

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. 4 +++ Fall 2003

A Special Report

The Riverside County Integrated Project

In 1998, the County of Riverside launched an ambitious if not unprecedented planning effort—the **Integrated Project**.

The Integrated Project sought to coordinate habitat, land use, and transportation planning within the fastest growing county in the state.

The driving force behind the Integrated Project was then-Supervisor **Tom Mullen**, who took the position that unless infrastructure—including open space—was in place, growth should not occur. Another factor was direction provided by the “**Museum Group**”—a group of stakeholders including **EHL, the Sierra Club, and the Building Industry Association**, that met at the Riverside Art Museum. Our shared principles acknowledged accommodation of growth, but stated that it should occur efficiently, with reduced land consumption per capita, and with sufficient certainty over time as to where development would and would not occur. Making an enormous commitment of time and energy, EHL served on all three **Integrated Project Advisory Committees**: General Plan Update, Community and Environmental Transportation Acceptability Process (CETAP), and Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP). Five years later, what happened?



Former RC Supervisor Tom Mullen

MSHCP is a “win” for conservation

In the wake of a divisive single species plan for the Stephens’ kangaroo rat, stakeholders negotiated a “**Planning Agreement**” for the MSHCP. The agreement called for species recovery, landowner incentives, and a **Scientific Review Panel** from UC Riverside.

As ultimately adopted, the MSHCP calls for 153,000 acres of new private lands to be added to existing public lands, for a total of 500,000 acres. Several new “core reserves”



Stephens’ kangaroo rat

will be created, including the long-fought for conservation priority of **Potrero Valley** near **Beaumont**. Many smaller jewels, such as the scenic **Lakeview Mountains** and historic **San Timoteo Canyon**, would receive protection. Most impressively, a 50,000-acre mega-reserve would be established in the foothills east of **Temecula**, with **Wilson Creek** the backbone of a broad landscape

linkage between the **San Bernardino and Cleveland National Forests**. Up to 146 species will be deemed “conserved.”

Over the years, EHL successfully fended off proposals to reduce the size and scope of the reserve. A countywide developer mitigation fee—about \$1600 per average housing unit—will be assessed whenever a building permit is issued. EHL helped craft a successful ballot measure—a sales tax to be used for transportation—that not only links participation in the MSHCP by the region’s cities to receipt of transportation funds, but also guarantees mitigation monies for habitat.

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WE NEED YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS!

To conserve natural resources, time, and money, subsequent issues of the EHL Newsletter will be distributed electronically. If you don’t have an e-mail address, let us know, and we will make special arrangements for you.

Please send your e-mail address to: **Jess Morton <jmorton@igc.org>**

If you are not on e-mail, please call **Jess Morton** at 310-832-5601 to make special arrangements.

We pledge to never share your e-mail address, outside of EHL.

Plan improved by extensive EHL comments

In order to improve the draft plan, EHL submitted extensive comments. During the closing moments, we were able to negotiate protections for very specialized species called “**narrow endemics**.”

Most of the MSHCP will be assembled over time, using narrative criteria established for “cells” of 160 acres each. Landowner incentives, crafted by EHL and others, are in place. Our biggest concern is that implementation will be improper, with excessive fragmentation. EHL is thus committed to monitoring and guiding the assembly process.

While we would prefer an even larger plan, and can point to numerous deficiencies, our judgement is that the MSHCP is fundamentally sound. The inherent tradeoffs—the facilitation of planned housing development and highways—are balanced by an ambitious conservation plan whose enactment in the political climate of the Inland Empire is little short of miraculous. **County staff** deserves much credit, as does a strongly supportive **Board of Supervisors**.

New General Plan fails to realize full “smart growth” potential

According to a recent study, Riverside County has the worst sprawl in the nation. It is the nation’s most pedestrian unfriendly and automobile dependent location, and its wanton consumption of habitat and open space is notorious. A reversal of this trend would set a major precedent, and EHL put great effort into

placing “smart growth” concepts in to this **General Plan Update**. Important progress was made, but it is also disappointing that the full potential for change was not realized.

