



SAN DIEGUITO RIVER PARK

THE HISTORY OF OUR CREATION

By Susan Carter, SDRP Deputy Director 1994-2014



The story of the San Dieguito River Park, and how it came to be, and how it progressed, is the story of citizens like you who were concerned about preserving an important part of their community. These were real people, who didn't just stand by as valuable wetlands and natural open space were lost to development – they did something about it – and as a result, a regional park extending from Volcan Mountain in the east to the beach at Del Mar, an expanse of 55 miles, came into being, providing lasting benefits for animals and humans.

WATER QUALITY

The creation of the San Dieguito River Park began first with an effort to restore water quality in the San Dieguito Lagoon. Ask yourself, if you saw that the natural wetlands near your community were suffering from pollution and lack of fresh water, what would you do?

Here is what one young activist did for the San Dieguito Lagoon, and it has made all the difference.

When Nancy Weare was a young college student, she became concerned about the condition of the San Dieguito Lagoon. Nancy has a PhD in Earth & Planetary Science from Johns Hopkins. She first came to the San Diego area as a student at Scripps Upper Campus in 1969. She recalls that the San Dieguito Lagoon had closed up, there were mosquitoes, and it was a public nuisance. By the early 1970's, development in the upper river valley, roadway crossings, and creation of the Del Mar Fairgrounds had reduced the San Dieguito Lagoon to about 200 acres west of I-5 and its watershed to about 46 square miles west of Lake Hodges. This led to frequent closing of the river mouth, poor water circulation and extreme variations in salinity. The effect was to minimize habitats, decrease the diversity of wildlife, and to limit the lagoon's ability to rid itself of pollutants.

Because she was concerned about maintaining the quality and quantity of water flowing in the river valley, she decided to do something about it. She began by speaking to her friends and neighbors. In 1972, a group of local residents (including Dave Keeling, Joe Lang, Margaret Porter, Rachel Reed, Stuart Resor, Walta Ross, and Nancy Weare) brought a vision of a restored lagoon to the City of Del Mar along with a request to become a standing city committee.

In 1974 the City of Del Mar officially established the San Dieguito Lagoon Preservation Committee for the purpose of preparing a plan for protecting, revitalizing and managing the lagoon ecosystem. (In 2014 the City of Del Mar changed the name to the San Dieguito Lagoon Commttee). Local residents on the original committee included: John Bradshaw, Allan Carson, Don Coordt, Edward Coughran, Charles Keeling, Joseph Lang, Jeannie O'Toole, Margaret Porter, Gerald Winterer, Herb Turner, and Nancy Weare (chair). Working with City staff, the Lagoon Committee developed a more detailed restoration concept. They used this concept to carry out directed efforts to gather the support of the public, government officials and wildlife agencies statewide.



WATER QUALITY CONTINUED

In 1979, an Enhancement Program for the lagoon west of Interstate 5 was completed utilizing funds granted the City of Del Mar by the Office of Coastal Zone Management , the California Coastal Conservancy, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Preparation of the Enhancement Program was carried out by William Healy, City of Del Mar Planning Director, and the Lagoon Committee, headed by its then Chairman, Don Coordt, along with Dr. Weare. The key issue addressed was how to secure a healthy lagoon by keeping the river mouth open for sufficiently long periods of time. Added to the Program was a schematic drawing of the entire San Dieguito River Valley from the ocean eastward to the mountains in Julian. This was an important critical reminder to readers that a healthy lagoon required an open and healthy watershed area and foreshadowed future efforts to preserve the 70-mile-long San Dieguito River Valley. Subsequently, a Conceptual Plan for the Expansion of the Lagoon (east of I-5) was adopted in 1989.

