Though the majority of the property lies in Los Angeles, its streams drain entirely into Orange County and therefore our local streams and beaches. This land is part of the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor that extends 31 miles from the 91 Freeway in Anaheim to the 605 Freeway in Whittier. The Shell-Aera land is a portion of what is called the unprotected "Missing Middle."

The "Before" photo captures the damage that decades of overgrazing has done to the landscape. Shell-Aera has also used part of its land for a century of oil drilling. Surprisingly, this grazed grassland is interspersed among a thick oak and walnut woodland. In fact, the woodlands have been designated a Significant Ecological



Area (SEA) within L.A. County's General Plan. The County's Technical Advisory Committee that makes recommendations to protect SEAs recently made the rare declaration that Shell-Aera's project is out of compliance with the intent of this SEA. In a recent study by the Conservation Biology Institute, the Shell-Aera property and portions of neighboring Tonner Canyon were determined to be critical to the survival and functionality of the species in the hills.

The "After" photo captures what the Shell-Aera land could look like when the native plants re-establish themselves, free of cattle grazing. Just over the hill in Chino Hills State Park (CHSP), ecologists have witnessed the natural revival of coastal sage scrub, chaparral, native grasses, willows, and sycamores, once cattle were removed.

Groups like Hills For Everyone and the Puente-Chino Hills Task Force of the Sierra

Club are working to connect 4,000 acres of lands saved in the Puente Hills with 13,000 acres of land saved as CHSP. The long term vision of the area includes protecting the Missing Middle and then creating a multi-county trail system with various staging areas, campsites, nature centers and other amenities for area residents to enjoy in this heavily urbanized region.

Recently a wildlife tunnel was retrofitted under Harbor Boulevard in La Habra. Designed to improve safety for speeding motorists and dispersing wildlife, this tunnel allows for the natural movement of wildlife at what once was a choke point. A deer found her way through only eight days after the tunnel's completion. Imagine that!

Let your imagination run free and join FHBP and others in protecting some of the region's last great places. Tune in next time to see another series highlight!



Photo and Photo Morph: Melanie Schlotterbeck

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## ORANGE COAST RIVER PARK YOUTH GATEWAY DESIGN CONTEST & OPEN HOUSE

Article & Photos By: Patsee Ober



Ashley Rodriguez,  
 Newport Beach Entrance

Four happy students from Estancia High School walked away with \$100 each for their winning artwork in the Orange Coast River Park (OCRP) Youth Gateway Design Contest, Saturday, April 29. Local high school students were invited to

design a gateway for each of the three city's entries to the Park with the promise that their designs will become the guiding force for the future architecture of professionally designed entry ways.

Contest judges, Bill Atkins, Guy Stivers and Ron Yeo, were intrigued that student themes steered away from a 'man made' gateway and instead evolved into scenes portraying gateways that were a blend of natural forms already present in the environment. On display, each art piece was hung from a line that stretched between two trees, creating an outdoor art gallery that rivaled the Louvre! Everyone agreed that Fairview Park was a perfect venue for the contest and OCRP Open House as sunshine touched over 100 attendees who were greeted with environmental booths, lots of great food and beverages, fantastic prizes, short speeches, park tours, and community camaraderie.

Among the VIP's attending were: California State Assemblyman Tom Harman of Huntington Beach, Harry Huggins from County of Orange, and city officials Robert Graham - Vice Chairman of the Costa Mesa Parks Commission and Kimberly Wood - Chair of the Fairview Park Committee. From Huntington Beach, Councilmember Cathy Green along with her husband, former Mayor Peter Green, enjoyed the event. Leslie Daigle, Keith Curry, Dick Nichols (Councilmembers from Newport Beach) participated along with Cheryl Brothers, a Fountain Valley Councilmember. Costa Mesa Cable TV was also on hand to interview FHBP President Jean Watt, during the event.

The Youth Gateway Design Project was sponsored in part by the National Park Foundation through a generous donation from Toms of Maine. Additional support was provided through the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, Kodak American Greenways Program, Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks, Earth Resource Foundation, and Friends of Fairview Park.

