



SAVE OPEN-SPACE AND AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

NEWS & VIEWS

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E-mail: info@soarusa.org

How Do We Keep Winning?

*Preserving our victories,
preserving our greenbelts*

Your efforts through SOAR have established voter-controlled protection of most of Ventura County's precious open space and agricultural land. Now we must ask: How do we permanently safeguard these greenbelt buffers that surround and nourish our communities? How do we build vibrant and livable cities without sacrificing vital farmland or natural habitats? During this welcome respite from campaigns, SOAR leaders have been addressing these key questions of our county's – and SOAR's – future.

Last year we defeated the first wave of well-funded developer campaigns that challenged our SOAR growth boundaries. Their shrewdly designed initiatives called for massive but little-studied development proposals. With each campaign the developers get smarter and more creative. SOAR too must evolve if we are to remain effective in responding to their efforts countywide.

SOAR is committed to meet this challenge head on – we are here for the long haul. First and foremost, we pledge that we will continue to:

- **Counter boundary-busting campaigns** by providing campaign expertise, coordination and fundraising capacity to any community whose growth boundaries are threatened by an inappropriate developer initiative.
- **Stay vigilant**, monitoring development activity across the region and keeping our network informed and mobilized.
- **Work with other stakeholders to look for long-term solutions** to our critical land use issues, including finding ways to protect open space and agricultural lands in perpetuity.



As in the past, our success depends entirely on you. As we commit to the long haul, we need you, too, to pledge your steady support for this worthwhile, long-term and lasting endeavor. You are the key to securing our county's green spaces for generations to come.

SOAR Launches New Initiatives

We're gearing up for the non-stop effort ahead:

- **A new executive director** – our first-ever – will provide full-time focus and energy in service to our members, partners and volunteers
- Our **At Risk Map** project will highlight emerging threats to open lands and track progress toward our goals over time.
- **Timely online communication** via our soon-to-be-launched web site, e-news briefs, and action alerts will keep you plugged in to your community and the region.
- A **leadership campaign** to recruit, train and network a new generation of grassroots activists in each community in the county will keep SOAR dynamic and forward-looking.
- We'll be creating ways to **connect, confer and celebrate** with other members and activists in your community and around the county through meetings, outings and special events.
- Our new **monthly membership program** makes it easy for you to stay connected and ensures steady, reliable funding for our ongoing efforts on your behalf. See back page and enclosed return envelope for details and **sign up today!**

News

From Around the County

Ventura

SOAR Leaders Propose

Hillside Funding Mechanism

Two SOAR board members have proposed an innovative approach to smart growth designed to help protect Ventura's hillsides. City Councilman Brian Brennan and County Supervisor Steve Bennett are working with the Coastal Conservancy to advance a concept that utilizes "Transfer Development Rights." The idea calls for the City of Ventura to develop specific and comprehensive plans for the development of downtown Ventura along the lines of a coastal European community, with higher density, mass transit and a walking city concept. In exchange for being allowed to construct higher density units, developers would pay into a fund to help with the purchase of the hillsides above Ventura. If done properly, smart infill development coupled with support for the permanent protection of the open spaces around the city can be a win-win concept for the citizens of Ventura.



Fillmore

City Hall Sandbagging

Patti Walker, early SOAR supporter and Fillmore councilperson, is under siege. Last November, Griffin, author of the "Heritage Valley" development proposal, spent over \$50,000 to elect two "friendly" candidates to City Council to reinforce the two sitting pro-development members. Now, Walker is being marginalized at City Hall and criticized heavily in the local press for raising legitimate questions about plans to move a levee and fill in the Santa Clara River at Griffin's behest. Griffin and the City are banking on the levee move to free up more land for Griffin's project.

The City's action has prompted two lawsuits including one coordinated by

SOAR board member Richard Francis. Clearly, unblinking vigilance on political and legal fronts is ever necessary. For now, we urge Fillmore SOAR supporters to let Patti Walker – and the other Fillmore councilmembers and press – know that you support her lonely battle at City Hall on behalf of open government and open space.



Santa Paula

Eyeing Fagan Canyon

Many Santa Paulans – including the City Council majority installed last November – want to break the suburban-sprawl mold here and replace it with a vision of compact, walkable, mixed-use and mixed-income neighborhoods. Their cause took on new urgency in January when national builder Centex Homes announced its interest in the Fagan Canyon expansion area. Encouragingly, Centex – known for its large-scale, single-family detached housing tracts – has agreed with civic groups and the City to a community planning "charrette" in the fall. This intensive series of public workshops will aim to create a buildable plan for Fagan Canyon that lives up to the community's needs, values and vision. Nationally renowned charrette expert

Did You Know?

Cited in national venues from Time magazine to NPR, studied and imitated near and far, "SOAR" – though not quite a household word yet (think Kleenex, Xerox) – has entered the land-use lexicon as a generic term for voter-led growth boundary initiatives. Google it and see.

Contact Us

For more information about joining or giving to SOAR, building a local chapter, or any other matter, please call us at 805-653-0061 or send an email to info@soarusa.org.

and New Urbanist architect Steve Coyle will facilitate, bringing independent perspective and discipline to the process. For more on these promising developments, contact SOAR board member and Santa Paula leader Mike Miller at mmiller@soarusa.org.



Thousand Oaks

Turning Point for Ahmanson Ranch?

Environmentalists and commuters are heralding news that Ahmanson Ranch is now being considered for purchase as a state park. After a dozen years of controversy over plans to build an eleventh city in the county, landowner Washington Mutual and the State are at the negotiating table. Had SOAR been in place before the county rezoned the land in 1992, "I wouldn't be surprised if over 90% of the voters would have voted against developing this vital open space resource," said County Supervisor and SOAR board member Linda Parks. The State will be deciding whether to use park bond money to purchase Ahmanson Ranch in the next couple of months.



