

SOAR VOLUNTEERS GATHER 85,000 SIGNATURES

After months of effort, passionate and hard working SOAR volunteers gathered 85,000, putting SOAR on the November 2016 ballot in Ventura County as well as in seven cities throughout the county. Here is the rundown on each of the County and City initiatives.



Ventura County

Volunteers collected 35,354 signatures and the Board of Supervisors voted to put SOAR 2050 on the ballot. The County SOAR protects open space, agricultural and rural land in the unincorporated county, giving all voters in Ventura County, even those in the cities, a say if those unincorporated lands are proposed to be rezoned for urbanization.

(Continued Inside)



Thousand Oaks

Volunteers collected 12,241 signatures that have been certified for the ballot. After a judge's ruling confirmed that the SOAR petition was in compliance with all legal requirements, the City Council voted to put the City SOAR on the ballot. The City SOAR includes renewal of the CURB and the Parks initiative that protects city parks and open spaces.



Ventura

Volunteers collected 10,634 signatures and the City Council voted to put the City SOAR on the ballot despite concerns raised by the city attorney about how the initiative referenced other documents. The City initiative includes both the SOAR initiative that protects open space and agricultural land in the city, and also renewal of the Hillside Protection Area initiative.

Competing Initiative Seeks to End SOAR Protections

Opponents of the original SOAR effort campaigned heavily in 1998 to defeat us. Fortunately, SOAR withstood their expensive and deceptive tactics and won with a resounding 63% of the vote. Unfortunately, our opponents are back, and they're calling themselves SustainVC.

This time around, these same opponents are trying a new strategy – to divide support for the countywide SOAR initiative by pushing a competing measure to keep SOAR from getting the majority vote needed to win. If neither initiative gets 50% of the vote, neither passes and SOAR's voter protections come to an end in 2020 – which would delight many of SOAR's opponents.

The competing measure would end the right to vote on development projects in unincorporated areas in 2036,

just 16 years after SOAR's current 2020 expiration date. SOAR's renewal effort would extend SOAR's protection to the year 2050, ensuring that another generation of Ventura County residents will have the same say on development that current residents have enjoyed since 1998.

In addition to cutting in half the number of years SOAR would protect open space and farmland, the competing measure creates loopholes and exemptions that will open large areas of farmland to development without a vote of the people.

Far from being sustainable, SustainVC is an initiative that encourages the removal of farmland and promotes urban sprawl.

Notable Quotes

“The SOAR initiative is vital in preserving the unique character and beauty of Ventura County -- the place I spent eighteen years growing up in. Mindful conservation and care-taking of green space/ agricultural resources is not only the environmentally sound choice, but the moral one for ensuring a high quality of life for future generations. I appreciate the hills I’ve spent years playing on, the local farmers I’ve bought produce from, and the quiriness of the city I’ve always cherished. SOAR is the only initiative that truly protects those things.”

– Genae Matthews

“Without SOAR we will become like LA. If I wanted to live in LA I would move there. I don’t want us to pave paradise.”

– Matthew Abbe

“The residents of Ventura County should have the final say in any development of open spaces in the county.”

