



BALDWIN HILLS  
CONSERVANCY

# **2013 UPDATED STRATEGIC PLAN**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The detailed strategies and policies for watershed protection and land conservation within the Conservancy's geographic area are instrumental in delivering a cohesive message reflecting statewide priorities for California's environmental health. Over the years, the Conservancy has demonstrated itself as a successful governance mechanism and effective partner with federal, state and local agencies. Regional planning decisions are influenced by the state's conservation goals through the multi-jurisdictional decision making forum created by the Baldwin Hills Conservancy Act. The Conservancy leverages expertise and resources to acquire lands and implement projects of statewide significance through local assistance grants and program delivery support. Ultimately, the Conservancy is responsible for bringing the state's innovative conservation policies directly to millions of area voters who approved initiatives aimed at preserving, protecting, and enhancing the state's natural resources

The *Baldwin Hills Conservancy 2013 Updated Strategic Plan* describes current and proposed resource allocation by the Conservancy; public needs served by the agency; policies and principles guiding the Conservancy and its staff; and the intended future course of the agency's efforts. The plan begins with background on the Conservancy, including the Conservancy's statutory authorities. The Conservancy's mandates have been applied in three main themes of the agency's current work program:

- Acquisition of open space
- Planning and development
- Interpretation and education

The program descriptions on the following pages are meant to describe issues and opportunities, not just statutory authorities. In some cases, these issues may be addressed under a range of adopted policies available to the Conservancy. As the *Baldwin Hills Park Master Plan* is the main reference for selecting projects, the Conservancy has identified program priorities that are consistent with the plan's objectives. Additional projects will be considered under criteria adopted by the Conservancy Board. Unless otherwise noted, all projects are targeted for completion during the Conservancy's statutory existence which will either expire or be extended on or before January 1, 2018. The *Strategic Plan* is a "living" document, intended for reference in the course of conducting the daily activities of the Conservancy, and it will be subject to a process of evaluation and updating every two years.

## BALDWIN HILLS CONSERVANCY'S MISSION

The Baldwin Hills Conservancy's mission is to acquire open space and manage public lands within the Baldwin Hills area and to provide recreation, restoration and protection of wildlife habitat within the territory for the public's enjoyment and educational experience.

## SUMMARY OF STATUTORY AUTHORITIES

The three core programs that make up the Conservancy's strategic plan are supported by the statutory authorities contained in Division 22.7 of the Public Resources Code. To carry out the statutory mandates in a cost effective manner and be responsive to the needs of local communities, there are additional legislative mandates that drive the work of the Conservancy as documented below:

### **Land Conservation** (reference: Public Resources Code Section 32566):

The Conservancy shall determine acquisition priorities and may acquire real property or any interest in real property within the Baldwin Hills area from willing sellers and at fair market value or on other mutually acceptable terms, upon a finding that the acquisition is consistent with the purposes of the Conservancy. The Conservancy may acquire the property itself, or may coordinate the acquisition with other public agencies with appropriate responsibility and available funding or land to exchange. The overall objectives of the land acquisition program shall be to assist in accomplishing land transactions that are mutually beneficial to the landowners and the Conservancy, and that meet the Conservancy's purposes.

### **Planning and Capital Improvements** [reference: Public Resources Code Sections 32565.5 (b) and (c), 32568 (a)]:

The Conservancy establishes policies and priorities within the Baldwin Hills area, and conducts any necessary planning activities in accordance with the purposes set forth in Section 32555 and; give priority to related projects that create expanded opportunities that provide recreation, aesthetic improvement, and wildlife habitat in the Baldwin Hills area.

The Conservancy may, within the Baldwin Hills area, undertake site improvement projects; regulate public access; re-vegetate and otherwise rehabilitate degraded areas, in consultation with other public agencies with appropriate jurisdiction and expertise; upgrade deteriorating facilities; and construct new facilities as needed for outdoor recreation, nature appreciation and interpretation, and natural resource protection. These projects shall be directed by the Conservancy and undertaken by other public agencies, with the Conservancy providing overall coordination through setting priorities for projects and assuring uniformity of approach.

**Recreation & Interpretation** [reference: Public Resources Code Section 32555 (a)]:

The Conservancy is created to acquire and manage public lands within the Baldwin Hills area, and to provide recreational, open space, wildlife habitat restoration and protection, and lands for educational uses within the area.

**Management of Public Lands** [reference: Public Resources Code Sections 32566, 32569 (a)]:

The Conservancy may direct the management, operation, administration, and maintenance of the lands and facilities it acquires. The Conservancy may initiate, negotiate, and participate in agreements for the management of land under its ownership or control with local public agencies, state agencies, federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, individuals, or other entities and may enter into any other agreements authorized by state or federal law. Local public agencies may enter into an agreement to transfer responsibility for the management of the land located within the Baldwin Hills area to the conservancy.