Dr. Weare has advice for others who are committed to making changes in their community: she says that to effect change, it is important first to make a plan (especially with visuals) so that people can actually see what you have in mind, and second, do the work to take it around everywhere and expose it to as many people and groups as possible. She said you can't keep the baby too close to the heart – you have to put it out there. And then you have to work to get that plan officially adopted. And that is what she did. As a direct result of her efforts, the City of San Diego and the San Dieguito River Park JPA ultimately acquired virtually all of the privately owned lagoon properties for public open space, and the California Coastal Conservancy and the California Coastal Commission encouraged Southern California Edison to restore 150 acres of coastal wetlands at the San Dieguito Lagoon, an \$86 million project that brought tidal water and flourishing wetland plants and aquatic life back to the San Dieguito Lagoon.

DEVELOPMENT PRESSURE

Ask yourself, if you learned that developments were being proposed that would degrade the natural environment, the rural character and the scenic beauty of your community, what would you do?

The 1970's were a time of awakening to environmental preservation in California. The California Environmental Quality Act was adopted in 1970, just after the National Environmental Policy Act in 1969, and the California Coastal Commission was created in 1972. It was a time when more citizens were getting involved in planning issues.



DEVELOPMENT PRESSURE CONTINUED

One of the first such in the north coastal part of San Diego was the planning of North City West from 1974-1980, which brought together many citizens who would go on to be involved in the successful Proposition A Growth Management Initiative in 1985. The planning departments of both the County of San Diego and the City of San Diego had each identified the San Dieguito River Valley as an important resource and greenbelt area for the region by the early 1980's, and had separately prepared resource studies and opportunities/constraint studies for the areas of the River Valley within their jurisdiction. The City of San Diego even adopted the San Dieguito River Valley Regional Plan for the area within the City of San Diego in 1984. However, much of the land that was studied was privately owned, and plans and studies do not have the power to stop private development. This became an increasing concern as growth boomed in the 1980's. Development proposals in both the west and east ends of the San Dieguito River Valley in the mid to late 1980's galvanized some communities to organize and find ways to stop rampant development that would impact areas near and dear to the hearts of local citizens.

AT THE LAGOON...

At the San Dieguito Lagoon, at the west end of the San Dieguito River Valley, the proposed development project that alarmed so many local citizens were a proposed 300-room hotel and shopping complex on the former dirigible base located directly west of the freeway south of the Del Mar Fairgrounds. That area is now a deep lagoon, created as part of the Southern California Edison restoration project as the result of a significant, multi-year, citizen effort.

Citizen efforts to restore the San Dieguito Lagoon had started in the 1970's under the leadership of Dr. Nancy Weare. After the City of Del Mar created the San Dieguito Lagoon Committee and adopted the San Dieguito Lagoon Resource Enhancement Program in 1979, part of the initial plan was implemented by the California Department of Fish & Game (now the California Department of Fish & Wildlife) in 1980-1983. The project involved dredging channels and creating a new 70-acre water basin with a least tern island, and it showed how the entire lagoon area could look someday. The vision for a restored and expanded lagoon was embraced by local residents and many others.

The proposed hotel and shopping complex would have radically reduced the potential for the entire lagoon to be restored. The complex was proposed for property west of the freeway that was privately owned by an Orange County group known as Birtcher/Del Mar 88. A public meeting was held on May 9, 1987, by the State Coastal Conservancy and the State Dept. of Commerce to discuss the future of the site.



AT THE LAGOON CONTINUED

The public notice said that presently the property was included in the City of San Diego's and City of Del Mar's San Dieguito Lagoon Enhancement Program, but the property owners wished to develop a portion of their property for hotel and retail/commercial uses. As reported in the newspaper afterward, the meeting was attended by over five hundred concerned local citizens who testified against the hotel project with strong and wide-ranging opposition. Attendees carried signs that said, "Save Our Lagoon" and "Lagoons are rare, shopping malls are everywhere." Credit for organizing the opposition goes to the Friends of the San Dieguito River Valley, in particular John Gillies, Alice Goodkind and Nancy Weare.

Attendees carried signs that said, "Save Our Lagoon" and "Lagoons are rare, shopping malls are everywhere." Credit for organizing the opposition goes to the Friends of the San Dieguito River Valley, in particular John Gillies, Alice Goodkind and Nancy Weare.

