



SOAR
SAVE OPEN SPACE & AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

Fall 2017

SOAR 2050 Wins Final Battle

On September 20, with the simple words, “Ok, it’s done”, Judge Vincent O’Neill signed the agreement to let the voter-approved Camarillo SOAR stand.

This was a big win for Camarillo and a huge win for SOAR because it means every SOAR initiative we fought for is now the law of the land. And what better way to cap off the battle to renew SOAR than fighting back a developer and his attempt to throw out the results of a city election where 73% of the voters resoundingly voted for SOAR?

While it took almost a year since the November 2016 election for the fate of the Camarillo SOAR to be decided, we knew that Camarillo SOAR supporters were not going to have it any other way.

Having collected signatures twice to get their City SOAR on the ballot, they were ready to do it again if they had to because SOAR truly is the will of the people. People want to have a say on proposals for major development on farmland and open space, instead of leaving those crucial decisions to politicians who are influenced by developers.

Soar Supporters Can Celebrate That Together We Achieved What Some Thought Impossible

We succeeded in getting nine separate SOAR initiatives on the ballot, and they won with the most votes on every ballot they were on. Because of that, SOAR will not expire as anticipated in 2020, but instead will continue its requirement of a vote of the people until 2050.

Like the Camarillo lawsuit, many of the milestones on the path to SOAR’s success can be measured by the challenges we overcame. From meeting our target to raise \$200,000 before launching our petition drive, then drafting 9 separate initiatives, organizing 300 volunteer signature gatherers, persisting through obstacle after obstacle to collect 84,000 signatures, fighting off legal challenges to our petitions, marshaling all of our resources and volunteer power to run a successful campaign despite efforts to confuse voters with competing initiatives; it is clear that SOAR’s triumph is epic.

Our success in overcoming powerful interests is a testament to

what can happen when people unite for a common good. Renewing SOAR involved so many difficult challenges that it was hard to believe that we could surmount them all. But surmount them we did, and now that we’ve cleared this final hurdle, we take particular joy in those three simple words: “Ok, it’s done.”



Thanks...



YOU MEET SO MANY NICE PEOPLE... at a SOAR event!

With so many opportunities to converse with others concerned about Ventura County's open space, the SOAR campaign brought us together like no other effort. Whether at a clubhouse in Santa Rosa Valley or the Camarillo Library table, a Ventura Hillside concert, at Thousand Oaks trailheads, with Santa Paula youth going door to door, in the streets of Simi, in front of Trader Joe's and Vons, in the parks of Moorpark, at fairs and parades, and even in the City Council chambers of Oxnard...we found a fun and dedicated crew willing to do what had to get done.

From the kick-off fundraisers in Westlake Village and Ventura, to the artists painting for SOAR at a beautiful venue overlooking Lake Sherwood, to the strawberry party on an Oxnard farm, to the dozens of homes opened for SOAR fundraising events with delicious farm to table food, the best homemade cookies, and wine and cheese patio parties overlooking what was at stake: Conejo Creek, Ahmanson Ranch, the Oxnard Plain, farms in Fillmore, the future of Santa Paula, to the "wrap-up" celebration at the Sportsman's Lodge, a good time was had by all.

Now, we look forward to renewing these connections and continuing those conversations at the SOAR Celebration planned for the New Year! It will be a grand gathering...and we look forward to seeing you there!



ODE TO RICHARD

What we accomplished together to get SOAR approved and in place until 2050 is nothing short of amazing.

Hundreds of people stepped up in so many significant ways to make it happen. Yet all of our work hinged on the efforts of just one person – SOAR co-founder and board member Richard Francis – who took on the extraordinary job of writing not one, not two, but nine separate SOAR initiatives at once.

Surely if there were contests for such a thing, Richard would be in the Guinness World Book of Records. Richard's legal expertise, land use knowledge and familiarity with our county gave him the ability to draft eight customized city SOAR initiatives and one unincorporated county SOAR initiative. And while his skills gave him the technical know how, it was his giving spirit and love for his community that led him to take it on, giving thousands of hours to this herculean effort, all pro bono.

Richard is the father of SOAR, having conceived of the concept when he wrote the original countywide SOAR in 1998. His approach for saving county open space and farmland by vote of the people coupled with voter approved city urban restriction boundaries (CURBs) has made Ventura County a national model for open space protection.

Richard's work didn't end with writing nine separate initiatives. He also successfully defended legal challenges by the County of Ventura over City of Simi Valley signatures, by the City of Thousand Oaks Clerk over the location of the words on a petition page, and by developers trying to stop the voter-approved City of Camarillo SOAR, all work that he again took on pro bono.