At the start of the process, the **General Plan Advisory Committee** helped create a



Riders wait for the bus at a transit oasis in Oro Valley, Arizona.

vision of open space and unique communities. Along with the **Building Industry Association**, we then crafted **Community Development Principles** that called for higher densities, mixed uses, a wide range of housing products. The centerpiece was “**Community Centers**” with built-in “**Transit Oases**” for high amenity transit services.

Compact urban form

A compact urban form was not achieved. Approval of housing tracts continued unabated during the planning process, and maps were revised by individual supervisors so that a huge excess of development land—close to a 50-year supply—was

This story continues on page 3

San Diego County

Promising San Diego County General Plan Update Veers into Uncertainty

To be successful, the “2020” **General Plan Update** must stop the calamitous rural residential sprawl that has consumed vast areas of **San Diego’s** countryside. One, two, and four-acre cookie-cutter lots have destroyed wildlife habitat and clogged the roads, while providing no affordable housing. In response, the “**Interest Group**” of stakeholders, in which **EHL** plays a leading role, crafted principles to focus growth into towns, and create rural greenbelts. A draft lands use map, called the **December 2002 Working Copy**, embodied these principles yet also reflected community concerns. In addition, an “**equity mechanism**” was brought into the mix at the request of the **Farm Bureau**, to provide financial support to landowners whose development potential was reduced.

At public hearings from June through October, however, this visionary plan started to unravel. At the request of landowners seeking financial gain, well over a hundred piecemeal exemptions from good planning were placed on a second map, affecting in excess of 15,000 acres of rural land. On a third map, the lowest densities—one unit per 80 and 160 acres—would be eliminated completely. The next steps are crucial: All these maps will undergo analysis for traffic impacts. After that, alternatives will be chosen for the environmental impact report.

To lose the promise of the 2020 Update would be tragic for San Diego, its farmers and ranchers, and its wildlife. Technically speaking, all options are still open, but a negative trend away from planning that protects the countryside was evident at the Board level. This uncertainty will inevitably push voters toward a ballot measure that has qualified for the March ballot.

Investing in the Future: San Diego’s Quality of Life Coalition

The San Diego region, like the rest of **Southern California**, is in an infrastructure deficit, affecting open space, water quality, housing, urban amenities, and transit, as well as traditional highway improvements. For this reason, a broad coalition of community members—housing, environmental, business, taxpayers, real estate, and others—has come together to find funding sources.

Orange County

A Solution for Dana Point Headlands?

Ten years ago, due to political pressure, the **Orange County Central/Coastal NCCP** effectively wrote off the critically endangered **Pacific pocket mouse** and other natural resources on the historic **Dana Point Headlands**. In the aftermath of a referendum overturning the then-proposed development, **EHL** worked with the **City of Dana Point** and community members on an alternative plan. After this plan was opposed by the developer and thrown out in court,



further negotiations ensued, in which **EHL** had input. A revised project went before the **California Coastal Commission** in October.

From a purely habitat perspective, the revised plan is excellent. An exemplary “**Conservation Park**” would be created, in which the pocket mouse would be well protected and could expand its range. State of the art management would be provided, and rare plants avoided. While some **coastal sage scrub** and **gnatcatcher** habitat would be lost, on site restoration of disturbed areas, including removal of an existing road, would result in no net loss of this habitat.

However, other parts of the project that affect beach resources are problematic. While these issues are outside of **EHL’s** expertise—and upon which we take no position—they have caused concerted opposition from the **Surfrider Foundation** and **Sierra Club**. Also, under the **Coastal Act**, no loss of sensitive habitat is



The Bluff Trail, Dana Point Headlands

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allowed unless complicated “balancing” provisions are utilized.

The Commission delayed a vote until January. In the meantime, we hope that a resolution acceptable to all parties can be reached, now that the habitat benefits that we have sought for so many years are finally within reach.

