



New Tool Aids in Park Preservation and Context

By Melanie Schlotterbeck

Over the last few years, Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks (FHBP) has been documenting the history behind the preservation of each of the regional parks and wilderness parks.

It's been a painstaking effort, not only cataloging each and every parcel within each of the 15 regional parks and seven wilderness parks, but also every document we could find publicly behind the acquisition or management of every parcel. Unique to each park was the decision to form a park, accept a donation, accept an easement, or receive as mitigation, lands that have created a world class county park system.

Using a specialized mapping tool called a Story Map, a product of ESRI, FHBP weaves the legacy of each park together with photographs, links, and maps. Each park includes a brief history, ownership details, and clickable map layers with downloadable origination documents per parcel. For ease of use, the Story Map was divided into Regional Parks and Wilderness Parks. Here are few examples of what we found:

- O'Neill Regional Park: Parcel 501 must control artichoke thistle to stop the spread onto adjacent lands.
- Clark Regional Park: Parcel 103 is under lease by the City of Buena Park for sports fields.
- Upper Newport Bay: Parcel 501 was dedicated because of its "unique natural resources and commanding vistas."

Dubbed the Park Legacy Project/Map, FHBP has attempted to capture the publicly available documents and synthesized the information into digestible bits for the public. The Story Maps are now available on our website: www.FHBP.org/ParkLegacy.

It is our hope that this bedrock of knowledge informs decisions, educates leaders, and engages the public. Viewers can check out the park, see its boundaries and what

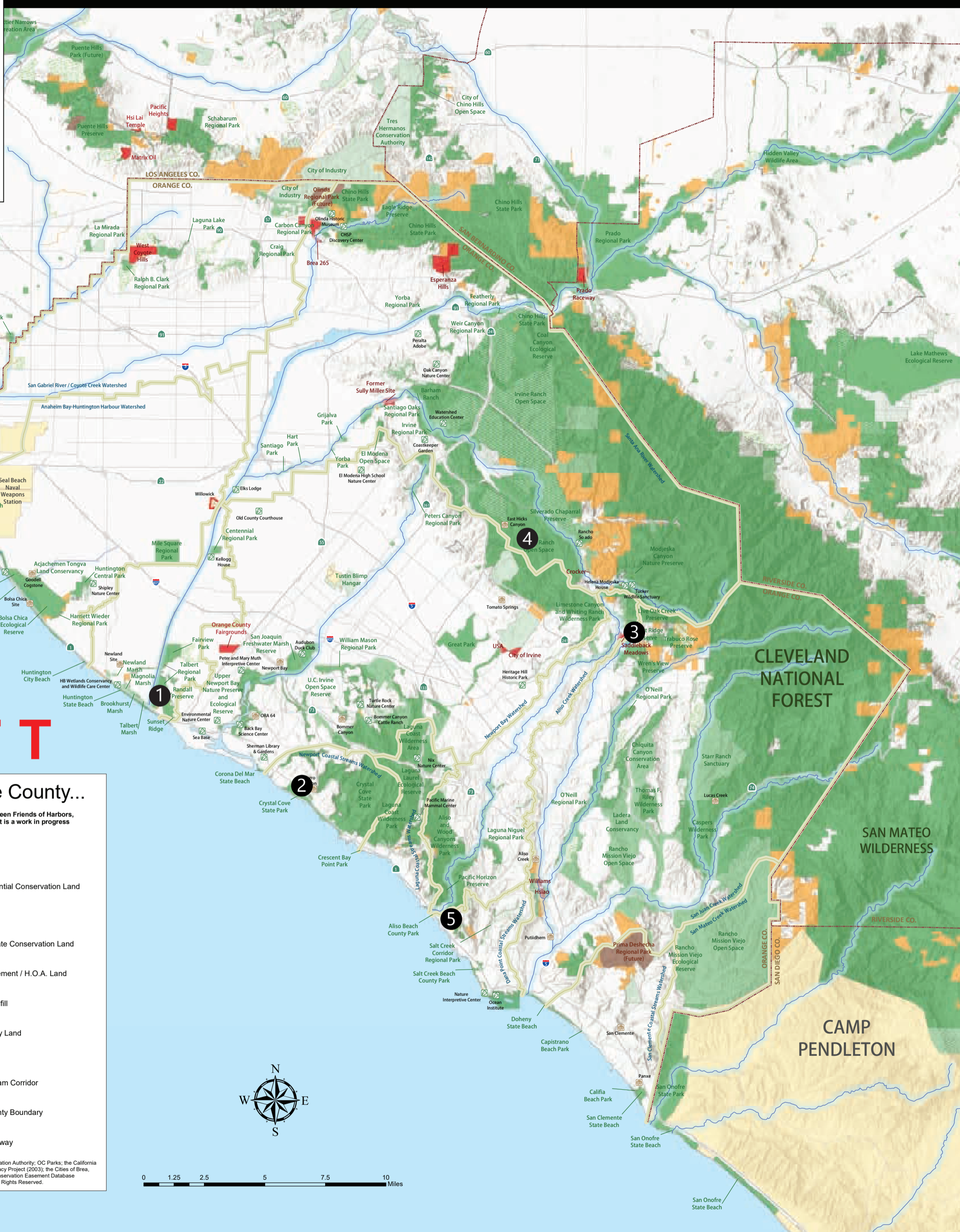
parcels make it up. From the smallest of parks that just have a few parcels up to the largest (O'Neill Regional Park with 262 parcels), each parcel has the actual historical documents available for download. To make things easier to understand, all of the documents have been summarized for their most useful information.