After that meeting, the property owner conceded he was willing to sell, and talk turned to its potential acquisition. In 1989, the 22nd District Agricultural Association proposed that the State of California purchase the property for use for parking during the Fair each year. This, too, was objected to by citizens because they preferred for the property to be restored to wetlands as part of the Lagoon Enhancement Program. When the State Public Works Board turned down the 22nd DAA's proposed acquisition, that left an opening for the newly formed San Dieguito River Park Joint Powers Authority, which voted on July 14, 1989 to pursue acquisition of the Birtcher/Del Mar 88 property, and which completed the purchase on January 31, 1991, making it the first property that the JPA acquired for the San Dieguito River Valley Regional Open Space Park.

Among the many folks who attended that large public meeting and went on to promote the creation of a regional park and open space preserve in the San Dieguito River Valley, and the creation of an agency, the Joint Powers Authority, to implement and oversee the regional park, were members of the newly formed San Dieguito River Valley Land Conservancy and the Friends of the San Dieguito River Valley. Members from the San Dieguito Lagoon Committee (formed in 1974 by the City of Del Mar) and other environmentally active residents from communities along the San Dieguito River Valley had formed two organizations in 1986 that focused on the coastal area. These were the San Dieguito River Valley Land Conservancy formed June 2, 1986 as a nonprofit 501c3 organization for the purpose of preserving natural open space along the entire river valley from the sea to the mountains, and the Friends of the San Dieguito River Valley formed December 22, 1986 as a nonprofit 501c4 organization to provide political action and education supporting that goal. The original founders of these two groups knew from the beginning that there was a need for both organizations – one to focus on land acquisition and the other to be political activists.



AT THE LAGOON CONTINUED

Early founders of the Conservancy included Lynn Benn, Karen Berger, Nancy Weare (President 1987-1993), Joyce Mattson, John Gillies, Margaret Schlesinger, and Jan McMillan. Early founders of the Friends were Alice Goodkind (President 1986-1998), Poppy DeMarco-Dennis, Dr. Joanna Lewis and Brooke Eisenberg. Following Alice Goodkind as President was Jacqueline Winterer who has served for many years as a faithful and passionate advocate for the lagoon and the River Park.

These groups wanted to accomplish a far-reaching goal...that of preserving open space and habitat areas and creating a trail system along the entire 55-mile-long San Dieguito River Valley. As a 501c3, the Conservancy would focus on acquiring river valley land through grants, donations and mitigation. The Conservancy's mission statement calls for the Conservancy to conserve, restore and enhance the entire San Dieguito River Valley system, including both the wetlands and uplands, for its scenic, open space and recreational value, as well as for the scientific, historic and educational opportunities that the area provides. The Friends, as a 501c4, would focus on education and political action. Their stated purpose is to conserve, restore and enhance the scenic, ecological and open space resources of the river valley system, emphasizing the importance of ecological resources.

Lynn Benn contacted the State Coastal Conservancy in 1985 to see if they could assist local residents to preserve the coastal open space. She called Karen Berger to invite her to the meeting, and is famously remembered for saying, "Do you want to help me buy the River Valley?" Melanie Denninger and Janet Diehl with the State Coastal Conservancy (SCC) were the trainers for the fledgling Conservancy. They taught these local citizens a nonprofit primer on how to set up a conservancy. Karen brought in Bob Sensibaugh when the SCC later held a workshop on Conservancies and Trusts. Bob Sensibaugh was the fledgling Conservancy's strategist. He had been a Navy Captain, and was a graduate of the Harvard Business School and was able to bring those skills to bear in developing a strategy and work program for the Conservancy.

Of special significance is the leap that these two organizations took to look past the immediate threat in the lagoon, and to realize that if they were to preserve the river in the condition it was at that time (the river was already dammed in two places upstream to create Lake Hodges and Lake Sutherland) that they needed to incorporate the whole river valley into their planning and acquisition efforts. Their conceptual planning began at the watershed level with a focus on the watershed of the River Valley, from the water's source on Volcan Mountain to the mouth of the river at Del Mar Beach.



