

ENDANGERED HABITATS LEAGUE NEWSLETTER



We publish this newsletter four times a year to inform our generous supporters — and the many other friends of the Endangered Habitats League — about our plans, activities and successes throughout the ecoregion.

If you are not yet a member of the Endangered Habitats League, please join us in the ongoing effort to preserve and protect the Southern California ecoregion's irreplaceable plants, animals and places. Form is on page 3.

Dedicated to Ecosystem Protection and Sustainable Land Use +++ Vol. 13 No. 3 +++ Summer 2003

Draft Palos Verdes NCCP Released

With the recent release of a draft plan, the **Palos Verdes Peninsula Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP)** is nearing fruition. For the last decade, work has moved slowly but steadily forward. Now, the long-anticipated **Portuguese Bend Nature Preserve** will become a reality, keystone to permanent protection for more than 1500 acres of prime open space under the NCCP. The environmental community has always seen the open spaces on the south side and in the canyons of the Palos Verdes Peninsula as the last recourse for many once-common species.

These hillside habitats of coastal sage and cactus scrub are sanctuaries for birds like California Gnatcatcher and Cactus Wren, for gray foxes and for gorgeous Mariposa Lilies. Throughout southern California, these and many other resident species dependent on native ecosystems have experienced devastating declines in population because of development. In PV, their fate has hung on the whims of politics, finance and the interpretation of geotechnical data, hardly the raw materials of sound conservation policy.



© PORTUGUESE BEND NATURE PRESERVE

Now the long-anticipated Portuguese Bend Nature Preserve will become a reality—a keystone to permanent protection for more than 1500 acres of prime open space.

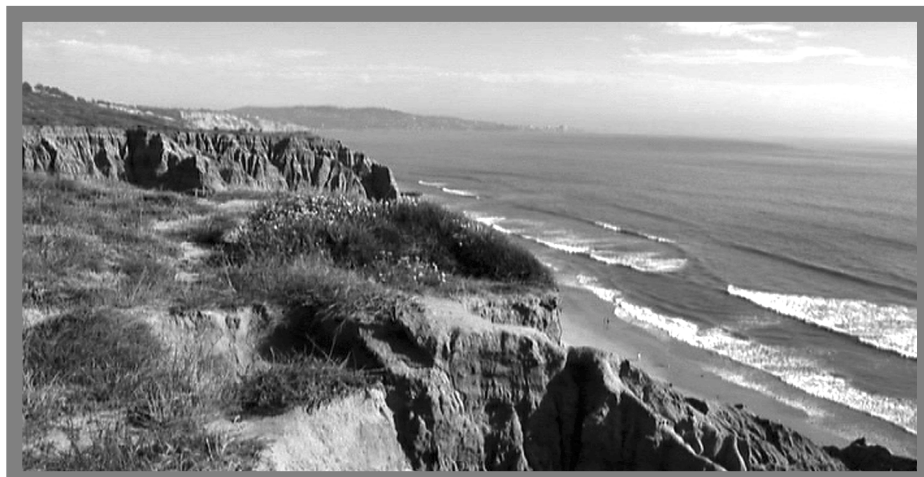
The most visible part of the NCCP reserve would be the Portuguese Bend Nature Preserve, consisting of almost all of the uphill open space visible from PV Drive South. In addition, Agua Amarga Canyon, the Forrestal Quarries and most of the coastal bluffs would also be part of the NCCP reserve. All of these properties will be, or have been, acquired for public benefit from private hands. When added to several existing publicly owned parcels,

they will create a regionally-significant wildlife area. Better yet, the NCCP also provides for much-needed habitat restoration and enhancement.

There are many details still to be resolved, but one major hurdle looms—funding. A substantial part of the money needed to complete NCCP land acquisition is expected to come from Prop 50's funds for LA County projects. Without this, realization of the NCCP reserve may be delayed for years. To apply for the funds in a timely manner, the draft plan and EIR must be finalized and approved by the public, the City and wildlife agencies within the next few months. A daunting task, but possible with everyone working together.

