

WATERSHED

E-NEWS FALL 2011

FRIENDS OF THE SANTA CLARA RIVER

Friends of the Santa Clara River (FSCR) is a non-profit, public interest organization dedicated to the protection, enhancement and management of the resources of the Santa Clara River, which flows approximately 100 miles from Acton, California to the Pacific Ocean. The Santa Clara is the largest natural river system remaining in Southern California, and was selected by American Rivers in 2005 as one of the nation's most endangered rivers.

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Fall 2011

Ron Bottorff, Chair

Ginnie Bottorff, Editor

Newhall Ranch Project: L.A. Supervisors Approve First Two Villages



The sprawling Newhall Ranch development proposed for 12,000 acres along the Santa Clara River in northwest Los Angeles County is one of the largest single residential development projects ever contemplated in California. Newhall Ranch would create a city of more than 60,000 on a six-mile stretch of the river that is currently mostly rugged open space and agricultural land. As we have reported previously, on January 3, 2011, a coalition of five environmental and Native American groups filed suit against the California Department of Fish and Game over its approvals of permits for the project. Action on this lawsuit is pending.

Meanwhile, the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), which must issue its own permit under the Clean Water Act, has issued a near-final permit in its August 31, 2011 Record of Decision for the entire Newhall Ranch project. The Corps had spent months in negotiations with the Environmental Protection Agency over several outstanding issues involving the permit, which now have apparently been resolved. FSCR is disappointed in the EPA's decision, in which the Agency failed to follow through on additional wetlands and floodplain mitigation issues that had been the subject of considerable concern in previous letters to the Corps. The Santa Clara River has been designated by the EPA as an Aquatic Resource of National Importance.

In two recent actions, on September 27 and October 25, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors gave near-final approval to the first two Newhall Ranch villages, Landmark Village and Mission Village, totaling over 6,000 homes and large areas of commercial development.

WATCH FOR AN ARTICLE THIS WEEK ON NEWHALL RANCH BY ZEKE BARLOW IN THE VENTURA COUNTY STAR – WE WILL SEND ALONG THE LINK

Ventura County Water Projects Move Forward

In 2007, the Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County (WCVC) was awarded \$25M for 11 projects under Proposition 50 - the Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach protection act of 2002, which created Integrated Regional Water Management Plans throughout California.

In a more recent action of greater interest to FSCR, WCVC has been awarded \$17.5M in 2011 for 8 projects under Prop 84, the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006. Of this, approximately \$4M will go to The Nature Conservancy for land acquisition in local watersheds.

Planning Underway for May, 2012 Watershed Forum

May, 2012 has been selected as a time to emphasize watersheds throughout California. In line with this, the Santa Clara River Watershed Committee, which operates within WCVC but also includes Los Angeles County representatives for the upper watershed, has established a planning committee covering a May, 2012 “State of the Watershed” forum.

The event, which may cover one or more weekends at various locations along the river, will consist of presentations, exhibits, field visits and interactive discussions about the health and future of the Santa Clara River Watershed. Key issues affecting the watershed – flooding, water quality, water supply, recreation, habitat preservation, land use changes, and fires are all potential topics of discussion. Presentations from key agencies and other groups involved in managing various aspects of the watershed are anticipated. These could include the Ventura County Watershed Protection District, United Water Conservation District, the Ventura County Farm Bureau, The Nature Conservancy, the State Coastal Conservancy, and several other state and federal agencies, as well as FSCR.

FSCR Hits the Outreach Trail

FSCR Chair, Ron Bottorff, and Vice-Chair, Barbara Wampole, have combined to cover five events in the fall of 2012 associated with our outreach effort to cities and organizations along the Santa Clara River. Barbara tabled at the City of Santa Clarita’s River Rally in September, as well as at Rancho Camulos’ annual Ramona Days in November. Rancho Camulos, located just upstream from Piru on the south bank of the river, is a National Historical Landmark. Ron also tabled at Patagonia’s annual Salmon Run (our 17th straight appearance at this event!), at which over 400 runners participated in a 5K run along the south bank of the Ventura River. These events allow us to discuss river issues with people in attendance and also sign up volunteers.

Ron presented a talk on the Santa Clara River on October 14 to over 100 persons at Oxnard College’s Marine Center, located at Oxnard’s Channel Islands Harbor. The audience, consisting largely of Oxnard College students, displayed considerable interest in the issues we

deal with, and had many questions about the river and on our restoration work at the Hedrick Ranch Nature Area.

A presentation, including graphics and photos, was given to a dozen Santa Paula High School student-volunteers who participated in a river cleanup, on November 19, at The Nature Conservancy's property just downstream of Santa Paula's 12th Street bridge. The cleanup was sponsored by the Coastal Alliance for a Sustainable Economy, based in Oxnard, and supervised by Cameron Yee from C.A.U.S.E. and Josh Spies from The Nature Conservancy.

Volunteer River Restoration Effort Will Continue

FSCR and its volunteer restoration team, led by restoration coordinator Jackie Worden, have now basically completed a major restoration effort at the Hedrick Ranch Nature Area (HRNA) funded by a grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). The funds became available to FWS from settlement claims for damages from an ARCO oil spill into the river in 1994. Work under this grant began in December 2004 and was completed in May 2011.

The goal of the restoration project was to restore natural function to riparian and wetland habitats historically found along the Santa Clara River. The project included removal of invasive, non-native plants and re-vegetation with native plants. The project focused on 48 acres of the approximately 220 total in HRNA, which was placed under FSCR stewardship after being acquired by the State Coastal Conservancy in 1999 as part of the Conservancy's River Parkway Project.

We will continue to expand our volunteer efforts by working on properties owned by The Nature Conservancy along the Santa Clara River, as well as at the Hedrick Ranch Nature Area. The location of future workdays will be posted in this newsletter and emailed to our members and volunteers two weeks prior to the event. Substantial rain cancels these events!! Workdays have been scheduled for the following dates in 2012:

- January 8th, Sunday
- February 4th, Saturday
- March 4th, Sunday
- April 7th, Saturday
- May 6th, Sunday (tentative, based on weather)