

SUMMARY ACTION MINUTES

(Action Items Displayed in Italics)

WEDNESDAY, JULY 10, 2024 — 3:00 p.m.

Before formally starting the meeting, Chair Fegraus announced the passing of Dr. Elisabeth Brown on July 6, 2024. Dr. Brown was a member of Laguna Laurel Advisory Group that led to the purchase of the Laguna Laurel parcels for Laguna Coast Wilderness Park. The Authority was created by that purchase agreement.

Dr. Brown served as an Authority member from 1991 to 2011, with many years serving as Chair. She represented the Laguna Canyon Conservancy, Laguna Greenbelt, Village Laguna, and CANDO – Laguna Canyon residents. Dr. Brown was a member of Laguna Greenbelt since 1982 and served as president from 1985 to 2020. This meeting is dedicated to Dr. Brown and her commitment to preserving open space.

I. ROLL CALL

Chair Fegraus, Vice Chair McCary, and Members Orgill, Clark, Horne, Osborne, and Felder were present. Members Foley, Conners, Weiss, and Litschi were absent.

II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

At this time, members of the public may address the Authority on items of public interest that are within the jurisdiction of the Authority and are not contained in today's agenda.

No comments were received from the public.

III. CONSENT CALENDAR (ITEM(S) A)

The following item on the consent calendar will be approved by one motion unless an Authority Member requests to pull a specific item.

A. APPROVE AUTHORITY MINUTES FOR THE MAY 8, 2024 MEETING.

Motion to approve the Authority Minutes for the May 8, 2024 Meeting:

Vice Chair McCary

2nd: Member Osborne

Unanimous vote to approve

IV. AUTHORITY MEMBERS AND PARTNERS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATES

A. LAGUNA CANYON FOUNDATION (LCF) UPDATE

Representative not available to provide an update at this time.

B. LAGUNA BEACH OPEN SPACE UPDATE

Member Orgill noted that the city's Open Space and Conservation Element is being updated.

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C. NATURAL COMMUNITIES COALITION (NCC) UPDATE

Darin Loughery, NCC Outreach and Engagement Coordinator, shared the following: The Natural Communities Coalition (NCC) and the United States Geological Survey (USGS) have been working together on a two-year study of an invasive lizard, known as the Sonoran spotted whiptail. The purpose of the collaborative effort is to establish whether the invasive Sonoran spotted whiptail is a true threat to the native orange-throated whiptail and other native species on habitat protected wildlands in Orange County.

The orange-throated whiptail is a lizard which is native to coastal sage scrub habitat and is one of three primary species that drove the development of the Natural Community Conservation Plan/Habitat Conservation Plan (NCCP/HCP) in southern California, along with the California gnatcatcher and coastal cactus wren. These three species together are referred to as NCCP/HCP target species, and when detected in the wild, serve as indicators of healthy coastal sage scrub habitat.

The Sonoran spotted whiptail looks very similar to the orange-throated whiptail, but is a parthenogenetic species, which means there are no males in the population and every individual is a female that can produce fertile eggs without mating. This allows for faster population expansion of the invasive species than the normal reproductive rates of the native species. In addition, the Sonoran spotted whiptail is about 20 percent larger than the orange-throated whiptail and has a maximum clutch size of seven eggs versus three eggs for the orange-throated whiptail.

As the population of Sonoran spotted whiptails in Orange County is expected to grow over the next year, scientists will be assessing if the species are successfully entering the wildland urban interface and actively occupying the habitat of orange-throated whiptails or other species in the Reserve.

D. IRVINE OPEN SPACE PRESERVE UPDATE

Representative not available to provide an update at this time.

E. NEWPORT BEACH OPEN SPACE UPDATE

Representative not available to provide an update at this time.

F. ALISO VIEJO OPEN SPACE UPDATE

Representative not available to provide an update at this time.

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G. LAGUNA NIGUEL OPEN SPACE UPDATE

Jeff Kirby, City of Laguna Niguel Recreation Supervisor, noted that there will a kick-off in September for their Trail and Education Program.

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Receive and File Agenda Items IV.A–G.