AT THE VOLCAN MOUNTAIN...

On Volcan Mountain near Julian, at the east end of the San Dieguito River Valley, a development was proposed in 1987 for a pristine area of the mountain by a foundation called First Fruit, Inc. The first alarm bells were raised when local folks (notably Vicki and Peter Bergstrom, John and Lynn Horton, Lou and Jan La Dou, Francis Hemsher and Clint Powell) first heard about a proposed 24-unit development on Volcan Mountain at a 1987 Julian Planning Group meeting. First Fruit founder Peter Ochs wanted to build this housing development to fund the foundation's religious non-profit work. Ochs was Chairman of Fieldstone Co., a large Newport Beach based company building housing developments in Orange and San Diego Counties, and he had the resources to build attractive, high-end homes on the mountain. These individuals, and other citizens, were very disturbed at the idea of a housing development on Volcan Mountain, and organized local residents, school groups, church groups and many others to write letters in opposition, and organized transportation to the Planning Commission meetings in San Diego.

The Volcan Mountain Preserve Foundation (now Volcan Mountain Foundation) was officially formed in 1988. The first board members were Frances Hemsher, president, Peter Bergstrom, Lynn Horton, Anne Hubbell and Clint Powell. They hired John Price, an environmental planner from Orange County, as a consultant to help them incorporate and to provide strategic advice. The small group of citizens raised money to pay Price by selling t-shirts with Lynn Horton's design that included the tag line "Volcan, NOT your ordinary mountain." They also sold "Save Volcan Mountain" posters, featuring a beautiful watercolor of the mountain by artist James Hubbell, that included the famous quote from John Muir, "Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop away from you like the leaves of Autumn."

After several hearings at the County Planning Commission attended by many local residents opposed to the project, Peter Bergstrom and John Horton, Directors of Camp Stevens, and Cory Jones from Camp Virginia, decided to see if there was a "win-win solution". They met with County Parks Director Bob Copper in Fall 1988 to see if there was a way the property could be acquired. Peter said, "If we lose this piece, we've lost the whole mountain". When asked why Volcan Mountain was important to preserve, he said, "Volcan Mountain is to San Diego as Alaska is to the United States. Most people won't go there, but you don't have to go there to appreciate the comfort it gives you that there is still wilderness, that something "whole" is there that has not been defaced."



AT VOLCAN MOUNTAIN CONTINUED

The timing was good because the state voters had approved Proposition 70 in 1988 and there would be money available for land purchases from that source. County Parks Director Bob Copper supported the acquisition, which would be the first of many more to come in order to preserve the mountain. When asked how they had accomplished so much, so quickly, John Horton said, "Ordinary people can do extraordinary things".

In addition to those already mentioned, Ken Wright & Carol Schloo-Wright, Sally Snipes, Larry Hendrickson, Toni Marquette, Gary Gernandt, Bill Porter, Michael Beck, Jay Evarts, Luana Lynch, David & Susan Schierman, Carol Pike and many others were involved in the formation and early work of the Foundation.

At a retreat at Camp Stevens in 1990 the Foundation board and others created the Volcan Mountain Foundation's 100-year plan to preserve all of the 52,000 acres of Volcan Mountain. As of February, 2017, 34,000 acres have been preserved by the VMF and its partners San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy, San Dieguito River Park Joint Powers Authority, County of San Diego and California Fish and Wildlife Department.

In 1990 a San Diego Foundation grant provided the funds to purchase materials to build a gateway to the new Volcan Mountain Wilderness Preserve. This Gateway was designed by James Hubbell and is at the entrance to the Volcan Mountain Wilderness Preserve hiking trail off Farmer Road. The Board wanted to create an entrance to the Preserve that would make people stop and realize that they were entering a very special place.



