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Park Planning Begins on the Randall Preserve

Habitat and Species Protection, Coastal Resilience, and Public Access are Being Studied During Park Planning Efforts

Newport Beach, CA – Coastal Corridor Alliance (CCA) and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) have partnered to plan the future habitat stewardship of the Randall Preserve, which was protected in 2022. Together through a federally compliant procurement process, CCA has hired the environmental, engineering, and planning firm Dudek to coordinate a variety of studies and assist with the Randall Preserve design. Once developed, draft plans will be made available to the public. Many meaningful community engagement opportunities will be offered.

“After 80 years of oil drilling, I’m excited that the public will soon have access to the Randall Preserve,” commented CCA Stewardship Consultant Melanie Schlotterbeck. “Public access restrictions have been in place since it was protected, while remediation is completed by the previous titleholder. During our planning process, we hope to gather important community feedback that will lead to a premier coastal nature preserve!”

CCA was awarded, through a federal competitive grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation with support from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, funds to complete park planning in the form of a Resource Management Plan and Coastal Resilience Strategy. The development of these plans and a Tribal Access and Engagement Plan will collectively inform a Public Access Plan.

Additional funds are being sought, while Dudek’s team completes biological surveys of the vegetation and special status species, coupled with mapping and research on the property. This information will inform a balanced approach to ecosystem protection and public

enjoyment on this unique property. CCA was gratified to realize its goal to protect the Randall Preserve and save the last, large remaining coastal areas in Orange County.

“MRCA is glad to lead a new chapter for the Preserve, carrying out a planning process that is informed by professionals, specialists, local community, and future users of the site,” said Isabela Noriega, MRCA’s Randall Preserve Project Manager. “Our goal is to see a series of plans coalesce to support the intent behind the acquisition.”

In Winter 2024, the procurement process received eight proposal submissions and Dudek was awarded the contract. Dudek previously participated in many of the studies conducted when the land was proposed for development as Newport Banning Ranch. This extensive knowledge of the property and creative approach to stewardship and recreational planning helped this firm secure the contract award.

“Dudek is honored to support CCA, MRCA, and local communities in designing a program that balances public access with the protection of unique ecology in coastal Orange County. The Randall Preserve will serve as a lasting refuge for both people and important wildlife,” said Michael Sweesy, Principal Restoration Ecologist at Dudek.

Together CCA, MRCA, and Dudek will work to complete the surveys, setting the tone for future stewardship, education and programming, public access, and regulatory compliance on the property. CCA will launch pre-engagement opportunities, including public workshops and training this fall, while the more robust, broader engagement will be held in Spring 2025 when the draft plans are ready.

“CCA is committed to an inclusive public engagement process. We are excited about the interactive web-based platform we are designing. Our Fall bilingual community events will provide area residents with a chance to give early feedback thanks to a grant from our partners at The Trust for Public Land. To encourage underserved community involvement, Spanish-language interpretation and travel stipends will be available to those in need,” notes Schlotterbeck, who is leading the planning effort on behalf of CCA.

Community members are encouraged to stay informed about the Randall Preserve and opportunities to engage with the lands and waters of the Coastal Corridor, by subscribing to the CCA e-newsletter at: <https://CoastalCorridor.org/newsletter/>

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About CCA:

Coastal Corridor Alliance is a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation, originally established to protect Banning Ranch, now the Randall Preserve. Learn more at: CoastalCorridor.org.

About MRCA:

The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority is dedicated to the preservation and management of local open space and parkland, wildlife habitat, coastal access, watershed lands, and trails in both wilderness and urban settings, and to ensuring access to public parkland and coastal resources. Learn more at: MRCA.ca.gov.

About Dudek:

Dudek is a 100% employee-owned, multidisciplinary planning, environmental, and engineering consulting firm based in Encinitas, CA. Learn more at www.Dudek.com.

About NFWF:

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation is dedicated to sustaining, restoring, and enhancing the nation's fish, wildlife, plants, and habitats for current and future generations. Learn more at: www.NFWF.org.