**Baldwin Hills Park Master Plan** [reference: Chapter 752 of the Statutes of 1999 Section 1 (c) and Public Resources Code Section 32656.5 (f )]:

Notwithstanding Section 7550.5 of the Government Code, the Secretary of Resources, in conjunction with the Director of Parks and Recreation, shall, not later than January 1, 2002, prepare and submit to the Legislature a master plan for the expansion and development of the Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area that is designed to accomplish all of the following goals:

- (1) Increase active recreation opportunities for underserved communities.
- (2) Create a comprehensive trail system.
- (3) Provide for public access and entry ways.
- (4) Protect and restore natural habitat.
- (5) Protect critical viewsheds.
- (6) Protect and improve urban water quality.
- (7) Emphasize connections between existing parks, trails, and urban streams.
- (8) Restore industrial lands to park and open-space purposes.
- (9) Protect watersheds connecting to Santa Monica Bay.

The Conservancy shall approve the master plan, and prioritize and implement the following in accordance with the master plan and with the master plan recommendations: (1) The acquisition of additional recreational and open space and a plan for the management of lands under the jurisdiction of the Conservancy, including additional or upgraded facilities and parks that may be necessary or desirable. (2) The planned conveyance of lands acquired and restored, or lands acquired, restored, and developed, to the Department of Parks and Recreation or to any other public agency once the acquisition and improvements have been finalized.

**Grants** (reference: Public Resources Code Section 32569 (a)):

The Conservancy may award grants to local public agencies, state agencies, federal agencies, and nonprofit organizations for the purposes of its division. The Conservancy shall administer any funds appropriated to it and any revenue generated by public agencies for the Baldwin Hills area and contributed to the Conservancy, and may expend those funds for capital improvements, land acquisition, or support of the Conservancy's operations.

**Prop 40: California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Act** [reference: Public Resources Code Section 5096.650 (b)]:

**Prop 84: The Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006** [reference: Public Resources Code Section 75060(d)(2)]:

Appropriations from the above bond acts may be spent in accordance with the particular provisions of the statute creating the Conservancy for the acquisition, development, rehabilitation, preservation, restoration and protection of land and water resources.

## ACQUISITION OF OPEN SPACE

### ISSUES AND PRIORITIES

The geographic area outlined in the authorizing statute features approximately 2,065.31 acres of land within the Baldwin Hills Conservancy boundaries. This includes some oil drilling lands and adjacent communities as well as the Ballona Creek, which contains four miles of channel, public trail and bikeway with private frontage parcels extending west from the Baldwin Hills' northwest foothill as defined by the Conservancy Act. The acreage calculation for the territory is based on digital polygons from Geographic Information System (GIS) two dimensional maps of the area. The Baldwin Hills area, which includes open space contiguous and or adjacent to Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area (KHRSA) totals 1,428.13 acres of protected, private or unprotected land as compiled by parcel data supplied by the Los Angeles County Assessor's public records (see Figure 1).

Figure – 1



**Other Features**


This map is for information purposes only. The parcels in private ownership indicated on this map are solely for reference and should not be construed as being public by any court or future transactions with the State of California.

Parcel data source: Los Angeles County Assessor, 2008.

Map created by: David H. Hirsch  
September 2013  
www.baldwinhills.org



Current GIS mapping of the parcel fee ownership indicates that of this acreage, approximately 654.48 are private or unprotected lands with major portions of the surface area dedicated to active oil operations. In accordance with Chapter 428, Statutes of 2000, it is the responsibility of the Conservancy to acquire the remaining privately held acreage.

Owner	Property Name	Parcel Count	Acres	Total Acreage
<b>BHRCA</b>				
	Finley & Lloyd properties - BHRCA	3	20.8600	
	Inglewood Hills - BHRCA	3	100.0400	
<b>BHRCA Total</b>				<b>120.90</b>
<b>County Parks</b>				
	Ball fields - County Parks	3	30.4872	
	East La Brea Greenbelt - County Parks	1	22.0500	
	Ruben Ingold Park & Stoneview Park - County Parks	2	7.4000	
<b>County Parks Total</b>				<b>59.94</b>
<b>County Parks Easement</b>				
	Plains Exploration and Production Company	4	142.5700	
<b>County Parks Easement Total</b>				<b>142.57</b>
<b>Culver City Parks</b>				
	Culver City Park - Culver City Parks	2	41.3200	
<b>Culver City Parks Total</b>				<b>41.32</b>
<b>LA City Parks</b>				
	Norman O. Houston Park - LA City Parks	1	9.7000	
<b>LA City Parks</b>				<b>9.70</b>
<b>California State Parks</b>				
	Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook - California State Parks	17	57.2840	
	KHSRA – California State Parks	20	309.0785	
	Stocker Corridor - California State Parks	5	32.8600	
<b>State Parks Total</b>				<b>399.22</b>
<b>Private/Unprotected (all others)</b>				
	Private	25	654.3594	
	Public Unprotected	1	5.1200	
<b>Private/Unprotected Total</b>				<b>654.48</b>
<b>TOTAL Baldwin Hills Parklands (Proposed)</b>				<b>1,428.13</b>
<b>*Total Land within BHC boundaries (including creek and other communities)</b>				<b>2,065.31</b>