Motion: Vice Chair McCary

2nd: Member Orgill

Unanimous vote to Receive and File Agenda Items IV.A–G

V. OC PARKS STAFF UPDATE

A. PARK OPERATIONS — ALL DEPARTMENTS UPDATE

Ev Mena, OC Parks Parks Division Manager, introduced Antonio Valdes who has joined OC Parks as Trails and Mapping Administrator. Antonio’s responsibilities will include managing planning documents, coordinating with contractors, and overseeing trail work and drone coverage.

B. LAGUNA COAST WILDERNESS PARK (LCWP) AND ALISO AND WOOD CANYONS WILDERNESS PARK (AWCWP) SPOTLIGHT

1. LCWP Update

Brad Barker, OC Parks Supervising Park Ranger II, shared the following: The 4th of July went well with no incidents; recent tour by the NCC Board of Directors of LCWP and then Crystal Cove State Park; the Red Cross recently recognized Derrick Ankerstar, Megan Matchett and Kevin Estrada for the First Responder Hero Awards.

Member Felder asked about the number of road kills and if LCWP wildlife population is decreasing, increasing, or holding steady.

2. AWCWP Update

Adam Martinez, OC Parks Supervising Park Ranger I, shared the following: July 4th went well with no incidents; working with county resources to identify restoration projects; Laguna Beach Fire Department and OC Parks Fire Coordinator are working together on training programs.

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Receive and File Agenda Items V.A–B.

Motion: Vice Chair McCary

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2nd: Member Osborne

Unanimous vote to Receive and File Agenda Items V.A–B

VI. DISCUSSION CALENDAR (ITEM(S) A–E)

A. LAGUNA CANYON ROAD IMPROVEMENT PROJECT UPDATE

City of Laguna Beach Staff, if available, will share an update on its Laguna Canyon Road Improvement Project following a report presented at the November 15, 2022 City Council Meeting and further planning.

Representative not available to provide an update at this time.

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Receive and file and continue the item.

Motion: Member Orgill

2nd: Vice Chair McCary

Unanimous vote to receive and file and continue the item.

B. LAGUNA CANYON ROAD WIDENING AND SAFETY PROJECT UPDATE

OC Parks Staff, if available, will share an update on Caltrans' Laguna Canyon Road Widening and Safety Project.

Brian Kurnow, OC Parks Entitlements Division Manager noted that Southern California Edison is working on the undergrounding section of the project; not much activity with the CALTRANS section.

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Receive and file and continue the item.

Motion: Member Osborne

2nd: Vice Chair McCary

Unanimous vote to receive and file and continue the item.

C. LAGUNA COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN STUDENT CENTER DEVELOPMENT

City of Laguna Beach Staff, if available, will provide a report of the proposed developments at the Laguna College of Art and Design Student Center and any possible impacts to AWCWP.

Representative not available to provide an update at this time.

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RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Receive and file and continue the item, if appropriate.

Motion: Member Orgill

2nd: Member Osborne

Unanimous vote to receive and file and continue the item.

D. IRVINE WILDLIFE CORRIDOR UPDATE

Receive information about the Science Advisors Series, Partner Charter, and other activities.

Member Clark shared information about the June 12th tour of the Irvine Laguna Wildlife Corridor with attendees from State, County and Federal agencies – the tour was led by a FivePoint representative. Mayor Khan, City of Irvine participated and expressed a desire to establish an educational kiosk adjacent to the corridor to help residents understand the purpose of the wildlife corridor.

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Receive and file and continue the item.

Motion: Vice Chair McCary

2nd: Chair Fegraus

Unanimous vote to receive and file and continue the item.

E. CITY OF LAGUNA WOODS WOODS END WILDERNESS PRESERVE TRAIL DRAINAGE AND IMPROVEMENT PROJECT LETTER OF SUPPORT

The City of Laguna Woods will present plans for its Woods End Wilderness Preserve Trail Drainage and Improvement Project.

Chris Macon, City of Laguna Woods City Manager, presented information on the project. Goals included reducing stormwater runoff to El Toro Road without reintroducing paved surfaces, refreshing the existing entry facilities, and enhancing wayfinding from El Toro Road. These goals, along with relocating the pedestrian entrance closer to on-street parking, maintaining a plant palette representative of Laguna Coast Wilderness Park, adding bollards at the intersection of El Toro Road and Aliso Creek Road, and adding video surveillance at the frontage are all an improvement for the Woods End entry. Most importantly the proposed project has funding from the CA Proposition 68 with a City general fund matching and from the American Rescue Plan Act.

