River Park Endowment Reaches Halfway Point

In November of 2001, at the urging of City of San Diego Council members Scott Peters and Brian Mainschein, the City Council joined the rest of the San Dieguito River Park member agencies by approving an annual contribution to the River Park endowment fund. That commitment, added to the prior commitments of the other five member agencies, adds up to almost 50 percent of the target endowment amount of $11.5 million by the year 2020. Reaching the target amount now depends on raising the remaining 50 percent from a community that understands the profound public benefit of preserving an entire river corridor stretching more than 55 miles across the county.

The effort to establish an endowment for the River Park began in 1999 when it became apparent that the River Park Joint Powers Authority (JPA) was transitioning from a planning based organization toward an organization responsible for the operation and maintenance of a rapidly growing regional park. The early years of planning and grant applications were paying off as many projects were getting off the drawing boards and on the ground. The JPA Board members, recognizing the benefit of self-sufficiency in the coming years, directed that costs be projected to establish a target amount for a permanent endowment. This endowment fund, to be raised over the next 20 years, would enable the JPA to generate sufficient interest revenue to pay for annual recurring operations costs when the River Park is completed in 20 years.

JPA Board members were unanimous in their support (as reported in the North County Times):

San Diego County Supervisor Pam Slater:
“It’s important to have an ongoing revenue stream to support the River Park so we don’t have to keep going back for government money. It also will carry a lot of weight with foundations and nongovernmental agencies that we would like to have join in supporting us.”

Escondido City Councilwoman June Rady and Poway Councilwoman Betty Rexford described the proposal as visionary. “I think it is essential,” Rady said. “The success of the River Park is dictating the operational and budget needs, and by creating an endowment we would be self-sufficient in 20 years... If we don’t do it now, it will never get done,” Rexford stated.

Solana Beach Councilman Tom Golich said that an endowment would provide insurance for the River Park. “When times are good, it’s relatively easy to find money. But when times are bad, finding operations funding may be a problem. So it would be nice to have an endowment set up so you don’t have to go asking.”

The projections showed that $11.5 million would be needed in 20 years to generate sufficient interest to cover operational costs of a completed River Park without increasing the current agency contribution level. To reach that goal, $200,000 must be raised... Continued on page 3
Bringing You Up To Date!

The River Park has been working on a number of exciting projects over the last several years - here's an update.

**Site for Future Interpretive Center** The River Park Board selected a site adjacent to the Sikes Adobe Farmhouse and applied for grant funding to design and construct an 8,000-square-foot Interpretive Center there. The Center would offer a description of the pioneer farming experience and the role and history of agriculture in San Diego. The grant rankings will be announced by the State in April.

**Restoration of Sikes Adobe Farmhouse** Meanwhile, construction drawings for restoring the farmhouse are being finalized prior to review by the City of San Diego Historic Sites Board and the State Office of Historic Preservation. Actual restoration is expected to begin in late summer.

**Lake Hodges Bicycle/Pedestrian Bridge** At a bridge type selection workshop held January 15, attendees received a presentation by the design engineering team that showed the various types of bridges and which types the team thought deserved more study. Those present from the public favored a style called a “stressed ribbon” design, which would have a slim profile and only require two piers in the lake. However, the design team will not be able to confirm that that bridge type is a feasible alternative until they receive more geotechnical information on the proposed abutment locations. After the JPA Board selects the bridge type, then the engineers will proceed to the first stage of design and the River Park will prepare the environmental documents for public review and comment.

**Mule Hill/San Pasqual Valley Trail** We hope to open the Mule Hill/San Pasqual Valley Trail with a Grand Opening Ceremony in May or June. For those of you who can see the finished sections and are anxious to hit the trail, please be patient! We’re almost there.

