

Hills For Everyone

Friends of the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor



Newsletter No. 52

Spring 2025

Dave Myers, Park Visionary Dies



Dave on a tour with State Park staff and Claire Schlotterbeck. Then, Dave Myers at a press event (1983) and map of the State Park as envisioned.

We are heartbroken to share the news of the passing of Dave Myers, founder of Hills For Everyone and creator of Chino Hills State Park. Dave grew up in La Habra, hiking throughout the Puente-Chino Hills. He used to say there were no warnings on the back side of a "No Trespassing" sign, so he went exploring. In those boyhood forays into the hills, he fell in love with the land.

In the mid-1970s, after watching one too many ridgelines levelled and one too many streams buried under fill dirt, Dave decided to save these hills by audaciously and successfully promoting the idea of a State Park in Chino Hills. Dave not only designed the Park, he also led many early fights to fend off housing developments and an international airport.

Dave took pictures of the wildlife in the hills to show what could be saved or lost. He developed literature and maps. He attended planning meetings in surrounding cities to promote better land use policies. He generated support letters from local cities who preferred to see a park rather than an airport as the backdrop to their cities. He rallied legislative support from both sides of the aisle including that of Assemblymember Ross Johnson, who led the funding effort for the next 20 years in the Assembly and the Senate.

On occasion Dave sued jurisdictions—even writing the legal briefs himself. One lawsuit saved the natural ridgelines in eastern Yorba Linda. Another forced Edison to remove miles of obsolete power lines.

Chino Hills State Park now encompasses over 14,100 acres with another 2,000 in the works. Dave's Park sits at the juncture of Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, and Riverside Counties. It has become the anchor parcel for a 28,000-acre complex of conserved lands. Following

his direct work with Hills For Everyone, Dave went on to establish The Wildlands Conservancy, which is responsible for saving 2.3 million acres across California and beyond. While leading Wildlands, he still directed funding toward the State Park via supporting the acquisition of Coal Canyon and construction of the Discovery Center.

Though David believed in science-supported conservation, it was as important to him that conservation bring reverence for beauty and nature back into our lives.

Dave died peacefully at his home in Oak Glen on March 9. He was 73. Through his vision and boldness, he kept the beauty of wildlands and wildlife alive in the heart of one of the most urbanized regions on the planet.

If you want to honor his memory and express your gratitude, call your representatives in Washington D.C. Ask them to protect public lands from being sold off, defunded, and opened up to mining and oil exploration. Call 1-866-584-5792.



Local Ballot Victories

The final results of the important park-related measures from the local elections are now in. All three of the measures we endorsed have been approved by voters. All three will provide protective policies or funding for the wildlands in our hills.

The statewide Proposition 4 Bond Act passed, with 60% approval. We now have a funding source to buy the last main ridgeline for Chino Hills State Park to protect it from housing. And, California can continue to address climate change impacts.

Measure JJ in Yorba Linda received a whopping 90% approval. This vote approved the Housing Element in the City's General Plan, hopefully avoiding future battles over open space lands next to the State Park.

Finally, Measure PH on the ballot in various communities in the Puente Hills in Los Angeles County received 68% of the vote. This measure will provide funding for the Habitat Authority to improve the plants and animal communities, increase ranger services, and maintain the trails of that ~4,000 acres of protected land.

The election showed that no matter what your party preference is, people voted to protect land.



