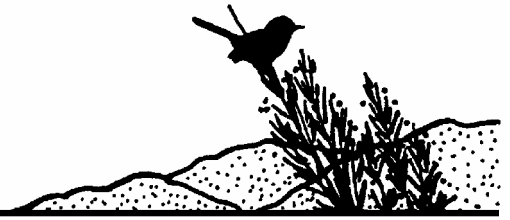


ENDANGERED HABITATS LEAGUE

Dedicated to Ecosystem Protection and Improved Land Use Planning

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Progressive Planning Process Begins in Riverside County

On October 20, 1998, the Riverside County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to begin an unprecedented planning effort for the rapidly growing western sections of the County. What is unprecedented is the *coordination* of land use, transportation, and habitat planning. A comprehensive General Plan update will accompany a look at new transportation corridors through a "Community and Environmental Acceptability Process," or CETAP. A multiple species preserve will be designed simultaneously.

Such combined planning has great potential. Compact, sustainable patterns of development could be integrated into a transit network. Mechanisms for assembling a preserve system and preserving agricultural land could be implemented through the revised land use process. But will any of this actually happen?

There is cause for cautious optimism. Under the effective leadership of Supervisor Tom Mullen, the Board put in place a management structure for the complex task, with consensus-building as a major goal. Very significantly, disparate interest groups have been talking con-

structively with one another. In fact, EHL and other conservation groups are working with building industry and landowner representatives on principles for a new General Plan. Common ground is being found, and you will be kept informed of our progress.

Riverside County, anticipated to double in population by 2020, is a top priority in EHL's growth management program. The coordinated planning now underway is an opportunity that will not come again, and we will ensure that state-of-the-art expertise is brought into the process.

One other bit of good news: Another recent Board action, with leadership from Supervisor Bob Buster, was to link expansion of the existing El Sobrante landfill to habitat protection. As a condition of expanding this well-operated facility, a portion of the "tipping fee" revenues will be used to acquire multiple species lands. The amount available could be \$60 million or more. With a source of reliable acquisition funds in place, and with integration of land use and transportation, Riverside County habitat planning could become an excellent model.

Election Results Set Back Habitat Plan for Northern San Diego County

The North County Multiple Habitat Conservation Program, or MHCP, now consists solely of the North County cities. The County of San Diego dropped out of the process about a year ago, ostensibly to do planning on its own. With the defeat of conservationist Jerry Harmon in the race for Fifth District Supervisor, the chances of the County moving forward on a good plan have been significantly reduced. The reelected incumbent, Bill Horn, has opposed habitat planning in the past on ideological grounds. Meanwhile, it appears that the MHCP cities are making progress again after recent stalls.

In other San Diego election results, a ballot measure implementing needed habitat improvements to the Multiple Species Conservation Program, or MSCP, passed.

These improvements, which were developed in coordination with EHL, the Sierra Club, and other conservation groups, linked development on less sensitive parcels to preservation of rare southern maritime chaparral and vernal pools on Carmel Mountain adjacent to Torrey Pines State Park.

Proposition B, which would have placed agricultural zoning — subject to a vote of the people — over extensive ranch lands, failed with heavy opposition by the pro-development San Diego County Farm Bureau, major newspapers, the Board of Supervisors, Realtors, and builders, including national groups. The future of these lands now lies in a General Plan update being undertaken by the County. EHL will be an active participant in that process.

Highway Could Open San Diego Backcountry to Sprawl

In San Diego County, a little-known gem of a landscape lies north of the border with Mexico. Accessed by State Route 94, this is a remnant of Old California — a sparsely populated, scenic rural area with immense natural values. Dotted with tiny country towns like Boulevard and Potrero, it would be criminal to open this area to suburban sprawl.

Yet that is the apparent mission of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). After a proposed series of highway widenings, two-lane Route 94 would be well on its way to becoming a freeway, allowing bedroom-community commuters to use the road. Furthermore, the widenings would facilitate the use of the road by big-rig trucks, which find Route 94 a convenient alternate route to and from Tecate, Mexico. The big-rigs use this winding, mountainous road even though it is posted with signs warning that, for safety reasons, these vehicles are not advised. In dereliction of their obligation to public safety, Caltrans has stalled on banning the trucks.

