THE CONSERVATION REPORT:

SADDLEBACK CANYONS: SADDLE CREST LAWSUIT

Statewide CNPS has become one of five petitioners in a Petition for Writ of Mandate and Complaint for Injunctive Relief, brought against the OC Board of Supervisors, and developer Rutter Santiago LP, for the Supervisors’ approval of the Saddle Crest development. See the Nov./Dec. Newsletter for background and details on the development and OCCNPS/CNPS’ past involvement. The other petitioners are Saddleback Canyons Conservancy, Rural Canyons Conservation Fund, Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks, and Audubon California.

Statewide CNPS is an official petitioner in this OC lawsuit because statewide CNPS is the 501(c)(3) designee for the entire organization, so has the authority to take legal action on behalf of the organization. OC-CNPS, a subsidiary of statewide CNPS, does not have that authority. See cnps.org/cnps/archive/legal_actions.php for details on CNPS’ litigation requirements and procedures.

The Petition was filed on Oct. 31. Despite this pending lawsuit, the OC Subdivision Committee approved a Vesting Tentative Tract Map (VTTM) for Saddle Crest on Nov. 14. Petitioners immediately appealed that decision to the Board of Supervisors, which in turn upheld the approval on Dec. 18.

Petitioners now see no choice but to file a separate suit contesting the VTTM’s approval, to ensure that that approval can be set aside later. This is because, under the law, a VTTM may take on a life of its own. Even if the project EIR and all other approvals are overturned in court, a developer could still have “vested rights” based on the tract map—the right to develop as planned, provided the development complies with any “public benefit” conditions placed on the tentative map by the approving jurisdiction.

OCCNPS’ main point remains that the proposed mitigations for loss of the site’s populations of Calochortus weedii intermedius and Nolina cismontana (both CRPR 1B.2) do not fulfill CEQA requirements. So the EIR is inadequate, the Board of Supervisors’ initial approval of the project was in error, and the VTTM approval was premature.

ACTION NOW: Go to fhbp.org/programs/saddleback-canyons.html to help support both lawsuits, and preservation of the Saddleback Canyons.

PUENTE-CHINO HILLS

Three new developments are in the works for private lands near Chino Hills State Park—lands that should be preserved as part of the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor; details and background: hillsforeveryone.org/projects/index.html.

ACTION NOW: Especially if you live in northern OC, speak up for preservation during the upcoming public comment periods, and donate to help preserve the Hills’ much-needed natural open space at hillsforeveryone.org/donate/index.html.

LOS CERRITOS WETLANDS

The Los Cerritos Wetland Authority has been working since 2001 to preserve and restore the approximately 500 acres of wetlands remaining along the San Gabriel River in Long Beach and Seal Beach; info and background: lcwetlands.org/index.html.

ACTION NOW: If you live in the Seal Beach area, join CNPS’ South Coast Chapter (which has long been involved with this project) at the fifth public workshop on the Los Cerritos Conceptual Restoration Plan, at the Seal Beach Senior Center on Jan. 31.

—Celia Kutcher, Conservation Chair

Native Gardener’s Corner—Members’ Tips, Tricks, and Techniques

This column is a regular newsletter feature offering chapter members and local experts a chance to briefly share information on many things related to gardening with natives.

This Issue’s question was “What is the dominant style or theme of the native garden you have installed (or are planning to install) to replace your lawn?”

Answers are listed in order received.

Celia Kutcher—“My garden is based on southern OC coastal CSS natives, includes a few elements from SoCal's offshore islands &
Like a golden dagger inlaid with emerald

much admired for its gaudy decoration, so these hills are venerated for how they light up every year with green-shine grass and brilliant mustard glow.

What if one day you heard the story of the dagger’s history: “With this weapon so-and-so stabbed and killed your great-great-grandfather. And his wife.”

I think about this sometimes after rain stirs the patient hills back into color: emerald sheen of noxious annuals, golden epidemic of mustard flower—

weapons of death in our Orange County wildlands.

What is in the eyes of the beholder?

Thea Gavin

southerly San Diego county, all in an informal, naturalistic layout. In large containers, a more eclectic selection includes summer-flowering species from Baja and Sonora.”

Rama Nayeri: “I recently did a design in Laguna Beach that was a combination of natives and edibles. That is the style that I am currently intrigued by. I love using natives but also enjoy the idea that you can feast from your own garden.”

Ron Vanderhoff “Theme? I always have great intentions, but the theme usually evolves to ‘Whatever catches my eye – that the cats won’t kill – that is cheap – that is rare – that is ultra-low maintenance – that is cool.’ Every once in a while one or two of those criteria intersect.”

Laura Camp: “I have a mostly Baja plants garden in my front yard, and a local natives/Ortega Highway plants garden in my side yard and back yard. I also have quite a few plants, especially manzanitas, that come from other parts of the state.”

Alison Shilling “My theme is Eclectic collector’s. I ripped up the lawn in September of 2008, went to a local native nursery, and bought 1 to 3 of each of my favorites. My ‘design’ consisted of planting tall ones at the back, small at the front, and shade lovers under the eaves. Whenever I find myself at a plant sale, I have to buy at least one and find a place for it!”