Renowned conservationist Jane Goodall at Orange County event

Endangered Habitats League and **The Heart and Soul Coalition** hosted “**An Evening with Jane Goodall**” on Sept. 13, 2003 in Laguna Beach. Benefiting the **Goodall Institute** and **The Cougar Fund**, the event linked our efforts to save the **Rancho Mission Viejo**—a biodiversity “hotspot” in southern Orange County—to conservation efforts worldwide.



© GOODALL INSTITUTE

Dr. Jane Goodall

According to Goodall, “People want a reason for hope and to know what they can do to help preserve these last remaining special lands.” In an inspiring talk before hundreds of attendees, **Dr. Goodall** recounted her path to study chimpanzees in Africa and her current involvement with youth groups. It was amply demonstrated why she had been named a **United Nations Messenger of Peace**.

EHL in the News

Executive Director **Dan Silver** was quoted in the *Los Angeles Times* and *Riverside Press Enterprise* regarding the accomplishments and shortcomings of the new **Riverside County General Plan**. While noting the innovations, Silver held the **County Supervisors** accountable for “not getting further down the path” of the initial vision of “town centers surrounded by green belts.”

EHL receives major grant

EHL has been awarded a **\$25,000 grant** from the **San Diego Foundation’s Orca Fund**, at the recommendation of **Paul Eichen** and **Susan Flieder**. The grant will be used to help fund our many projects in **San Diego County** and will augment support previously granted from the **Orca Fund**.

“Smart growth” is in Schwarzenegger’s vocabulary

Some analysts say new state administration could become a turning point in growth management

According to the Associated Press (AP), **Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger** could join the ranks of Republican governors who are trying to curb suburban sprawl by rebuilding existing cities. Schwarzenegger’s website indicates he is an advocate of “smart growth”—he pledges support for transit, and renovation of rundown urban neighborhoods and business districts. The Governor also has vowed to restrain development on vacant farmland, and has attacked “fiscally unsustainable sprawl.”

Environment Now (EN), a Los Angeles-based advocacy group, pulled together much of the growth-related material on Schwarzenegger’s website. According to EN, the Governor also plans to clean up contaminated city properties throughout the state, and make older neighborhoods more livable—putting in new parks to be paid for with state bonds.

Several key players on the Governor’s transition team have strong urban redevelopment credentials. Major suburban subdivision developers—many of whom helped fill Schwarzenegger’s war chest with \$21,200 campaign donations—are not represented.

These builders, and other real estate interests who contributed \$2.5 million to the Governor’s campaign, have plans this year to build 187,000 new homes. A majority of these are single-family dwellings—134,000 are planned for vacant land in new suburban battlegrounds around the state.

In spite of the real estate lobby’s largesse, the AP story concludes that, “Though no one knows for certain how the... governor will manage growth... analysts believe the... new administration could become a turning point in a state widely known nationally as a laggard in growth management.”

Adapted from a story that ran 11-10-03, in *The Desert Sun*, Palm Springs CA

Riverside County Integrated Project

(continued from page 1)

created. However, a “**Certainty System**” developed and championed by EHL will lock in rural designations for the next five years and produce more orderly planning in the future.

Efficient use of land

Improvement in this regard is the strongest achievement of the update. A 25% density bonus will be available in exchange for high quality community design and for paying an additional open space fee—additive to the multiple species fee. Over time, this will reduce the amount of land consumed.

Livable Communities

“**Community Centers**” were the centerpiece of innovative thinking in the Update. While small in total area, their mixed uses, walkability, and affordable housing embodied the stakeholders’ vision for a more sustainable path. Despite a successful outreach effort to the local business community led by EHL, resulting in endorsement by the **Greater Riverside and Hispanic Chambers of Commerce**, the outcome was disappointing.