– Robert Bonderer

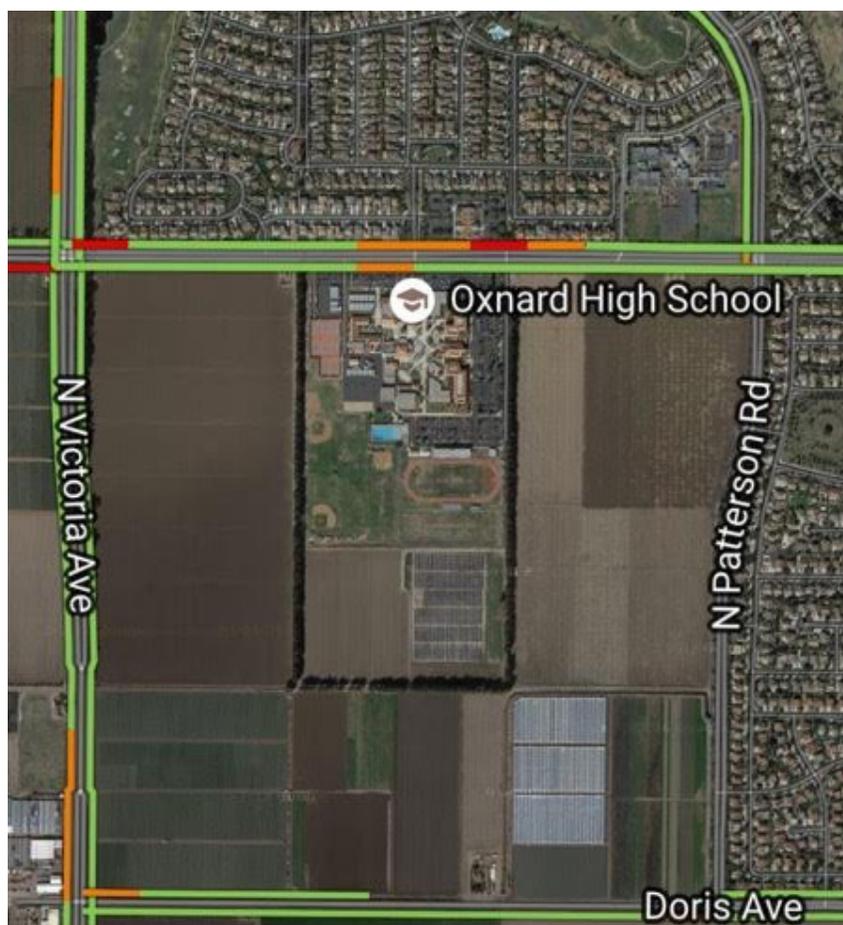
“SOAR rocks!”

– Chaise Rasheed

SustainVC Loopholes Promote Sprawl

SustainVC removes SOAR protections on over 1,000 acres of farmland. The backers of SustainVC say removing these protections will “help” agriculture. The “help” they are offering, however, is to let owners of agricultural land convert the land from agriculture to urban development without a vote of the people.

As one example, Section 2.7 of the SustainVC initiative removes SOAR’s requirement of a vote of the people if the farmland is adjacent to schools that are at the edge of cities. It would allow these agricultural parcels to be rezoned and developed into housing tracts or other urban uses with a simple majority vote of three members of the Board of Supervisors. This exemption has the possibility to blot out farmland adjacent to several cities on parcels ranging in size from 20 to 300 acres each. Far from “helping” agriculture, this exemption develops agricultural land around the edges of cities, the definition of “urban sprawl.”



One of several locations in the county where SustainVC exemptions would remove voter protections from farmland.

Please connect with us on Facebook and Twitter to get up-to-date information and find out about ways to assist our SOAR effort! As the count down to the November election nears, we’ll be asking for your help!