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© CHRIS PYLE

Coastal land in San Diego will be protected by the Multiple Habitat Conservation Program, which involved years of collaborative work by EHL and other stakeholders.

Carlsbad reaches precedent-setting agreement with Coastal Commission

June 12, 2003—Ending over two years of disputes, the **California Coastal Commission** approved the **City of Carlsbad's Habitat Management Plan (HMP)**, a critical element of the larger **Multiple Habitat Conservation Plan** for North County cities. The crux of the dispute was how different laws covering the same territory are reconciled: the **Coastal Act**, the state and federal **Endangered Species Acts**, and the **California Natural Community Conservation Planning Act**. In many ways, the Coastal Act's mandate for avoidance of Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area (ESHA) is the most stringent. However, comprehensive, multi-jurisdictional habitat plans, formulated under the other laws and extending inland from the coast, provide unique ecosystem benefits.

A system of avoidance and mitigation that strongly emphasizes restoration was devised to achieve "no-net-loss" of ESHA, while providing some flexibility for the HMP. This reconciliation sets a high standard and an excellent precedent for other areas along the coast. EHL offered testimony in support, in addition to providing help and encouragement along the way. Credit is due to **City of Carlsbad** and **Commission staff** for their persistence and dedication, and to the **City Council** and the **Coastal Commission**.

San Diego County moves forward on General Plan "2020" Update

June 25, 2003—After days of testimony from community groups and from advisory committee members like EHL, as well as from hundreds of property owners protesting potential downzoning, the **Board of Supervisors** moved forward on the momentous **General Plan "2020" Update**. In doing so, the Board incorporated a planning framework of higher density country towns, limitation of new estate lots, and rural and agricultural preservation. This framework resulted from EHL's collaboration with other stakeholders. The "Working Copy" land use map, a staff-brokered compromise between the Interest Group advisory committee and community groups, will become the preferred alternative in the DEIR.

However, hundreds of landowner requests for map changes will be referred to staff and brought back to the Board. Potentially, these could harm the planning effort irretrievably. In addition, staff was asked to recommend policies for "pipeline" projects that might be processed prior to adoption of the new plan. Such projects could produce a failed outcome.

There are issues on which EHL and other Interest Group members will continue to work. These include rural clustering—termed **Open Space Subdivisions**—and an "equity mechanism" to benefit rural landowners. To further complicate matters, **Save Our Forests and Ranchlands** is circulating a citizen's initiative that would preempt large parts of the 2020 Update.

EHL congratulates all the Supervisors for moving ahead.

EIR for Rancho Mission Viejo development initiated

As they begin to write the last chapter for Orange County's remaining natural heritage, the **County of Orange** has started processing an **Environmental Impact Report (EIR)** for a massive development proposed by the **Rancho Mission Viejo Company**. EHL submitted extensive comments on the "Notice of Preparation" for this document.



© THE HEART AND SOUL COALITION

There are many deer at Rancho Mission Viejo.

The last 23,000 acres of historic Rancho Mission Viejo harbor irreplaceable coastal sage scrub, with over 80 pair of California gnatcatchers. Rancho Mission Viejo is also prime coastal watershed for **San Mateo Creek**, which supports the last steelhead trout run south of **Malibu**. Due to efforts by **The Heart**

and **Soul Coalition**, which EHL initiated, there is now widespread support for protecting the Rancho. (See right-hand column.)

EIR linked to Conservation Plan

The EIR is closely linked to a **Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP)** for upland habitat, and a **Special Area Management Plan (SAMP)** for wetland and aquatic resources. However, the planning guidelines issued by the NCCP and SAMP are disappointing and do not provide a sufficient basis for the NCCP/SAMP.

