

WATERSHED

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FRIENDS OF THE SANTA CLARA RIVER

Friends of the Santa Clara River 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 watershed is the largest natural river system remaining in Southern California, and the river was selected by American Rivers in 2005 as one of the nation's most endangered.

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Hidden Creeks Estates Development Project Threatens Santa Susana Mountains Wildlife

The Santa Susana Mountains ridgeline forms the southern border of the Santa Clara River watershed through the mid-section of the river in Ventura County and extends eastward a few miles into Los Angeles County.

The City of Los Angeles is now in the process of certifying a Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for a project called Hidden Creek Estates. The project area, currently within unincorporated Los Angeles County, is proposed for annexation into the City as part of the adjacent community of Porter Ranch. The land is zoned for 33 homes but the developer, Forestar Real Estate of Austin, Texas, hopes to be allowed to build 188 under City jurisdiction. Total grading on the site would involve moving 6.5 million cubic yards of earth.

Numerous scientific experts have weighed in on the project's many impacts to wildlife resources. Paul Edelman, Deputy Director of Natural Resources for the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, claims the site is a critical component of the Santa Susana Mountains ecosystem. Edelman told the Times in a November 21 article by Louis Sahagun that "You couldn't pick an ecologically worse place to plop down a big subdivision."

For the full Times article see [Scientists fight developer on Page AA1 of Thursday, November 21, 2013.](#)

The project site lies a few miles south of Newhall Ranch and forms part of the critical wildlife corridor connecting the Santa Monica Mountains with the Los Padres National Forest. Even though the site is outside the Santa Clara watershed, Friends has always considered the entirety of the Santa Susana Mountains to be within our area of interest. We will be following the project closely and will provide comments to the City when the matter is brought up for consideration early in 2014.

2013 Salmon Run Proceeds go to the Santa Clara River Steelhead Coalition

Patagonia's Salmon Run is an annual event in which 400 runners vie for awards in various age and gender categories by following a 5K course along the lower Ventura River from the Main Street bridge. The race, which draws runners from a wide area, has been held since the late 1990s and clearly qualifies as the top eco-run event of Ventura County. Friends has staffed a display at the Salmon Run since its inception and was itself the beneficiary of the proceeds in 1997, which normally exceed \$10,000.

The Santa Clara River Steelhead Coalition, formed early in 2013 and dedicated to recovery of the endangered southern steelhead fish, has already identified potential restoration projects within the Santa Clara River watershed, and is planning a broad outreach program to communities within the watershed. Friends has participated in the organization since its founding and a full report on the Coalition was provided in the Spring 2013 edition of ENEWS. This major financial award from Patagonia will provide a mighty assist in achieving the Coalition's goals, and is greatly appreciated by all Coalition members.

United Water Conservation District Kicks Off Environmental Review of Its Habitat Conservation Plan

We have reported previously on fish passage problems at the Freeman Diversion facility, the only dam on the main stem of the Santa Clara River (shown at left),



which is owned and operated by the United Water Conservation District. The dam blocks passage of migrating fish species, most notably the federally endangered Southern Steelhead. Although the dam has a fish ladder to allow fish passage, it has not worked well for the steelhead. Additionally, there is the potential for doing harm to the fish, including kill, within the facility - called "take" under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). The possibility of take triggers the need for

United to have an incidental take permit under federal and state law, which in turn requires United to prepare and execute a Multi Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP).

United Water has now launched a full environmental review of the MSHCP, being carried out under Section 10 of the ESA and Section 2081 of the California Fish and Game Code. The document will be prepared as a joint Environmental Impact Statement (federal) and Environmental Impact Report (state). If interested, you can download the full Notice of Preparation for the EIS/EIR from the home page of United's website, <http://www.unitedwater.org>. Comments will be accepted until January 10, 2014.

FSCR and other environmental group representatives attended a scoping meeting for the EIS/EIR in Oxnard on December 12, where we submitted preliminary comments. We plan to monitor the EIS/EIR process closely as development of the MSHCP goes forward.