The Conservancy's acquisition strategy evaluates opportunities that will allow for increased recreation activities, habitat protection, interpretive and cultural facilities, environmental interpretation as well as park-related economic sustainability. Working in conjunction with three primary agencies: California State Parks, State Lands Commission, and the Baldwin Hills Regional Conservation Authority (a joint powers authority, or JPA), the Conservancy will continue to optimize relationships, expertise and financial resources to engage in a manageable acquisition strategy. Since the majority of the remaining open space in the Baldwin Hills is encumbered with active oil extraction infrastructure, and under current conditions oil and gas production could continue for more than thirty years, the Conservancy must remain flexible in its approach. A thorough economic evaluation of all viable options for financing and acquiring property interests in the Baldwin Hills has been developed as an integral part of strategy formulation and to ensure the optimum use of available funding resources. Since the implementation of new ordinances by the County of Los Angeles in 2008, ongoing dialog with the field operator, landowners and community stakeholders has been fostered through a Community Advisory Panel. Conservancy participation in these public meetings has resulted in an increased stakeholder understanding of the complex issues related to development of mineral resources, land and water conservation, and public confidence in the long term compatibility of land use in the area. Acquiring surface rights for parcels within the active oil field insures the land is protected for future park use. However, the vast majority of the parcels will remain inaccessible until it is feasible to arrange for improvements that do not interfere with operator and mineral holder interests. The approach applied by land trusts for successful preservation of privately owned active agricultural land utilizes acquisition options that include purchasing conservation easements and offering other mutually agreeable incentives for landowners to become willing sellers. This model is being adapted for use within the Conservancy's acquisition strategy.

The balance of the acreage in the area is protected public land, which includes 631.08 acres held in fee by the Conservancy's partner public agencies and an additional 142.57 acres of active oil drilling land under a conservation easement held by the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation. To date, the Conservancy's acquisition work program has resulted in a 33 percent increase in public land, or 154.95 acres (see figure 2). Since the boundaries of the Conservancy include an unincorporated part of Los Angeles County which touches the cities of Inglewood, Culver City, and Los Angeles, partnerships with all of the stakeholders working in the Baldwin Hills area remain critical to successfully implementing our long range acquisition objectives.

Figure – 2



## **Habitat Preservation**

The slopes and canyons of the western and eastern ridgelines of the Baldwin Hills are host to a vast oasis of natural habitat composed mainly of native California coastal sage scrub and associated chaparral habitat. Studies conducted by biologists from the Los Angeles County Natural History Museum document the Baldwin Hills area as home to a wide range of California native wildlife representing resident populations of over 166 bird, 21 mammal, 12 reptile, and 12 butterfly species. Invasive plants and fragmentation from development and industry have compromised the integrity of the surviving habitat. Protecting the existing biodiversity of plant and animal species is a priority for the Conservancy. These ecosystems are the primary indicators for a healthy environment and are vulnerable due to population growth and the heat island effect of urban infrastructure. California's Climate Change Adaptation Strategies have particular resonance with preserving biodiversity in highly urbanized regions of the state. With over 9.8 million people residing within greater Los Angeles County, the Baldwin Hills present an opportunity to showcase statewide policies through ongoing restoration of the remaining habitat and creation of migratory wildlife corridors that connect to the coastal zone. Areas of focus include, but are not limited to, Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area, Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook, Culver City Park and the remaining privately held habitat regions beginning at Holy Cross Cemetery and continuing north behind West Los Angeles College. Collaborative restoration programs with City, State and County Parks continue, while both West Los Angeles Community College and the Los Angeles Archdiocese are being pursued to develop a preservation program consistent with the Conservancy's mission. Working in coordination with the appropriate regulatory agencies and watershed managers, the Conservancy will continue to advance its goals of habitat restoration and protection utilizing state promulgated considerations for climate adaptation.

## **Recreation**

The Baldwin Hills are a natural oasis in the middle of a highly urbanized area, providing a refuge for both wildlife and people. Over one million people live within five miles of the Baldwin Hills, and, with barely one acre of parkland per 1,000 people, this is one of the most park-poor regions in California. Community demand for open space, trails, and active recreation facilities is reflected in the master plan and delivery of such amenities is a critical to the quality of life in the region. The parklands are easily accessible to 1.2 million of County and City residents via a 10-20 min bus ride. Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area is the largest recreation unit in Southwest Los Angeles County, serving some of the most densely populated communities of color in the state. Visitors from throughout the state come to Los Angeles as a tourist destination. As Southern California's population grows, parks remain among the most attractive resources for people at all levels of the socioeconomic ladder. Over two thirds of the entire park is planned for active and passive recreation. Acquisition efforts will not only protect the passive areas of native coastal sage scrub and spectacular view sheds, it will also set the stage for increased equity and access to much needed outdoor recreation improvements.