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RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Authorize the Chair to prepare and send a letter of support on behalf of the Authority to the City of Laguna Woods for its Woods End Wilderness Preserve Trail Drainage and Improvement Project.

Motion: Chair Fegraus

2nd: Vice Chair McCary

Unanimous vote to authorize the Chair to prepare and send a letter of support to the City of Laguna Woods for the Woods End Wilderness Preserve Trail Drainage and Improvement Project.

F. AUTHORITY MEMBER AT LARGE LETTERS OF APPRECIATION AND SUPPORT

Discussion of the preparation of a letter of appreciation to be sent to the Authority's former Member-at-Large Tom Maloney for his service to the Authority. Discussion of the preparation of a letter to the Orange County Fifth District Supervisor in support of the appointment of Barbara Norton as the Authority's new Member-at-Large.

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

1. Authorize the Chair to prepare and send a letter of appreciation to former Authority Member Tom Maloney.
2. Authorize the Chair to prepare and send a letter to the Orange County Fifth District Supervisor in support of the appointment of Barbara Norton as the Authority's new Member-at-Large.

Motion: Member Osborne

2nd: Chair Fegraus

Unanimous vote to authorize the Chair to prepare and send a letter of appreciation to former Authority Member Tom Maloney and a letter to the Orange County Fifth District Supervisor in support of the appointment of Barbara Norton as the Authority's new Member-At-Large.

G. HABITAT SUSTAINABILITY AND LCWP TRAIL MAP REVIEW

Authority Members will refer to and discuss sections of LCWP General Development and Resource Management Plans that require updates or amendments and discuss preparation of an addendum to these plans.

Member Clark and Chair Fegraus shared visuals of the draft ideas for the Addendum topics. Members were encouraged to review the documents and draft ideas and share with the team working on the draft Addendum — Chair Fegraus, Member Clark, and Barbara Norton.

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RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

1. Discuss and incorporate information recommended for inclusion in the Addendum to the LCWP General Development Plan.
2. Continue the item.

Motion: Vice Chair McCary

2nd: Member Orgill

Unanimous vote to Receive and File and Continue the item and prepare a more detailed Addendum to be presented for review at the next meeting.

VII. AUTHORITY COMMENTS AND REPORT

At this time Authority Members may comment on agenda or non-agenda matters, provided that no action may be taken on off-agenda items unless authorized by law. Members may also suggest items for the May 8, 2024 meeting agenda.

Member Felder commented on the continuing issues with the Southern California Edison actions in the Top of World area and that the Laguna Beach Planning Commission will include the restoration topic at a future meeting. This area is adjacent to the county managed wilderness parks.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT TO SEPTEMBER 11, 2024 MEETING 4:34 p.m.

Motion: Member Orgill

2nd: Member Osborne

Unanimous vote to adjourn to the September 11, 2024 Meeting.

2024 Addendum to the 1998 Laguna Coast Wilderness Park General Development and Resources Management Plans

Since 1998 there have been many changes to Laguna Coast Wilderness Park (LCWP). These include newly acquired land and ownership. Currently approximately 7,000 acres of wilderness are owned by the County of Orange, State of California, Cities of Laguna Beach and Laguna Woods. These are managed by Orange County Parks.

Southern California Edison and Laguna Beach County Water District also own land within LCWP. Multiple ownership presents challenges but also opportunities for collaboration. The intent of preserving this land remains the same as stated in the 1990 purchase agreement – “Habitat preservation and passive recreation.”

These changes also include the preservation of approximately 22,000 acres wilderness parks and preserves with contiguous boundaries in Orange County. This area, South Coast Wilderness, includes City of Newport Open Space, Crystal Cove State Park, City of Irvine Open Space Preserves, Laguna Coast Wilderness Park, Aliso and Wood Canyons Wilderness Park, City of Laguna Beach Open Space and City of Laguna Woods Open Space.

