



Subscribe



Webmail



Homes



Jobs

Search



News



The Web



Classifieds

Advertising

Circulation

Web Services

Traffic

Stocks

Home

News

Sports

Business

Opinion

Entertainment

Features

Columnists

Cor

Top Stories - Coastal - Inland - Californian - Business - National - Columnists - Letters - Obituaries

Keyword

## Archives

Last modified Saturday, August 23, 2003 1:14 AM PDT

### Habitat plan good for builders, residents

By: ED FITZPATRICK - For The Californian

I have been a developer in Western Riverside County for the better part of 20 years. I've watched these communities grow and I've watched elected leaders grapple with the challenge of accommodating the tide of growth while maintaining the quality of life that makes our communities unique to Southern California.

Unfortunately, I've also witnessed firsthand the bureaucratic nightmare of obtaining federal and state environmental permits needed to build homes, shopping centers and businesses. I fully support the protection of threatened and endangered species, but I can say from personal experience that this is a seriously flawed system.

Fortunately, we now have the opportunity to take a better path --- the Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan. This innovative approach to meeting conservation requirements will streamline the approval process for development, and protect our open-space heritage.

In the coming months, 14 cities in Western Riverside County will consider adopting the conservation plan. I strongly urge them to do so. The future quality of life of their residents depends on it.

By adopting the MSHCP, cities in Western Riverside County will receive millions in funding from voter-approved Measure A to provide much-needed new roads and traffic improvements. For example, Lake Elsinore, where my company has been trying for years to secure approval for a major project, will receive \$38 million in Measure A funds. Without the MSCHP in place, Lake Elsinore will lose this money.

The plan has recently come under legal attack from special interests who are convinced that the current environmental review process will better serve their financial aims. I am sorry to see this, given that the MSHCP actually offers a better chance to profit from habitat-rich land than does the current system.

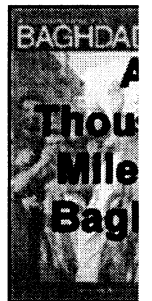
Under the MSHCP, funding will be provided by local, state and federal parties to buy habitat-rich properties for conservation. Without the MSHCP, property owners and developers will face delays or, in some cases, outright rejection from resource agencies in their attempts to realize financial gain from habitat-rich property through development.

If the plan is not adopted, federal and state agencies will continue to work project by project, species by species, offering no certainty for the development community as a whole and no clear picture of where and how the county will accommodate growth.

**HARD**  
Order Back  
This Date's



Arts & Ent  
Maga



News L

...more /

A personal experience has convinced me the status quo process is hurting Riverside County:

The Ramsgate project, a 1,237-acre residential development in Lake Elsinore, was determined to impact approximately one-tenth of an acre of Army Corps of Engineers jurisdiction. Because of this comparatively small impact, we were forced to endure a two-year permitting process that was originally represented to us to take only 5 1/2 months. In addition, we were forced to give up more than 120 single-family residential lots of the project to protect a wildlife corridor that federal resource agencies insisted be 2,000 feet wide.

These impacts and losses occurred on only 414 of the 1,237 acres, yet the remaining 1,648 lots and 750 acres are now held in limbo due to the presence of the California gnatcatcher. With the MSHCP, we have the opportunity to receive fair compensation for the conservation of this property.

As developers, we have a right to ask questions about this plan and to protect our right to private enterprise. But we also have a responsibility to enhance the communities in which we build, to make them better places to live. I believe that means supporting the Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan.

This is a path we must take.

Ed Fitzpatrick, who lives in Encinitas, is a principal with Eastbridge Partners in Irvine.



Print this story



Email this story