Bob Allen “My soil in Mission Viejo is 100% sand with no NPK and no organics! I’ve learned that plants from the Channel Islands do best.”

Sarah Sarkissian “Front yard mostly local natives with some Mediterranean while the back yard is mostly local natives, with edibles in different zones.”

Stephanie Pachecho “My dominant style is to combine a wildlife habitat with natives, plus a “transition” garden with fruits, vegetables, and rain barrels.”

Charles Wright “Our tiny townhouse garden in Irvine has a cottage garden theme for my wife, roses being the main feature. To this are added water source for birds, bougainvillea for cover, and California natives that fit in: blue-eyed grass, maidenhair fern, Cleveland sage for pollinators, coral bells, and ribes and more to come to attract hummers and butterflies. Our mountain home is almost all native appropriate for a high desert environment with herbs and a few other plants for color. I’ve had best luck nurturing what is there.”

Mark Sugars “Local Habitat is the dominant theme of my front yard; therefore, the plants are those of Irvine’s Coastal Sage Scrub community, and all are the wild variety thereof: Rhus integrifolia, Salvia apiana, Salvia mellifera, Baccharis pilularis, Artemisia californica, Eriogonum fasciculatum and Encelia californica, with Rosa californica representing the former natural wetlands near my home—one does what one can.”

Thea Gavin “My back yard is eclectic, full of lovely locals (buckwheat, needlegrass, coyote brush, sagebrush) mixed with some desert beauties (desert willow, desert lavender, big basin sage). Then it rains. Then the wildflowers pop. All the time, the vegetable garden welcomes the pollinators, birds and lizards who make their homes in the native plants.”

Trude Hurd “The theme for our curbside is Short Perennial Natives. I wanted southern California native plants that were no more than 1-3 feet high so they didn’t block the view of the house, leafy all year, a variety of flower colors, enduring full sun and low water. So I planted Seaside Daisy, Blue-eyed Grass, Yarrow, Sundrops, and Desert Penstemen with two species of Dudleya at both ends. It took us 2.5 months and 23 saw blades to remove all the liquid amber tree roots (many as big as my arm and thigh) plus the entire Thanksgiving week vacation to break up the hardened clay and gravel layer. Neighbors noticed our hard work, and I hope next year they will see how attractive CA natives are and consider them for their own yards since too many are “planting” concrete or gravel. I want to educate them in addition to having something nice for wildlife and myself!”

Dan Songster “When I finally remove my dying olive tree and launch into my front yard landscape, I plan a blend of coastal sage scrub and chaparral in the front half of the yard and mostly oak woodland plants in what will become the courtyard. Of course, there will be the inevitable addition of odd plants from my travels or plant gifts that I cannot resist. Oh, and native bulbs!”

Sarah Jayne “The inspiration for my garden came from many walks in the backcountry of Crystal Cove State Park. I wanted all the scents and textures in my own back yard. Now I have a sixty-foot sycamore so anything that required full sun is gone. But the sycamore provides shade in the summer and bare branches in the winter. I still love it, fallen leaves and all.”

Garden Tour, May 4, 2013
The Garden Tour Committee will be visiting gardens in January and February. Brand new to well established, large and small, we like to offer a wide variety of gardens. Front yard lawn conversions are of special interest. Of course, for our tour, gardens should emphasize the use of California native plants, but need not be exclusively so. We like vegetables too. If you would like us to help you decide, just let us know and we’ll set up a time to come by.

There are other ways to participate in the tour. Docents are needed for each garden and we can always use help with the preparations. We’ll be calling.

Contact the Garden Tour Committee through Sarah Jayne, sbjayne@cox.net. We look forward to hearing from you.
Chapter Meetings
Chapter meetings are held on the third Thursday of the month, except during July and August. Unless otherwise stated, meetings take place at the Duck Club in Irvine. Doors open at 6:45 pm; the program begins at 7:30.

Thursday, January 17: Chaparral, Wrentits, and Grizzly Bears
Speaker: Richard Halsey
Of all the distinct, native plant communities in California, only one is found throughout the state—from the Rogue River Valley in southern Oregon to San Pedro Martir in Baja California. Chaparral is California’s most extensive native plant community. It is also the state’s most characteristic wilderness, dominating foothills and mountain slopes. Mr. Halsey will take us on an exploration of chaparral’s unique natural history, reveal the truth concerning its many myths and surprising mysteries, and demonstrate why it represents such a vital link to nature for all Californians.

Richard W. Halsey is a writer, photographer, and the director of the California Chaparral Institute, a non-profit research and educational organization dedicated to the preservation of native shrubland habitats throughout the world and supporting the creative spirit as inspired by the natural environment.

Mr. Halsey also works with the San Diego Museum of Natural History, publishes The Chaparralian, a periodic journal focusing on chaparral and wildfire issues, and continues to teach natural history. He has conducted numerous research projects and published several papers concerning the ecology of California’s chaparral ecosystem. In addition, he has been trained as a Type II wildland firefighter, past an age most would consider prudent. The second edition of his book, *Fire, Chaparral, and Survival in Southern California*, was published in 2008 and was awarded the Best Nonfiction-Local Interest Book by the San Diego Book Awards Association.