Many thanks to our local community of donors for their contributions of food, drink and adventure: Albertsons, Chimayos at the Beach, Dukes, El Ranchito, Jersey Joes, Merrilee's Swimwear, Mothers Market, Newport Bay Naturalists, Oggles Pizza, Ralphs, Stonefire Grill, Sun Flour Bakery, Taco Mesa, Trader Joes, Vons, and the City of Costa Mesa. Congratulations to all the participants and the winners!!! More photos of the event can be found at [www.fhbp.org](http://www.fhbp.org).



Brandon Tipton,  
 Costa Mesa Entrance

### Birds of a feather...

Be a part of Friends of Harbors, Beaches & Parks.

Help our practical, realistic projects make Orange County a better home for all of us.

Your help, large or small, is deeply appreciated.



**Yes!** I want to help Friends of Harbors, Beaches & Parks.

FHBP contributions are tax-deductible. Donors receive newsletters and other information on our conservation activities. Please check the category you wish:

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Heather Lee Willis,  
 Huntington Beach Entrance

## Great American Write In a Hit!

Activists tabled for a greener, cleaner Earth at the Great American Write-In. Sponsored by Women For: Orange County, this event gathers local groups together to provide information and answer questions on a variety of topics such as the environment, human rights, and peace. Environmentalists were well represented among the forty organizations and hundreds of community members. Armed with talking points and sample letters on selected issues, community members pack the central tables for hours at a time, busily writing letters to government officials and leaders. FHBP wishes to thank its members for participating -- your dedication makes all the difference!



The Write In

Visit [www.WomenForOC.org](http://www.WomenForOC.org)

## OC League of Conservation Voters

The Orange County League of Conservation Voters (OCLCV) held its annual awards banquet in early May. The evening honored Evan Henry, Councilmember Karl Warkowski, Friends of Shipley Nature Center and Inside the Outdoors. Susan Smartt, Executive Director of the California LCV, presented a wonderful keynote address at the gathering re-affirming the importance of getting candidates in office that not only support environmental issues, but that also confirm their commitment when voting. This was the League's biggest banquet to date and all funds raised will go to support environmentally friendly Orange County candidates for the upcoming city and county elections.



Susan Smartt

Visit [www.OCLCV.org](http://www.OCLCV.org)

## Coyote Hills Targeted for Houses

The comment period for the revised Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the West Coyote Hills ended in June. Friends of Coyote Hills (FCH) engaged the best legal and biological consultants in the state to analyze and comment on the DEIR. Chevron has proposed 760 houses and a commercial strip on its 510 acres. The hills contain critical coastal sage scrub habitat that support the federally listed California gnatcatcher, the sharply declining cactus wren and white-tailed kite. The land is the last natural, open space in northwest Orange County. FCH is actively seeking support from local government officials and the community to save the land as a park and preserve.



Coyote Hills

Visit [www.CoyoteHills.org](http://www.CoyoteHills.org)

