

West Coyote Hills Interpretive Planning Meeting Report Prepared by The Acorn Group, April 2007

Members of the West Coyote Hills Trails and Open Space Committee, together with the West Coyote Hills planning team, participated in an interpretive planning session facilitated by Jennifer Rigby on March 26, 2009. Committee members included: Ginger Britt, Teri Brodowski, Doug Brodowski, Monika Broome, Tom Dalton, Katie Dalton, Steve Eldredge, Walter Fisher, Rose Marie Fisher, Chuck Greening, Bob Hayden, Chris Heusser, Molly McClanahan, Kay Miller, Jim Meyer, Bill Naylor, Jacob Staggs, and Jerry Young.

West Coyote Hills planning team members included Jim Pugliese, Scott Starkey, Janet McNeill, Roger Bell, and Jennifer Rigby.

This session launched the development of the interpretive master plan—the document that identifies and defines opportunities for visitors on West Coyote Hills' trails, vista points, and nature center. The specific purpose of the session was to start thinking about topics for interpretation, the organization of messages, goals for interpretation, and possible themes. A copy of the agenda is provided in the first appendix; group input is summarized in subsequent appendices.

Interpretive principles

To recap, an interpretive master plan identifies strategies to create the optimal visitor experience in order to cultivate an informed public. While it takes into account all other plans—resource management plans, trail master plans, and architectural plan packages—and considers the site, the architecture, and the resources in their entirety, the focus remains on the visitor. The aim of an interpretive plan is to identify those strategies that will help the visitor become aware of, understand, and embrace a unifying message (theme) conveyed through the media. In the greater context of planning for West Coyote Hills, it is the interpretive planning effort that addresses resource management issues while remaining responsive to the needs and interests of visitors. Specifically, it aims to accomplish the following:

- ❖ Help people connect with the resource
- ❖ Accomplish the mission of West Coyote Hills
- ❖ Inspire and enlighten in order to open minds and promote stewardship

It is important to note that interpretation is not the presentation of facts, but rather the presentation of material that piques curiosity and relates to the audience's experiences. Freeman Tilden, an early champion of interpretation, suggested that the primary interests of visitors to sites of natural beauty and cultural significance are in whatever touches their personalities, experiences, or ideals. However it is defined, it's all about communication and the effectiveness of provoking thought.

Interpretation has five essential qualities. It is **purposeful**—it serves the visitor as well as the institution's mission. It is **enjoyable**—it is entertaining, stimulating, interactive, and multi-sensory. It is **relevant** in ways that are meaningful and personal. Meaningful content links to something the audience already knows; it becomes personal when linked to something the audience already cares about. Interpretation is also **organized**. The media are well planned,

sequential, and easy to follow. Last, it is **thematic**. It focuses on a central message about the subject matter that serves to connect facts and concepts together as a unifying whole. A theme organizes the media, allowing the visitor to know where the presentation is going, making it easier to connect it to other information.

Topics, Tangibles, and Intangibles

The committee came up with a number of suggested topics for interpretation. These are summarized in the third appendix. Topics serve as the potential subject matter for the interpretive media. For West Coyote Hills, they range from elements of natural history, including the site's flora and fauna, specific habitat types, secluded canyons and topography, and seasons and life cycles, to elements of human history, including American Indian heritage, Spanish and Mexican land grants, sheep and cattle ranching, and oil exploration. They also point to layers of relationships between humans and nature—the history of interactions, our dependence on natural systems to sustain our lives and livelihoods, and the value of preservation to the human spirit and the human community.

The committee clustered (and re-clustered) the topics into categories which would later help inform development of the theme.



Planning by Post-Its

In interpretation, it is important to build the story “up,” rather than just “across.” In order to help visitors connect to meanings emotionally as well as intellectually (meaning, care enough about West Coyote Hills to help care **for** West Coyote Hills) it is important to link those tangible resources, such as its secluded canyons, sages, and gnatcatchers, with intangible meanings. These intangible meanings go beyond topics to embrace universally recognized values such as human heritage and the conservation of nature and wild places. When this is accomplished, visitors experience “the spirit of place” in a very personal, relevant, and emotional way.

