

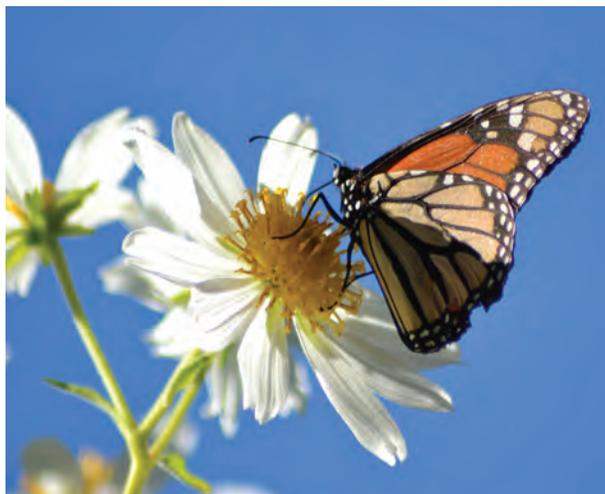
CALIFORNIA'S HIDDEN SECRET

Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB)

BY FRAN PAVLEY

SEE WCB GRANTS P5

Have you ever heard of the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB)? It was founded in 1947. It's an independent board within the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. The WCB has the authority and funding to carry out acquisition and restoration programs for wildlife habitat and related public recreation.



and four public members. Two are appointed by the Governor and two by the legislators. There is also a six-member Legislative Advisory Committee that includes Ventura County Assemblymember Steve Bennett.

SOAR protections have made many acquisitions and restoration programs possible by saving open space and agricultural lands in Ventura County.

For more information about the WCB, check them out online. Information on grant guidelines and meeting agendas are available. You

The WCB's seven-member board consists of the President of the Fish and Game Commission, the Director of the CA Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Director of the CA Department of Finance,

can also subscribe to the WCB online newsletter at <https://wcb.ca.gov/Subscribe>

Fran Pavley sits on the Wildlife Conservation Board and Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. As State Senator and Assemblymember, she authored landmark legislation on climate change.

SOAR SUPPORTS FARMWORKER HOUSING

BY STEVE BENNETT

Nine years ago the SOAR Board crafted the 2016 SOAR initiatives which were overwhelmingly approved by voters countywide. They extended, until

2050, protection of farmland and open space from inappropriate urban sprawl projects like those that paved over the farmland of the San Fernando Valley.

(Continued on p2)

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Ventura County's farmland is literally some of the best farmland in the world. However, as John Krist points out on page 3, protecting farmland takes more than land-use policies and laws. We must have common sense policies that help agriculture stay profitable.



the rampant urban sprawl that paved over most of the other farmland in Southern California. We trusted that well-planned farmworker housing, would help meet these housing challenges. Finally, we recognized that we are all in this county together so we must thoughtfully consider everyone as we propose policies.

That's why we included in the SOAR initiatives exemptions for farmworker housing projects that meet certain requirements. We knew the housing market was failing to provide the affordable, low-income housing farmworkers needed in Ventura County. We believed these focused projects would provide hard-working families with a housing option that they deserved as pointed out by Martita Martinez-Bravo's comments. We had confidence that these limited projects would not result in

We proudly stand behind those beliefs today. We believed then and now that the vast majority of Ventura County residents agree. And we appreciate the efforts of House Farm Workers!, Friends of Fieldworkers and all those advocating for low-income housing options for these farmworker families in need.

Steve Bennett is a California Assemblymember and a Boardmember of SOAR.

EXEMPTION CRITERIA

The SOAR initiatives require voter approval before land zoned for Open Space, Rural, or Agricultural can be rezoned.

The initiatives also limit the expansion or extension of urban infrastructure onto SOAR-protected lands. There is an exemption from voter approval for low or very low-income housing projects that meet four stringent criteria.

For farmworker housing projects that meet all these criteria on Agricultural land, the SOAR initiatives "actively promote infrastructure, sized not larger than necessary for the specific project, to support the continuing viability of agriculture." (3.2.1, 4.7 SOAR Initiative)

- 1. THE PROJECT IS NEEDED TO MEET STATE HOUSING LAWS** for low and very low-income housing.
- 2. THE PROJECT'S SITE IS IMMEDIATELY ADJACENT** to existing compatibly developed areas.
- 3. THERE IS ADEQUATE CAPACITY** to provide the project with adequate public services (e.g., water and sanitation service, schools, police and fire services).
- 4. THERE IS NO EXISTING RESIDENTIALLY DESIGNATED LAND** available to accommodate the proposed project.