In 1897, Orange County created the first regional park in the State of California—Irvine Regional Park—when it accepted a donation of parcel 101 from The Irvine Company. This detail is housed in a database along with a copy of the original document outlining the donation terms. Nearly 100 years later, when the County went bankrupt and used the parks as collateral for the debt, FHBP was formed. Historical context is important, now and for the future.

Acting as the collective voice for our park system and regional conservation issues has been key to our success. Things haven't changed much. As the late Coastal Conservancy Executive Director Peter Douglas alluded in his famous quote, "The coast is never saved. It is always being saved," activists, leaders, and conservation groups alike have been diligent about ensuring the original intent behind these protected areas remains intact. You may access the story maps via the FHBP website: www.fhbp.org/resources/studies-reports/parklegacy/.

Welcome Connie!

Please join us in welcoming Connie Gallippi to FHBP as our new lead consultant for the Green Vision and other FHBP projects. Connie holds a bachelor's degree in natural resource management from Virginia Polytechnic Institute. She has broad experience in nonprofit work, both locally and globally, and has worked extensively on state conservation issues, including crafting legislation, coalition building, securing state and private funding, and influencing policy. Most importantly, Connie shares our unceasing commitment to the outdoors and our amazing natural resources. She brings a fresh perspective while also respecting and building upon the long tradition of conservation work FHBP is so well known for.



DRAFT

A Green Vision for Orange County...

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

Acquisition Opportunities

- Active Conservation Project
- Potential Conservation Land

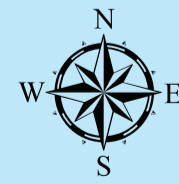
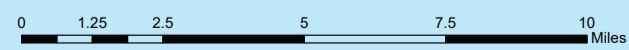
Other Land Designations

- Public Conservation Land
- Private Conservation Land
- Public Not Protected
- Easement / H.O.A. Land
- Golf Course / Cemetery
- Landfill
- Military Land
- Utility Land

Other Map Layers

- Nature / Education Center
- Sacred Site
- Watershed Boundary
- Stream Corridor
- County Boundary
- Highway

Data compiled from a variety of sources including First American Title; the Orange County Transportation Authority; OC Parks; the California GAP Program at the University of California, Santa Barbara; the California Resources Agency - Legacy Project (2003); the Cities of Brea, Irvine, and San Juan Capistrano; the California Protected Areas Database (2020); the California Conservation Easement Database (2020); and Flanders Marine Institute: Global Oceans and Seas, version 1 (2021). © FHBP 2024. All Rights Reserved.



Project Updates

1 Randall Preserve Restoration

California Oaks Coalition works throughout California to protect and perpetuate oaks, the state's primary old growth resource. The 81 members of the coalition include three organizations working to keep oaks standing in Orange County: Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks; Coastal Corridor Alliance; and Hills For Everyone. The coalition, an initiative of the California Oaks program of California Wildlife Foundation, has been assisting Coastal Corridor

Alliance to identify information about historic vegetation in the Randall Preserve to assess the viability of oaks for the area's restoration. The survey map can be accessed through the T-sheet Atlas, a GIS database, and an interactive website, www.calsheets.org/Cove.org.



