



Summer 2018

## SOAR and the Growth of Local Land Trusts

Some have wondered about the purpose and effects of the recent SOAR election victories, and it certainly cannot hurt to be reminded every now and then that the SOAR battles have created real and tangible benefits to the community. The obvious sometimes creates complacency. We have open space between the cities and we can sometimes become inured to – forget – or at least fail to acknowledge – the psychological and physical benefits that brings if only on the occasional walk along the edge of an orchard or field.

But there are other very real benefits that have been created by the SOAR victories. Local large landholders who had possibly harbored deep development objectives for their properties have begun to realize that the highest and best use of their properties may be to sell to a non-profit. The political will, as demonstrated by SOAR, does not support the kind of sprawl that such developments would engender.

As is currently being experienced by the Ventura Land Trust, there is a new-found willingness of certain landholders to sell their properties to a land trust for the purpose of a public use of formerly private land. The ability to hike in the back-country behind the cities of Ventura and Santa Paula through the dedication of property to a land trust can create a destination objective for much of Southern California and beyond.

While not the whole story, the victories in the SOAR efforts are among the factors that very much facilitate the prospect of not just hiking along private lands, but the ability to hike through the lands once they have become part of the land trust domain.

SOAR is a part of that calculus when landowners are evaluating their options. SOAR victories really matter and the layers of their import are not always obvious.

## Where We Build Matters



The Thomas Fire was the largest fire in our State's history, however it was not the most devastating. When compared to Sonoma County where two months earlier the city of Santa Rosa experienced ten times the loss of homes as Ventura, the Thomas Fire while crushing and geographically larger, was less destructive in part because there were less homes in its path.

Ventura County's General Plan, which is strengthened by SOAR, discourages the building of housing tracts in the unincorporated county. The result of this policy is that

there are fewer homes in what is called the wildland-urban interface, an area more prone to destruction from fires.

We know years of drought have increased the risk of wildfires, but we also must realize that sprawl development into forested and rural lands furthers the potential for loss of homes and lives from wildfires. Where we develop matters. SOAR holds the line on sprawl development and in so doing, not only preserves open space and farmland, but enforces a development pattern that reduces the risk from fire.



# A Tale of Two Cities' Growth Boundaries

It was the smallest of changes, it was the largest of changes. One was easy to decide, the other difficult and years in the making. And so it was that the Commission that determines urban boundaries (LAFCo), voted at its February meeting to reduce Fillmore's growth boundary by 0.46 acres, and reduce Santa Paula's by 7,586 acres.

The Fillmore change was minor and received approval quickly with little comment. The Santa Paula change, which reined in the city from sprawling out into far-off Adams Canyon and Fagan Canyon, was the end of a long drawn out saga with enough twists and turns to keep everyone in suspense.

The Santa Paula City Council supported the major expansion into both canyons, though they had to rescind their vote to develop Fagan Canyon when city voters did a referendum. LAFCo (the Local Agency Formation Commission) twice changed its position on the expansion into the two canyons which, if allowed, would triple the size of the city. Santa Paula voters also changed their stance, twice

voting to deny development in Adams Canyon, and then later voted to approve it.

In its decision in February to remove both Adams and Fagan Canyons from the city's growth boundary, LAFCo Commissioners pointed out that neither canyon was part of Santa Paula's General Plan, a requirement of State law. As such, the proposals to develop the canyons lacked plans for roads, sewers, fire protection, water and other necessary public services.

Epilogue: While the LAFCo vote brought an end to this chapter in Santa Paula's effort to develop Adams and Fagan Canyons, it is important to note that smaller expansions to its growth boundary have been approved. Most notably, Limoneira's Harvest development that includes 1,500 homes, received only thumbs up by the City Council, LAFCo, and 83% of City voters, and did so while properly following the legal requirements to first be included in the City's General Plan.

## SOAR: Leaving a Legacy for the Next Generation

Every SOAR board member has pledged to support the next generation of SOAR with a planned gift – for example an earmark in a 401k or IRA account, or a bequest in a will or trust. With leadership from SOAR member Van Royce Vibber, we are already 25% of the way toward our initial goal of building a \$1 million fund to ensure that the next generation of SOAR leaders can continue SOAR's protection of open space and farmland through 2050 and beyond. Please join us, and leave a legacy for our children and grandchildren. For more information contact Karen Schmidt at [kschmidt@soarvc.org](mailto:kschmidt@soarvc.org) or 805-798-1629.



