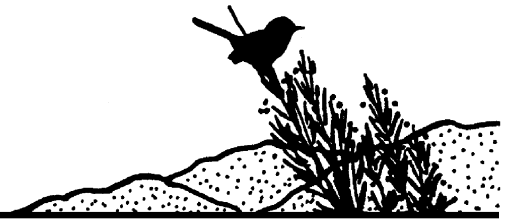


ENDANGERED HABITATS LEAGUE

Dedicated to Ecosystem Protection and Improved Land Use Planning

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Widening of Scenic Highway Halted

For the last two years, one of EHL's major objectives has been to halt the planned widening of State Route 94 in southern San Diego County from a two-lane rural road to a growth-inducing four-lane highway. We are pleased to report that, due to the intensive engagement of EHL and our ally, the Backcountry Coalition, this disastrous widening will not occur.

SR 94 runs from the City of San Diego into the scenic and wild South County, through the magnificent San Diego National Wildlife Refuge and the Rancho Jamul Ecological Reserve, and through picturesque towns like Campo, Potrero, Dulzura, and Boulevard. Not surprisingly, both the regional transportation agency — the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) — and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) had expansion to four lanes in their long-range plans.

The border town of Tecate provided a further impetus to widening. The Tecate Port of Entry with Mexico was planned for major expansion by the U.S. government. Such expansion would have placed so much traffic on SR 94 that major improvements — at huge cost to the California taxpayer — would have been necessary. Unlike other ports along the border, Tecate does not have full safety inspections, and thus attracts the most dangerous big-rig trucks to a winding, mountainous road. Widening — also pushed by local boosters and land speculators — would lead to bedroom communities along the route, and disruption of wildlife movement on a large scale.

A vital CEQA lawsuit brought by the Backcountry Coalition delayed spot widening of SR 94 by Caltrans, and set the stage for longer term solutions. To achieve such solutions, EHL and the Backcountry Coalition enlisted the aid of Senator Barbara Boxer. After meeting with us in Tecate itself, inspecting the facilities, and learning of the superior

transportation routes available through other ports of entry, Senator Boxer prevented the Port of Tecate from expanding its capacity and drawing scarce funds away from more cost-effective investments. Only sensible modernization of facilities will occur.

Our next task was to participate in a SANDAG "Major Investment Study" for SR 94. Such studies precede major commitment of funds. As a member of the stakeholder advisory committee, EHL contributed professionally-prepared technical analyses that led SANDAG to prepare a "constrained" analysis taking into account Port of Entry limitations and realistic estimates of County population growth. As a result, the study concluded that "non-capacity increasing" improvements on SR 94, such as passing lanes, would suffice, along with investment in other ports of entry along the border.

Supervisor Dianne Jacob played an important role as chair of the SANDAG committee overseeing the study, and was instrumental in building consensus around this favorable outcome. Embracing the more limited roadway as consistent with its current growth management strategy, SANDAG has already eliminated expansion to four lanes from its new Regional Transportation Plan. With the study in hand, it is anticipated that Caltrans will follow suit with the two-lane configuration.

Ideally, we would have liked to completely eliminate the big-rig trucks, or to entirely close the Tecate Port of Entry, exclusively focusing on better and safer ports. However, these outcomes would entail major state legislation or exceedingly unlikely actions by the U.S. State Department. Thus, we are very happy with this victory for rational transportation planning and rural protection. It is not often that highway expansion that induces growth in scenic, rural areas is stopped in its tracks.

Riverside County Integrated Plan Update

Ever escalating in complexity, the ambitious Riverside County Integrated Plan (RCIP) is moving forward, but not without problems. This unprecedented effort combining multiple species, land use, and transportation plans, seeks to plan for the future in a county both rich in natural resources and with a history of unmitigated sprawl.

A group of stakeholders, including EHL, has been struggling with implementation mechanisms for the habitat component for many months. There has been significant progress on a combined system of developer fees and marketable "habitat credits." Unfortunately, project approvals and General Plan amendments continue unabated. EHL pushed for a moratorium on project approvals until the RCIP was completed, but opposition from the building industry allowed only an "informational" interim process to be adopted by the Board of Supervisors. Decision-makers will be provided with information on how a project may affect preserve design, but there is no commitment to act upon the information. If this process fails, EHL will consider litigation.

The land use component is proceeding rapidly, with multiple "area plans" for different sections of the county. These do not undo the incredible amount of sprawl already approved, but nevertheless advance the progressive "vision statement" formulated by the stakeholders. For example, higher density, mixed-use centers are being identified, and spatial separation between communities is a goal. However, the existing grid of 2 1/2-acre lots over much of the "rural" landscape is not much of a separator. EHL is thus advocating both downzoning and incentives for rural clustering to preserve blocks of agricultural and natural land. We also hope to overcome barriers to more efficient use of land by assuring quality design standards for higher density developments.

The transportation component became controversial, though, as it settled on which regional transportation "corridors" to pursue. Initially, the intent was to select only two corridors, but this has given way to a plan favoring four corridors. This four-corridor approach will strain the planning resources available. The corridor between Orange and Riverside Counties is important economically, but new routes are highly constrained environmentally. Another of the corridors is opposed by environmental groups due to potential impacts on the San Jacinto Wildlife Area.

On a more optimistic note, the Mission Group of consultants — brought into the Integrated Plan process by EHL — has presented a practical concept for implementing transit. Called the "Transit Oasis," it would connect neighborhood nodes such as shopping centers, Metrolink stations,

and schools with short and convenient shuttle vehicle loops. Once in the loop, one could transfer to an express connection to other major focal points, which would have their own distribution loops. The Oasis would be heavily landscaped and attract riders (and businesses) due to its amenity value. The Transit Oasis concept has been recommended for integration into the General Plan by the stakeholders' Transit Task Force.