The southern portion of the park has been established primarily as an active recreation management zone. In 2006, the Conservancy facilitated the purchase of the Inglewood Hills Property pursuant to a grant agreement with the Baldwin Hill Regional Conservation Authority. This acquisition of surface rights for 103 acres increased public land holdings in the Baldwin Hills by 20 percent. Based on the proximity to the existing ball field complex and immediate vehicular accessibility to and from major streets, these lands have the greatest potential for the development of active recreation facilities. Due to existing oil production activities taking place on these parcels, facilities that expand or enhance the ball field complex should be planned with the expectation that development will take place in phases when the public land is deemed accessible, properly rehabilitated, and suitable for improvement.

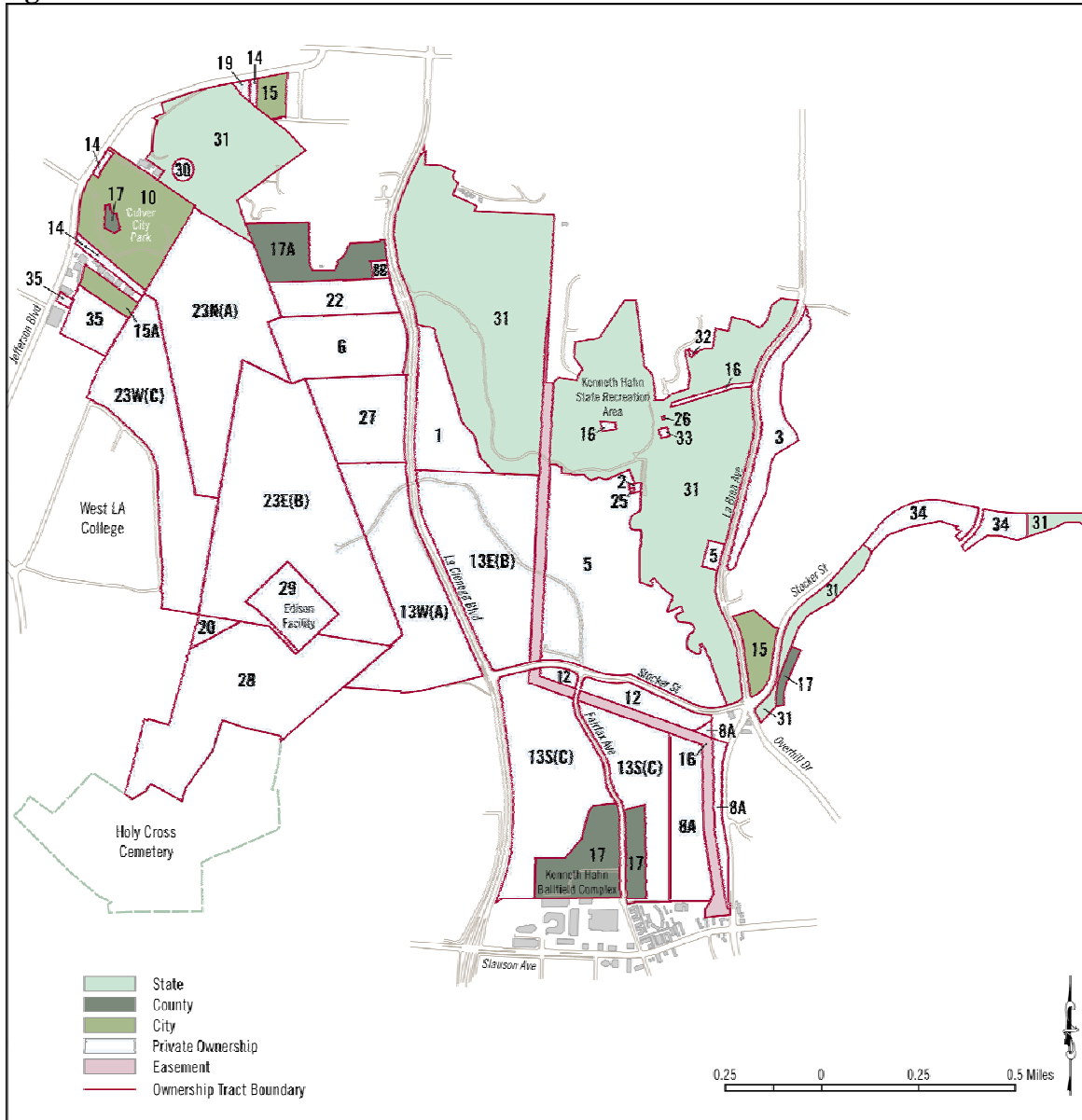
## **Conservation Matrix**

Conservation priorities are identified through the use of a matrix developed for analysis of the parcels that are targeted for purchase (see figure 3). The five property parcels with the highest point total on the conservation matrix are labeled numbers: 23(C), 23(A), 28 and 8(A) on the parcel map (figure 4). Each of these parcels meets vital criteria for prioritization including adjacency to existing publicly owned land or native habitat value. Nearly 140 acres of natural habitat area with existing healthy native coastal sage scrub are included in the priority parcels list.