Remember, it isn't just a chunk of concrete. It's an iconic symbol of the Cold War.

Interpretive goals

Before delving into goals, it is important to revert back to the December 6 summary notes in which visitor experiences at West Coyote Hills were identified. "Importance of access" is defined by the following opportunities: offer recreation and education, connect with nature, become aware of native plants and wildlife, savor experiences in the outdoors, build a lifelong sense of stewardship, celebrate nearby natural habitats, study a "living laboratory," learn about the region's cultural history, improve the communities' quality of life, and increase "connectivity" with other trails.

Moving forward, based on these opportunities, the committee began to think about goals. Goals are statements of desired outcomes that guide programs and management or operations functions. They articulate what interpretation is meant to do for West Coyote Hills, its visitors, and its management. They guide the formation of interpretive media and services during the planning process and permit accurate and meaningful evaluation of interpretive programming before, during, and after development. Later, we will develop a series of specific and measurable objectives that correspond to each goal. They provide the actual basis for such evaluation.

Educational directives related to West Coyote Hills focus on a desire to impart knowledge and cultivate an appreciative audience. To do this, interpretation must address both the cognitive and affective realms—the logical as well as the emotional aspects of the mind. People will not make behavioral changes if they only *understand* an issue; they must also feel that the topic has some relevance to their lives and that a behavioral change will bring one or more valued benefits.

Every interpretive experience should be designed, therefore, to have an emotional or affective component as well as an intellectual or cognitive component, leading ultimately to a desired behavioral change. However, unlike visitor knowledge and visitor behavior, visitor feelings and attitudes are difficult to measure with accuracy and certainty that a specified variable is having an effect. Even so, progress toward attainment of affective goals often can be measured indirectly—inferred from measurement of visitor behavior, since behavioral changes are typically preceded by changes in attitude or affect.

The following goals represent a blending of input received during the March 26 planning session and subsequent work by The Acorn Group. Goal statements received during the meeting are recorded in the second appendix.

Combined, these affective, cognitive, and behavioral goals will ensure interpretation is aimed at helping visitors feel connected to both the rich human heritage and natural history of West Coyote Hills, while understanding and valuing it. Once the goals are approved, corresponding objectives will be developed.

Emotional Goals

Visitors of all ages and abilities will feel safe and comfortable¹ on the trails.

Visitors will have a satisfying and enjoyable time at West Coyote Hills² on the trails and in the nature center.

Visitors will value the efforts of reclaiming West Coyote Hill's oil fields and restoring the wildlife habitat.

Visitors will appreciate the rich human heritage of West Coyote Hills.

Visitors will appreciate the rich natural heritage of West Coyote Hills, including its wildlife, vegetation, and geographical and geological features.

Visitors will recognize that the landscape has changed over time, most recently during the past two centuries.

Visitors will feel they have an important role to play as land stewards of West Coyote Hills.

Visitors will recognize that appropriate behaviors are expected of them.

Cognitive Goals

Visitors will gain an understanding of the human settlements and activities that occurred historically on this land.

Visitors will become familiar with the plants and animals associated with West Coyote Hills' habitats, including coastal sage scrub, southern cactus scrub, and southern willow scrub.

Visitors will gain an understanding of the geography of the Los Angeles Basin and the coastal plain of Orange County, and how it has changed over time.

Visitors will gain an understanding of the geological forces at work at West Coyote Hills.

Visitors will gain an understanding of how to act as land stewards of West Coyote Hills.

Visitors will know the rules and regulations that help protect and manage the resources of West Coyote Hills and the reasons they are in place.

¹ Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs states that people need to have certain basic needs (physiology, safety, and security) fulfilled before they can move on to pursue higher levels of need, such as self-fulfillment. Since interpretation occurs at a higher level, first meeting basic visitor needs is essential to its effectiveness.