AT VOLCAN MOUNTAIN CONTINUED

Coordinated by Vicki Bergstrom and Caryn Brause, it took almost a year to complete. Volunteers came out every Sunday morning and Jim Hubbell was there guiding the project and adding his special touches.

Other artists who contributed to the project were Bill Porter who did the beautiful metalwork on the gate, and Mirko Mrakajec whose wood carving graces the wooden pieces on either side of the gate. This wood came from Palomar Mountain. Those who were there recall that when a County official came to view the work, he determined that one section of the carving that Mirko called "the Universal Man" looked demonic. He asked that it be removed. Instead of being offended, Mirko just went back and carved it into a frog!

Vincente Guerrero, a skilled stone mason from Mexico, did the rock work on the kiva-like sitting area. Brennan Hubbell created the tall metal sculptures as you pass through the gate. Gene Thompson built/carved the original sign along the path to the Gateway. The stone bench just beyond the gateway was created in memory of Lynn Horton, an early president of the Foundation, and the bronze inset is her artwork (at that time the County did not permit including her name on the bench).

Greg Schuett, principal of Cuyamaca Outdoor School was one of the dedicated volunteers. Shortly afterward he joined the Board and served as Board president for many years afterward.

Creating a regional open space park, and raising money and buying land took a lot of work on the part of citizens like yourself, as well as elected officials who wanted to make a difference, to accomplish. In the mid-1980's, Karen Berger and Bob Sensibaugh were tireless in their efforts to meet with decision-makers about preserving the San Dieguito River Valley. Concurrently, Diane Coombs, Open Space Chair of Citizens Coordinate for Century 3 (C-3), an important, local, urban planning organization, led field trips and wrote letters to SANDAG urging the agency to take action to create a multi-agency task force and to create a joint powers authority to carry out the Park's mission.

Under the urging of these groups, along with Del Mar's San Dieguito Lagoon Committee, SANDAG took action in 1987 to create a multi-jurisdictional Task Force (later Executive Committee) for the purpose of exploring the creation of a regional park in the San Dieguito River Valley. The idea for the task force was initiated and shepherded by SANDAG Deputy Director Stuart Shaffer. When the Task Force Executive Committee was created it was led by co-chairs San Diego Councilmember Abbe Wolfsheimer and County Supervisor Susan Golding.



AT VOLCAN MOUNTAIN CONTINUED

In 1989, this group approved the creation of a separate Joint Powers Authority from the same member agencies (the County of San Diego and the Cities of Del Mar, Escondido, Poway, San Diego and Solana Beach) to serve as the vehicle to oversee the acquisition, design and ongoing operation of the regional open space park.

POLITICAL WILL

Grass roots pressure from citizens such as Karen Berger, Bob Sensibaugh and Diane Coombs was powerful, but would not have achieved the desired goal without the political will and leadership of certain key elected leaders who listened to these citizens and other early supporters and determined to make it happen. Among those political leaders, two stood out as early proponents: Abbe Wolfsheimer Stutz and Susan Golding.

Abbe Wolfsheimer Stutz (1938-2014) was a Founder of the San Dieguito River Valley Regional Open Space Park. Abbe was born to Colonel Irving Salomon and his wife Cecile Salomon in Chicago in 1938. The family moved to Rancho Lilac in Valley Center when Abbe was 7, where she attended school in a one-room schoolhouse on the ranch. Her father was a noted philanthropist who served as the United States Ambassador to the United Nations during the Eisenhower administration. During this period Rancho Lilac was visited by many notable persons, including Eleanor Roosevelt and President Dwight Eisenhower.

