

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Banning Ranch Conservancy Wins Lawsuit Against Newport Beach City Council

Newport Beach, California— The Banning Ranch Conservancy, a local non-profit organization dedicated to preserving Banning Ranch as permanent public open space, won its lawsuit challenging the Newport Beach City Council’s approval of the Newport Banning Ranch project. In July, 2012, the City Council approved the project proposed by developer Newport Banning Ranch LLC consisting of 1375 residences, a 75 room resort hotel and 75,000 square feet of commercial retail space.

The lawsuit claimed that the City violated its own General Plan and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). While the CEQA claim was not upheld, the Orange County Superior Court did find that “...the Project itself, as approved, is inconsistent with the General Plan ... in that the City failed to coordinate and work with the [California] Coastal Commission in identifying which wetlands and habitats present in Banning Ranch would be preserved, restored or developed, prior to its approval of the Project.” The Court’s decision reverses the City’s approval of the Project.

Steve Ray, Executive Director of the Conservancy says. “We did not want to litigate, but the City must comply with the law. In particular, the City Council seems to be single-minded in promoting the development of Banning Ranch, which is contrary to the will of the citizens of Newport Beach.”

In 2006, voters approved a ballot initiative as an amendment to the Newport Beach General Plan designating that the priority for Banning Ranch is that it remain as permanent open space and that it be used as a public park. Says Ray, “At 401 acres, it would result in a substantial park for residents. We have launched a major fundraising drive to purchase Banning Ranch at fair market value from the developers and to create a park and coastal nature preserve, just as the citizens want.”

John McClendon of Liebold, McClendon & Mann (Laguna Hills) served as lead litigator on behalf of the Conservancy.

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*For more than 15 years, the **Banning Ranch Conservancy**’s mission has been to preserve, acquire, conserve and manage the entire Banning Ranch as permanent public open space, park and coastal nature preserve.*