

**Robert E. Ward Nature Preserve/West Coyote Hills
Trails and Open Space Advisory Committee
Meeting notes from December 6, 2008 planning session**

Introduction

Twenty-three members of the West Coyote Hills Trails and Open Space Advisory Committee met on December 6, 2008 at the Fullerton Arboretum. The purpose of this session was to define visitor experiences at the Robert E. Ward Nature Preserve and West Coyote Hills open space—likely user groups, benefits of access, and significance of the site itself. The group's input will be carefully considered as the planning and design process moves forward.

The session was based on a process designed to encourage open communication. By using a “nominal group technique,” we took everyone's opinions into account and went through multiple tallying steps. Rather than rely on traditional voting, we asked committee members to rank, critique, and combine statements to best capture group consensus. We feel comfortable that our process ensured fair and equal participation of all group members and we are pleased with the thoughtful, creative input you provided. A summary of each group's statements and rankings is provided in appendices I and II (attached).

Participants

Jim Pugliese, Scott Starkey, Steve McCormick, and Kavita Rodrigues served as group facilitators; Jennifer Rigby facilitated the workshop process. Participants included:

Steve's group: Jim Meyers, Jim Donovan, Carlos Ixmayer, Allan Marr, Leon Gray, Aaruni Thakur

Jim's group: Jerry Young, Janet McNeill, Rose Marie Fisher, Chuck Greening, Walter Fisher

Scott's group: Ginger Britt, Chris Heusser, Frank Fuetterer, Roger Bell, Bud Welch, Jacob Staggs

Kavita's group: Bob Hayden, Monika Broome, Diane Glick, Larry Lara, Molly McClanahan

Process

Once participants were evenly distributed according to interest and background (e.g., outdoor recreation enthusiasts were evenly dispersed among all four groups, rather than clustered in one group) the session began. Jim Pugliese introduced the meeting and provided an overview of the project status, the role of the Trails and Open Space Advisory Committee, and the purpose of the planning session. Brook Ortega of DUDEK then provided an overview of biological issues that pose certain constraints on the project, most notably, the presence of the federally listed California gnatcatcher on the site.

Jennifer Rigby introduced the workshop process and the essence of the three driving questions:

1. **Why** is it important to allow access to the site?

This question gets to the essential purpose of the Robert E. Ward Nature Preserve and adjacent open space areas within the West Coyote Hills planned community. We asked participants to think about how the trails, key vistas, and nature center will serve the mission of the preserves. We also asked them to keep in mind there are certain constraints related to the site's biological resources.

2. **Who** are the target audiences?

We asked participants to think about the likely visitor(s), profiles of typical visitor(s) the site should attract, the experiences those visitors may seek, and how we can best meet their needs without compromising the integrity of the resources.

3. **What** is significant about this site?

This question required that participants moved beyond thinking about the inventory of biological resources. The purpose of this question was to capture the “spirit of place”—the significant stories, history, and ecology of the site that are not necessarily tangible, but still important qualities that need to be captured and respected during the design process.

Each question was answered one at a time—the initial goal was to generate and capture everyone’s ideas on chart paper. Responses were “shared in the round.” Once one statement was offered by each participant, “one round” was completed. The “round” was repeated until all statements were recorded.

The next step was to clarify, but not critique, any of the statements. The facilitators asked the authors to further explain any statements, if requested by a group member. Following clarification, we moved onto a step called “Focused Pro.” This was the first of two steps that allowed for fair and efficient critiquing. Each participant was asked to think about which three statements they felt best answered the driving question. These statements were shared “in the round” and participants were encouraged to state their reasoning as they voted. The process was repeated until each participant identified their three top picks for statements. This launched the consensus-building aspect of the process.

The second step, “Focused Con,” provided an opportunity for constructive criticism. Each participant was asked to think about which three statements (only from those circled as “the best”) they felt had some flaws. Participants continued working “in the round,” one at a time stating their reasoning.

Finally, participants were asked to combine any of the circled statements to create stronger and clearer statements. Items could only be combined if every participant within a group agreed.

After the third question was answered, the groups studied the trail map and recorded ideas for amenities, etc. that complement the group’s “visions.” Mark-ups included suggested treatment for primary and secondary trails, suitable gathering spots, and specific amenities that reflect the group’s collective thoughts. This information is summarized in appendix II.

Last, a spokesperson for each group presented the group’s statements and ideas regarding the trail map. Each group’s chart paper was clustered according to the driving question and displayed for viewing. After all groups presented their ideas, members circulated and voted (using a 10/4 rule) on those circled or combined statements that they felt best addressed each question. They were also allowed to vote on the trail recommendations noted on the maps.