Conceptual plans for the proposed Ventura Ranch, a 100% affordable complex for farmworkers and their families.

FARMERS NEED FARMWORKERS

BY JOHN KRIST

A large part of Ventura County's charm and beauty is due to the persistence of its robust agricultural community, which cultivates a rich landscape of fields and orchards. We owe this in part to judicious land-use policies and laws. It takes much more than this, however, to maintain local agriculture.

The most important driver of that is the continued profitability of farming and ranching operations. This

in turn depends on a skilled and stable work force. This is why House Farm Workers! (HFW!), which for 20 years has been a leading advocate for affordable farmworker housing in our county, joins SOAR in support of a proposed housing project in the unincorporated area just north of Ventura.

The Ventura Ranch development would provide 328 units of affordable, high-quality housing dedicated

to farmworkers and their families, who too often find themselves living in overcrowded, substandard conditions because of the economic mismatch between their incomes and Ventura County's expensive housing market.

John Krist is the former CEO of the Farm Bureau of Ventura County and a member of the House Farm Workers! Board of Directors. For more information: housefarmworkers.org

FARMWORKERS NEED HOUSING

BY MARTITA MARTINEZ-BRAVO

Friends of Fieldworkers is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to befriend farmworker families in Ventura County by supporting, celebrating, and advocating for them. The families referred to us have experienced some form of crisis or trauma, including the death of a child or loved one, cancer, and other illnesses, sexual abuse, housing insecurity, or displacement due to home fires.

Farmworkers often live in substandard and unsafe housing. Such conditions not



only impact them, but also the health and well-being of their children. Even doing homework in an overcrowded household can be a struggle and impact a child's ability to achieve successful outcomes in school.

We need long-term housing solutions that can assist farmworkers and their families

as they contribute significantly and greatly to our vibrant economy across Ventura County.

Friends of Fieldworkers joins SOAR in supporting affordable housing for farmworkers, including the Ventura Ranch development. We hope that all community members can come together to have a vision that includes sharing our community with the hands who feed us.

Martita Martinez-Bravo, PsyD, is on the Camarillo City Council and is the Executive Director of Friends of Fieldworkers, Inc. For more info: friendsoffieldworkers.org



**IT'S
NESTING
SEASON!**

We love our trees, and some tree enthusiasts show off their beautiful trees by shining lights on them at night. **Please remember that trees are also home to birds, and night lighting can discourage and harm nesting birds.**

California's nesting season is from 1 March through approximately 31 July, so limiting lights during this period in particular is best! Night lighting has also been shown to impact spring and fall bird migration. A 2019 Cornell study found the bird population in the United States and Canada dropped by 3 billion birds since 1970. Here are some other ways to protect our avian neighbors:

- Make windows safer from bird strikes
- Keep cats indoors
- Plant more native species
- Avoid pesticides

Wildlife and Conservation Board (WCB) GRANTS

CONTINUED FROM P1



Habitat and Restoration

—— \$1,551,407 ——

Ventura County Resource
Conservation District

Granted for several monarch restoration projects including along the Ventura River, Santa Clara River and Calleguas Creek

Santa Clara River

—— \$1,010,000 ——



The Nature Conservancy

Granted to restore the riparian area that was impacted by gravel mining activity on the banks of this naturally flowing river

Simi Hills

—— \$600,000 ——

Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District

Granted to purchase with other agencies, 213 acres to preserve a wildlife corridor for deer and mountain lion.





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Matilija Dam Ecosystem

—— \$5,025,000 ——

Ventura County Watershed Protection
District

Granted for restoration plans with the removal of the Matilija Dam, protecting aquatic and terrestrial habitat and allowing sand to replenish beaches.



MORE WCB GRANTS FROM P5

Walker-Hearne Ranch

—— \$2,991,605 ——

Ventura Land Trust

Granted to purchase 2,123 acres at risk of development, allowing for species migration in response to climate change.

Steelhead Restoration

—— \$1,625,000 ——

Ojai Valley Land Conservancy

Granted to expand by 30% the Steelhead Preserve in the Ventura River Watershed, protecting several endangered species.