He also defended the rights of SOAR signature gatherers, spoke at community gatherings, before councils, and at debates, collected signatures, and on top of that he was one of the top financial contributors to the SOAR campaign. So while not yet entered into the Guinness World Book of Records, Mr. Richard Francis is certainly entered in our book of legends.

SOAR Launches Planned Giving Campaign

We are embarking on a Planned Giving Campaign. The purpose is to raise money through planned gifts pledges by our members, so that when the current generation passes on we will have assets for future generations to keep SOAR healthy and alive.

The money will be used primarily to defend the November 2016 initiatives from legal challenges, and/or to renew SOAR in 2050 -- to preserve farmland and open space in perpetuity. Naturally, you can also earmark your bequest for any purpose you choose.

Van Royce Vibber has volunteered to help coordinate our planned giving campaign. SOAR receives no government funding or endowments, so all gifts must come from you: our members.

We are just starting this Planned Giving Campaign. Our target is to raise \$1,000,000. All Board members will be making a gift from their estates, and we are already at 25% towards our goal. There will be more information in future communications.

Meanwhile, if you would like information or want to get started on your planned giving now, please contact Van at 310-883-4537/van@soarvc.org or SOAR Executive Director Karen Schmidt at 805-798-1629/kschmidt@soarvc.org.

Of course, you can also contact any of SOAR's board members for more information...or for any reason you would like.

WHY I LEFT PART OF MY ESTATE TO SOAR

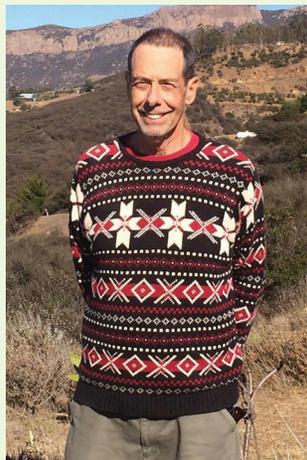
By Van Royce Vibber

When my wife Julie was alive, we created a trust which left the majority for the survivor's use in their lifetime. We had an understanding that after providing for children and immediate family, the survivor would direct the majority of the remainder to various environmental organizations and causes.

What better way to celebrate your life than to leave a lasting legacy to whatever you believe in?

Why did I choose SOAR ?

- 1. It's concrete and tangible.** Money given for nebulous concepts and abstract ideas has a way of vaporizing into thin air. The SOAR ballot initiatives are precise, far-reaching, meaningful, and enforceable.
- 2. SOAR is successful.** The masterful, effective 2016 ballot initiatives protect farmland and open space in all of Ventura County and surrounding all 10 of its cities until 2050. Now we can provide the means to protect Ventura County for those generations the come after us.



3. SOAR is lean, mean, and green. A 5-figure gift is significant and highly beneficial. Because SOAR is a lean organization (all Board members and numerous others volunteer without pay and donate valuable professional services and expertise), my donation has a major impact and makes a real green difference. While some of the giant environmental organizations do excellent work and provide great benefit, some have become bloated and overly bureaucratic. Even \$250,000 (although greatly appreciated) might just be absorbed in overhead, and barely moves the needle in some

of the largest organizations.

- 4. This is the ideal time.** The November 2016 ballot initiatives remain in effect until 2050. At that time, they will have to be renewed. Long-range planning and creating funding now will ensure that our goals will be met. Farmland and open space can be preserved in perpetuity.

I am proud to say that my bequest is kicking off SOAR's Planned Giving Campaign. I hope you will join me in making a gift which passes to SOAR in your estate plans.



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A NOTE FROM THE FUTURE — *I'm a SOAR baby!*

I was born thirty years ago, back in 2016, at a time when grassroots petitioners stood out in front of grocery stores collecting signatures for a law that saved all this farmland and open space you now see in Ventura County.

Our parents and grandparents kept the bulldozers from paving it all over. Their efforts are one of the reasons Ventura County is continually rated the most desirable place to live in the nation.

City dwellers stream in to our county to hike in natural open space and tour our productive country farms. These lands offer a peaceful and inspiring break from the endless parking lots, buildings and roads that cover Southern California.

I'm very familiar with the grassroots effort that saved our county from urban sprawl because my grandparents helped in the first SOAR signature drive in 1998 and the second one in 2016.



Now I'm following in their footsteps by working to renew SOAR before it expires in 2050. Many of us are collecting signatures and gearing up to wage a major campaign against a strong and entrenched development industry.

Fortunately, we have help from an endowment that thoughtful SOAR supporters set up for us two decades

ago, to ensure SOAR passes again. My generation is also committed to seeing that after we pass SOAR this time, we too pass on the resources necessary for the next generation to also renew SOAR.

Ensuring that SOAR continues is a big responsibility and one of the most important things we can do. We take that responsibility seriously. We do so because of our appreciation for these lands that bond us in this undertaking to keep SOAR in place and continue the legacy.