Findings

Importance of access: The groups consistently identified recreation and education as important pursuits at the site. The opportunity to connect with nature, become aware of Southern California’s native plants and wildlife, savor experiences in the outdoors, and build a lifelong sense of stewardship appeared in each group’s individual and combined statements. The presence of “intact nature” would allow visitors to witness and even

celebrate natural, functioning habitats that are close to home and of a reasonable size (meaning, not overwhelming).

Once opened, the site also will be of benefit to formal and nonformal education groups, including visiting classes of K-college students, as well as nonformal groups such as Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. The group suggested the site is a “living laboratory” for naturalists, including students, interested in the study of nature and natural processes.

What is equally noteworthy is the interest the groups expressed in interpreting the site’s cultural history—the influence of oil exploration and extraction, and the region’s human history dating back thousands of years to settlement by American Indians.

Recreation was not seen as incompatible with education. The groups expressed interest in offering recreational opportunities that “improve the communities’ quality of life” in an open space (versus formal park) setting. This was viewed as particularly relevant to those interested in exercise. The possibility of trails that increase “connectivity” with other sites and trails, including the Fullerton Loop, was seen as a very valuable aspect. Given the limited reaches of open space in North Orange County, access to West Coyote Hills is seen as a significant and welcomed pursuit.

Target audiences: The list of target audiences included children, family groups, naturalists including birdwatchers, recreational users—dog walkers, equestrians, runners, cyclists—as well as organized groups and current and prospective homeowners. What is notable is that two of the groups expressed a desire to ensure accessibility for all people including seniors and those with special needs. Other audiences of note include radio-controlled gliders, Fullerton College Police Academy, and the homeless. While these groups were not identified as likely target audiences, their presence nevertheless may have implications for trail access and control, as well as visitor safety. It also should be noted, however, that the purpose of Saturday’s session was not to discuss the ramifications of multiple-use trails and open space.

Spirit of the site: As far as capturing the “spirit of the site,” three trends emerged. The groups consistently made reference to the process and success of establishing the preserve and surrounding open space. West Coyote Hills is not only valued as an excellent backdrop for interpreting the interplay between natural and human communities, but also as a powerful case study and model for other cities. The concepts of “green design,” balance of development and preservation, and protection of endangered (threatened) species came up more than once as important messages.

Second, the groups called out the site’s topography, including its vista points, as significant features. While the site is important coastal sage scrub habitat—and home to rare wildlife—it is also visual and experiential relief from Fullerton’s “flat lands.” The groups noted the spectacular views from its higher reaches.

Third, the groups came back to the opportunities they voiced when answering the first question. West Coyote Hills is seen as an opportune place to raise awareness, impart knowledge, and strengthen individual stewardship values among the visiting public. The groups clearly value the stories the land will tell.

Action steps:

Please review these meeting notes and appendices I and II. Feel free to electronically track any changes and/or add comments, and send them to Jennifer Rigby (emailacorn@aol.com) and copy Jim Pugliese (jim@westcoyotehills.com) and Scott Starkey (scott@westcoyotehills.com). If you do not have access to email,

please feel free to fax your comments to Jenny's attention at (714) 838-5309. We would appreciate hearing from you by December 29, 2008. At that time, we will finalize this report and begin preparing for development of a trail master plan.

We would like to schedule the next planning session with the West Coyote Hills Trails and Open Space Advisory Committee in late January to hear your thoughts on specific aspects of the trail system. In the spring, we plan on launching an interpretive master plan that addresses ways to enhance visitor experiences on the trails as well as in nature center. We will also conduct a large-scale educator needs assessment to fully understand the needs, interests, and constraints of educators from nearby school districts, as well as Fullerton Community College and CSU Fullerton. Once the trail master plan and interpretive master plan are completed, we will move into the design development stage, and ultimately onto development of construction documents.

Appendix I: Summary of group response to three questions

Please note green statements are those identified by each group as the best answers. Any blue numbers that appear in parentheses after them represent the tally of votes of support received by members of the group at large. Those numbers also appear in association with each group's "combined" summary statements, as well as recommendations for the trail system (Appendix II).