**AEP Donates $3,500**

The River Park was extremely fortunate to receive a check last December for $3,500 from the San Diego Chapter of the Association of Environmental Professionals (AEP). The donation was proceeds from AEP’s second annual Environmental Awards Program held at the beautiful Mission Trails Visitor Center and hosted by Channel 8 newscaster Loren Nancarrow. A jury presented awards to several projects in San Diego recognized for their environmental sensitivity and creativity. The proceeds were added to the River Park’s endowment fund, which now has received $6,000 from San Diego AEP. Thank you AEP for your generous contribution!
County Initiates Visionary Regional Trails Plan

By Dick Bobertz, Executive Director

The San Diego County Board of Supervisors gave us all a New Year’s present at their first meeting of the New Year. They unanimously approved goals and guidelines for a comprehensive effort to establish a regional trails system. The draft program proposes developing trails for hiking, biking and equestrian uses on a regional basis and coordinating regional trail segments with other public agencies and cities. The plan was put on track to be adopted as part of the Public Facilities Element of General Plan 2020.

Why is this so important? Because, believe it or not, there is no current government plan to coordinate the provision of a regional trail system - not in the County and not in the City of San Diego. Yes, various trail segments are being constructed in both jurisdictions largely as requirements of individual developments. But no one is charged with the responsibility to see that these segments are connected to form a regional system.

The draft Goals and Policies recently approved by the Board of Supervisors and a preceding Trails System Assessment were expertly authored by Bob Christopher, the project lead in the Department of Public Works. You can review the reports and trails map on the Internet at www.sdcdpw.org/trails. Next, the department will produce a plan for implementing the system with estimated costs for administration, acquisition, construction, design criteria, operations, maintenance and funding sources. A community trails plan will accompany the regional plan and be coordinated with it. These reports are scheduled for Board consideration in September 2002 and the Regional Trails Plan for inclusion in General Plan 2020 in February 2003.

The County’s draft regional trail map includes four trails extending across the County from east to west including: the San Dieguito River Park Coast to Crest Trail, the Trans-County Trail, the California Riding and Hiking Trail, and the Otay Valley Regional Park Trail. I am sure that Mayor Murphy’s recently announced goal for a San Diego River Corridor Trail will be added to the map. That will make five east-west regional trails across the County, all connecting to the north-south Pacific Crest Trail on the east and the Coastal Rail Trail on the west.

I admit to being an optimist, but it seems obvious to me that the next step will be to provide north-south links at various points along these trails to establish a grid of regional trails overlaying the entire County. If such a system can be established, people will actually be provided with a practical alternative to automobiles. How many people would choose a 30-minute bi-cycle ride that is completely separated from traffic over a similar time spent in a car in congested traffic? How many people will take advantage of an accessible regional trail grid for mental and physical health benefits? How much will San Diego’s quality of life improve? Let’s find out.

Endowment... Continued from page 1

each year for 20 years.

How can that be accomplished? Although the River Park has been very successful in winning grants from assorted federal and state programs, those sources only provide funds for land purchase or construction projects - not for operational costs. That means the community must provide for itself in caring for the River Park when it is complete. The “community” in this case means the River Park JPA member agencies, private individuals, local organizations, businesses and corporations whose employees will receive direct benefit from the River Park.

Over the last two years, the River Park Board members have followed up their words of support with actions. At the urging of the JPA Board members, each of the five cities and the County that make up the JPA have authorized annual River Park endowment fund contributions for the next 20 years. These commitments, added to an annual amount the JPA Board had previously designated for the endowment (rent savings realized when the River Park administrative office moved from rented space in San Diego to a house owned by the River Park in Poway) totals $91,427 or more than 45 percent of that annual $200,000 goal. Remember that these are commitments for annual contributions for 20 years. That means we have achieved almost half of our 20-year goal in little more than two years.

Now we begin the search for the remaining 50 percent. One of the reasons the JPA Board made these commitments was to set a good example. With this momentum it is hoped that the community will join in to help assure the future of a public asset that increases in value to current and future generations every year. Fund raising will continue to ensure that conservation accomplishments that are achieved over the next 20 years are sustainable for all time.

Will you join the effort? Make a contribution and talk to a friend about the importance of this effort to establish a legacy for future generations.