Follow Us at



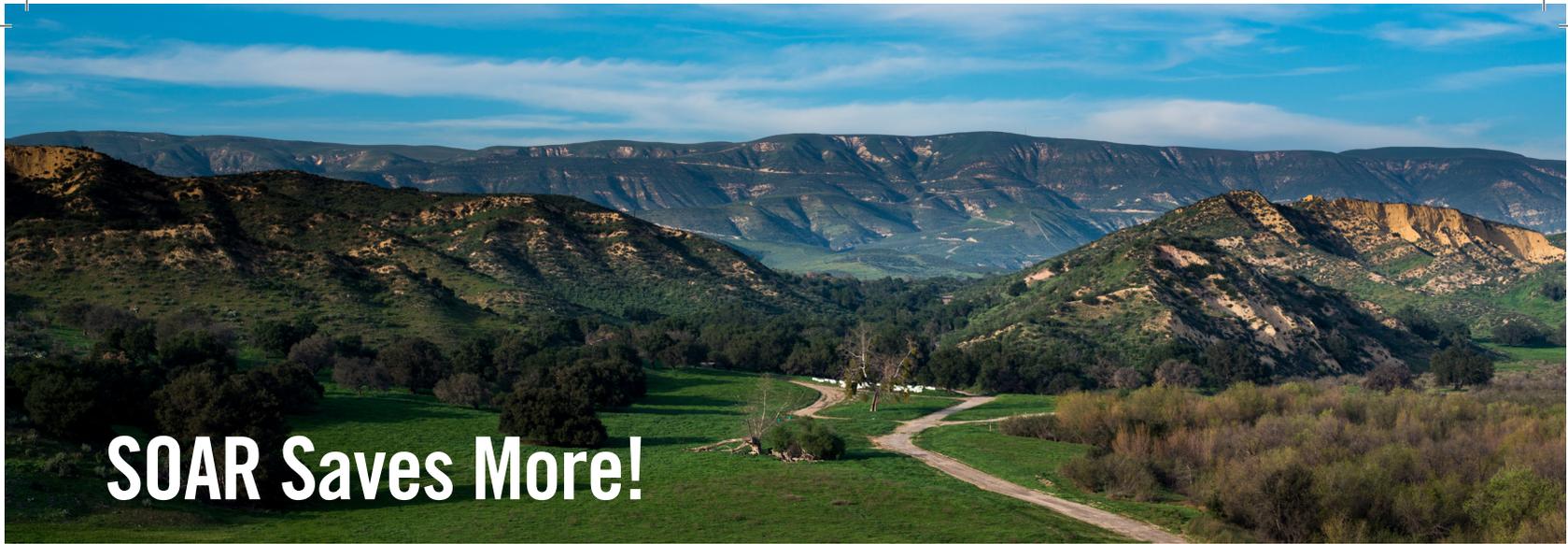
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SOAR Saves More!

SOAR 2050 - The Choice is Clear

SOAR	SUSTAIN VC
Written by and for citizens of Ventura County to protect the public interest	Written by developers and landowners who would profit from development
Ensures public input on sprawl development	Creates loopholes and exemptions that will lead to more development of open space and agricultural land without voter approval
Extends the right to vote on development to the next generation of Ventura County residents	Terminates voters' right to weigh in on development just 16 years from SOAR's current expiration date
Requires developers to take their case for development projects to the people	Puts many development decisions in the hands of politicians and the special interests who finance their campaigns
Protects irreplaceable agricultural land	Threatens some of the world's richest soils

If you want to stop sprawl and protect agricultural land and open space in Ventura County, the answer is simple: protect citizens' right to vote on development.

Volunteer Highlight



Louise Roberts

SOAR SUPPORTER EXTRAORDINAIRE!

From the beginning, Louise Roberts has been the heart and soul of the Save Conejo Creek, an organization to stop a massive development of farmland in Camarillo. First she mobilized residents to save the 900 acres at the bottom of the Conejo Grade from a housing development of 2,500 units and 100 acres of industrial development. Then she coordinated the Camarillo SOAR initiative campaign that collected over 6,000 signatures not once, but twice, in order to protect this prime farmland with a vote of the people.

Next time you drive down the Conejo Grade and enjoy the farmland view to the sea...say thanks to Louise!

SOAR – From Napa Valley to Ventura County

SOAR in Ventura County borrowed its idea from a similar initiative that was passed in Napa County in 1990. As in Ventura County, the Napa Valley initiative gave voters the right to weigh in on development of open space and agricultural lands rather than leaving sole control over the fate of those lands to county supervisors – many of whom are elected with huge financial contributions from developers.

In 2008 Napa County residents voted overwhelmingly to renew their SOAR initiative for 50 years – to 2058! The initiative was so popular it was endorsed by every city council in the county and the county Board of Supervisors, and had no organized opposition.

Backers of the renewal initiative – including the Napa County Farm Bureau – opted to extend the voter protection well in advance of the original measure’s 2020 expiration date, choosing to run the campaign in a presidential election year to ensure high voter turnout. The renewal initiative was nearly identical to its 1990 predecessor and passed with **62% of the vote.**

Said one Napa Valley farmer, “Everybody likes [Measure J, Napa County’s version of SOAR], and what happened in the intervening 18 years [since it passed] is that people have seen that the measure does nothing against business. It isn’t bad for anybody...It really puts the bar a little bit higher, since supervisors are an easier place to get exceptions than the voters at large.”

Did You Know?