1. Why is it important to provide access to the site?

Steve's group

1. Provides recreation and education opportunities
2. Opportunity to interact with nature and be outside
3. Understand the wealth of knowledge and resources
4. Time for family interaction
5. Limited opportunity in North Orange County
6. It will connect with other surrounding trails
7. Provides a fitness opportunity
8. Maintains and formalizes the Fullerton Loop
9. Will help tell the story about Fullerton

Statements with flaws: 1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9 (primarily 1, 4, 6)

Combined:

- a. Because there is limited opportunity in North Orange County and the site provides recreation, education, and access to nature (10)
- b. Provides a connection to the surrounding area including the Fullerton loop (2)

Kavita's group

1. Share the love of the natural environment
2. Understanding what is native to California
3. Enhance the communities' recreational experience and improve their quality of life
4. Build a lifelong sense of stewardship
5. Opportunity to learn about the surroundings and help people appreciate local ecology
6. Educational experience
7. To differentiate between open space preserve versus park.
8. "In the end we will conserve only what we love. We love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught." (Baba Dioum)

Statements with flaws: 3, 4, 7 (primarily 4 and 7)

Combined:

- a. The opportunity to learn about the native environment to help people appreciate local ecology to build a lifelong sense of stewardship (9)
- b. To educate the community, and respect, value, and treasure this open space preserve (2)

Scott's group

1. People need a place to enjoy nature
- 2. Encourage young people to preserve nature**
- 3. Focal point should be education (all levels) so students study and appreciate nature**
- 4. Make five vista points accessible—highest points in Fullerton**
- 5. Arrange responsible trails and interpretive opportunities to celebrate nature**
6. Loss of open space due to development of homes and businesses
7. This should be a model nature preserve
- 8. Complements the Fullerton Arboretum and Laguna Lake—provides connectivity and transformity**
- 9. Historical perspective of the past (appreciation)**
- 10. Provides connectivity with existing trails and parks.**
11. Engages the community—makes it theirs. They are drawn to it.

Statements with flaws: 3, 4, 5, 10

Combined:

- a. This model nature preserve will provide connectivity with existing trails and the local community that feature vista points and quality trails (7)
- b. The focal point will be educational in nature, providing a historical perspective and a deep appreciation for the preservation and conservation of the natural environment [among] all ages (12)
- c. Get people outdoors (1)

Jim's group

- 1. There is a community-wide need to interact with open space and nature (1)**
2. How best to keep habitat that is there in its "natural state"
- 3. Most people need an opportunity to see the relationship between the natural and built worlds**
- 4. Opportunity to experience an intact nature, a diverse environment of a reasonable size**
- 5. Opportunity to teach environmental stewardship for the next generation**
- 6. A means of broadening understanding of man's relation to natural habitats (flora, fauna) (2)**
- 7. Senegalese parable (Baba Dioum) (2)**
8. For enjoyment of the natural world
- 9. To provide a living laboratory for naturalists to study relationships between existing habitat in an urban environment**
10. Because it's healthy for the individual to fully experience nature
- 11. Because it is vital to understand our impact on the natural world**
12. Access to the natural world for all ages.
- 13. It would increase North Orange County's opportunity to experience nature.**

Statements with flaws: 4, 5, 9, 11, 13

Combined: Not applicable

2. Who are the target audiences?

Steve's group

1. Recreational users
2. Interpretive naturalists
3. Fitness
4. Dog walkers (4)
5. Hardcore runners
6. Fullerton College Police Academy
7. Singles groups
8. Walkers
9. Bikes (mountain)
10. People looking for a social place
11. Equestrians
12. One time visitors
13. Prospective home buyers
14. Organized groups: girl/boy scouts and school children
15. Migrating birds and other species
16. Homeless
17. Radio-controlled gliders

Statements with flaws: 1, 2, 4, 9, 11, 15 (primarily 4, 9, 11)

Combined:

- a. People who are looking for recreational, naturalist, and fitness uses (5)

Kavita's group

1. Children including children with special needs (2)
2. All ages and stages
3. Equestrians
4. Bikers
5. Birdwatchers
6. Naturalists
7. Wilderness organizations
8. Visually impaired
9. Physically challenged
10. Families
11. Organized groups

Statements with flaws: not applicable

Combined:

- a. All ages and stages (3)
- b. Physically and developmentally challenged (2)

c. Special use such as equestrians, cyclists, hikers, and groups (3)

Scott's group

1. Families would enjoy a nearby recreation[al] opportunity in these tough economic times
2. Hiking, running, horse, mountain bike clubs
3. Educational community (classes could be held, etc.)
4. Person [who] wants to get away (1)
5. Health-[conscious] people looking to stay fit (1)
6. Seniors
7. Out of towners (inner city) who do not get to enjoy nature
8. Tourism
9. Future and current residents

Statements with flaws: 1,2,3,4,5,7,9 (primarily 3, 4, 5)

Combined:

- a. Variety of backgrounds (educators and students, families, hikers, equestrians, bikers, birders, naturalists, out of towners, and people with disabilities) (11)
- b. People looking to stay healthy (1)