A local grassroots group, the Back Country Coalition, has been instrumental in fighting the highway widenings and the big-rigs. EHL has assisted their efforts by retaining professional traffic engineers. The Coalition has now filed suit against Caltrans under the California Environmental Quality Act for illegal piecemealing of a larger project. Also, Senator Barbara Boxer acted to scale back the plans of the federal General Services Administration to expand the international Port of Entry at Tecate. Such expansion would have allowed an even greater number of dangerous big-rigs onto the road.

Fortunately, there are better transportation solutions. Trucks can take excellent Mexican highways to Otay Mesa, a Port of Entry with access to interstate highways. There are significant operational and infrastructure improvements which need to be done to make this superior system work well, however. EHL is a member of two key advisory committees — to the Ports of Entry Council and the San Diego Association of Government's Rural Route 94 Major Investment Study — in which we will advance transportation options that preserve rural and natural values and direct border commerce to the appropriate routes.

Critical Resources at Stake in Four Corners Study

Readers may recall that earlier this year, as part of its Regional Transportation Plan, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) proposed two new highways bisecting some of our most important wildlands. Near the "Four Corners" where Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, and Riverside counties meet, roads hugely damaging to Chino Hills State Park, the NCCP Reserve, and the Tecate Cypress Reserve were contemplated. Due to public and legal opposition organized by EHL and other groups, SCAG deferred to local governments from the Four Corners area on these projects.

A formal study of alternatives has begun. One underlying problem is the "jobs/housing imbalance" of commuters from Inland Empire bedroom communities going to work in Orange County. EHL is participating at both the policy and technical level. We have two basic goals: to preserve the environmental resources, and to advance transit and transit-oriented development as long-term solutions. With the help of a professional transportation planner, our initial step will be to ensure that the Four Corners consultant team evaluates a full range of options.

Intrinsic to the traffic problems — and potential solutions — is the fate of 24,000 acres of former Dairy Preserve lands in Riverside and San Bernardino counties. These are now being irresponsibly planned for typical automobile-dependent sprawl, without transit, farmland preservation, or greenbelts. EHL and the Sierra Club have filed suit against the City of Ontario over its failure to consider or mitigate traffic, habitat, and agricultural impacts over 8,000 acres of these lands.

ENDANGERED HABITATS LEAGUE

The Endangered Habitats League is a non-profit organization.
All contributions are tax-deductible.

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Jack Bath Director-San Bernardino County/EHL Secretary

Michael Beck Director-San Diego County

Jane Block Director-Riverside County

Pete DeSimone Director-Orange County

Jess Morton Director-Los Angeles County/EHL Treasurer



California Meadow Vole (*Microtus californicus*)

This is the common meadow vole throughout most of the state except the higher elevations. It eats fresh, tender leaves and developing seeds of forbs and grasses. Found in wet meadows, alfalfa fields, and irrigated pastures. Sketch and description from *California Mammals*, by E. W. Jameson, Jr. and Hans J. Peeters (UC Press, 1988).

Unlikely Allies Call for Growth Management

The Endangered Habitats League is part of an emerging coalition which, in late October, placed full page newspaper ads asking the gubernatorial candidates to “get serious” about how unplanned growth and out-of-control sprawl is destroying the California dream. Participating along with EHL in the California Futures Network (CFN) ad were the League of Women Voters of California, United Food and Commercial Workers, Latino Network, Silicon Valley Manufacturing Group, Women for Agriculture, Housing California, Audubon-California, and more than 30 elected officials.

So far, nearly 225 organizations and community leaders have endorsed CFN’s five Smart Growth Principles. These are:

1. *Plan for the Future:* Make government more responsive, effective, and accountable by reforming the system of land use planning and public financing.
2. *Promote Prosperous and Livable Communities:* Make existing communities vital and healthy places for all residents to live, work, and raise a family.
3. *Provide Better Housing and Transportation Opportunities:* Provide efficient transportation alternatives and a range of housing choices affordable to all residents, without jeopardizing farmland, open space, and wildlife habitat.
4. *Conserve Green Space and the Natural Environment:* Focus new development in areas planned for growth, while protecting air and water quality and providing green space for recreation, water recharge, and wildlife.
5. *Protect California’s Agricultural and Forest Lands:* Protect California’s farm, range, and forest lands from sprawl and the pressure to convert farmland for development.

According to Carl Guardino, President and CEO of the Silicon Valley Manufacturing Group, workers in Silicon Valley lose an estimated 34,000 work hours sitting in traffic every day as a result of the severe jobs/housing imbalance. “These workers are frustrated by a transportation system that is disconnected from sound land use planning and does not link jobs, housing, and land use. The five Smart Growth Principles address our needs.”