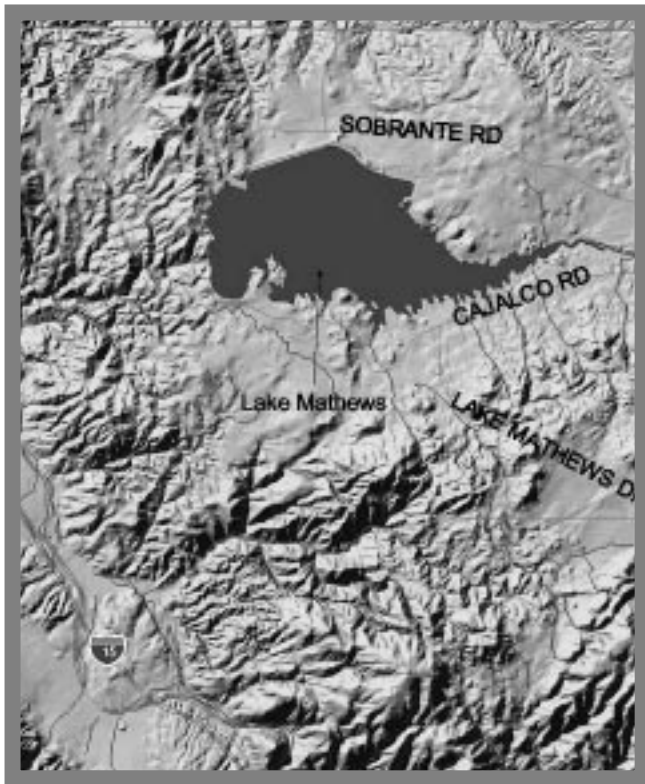
At the end of the day, only a quarter of the original centers remained mandatory, subject to coherent master plans. The rest, including the largest, were eliminated or changed to options, in which property owners could place sprawl where the civic center or transit stop should have been.

The failure to fully realize the potential of the Community Centers reflects differing visions of desirable communities and

discomfort with change. While the door is technically open to smarter growth, will **Riverside County** step through it? If Community Centers are to be built, it will take a concerted effort by progressive developers.

Rural lands

There are mixed results in this area. Stakeholders had envisioned “community separators” between growth areas, but these fell prey to the lack of discipline of the **Board of Super-**



CETAP east-west transportation corridor that would traverse one end of the Lake Mathews reserve is controversial. Plans to extend this corridor into Orange County may involve a tunnel; this could be made environmentally acceptable.

visors. However, more remote rural lands will benefit from a **Rural Incentives** program that EHL initiated. While not finalized, it is anticipated that transfer of density to development areas as well as on-site clustering will be facilitated.

New transportation corridors chosen

Two new multimodal corridors—both automotive and transit—were envisioned by CETAP, one running east-west, the other north-south. The corridors faced an ironic situation: The County of Riverside had scattered so much development through the countryside—even subdivisions approved while the Integrated Project itself was underway—that siting new highways became nearly impossible. Thus, although not for environmental reasons, a highly growth-inducing north-south route east of **Temecula**, was rejected, ultimately in favor of the least environmentally damaging alternative—widening the existing freeways.

In the case of the east-west corridor, a controversial route that traverses the **Lake Mathews** reserve is favored. Because the route

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 _____

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Gift Membership

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

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is at one end of the reserve, mitigation may be possible—but only with significant expansion elsewhere. Plans to extend this corridor into **Orange County** are currently centering on a tunnel. While expensive, this could probably be made environmentally acceptable.

Conclusion

The General Plan (and to some extent CETAP) represent incremental progress. However, within a highly fragmented landscape and pro-development political climate, the MSHCP must be recognized as a savior to Riverside County and as an unprecedented conservation success. On all fronts, continued engagement by EHL will be essential.

View complete report on at www.ehleague.org

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

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Upcoming Conference

3rd Annual New Partners for Smart Growth: Building Safe, Healthy and Livable Communities

January 22-24, 2004
Hilton Portland & Executive Tower Hotel

Presented by the Local Government Commission and Penn State University.