Jim's group

1. Runners (2)
2. Hikers
3. Cyclists (Fullerton Loop)
4. Families (1)
5. School groups
6. Pets
7. Nearby residents (3)
8. Meditators
9. Birdwatchers
10. Horsemen
11. Homeless

Statements with flaws: 5, 7, 10

Combined: not applicable

3. What is the significance of the site?

Steve's group

1. Tells the story of the history of oil exploration in California
2. Represents how other cities can strike a balance between development and preservation
3. Spiritual jewel, a release
4. How the site, relative to oil, helped in World War II due to proximity to ports

5. Freedom and opportunity it provides all users
- 6. Opportunity to preserve the undeveloped/natural characteristics**
- 7. Provides opportunities for spectacular views**
- 8. Fullerton's acceptance of the green movement**
- 9. Tells the story of ecology and natural history**
- 10. Ending the debate to save Coyote Hills**
- 11. Property rights versus public use**

Statements with flaws: 1-6

Combined:

- a. Tells the story of the oil, ecology and natural history (7)
- b. West Coyote Hills will serve as a model for other cities to: be green; debate [issues regarding] public land; balance development and preservation (7)

Kavita's group

- 1. Interdependence of flora and fauna (1)**
- 2. A balance between nature and human kind**
- 3. Proximity to urban and suburban communities**
- 4. Appreciation of the historic backdrop**
- 5. Multiple stages of historic significance**
- 6. The containment of natural habitat and the protection of endangered species**

Statements with flaws: 1-6

Combined:

- a. Serenity of the natural habitat within the urban environment (6)
- b. Appreciation of the "spirit of place" within its historic context (4)
- c. A unique learning experience in an outdoor classroom (4)

Scott's group

- 1. Human and nature—interdependence**
- 2. Preserve and appreciate the history of the land and see how [the] landscape is changing toward sustainability**
- 3. Respect property's history—how and why it was used dating back to the time of Native American Indians**
- 4. Last opportunity to preserve protected birds and plants in North OC**
- 5. The topography will set Fullerton apart—give the City a sense of place and define Fullerton as its backdrop.**
- 6. Provide a place to appreciate nature and open space areas.**
- 7. Teach respect of nature for current and future generations.**

Statements with flaws: 2 – 7 (primarily 2, 6, 7)

Combined:

a. The property illustrates the significance of the landscape and [the] developer's respect for current and future generations for the history of the land and interdependence between humans and [the] natural environment. (15)

Jim's group

1. Oil history (1)
2. Topography
3. Natural oasis with [an] urban environment (undeveloped) (5)
4. World class biome (2)
5. Artifacts
6. One of the highest points in Fullerton

Statements with flaws: 1

Combined: Not applicable

Appendix II: Summary of group input on trail map

Kavita's group:

Definition of trail use (active and passive)

Add water element for habitat (3), restrooms, potable water sensitive to the site, benches, natural shade along the trails; educational (positive) and directional signage [that is] multilingual, staging area for cyclists and equestrians (3)

Create a green building (interpretive center) "off the grid" such as Debs Park (4)

[Consider] sensitivity of materials used on the site for permanent fixtures (2)

[Consider] low impact to the site at all times

[Integrate] the Baba Dioum quote at the entrance to the preserve (5)

[Ensure] better access to cross Euclid at both Laguna Road and Lakeview Drive

Steve's group:

[Consider use of] bluffs near Fire Station No. 6 for gliders

[Add] signs, wayfinders, interpretive kiosks

Preserve an oil pump or derrick (6)

Add benches, recycle cans, dog waste bags

Add three emergency call boxes (locations noted on map)

Add two restrooms (locations noted on map)

Remove trail that bisects the Preserve (the one that lines up with Laguna Road) and restore the habitat

Place the nature center in the southeastern corner of the Preserve

Scott's group:

[Address issues related to] security, maintenance, park ranger staff (will taxpayer money cover this?)

Vista points are the highest points in the hills. [We need]: accessibility for all, restoration of the area, seating and shade, viewing areas with telescopes (1)

Design aspects: sustainability (e.g., trails that are safe for users and not overly steep). Aesthetic dimensions: attractive environmental appreciation (e.g., trails that are not overly wide and that emphasize trail-like, rather than road-like aspects) (3)

Add available water fountains, auditorium space for group activities, interpretive panels and wayside signs, restrooms through trails, benches and shade, different trails for different uses, tables where lunches can be eaten, a well-funded ranger system, an architectural style (theme) that is as natural as possible.

No motorized vehicles

Jim's group:

Viewpoints: need open shelters with shade for the view. Need to think ahead to reduce (collect) litter and trash

Need multiple access points; water and toilet access

Hike only in Ward area

Parking area: Environmentally sensitive (no asphalt)