

# **Environmental Oversight Committee Meeting Minutes**

**May 5, 2010**

## **Committee Members Present:**

Chair Patricia Bates, OCTA Board of Directors  
Vice-Chair Melanie Schlotterbeck, Measure M Support Groups  
Nancy Jimeno, California State University, Fullerton  
Dan Silver, Endangered Habitats League  
Jonathan Snyder, US Fish and Wildlife Services  
Adam Probolsky, Probolsky Research  
Sylvia Vega, Caltrans  
Erinn Wilson, CA Department of Fish and Game  
Greg Winterbottom, OCTA Board of Directors

## **Committee Members Absent:**

Rose Coffin, Taxpayers Oversight Committee  
Veronica Chan, US Army Corps of Engineers  
Debbie Townsend, California Wildlife Conservation Board

## **Orange County Transportation Authority Staff Present:**

Marissa Espino, Senior Community Relations Specialist  
Janice Kadlec, Public Reporter  
Dan Phu, Project Development Section Manager  
Monte Ward, Measure M Consultant

## **Members of the Public**

Ron Krueper, California Dept. of Parks and Recreation, Inland Empire District

### **1. Welcome**

Chair Patricia Bates opened the meeting at 10:00 a.m. and welcomed everyone. She asked everyone to join her in the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **2. Approval of April 2010 Minutes**

Chair Patricia Bates asked if there were any additions or corrections to the April 7, 2010 Environmental Oversight Committee (EOC) meeting minutes. There were no additions or corrections. A motion was made by Melanie Schlotterbeck and seconded by Erinn Wilson to approve the April 7, 2010 EOC meeting minutes as presented. The motion passed with two abstentions. Chair Patricia Bates and committee member Sylvia Vega abstained from voting for approval because they did not attend the April 7, meeting.

### 3. Acquisition Property Tours

Dan Phu said he appreciated the property owners working with the committee to accommodate the scheduled property visits. There were four days of property tours covering all 20 properties in Groups 1 and 2 during the month of April. The purpose of the property tours was to confirm the evaluations based on the real-life tour of the properties as well as in relationship to the landscape environment. He presented a power point report with four representative pictures of each property. The properties visited were:

#### Group 1

- |                                       |                        |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Ferber Ranch                       | 8. Takahashi           |
| 2. Hayashi                            | 9. The Hafen Estates   |
| 3. Holtz Ranch                        | 10. Watson             |
| 4. Mitchell Properties West           | 11. MacPherson         |
| 5. O'Neill Oaks                       | 12. Saddleback Meadows |
| 6. Saddle Creek South                 | 13. Siena Summit       |
| 7. Saddleback Valley Christian School | 14. Sky Ranch          |

#### Group 2

- |                             |                         |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Adams                    | 4. Saddleback Vineyards |
| 2. Deer Canyon              | 5. Thier 1              |
| 3. Mitchell Properties East | 6. Thier 2              |

Dan Phu noted at the conclusion of the tours the various property owners asked what the next steps in property acquisitions would be. Dan said they will convene a meeting with the evaluators (wildlife agencies) as well as Caltrans and OCTA staff members to take another look at Groups 1 and 2 properties now that the tours were complete. If there were any changes they will report back at a future EOC meeting.

#### Public Comment

Ron Krueper, Inland Empire District Supervisor, California Dept. of Parks and Recreation, reaffirmed his department's interest in working with the EOC in their evaluation of the Hayashi property adjacent to the Chino Hills State Park. He also thanked the EOC in looking at Chino Hills as a restoration project. Chino Hills is the anchor point for the wildlife corridor. The habitat value of Hayashi is something greatly needed in the area. Chino Hills State Park has been developed along ridgelines and the watershed. The Parks Department sees the inclusion of the Hayashi property into state parks as an acquisition that becomes a stepping stone to protect the entire Soquel Canyon Watershed. By protecting the entire watershed it is a very unique for this to happen in Orange County. There are very few watersheds protected in their entirety.

