



The Pickleweed

The Newsletter of the Huntington Beach Wetlands Conservancy, Inc. (A Nonprofit Corporation)

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A Message From Our Chairperson

By Gordon Smith

As you'll read in the articles that follow, the Conservancy has had its share of ups and downs these past months. On the up side, we held our grand opening for our Interpretive Center to positive reviews from folks attending. We're putting together our docent-training program for the Center, and several have expressed interest in volunteering. Also, we received generous corporate and foundation grants to support our activities, and our marsh ecosystem continues to thrive with the coming and going of the tides.

On the down side, we sadly lost to cancer a long-time board member. And we continue to be plagued by vehicular damage to our PCH fence and dunes, and the fight against litter and debris continues unabated. Weeds and other non-native plants, particularly on the PCH dunes, continue to be a maintenance challenge.

All in all, though, the progress we've made over the past thirty years as a volunteer-based organization has been gratifying. Thanks to a dedicated group of fellow board members, and to supporters from the community and local, state and federal agencies, we've been able to leverage grant opportunities to acquire and restore more than 130 acres of precious coastal habitat. Our new interpretive center serves as a sort of capstone to our efforts; it tells the story of our organization and the importance of our work to the environment.

In no small measure, however, the qualities of patience and perseverance have been essential ingredients to our success. As illustrations, we are still waiting for the bureaucratic process to yield ownership of the Newland Marsh between Beach Blvd. and Newland Street. The County's trash containment booms in the Talbert and Huntington flood channels are still in the permitting stage, and the tank farm north of Magnolia Marsh has yet to be demolished and the land put up for sale. And so it goes.

Remembering Kristen Bender

By Gordon Smith

Long-time Conservancy board member Kristen Bender succumbed to cancer in October after a seven-year battle with the disease. Kristen joined our board of directors in 1994, serving terms as chair and vice chair. Kristen was retired from a career teaching biology at Cal State Long Beach; her expertise was invaluable to our organization as we embarked on our wetland restoration projects, and her dedication to the



Kristen Bender, third from left, joins NOAA's Jane Lubchenko and Conservancy members at 2009 Magnolia Marsh restoration grant announcement. Her goals of the Conservancy was an inspiration to all. Kristen was survived by her son Jon and her sister Linda Kuipers. She will be greatly missed.

Interpretive Center Opens

The newly completed interpretive displays of the Wetlands and Wildlife Care and Education Center are now open to the public. The Conservancy held a grand opening of the interpretive center in May, with a ribbon cutting and tours of the center and Magnolia Marsh. Attendees were impressed by the quality and scope of the displays featuring interpretive and interactive panels on the coastal wetland ecology and restoration, care of sick and injured wildlife, and the challenges of protecting sensitive wetlands and native wildlife in an urban environment.



Smith cuts ribbon for May 31 grand opening

The interpretive center is staffed and open to the public from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Group tours at other times can be arranged by contacting the Conservancy.



Interpretive center diorama

Also, the Conservancy is seeking volunteers to serve as docents to help staff the Center and conduct tours. Anyone interested should please call or email the Conservancy.

Conservancy Baset by PCH Collision Damage

By Jack Kirkorn

The chain link fence separating the Huntington Beach Wetlands from Pacific Coast highway has been repeatedly damaged from vehicles plowing into it while traveling northbound on the highway. The incidence of these collisions, generally occurring late



Collision damage to PCH and Brookhurst

at night and involving intoxicated drivers, is increasing in frequency. They have caused thousands of dollars in damage, not all of which has been recovered from insurance policies carried by the drivers. (The Conservancy, not Caltrans, owns the fence.) Three incidents occurred in just the past six months, the most serious taking out our sign at the corner of PCH and Brookhurst Street along with several yards of fencing. The fragile dunes and wetlands along the highway have also sustained damage, both from the initial intrusion of the out of control vehicles, and from the towing out afterwards. The Conservancy would appreciate being contacted by anyone witnessing vehicles damaging the PCH fence.

Trash and Debris: An Ongoing Maintenance Challenge

As readers of earlier Pickleweed issues are aware, the influx of trash and debris represents a serious challenge in the management of the Huntington Beach Wetlands. In the summer, trash blows into the wetlands from the beach and PCH; in the winter, it

flows down the flood control channels that empty into Magnolia and Brookhurst marshes.

The flood channels, draining miles of urban runoff from west Orange County, represent the largest source of trash. Despite the lack of serious rain these past



Coastal Cleanup Day volunteers

months, 75 volunteers collect over 700 lbs. of trash from the Huntington Beach Wetlands during Coastal Cleanup Day in September, virtually all of it originating from the flood channels. We will be facing a major influx of accumulated trash once heavy rains do come, although the county Flood Control District has plans to install catchment booms in the two channels. It remains to be seen if the booms will be in place in time for this winter's rains.



Largest piece of trash

Trash and debris that wash into our marshes collects in marsh vegetation, but much of it also finds its way out to the open ocean, befouling the marine environment and our beaches. Displayed in our interpretive center is a photo of the remains of a seabird with bits of floating

plastic that it had ingested, thinking the colorful stuff was edible. The photo graphically illustrates the importance of stopping urban debris at its source.

On the subject of trash, Conservancy volunteers have removed all manner of flotsam from our wetlands over the past thirty years. Plastic straws, bottle caps, water bottles, plastic toys, and tennis balls are the usual sorts of items bagged. One year, however, we came across an object in Talbert Marsh that looked very much like a piece of military explosive ordnance. Needless to say, the thing was left in place, and the sheriff department's bomb squad was called in. The military was contacted, and it was determined that the thing was a floating incendiary device used for practice runs by fighter planes. The bomb squad carefully hauled it off in a large bucket of sand.

The record for the largest piece of trash is held by the highway barricade recently hauled out of Brookhurst Marsh (see photo). Filled with water when deployed on a highway, the heavy plastic barricade apparently floated in from the flood channel.

Conservancy Hosts OC River Park Meeting

On October 22 more than 50 representatives of the County of Orange and the cities of Costa Mesa, Huntington Beach and Newport Beach joined members



OCRCP Stakeholders Meeting

of the Conservancy and other local advocacy groups for an Orange Coast River Park "stakeholders" meeting. The groups came together to review the progress to date on the long-planned park that is intended to incorporate and link together several natural areas along the Santa Ana River. The Conservancy's Talbert Marsh, accessed by a bike trail

from the river, will be a component of the park once it is completed.

For more information on the River Park, visit its website at <http://ocriverpark.org>.

Recent Financial Support

By Jack Kirkorn

The Conservancy, as a non-profit corporation, funds its many projects from state and federal grants, mitigation funding, and private donations. We have been very successful in gaining funding from these various sources, and are very grateful.

Recently we have received financial support from the Chevron Corporation and the Massen Greene Foundation. Funding from the Chevron Corporation has been used to build and install three monument signs at strategic locations around our marshes. Money from the Massen Greene Foundation is going to be

used to fund the development of a docent program for our newly completed interpretive and educational center, as well as for public tours of our three restored marshes.

We are always in need of donations, large or small, from private individuals to fund our ongoing administrative costs, such as paying for utilities, insurance, and other administrative costs. Please help.

Our Board of Directors

Gordon Smith, Chairperson	Fred Bennett
Jack Kirkorn, Vice Chairperson	Dave Guido
Bill Weisman, Secretary	Jim Robins
Ann McCarthy, Treasurer	Dick Zembal

WE CAN ONLY RESTORE AND MAINTAIN THESE VITAL WETLANDS WITH YOUR CONTINUING SUPPORT

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