



**PRESS RELEASE
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Sierra Club ends decade's long battle over open space vs toll roads in Orange and San Diego counties

IRVINE, CA – Sierra Club and the Save San Onofre Coalition are ending a 15-year fight over a proposed Foothill-South Toll Road extension that would have forever changed the water quality, habitat and cultural resources in southern Orange County and northern San Diego County.

This landmark agreement means the Transportation Corridor Agency, TCA, must come up with alternate plans for State 241 and Interstate 5 toll lanes that won't harm the area's natural habitat and cultural resources or ruin the San Mateo Watershed's water quality.

For more than a decade, the Sierra Club Angeles Chapter and its Sierra Sage Regional Group have implored the TCA to use an alternative route for the toll road that was proposed to run through San Onofre State Beach and other key coastal and inland parks.

Sierra Club is the acknowledged leader in this fight and formed a very effective informal coalition with Audubon, Audubon Sea and Sage, Natural Resources Defense Council, the Surfrider Foundation and the Endangered Habitats League in to present a united front to the TCA in demanding protections for habitat and wildlife.

This key battle to preserve open space underscores the imperative to stop use of public parks and wildlife preserves as cheap corridors for highways -- all of which have been achieved with this agreement.

"For over fifteen years thousands of Californians from all walks of life fought to protect a beloved state beach that provides affordable coastal camping for working families. Today's agreement ensures the park's integrity and helps lock into place a remarkable legacy of unspoiled lands stretching from the surf at Trestles to the peaks of Saddleback." Bill Corcoran, Western Director, Sierra Club

The final agreement achieves the following objectives:

Resolution of Litigation. Settles five lawsuits challenging TCA's 2006 and 2013 approvals of its Foothill-South and Tesoro Extension projects

brought by the California Attorney General and members of the Save San Onofre Coalition.

Rescission of Approvals. Provides that TCA will rescind its 2006 approval of the so-called "Green Alignment" that would have run through San Onofre State Beach and its 2013 approval of its Tesoro Extension project.

Avoidance of Parks and Open Space. Ensures permanent protection of San Onofre State Beach, the Richard and Donna O'Neill Conservancy, and other critical open space, wildlife habitat and cultural resources in the San Mateo Creek and adjacent watersheds from TCA-sponsored road projects.

Long Term Protections. Allows TCA to move forward with a formal CEQA/NEPA process to review alternative routes for connecting SR-241 to the Interstate 5 freeway and develop an SR-241 extension project that avoids San Onofre State Beach and other environmentally and culturally sensitive lands designated in the agreement, without opposition by the environmental organizations comprising the Save San Onofre Coalition.

Non-Opposition to SR 241 Extension Project. Establishes a cooperative framework by which an alignment for the SR-241 and other I-5 traffic congestion solutions can be identified, evaluated and potentially advanced in a manner that follows applicable laws, is consistent with recommendations issued by regulatory agencies in 2008, and meets south Orange County's transportation needs.

Conservation Fund. Creates a robust conservation fund to help preserve and restore San Mateo Creek and its watershed. An important component of the agreement is an unprecedented commitment by TCA to create a \$28 million conservation fund that will help preserve and restore San Mateo Creek and its watershed. An independent oversight committee comprised of Save San Onofre Coalition members, TCA and resource agencies will work collaboratively to target priority land acquisitions and carry out critical habitat restoration projects.

Sierra Club Angeles Chapter is the largest chapter of the world's largest environmental organization. It represents 40,000 members in Los Angeles and Orange counties.

Sierra Sage represents South Orange County as part of Sierra Club Angeles Chapter.

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