The Coastal Greenbelt Authority (CGA), established by the 1990 Laguna Laurel purchase agreement, remains the oversight authority of the management of LCWP. In that role CGA initiated the development of this Addendum.

Include CGA Bylaws in the Reference section and a link to the OC Parks website for current CGA meetings.

The following Timeline illustrates the progress of the preservation of land within the coastal canyons of Orange County.

1972 County of Orange Board of Supervisors approved the concept of a Laguna Greenbelt at the urging of Jim Dilley, a Laguna bookstore owner who formed the nonprofit, Laguna Greenbelt Inc.

1978 City of Laguna Beach purchased the Laguna Canyon area now called the James Dilley Greenbelt Preserve (376 acres) in Laguna Coast Wilderness Park

1979 Dedication of Aliso and Wood Canyons Wilderness Park through development agreement with the Mission Viejo Company and the County of Orange

1984 State of California purchased The Irvine Company land for Crystal Cove State Park

1988 Orange County Board of Supervisors approved The Irvine Company's Laguna Laurel Development Plan which would have created a new community in Laguna Canyon.

1989 More than 8,000 participated in the Walk in Laguna Canyon on November 11th to protest the development in Laguna Canyon and to show their support for preserving the land.

1990 At the November election almost 80% of Laguna Beach voters approved Proposition H, a \$20 million bond for the purchase of the land planned for the Laguna Laurel Development. This was the highest vote for a California bond measure since 1956.

1990 Historic Laguna Laurel Purchase Agreement between The Irvine Company, City of Laguna Beach, County of Orange and State of California to purchase the land slated for the Laguna Laurel development. The purchase agreement was in five Option payments.

June 1993	\$33 million	Preserved 1,286 acres
June 30, 1992	\$3 million	Preserved 26 acres
April 9, 1993	\$4 million	Preserved 50 acres
October 15, 1993	\$5 million	Preserved 41 acres

The purchase agreement ended June 30, 1995, due to a lack of funding for the 5th Option of \$33 million for 173 acres. The cities of Irvine, Laguna Beach, Laguna Hills, Leisure World Mutuals, Orange County and Laguna Canyon Foundation continued to work with The Irvine Company to reach an agreement for Planning Area 18, the last developable parcel within Laguna Canyon approved for more than 1,500 housing units.

April 1993 Dedication of Laguna Coast Wilderness Park

1998 Newport Coast Development agreement with the County of Orange, adding 2,000 acres to Laguna Coast Wilderness Park

2000 California Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, and Coastal Protection Bond Act included a \$12,5 million line item to undertake projects for the South Coast Wilderness system of coastal canyons and watersheds in south Orange County, including, but not limited to, properties in Laguna Coast Wilderness Park and Aliso & Wood Canyons Wilderness Park.

2001 Gift by The Irvine Company to the County of Orange of 11,000 acres which includes the remaining Laguna Laurel Development land, 173 acres, for public open space.

2002 City of Laguna Woods purchased 10.6 acres with funding from the 2000 State Proposition 12 through the Coastal Conservancy. Land is leased to the County of Orange for management as part of Laguna Coast Wilderness Park

2004 City of Laguna Beach purchased the Trinity 36-acre parcel and the Wainwright 32-acre parcel with Prop 12 Funds, and leased the parcels to the County of Orange for management as part of Laguna Coast Wilderness Park

2004 Ridge Park dedicated as part of the Newport Coast Agreement with the County of Orange

2006 City of Laguna Beach purchased the Decker 11.43-acre parcel with Prop 12 Funds and leased the parcel to the County of Orange for management as part of Laguna Coast Wilderness Park

- 2007 City of Laguna Beach purchased the Haun 10.45-acre parcel, the Jaysu 27.92-acre parcel, the Stonefield 50.37-acre parcel and the Chao 58.4-acre parcel with Prop 12 Funds and leased the parcels to the County of Orange for management as part of the Laguna Coast Wilderness Park
- 2008 City of Laguna Beach purchased the SBD 10.38-acres with Prop 12 Funds.
- 2009 City of Laguna Beach purchased the Bunn-Moore 4.5-acre parcel with Prop 12 Funds
- 2012 City of Laguna Beach purchased the McGraw 1.99-acre parcel with Prop 12 Funds
- 2013 City of Laguna Beach purchased the McGehee 56.25-acre parcel with Prop 12 Funds