Ron Krueper presented a letter from Director Ruth Coleman representing a commitment to working on the potential acquisition of this land. In the letter, Director Coleman states "regarding the potential land acquisition opportunity of Hayashi, the

property is contiguous to the Chino Hills State Park and identified in the Park's General Plan as an important addition to the park. As such, State Parks' is willing to take the title and manage these valuable open spaces for perpetuity. The State requires all potential land additions to be approved not only by State Parks but also by other State agencies – the Dept. of General Services, Dept. of Finance, and Public Works. However, we are very confident that these agencies would support our recommendations to manage this land in an endowment also included with the land.” Ron Krueper said the State Parks has a mechanism in place resulting from other large land dedications involving Chino Hills State Park for an endowment that have been effectively managed.

#### **4. Restoration Proposal Update**

Dan Phu gave an update on the Preliminary Restoration Proposal: Biological Factors. At the last EOC meeting, revisions were suggested for the preliminary results matrix and these changes have been made. A column was added to the matrix identifying the project “sponsor” and more detailed information was added for the Upper Buck Gully project. Dan said the next step in this project was to bring this report to the T2020 Committee (T2020) on May 17 and the OCTA Board of Directors (Board) on May 24 to obtain approval to move ahead.

Marissa Espino said OCTA staff is confirming if the 11 property owners have the proper conservation easement. It is expected this information will be confirmed by the next EOC meeting in June.

Dan Phu added the question has been raised before on whether the property sponsor has the correct conservation easement necessary because the property sponsor is not always the property owner. The wildlife agencies want to make sure these conservation easements exist in order to provide mitigation credit to OCTA.

Melanie Schlotterbeck clarified that conservation easements are one way to protect lands and that other properties like regional parks, state parks, and national forests also have a protection status. These properties are also eligible for restoration dollars.

Chair Patricia Bates suggested, as the evaluations move forward to the T2020 and the Board, that the terms of how these factors will affect the selection process are made clear.

#### **5. Mitigation Program Status Update**

Dan Phu gave a status update on the support of the Mitigation Program and bridging the gap with the conservation planning efforts. OCTA is in the process of bringing three different consultants on board to act in an advisory role as a Conservation Transaction Specialist, Right-Of-Way Specialist, and Conservation Biologist. The purpose of bringing them on board is to provide expertise and advice to the OCTA and the EOC on the transition between the conservation assessment undertaken last year and the development of the NCCP/HCP as well as support for the acquisition

process currently underway. The other contract in process is based on approval of the T2020 and Board to begin the appraisal process on the 10 properties currently in Group 1. The process is on target and the appraisers will be on board in early June 2010. The process will take four to six weeks for the property appraisal and then two to four weeks for appraisal review. Information on the potential cost of the properties should be available by the end of summer.

Monte Ward said OCTA will be recommending to the T2020 in May to give EOC full discretion to advance Group 2 properties up to the appraisal status as needed. This would result in the EOC being able to move Group 2 properties up for appraisals without going to the T2020 or the Board. It would also budget the appraisal process to handle sufficient appraisals as other properties need to be added.

Chair Patricia Bates said this will help move the process along at a quicker pace.

## **6. Public Comments**

There were no further public comments.

## **7. Committee Member Reports**

Nancy Jimeno thanked OCTA staff especially Dan Phu and Marissa Espino for an amazing amount of coordination in putting together the property tours. She would like to also thank the landowners for their outstanding cooperation on the tours. She said she asked some of the landowners what their original purpose was in purchasing their land. None of them said they purchased it so they could sell it for conservation at a later date. Nancy Jimeno also thanked Supervisor Bates staff for their input on the tours. She said she was the one who pushed for the tours and the result was incredible.

Melanie Schlotterbeck agreed that OCTA staff did a great job.

Dan Silver said the tours went like clockwork and it was amazing. Multiple days (four) seemed like a long time but it was really necessary and was the right decision to be able to get on each property and walk them. It was extremely valuable.

Melanie Schlotterbeck requested a finance update at the next EOC meeting. Dan Phu said the finance department is in the process of updating the Measure M Program and should have the figures available at the next meeting.

Chair Patricia Bates said the work the EOC is doing is starting to spread throughout the County and she is questioned about future tranches for the conservation program frequently. It would be good to have an idea of the financial figures.

Marissa Espino said the Restoration Property tours are coming up in the end of May. They will only require two days for 11 properties and the committee members will be emailed with the information in the next few days.

**8. Next Meeting June 2, 2010**

The next meeting of the EOC will be Wednesday, June 2, at 10:00 a.m.

**9. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 10:30 a.m.