Setback on Delhi Sands Protection

EHL has been fighting a lonely battle for the endangered Delhi Sands flower-loving fly and its ecosystem. Only a tiny amount of sand dune habitat remains in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties.

For the last two years, EHL has battled the County of Riverside over a developer-serving "Negative Declaration" issued under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This declaration falsely contended that there were no significant impacts to this species from a warehouse construction project, and therefore that a full Environmental Impact Report (EIR) would not be prepared. After a rollercoaster of partial victories and defeats, our appeal was denied.

Nevertheless, EHL is committed to stopping this tactic of circumventing avoidance and mitigation measures through the abuse of "Negative Declarations." We are closely monitoring similar projects in Colton and Fontana, and will continue to crusade for the nearly lost ecosystem of the Delhi Sands.



ENDANGERED HABITATS LEAGUE

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

Dan Silver Coordinator and Newsletter Editor

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

Hollenbeck Canyon Optioned for San Diego Preserve System

With superb leadership from Supervisor Dianne Jacob, 3,700 acres adjoining the San Diego National Wildlife Refuge and Rancho Jamul Ecological Reserve has been optioned by the County of San Diego for conservation purposes.

Located east of the town of Jamul along SR 94 in the southern portion of the County, the streams and coastal sage scrub of Hollenbeck Canyon will make inestimable contributions to the growing preserve network of the Multiple Species Conservation Program. These lands will also help retain the rural character of the area.

After EHL alerted many other conservation groups to this opportunity, we generated a deluge of supporting letters to County government. EHL heartily commends the Daley family for this sale, which could easily have gone to developers who were offering a higher price.

Grant to EHL to Support Interpretive Center

EHL is pleased to announce the receipt of a \$2,000 grant from the San Diego Foundation's H. William Kuni Fund. The grant will support the Crest Reserve Interpretive Center.

The Crest Reserve, located just east of the City of San Diego, is 2,000 acres of coastal sage scrub, granite boulders, chaparral, year-round stream, and oak woodland. It is an important part of the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP). Even though extensive development had been approved prior to the MSCP, monies from the State of California allowed protection of this pristine parcel. It will be a superb site for visitors to learn about and experience native habitats.

We anticipate that renowned designer James Hubbel, noted for his organic wood and glass creations, will design the center. Many thanks to community leader Bill Kuni, at whose direction this grant was made.

Will We Learn from History?

A recently published book has unearthed a study from 1930 titled, "Parks, Playgrounds and Beaches for the Los Angeles Region," on how to make Los Angeles a livable city. Tragically, the study was completely ignored, if not actively suppressed.

Remarkably, the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce had commissioned the nation's foremost urban planners, the Olmsted Brothers (of New York City Central Park and San Diego Balboa Parks fame), to recommend solutions to what was even then perceived as a catastrophic loss of open space. Their report noted, if "the sharp practice of ruthless promoters" continued, "urban growth will fill in one after another of the open spaces... [leaving people] shut off from any considerable area of open land."

The Olmsted report recommended extensive public ownership of the coast from Malibu to Long Beach, a 440-mile network of parks based upon the Los Angeles River and other riparian systems, and neighborhood parks within a half mile of every household. The cost was estimated at \$224 million. Quickly, however, the concrete armoring of Los Angeles River established the actual direction Los Angeles would take.

The multiple species plans in Orange, Riverside, and San Diego Counties are serious efforts not only to protect biodiversity, but to keep nature accessible to urban areas and to link open space preservation to quality of life. The Olmsted brothers would be pleased. But, to avoid repeating the failure of Los Angeles in 1930, we must still find the financial resources and the planning wherewithal to do the job right.

Visit EHL's website at:
<http://exo.com/~dsilver/>

Nominations Sought for EHL Board of Directors

Every two years, EHL's membership elects a Board of Directors to govern the organization. Please submit nominations to Dan Silver, EHL Coordinator, via mail, fax, or e-mail (dsilver@exo.com; see addresses on page 1 of this *Newsletter*). Dan will forward nominations to the Nominating Committee (Jane Block, Jack Bath, Pete DeSimone). Please specify which county (San Diego, Orange, San Bernardino, Los Angeles, or Riverside) the nominee would represent. Background on the person's qualifications would also be appreciated. You may nominate yourself, of course! A report from the Nominating Committee will appear in the Fall *Newsletter*. Elections will be held at the EHL annual membership meeting in December. At that time, nominations from the floor will also be accepted.

Quail

A number: 62 sticks in my mind
remembering plump birds by the fence
running by twos, threes, ten at once
a procession; quail crowd down that lane

In those days the birds were easy
"chi-Ca-go," their sound on the hills
carried along bluffs, in still churchyards
deep eyes watched from shrubbery

She asked how could one know
with such precision that 62 birds
had moved through the undergrowth
as if this needed a miracle of fingers

But I, too, had counted them
an automatic response to nature
asking the question again and again
I said I had seen them go

I cannot pass this one bend of road
but that the quail do not chuckle there
recounting those same 62 journeys
their movements tallied: by twos, threes, ten

The quail have not passed this way
since our garden grew through tame
to a denial of all wilder needs
we attend such orderly beds

For who is left to ask the count
of birds piling through memory
though my ears listen for the calls
my eyes take in the changes

-Jess Morton

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