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Orange County

Essential Investments in Orange County

With California voters' strong support for ballot measures to fund conservation, our state has invested wisely in protecting our land, water and parks. These essential investments have strengthened California's economy by enhancing our environment, attracting tourists and creating jobs.

In Orange County, these investments are increasing and improving the local water supply to ensure residents have clean, safe drinking water. They're restoring vast swaths of coastal wetlands and wildlife habitats. They're promoting healthier lifestyles by opening coastal lands to the public for hiking and exploring, and they're assisting in the recovery of threatened and endangered species.

Although we have made great improvements, there is still much to be done. The future of all of California — from its wide diversity of plants and animals to the wide diversity of people who live here — depends on these essential investments in the land, water and parks that make the Golden State the unique and promising place we all cherish. Among the noteworthy investments in Orange County are:

CRYSTAL COVE

Crystal Cove is one of Southern California's gems, a beloved beach and expansive parkland north of Laguna Beach that offers nearly 2,400 acres of woodland for hikers, 3.5 miles of scenic coastline, equestrian trails for horseback riders and miles of roads and trails for bikers. Crystal Cove's underwater park boasts dolphins, harbor seals, gray whales, thresher sharks, sea lions and many other species for divers, snorkelers and beachgoers to see up close. Crystal Cove's historic district features 46 vintage cottages and is considered to be the last of Southern California's beach colonies. More than \$11.5 million in Proposition 40 funds helped pay for the restoration of these cottages that are now open to the public. The project won the Governor's Award for Historic Preservation in 2007.

GROUNDWATER REPLENISHMENT SYSTEM

The largest water purification system of its kind, Orange County's Groundwater Replenishment System in Fountain Valley produces enough water to meet the needs of 500,000 people annually. This state-of-the-art purification system reclaims wastewater and returns it to the local groundwater basin where it blends with water from the Santa Ana and Colorado rivers and the State Water Project before it is pumped into homes and businesses. The project, financed with \$37 million from Proposition 13 and funding from other sources, has been so successful that other cities consider it a model to follow in seeking new water supplies.



Crystal Cove (Orange County)
Photo: Automania/Flickr



Groundwater Replenishment System (Fountain Valley)
Photo: Orange County Water District & Jim Kutzle



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SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA INTEGRATED WATERSHED PROGRAM

The Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority (SAWPA) developed the Southern California Integrated Watershed Program in Santa Ana to alleviate dependence on imported water during drought years. It is a series of projects that have generated more than 300,000 acre-feet of water – enough to serve 2.4 million people annually. The program, financed with \$235 million from Proposition 13 and \$565 million in local agency funds, has made SAWPA a leader in watershed management for water agencies throughout the state.

BOLSA CHICA WETLANDS RESTORATION

With more than 90 percent of the state's wetlands dramatically altered or destroyed in the last two centuries, the restoration of the Bolsa Chica Wetlands in Huntington Beach has provided critical habitat for more than 200 bird species, including six endangered or threatened species, and recreational opportunities for visitors to see birds up close. Thirty years of work by local residents and organizations saved the more than 1,200 acres of coastal wetlands. More than \$10 million from Proposition 50 paid for an additional 118 acres of land at Bolsa Chica in 2005. In 2006, because of a joint effort by eight state and federal agencies, the ocean flowed directly into the Bolsa Chica wetlands for the first time in a century.

LAGUNA COAST WILDERNESS PARK

The Laguna Coast Wilderness Park lies within some of the last remaining coastal canyons in Southern California and hosts Orange County's only natural lakes. Proposition 12 funds paid for 238 acres of open space to add to the park, significantly enhancing public access to the coast and to the 20,000-acre South Coast Wilderness network of trails, coastal canyons, parks and preserves.

COAL CANYON

Environmentalists had fought for decades to save Coal Canyon, a critical link between Chino Hills State Park and the Cleveland National Forest. Once designated for housing and an industrial park, funding from Propositions 12 and 40 helped protect 650 acres in the canyon near Corona as open space, an acquisition heralded as one of the most important wildlife corridors preserved in the United States.



Southern California Integrated Watershed Program (Santa Ana)
Photo: Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority



Bolsa Chica Wetlands Restoration (Huntington Beach)
Photo: Bolsa Chica Conservancy & Adrienne Morrison



Laguna Coast Wilderness Park (Orange County)
Photo: OC Parks

CONSERVING CALIFORNIA

A public education program about our essential investments in land, water and parks presented by Audubon California, California Council of Land Trusts, Ocean Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy and WiLDCOAST.

For more information, please visit our website:
www.conservingcalifornia.org