- There has been greater than a 50% increase in the gross value of crops in Ventura County since 1998.
- Even with SOAR, on average 566 acres of prime farmland is converted each year. Much of that farmland is within the sphere of influence of cities and subject to a simple majority vote of a city council.
- With gross values for crops now exceeding \$2 billion, the Ventura County agricultural industry remains one of the largest sectors of our county’s economy. Preservation of farmland allows for a diversified economy
- Since 1998 there have been SOAR votes in 11 cities, 6 of them approving the development. SOAR does not stop development, it just includes voters in the decision making process.



“SOAR represents the crucial collective effort to preserve those special qualities and irreplaceable resources that make Ventura County unique”

- Marilyn Carpenter

SOAR ensures that another generation of Ventura County residents will have the same say on development that current residents have enjoyed since 1998.



FAQs

Q: What happens if both SOAR and SustainVC pass by getting more than 50% of the vote in November?

A: The initiative with the most votes wins.

Q: What if neither SOAR nor SustainVC get 50% of the vote in November?

A: Neither initiative moves forward.

Q: What do city SOAR initiatives do?

A: They put City Urban Restriction Boundaries (CURBs) around a city that can only be changed by a vote of that city's voters. They provide a second level of protection in cases where cities want to expand into open space and agricultural land in the unincorporated county.

Q: What if the county SOAR initiative is renewed but a city initiative isn't?

A: There are at least four years until the current city SOAR initiatives expire so we can try again in a subsequent election to renew the initiative. Without a city SOAR, city councils can bypass the County SOAR to expand their borders and develop county open space and farmland without voters in either the city or the county having a say.

Q: What's the difference between SOAR and SustainVC?

A: Simply put, SOAR Saves More! SOAR renews the right to vote on protection of open space and farmland until the year 2050. SustainVC drives loopholes into SOAR's protections and cuts in half the timeframe of SOAR protections. SOAR is supported by grassroots citizens who want to protect open space and farmland for future generations. SustainVC is supported by developers and landowners who will profit from development of those lands.

(Continued from front page)



Camarillo

Volunteers collected signatures twice and, after fighting off a last minute challenge by a developer, the Camarillo City Council voted to put the City SOAR on the ballot. The Camarillo SOAR not only renews the City Urban Boundary Restriction Boundary (CURB) around the city, it also gives voters a right to vote on farmland that was once part of the massive Conejo Creek project proposed in 2015 (if it is considered again for development).



Santa Paula

Volunteers collected sufficient signatures and the Santa Paula City Council voted to put the City SOAR on the ballot.



Fillmore

Volunteers collected sufficient signatures and the Fillmore City Council voted to put the City SOAR on the ballot. The City Council also voted to put on a competing measure that would end SOAR protections in 2030.



Simi Valley

Ventura County Elections Division found that 37% of the 11,852 signatures on the Simi Valley SOAR initiative were invalid even though 60% more signatures were submitted than needed. Simi SOAR leaders are challenging the decision, but are comfortable knowing they have time and hundreds of volunteers to collect signatures for a future election, since SOAR does not expire until 2020 in Simi Valley.



Moorpark

Volunteers collected sufficient signatures and the Moorpark City Council voted to put the City SOAR on the ballot.



Oxnard

The Oxnard City Council voted to put two city-sponsored measures on the ballot, SOAR 2050 and a competing measure that would only be effective until 2030.



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The Future of Ventura County is at Stake

DONATE TODAY TO ENSURE SOAR'S VICTORY IN NOVEMBER

SOAR is facing the battle of a lifetime. To keep SOAR in place for another generation - until 2050 - we will need to raise additional funds to defeat the developers' divide and conquer strategy. Established in 1998, SOAR is the best way to protect Ventura County's open space and agricultural resources.

Developers and large landowners spent hundreds of thousands of dollars opposing SOAR when it was first approved in 1998. Based on their strategies to date, it is clear that our opponents will again be extremely well-funded and will do their utmost to confuse voters with their competing initiative. But we know that voters will continue to support us as long as we have the resources to get our message out.

Now more than ever SOAR needs your financial support to ensure that SOAR's protections are renewed. Donate today with the enclosed return envelope or online at soarvc.org/donate.

Thank you for supporting SOAR 2050!

