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**BANNING RANCH
CONSERVANCY**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Wildlife Conservation Board \$15.5 Million Grant Helps Officially Protect Banning Ranch

With approval of this grant, all of the public and private funds needed to secure public ownership of Southern California's largest swath of unprotected coast open space are now in hand

SACRAMENTO – Today, California's Wildlife Conservation Board voted to approve up to a \$15.5 million grant to help fund the purchase of Banning Ranch, one of the last remaining parcels of privately owned land along the Southern California coast.

The 385-acre property and active oil field has long been eyed for its open space potential with the opportunity to restore coastal wetlands, address climate change, and create park access for millions.

“When Trust for Public Land first became involved in the effort to protect Banning Ranch, this is the moment we were working towards and thanks to the generosity of Randall family and support from our state and federal public funding partners, we can officially say Banning Ranch will become California's next oceanfront park,” said Guillermo Rodriguez, California State Director and Vice President-Pacific Region for Trust for Public Land. “This is such an important moment in the decades-long, community-driven fight to close the park equity gap in Southern California and make Banning Ranch public, open to all and we're thrilled to give residents the opportunity to realize a dream about what Banning Ranch can be, and work alongside them to make their vision come to life.”

Trust for Public Land and Banning Ranch Conservancy worked over the last five years to secure public and private funds from state and federal sources, including a \$50 million [donation](#) from philanthropists and longtime Orange County residents Frank and Joann Randall, to complete the \$97 million purchase.

For more than two decades, the Banning Ranch Conservancy with a coalition of nonprofit organizations, government partners, and community and tribal activists have fought to preserve Banning Ranch and transform it as a regional public asset. This is the first time the property has been for sale and under option in more than a half century.

“This has been a team effort, and we have kept our eyes on the prize. It is an historic moment for our coast, and for nature lovers and park lovers everywhere,” relayed Terry Welsh M.D, President of Banning Ranch Conservancy. “Thanks to everyone, from the landowners, to Frank and Joann Randall, and Assemblywoman Petrie-Norris.”

Banning Ranch is within the ancestral homelands of local California Native American tribes and people, and holds important significance for these tribes and community. The Banning Ranch site, in addition to the adjacent Fairview Park and other bluff areas near the Santa Ana River, has been identified as being part of the native village site known as Genga (or Gengaa).

More than 8.4 million people now live within an hour's drive from the property. State data says about half are considered low-income, one-third live in park-deficient communities and 66 percent of residents region-wide are of Hispanic or Asian descent.

Protecting this property from development and repurposing it from oil extraction to public purposes aligns with California's ambitious climate goals and ["30 x 30" initiative](#) that calls for the protection of 30% of the state's land and coastal waters by the year 2030. Restoring the property to open space can help mitigate impacts from sea level rise, sequester carbon in area wetlands and provide habitat for a half dozen of endangered and threatened species while creating public access, all of which are key priorities in the initiative.

With full funding in hand, the next phase is to focus on the remediation plan that will guide the removal of oil facilities, infrastructure and clean up the land. Going forward, project partners will work with the public agencies on a public engagement process to envision turning the property into a vast public park that would provide coastal access with trails, low-cost camping and picnic sites and cultural access. It would connect to a nearly 1,000-acre network of parks and open space that would be linked by bike and walking trails, and easily accessed by public transportation.

About Trust for Public Land

Trust for Public Land (TPL) is a national nonprofit that works to connect everyone to the benefits and joys of the outdoors. As a leader in equitable access to the outdoors, TPL works with communities to create parks and protect public land where they are needed most. Since 1972, TPL has protected more than 3 million acres of public land, created more than 5,000 parks, trails, schoolyards, and iconic outdoor places, raised \$84 billion in public funding for parks and public lands, and connected more than 9 million people to the outdoors. To learn more, visit tpl.org.

About Banning Ranch Conservancy

Banning Ranch Conservancy is a local nonprofit organization whose board and staff aims to preserve, acquire, conserve and manage the entire Banning Ranch as permanent public open space, park and coastal nature preserve. Over the last two decades Conservancy volunteers, activists, consultants, partnering non-profits, and elected leaders have worked strategically and collaboratively to protect this coastal gem from potential development. To learn more, visit: BanningRanchConservancy.org.