² West Coyote Hills includes the Robert E. Ward Nature Preserve.

Behavioral Goals

Visitors, primarily those on foot and horseback, will spend at least one hour on the trails, actively engaged with the interpretive media.

Visitors will visit the nature center and spend at least one hour involved in the interior exhibits and displays, as well as loop trail and exterior exhibits.

Visitors will demonstrate heightened awareness of, understanding of, and support for West Coyote Hills through their adherence to rules and regulations.

Visitors will engage in activities that are appropriate on specific trails.

Interpretive themes and sub-themes

The committee then was asked to think about and develop draft themes for West Coyote Hills. They worked in subgroups and reported back to the larger committee. Their ideas are summarized in the fourth appendix.



A theme is the principle message, or story, about the subject matter which serves to connect topics and concepts together as a unifying whole. A theme allows for a linkage of important ideas concerning the topic(s) the committee identified. It is well documented that theme-based interpretation is easier to comprehend and recall at a later point. It serves as an “advance organizer,” giving the visitor a sense of where the exhibit media are going and making it easier to connect their content to other information.

Although the central theme may or may not be articulated verbatim in media or programs, it is the conclusion that we hope visitors will reach on their own after experiencing the exhibits and the impression that will linger long after the details of the visit have been forgotten.

Sub-themes further develop the central theme, allowing for a logical progression into storylines. Typically a well-planned experience conveys three to five sub-themes, all of which are subordinate, but directly related, to the central theme.

The following represents a synthesis of ideas proposed by the committee during the interpretive planning session. It is important to keep in mind the theme and sub-themes do not appear in print. Rather, these statements focus the media and offer a thread that weaves the stories together.

Proposed overarching theme

Once the gathering grounds of the Tongva, the grazing lands of ranchers, and the oil fields of wildcatters, West Coyote Hill's open space now returns to a more pristine, natural state. Its restored habitats support wildlife, enriching our spirit and our natural heritage.

Sub-themes

The human history of West Coyote Hills spans thousands of years. Footprints from the past have etched the land.

A mosaic of habitats is found in West Coyote Hills. Diverse plant communities support wildlife, some of which is threatened.

West Coyote Hills is the focus of habitat restoration, monitoring, and protection. Active stewardship of the land is a responsibility we all share.

The interpretive matrix, attached as a PDF document, displays this information hierarchically. The theme is supported by the sub-themes. The sub-themes in turn are supported by key messages. Key messages keep information "in check," ensuring that we cover important material, keep the interpretive goals in mind, and avoid straying from the theme and sub-themes. Not all key messages are equally weighted.

Action steps:

Please review this meeting report and the interpretive matrix. 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 April 24, 2009. At that time, we will finalize the interpretive summary and matrix, and continue our working developing the interpretive master plan.

We would like to schedule the next planning session with the Trails and Open Space Advisory Committee in May. This session will likely take place at West Coyote Hills and will focus on trail types and the trail routing plan.

Appendix 1: meeting agenda

West Coyote Hills Interpretive Planning Workshop March 26, 2009 Agenda

Introductions

Introduction to the interpretive master plan—what it will accomplish and how it differs from facility master plans, resource management plans, and strategic plans

Overview of the 5M approach to interpretive planning—understanding how the mission statement, target markets, mechanics of the site, messages, and selected media work together,

All-group work

Identifying topics for interpretation

Clustering topics into a coherent structure

Sub-group work

Developing draft interpretive goals, theme, and sub-themes.