Important Agreements regarding LCWP

- 1996 Natural Community Conservation Plan and Habitat Conservation Plan (NCCP/HCP) for the Coastal Subregion includes LCWP
- 2016 Wildland Fire Management Plan (WFMP) as part of the NCCP/HCP program
- 2019 Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Plan (HREP) Update of the original 2003 HREP as part of the NCCP/HCP program
- 2003 County of Orange and Laguna Canyon Foundation Agreement for the development of the Nix Nature Center and interpretive exhibits
- 2006 County of Orange and Laguna Canyon Foundation Agreement for Mary's Trail adjacent to the Nix Nature Center to serve as an interpretative and a connecting trail to existing trails
- 2008 County of Orange and Laguna Canyon Foundation (LCF) Agreement for LCF support of park projects and volunteer programs

Include in References with links to the documents

2024 Laguna Coast Wilderness Park Management Practices

- LCWP opened in 1993 under managed access practices.
- Today Adaptive Management Practices guide the management of access and habitat protection. This strategy provides the ability to close and open trails, regulate visitor use, such as hiking, biking, equestrian uses, to prevent overuse and habitat damage and allow for restoration activities.
- Currently LCWP is open 7 days a week from 7 a.m. to Sunset and Parking Areas 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Include in References a link to OC Parks/LCWP website

New Access Points – *need new Staging Areas (Parking) and Trail Access Maps and to include in References a link to OCParks website*

- At the time of the 1993 opening of LCWP there were four access points known as Staging Areas with fee parking – Big Bend, James Dilley Preserve, Little Sycamore Canyon and Willow Canyon (which replaced the Laurel Canyon Staging area noted in the 1998 General Development and Resource Management Plans). Also, multi-use access at the Laguna Bowl on Laguna Canyon Road with metered Laguna Beach street parking.
- Today access points also include:
 - Ridge Park, Gate 9, dedicated in 2004, provides entry to LCWP, Crystal Cove State Park and City of Irvine Open Space. Street parking only is available.
 - Woods End, at El Toro Road and Aliso Creek Road, with limited parking, provides access to the LCWP Dilley section and Little Sycamore Canyon using the Laguna Canyon Road undercrossing.
 - Laguna Beach Dartmoor and Poplar Streets provide public access to the southern portion of LCWP with limited street parking only.

Trails – *Include in Reference a website link to the latest trails map*

New Trails

- Woods End Trail, Ridge Top, Barbara's Lake Trail, Gravel Trail, Edison Trail, Blackjack Trail in the Dilley section of LCWP
- Bommer Ridge, Old Emerald Trail – starts now bottom of Emerald Canyon to middle of Emerald Canyon, Emerald Canyon Road – from Post 14 to back gate of Emerald Bay, Old Emerald Falls Trail, Lizards Trail
- Mary's Trail, dedicated in 2007, adjacent to the Nix Nature Center

Renamed Trails

- BVD was renamed Old Emerald Falls Trail
- Bea Whittlesey Trail was renamed Canyon Trail

Trail Use Designations

All trails have specific use designations to protect the habitat. Trail designations include Hiking Only, Multi-Use includes Hiking, Biking and Equestrian uses. E-bikes and any unauthorized motorized vehicles are not permitted on any trails. Camping is not permitted in LCWP.

Orientation Panels – *include photos – need to locate? – check with LCF*

The plein-air paintings, owned by the Laguna Canyon Foundation, in the Nix Nature Center Gallery, are the originals that were used for a series of orientation panels that were installed throughout the park in 2001. The Orientation Panels are at the six entrances to key trails. The panels orient visitors to the “mosaic” that is the South Coast Wilderness, introduce visitors to the unique qualities of each access point and encourage responsible park use.

The orientation signs received a second-place award in the Wayfarer Category from the National Association for Interpretation in the 2002 national interpretation competition. The development of the six orientation signs was funded by a grant from The Bren Foundation and designed by The Acorn Group and SoLa Creative.