**Figure 3**

Property Number	23(C)	23(A)	28	8 (A)	1
<b>Point Criteria</b>					
<b>Development Threat (5 pts)</b>					
Immediate (4 pts)	0	0	0	0	0
Long-term (1 pt)	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Improvement Potential (4 pts)</b>					
Minimal Mitigation Need (1 pt)	0	0	1	0	0
Few Physical Constraints (1 pt)	1	1	1	0	0
Program Continuity (1 pt)	1	1	1	1	1
Independent Capacity (1 pt)	1	0	1	0	0
<b>Accessibility (3 pts)</b>					
Connectivity to Existing Public Land (2 pts)	2	2	2	2	2
Multi-Transportation Accessible (1 pt)	1	0	1	0	0
<b>Recreation Potential (6 pts)</b>					
Active Recreation (2 pt)	0	0	0	2	2
Passive Recreation (2 pt)	2	2	2	2	2
Educational (2 pt)	2	2	2	0	2
<b>Habitat (6 pts)</b>					
Corridor Potential (2 pt)	2	2	2	0	2
Eco-system Viability (2 pt)	2	2	2	0	0
Evidence of Sensitive Species (2 pt)	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Public Value (2 pts)</b>					
Local Benefit (1 pt)	1	1	1	1	1
Regional Benefit (1 pt)	1	1	1	1	1
<b>POINT TOTALS</b>	17	15	18	10	14

**Figure 4**



## PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

### ISSUES AND PRIORITIES

The Conservancy has an opportunity to redefine what a park in an urban setting can be, establishing an exciting new model for restoring large expanses of natural open space and creating new park and recreation amenities in the heart of an urban area. With increasing population growth, demands for high-quality outdoor recreation in natural settings have intensified, as has the focus on planning for transformation of post-industrial areas in urban communities into recreational resources.

### Baldwin Hills Park Master Plan

Pursuant to subdivisions (b) and (c) of Section 1 of Chapter 752 of the Statutes of 1999, a master plan has been developed for the expansion of KHSRA. The plan was the result of an extensive two-year public planning process commissioned by California State Parks from 2000-1. Eight community workshops were held from which the conceptual design and park components were derived. The *Baldwin Hills Park Master Plan* was adopted by the Conservancy in September 2002 and provides the conceptual guidelines for the Conservancy to expand on the acquisition and development efforts initiated by the County of Los Angeles and the California State Parks in 1971.

The *Baldwin Hills Park Master Plan* specifies that the park that will result from the Conservancy's efforts will provide "active and passive recreation facilities" and "educational and cultural facilities." Proposed visitor facilities include: two interpretive/education centers, community/art/senior center, amphitheater, sculpture garden, botanical garden, 60 acres of multiple-use fields supporting softball, baseball, soccer and other active recreational uses, golf course with clubhouse/banquet facility, tennis center, skate parks, narrow-gauge train, 15 miles of jogging, bicycling and hiking trails, indoor basketball courts, recreation center/gymnasium, par course, climbing wall, competition-sized swimming pool, restrooms, and parking. Administration and maintenance facilities are also envisioned, including: law enforcement and public safety station, park administrative headquarters, park entrances, trailheads and roads.

Strategies for site improvements in the *Baldwin Hills Park Master Plan* focus on the following: 1) the potential of the park to provide access to recreation and interpretation opportunities for millions of people within a 10-mile radius, 2) the many scenic vista points from which most of the Los Angeles Basin, Pacific Ocean and local canyons and mountains can be viewed, and 3) a balanced environment with sensitive natural habitat restored to improve wildlife connectivity. For the five year plan, key capital improvement projects have been culled from the *Baldwin Hills Park Master Plan* (see figure 5).



The land proposed for site improvements as described in this document are mandated by the Conservancy's mission. The expansion of KHSRA is being approached as a single strategic project with acquisition of parcels and improvement of publically held properties fulfilling steps to the stated goal. The Conservancy's priorities will vary depending on leveraging of resources, project readiness, public demand, and the preservation of specific habitat areas. Each of these factors can take precedent over the other.

**Figure – 5**

<b>Master Plan Project Priorities</b>	<b>Project Location</b>
Habitat Restoration and Trail Creation @ Lloyd Property/Finley Fee	West of La Cienega entrance
Habitat Restoration (Phase I)*	Baldwin Hills parklands
Jefferson Boulevard Streetscape Improvements*	Jefferson Boulevard between Rodeo Road and Duquesne Avenue
Baldwin Hills Parklands Branding and Wayfinding*	Perimeter of parklands
Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook (BHSO) connection to Ballona Creek	BHSO at Ballona Creek
Stocker Corridor Trail and Bikepath*	Stocker Street
Eastern Ridgeline Expansion*	KHSRA
Ballona Corridor Improvements	Ballona Creek
Ballona Creek Outdoor Classroom	Milton Street
Multiple-use Athletic Fields	SE portion of KHSRA
Stocker Street Pedestrian Crossing	Stocker Corridor and Norman Houston Park
Western Gateway /interpretive/community center (below BHSO)*	Stoneview Drive
La Brea Greenbelt Trail Connection	La Brea Avenue
Eastern Gateway at Don Lorenzo Drive Streetscape Improvements*	La Brea Avenue and Don Lorenzo Drive
Ingold Park Connection to Stocker Trail	Stocker Corridor Trail at Ingold Park
KHSRA Trail /Access/ Way finding	Central KHSRA
KHSRA Habitat Restoration & Existing Trail Improvements	Central KHSRA
Pedestrian Access / Shuttle Road cross La Cienega	La Cienega Boulevard at KHSRA
Culver City Park pedestrian and bicycle trail improvements	Culver City Park
Culver City Skate Park (Phase II)*	Culver City Park
Culver City Dog Park (Phase II)	Culver City Park
Sports Complex Improvements	SE portion of KHSRA
* indicates completed or currently being implemented	