All-group reporting

Next steps

Appendix 2: suggested visitor goals

committee member 1

- Visitors will [have a] lifelong sense of WCH's unique beauty and sense of place that creates a sense of stewardship.
- "In the end we will conserve only what we love. We love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught." Senegalese ecologist, Baba Dioum.
- [Visitors will] understand, respect, value, treasure, and support this native habitat.

committee member 2

- A small piece of nature can impact you every day.
- Open space is worth [the] effort to preserve.

committee member 3

- Visitors should be enlightened; should open their awareness.
- Appreciation for [the] intelligent effort to preserve open space and transform a degraded environment to something that impacts people and nature positively.
- A laboratory for kids to learn and for healthy life styles to be encouraged via recreation and fresh awareness.

committee member 4

- Consideration of land use is one of the most important responsibilities of the citizenry.
- Enjoyment of natural beauty is made possible by man's stewardship of resources available to him.
- A personal relationship with nature is important to the soul.

Committee member 5

- Appreciation of our unique nature[al] environment—open space and nature.
- Awareness of the value of the environment and stewardship
- Joy of psychological renewal, exercise, relaxation, and recreation.

Committee member 6

- Obtain a respect for nature, an appreciation for the ecology and majesty of the habitat.
- Gain understanding of nature/human relationship, i.e., how we can save the natural environment and still do for ourselves.
- Learn something new about the environment/history.

Committee member 7

- Emotional: Preserving the highest points will result in visitors experiencing awe/wonder at the beauty and vastness of the Earth.
- Awareness of the value of the environment and stewardship
- Joy of psychological renewal, exercise, relaxation, and recreation.

Committee member 8

- Develop an understanding and appreciation for the natural beauty of the area and encourage its use.
- Explain the geology of the area.

- Explain the flora and fauna of the area.

Committee member 9

- To remember the trails as a landmark and a place to return to soon.
- To understand the importance of the natural wildlife and undisturbed state of fauna, etc. and to value it.
- To take pride in the City of Fullerton and to want to protect and preserve trail resources and open space.

Committee member 10

- In touch with the value of nature.
- Understand the value of natural system of life (cycle of life).
- Value of being in harmony with nature.

Committee member 11

- Visitors should feel a physical connection and an ownership with the land.
- Visitors should come away with an appreciation of the interconnectedness and interdependence of life.
- Visitors should understand that man is part of the natural ecology.

Committee member 12

- Get reconnected with nature (local story).
- Sense of place regarding historical phases: Native Americans/Ranchos/Oil operations/Development
- How to capture recreational users and bring them aboard.

Committee member 13

- To leave with a sense of the delicate balance between man and the natural world.
- Understand nature's reaction to: a. Man's presence and 2. Ability to compensate for climatic conditions.
- An appreciation for man's historic activities on site.

Committee member 14

- Visitors would feel refreshed and energized.
- Visitors would be able to connect with nature.
- Property would provide venue to allow families and friends to connect with each other.

Committee member 15

- To foster appreciation for the natural ecosystem, of Coyote Hills as a valuable community asset.
- To encourage visitors to share their experience in the Hills with family and neighbors.
- To promote personal and community stewardship of the natural [and] built environment of Coyote Hills.

Committee member 16

- Appreciate that long-term sustainability of the land requires that each of us becomes a good steward.
- To foster appreciation of the natural ecosystem of Coyote Hills as a valuable community asset.
- To provide people a place to exercise and recreate in a healthy outdoor environment.

Committee member 17

- Create an appreciation of open space and nature.
- To provide people a place to exercise in an outdoor, healthy environment.

Committee member 18

- Island of nature (flora, fauna) in suburbia.
- Awareness of history.

Committee member 19

- Appreciate that coastal sage scrub is an essential feature of the ecosystem of WCH.
- Appreciate that long-term sustainability of the land requires that each of us becomes a good steward.
- Appreciate that humans are part of an ecosystem of living and non-living things without which we cannot survive.