## Morrell Canyon Threatened by Dam

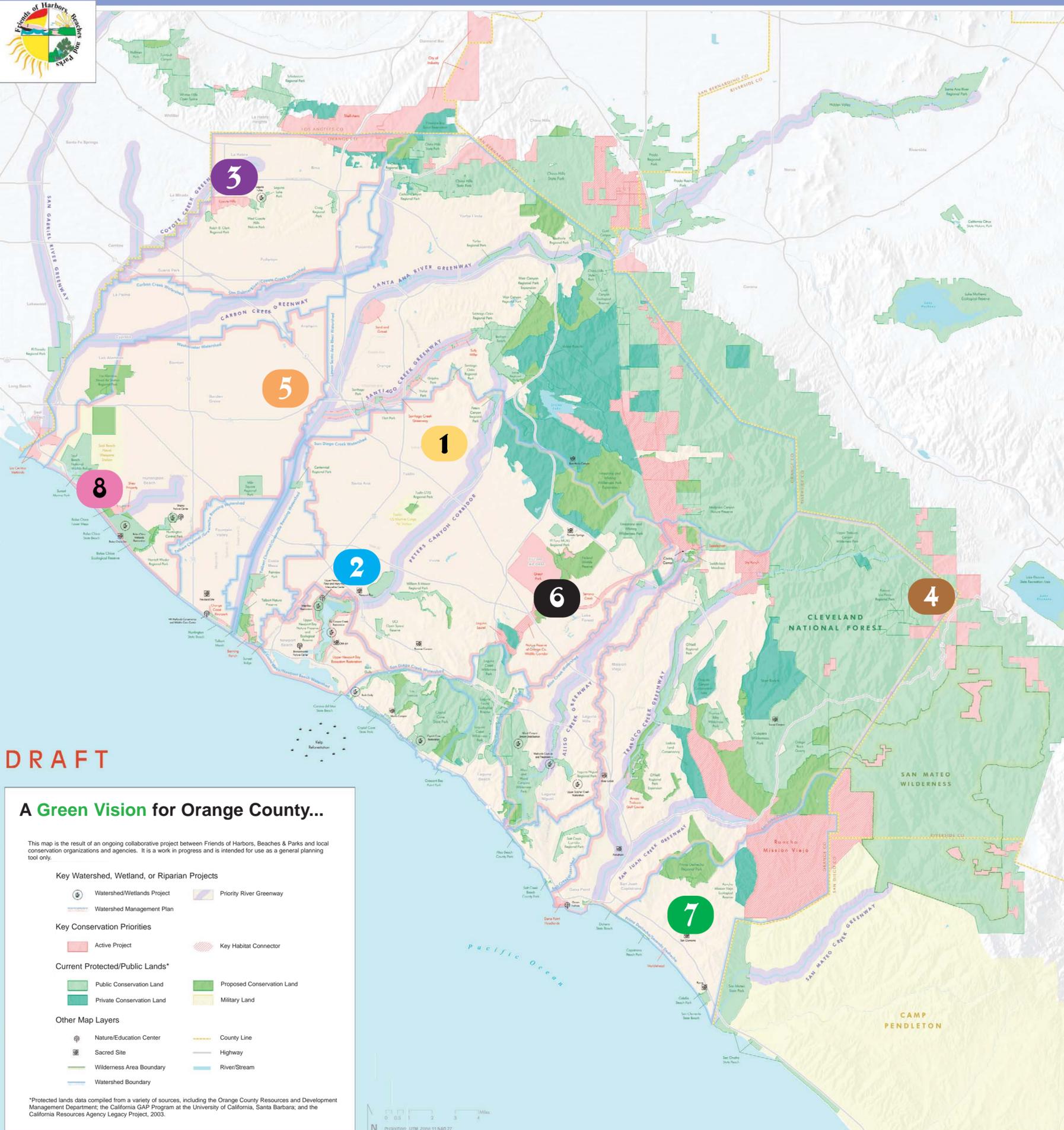
Santa Ana Mountains Task Force has been working to generate public opposition to the Lake Elsinore Advanced Pumped Storage project. The project would drown the Cleveland National Forest's Morrell Canyon, with a hydroelectric dam. The project proposes new power lines, significant environmental damage and loss of a natural canyon among other things. Roughly 500 people attended hearings to comment on the project in early April. Attendees offered many great reasons for decision makers to oppose the dam such as: loss of habitat, lower property values, fewer recreational areas, and increased water pollution. To learn more email Robin Everett at [robin\\_e1@hotmail.com](mailto:robin_e1@hotmail.com).



Morrell Canyon

Visit [www.SierraClub.org/ca/socalforests](http://www.SierraClub.org/ca/socalforests)

## Orange County



DRAFT

### A Green Vision for Orange County...

This map is the result of an ongoing collaborative project between Friends of Harbors, Beaches & Parks and local conservation organizations and agencies. It is a work in progress and is intended for use as a general planning tool only.