In 1985, Abbe ran for and was elected to the City of San Diego City Council, representing District One, which at the time included all of the City's jurisdiction in the San Dieguito River Valley - the coastal area of the City up to Via de la Valle, and eastward to and including Rancho Bernardo and San Pasqual Valley. Later the District boundaries were modified so that the Coastal area of the Park was in District 1, and the eastern area of the Park was in District 5. Abbe believed strongly that a Councilperson should leave a tangible legacy, such as parks and libraries. Almost immediately after her election, she began promoting her vision of a regional, open space park in the San Dieguito River Valley. She campaigned for SANDAG to create a regional task force, she created a citizens committee in her District to advise her about the proposed park, and she urged the creation of a separate government agency, the San Dieguito River Park Joint Powers Authority to design, implement and operate the regional park. Ramona Salisbury Kiltz was a member of Abbe's planning committee from its beginning, representing the League of Women Voters and the Rancho Bernardo Planning Board. She later served as Vice-Chair of the River Park's Citizens Advisory Committee.



POLITICAL WILL CONTINUED

Despite these accomplishments, Abbe felt that her biggest value was in helping to find the funding that would be needed to acquire private land in the river valley for public open space. For example, she secured \$1.3 million in Wetland Priority Funds from the City of San Diego that was matched by the County with \$700,000 in 1988 Bond Act funds to make the first JPA land purchase, the Birtcher Del Mar 88 property. She also negotiated \$2 million for the Park as part of the City of San Diego's approval of Highway 56. That money went into additional acquisitions of land for open space, including in the lagoon area. As her husband, David Stutz, said, she was always excited to turn over stones in various places to find money to help create the Park.

Abbe served as Co-Chair (with Supervisor Susan Golding) of the San Dieguito River Valley Regional Open Space Park Executive Committee at SANDAG in 1987/88, and as first Chair of the San Dieguito River Park Joint Powers Authority after its creation in June, 1989. She said that creation of the San Dieguito River Park was her proudest achievement during her term in office. She often said that coming to the JPA meetings each month was her dessert after the stresses of her other work responsibilities. After leaving office, she continued her support as an Advisory Board member of the San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy.

Abbe Wolfsheimer is recognized as a founder of the San Dieguito River Park whose invaluable contributions, dedication and zeal led to its creation and ensured that it would remain as a lasting legacy for future generations.

Susan Golding, born in 1945 in Oklahoma, was County Supervisor from 1985-1992, later becoming Mayor of San Diego. She was the daughter of Brage Golding, who served as President of San Diego State University from 1972-77. During her term as County Supervisor she encouraged comprehensive planning in the San Dieguito River Valley, created an Upper San Dieguito River Valley Task Force in her district, and worked successfully with SANDAG to approve the multi-agency task force in the form that was later molded into the San Dieguito River Joint Powers Authority as it still stands today. It was through her efforts that County staff and the other supervisors agreed to relinquish separate control for park planning in the San Dieguito River Valley and instead join in the new coordinated regional planning effort. Susan served as Co-Chair (with City Councilwoman Abbe Wolfsheimer) of the San Dieguito River Valley Regional Open Space Park Executive Committee at SANDAG in 1987/88. In that capacity she exerted leadership that helped define and shape the Park.



POLITICAL WILL CONTINUED

While we recognize the enormous role of these two leaders at the City of San Diego and County of San Diego, it is important also to note the roles of leaders at the smaller entities as well, in particular Jerry Harmon, City Council, City of Escondido, Margaret Schlesinger, City Council, City of Solana Beach, and Jan McMillan and John Gillies, City Councilmembers, City of Del Mar. Each of these players was instrumental in persuading their respective agencies to join and fully support this experiment in planning a multi-agency regional park.

Another key political supporter who had a long history with the San Dieguito River Park was Mike Gotch (1948-2008), who served on the San Diego City Council from 1979 to 1987, representing the Mission Beach/Pacific Beach area. He was an early voice for conservation who urged funds to be set aside for the acquisition of wetlands. Later he served briefly in 1989 as the first Executive Director of the San Dieguito River Park Joint Powers Authority, before becoming a State Assemblyman for two terms and later a policy aide to Governor Gray Davis. In the latter capacity he was instrumental in writing funding for the San Dieguito River Valley into a park bond act.