2 Crystal Cove Beach Cottages

Crystal Cove Conservancy (The Conservancy) has reached a milestone in the efforts to restore the historic North Beach Cottages at Crystal Cove State Park! The project to revive these cottages is fully funded and nine completed cottage rentals are now open for public stays. As the cottages are meticulously restored, The Conservancy is bringing the history of Crystal Cove back to life. Not only do these cottages transport visitors back in time, but the revenue

from overnight rentals also helps provide support for The Conservancy's STEM education and conservation programs. The North Beach Cottage restoration is expected to be complete by 2026. For more information about the cottages, visit CrystalCove.org/Beach-Cottages.



3 Saddleback Meadows

The Orange County planning department is processing a 181-unit subdivision on 222 undeveloped rolling acres near Cook's Corner in the Foothill/Trabuco Specific Plan Area. The property was bought out of bankruptcy in the mid-90s and attempts to develop it have been stymied by legal challenges. The current project relies on a Revised Subsequent EIR certified in 2002, with addenda that do not address new intense development nearby. Climate change

impacts were never analyzed. The project's location within a very high fire hazard severity zone is inappropriate for housing. The Saddleback Canyons Conservancy, one of FHBP's sponsored nonprofit organizations, is working to oppose this undesirable sprawl project in the rural canyons.



4 Red Rock Canyon Wilderness

Hike atop the 20 to 40 million-year-old Sespe Formation and enjoy amazing views of the Santa Ana Mountains at Red Rock Wilderness. Located within OC Parks Irvine Ranch Open Space, the approximately 1,500-acre area features eight miles of new multi-use trails for hikers, mountain biking and horseback riding with a scenic overlook that offers 360-degree views of the colorful sandstone and cobble bluffs. This is a protected and preserved natural habitat

for a variety of flora and fauna where you will see coast live oaks, prickly pear cactus, coastal sage scrub, and native grasses. Red Rocks Wilderness is accessible for scheduled guided and self-guided programs through advance registration. Visit OCParks.com/irvine-ranch-open-space.



5 OC Climate Action Plan

The County of Orange is creating a Climate Action Plan that not only analyzes the amount and sources of greenhouse gas emissions, but considers alternative ways to cut down on those emissions. This work will finally bring the county up to speed with climate planning. Meetings are being held by the county, and this offers all a chance to weigh in on how to curb climate change and implement such nature-based solutions as urban greening, land preservation,

and restoration projects. This plan will allow Orange County to step up its climate resilience and make local projects and agencies eligible for grant funding. Get on the county's notification list by emailing GreenOC@ocwr.ocgov.com.



6 Puvungna Status

In 1919, California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) dumped over 5,000 cubic yards of construction soil and debris on the 22-acre Puvungna site; a sacred, religious, cultural and historic site located on the campus. The California Cultural Resources Preservation Alliance, Inc. (CCRPA) and the Juaneño Band of Mission Indians Acjachemen Nation-Belardes (JBMIAN) filed a CEQA Lawsuit that same year. In 2021, Winter King of Shute,

Mihaly and Weinberger negotiated a settlement agreement that placed a restricted easement on Puvungna and requires the establishment of a Conservation Easement. CSULB released a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the easement grantee.



Update on CEQA



By Gloria Sefton, FHBP Board Secretary

FHBP is an unwavering supporter of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), our premier environmental protection law. Enacted in 1970, its main objectives are to bring projects that could have a detrimental effect on the environment into the public arena, to analyze those impacts, and to require mitigation of significant impacts.

CEQA has been challenged periodically because it introduces a substantial process to land-use decisions. But, despite often being blamed for holding up development, only about 200 CEQA lawsuits are filed yearly, representing about 2% of all projects subject to CEQA review.

With the state's current housing and infrastructure needs, the spotlight again has been on CEQA. Last year, the Little Hoover Commission, a state oversight agency that investigates government operations and policy, held five hearings to consider changes to CEQA. FHBP participated in those hearings and voiced support for the law.

In May, the Commission released its report (<https://lhc.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/Report279.pdf>). While stating that CEQA should be retained "as a strong form of environmental protection," the report makes change recommendations, which it oddly deems "targeted and limited," on several fronts:

- Exempt all infill housing from CEQA review (with no affordability requirement)
- Limit public input to the public comment periods to avoid what it calls "data dumps" on lead agencies
- Establish the same standing requirement as exists under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to avoid purported illegitimate purposes
- Provide for additional CEQA judicial training
- Reaffirm that courts should defer to requirements of the statute and CEQA Guidelines
- Establish clear parameters for significance thresholds and for analysis and mitigation of impacts.