Fire Prevention

1995 the Orange County Fire Authority (OCFA) was established as a Joint Powers Authority which includes LCWP and adjoining parkland. Within the agreements the NCCP/HCP program has a specific Fuel Modification Plan for Willow Canyon and Little Sycamore Canyon including the Nix Nature Center.

Hydrology *Include Photo of Interpretive Sign at Barbara's Lake*

With the realignment of Laguna Canyon Road there are now two lakes instead of the original three. Barbara's Lake and the small pond nicknamed Bubbles Pond are now connected. Barbara's Lake was named after Barbara Stuart, a founding member of Laguna Greenbelt Inc. *? Lake water studies have been done – dates? Laguna Greenbelt Inc did an early one*

Volunteer Programs

Laguna Canyon Foundation and OC Parks sponsor volunteer training programs which are critical for the park's operations. These trainings happen upon volunteer request and/or interest. Volunteers can sign up for these trainings on <https://letsgooutside.org/volunteer/> or request training from OC Parks of Laguna Canyon Foundation staff. Introductory training (Facility Certification) is required for all volunteers in LCWP, and additional trainings are required for

more specific positions, including volunteering at the Nix Nature Center, Backcountry Patrol, leading a guided hike, Wildlife Camera project, and creating a new program. In recent years Laguna Canyon Foundation has provided more than 5,000 hours of service as long-term volunteers. Volunteers are an integral part of LCWP.

Provide website links..... LCF, OC Parks, Let's Go Outside.

Education and Interpretive Programs

Laguna Canyon Foundation (LCF) staff and volunteers along with the LCWP Resource Specialist provide many educational and interpretive programs. LCF yearly brings more than 1,300 second through fifth grade students from Title 1 partner schools and select local schools for a day on the trail, offering field trips that follow Next-Generation Science Standards at little to no cost to the schools or students.

The OC Parks Resource Specialist at LCWP is a full-time position dedicated to resource protection and education events at LCWP, including several recurring kid-friendly programs. Public involvement is encouraged through cell phone tours, helpful brochures, and the “What Did You See Today?” posts on a whiteboard at the Nix Nature Center which augments the camera studies data. These and other programs are ways to help the public understand they have a responsibility to observe and care for the natural environment.

LCWP Management and Operations

- Initially through an Interim Operations Plan, then under the 1998 GDP and RMP documents.
- With the inclusion of OC Parks into the Community Resources Department there was a change in the

management structure. The current OC Parks management team for LCWP includes the LCWP Supervising Ranger, Laguna Canyon Operations Manager and OC Parks Division Manager. This team is responsible for all the LCWP park staff management and in the park responsibilities.

2006 Laguna Canyon Road Realignment

The new alignment from the freeways to the 73 included a number of undercrossing that provide trail connections and improve wildlife movement ensuring diversity.

2009 Monument Signs – *include photos*

Laguna Canyon Foundation (LCF) and OC Parks managed the design and implementation by SoLA Creative to create and install Monument Signs at each of the four staging areas – Dilley Greenbelt, Big Bend, Willow Canyon, Nix Nature Center. The project was funded by Laguna Canyon Foundation donors including James and Rosemary Nix. The LCF and County of Orange 2008 agreement provides the basis for LCF to commit financial resources to assist in park enhancements and improvements.

Art and LCWP

- Art is part of the history of LCWP and the larger Laguna Community. Within the park art is used for interpretative signage, inherent in each of the Nix Nature Center exhibits, architecturally visible as the Painters Pier and seen in collaboration with art education entities such as the Laguna College of Art and Design.

Biological Resources

- *A number of biological studies have been done in addition to the ones with the NCCP/HCP program. We need to find them and put in the Reference section*

Goals moving forward --- Still an unsure if these items are still current where Goals should go in the Addendum.

- Maintain Native Plant Nursery Program managed by Laguna Canyon Foundation and OC Parks. It provides an ongoing plant source for restoration projects. Volunteers are welcome.
- Provide website links for studies done through the NCCP/HCP program, universities, public and nonprofit organizations.
- Preserve Historical Wildlife database from camera studies. Important to continue under the direction of the Resource Specialist.
- Coordinate all studies with the OC Parks Natural Resources Team.
- Implement restoration projects as a result of studies.