In studying the history of the San Dieguito River Park, certain individuals are clearly responsible for its creation, and we consider them Founders of the Park. But others had a very key role in it becoming the Park we know today. One of those was Emily Durbin (1933-1990), who played a monumental role in preserving the stunning 3,700-acre valley known as Pamo Valley, which is located just north of Ramona, and makes up a large part of the natural open space in the regional park. Pamo Valley was acquired by the City of San Diego in the 1950's for the purpose of damming the Temescal Creek that runs through it and converting the valley into a reservoir for the City of San Diego's long-term water needs and to serve as an emergency backup water supply. Emily was conservation coordinator and then county land use chairwoman of the San Diego Chapter of the Sierra Club in the late 1980's. Pamo Valley was dotted with rare Englemann oaks, with more than 300 acres of natural wetlands, home to golden eagles, bobcats, mountain lions and more than 100 species of resident and migratory birds. Emily argued that there were less environmentally damaging ways to enhance San Diego's water supply than by filling Pamo Valley with water. She suggested that the level of San Vicente Dam could be raised and that Lake Hodges should be used more efficiently so that overflow water didn't run out to sea and that it be connected to the City's potable water system so that imported water could be stored in the lake. In addition to her diligent pursuit of the agencies who would be issuing the permits for a future reservoir at Pamo Valley, she conducted weekly field visits for over six months to introduce people to the resources of the valley, trusting that they would become advocates when they saw its beauty and value.



POLITICAL WILL CONTINUED

She was named as an intervenor, along with the Sierra Club, in a federal and state lawsuit against the city of San Diego for its failure to comply with the U.S. Clean Water Act. Her efforts led to success in 1988 when the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) citing the Clean Water Act, ruled that in fact less environmentally damaging alternatives had not been studied, and threatened to overrule the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' approval of the project. As a result, the County Water Authority set aside their plans to make a reservoir at Pamo, and over time implemented the alternatives that Emily had advocated.

WHAT CAN BE LEARNED FROM THE HISTORY OF THE CREATION OF THE SAN DIEGUITO RIVER PARK?

Several themes arise from reading about the people who contributed to the preservation of the San Dieguito River Valley as a natural open space park that should inspire others to accomplish great things themselves in their community and beyond.

First, grass roots activism is powerful. The basic actions of calling one's friends, writing letters and articles in the newspaper, attending planning group and planning commission meetings, and spreading the word in multiple ways are effective in rallying the general community. The San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy, the Friends of the San Dieguito River Valley, and the Volcan Mountain Foundation all used these techniques powerfully to build community support.

Second, it is important to reach key elected officials who will take your issue to heart and carry the banner forward. One on one meetings and field trips are valuable ways to do this. Elected officials may be particularly encouraged to take a leadership position if they see that this is a very important issue to their constituents. At the small city level this can be easier to do than at municipalities the size of the City and County of San Diego. However, a strong leader who is devoted to your cause is an invaluable asset.

Third, persistence and creativity are needed when setbacks inevitably occur. Peter Bergstrom's effort to find a win-win solution at Volcan Mountain turned around a situation that could have changed the rural character of the pristine eastern end of the river valley forever.



WHAT CAN BE LEARNED CONTINUED

Fourth, it is important to identify the unique skills that some of your fellows have; for example in the case of the San Dieguito Lagoon, Dr. Nancy Weare's knowledge of the lagoon ecosystem was invaluable in developing a science-based plan for the area, and for encouraging the adoption of the plan by the Del Mar City Council. Others had knowledge of the political system, others were journalists who could effectively communicate their message in the media.

Fifth, use the legal system to incorporate into non-profit organizations that can receive donations, as both the San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy and the Volcan Mountain Foundation did. When you don't have technical knowledge, seek it out, as the San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy did by consulting with the California Coastal Conservancy, and Volcan Mountain Foundation did by hiring a local consultant.

You may find many more themes that reverberate for you as you read about the history of citizen activism and how it led to the creation of the San Dieguito River Valley Regional Open Space Park (the San Dieguito River Park). The most resounding lesson is that individual citizens can make a vital difference in their community. What do you feel strongly about? What difference would you like to make in your community?