The Commission has no legislative authority, but its recommendations are likely to persuade lawmakers.

FHBP supports CEQA Works (ceqaworks.org), which is working to keep CEQA strong, and we will continue monitoring legislation that chips away at our bedrock environmental law.

Oaks vs boring beetle



By Tina Thompson, FHBP Board member

Mature oaks in the Santa Ana Mountains are under threat by a 10 mm-long insect. The tiny gold spotted boring beetle burrows into oaks to lay its eggs. It eats the tree tissue, cutting off water and nutrients. The borer is partial to drought-weakened trees greater than 10 inches in diameter.

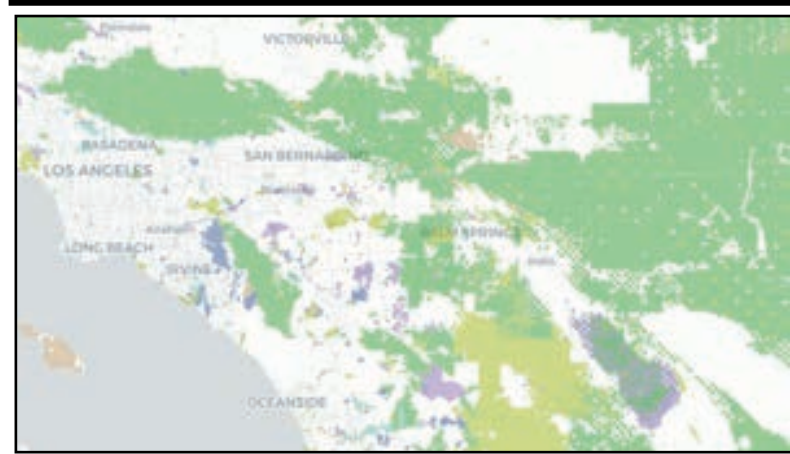
The beetle is not native to California. It was first seen in San Diego County in 2004, and has since spread to Orange and Riverside counties and is responsible for the deaths of some 80,000 trees in the Cleveland National Forest. The beetles can jump from tree to tree, but are primarily spread through infected firewood. If caught early, trees can be treated with insecticide sprays or soil additives. If not, the tree will die within two or three years.

A Gold Spotted Oak Borer (GSOB) infestation can be identified by D-shaped exit holes in the bark. These 0.15-inch holes can appear before any other injury to the oak is evident. Woodpeckers are also a harbinger, as they like to eat the insects under the bark. Crown thinning and dying branches are an indication of a moderate to severe infestation.

A survey by the U.S. Department of Agriculture found major infestations in Silverado Canyon, past the forest gate. The Forest Service is removing heavily infested trees and treating those most vulnerable. The Irvine Ranch Conservancy has also been taking out dead trees and treating minor infestations with insecticide spray.

With firewood being the major method of GSOB transport, canyon residents have launched an extensive information campaign to stop the movement of firewood. Once an infestation spreads, the tree cannot be saved. Residents in the local canyons have been fighting gold spotted borers for several years, primarily with an information campaign focused on firewood. The message: never remove or transport oak firewood from one place to another; use only local sources and burn it. If stored, cover tightly with a tarp or plastic. The Canyon Fire Safe Council, who is spearheading the campaign, recommends that infected trees be treated by an arborist.

Greenprint finally approved



By Melanie Schlotterbeck, FHBP Consultant

In 2020, Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks (FHBP) worked to ensure that an online mapping tool featuring natural and agricultural lands was included as a mitigation measure for a six countywide plan being developed by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG). The Plan included numerous sustainability features as well as transportation, housing, and growth forecasts. It is only because of the tenacity of FHBP and the continued support from its project partners such as Endangered Habitats League, Hills For Everyone, the California Native Plant Society, and others that this mapping tool is finally moving forward.

Numerous delays initiated by the building industry caused this mapping project to nearly collapse. The tool and access to information is aligned with SCAG's regional planning role and mission. As a mitigation measure, the map would help offset the impacts from development, growth, and roadway projects from Ventura County to Imperial County.