For more information about the San Dieguito River Park go to <www.sdrp.org>.
Volunteers

Three Cheers for Volunteers!

By Dolores Knight, Event & Volunteer Coordinator

Volunteers are truly amazing! In the past year several large projects have been completed by individuals who see the big picture and yet understand the importance of tackling the pieces.

The River Park knows this all too well! We have a plan to create an open space park with miles of trail for future generations to enjoy, and each year we come closer and closer to achieving this goal. Let’s look back over the year with appreciation and look forward to the new year with anticipation.

It takes a huge effort to put on our annual Trail Run & Hike fundraiser. We cannot thank all of you volunteers enough for getting up so early on a Sunday morning to make it a special day for the participants whose support, along with yours, is immensely appreciated! ☺

Hands On San Diego is a remarkable countywide volunteer event week that is organized by the Volunteer Center of San Diego and United Way Chad. They partner corporations with community agencies to stress the importance of volunteering. We have had the good fortune to have Hewlett Packard come to our office to do general landscaping and to paint the ranger field office. What a delight when we saw what they had accomplished! Thank you so much B. Baker, A. Hunter, Robert Kristof, Wendy Campbell, Tim Jude, Jim Marshall, Kristine Olmstead, Tanya Maurer, Lorraine Christie, Bill Martin, Lothar Lendero, Marvin Mao, Kan Liu, Vladimir Pavlov, Marcus Scholz, James Hasler, and Tom Stark! ☺

A project that required a lot of elbow grease was the Piedras Pintadas graffiti removal. A significant Native American site (not open to the public for that reason) that is graced with pictographs from the early settlement of the Kumeyaay Indians unfortunately was damaged yet again by graffiti. But a group of determined volunteers working with Planner Shawna Anderson and Coordinator Dolores Knight was able to remove almost 95% of the unsightly rubbish. Way to go Johnny Contreras, Tribal Representative with the San Pasqual Band of Mission Indians, Cheryl Contreras, Daniel Contreras, Brittany Contreras, Ken Hedges from the Museum of Man, Pacific Coast District Leader Bill Collins, City of San Diego Associate Planner Nicole McGinnis, Troop #765 scouts Andrew Marini, Jeffrey Teng, and Troop #776 scouts Brenden Phillips, Brian Carroll, Julian Harton, Gary Untied, parents Julie Marini, Sam Marini, and DeDe Phillips! ☺

Thank you, Gary Ruyle for offering your time and knowledge to stain the San Dieguito River Crossing and Adam Cole, Julie Marini, Sam Marini, Andrew Marini and Natalie Brechtel for assisting Gary with the preparation. It looks

Thanks to Sony Technology Center-San Diego for their generous donation of a 21” color TV, which was the top prize for the Trail Run & Hike pledge fundraiser. Michelle Wilson raised over $550 making her the winner! The pledges produced $1452.

Thank you, Gary Ruyle for offering your time and knowledge to stain the San Dieguito River Crossing and Adam Cole, Julie Marini, Sam Marini, Andrew Marini and Natalie Brechtel for assisting Gary with the preparation. It looks
beautiful and blends in nicely with the natural surroundings. Just what we wanted! Thanks again! ☺

The River Park is grateful to the countless number of volunteers who came out for monthly work projects and to the special work parties from Back Country Horsemen, Ramona Trails Association and Escondido High School Surfrider Chapter and, of course, Dust Devils who put in many hours on the construction of the Mule Hill/San Pasqual Valley Trail! We look forward to seeing every one of you at the Grand Opening! ☺

Goodbye and grateful appreciation to retiring librarian Renate Danielson who volunteered for so many years, and welcome to Karen Lindemuth who will carry on Renate’s efforts. ☺

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**Scouts Pitch In**

By Dolores Knight, Event & Volunteer Coordinator & Todd Stepien, Park Ranger

As you follow a trail in the River Park, take note of an information kiosk or a routed sign that informs you about a plant or points out the next direction. Then perhaps you’ll continue on the trail and cross a bridge that leads to a bench in the distance and you can’t wait to sit there to take in the beauty of your surroundings. You might ask yourself: Who builds these wonderful structures? Well, we have the answer for you! Boy and Girl Scout troops are continuing to choose aiding the River Park as a way to perform service to the community by building kiosks, benches, puncheons and signs. In addition, over the years troops have assisted with planting native species, removing invasive species, trimming overgrown brush and picking up trash just to name a few tasks. And their contributions are deeply appreciated.