- |  |                            |
|--|----------------------------|
| Key Watershed, Wetland, or Riparian Projects |                            |
| Watershed/Wetlands Project                   | Priority River Greenway    |
| Watershed Management Plan                    |                            |
| Key Conservation Priorities                  |                            |
| Active Project                               | Key Habitat Connector      |
| Current Protected/Public Lands*              |                            |
| Public Conservation Land                     | Proposed Conservation Land |
| Private Conservation Land                    | Military Land              |
| Other Map Layers                             |                            |
| Nature/Education Center                      | County Line                |
| Sacred Site                                  | Highway                    |
| Wilderness Area Boundary                     | River/Stream               |
| Watershed Boundary                           |                            |

\*Protected lands data compiled from a variety of sources, including the Orange County Resources and Development Management Department; the California GAP Program at the University of California, Santa Barbara; and the California Resources Agency Legacy Project, 2003.

Articles By: 1 Elaine Booth, 2 & 5 Melanie Schlotterbeck, 3 Helen Higgins, 4 Robin Everett, 6 Stephanie Pacheco, 7 Joan Irvine Smith, 8 Marc Stirdivant  
Photos By: 1 Angelo Vassos, 2, 5 & 6 Melanie Schlotterbeck, 3 Eric Chang, 4, Andrew Harvey, 7 Davis Barber, 8 Marinka Horack

Map: GreenInfo Network  
310-558-3660

# Green Vision Map

## Measure M and the Environment

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A team of local environmental leaders appointed by FHBP's Green Vision Working Group successfully negotiated environmental mitigation into the upcoming 1/2 cent sales tax renewal called Measure M. The Measure had \$402 million for water quality improvements and it now includes \$243.5 million for large scale mitigation, including acquisition, for transportation-related habitat destruction. Over two dozen environmental groups collectively supported the addition of the mitigation component in the Measure. The \$11 billion transportation measure is expected to be on November's ballot. Many consider this funding mechanism a step towards completing the Green Vision.



Traffic on the 5

Visit [www.FHBP.org](http://www.FHBP.org)

## New Coalition for Great Park

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The Environmental Coalition for the Great Park and Great Park Communities is an independent coalition of regional Orange County environmental groups, as well as local groups and individuals with a specific interest in environmental issues at the OC Great Park. The Coalition supports sustainable, regenerative, and ecological design practices at the Great Park by assisting with ideas, information, contacts, and support. Sixteen environmental groups, plus individual members, are working constructively as community partners in the Great Park planning process. Contact Stephanie Pacheco at [stephaniepa@socalrr.com](mailto:stephaniepa@socalrr.com) to learn more about this new group.



El Toro Base

Visit [www.FHBP.org](http://www.FHBP.org)

## New South County Conservancy

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The Capistrano Valley Conservancy, dedicated to "protecting and preserving the cultural, historical, and natural resources of the Capistrano Valley and surrounding area," has been formed by Joan Irvine Smith. The inaugural event will be held Friday, July 14 at the Oaks in San Juan Capistrano. Joan Irvine Smith Fine Arts is putting up \$10,000 in prize money for 30 signature artists. The paintings will be sold and half of the proceeds will benefit the new Conservancy and support the preservation of the Mission San Juan Capistrano, the Capistrano Valley Symphony, the San Juan Capistrano Historical Society, and the Donna O'Neill Land Conservancy.



Donna O'Neill  
Land Conservancy

For More Info Call 949-542-8363

## Bolsa Chica Gets 118 Acres Added!

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On December 21, 2005, another portion of the Bolsa Chica was purchased by the State of California. The acquisition used funds from Proposition 50, which was passed by voters in 2002. This 103-acre parcel, together with an additional fifteen acres acquired in January 2006, preserves the entire lower bench of the Bolsa Chica mesa as open space and habitat. "This is the culmination of thirteen years and thousands of hours of work by members of the Bolsa Chica Land Trust and other organizations," said Flossie Horgan, co-founder of the Trust. "We're ecstatic to see it preserved for future generations."



Bolsa Chica

Visit [www.BolsaChicaLandTrust.org](http://www.BolsaChicaLandTrust.org)