Melanie Schlotterbeck

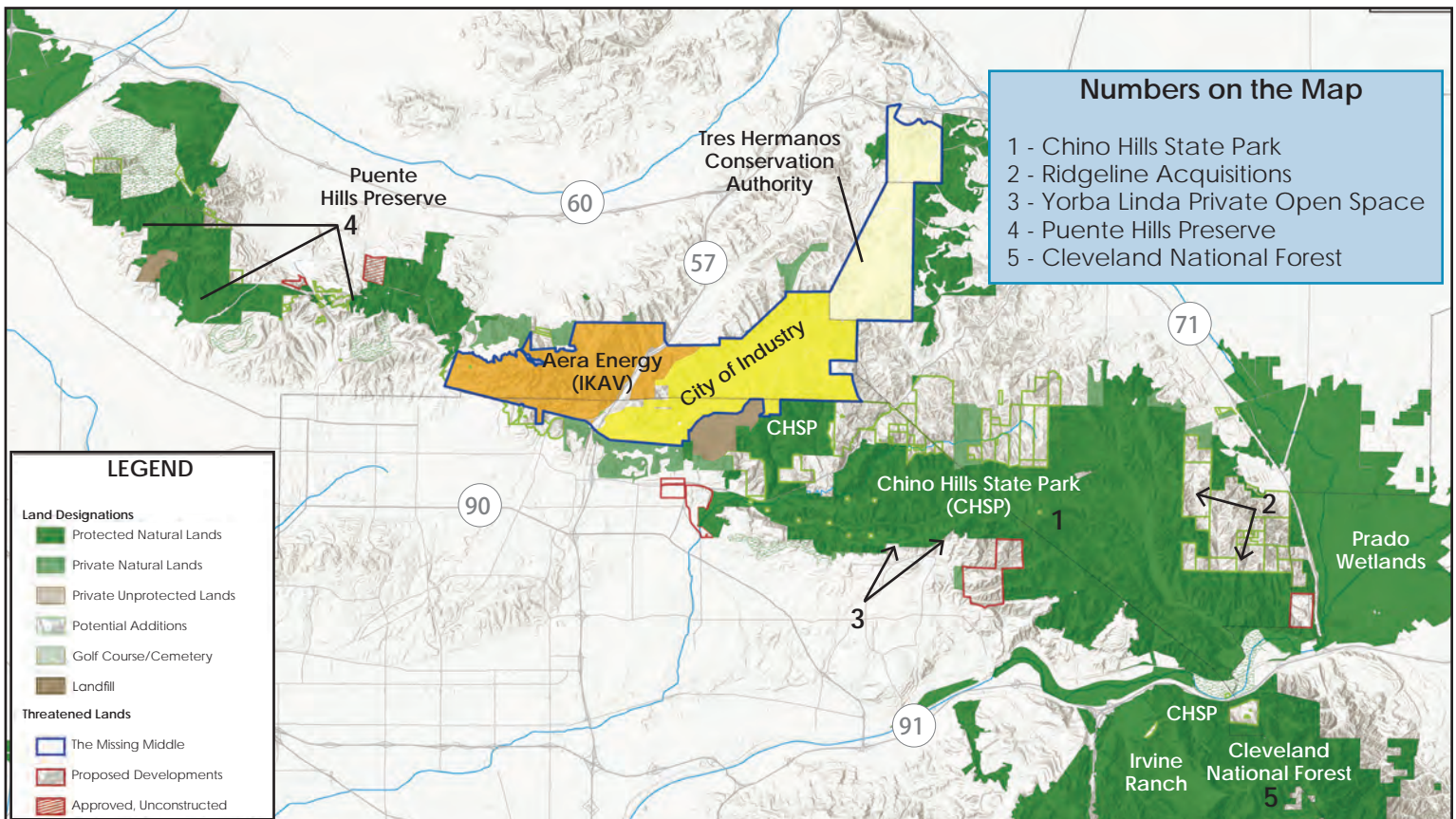
Defend our Parks & Forests

Once the Trump Administration took office in January and gutted funding for the National Park Service, we joined nationwide bipartisan advocates to defend our public lands like National Forests, National Parks, and National Monuments. The Cleveland National Forest is a core part of our Wildlife Corridor. These debilitating and demoralizing cuts in operational funding and staffing can ruin not only the land itself, but also the visitor experience. During the last closure, rangers watched their beloved land irreparably damaged by lawless visitors. This loss of services will also ruin local, mostly rural, economies that depend on tourism.

Impacts of closures of federal lands will cascade into local, regional, and state parks as they are forced to absorb crowds without the extra funding to manage it. For example, in California, federal public lands provide 30,000 campsites, while our State Parks provide only 14,000, creating quite a shortfall when the federal lands close.

So much is in flux. We still don't know the status of the \$3.874 million that the federal government had formally agreed to provide to buy the eastern ridgeline of the State Park. Efforts are afoot to allow for oil and gas exploration and mining operations on federal lands. Please reach out to your Congressional representative and Senators Schiff and Padilla urging them to defend our public lands. **We need to speak up for the land, just as Dave Myers did. If not you, then who? If not now, then when?**

Mapping the Corridor Projects



Habitat, Houses, and Hardening

Did you know that Iowa (shown right) has no species found only in Iowa, but California has over 2,100 species found only in California?