Pictured here are scout efforts from the last year. Three scouts each created 14 routed trail signs, and one scout built an information kiosk.

We wouldn’t have this wonderful publication reach your door if it were not for Gene Tendler. Thanks Gene!

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**Teachers, Scout Leaders, Community Organizations:** The River Park offers docent-led hikes given by our special volunteer River Valley Guides. So if you are looking for a field trip, team or group outing, we have one for you! There is no fee for this activity.

**Kayakers:** The River Park has partnered with the San Diego Water Dept. to offer a unique kayaking experience around Lake Hodges. This Park fundraiser, offered weekly at $50 per person (all but $5 tax-deductible), is a wonderful way to contribute to a great cause and have fun at the same time. Half of the proceeds will go to public improvements approved at Lake Hodges and the remainder toward an endowment to maintain those improvements. This Breakfast with the Birds includes a continental breakfast, all boating gear and instruction, and a memory magnet! Minimum age is 18. The trip begins at 7 am and ends at Noon. Connect with nature! Call now to make a reservation!

Contact Dolores Knight, Event & Volunteer Coordinator, 858-674-2275 x 14 for more information.
**Is It Still a Lake?**

*By Environmental Planner Shawna Anderson*

It’s an alarming sight: Where there used to be water, there is now a “forest” of willows and other trees with no water in sight. Of course, I’m talking about the low water level at Lake Hodges as seen from Interstate 15.

The water level is quite low; in fact it hasn’t been this low since about 1990. However, water level data going back 50 years shows water levels have been even lower throughout the 1950s, ’60s, and ’70s. The elevation of the spillway is 315 feet above mean sea level (msl) when water spills over the dam; Lake Hodges has spilled 13 times in the past 50 years. The elevation shouldn’t be confused with the depth of the lake, which is 115 feet at its maximum level.

In January the water level at Lake Hodges was at 285 feet msl, but historically it has gotten much lower than that. Because Lake Hodges is filled solely by rainfall and runoff, the lake level fluctuates widely. The historical graph depicted here shows this fluctuation for the past two decades. Water levels at Lake Hodges were high through most of the 1990s but have decreased since 1999 due to low rainfall in the past few years.

Built in 1918, Hodges Reservoir is designed to hold 37,700 acre-feet of water. It has been owned and operated by the City of San Diego since 1926. Water is drawn from Lake Hodges by the San Dieguito Water District and Santa Fe Irrigation District via an open flume that connects Lake Hodges to the San Dieguito Reservoir under a long-standing agreement that has been in place since the city purchased the reservoir. According to city records, the two water districts have been removing water over the last five years at a fairly steady rate of about 9,000 acre-feet per year, not enough to substantively affect water levels in the reservoir.

Lake levels at Hodges will be regulated once the San Diego County Water Authority implements the Emergency Storage Project (ESP) at Lake Hodges. Already underway, this major project includes a system of reservoirs, interconnected pipelines and pumping stations to improve water storage and distribution in case of an emergency such as an earthquake or drought. One component of the ESP is to connect Lake Hodges to a new Olivenhain Reservoir currently under construction and to operationally regulate Lake Hodges by transferring water between the two reservoirs. Water levels at Lake Hodges will be drawn down prior to winter rains to increase storage capacity and then maintained at a higher level in the summer by importing water for emergency storage. This phase of the ESP is to be completed between 2004 and 2008. Lake levels will then be consistently held at between 296 feet msl and 311 feet msl with fewer fluctuations.

For more information about the ESP, call the San Diego County Water Authority at 877-426-2010 or look at their website www.sdcwaw.org.

