

Stu News Laguna

Laguna Beach's Online Newspaper and Community Forum

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Laguna Greenbelt, Inc. hosts Wildlife Corridor tours for advocates and government officials

On Wednesday, June 12, the Laguna Greenbelt hosted a tour of a key portion of the Irvine-Laguna Wildlife Corridor in Irvine, near the intersection of Astor and Lynx. Led by John Leonard, FivePoint VP of Engineering, attendees included representatives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Orange County Department of Public Works, the City of Irvine, Congresswoman Katie Porter's office, FivePoint (developer of the Irvine Great Park), and the environment groups Power in Nature and Laguna Greenbelt. The purpose of the tour was to highlight the current progress of the Corridor while addressing key remaining obstacles, particularly overcoming the blockage created by the I-5 freeway.



Photos courtesy of Laguna Greenbelt

Tour participants

The Irvine-Laguna Wildlife Corridor is a dedicated wildlife pathway being constructed to reduce habitat fragmentation in the southern Orange County region. When completed, the Corridor will provide a six-mile route for wildlife to travel between the Cleveland National Forest and the 22,000-acre Laguna Coast Wilderness. This 600-800-foot-wide, two-and-one-half mile long segment is being developed by FivePoint in conjunction with the City of Irvine as part of the creation of the Irvine Great Park.



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Viewing potential interpretive locations

As the tour began, Irvine Mayor Farah Khan shared her thoughts. “This Corridor was so critical in establishing a route for our natural habitat. I want to thank FivePoint for their forethinking and working with the city in such a unique way to make sure we were able to build the Irvine-Laguna Wildlife Corridor as we were building out the Great Park neighborhoods.”

Melanie Schlotterbeck, head of the Southland Region for the Power in Nature coalition summed up why the 120 environment groups within their organization support the Corridor: “We need connectivity value between landscapes so that deer, coyote, foxes, and bobcats have access to other landscapes to reproduce so they are not dating their cousins.”



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Walking through native vegetation

During the short hike, attendees noted the care taken to utilize native vegetation and to create wildlife-friendly surroundings while also serving as a flood water control project. Attendees discussed the importance of ensuring wildlife mobility over the I-5 freeway and highlighted its

importance to the function of the Corridor. This critical portion requires additional solutions to ensure the Corridor functions fully from the Pacific Ocean to the Cleveland National Forest.

Additionally, the group discussed the possibility of building an interpretive and viewing center adjacent to the Corridor to establish a permanent fixture to educate the public on the Irvine-Laguna Wildlife Corridor and its importance to Orange County wildlife.

Speaking for the Laguna Greenbelt President Norm Grossman said, “I would like to offer a special thanks to John Leonard for his incredible work in heading the development of this segment and the rest of the FivePoint team for their decade-long support of the project. We thank all those who attended and hope to see them soon, when we can celebrate the completion of the Corridor.”

For more information about Laguna Greenbelt, go to <https://lagunagreenbelt.org/>.