At a workshop held on May 28, 2003, attended by hundreds of conservation activists, EHL critiqued the guidelines and also called for the return of an alternative that offered near-total preservation. EHL submitted a letter from the **Conservation Biology Institute** that stated the guidelines would allow excessive fragmentation of intact habitat and watershed lands. If ultimately adopted, "halfway measures everywhere" would produce a failed NCCP/SAMP. We called for revisions that direct *all* development away from key resources areas.



© RANCHO MISSION VIEJO

The Rancho is now a working cattle ranch.

SCORE proposes alternatives

Meanwhile, alternatives proposed for inclusion in the EIR were presented at a meeting of the **South County Outreach and Review Effort (SCORE)**, **Supervisor Tom Wilson's** forum for public participation in planning for the Rancho. Even though each alternative corresponds to one of the NCCP alternatives in terms of development footprint, the land uses—residential, commercial, number of units, etc.—are modifications of the Rancho Mission Viejo Company's preferred alternative ("The Ranch Plan").

We are therefore concerned that the applicant is controlling many underlying assumptions—assumptions which will be important in determining the feasibility of different options.

EHL continues to support SCORE and the NCCP/SAMP programs as the best vehicles for a solution that protects the key resources areas and also provides for some development. However, much work remains to be done.



© RANCHO MISSION VIEJO LAND CONSERVANCY

In Southern California, where there are deer, often there are cougars, too.



© THE HEART AND SOUL COALITION

The Heart and Soul Coalition, dedicated to preserving Rancho Mission Viejo's open space and sensitive habitat, now has endorsements from 1,200 local individuals and over 100 community groups in Orange County.

The Heart and Soul Coalition, achieving its mission

The **Heart and Soul Coalition (HSC)** is dedicated to preserving **Rancho Mission Viejo's** open space and sensitive habitat. Formed over a year ago, HSC now has endorsements from 1,200 local individuals and over 100 community groups in **Orange County**. Together, these two categories represent thousands of Orange County

residents. Individual endorsers come from of all vocations and walks of life, including elected officials, educators, doctors and nurses, business owners, clergy, and scientists. Community groups aligned with HSC include environmental organizations, senior, recreational and political groups, as well as youth groups. At the national level, The Heart and Soul Coalition is endorsed by **Defenders of Wildlife**, the **National Wildlife Federation** and the **Endangered Species Coalition**. Total membership in these organizations is over 2.5 million people.

Heart and Soul Coalition presentations to community groups, elected officials, and businesses continue to raise public awareness about the importance of preserving Rancho Mission Viejo. Our outreach program communicates with the public through community events and educational programs for children.

Visit our new website: www.ehleague.org

We are delighted to announce the launch of our website. The initial phase includes messages about our work and some of our many projects, as well as other basic information about **EHL**.

We will soon add an action alert system, a section on current news, an archive of all of our newsletters, and details about EHL staff and board members. We want the EHL web site to become an effective resource for anyone serious about conservation in **Southern California**.

In coming months many enhancements will be added:

- ⇒ A photo gallery including information on some of the many precious species and habitats within our region
- ⇒ Sections on the various aspects of sustainable land use, growth management, and planning, and information on our policy and legislation work
- ⇒ Resources and links, including details about our collaborative relationships
- ⇒ Updated information about our current projects and, most importantly,
- ⇒ The latest information on how you can help or participate

We will post information on web updates in the newsletter. In the meantime, visit the site and watch for the enhancements as we work toward better communication. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact our Communications and Development Director, **NicaKatherine Knite**: e-mail nicasdreamin@cox.net