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**What’s Growing on… in the Field**

*By Senior Ranger Jason Lopez*

Generally, the daily tasks and work environment of the River Park field staff vary greatly from day to day and week to week, but one responsibility requires a different sort of commitment. We have one overriding obligation that exceeds all others - our work with the Dust Devils. Rain or shine, 20 degrees or 100 degrees we meet on Tuesday mornings. A specific job is planned four days in advance and the field staff’s work schedules are arranged around this constant. Certain tasks are saved for Tuesdays, especially those that require patience and skill. The trail building expertise of the River Park Dust Devils is quite remarkable, especially considering that they are volunteers. Although Ranger Todd Stepien and Assistant Ranger Dave Hekel are noteworthy trail builders, many projects are not scheduled until the Dust Devils can assist.

The Mule Hill/San Pasqual Valley Trail has dominated the Dust Devil project list over the last year.

Two other key players in the construction of the Mule Hill/San Pasqual Trail are special crews from the California Conservation Corps (CCC) and the California Department of Forestry (CDF) Puerta La Cruz Camp. CCC crews often support specialized work. The CCC provided a small crew on days that are scheduled around the project’s progress and the availability of Park staff.

Our primary labor source has been the CDF Puerta La Cruz firefighters. The majority of the labor-intensive work has been done with the assistance of CDF. The valuable relationship with Puerta La Cruz has greatly benefited the River Park. The all-female crews have been responsible for clearing and construction of many miles of trail, various clean-up projects, habitat restoration, fence installation, and many other projects. Their assistance has allowed Park staff to accomplish many tasks without the need for heavy equipment or contracted assistance. This has resulted in fewer environmental impacts and a more carefully constructed trail.

In the future, the people who have built this new trail will look upon it differently than the generations who will use it for recreation. The builders will see tall vegetation behind the fence they installed, the obliterated road where they broke up compacted soil and scattered native seed, and the carefully shaped trail that still has its original slope. They also will remember the trash hauled out, the water trucked in, the native plants saved, and the faces of nervous truck drivers who were alarmed when they discovered the location where materials needed to be dropped off.

The real work begins after the opening ceremony when the people who have patiently waited for access come and use the 11 or so miles of new trail. The route travels though sensitive wildlife habitat and along various agricultural operations. These areas did not have public access before, and how the trail community treats this resource will send a strong message to many about how trails impact both natural environments and working farms. During this project, we have not only constructed a trail tread but we have spent equal time taking measures to manage the usage so
Partnerships

Competitors or Complementaries?
By Craig Adams, Executive Director, San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy

Recent media attention has focused on the announcement of an effort to formally develop a San Diego River Regional Park. Some media, probably looking for a story of conflict, have approached representatives of the San Dieguito River Park effort asking, “Doesn’t this compete with your efforts?” Maybe to the surprise of the provocateurs the response has uniformly been, “To the contrary, our success is interrelated to theirs and, in helping them, we are helping to fulfill our own mission.” The San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy is engaged in several projects that reflect this “regional partnership role.”

Resource Mapping for Decision Making In a highly competitive field the Conservancy received a grant from the San Diego Foundation to develop prototype applications of available geographical information (so-called GIS systems). We are developing maps for the San Dieguito River Watershed, but we consulted with conservation groups in other areas to find applications that share needs.

Regional Habitat Conservation Research Center The Conservancy recently received an anonymous grant from a national foundation to evaluate the feasibility of and to develop an action plan for a Regional Habitat Conservation Research Center. The Center, which would be designed to support citizen-based conservation efforts in the county, might provide supporting services such as: compilation of habitat status and species monitoring information, an information resource for organizational and program development; and potentially a clearing house for the sharing of tools, equipment and certainly experience.

River Park staff are partners with the Conservancy and contributors in these projects that are designed to contribute to the conservation of broader regional habitats that our special river system depends upon for its own viability and vitality.