CFN hopes to lead the way toward land use reform in our state. Please mark your calendars and attend the Smart Growth Summit on January 28, 1999 in Sacramento. For more information about CFN or to become a CFN supporter, visit the website at: <www.calfutures.org>, or contact CFN at 2201 Broadway, Suite 815, Oakland, CA 94612; 510-238-9762, fax 510-238-9769. To subscribe to the growing CFN email network, send an email to: <cfn@igc.org>.

EHL Business

Annual Meeting

The Endangered Habitats League will hold its annual meeting on **Saturday, December 12, 1998** at beautiful Starr Ranch Audubon Sanctuary in Orange County (949-858-0309). Please join us to conduct League business, hear regional updates, plan future strategies, and enjoy the scenery. We will meet at 11:00 A.M. sharp, and please bring a lunch. Directions to the Sanctuary are:

From South: 5 Fwy to Oso Pkwy exit. Turn right and continue approximately 3 miles. Left on Antonio and continue approximately 5 miles. Right on Santa Margarita Pkwy to Plano Trabuco Rd. Right on Plano Trabuco Rd. to Dove Canyon Dr. Left on Dove Canyon Dr. to Security Gate. Present this Newsletter and continue on Dove Canyon Dr. Left on Grey Rock Rd. Proceed approximately 100 yards to Starr Ranch access road on right. Proceed cautiously and follow signs.

From North: 5 Fwy to Alicia Pkwy exit. Turn left and continue approximately 5 miles. Right on Santa Margarita Pkwy to Plano Trabuco Rd. Right on Plano Trabuco Rd. to Dove Canyon Dr. Left on Dove Canyon Dr. to Security Gate. Present this Newsletter and continue on Dove Canyon Dr. Left on Grey Rock Rd. Proceed approximately 100 yards to Starr Ranch access road on right. Proceed cautiously and follow signs.

Amendment to Bylaws

At the annual meeting, we will consider the following change to EHL Bylaws:

Election of Board members will occur 1) through ballots distributed by mail or in the EHL Newsletter or 2) at an annual or special membership meeting which has been noticed by mail at least two weeks in advance. Those nominees receiving the highest vote totals will be elected.

Nominating Committee Announced

The Board of Directors has designated a committee to nominate candidates for EHL’s Board of Directors, to serve two-year terms. If you wish to suggest nominees, contact either Jane Block (909-683-0304, <jblock@empirenet.com>); Jess Morton (310-832-5601, <jmorton@igc.apc.org>); or Pete DeSimone (949-858-0309, <starr@exo.com>).

Globally Important Wetland Under Assault by Century 21

Four hours south of the U.S. Mexican border in Baja California lies Bahia de San Quintin, a near-pristine bay with 26,000 acres of wetlands. This is the most significant salt marsh in our ecoregion south of San Francisco Bay. It is critical habitat for the Black Brant and the endangered Light-footed Clapper Rail, Least Tern, and Snowy Plover. Surrounding uplands support coastal sage scrub and California Gnatcatchers. The ecological significance of the bay can hardly be overstated. Its beauty and sense of “intactness” — like seeing a flock of a hundred pelicans — is overwhelming.

There is also sustainable economic use of the bay — not only ecotourism and fishing, but a thriving aquaculture industry which employs 1,000 people raising clams and oysters. The high water quality has allowed health certification for export of the shellfish to the United States.

The local community is now working on a long-term land use and management plan, or *ordenamiento*, which could put in place sustainable uses for the bay. However, the promise of the *ordenamiento* is about to be obliterated by a completely ill-conceived development proposal.

Century 21, the international real estate firm, is proposing to the Mexican government massive industrial tourist development of the worst sort. The funding would be U.S. money. On the peninsula surrounding the bay would be five hotels, three golf courses, a 350-slip marina, housing for thousands, a desalination plant, a shopping mall, and underground parking. Such development — called “Cabo San Quintin” by Century 21 — would forever destroy the ecosystem and the water quality, let alone the tranquility. According to Agromarinos, SA, the aquaculture industry would vanish due to pollution, toxic paints used on boats, and sewage.

There is clearly no place for Cabo San Lucas in Bahia de San Quintin! EHL will work closely with the bi-national conservation group *pro esteros* to stop the proposed development and to protect existing, ecologically sound, uses. Please respond to any action alerts you may receive.

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First Class