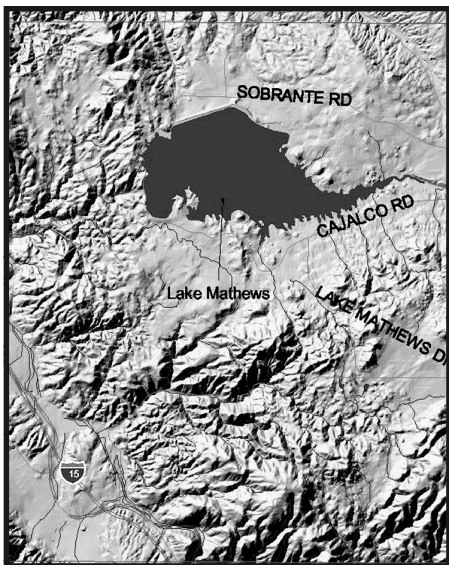
EHL in the News

On April 6, 2003, the *Californian*—in a run-up article for Riverside County's consideration of their new general plan—quoted EHL Executive Director Dan Silver: "It's a historic point where decision-makers have some profound choices in front of them," said Dan Silver of the Los Angeles-based Endangered Habitats League. (Silver) said Riverside County will either become a model for other counties on how to deal with growth responsibly by implementing the plan or it will repeat the mistakes made throughout Southern California and become an extension of that sprawl."

The *Riverside Press Enterprise*, in a similar run-up article on the Riverside County multiple species plan dated May 4, 2003, also quoted Silver on the public benefits of the plan. "This is a way of ensuring that open space will be there forever, that we won't end up like the L.A. Basin—paved in concrete," said Dan Silver, coordinator of the Endangered Habitats League."

June 17, 2003—the *Los Angeles Times* quoted EHL Board Member Jane Block in an article that featured her photograph: "Jane Block, who has fought to save open space in the county for 24 years, said that without the (Riverside County) plan, 'you'd just continue to have chaos.'"

On May 8, 2003, the *Riverside Press Enterprise* covered the effort by EHL, Center for Biological Diversity, and San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society to acquire 2,500 acres along Lytle Creek in San Bernardino County. This opportunity arose out of a legal settlement. Dan Silver was quoted, describing some of the local benefits of acquisition in terms of meeting ESA requirements. "Lytle Creek will in a very significant way resolve San Bernardino County issues involving the (San Bernardino) kangaroo rat," he said. "It's a great problem-solver."



June 2, 2003—the *Los Angeles Times* covered potential routes for a new transportation corridor, including a route that would go through the existing Lake Mathews reserve: "Dan Silver, executive director of the Endangered Habitats League in Los Angeles, said that the road ... would destroy coastal sage scrub, chaparral, grasslands and colorful wildflowers. He said the area that the road would cut through is a critical part of the reserve, and

the transportation agency would need to set aside several thousand acres of additional land to compensate for the destruction caused by the thoroughfare—which commission officials said they would consider. 'If you do bisect it with a road, you really do have to make amends in a big way,' Silver said."

Membership Signup

If you are not yet a member of the Endangered Habitats League, please join us in the ongoing effort to preserve and protect the Southern California ecoregion's irreplaceable plants, animals and places.

Fill out the form below and mail it with your donation. Please print.

I/we are enclosing a donation in the amount of

\$ _____

Your Name (s) _____

Address 1 _____

Address 2 _____

City/State/Zip _____

Home phone _____ Fax _____

Office phone _____ Fax _____

E-mail _____

Gift Membership

I/we would like to give an EHL membership in the amount of \$ _____

To: Name (s) _____

Address 1 _____

Address 2 _____

City/State/Zip _____

Home phone _____ Fax _____

Office phone _____ Fax _____

E-mail _____

Please mail this form with your donation(s) to:

Endangered Habitats League

8424-A Santa Monica Blvd., #592
Los Angeles, CA 90069-4267

Job Announcement

We are seeking an experienced Inland Empire Project Manager for Riverside and San Bernardino Counties.

Responsibilities include ensuring proper multiple species preserve assembly, participation in CEQA review of projects, endangered species protection, and helping to implement "smart growth."

Strong networking, writing, and interpersonal skills are essential. A background in biology or planning is desirable.

Salary is competitive.