What’s Growing… Continued from page 6

Native Plant Surveys
By Julie Evens, California Native Plant Society

The San Diego Chapter and Vegetation Program staff of the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) began a vegetation project within the San Dieguito River Valley in 2001. From May to August, CNPS and numerous volunteers conducted over 85 vegetation surveys in the River Valley. Volunteers were trained to classify and quantify vegetation and to detail habitat quality and had fun discovering and detailing new plants and patterns across the landscape.

The CNPS vegetation project has benefited from a generous monetary gift given by an anonymous donor in the County. This donation was allocated to staff time for coordination of the San Dieguito project. Both monetary support and volunteer time provide vital assistance for this and other CNPS vegetation projects.

Many of San Diego County’s sensitive habitats and plant assemblages occur in the River Park’s Focused Planning Area, including coastal sage scrub, coastal herbaceous wetlands, riparian woodlands, native grasslands and oak woodlands. Further, over 100 different vegetation communities, called alliances, occur in this region.

This is a great opportunity for CNPS to collect baseline vegetation and site quality information in a range of landscapes and biodiversity of the San Dieguito watershed. CNPS is collecting and processing fine-scale, field-based vegetation data. This information will be shared with local and regional organizations and agencies for prioritizing open space for acquisition or protection, by creating a vegetation map and a ranked list of priority land areas.

Mapping and Conservation Values Using the survey and map information, CNPS will look at vegetation diversity within the San Dieguito River Valley and determine which vegetation types are rare, common, threatened, unhindered, etc. With this and other information, CNPS will produce a ranked list of priority land parcels through input from California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) staff. Areas will be compared to identify conservation values, which will be helpful for such things as land acquisition, proper placement of trail systems and other management in the River Park.

CNPS is currently collaborating with local agencies to provide them with defensible definitions of vegetation types, a vegetation map, and a conservation analysis of open space parcels. The agencies include San Dieguito River Park JPA, the San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy, CDFG, County of San Diego Parks and Recreation Dept., San Diego Association of Governments, San Diego City Parks Dept., and The Nature Conservancy.

Future Vegetation Training CNPS is offering training to volunteers in classifying and quantifying baseline vegetation, site history, and site quality information. We encourage people with some botanical knowledge, as well as those just interested in learning the plants and survey techniques to contribute their help.

Scheduled training dates are March 16-17, April 12-13, or April 27-28. You are also welcome to register for and attend the next technical, fee-based workshop on March 14-15. If interested, please contact Julie Evens, state CNPS Vegetation Ecologist, (619) 327-0714, jevens@cnps.org, or Robert MacAller, San Diego Chapter Vegetation Chair, (619) 308-9333, rmacaller@recon-us.com.
The vision for the San Dieguito River Park is a greenway and natural open space park in the San Dieguito River Valley that will protect the valley’s unique resources while providing compatible recreational and educational opportunities, including a trail for hikers, bicyclists and equestrians extending 55 miles from the ocean at Del Mar to the river’s source on Volcan Mountain. Two organizations work jointly to make this vision a reality. The San Dieguito River Park Joint Powers Authority (JPA) is a local government agency authorized by its member agencies, the County of San Diego and the cities of Del Mar, Escondido, Poway, San Diego and Solana Beach to plan, improve and manage the Park. The San Dieguito River Valley Land Conservancy is a nonprofit 501 (c) (3) volunteer member organization that raises funds for land acquisition and Park amenities. We ask you to send your contributions to the Conservancy where they will be used to support the Park’s goals.

Support the San Dieguito River Park by becoming a Park Partner!

- Subscribing $35
- Maintaining $50
- Contributing $100
- Sustaining $500
- Patron $1000
- Other $ ___

Where would you like your money allocated?
- Land Acquisition
- Educational Fund
- Endowment Fund
- Trail Construction/Maintenance

Name ___________________________________
Address _________________________________
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Phone Number ___________________________

Please make checks payable to: SDRVLC

Mail to: San Dieguito River Valley
        Land Conservancy
        P.O. Box 89
        Del Mar, CA 92014

Dues and gifts to the SDRVLC are tax deductible. Call the Land Conservancy office if you have any questions, (858) 755-6956

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