

Fall 2018

NEW ZONE PROPOSED TO PROTECT WILDLIFE

Birds gotta fly, fish gotta swim, and mountain lions gotta roam. Or as plant physiologist David Goddard once said, “No organism lives without an environment.” While we’ve protected large areas of open space in Ventura County through SOAR, the survival of wildlife in those open spaces is jeopardized by an inability to migrate. Wildlife, including mountain lions in the Santa Monica Mountains, need to connect to larger land areas for food and water, to find mates, and to establish their territory.

Unfortunately the major travel paths that link wildlife in the coastal mountains to large open space areas inland are becoming blocked-off. Impermeable fences, roads with high-speed traffic, new buildings, and the destruction of creeks that once provided safe passage, are causing wildlife to disperse into urban areas, inbreed, and be hit by cars. In fact, on average, a mountain lion a year is killed from vehicle collisions while moving to and from the Santa Monica Mountains.

To stem the increasing loss of wildlife, the Ventura County Board of Supervisors is moving forward to create a first-of-its-kind wildlife corridor zoning. The new zoning would help keep these important linkages from being blocked off. The zoning would establish standards in the corridors to protect creeks, reduce night lighting, limit impermeable fencing, and allow for clustering new development away from constricted corridors.

The inability to connect to larger areas of open space is a major reason why the lifespan of mountain lions is cut short from an average of 8-13 years in the wild, to only three years if they’re from the Santa Monica Mountains. That explains why at last count there were only 15 mountain lions left in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, an area totaling 240 square miles. It is also why their survival as a species in this area is threatened.



However, we can help reverse that trend by being deliberative in siting development, using tunnels and bridges to prevent animal-vehicle collisions, and not blocking wildlife that use these critical corridors for their survival.

SOAR has played an instrumental role in ensuring that large open space lands will remain undeveloped decades into the future, but what of the wildlife that inhabit them? We applaud Ventura County for taking a leadership role in not only protecting large areas of open space, but also protecting the wildlife that inhabit them.

If you would like to show your support for this new Wildlife Corridor Zoning you can send an email to ClerkoftheBoard@ventura.org or better yet, attend the hearing at the Board of Supervisors meeting and let your voice be heard. For more information, go to vcrma.org/habitat-connectivity-and-wildlife-movement-corridors.

SOAR & HOUSING AFFORDABILITY



Housing affordability is a tremendous challenge in all Southern California coastal counties, from San Diego to Santa Barbara county. Our Mediterranean climate and high quality of life attract so many people that this area will always have high prices relative to inland areas.

Counties without SOAR, such as Orange County, once had thriving agriculture. Shortly after World War II, Orange County and Ventura County had the same size population. Orange County paved over its agricultural land and now has more than three times the population of Ventura County. Yet Orange County has higher housing cost and less housing affordability than Ventura County.



Orange County proves that paving over your agricultural land and open spaces does not ensure the production of affordable housing. Affordable housing requires the building of affordable housing units.

SOAR increases the likelihood that affordable housing units will be a greater part of future housing in Ventura County development in a number of ways.

1. The SOAR initiatives require voter approval before land zoned open space or agriculture can be rezoned for development.

Development projects that use up precious open space and agricultural land will need to garner broad public support. Part of earning that support is to demonstrate that significant workforce housing is part of a proposed project.

2. SOAR discourages development on our precious open spaces and agricultural land and instead encourages redevelopment of our existing urban areas.

This redevelopment is much more likely to result in smaller units in more compact settings. These units are more likely to be affordable than a sprawling ranchette built on open spaces outside of our cities.



SOAR & WATER

It is safe to say that without the passage of the SOAR initiatives 20 years ago, there would be much less agriculture and open space in Ventura County today. As our water crisis intensifies, SOAR has played an important role in keeping our water options open. Paving over less land means more water percolates into our groundwater basins. Ventura County has some of the most valuable groundwater basins in the world. Ensuring they recharge regularly is essential to their sustainability.

Areas that no longer have agriculture have less variability in their demand for water. Once an area is urbanized, its water demand is much less flexible. While urban areas must become even more water efficient, once those efficiencies are in place flexibility of demand is low. When rainfall is low for a number of years, agriculture can switch from high water demand crops to lower water demand crops more easily than an urbanized area can further reduce demand.

Ventura County has some of the most variable rainfall patterns in the world. This variability in supply of water means we must be able to flex our demand for water as rainfall patterns vary. Relative to our neighboring Southern California coastal counties, SOAR has improved our ability to do this.



SOAR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR KAREN SCHMIDT TAKES ON NEW ROLE



Karen Schmidt

After serving for more than 15 years as SOAR's part-time executive director, **Karen Schmidt** is stepping down to take on a new position as Regional Affairs Manager representing Ventura County at the Clean Power Alliance of Southern California.

Karen joined SOAR in 2002 following a career that included conservation biology research at

Stanford University, climate change and energy policy in Washington, DC, and management consulting in New York City. She worked with SOAR board members

and volunteers on multiple campaigns over the years, culminating in the successful 2016 effort to renew all nine city and county SOAR initiatives to 2050.

During her tenure at SOAR Karen also worked as an independent consultant in renewable energy, local food system development, and nonprofit management. She has served numerous community organizations in the region including the Ventura County Farm to School Collaborative, Ag Futures Alliance, Food for Thought Ojai, The Nature Conservancy, Los Angeles Food Policy Council Task Force, and Ventura County Civic Alliance.

While we will miss Karen's excellent organizational skills, and the clear focus, dedication, intelligence and follow-through she brought to our SOAR team, we are delighted that our friend will be moving on to her new role in bringing clean energy to our region.



PO Box 7352
Ventura, California 93006-7352
www.soarvc.org

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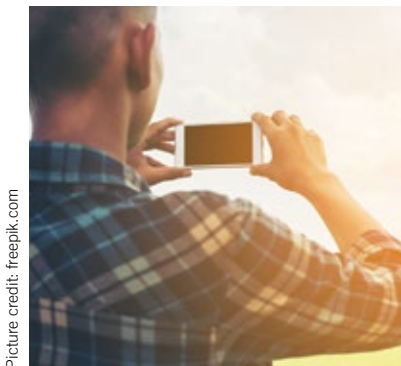
SOAR: LEAVING A LEGACY FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

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 Van at vroycevibber@gmail.com.



CALLING ALL CAMERA & SMARTPHONE USERS

We're looking for great photos of Ventura County farms, open spaces, and the people of all ages who enjoy them. If you have an Instagram-worthy pic of your favorite inspiring vista, your family out on a hike, or your last culinary creation featuring the bounty of our county, send it our way! Images can be emailed to info@soarvc.org. Please include the name of the photographer and any available identifying information.



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