SAN DIEGUITO RIVER PARK

FOUNDERS



LYNN BENN

Lynn was the first to identify the need to protect the San Dieguito River Valley through acquisition. She planted the seed that led to others acquiring land in the San Dieguito River Valley to preserve it as open space forever, asking her question, "Will you help me buy the River Valley?"

KAREN BERGER

Karen is a founder of the San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy, which was organized as a 501(c)3 in order to acquire natural open space in the San Dieguito River Valley. She served as an effective citizen advocate and an important liaison with SANDAG and San Diego elected officials. Karen played a vital role in the effort to acquire land in the San Dieguito Lagoon area, and to preserve the San Pasqual Valley for agricultural use.



PETER BERGSTROM

Peter is a founder of the Volcan Mountain Preserve Foundation, located at the eastern end of the San Dieguito River Park. Peter tirelessly rallied public support for preserving Volcan Mountain. He worked closely with County leaders to identify potential acquisition funding sources while successfully negotiating with private landowners.





SAN DIEGUITO RIVER PARK

FOUNDERS



DIANE COOMBS

Diane first called for a regional, coordinated effort to preserve the San Dieguito River Valley as a citizen, and as a member of Citizens Coordinate for Century 3. Later she served as Executive Director of the JPA for eight years. Her passion for open space preservation drove her on as she skillfully negotiated key property acquisitions in the Lagoon area, as well as Volcan Mountain.

SUSAN GOLDING

As a proponent of urban planning, and in her capacity as County Supervisor, Susan implemented development design guidelines and Specific Plans to help preserve the open space in the San Dieguito River Valley that could not be acquired. She advocated for the County to join the new JPA, thus creating a successful and effective multi-jurisdictional cooperative venture.



ALICE GOODKIND

Alice was a founder of the Friends of the San Dieguito River Valley. She was a clear-eyed advocate for the highest standards for the Park and for the restored lagoon, and never relaxed those standards. She spoke out strongly through the years to make sure that those in power remembered what the Park could and should be.



SAN DIEGUITO RIVER PARK

FOUNDERS



BOB SENSIBAUGH

Bob was a founder of the San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy. He was a gifted strategist and organizer who brought those skills to bear as he researched and documented how to go about acquiring privately-owned land in the river valley. He endlessly visited with elected officials to gain their support for the fledgling River Park.

NANCY WEARE

Nancy is a scientist who recognized in the 1970's that the San Dieguito Lagoon ecosystem was in poor health. She used her expertise to create a visual plan and graphic for a restored lagoon, and promoted the plan to community groups throughout the area. She is a founder of the San Dieguito Lagoon Committee, San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy, and Friends of the San Dieguito River Valley.



ABBE WOLFSHEIMER-STUTZ

Abbe was a visionary proponent of the San Dieguito River Park. She strongly believed that the River Park should be created and operated by an independent agency, which led to the establishment of the River Park as a Joint Powers Authority. She used her position as San Diego City Councilperson to help direct funds to the new Park. Abbe was a powerful leader who provided the political will to make the River Park happen.



SAN DIEGUITO RIVER PARK

FOUNDERS

OTHER SAN DIEGUITO RIVER PARK KEY PLAYERS

CRAIG ADAMS
VICKI BERGSTROM
DICK BOBERTZ
WAYNE BRECHTEL
CAROL CARR
SUSAN CARTER
MELANIE DENNINGER
EMILY DURBIN
JAN FUCHS
PEGGY GENTRY
MIKE GOTCH
JERRY HARMON
CHRIS KHOURY
MAX KILTZ
DAVE KREITZER
HARRY MATHIS
JAN MCMILLAN
PHIL PRYDE
DAVE ROBERTS
MARGARET SCHLESINGER
STUART SHAFFER
PAM SLATER-PRICE
JACQUELINE WINTERER
DWIGHT WORDEN