## Improving Existing Facilities

KHSRA (319 acres) is managed by the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation and includes large areas of native coastal sage scrub habitat, lawns and landscaped areas, picnic sites, tot lots, basketball court, fishing lake, lotus pond, community center, six restrooms and five miles of trails. The community center has four administrative offices and a small meeting room. The Ball field Complex is located at the southern end of the park and includes baseball diamonds and soccer fields with four restrooms.

Maximizing the public use of existing acreage is imperative. The Conservancy has awarded grants and supported projects for sustainable infrastructure improvements on acres of public land in the KHSRA. The projects will reduce vehicle miles traveled and make KHSRA a convenient destination for visitors approaching from adjacent parks, communities and public transportation stops. The following plans are currently funded and in development:

- Native tree and shrub plantings
- Fitness zones
- Interpretive, directional, and safety signs and exhibits
- Trailheads and kiosk connections to existing paths
- Native habitat propagation and restoration program
- Improved pedestrian entryway at Don Lorenzo
- Perimeter way finding signage
- Baldwin Hills Parkland branding
- La Cienega Bridge entrance enhancements

Other priorities at KHSRA include: upgrades to existing facilities for improved sustainability; expansion of sports facilities; creation of new cultural exhibits; buffering habitat area with transitional landscaping; turf removal to lower maintenance costs; securing recycled water infrastructure; mitigate off-road biking and unleashed pets to recover natural habitat and hydrology; and improving park visitor circulation. As the park expands, these and other future opportunities remain available for the Conservancy to prioritize and implement in collaboration with our partner agencies.

## Public Access

A key element of any urban park is its accessibility to the public. The most common recreation activities in the Baldwin Hills area include walking and jogging and hiking. Throughout the year, visitors take advantage of KHSRA, its footpaths and dozens of scenic viewpoints. There are several excellent opportunities for improving public access through the creation of new pedestrian walkways, bicycle trails and pedestrian bridges over busy streets. The *Baldwin Hills Linkage and Access Study* authorized by the Board in 2004 has yielded recommendations for projects to be considered and prioritized for implementation. Using the *Baldwin Hills Park Master Plan* as a guide, the study team evaluated thirteen linkage points using various criteria, including topography, community character, visibility and image, infrastructure, and jurisdictional issues. In developing the programming matrix for these sites, the design team divided the Study into four distinct areas containing several potential projects. Three primary objectives were identified for each project: to increase public access; to raise the awareness of the larger Baldwin Hills park area; and to provide enhanced recreational amenities. Each project site has been developed as a conceptual plan, complete with placement of directional and interpretive signage, proposed landscaping palettes, and estimated construction costs. These public access site improvements have been incorporated into the regional plans for the parklands and include 11 remaining improvement projects ready for implementation through grants and partnerships with local agencies and non-profit organizations.

Reference: Baldwin Hills Linkage and Access Study

Building on the master plan's goal for increased public access, the Conservancy created a way-finding signage and branding template for the Baldwin Hills Parklands which was implemented in 2011. These signs, located on freeways, major streets and intersections direct the public to the park and its wide range of amenities. During the implementation of the way-finding project, regional stakeholders, including the Baldwin Hills Regional Conservation Authority, Culver City, City of Los Angeles, California State Parks, and the Coastal Conservancy, coalesced behind a long held vision of aligning approximately ten-miles of trails linking the Baldwin Hills with 22-miles of the California Coastal Trail. Under the leadership of the County's Second District, the Conservancy and its partners are poised to create the first regional trail in Southwest Los Angeles County. When completed, the trail will establish a seamless corridor with a strong sense of place that connects upland residents with California's coast and wetlands. Feasibility studies that included public workshops on proposed trail features, alignments, and multi-modal access issues have been completed. Construction documents are being developed for seven segments of trail connecting Stocker Corridor, Reuben Ingold Park, Norman Houston Park, Kenneth Hahn SRA, Stoneview Nature Center, Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook and Culver City Park to the Ballona Creek Bike Path. The planned infrastructure improvements demonstrate regional transportation solutions that reduce carbon emissions and improve public health. The Conservancy has undertaken the implementation of two Park to Playa segments to be completed over the next few years.