The tool was nearly complete in 2022 thanks to the exceptional work of The Nature Conservancy who was contracted by SCAG. The map is similar, but more complex than FHBP's Green Vision Map. Months away from a launch, the building industry flexed its political muscle to create enough doubt and controversy that the decision makers were about to walk back the creation of the tool entirely. FHBP stepped up and was at the forefront of every meeting to ensure the tool was successfully developed.

Numerous added steps were incorporated to "safeguard" a tool that was ultimately going to show the location of existing parklands and help agencies understand where mitigation opportunities existed. These added steps included the formation of a working group, nearly entirely supported by the building industry, the adoption of a policy document outlining how lands could be voluntarily protected through mitigation, and the creation of a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) focused on data standards. We trudged through it all. We attended every meeting, served on the TAC, wrote letters, held workshops and testified. Finally, we prevailed.

A final decision occurred in February 2024 to not only allow the Greenprint to move forward, but to begin beta testing sometime this summer.

E-bikes need enforcement



By Mike Wellborn, FHBP President

The explosion of the number of e-bike riders in our communities has resulted in benefits for many of our residents, while also seeing an increase in inconsiderate riders performing inappropriate and dangerous actions. Often, the same e-bike riders who are acting in this manner also disregard the other rules – such as following the vehicle code on the streets and obeying regulations out in parklands.

FHBP is very active in the Safe Trails Coalition and in collaborating with OC Parks to maintain the existing policy of restricting the use of e-bikes on wilderness park (dirt) trails. The wilderness park trails have experienced problems similar to those on the streets and sidewalks with trail users now being subjected to crashes, as well as harassment by inconsiderate and illegal e-bike riders. With enforcement limited in remote areas of our parks by rangers, the situation (especially) on weekends is a serious health and safety matter for park users. The County's regional parks are well loved gems in the communities and enjoyed by a wide range of visitors. They are not the domain of one user group.

The Safe Trails Coalition (at www.safetrailscoalition.org) includes representation from hikers, equestrians, mountain bikers, and environmentalists. The website offers guidance for the use of the trails and brings forward many of the issues faced by trail users. The Coalition supports advising the land manager (park rangers, parks staff, County sheriffs) of any issues you may see on the trail. For example, if a downed tree needs to be removed from a trail, or an e-bike rider is seen riding off of official trails, please report them to the proper land managers. FHBP is urging the Board of Supervisors to improve protection for our park users and the unique, fragile habitats in the parks.

We are encouraging a more substantial effort by law enforcement to engage, educate, and as necessary, cite the offenders. In conjunction with the efforts by law enforcement, outreach to the District Attorney's office and the courts to maintain continuity up the levels of responsibility is just as critical. Violators must be curbed for the health and safety of all members of our communities.

Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks (FHBP) works to protect the natural lands, waterways, and beaches of Orange County. Learn more at:

www.FHBP.org



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Happy Trails, Melanie



Melanie Schlotterbeck and FHBP founder Jean Watt

By FHBP Board

For over 20 years, Melanie Schlotterbeck has been the face of the ambitious Green Vision project, initiated by FHBP's co-founder, Jean Watt. This proactive endeavor works to conserve land and habitats in Orange County, one of the world's top biodiversity hotspots. Anyone involved in conservation in Orange County – or in Southern California for that matter – knows her and the enormous impact she has had in literally transforming our landscape.

Melanie now has an opportunity to expand her role beyond Orange County. Inspired by California's "30x30" goal to protect 30% of California's lands and waters by 2030, she will be moving on from FHBP to work at the state level to more broadly protect and preserve California's lands and coastal waters. While working to support conservation throughout California, she will naturally bring attention to the unique needs of Southern California. FHBP knows that Melanie's accomplishments in Orange County can serve as a model and inspiration for others throughout California.

Just a few examples of Melanie's many achievements: unifying the Green Vision coalition of over 85 conservation organizations; developing the Green Vision Map, an innovative GIS project to visualize our conservation goals; spearheading an Orange County regional advance mitigation program resulting in the protection of 1,300 acres and restoration of 350 acres; creating the General Plan Resource Directory and other initiatives to bring conservation best practices into our communities; leading approval for the state's first two Sustainable Community Strategies (in Orange County and the Southland); advancing to completion a six-county-wide Greenprint; and launching the 30x30 initiative in Orange County. These and her other conservation projects will live on with FHBP, inspired by her dedication.

We'll miss having her as part of our daily lives, but we know our paths will cross often. FHBP extends its deep gratitude to Melanie for her efforts and achievements over the past 20 years.



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