



Spring 2020

## STAYING WELL AT HOME

If you have to “Stay Safe At Home” it is sure nice to have semi-rural Ventura County as your home. Without SOAR, Ventura County would look and feel much more like the San Fernando Valley in Los Angeles County. Let’s compare the experiences. In both counties one of the few things you can do outside the home is to exercise but only if you can stay safe distances from others. Even though both counties have closed parks and trails, **Ventura County’s greater amount of open space makes it easier to get to an attractive place to exercise a safe distance from others.** In addition, traveling to those open spaces provides more respite than a drive through urban sprawl and when you arrive the air is cleaner.



On a basic day-to-day level, it is easier and more enjoyable to take that walk, ride your bike, pick up trash or volunteer to glean crops for a food bank in Ventura County.

Additionally, combating this challenging virus requires a community-wide commitment to decrease our contacts with



each other. This means individuals putting the health of their community in front of their own personal comfort and desires.

The willingness to sacrifice for the common good is correlated to how strong of a sense of community connection someone feels. Ventura County’s ten different cities, surrounded by open space buffers, have maintained their distinctive characters. Now more than ever that sense of place and community identity helps us stick together while staying apart for the good of our neighbors and ourselves.



**We are grateful to everyone who has supported SOAR over the years and helped make Ventura County a better place than most to ride out the COVID 19 virus.** We cherish our communities who have worked long and hard together to care for each other and for this remarkable place we have the good fortune to cohabit. Thank you for doing your part in the past to make SOAR happen and for doing your part today to fight the virus by Staying Well At Home. ☆

# SPRING IS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD



**Common Fiddleneck**  
*Amsinckia intermedia*

Like the Common House Finch, this flower must also suffer the indignity of being labeled common, but it can be distinguished because it looks like... the neck of a fiddle! Not to be confused with a similar plant that has no orange blotches, the Common Fiddleneck is a member of the Borage family. As one would expect, it is found in many places and despite its bristles, it is enjoyed, or at least tolerated, as a food source by cattle. ☆



**Indian Paint Brush**  
*Castilleja affinis*

Indian Paint Brush stirs up visions of our land's indigenous people who may have also thought it looks like nature's paint brush, perhaps painting a fiery sunset. Surprisingly it is the leaves, not the flowers that bring the bright red colors that catch our attention. The true flowers inconspicuously mingle with the leaves in the spring. ☆



**Sticky Monkey Flower**  
*Diplacus aurantiacus*

This is a wonderful name for a flower that is indeed sticky, but it may take another local weed, cannabis sativa, to see the monkey face! Found in late spring, the Creek and Scarlet Monkey Flowers live in riparian environments while Bush and Yellow Monkey Flowers are along rocky slopes. ☆



**Prickly Phlox**  
*Linanthus californicus*

Most will never know the surprisingly rich perfume of the prickly phlox flower. To smell its lovely scent you must get quite close, and unfortunately it didn't get its prickly name for nothing! Its sharp needle-like prickles make picking a painful experience so many never try. However, in the language of flowers, phlox means "our souls are united." In the spirit of the prickly phlox, SOAR supporters stand united in our love for our open spaces, and while the coronavirus has forced us to withdraw from human contact, we continue to share in our joy at the beauty of our world. ☆

## 18 ACRES OF FARMLAND

### PROPOSED FOR 360 UNIT FARMWORKER HOUSING COMPLEX



A 360-unit farmworker housing project is proposed for 18 acres of farmland on Somis Road, immediately north of the city of Camarillo.

farmworker housing. County staff believe this does not require a SOAR vote, instead requiring a Conditional Use Permit.

The units will all be 100% affordable to farmworkers who qualify as lower income, for families who make 80% of area median income and below. Yet challenges remain when an urban project is placed into a non-urban setting. For example, because there are no sewers in the unincorporated area, the developers are looking at constructing a small sewer system just for the project. It remains to be seen how the operation of the system will be funded.

County Planning staff are taking comments in preparation for a hearing. For more information and to provide written comments contact [justin.bertoline@ventura.org](mailto:justin.bertoline@ventura.org). ☆

The County's General Plan which would otherwise not allow urban development in the unincorporated county because it appropriately belongs in cities, has an exception for

# AWARD-WINNING WILDLIFE CORRIDOR ZONING!



**Ventura County's Wildlife Corridor Zone** has received an Award of Excellence from the American Planning Association Central Coast Section. The APA jurors called the zoning an excellent example to other jurisdictions that can also preserve their critical linkages and biodiversity using the same incentive-based approach. SOAR was a strong supporter of the new Wildlife Corridor Zone, informing and holding a workshop for our members who in turn sent dozens of support letters and emails to encourage its adoption.

The jurors praised the County of Ventura's Planning Division for its extensive outreach that demonstrated a commitment to serving the public interest and protecting habitat and wildlife. In giving the Award of Excellence,

the APA stated: "The jury acknowledged the County of Ventura Planning Division's multi-level planning approach, including updates to the General Plan, zoning ordinance, overlay zone, approval regulations, and zoning map amendment, addressing everything from lighting regulations to vegetation management to lot coverage. The jury applauds the County of Ventura's leadership to develop, adopt, and implement this first-of-its-kind ordinance in the region, State, and possibly the nation."

Congratulations to Ventura County's Planning and Legal staff, its Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors, and the environmental organizations and individuals whose advocacy brought us this award-winning model of environmental protection! ☆

## 580 ACRES IN TIERRA REJADA VALLEY THREATENED



Owners of the Butler Ranch, located at the north end of the Tierra Rejada Valley, are proposing turning their ranch into a large lot housing development with two roads and 24 estate homes. The project would bring city infrastructure and services to the rural land, using imported water and city sewer service.

The ranch is in a high fire severity zone and was recently designated a critical wildlife passage area as part of Ventura County's Wildlife Corridor Zone. To build, the developers would cut into the hills, moving over 630,000 cubic yards

of earth to fill in areas for building pads and roads. The land is currently zoned for agriculture (AE-40) that allows one house per 40 acres. The owners want to rezone the land (to OS-20) to double the number of units per acre. No SOAR vote is required because it does not require a general plan amendment.

An Environmental Impact Report will be released next month in preparation for subsequent hearings to seek project approval. If approved by the Board of Supervisors, it would create a rural form of sprawl. It would fragment ranch land and natural habitats, increase ag/urban conflicts, increase fire danger, and pave the way for development of even more remote areas.

SOAR will continue to monitor this development application and share important hearing dates and information and opportunities for action. ☆



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## HOW ARE YOU STAYING WELL AT HOME?

Share with us how you are experiencing spring season!

SEND PHOTOS OF YOUR FAVORITE PLACES  
AND BLOOMS TO  
[INFO@SOARVC.ORG](mailto:INFO@SOARVC.ORG)

To talk with us about how you can participate in SOAR'S planned giving effort, please contact SOAR board member Van Royce Vibber at (310) 883-4537 or email us at [info@soarvc.org](mailto:info@soarvc.org). Meanwhile, your regular donations keep SOAR ready to respond to the next development threat, and continue to be one of the best investments you can make in the future of Ventura County. Thank You!