## Whole Foods Supports SOAR with Community Giving Day

Thanks to Whole Foods and all of our awesome volunteers who helped SOAR raise over \$7,400 while promoting locally grown produce at the Community Giving Day at the Whole Foods Markets in Oxnard and Thousand Oaks!





# Keeping the Open Space in Parks

It was a win for open space advocates and democracy when a request by residents to establish an open space protection zone was given the go ahead by the Board of Supervisors earlier this year. The request was to include in the County's General Plan Update a special open space zoning for parkland in Ventura County, OS-P.

The reason the request was made is because in unincorporated Ventura County, Open Space zoning allows for certain types of development, such as very low-density housing (one house per ten acres), landfills, and prisons. The final vote to add the Open Space – Parkland (OS-P) overlay zone will be part of the General Plan Update approval expected in Summer of 2020.

## Strategic Parkland Purchase

One of the more contentious development proposals in our county has been further laid to rest with the recent purchase of 125 acres of open space for parkland in Alamos Canyon between Moorpark and Simi Valley. The 4,300-acre Hidden Creek development was approved by the Moorpark Council in 1998, but Moorpark voters rose mightily in opposition.

Led by Councilmember Roseann Mikos with the help of the SOAR initiatives and a lawsuit, the massive housing development behind Moorpark College was defeated. Now twenty years later, with funds made available by the Board of Supervisors (through a condition on the expansion of the Simi Valley landfill), the land that was needed to connect the massive development to the 118 freeway will be preserved as parkland in perpetuity.

The City of Moorpark is also close to buying an additional 130 acres in that same corridor. The land will be public parkland and remain a vital part of the wildlife corridor that links the Santa Monica Mountains and Santa Susana Mountains with the Simi Hills.



Recognizing the exceptional work being done to improve the environment throughout the county, *the Board of Supervisors presented Earth Day Awards* to the following winners who are leading the way to a healthier planet:

- **The Thacher School** for such projects as a new 745 kilowatt solar array generating more than 95% of the school's electricity; the completion of a horse manure and food waste composting facility, using laundry greywater to irrigate trees, installation of a 5,000 gallon rainwater harvesting system.
- **Ventura County Watershed Protection District** that conducted a Raptor Pilot Study that found using raptor perches and owl boxes to entice raptors to prey on rodents is more effective than using poison. The study was conducted to further efforts of the County to eliminate the use of anti-coagulant rodenticides that are lethal to area wildlife.
- **Sandy Hedrick and the Friends of the Santa Clara River** that stabilized approximately 1,000 linear feet of stream bank, removed invasive plant species, and re-established native riparian vegetation on approximately sixteen acres of land.
- **Rustic Canyon Golf Course - Water Reclamation Project** that installed a recycled water pipeline and booster pump station that delivers over 135 million gallons of recycled water from the reclamation facility to the golf course and other customers along the pipeline route.
- **Wishtoyo Chumash Foundation's White Paper, Agritoxins: Ventura County's Toxic Time Bomb**, that documented the inadequate occupational health and safety protections for migrant farm workers and the disparate threats that agritoxins pose to Latino communities and schools in Ventura County. The white paper serves as a foundation to help organize and empower these communities to protect themselves from environmental contaminants.



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## SOAR Mourns the Loss of Frank Boross and Wolf Breiman

### Frank Boross

Frank played an invaluable role in the SOAR organization. For decades, aided by his wife Linda, he coordinated the production of our SOAR campaign mailers. His sense of design, his willingness to be there for us day and night during the toughest of campaigns, his patience and kindness and dedication giving so much of himself for SOAR, has endeared him to us forever. From the graphic layout to the printing and mailing Frank allowed SOAR to mail much more cost effectively than our opponents and with more impact. This was essential to our winning campaigns.



*Frank and Linda Boross*

### Wolf Breiman

For the last two decades, Wolf's passion for winning SOAR campaigns was incredibly infectious. He inspired us by being an all purpose volunteer, gathering thousands of signatures, making phone calls, attending mailing parties, and hosting events. These losses remind us how special the collection of committed SOAR volunteers is and how much we need to appreciate each other.



*Wolf Breiman and Debbie Diamond*