

Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority?

The Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority (“the Habitat Authority”) manages approximately 3,886 acres of public open space in the Puente Hills Preserve, which includes Hacienda Hills, Turnbull Canyon, Sycamore Canyon, Hellman Park, Arroyo Pescadero and Powder Canyon. The Habitat Authority’s mission is the restoration and management of the Puente Hills for preservation and to provide outdoor recreation for the community. The Habitat Authority also works to assist with wildfire preparedness efforts and emergency response in its service area and contracts with three Rangers who provide patrol services.

What is the role of Rangers within Puente Hills Preserve?

The Rangers currently contracted by the Habitat Authority are sworn California peace officers whose duties include debris removal, fuel clearance, vandalism repair, ticketing for illegal activity, trail repair, securing trailheads daily, closing trails during hazardous conditions and providing extra patrol during high fire threat. The rangers help prevent homeless encampments, stop people from using drugs or setting off fireworks and even prevent car break-ins in neighboring areas. Without additional funding, the Habitat Authority may be unable to continue contracting Rangers within the Preserve.

What challenges does the Habitat Authority face?

The Habitat Authority currently faces an ongoing structural deficit. In order to maintain the financial health of the Habitat Authority, budgetary reductions have been made in recent years. Positions have been left unfunded and many services and programs have been cut. Remaining program and service levels do not meet current needs, even as lengthening fire seasons and neighborhood safety concerns increase the need for services. Without an additional stable funding source, the Habitat Authority will be forced to make additional cuts, which could include eliminating Ranger services and limiting access for individuals and families.

Is there a plan to continue to fund critical programs?

Although no final decisions have been made, the Habitat Authority is considering forming a legal entity called a Community Facilities District (CFD). This CFD would allow the Habitat Authority to explore local funding options, including a special tax on real property in the designated geographic area to help provide funding for key projects. The top priorities for the measure would include the security and cleanliness of the Preserve, preventing wildfires and maintaining and protecting natural lands and habitats.

What are the proposed boundaries of a potential CFD?

The current CFD boundaries being considered would include the entirety of the cities of Whittier and La Habra Heights as well as part of the communities of Hacienda Heights, Rowland Heights and Workman Mill.

How could a CFD be established?

A district may be created with the approval of two-thirds of voters living within the proposed boundaries of the CFD.

How would dedicated, local funding help protect and maintain our local parks and open spaces?

A special tax on real property within a potential CFD could provide the needed funds for key projects, including:

- Clearing brush from emergency access roads for first responders
- Protecting local natural lands by prevent homeless encampments, vandalism and illegal dumping
- Maintaining natural habitats, including the Hacienda Hills, Turnbull Canyon, Sycamore Canyon, Hellman Park, Arroyo Pescadero and Powder Canyon
- Maintaining park ranger patrols for fire safety, keeping our hills and trails safe and providing emergency response

How could a potential funding measure help to maintain safety within the Preserve and surrounding communities?

A potential funding measure is crucial for maintaining the rangers who patrol the natural areas in the Puente Hills to make sure people are safe, to prevent homeless encampments, to stop people from using drugs or setting off fireworks and even to prevent car break-ins in neighboring areas.

How could a potential funding measure help mitigate the risk of wildfires in our communities?

As evidenced by the Sycamore/Spyglass Fire, Colima Fires and fire in La Habra Heights near the Skyline Trail and Punta del Este, wildfire season can often be year-round in our area. A potential measure would reduce the risk of wildfires in our area by providing funding to remove hazardous dead trees and dried brush and helping ensure there is an adequate number of rangers who are trained wildland firefighters and are available to patrol trails and open space for early warning signs.

How can I be sure funds from a potential measure would be spent as promised?

A potential measure would include strict fiscal accountability provisions, including:

- All funds would be locally controlled and could not be taken by the State or used for other purposes
- Annual audits and public financial disclosures would ensure proper use of funds

Could funds from a potential measure be taken by the State?

No. Any potential funding measure would maintain the Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority's control over local funds for local needs. No funds could be taken by the State or federal governments.

Who could vote on a potential measure?

All registered voters who live in the proposed CFD would be eligible to vote on a potential measure.

How can I learn more?

As Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority continues to evaluate options for preserving and protecting our natural areas, we want to hear from you. To learn more, please visit www.habitatauthority.org.