Simi Valley

SOAR Spirit Alive and Well

Hundreds of people attended recent Planning Board and City Council meetings to oppose a 90-unit condominium development at Kuehner and the 118 freeway – an area cited by many as the "Gateway to Ventura County". The big showing demonstrates that the spirit to oppose unwanted development is alive and well in Simi Valley in spite of last November's defeat of Measure B, also known as Simi Valley SOAR II. "Stay tuned and stay active," urges SOAR board member and Simi Valley leader Kevin Conville. "Let the politicians and the big corporations know that we can't afford more sprawl clogging our roads and spoiling our environment. We're going to keep holding their feet to the fire."

Meet SOAR's New Executive Director



Evolving SOAR into the sustainable, long-term organization that Ventura County needs demands the dedication, drive and consistency of a full-time leader. We are fortunate to have found Karen Schmidt to fill this role as SOAR's first executive director.

Karen brings to SOAR many years of experience in environmental science, policy and non-profit management, and a passion both for protecting natural areas and for building sustainable communities. Her diverse career includes conducting research on nature-preserve design and management in the northern Rockies, lobbying Capitol Hill on global climate change,

and working as a ranger in Yosemite and Glacier National Parks.

She holds masters and bachelor degrees in biology and environmental earth sciences from Stanford, and an MBA from Kellogg. While in business school she developed coursework on sustainable development and helped found an international network of MBAs working on corporate social responsibility. She is returning to environmental activism after six years of learning "how the other half thinks" as a management consultant with Booz, Allen & Hamilton.

"After living everywhere from Alaska to New York City I'm delighted to be back home in California, and honored to be working with such a tremendous group of people," says Karen. "SOAR has put Ventura at the forefront of sustainable land use issues nationwide, and I'm excited to help the organization build on its extraordinary achievements."

Karen lives in Ojai with her husband, artist Cullen Robertson, and daughters Lucy and Alice. She can be reached at kschmidt@soarusa.org.



Become a Monthly Member and Win!

To reward you for joining our new monthly membership program, we are giving all new Frontline members free raffle tickets to win in a sporty new 4-passenger Ford Th!nk neighborhood electric vehicle. Raffle proceeds will benefit The SOAR Fund, our affiliated nonprofit 501(c)3 organization dedicated to research, education and policy development on open space issues in Ventura County. Additional raffle tickets can be purchased for \$25. Use the enclosed return envelope, call (805) 653-0061, or email us today at join@soarusa.org. The more you pledge, the more chances you have to win. The drawing will be held on October 15, so act now!

Open Space District Makes Progress

A 41-member committee of which SOAR was a member recently submitted its unanimous recommendations to the Board of Supervisors on a countywide Open Space District. The district would use specially dedicated tax revenue to buy open space or the development rights to agricultural land through voluntary deals with landowners. The state budget crisis and potential tax increases will complicate timing of a ballot measure to create the district. But we are confident that when the time is right, the citizens of Ventura County will support this powerful tool for permanently protecting our county's natural resources. Learn more at www.ventura.org/planning

SOAR Board Member Sprouts Smart Growth

Heather Poehler and husband Mike Miller, a SOAR board member and Santa Paula leader, became first-time parents at 1:30am on April 5th. "The 24-hour labor didn't seem that bad, until the second twelve hours," the new father said. The family is reportedly doing great. Congratulations Heather and Mike, and welcome, baby Conrad!



Join SOAR's Frontline today!

Our new monthly membership program will be key to our success.

Sign up for our new Frontline monthly membership program with a pledge of \$5 a month or more.
Use the enclosed return envelope, call (805) 653-0061, or email join@soarusa.org.

Benefits of membership:

- The satisfaction of helping safeguard our county's vital green spaces
- A subscription to our print and electronic newsletters
- Action alerts
- Invitations to special events, and more

Added benefits of monthly giving:

- Easy and hassle free, debits are automatic
- No check writing, mailings or stamps – less paper waste, less administrative costs
- ***Plus***, all Frontline members will be automatically entered in our raffle to ***win a new Ford Th!nk electric vehicle.***

Your support is essential to keep SOAR winning!



What Can I Do?

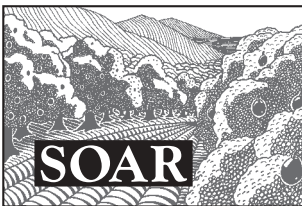
- **Join SOAR** – Make a monthly contribution to help keep us working steadily for you and with you to stop sprawl and make Ventura County a better place to live.
- **Speak up** – Go to a public meeting, write a letter to the editor, talk with your neighbors, and call or email us about the issues that concern you.
- **Get involved** with – or start up – a local SOAR chapter. Contact us for more information.
- **Stay tuned** – We will announce our website launch, unveil our At Risk mapping project, and much more in upcoming issues of News & Views.



What We Have Done With Your Support



- ✓ *Acres protected by SOAR boundaries:*
600,000+
- ✓ *Number of jurisdictions with SOAR initiatives in place:* **8 cities, all county land**
- ✓ *Developer spending on Ventura and Santa Paula campaigns in 2002:* **\$2.5 million**
- ✓ *SOAR spending to successfully defeat developer campaigns in 2002:* **\$200,000**



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Our Mission

SOAR's mission is to make Ventura County a better place to live by limiting urban sprawl, protecting open space and agricultural lands, and promoting livable and sustainable communities in the county and surrounding regions.