Reference: Park to Playa Trail Feasibility Study 2011

## Habitat Restoration

Three plant communities native to Southern California are found in the Baldwin Hills: coastal sage scrub, riparian woodlands and grasslands. Existing healthy natural habitat areas are located on the steep slopes and canyons on the exterior faces of the east and west ridgelines. These existing areas are presently separated, creating habitat islands. Restoring a total of 300 acres to mend habitat fragments can increase re-colonization rates of flora and fauna, thereby improving long-term viability of existing native species. Working in partnership with local education institutions, County and State Parks, the Conservation Corps, non-profits and community volunteers, the Conservancy will focus its efforts on coordinating and funding projects that address preservation of species biodiversity throughout KHSRA.

According to the Biota of the Baldwin Hills Study from 2001, “The intentional and accidental introduction of exotic plant species has permanently changed historic plant communities of Southern California. Several non-native plants that threaten native species are weedy species blown or tracked in as seeds because they are less able to survive in neighboring habitat and are unlikely to adapt to the rapid addition of exotic predators and competitors. Others, such as pampas grass, are very aggressive and pose serious threats to native plants. Removal of non-native plant species must be targeted considering the biology of each species. Although non-natives such as Pampas grass (*Cortaderia jubata* and *C. selloana*) are notoriously invasive and laborious to remove, diligent removal efforts would promote healthier and more abundant coastal scrub plants. Native coastal scrub shrubs such as coyote bush (*Baccharis pilularis*) and bush sunflower (*Encelia californica*) planted along the edges of park landscaping could help to contain non-native landscaping plants.”

Non-native and invasive plant mapping, suppression and eradication are the first phase of the Conservancy’s habitat restoration efforts. The work is time-sensitive and seasonally dependent. Targeted areas include highly visible corridors leading into the park and on the most popular trail sites. All work is currently being coordinated with departments that have jurisdictional control or management responsibilities for their respective properties.

Projects of immediate interest include the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook, at the northern tip of the western ridge of the Baldwin Hills, the Stocker Corridor on the eastern end of KHSRA and the East and West La Brea Greenbelts. The habitat on each of these properties was severely degraded prior to acquisition. The Conservancy has begun the process of restoring some of the land at these sites through grants to groups such as the Los Angeles Audubon Society, Northeast Trees, California Conservation Corps, and Los Angeles Infrastructure Academy. Significant visual results have been achieved over the course of the past five-year term. Through the Baldwin Hills Parkland Restoration Project, one program targeted mapping and removal of invasives in high traffic natural areas surrounding trails and picnic areas and included the successful removal of over 450,000 square feet of castor bean in 130 locations. This represents eradication of almost half of the castor bean mapped in the parklands. Larger natural areas will be restored through stewardship

programs and volunteer efforts coordinated by area stakeholders. This ongoing effort will compliment the current improvements managed by State and County Parks and will include the following programs:

- Removal of non-native plant species
- Re-vegetation of degraded areas with native habitat
- Urban forestry
- On-site propagation of native plants
- Development of a weed management plan
- Invasive species GIS mapping
- Creation of California friendly landscape buffers between habitats and pedestrian thoroughfares
- Inventory wildlife and habitat areas
- Involve the public in protecting and restoring natural plant and animal communities

# INTERPRETATION AND EDUCATION

## ISSUES AND PRIORITIES

Providing opportunities for outdoor education and use of the Baldwin Hills and Ballona Creek as living laboratories are among the primary management goals of the Conservancy. The Conservancy can serve as a unique bridge to raise awareness and understanding of how state-directed watershed preservation efforts, including land acquisition, habitat restoration, and water quality enhancement, relate to communities that exist in Los Angeles' urban core. Working with a range of education partners, the Conservancy developed an Environmental Interpretation Initiative (Initiative) focused on serving the needs of area students and teachers beyond the classroom.

The Initiative consists of three elements: 1) Curriculum Development; 2) Research Studies/Needs Assessments; and 3) Capital Improvement Projects.

Curriculum Development: Although several park areas in the Baldwin Hills serve primarily as recreational facilities, they are also potential vehicles for outdoor environmental interpretation. For example, the remaining coastal sage scrub habitat is currently being used effectively by students and teachers from Crenshaw and Dorsey High School as a laboratory for earth science studies under the state's education standards.

Interpretive modules for the Baldwin Hills have been created specifically for elementary, middle school and high school students. Using the outdoors as a teaching station, the Baldwin Hills are available to serve students and teachers in LAUSD Local Districts D, G and I, and Compton, Inglewood and Culver City school districts. Local teachers can facilitate student understanding of statewide environmental concepts and issues, and how they relate to students in the inner-city. The curricula seeks to foster an awareness among students and their teachers that park habitats are dynamic ecosystems, increase knowledge about the impact humans and human behavior have on an urban ecosystem, promote stewardship of the land, and encourage students to make informed decisions about improving the environment. Specific class modules include science investigations, environmental action projects, cross-cultural and literacy activities.

Reference: 2005 Environmental Interpretation Initiative Needs Assessment /Curriculum Guide

Research Studies/Needs Assessments: The Ballona Creek Trail and Bikeway Environmental and Recreational Enhancement Study (December 2003) conducted by the Loyola Marymount University (LMU) research team identified not only interpretive opportunities on Ballona Creek, but also the need for continued analysis and investment. The Initiative has expanded on the LMU Study findings,

exploring what environmental interpretive resources are currently available to youth in the greater Baldwin Hills area, how the existing and future park areas may serve unmet needs, and what kinds of facilities could be developed in concert with interpretive programs and curricula.