Appendix 3: suggested topics

Broad opportunities:	foundation opportunities, partnership with other similar organizations, grant opportunities, volunteer opportunities, why Fullerton cares, park versus preserve, homeless people, endowed, shared use
Issues:	litter, litter control ² , animal control [proximity to neighborhoods]
Engaging youth:	children's activities, multi-age interest, educational opportunities, laughter of children, passive and active learning, exercise ² , educational, a place for learning, discovery, trails to get youth away from computers and video games, fun—creatively engaging, hands-on, senses (sight, touch, smell, hear, taste)
Other elements:	trail guides, self-guided or docent-led tours, gathering spot for events or education [programs], staff
Trail experiences:	recreation ³ , trailer users, trail running ² , horses ² , mountain bikes, trails
Trail planning:	erosion control ⁴ (keep the surfaces permeable), accessibility, access to nature center trails, accessibility of center to the physically challenged, use of trails, protection of species [through design], protection of resources [through design], preserve the rustic nature, hours of availability, security, safe trails, sustainable funding, quality trails, interconnection of trails ⁴ [to each other and to regional and local trails],
Trail amenities:	parking, water for people and pets ² , availability of restrooms ² and water stations, mileage markers, benches
Trail types:	trail diversity (easy, moderate, difficult), trail surface, active and positive versus reactive and negative, trails for health/wellness and fitness, dirt trails,
Human history:	oil wells ² , history of site, native inhabitants, historical uses [of site] and inhabitants, history of the land and people, oil field history ² , historical oil operations, history of Coyote Hills, human history
Sense of place:	island, retreat, rejuvenation, sounds of nature, solitude, renewal, harmony, healthy living, quality of life, nature in an urban area, highest and best use of the land, sense of place; peace, quiet, tranquility
Flora:	trees ³ , plants ² , cactus, trees and shade, seeds, seed pods and propagation, weeds, chaparral, "flora and fauna," coastal sage, unique vegetation, habitat of species, life cycles "natural," uniqueness of coastal sage scrub system, scents, smells after rain

Superscript numbers denote frequency of response.

Geology: secluded canyons, topography³, vistas⁴, views² of mountains and oceans, scenic views,

General ecology: unique natural beauty, seasons, drought tolerant beauty

Wildlife: wildlife, small, hard-to-find insects, spiders, lizards, snakes, food web ecology, birds³, bird calls, gnatcatchers, critters, coyotes, protection of species, sensitive species, endangered species, fauna; coyotes, wildlife and horses

Humans and nature: man and nature in harmony, nexus of man and nature, a pathway for nature, history of man and interaction, interdependence of people and the environment, community and home, ecological appreciation of the natural environment, interact[ion] with nature

Stewardship: stewardship, stewards of the land, community support and stewardship

Appendix 4: suggested interpretive themes

An outdoor laboratory/classroom to observe, discover, and connect

Hunters and gatherers—living off the land

The interconnectedness and interdependence or web between flora and fauna

By saving Coyote Hills, we are actually saving a view and connection with all of Southern California. From downtown LA, out to Palos Verdes and Catalina Island and all the way to Laguna Beach. It goes well beyond Fullerton and the Coyote Hills.

West Coyote Hills as a place that enables environmental and historical awareness, and that encourages responsible use.

The ecology of the environment is key to restoring the habitat and introducing a human presence.

Visitors will be renewed, restored, and rejuvenated by the infinite beauty of the vista (landscape). A sense of peace will permeate the soul.

The Ward Preserve center is intended to educate the public about the geology, flora, and fauna of North Fullerton, so that everyone can benefit from the natural beauty of the area.

Explain the geology of the area.

Explain the flora and fauna of the area.

Develop an understanding and appreciation for the natural beauty of the area, and encourage its use.

The use of these valued trails will enlighten your spirit and bring peace to your heart.

Visitors would gain a sense of value and respect for the nature that supports them.

Fossils to fuel—how things are affected by change.

History of place: what was there, what is left, what can be restored and reintroduced.

Coastal sage scrub is an example of natural habitat's adaptation to local conditions as seen through its yearly growth and blooming cycle.

Respect and celebrate the land's human and natural history.

North Orange County needs a place where people can experience the joys of nature and teach young people how to enjoy it without damaging it.