Thursday—February 21: A Botanical Tour of the San Emigdio Mountains Region of California
Speaker: Pam De Vries
The San Emigdio Mountains Region is situated at the junction of several distinct geographic ecoregions including the Mojave Desert, the Transverse Ranges, and the Great Central Valley. This tour of the rich and varied flora of the region begins with a visit to the lower elevation wildflower fields of the Gorman Hills off Interstate 5, renowned for its brilliant spring displays. We will also visit Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge where California condors are often in view and the federally listed Kern mallow (*Eremalche parryi* subsp. *kernensis*) grows at its highest known elevation. Next is a quick trip through the juniper and oak woodlands of the region before climbing in elevation to the pinyon/Jeffrey pine forests and sub-alpine habitats of Frazier Mountain and Mount Pinos. Finally, we’ll check out riparian and seep habitats, western blue flag meadows (*Iris missouriensis*), and visit a high elevation vernal pool with its infrequent display of Hoover’s calico flower (*Downingiabella*). Photographs of common and rare plants will be presented, along with maps showing access points and trail information.

Pam De Vries holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Botany from California State Polytechnic University, Pomona; and a Master of Science degree in Biology from California State University, Fullerton. She has worked as a botanical consultant in southern California since the mid-1990’s. In 2006, she and her husband moved to Pine Mountain Club in the San Emigdio Mountains region. In addition to working as an independent botanical consultant, she also provides occasional botanical survey and research assistance on a volunteer basis to the Los Padres National Forest and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Her recently published book, *A Field Guide to the Plants of the San Emigdio Mountains Region of California*, describes over 190 herbs, shrubs, and trees found in the region. A few of these books will be on sale after her presentation and Pam is willing to sign copies for chapter members.

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**2012 Native Perennial Award**

Perennials are identified by their woody roots and the faithful reappearance of new growth each year from those roots. Some have splashy flowers; some go about their business quietly and persistently behind the scenes and also in full flower on stage.

The achievements are many: Our first garden tour in 2002; a plant science program for third grade with Orange County’s Inside the Outdoors program; interest centers around the meeting room (to keep people from sitting too soon in the uncomfortable chairs); establishment of chapter teams; years as chapter treasurer; president 2010 to 2012.

And at the state level: Chapter Council chairman; Board of Directors president; Board of Directors treasurer; Board of Directors Finance and Investment Committee; Rare Plant Inventory Data Base Project; and—on going—the *Manual of California Vegetation*, 2nd edition, Database Project. Not to mention generous financial support.

The latest exciting local project, in its initial stages, came from an invitation to our chapter to assist with the conversion of a large public landscape to water-conserving native plants.

For all this and a great deal more, we thank Brad Jenkins.
Scanlon, Therese Thavirat, and Abby Truman. We hope to see you at a Pratt, Mari Quillman, Lynn Sandweiss, Rita Sanglerat, Marianne McDivitt, Sharon McKinstry, Manuella Melchert, Gayle Middleton, Scott Moore, Krista Micholds, Max Oueudorff, Cathy Pazemenas, Riley Pratt, Mari Quillman, Lynn Sandweiss, Rita Sanglerat, Marianne Scanlon, Therese Thavirat, and Abby Truman. We hope to see you at a meeting or a field trip soon!

Many thanks to retiring board members Rich Schilk (taking on a new role as Dad) and Mike Field (taking on new duties as Granddad). A warm welcome to new board member Chris Barnhill.

MEMBERSHIP CORNER—January/February 2013

We have a very large number of new members to welcome, and we are very thankful for a great year for membership in the Orange County chapter of CNPS. We currently boast the highest number of members we have ever had as a chapter (approximately 380). But rather than rest on our laurels, the chapter board and membership committee has two priorities: 1) satisfy our current members with relevant programs, improved information and compelling reasons to continue their membership, and 2) continue to increase membership at least 10% per year. After all, our county has a population of about three million people, and there is still a lot of work to do to increase the visibility of our organization, protect local native plants habitats and rare plants, support statewide protection efforts such as those in the deserts, promote the use of native plants in public and private gardens, and so much more. We look forward to a year of creative, productive fun!

And on to our new members – thank you for joining us: Bret Burns, Tom Cannon, Cynthia Cassady, Walter Crone, James Day, Frederique de Lame, Ginny du Rivage, Sandra Fazio, Sonia Hernandez, Ruthi Horner, Rosemary Kastner, Travis Kegel, Scott Kramer, Monty McDivitt, Sharon McKinstry, Manuella Melchert, Gayle Middleton, Scott Moore, Krista Micholds, Max Oueudorff, Cathy Pazemenas, Riley Pratt, Mari Quillman, Lynn Sandweiss, Rita Sanglerat, Marianne Scanlon, Therese Thavirat, and Abby Truman. We hope to see you at a meeting or a field trip soon!