If interested, please send a cover letter and resume to Dan Silver <dsilverla@earthlink.net>

The Endangered Habitats League is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. All contributions are tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by law.

Dan Silver Board Member & Executive Director

Jack Bath Board Member & Secretary

Michael Beck ... Board Member & San Diego Director

Jane Block Board Member

NicaKatherine Knite Communications and Development Director

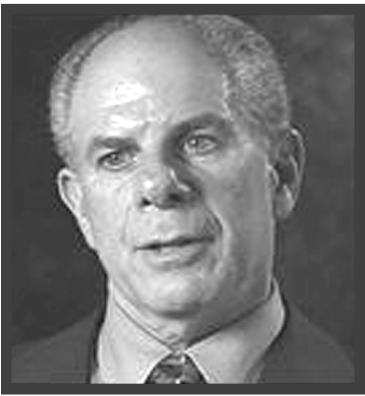
Pete DeSimone Board Member

Karen Messer Board Member

Jess Morton Board Member & Treasurer

Lynne Baker San Diego Project Manager

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In Memoriam: Chuck Nathanson

In June, **Chuck Nathanson**, head of **San Diego Dialogue** and friend of the environment, passed away after a long struggle with cancer. Chuck was a

truly extraordinary individual – journalist, academic, activist. While focusing on cross-border issues, the Dialogue provided a forum for advancing a variety of civic issues.

Chuck assisted **EHL** in connecting with **San Diego** “movers and shakers” in the business and governmental sectors, and gave the environmental cause great credibility. He was instrumental in introducing new models for rapid transit and in bringing together a broad-based “**Quality of Life Coalition**” to work on regional funding for open space, housing, and water quality. In another tribute, Chuck was justly noted for his “tenacity, forthright intellectual abilities, fortitude, vision, compassion, graciousness and style.” He sought solutions, but never sacrificed his principles.

There is no replacing **Chuck Nathanson**, but we will carry on his work.

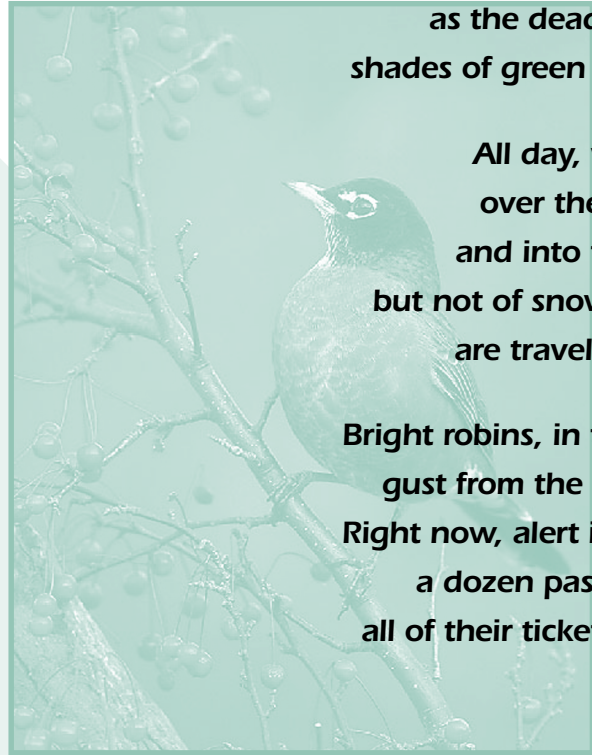
Robins

**It is a wintry day—
dull skies and a bitter wind
scattering the littering leaves
as the dead straw stalks stir;
shades of green grass and flower.**

**All day, wild flurries blow
over the frigid landscape
and into the skeletal trees;
but not of snow, or rain—robins
are traveling up the valley.**

**Bright robins, in their loose flocks,
gust from the air, settle and go.
Right now, alert in a terminal oak,
a dozen passengers take ten,
all of their tickets marked spring.**

Jess Morton



Endangered Habitats League

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