



Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority

Endowment Provided by the Puente Hills Landfill

June 27, 2013

Mr. Jerrod Walters
Associate Planner
City Hall
14000 City Center Drive
Chino Hills, CA 91709

Comments on the Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report, Initial Study – City of Chino Hills General Plan Update #13GPA02

Dear Mr. Walters:

The Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority (Habitat Authority) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR), Initial Study (dated May 22, 2013) for the City of Chino Hills General Plan Update #13GPA02.

The Habitat Authority is a joint powers authority established pursuant to California Government Code Section 6500 *et seq.* with a Board of Directors consisting of the City of Whittier, County of Los Angeles, Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County, and the Hacienda Heights Improvement Association. According to its mission, the Habitat Authority is dedicated to the acquisition, restoration, and management of open space in the Puente Hills (Puente Hills Preserve) for preservation of the land in perpetuity, with the primary purpose to protect the biological diversity. Additionally, the agency endeavors to provide opportunities for outdoor education and low-impact recreation. The Habitat Authority owns and or manages over 3,800 acres which lie within the Cities of Whittier and La Habra Heights, as well as in the County unincorporated areas of the Puente Hills known as Hacienda Heights and Rowland Heights. The Puente Hills Preserve is an integral part of the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor, an unbroken zone of natural habitat extending nearly 31 miles from the Cleveland National Forest in Orange County to the west end of the Puente Hills and Whittier Narrows.

The Habitat Authority looks forward to providing more substantive comments on the DEIR. In the meantime, we have provided some comments on the Initial Study and recommendations for the DEIR.

Project Description

The Habitat Authority recommends the development of a more detailed project description. Currently, the Initial Study lists the six elements that will be covered in the General Plan Update, but

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information about how those elements will change needs to be provided in order to determine if impacts will occur and to determine the significance level of potential impacts.

Thresholds of Significance

The Habitat Authority encourages the lead agency to develop and publish thresholds of significance used in the determination of the significance of environmental effects.

Environmental Impacts Checklist

I. Aesthetics:

Not enough information has been provided in the Project Description to indicate “no impacts” would occur to aesthetics. A more detailed project description and information in the General Plan Update are needed to evaluate if environmental factors would potentially be affected. In the Draft EIR, please consider that the Chino Hills State Park is a respite for the metropolitan area and undisturbed ridgelines are important to aesthetics which contribute to the enjoyment of the visitor.

IV. Biological Resources

Due to their importance biologically and very restricted range of walnut woodlands, please consider potential impacts to woodlands in the Draft EIR. Woodland habitat is naturally rare in lowland Southern California, making it especially valuable in the region for the suite of species dependent on it. The Southern California black walnut holds status designation 4 by the California Native Plant Society, indicating this plant has limited distribution and should be monitored regularly as well as evaluated for consideration while preparing CEQA documents. The Chino-Puente Hills is a major center of distribution for this species.

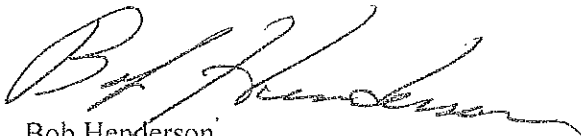
Remaining corridors of undeveloped land within the Puente-Chino Hills provide a rare opportunity to preserve a functional ecosystem and impacts to this wildlife movement corridor should be considered in the Draft EIR. Covering more than 30,000 acres of land, the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor supports a wide variety of habitats and vegetation that provides habitat for a unique assemblage of plants and animals. Biologically, this area preserves a microcosm of the California Floristic Province, an identified biodiversity hot spot in North America and a genetic reserve for the continent. As a result, the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor is regionally and globally significant as a prime example of this unique habitat web, yet it occurs in an area that is almost completely surrounded by existing development, with the attendant human influences. This wildlife corridor provides food, cover, breeding grounds, and refugia in the event of a large disturbance, and contributes to species diversity, dispersal routes for juveniles, home ranges, and the transfer of genetic material, which help maintain healthy populations. Corridors are important in sustaining populations of both animals and plants.

X. Land Use and Planning

Please indicate if the density for each residential land use category has changed. Changes to the density of residences in each land use category could affect the impact evaluation for numerous sections, including aesthetics.

As confirmed in an email from you on June 18, 2013, thank you for your consideration of our comments received after the close of the comment period ending on June 22, 2013. We look forward to providing comments on the DEIR. Feel free to contact me or Andrea Gullo, Executive Director, at (562) 945-9003 for further discussion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bob Henderson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and "H".

Bob Henderson
Chairman

cc: Board of Directors
Citizens Technical Advisory Committee