In California, we live in a remarkable and ancient landscape—old and rich. No glaciers scraped their way across the terrain here (like it did in Iowa), leaving the bedrock lifeless upon their retreat. We live atop rocks that are nine million years old and rocks that were compressed into a new form with the latest earthquake. The calliope of movement creating hills and canyons has given that diverse palette new places to differentiate. The plants and animals that live here with us have had a long time to evolve.

Throw in the rare warm Mediterranean climate and you have both a crucible and an Eden for unusual and rare life forms. This is why California is blessed with so many species. Biologists assure us there is no other region of comparable size in the nation that has greater biodiversity than we have right here in Southern California. Indeed, it is second only to the rainforest.

It is against this backdrop that we need to look at fire. From pollinators to pumas, all wildlife depend on the plants, which are not just fuel—they are habitat. They are not just brush, they are precious public investments in

ecosystems. And, unlike Northern California forests, our lands are burning too often, creating a vicious cycle. The more we cut or burn these lands, the more they convert to highly flammable landscapes. They need to be restored, not bludgeoned.

Throughout millennia, large catastrophic fires have always blown through this region. But these large fires were rare—occurring every 30-150 years. That is normal. Once we placed housing, roads, and powerlines in these wind and fire corridors, we increased the frequency of ignitions and changed the underlying vegetation and fire pattern.

We went from natural fuels that burned hot but infrequently to fuels like houses, computers, couches, and car batteries that burn much hotter, are filled with toxicants, and spew embers. In the wildlands what emerges after a fire, are non-native grasses that grow faster, dry sooner, and ignite easier. Without help, native vegetation can't mature fast enough to



Melanie Schlotterbeck



restore itself before another fire hits. Excessive clearing only feeds the cycle.

We can't stop the embers and we can't stop the Santa Ana winds, but we can take steps to reduce fire ignitions, and we can make our homes harder to ignite. Fuel modification at the wildland-urban interface is only a small part of the answer. It will all grow back. If your house catches fire, there is a 90% chance that your neighbor's house is responsible, not the burning habitat. Making our homes harder to burn is the pill we need to swallow.

We can only hope that the new homes that will be built in Altadena and Pacific Palisades require the strongest fire-resistant building codes possible to minimize future tragedies.

Tips from an Experienced Evacuee



- Make your home harder to ignite using ember resistant vents, boxed eaves, and double pane windows.
- Clear away combustibles five feet from your house, including vegetation and flammable fences. When you give firefighters adequate defensible space, they can go on the offensive.
- Make a list now of what you want to take. When the moment comes, you can't think straight. Trust us.
- Get head lamps. Be ready to evacuate in the dark. In a major wind-driven fire, it is highly likely we will be without power because of Edison's Public Safety Power Shutoff.
- Leave early. Avoid the traffic jam. Go far away from the toxic smoke and chaos. Hotels may book up early.
- Don't try to defend your house. You are in the way and you may run out of water. Reservoirs were built to supply water for daily use, not to combat wildfires. During big fires, water use often out paces the ability to refill reservoirs.



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What You Can't See

One of the least fun parts of our work is commenting on governmental regulations. These policies can help or hurt conservation efforts. Over the last several weeks, HFE has submitted hundreds of pages of letters and attachments outlining how policy decisions will impact natural land protection in our area.

For example, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife updated its State Wildlife Action Plan which covers protection of species throughout the state. After reading the lengthy document, we noted the Department needs to do a better job incorporating existing policies at the local and regional level that support species protection. In another instance, we commented on Caltrans' proposed mitigation program for the Orange County region. In this letter, we focused on wildlife connections at Coal Canyon. The Department included only three species needing protection in all of Orange County, whereas, at least a dozen sensitive plants and animals have the potential to be impacted by freeway projects.

We also continue to sign on to letters regarding bills that the State Legislature is considering. Currently, the California Environmental Quality Act is under dire threat. Without the protections it affords, we would not have a park.



Tim Bulmer

Get Involved

There are many ways to support HFE's work. In addition to these platforms, you can join our email list. We send out about one email a month and never sell, trade, or share our list. Subscribe on our website:



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