The program will feature cutting-edge smart growth issues, the latest research, implementation tools and strategies, successful case studies, new partners, new projects and new policies. The conference will draw a national audience committed to building safer, healthier and more livable communities everywhere.

Program Format

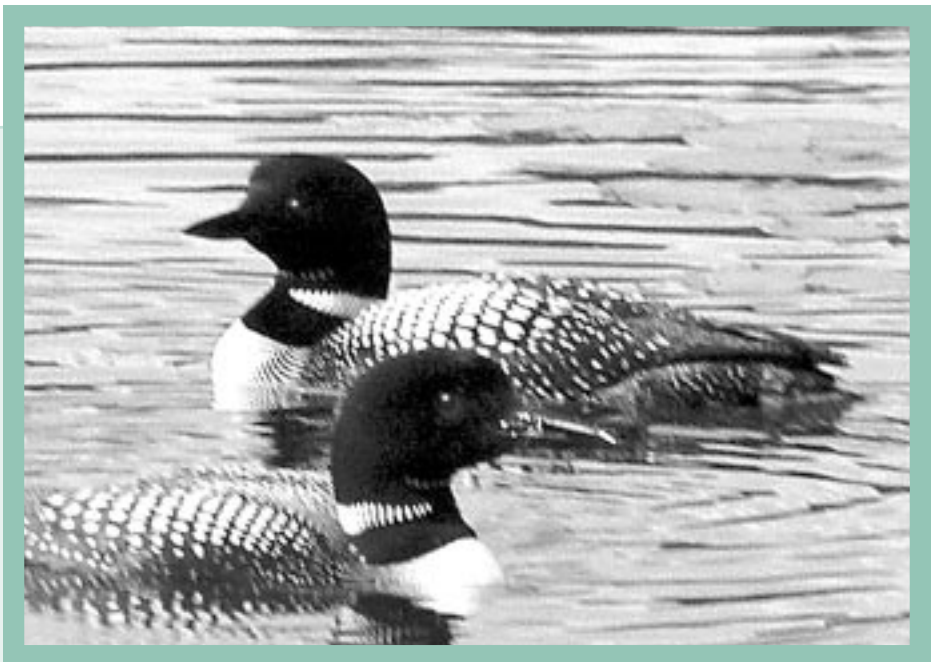
- ✓ The main conference program will begin on the evening of Thursday, January 22, and will continue through the afternoon of Saturday, January 24.
- ✓ Several optional pre-conference sessions will be offered in the morning and afternoon of January 22.
- ✓ Several optional tours of local model projects will be offered on both Thursday, January 22, and Sunday, January 25.
- ✓ The program will include a dynamic mix of keynote addresses, implementation workshops, and breakout sessions, as well as opportunities for participants to network.



Hilton Portland & Executive Tower Hotel

Visit www.outreach.psu.edu/C&I/SmartGrowth/ for updated conference and registration information.

Credits: Stephens' kangaroo rat on page 1 © B. "Moose" Peterson/WRP, courtesy of the CA Environmental Protection Agency • Pacific pocket mouse on page 2 courtesy of the santamargaritariver.org.



Loon Songs

*Below the loose cliffs, where the wet fist knocks,
lacy seas surge over the raised knees of cleft rocks
and the chasing shadows as the loons dive and climb,
dark forms easing seaward in the slow thighs of time.*

*Rounding the point, the loons line low over gray waves,
urgent black notes undulating across sea-staves,
an unvoiced evocation of their lake-sung ululant cry.
Loons lining north under the vast, soft rhythms of sky.*

*The boneless mists lapse onto the lake, diverge, retire
into silhouette cedars. Foretold in the eyes' dark fire,
the loons, slow forms, low, drift away, with fog coalesce.
At the shore, tense needles of spruce, on end, motionless.*

*Ice forms and the thick heads lift. South the quick bore
through chill wind. One unknowable pulse pulls at the core
of the purposed loons. This dark blood of earth, that sings
along unseen veins of necessity on hot heartbeat of wings.*

Jess Morton

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