Capital Improvement Projects: The Conservancy will continue planning for the types of facilities to accommodate increased park programming. Existing projects, such as the BHSO Greenhouse Program, KHSRA Interpretive Trail Nodes, Native Plant Walk and Wildlife Garden will continue to provide much needed resources for youth to access science in an outdoor natural setting.

Milton Street Park is the latest project in the construction phase with a three year target for completion. The 1.2 acre site located adjacent to Del Rey Middle School and the Ballona Creek was purchased through a matching grant between the BHRCA and the Conservancy. Development of the site has been funded with support from the Coastal Conservancy and the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission. The Conservancy and its partners anticipate the creation of an exemplary model of a multi-benefit amenity within 50-yards of the middle school and an urban waterway that features tangible remnants of riparian ecosystems. Coordination with the school to create sustainable programming at the site to include water quality monitoring, species inventory and documentation of migratory patterns will be among some of the continued work of the Conservancy.

Reference: 2012 Milton Street Park Project Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration

In order to sustain the vision of the Master Plan over time, the Conservancy plans to make strategic, capital investments and solidify its presence physically, either by acquiring an existing structure or targeting a specific new site for development. Future facilities may range from outdoor interpretive sites suitable for large groups, to a “green zone” portal complete with classrooms, exhibition space, administrative offices and parking. Establishing a portal facility that represents the nucleus of stewardship in the Baldwin Hills will provide future generations with the proper platform to continue the evolution of the parklands into a world class destination. The Stoneview Nature Center includes plans for creation of a nature education center with community facilities surrounded by native landscaping, trails, demonstration sites for drought tolerant gardening, bioswales, rainwater capture and other community-driven environmental stewardship programming. The Conservancy has partnered with the Baldwin Hills Regional Conservation Authority and County Parks to construct this new low impact development that will showcase best management practices in environmental sustainability.

Reference: 2013 Stoneview Nature Center Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration

## **Natural Resource Stewardship**

Actions of the local communities impact the health of area habitat. Individual practices can affect the health of this refuge. Even with professional led restoration efforts, the viability of creating and sustaining large areas of habitat that provide a home for flora and fauna is dependent upon community involvement. Leadership training efforts will center on issues of habitat connectivity, watershed management and community environmental stewardship. Proposed re-vegetation strategies consider the corridor potential with other natural areas (i.e. Ballona Creek and wetlands) surrounding the park. Volunteer or donated support for operation and maintenance of on-site nurseries can help provide students with learning opportunities while providing native plant stock for on-going restoration and re-vegetation throughout the native habitat areas of the park.

Over the past five years, a Native Plant Walk and Wildlife Garden as well as an Outdoor Interpretive Resource Program (aka Greenhouse Project) have been established at KHSRA and the BHSO respectively. Under a grant agreement with the Conservancy, the LA Audubon Society developed education-based resources to train students and visitors to become docents and leaders for restoration efforts in the parklands. Volunteers from the California Native Plant Society, Target Science Network, and Earthworks Restoration have used the interpretive amenities and restoration sites to recruit local schools and private stakeholders to help maintain the interpretive areas, restore habitat and create signs that will help park users identify native habitat that can be found in the preserved areas of the park. The Conservancy will continue to expand its role and support place-based projects that help define the Baldwin Hills as a premier location for environmental awareness and stewardship.

## **Signage & Kiosks**

Public awareness of the resources available at the park must be improved in order to establish the park as an interactive destination for local schools and regular park users. Uniform public area signage and interpretive kiosks for parkland within the boundaries of the Conservancy would dramatically improve user familiarity with the historical, cultural and environmental context of the region. The board adoption of the Baldwin Hills Park Lands Logo and branding concept was the first step in unifying the park's resources under a common theme. Working in partnership with the County and California State Parks, the Conservancy has developed formats for collaborative signage and kiosks to correspond with visitor destinations and other points of interest throughout the park. A wide range of current and future projects will carry the new templates. The Conservancy will take the leadership role in working with area landowners and operating agencies to use the signage template and branding in various applications including: street banners, way-finding and directional kiosks, mobile and web-based technology, trail heads with linkage to adjacent parks, restoration sites and new capital improvement projects funded by the Conservancy.



## SUMMARY OF FIVE YEAR GOALS AND EXPENDITURES

Program	<u>Objective</u>	Units	Approximate Cost
Acquisition of Open Space	Land conservation	135 Acres	\$13,500,000
Planning and Development	Corridor greening and urban forestry	2 Projects	\$750,000
	Habitat restoration	1 Project	\$500,000
	Sports complex improvements	2 Projects	\$1,250,000
	Pedestrian access infrastructure	2 Projects	\$2,000,000
Interpretation and Education	Resource stewardship & interpretation initiative projects	2 Projects	\$400,000
		<b>Total</b>	<b>\$18,400,000</b>