

To Whom It May Concern:

## **SAVE BANNING RANCH!**

*(Rebuttal to the Steve Rosansky article from 1/6/2013)*

The Santa Ana River flows through the historic Banning Ranch where it enters the waters of the Pacific Ocean. Significant developed portions of the cities of Newport Beach, Huntington Beach and Costa Mesa now occupy the former ranch lands. What's left of Banning Ranch, at 401 acres, is the largest parcel of privately-owned undeveloped open space remaining on the entire Southern California coast.

Banning Ranch is an ecological staircase, meaning it has every element necessary to be a self-sustaining ecosystem. It contains rare coastal wetlands, arroyos, bluffs, mesas, vernal pools and ephemeral streams, with an abundance of native plant habitats serving significant species of wildlife, of which over a dozen are federally or state protected. Banning Ranch also has important historical, archeological and paleontological sites. In short, it is a gem.

The citizens of Newport Beach recognized such and, in 2006, voted that the City's priority for Banning Ranch should be that it remains permanent open space and park, and that it should be acquired for those purposes. The City was charged with the responsibility to do so. Instead, the Newport Beach City Council championed the development of the property by its oil company owners. In July, 2012, the Council approved a development of 1375 homes, a resort hotel and the equivalent of a mall by certifying a seriously inadequate Environmental Impact Report. As approved, this project would be nearly as large as the last five major Orange County coastal developments – combined!

The Banning Ranch Conservancy was formed as a non-profit organization by members of local communities with a mission “to preserve, acquire, conserve and manage the entire Banning Ranch as permanent public open space, park and coastal nature preserve” as envisioned by the citizens. The Conservancy is working to halt the development and has filed litigation in court. But the Conservancy's main goal is to purchase the property at a fair price and conserve it in perpetuity. This open space and parkland is sorely needed in the midst of our suburban jungle. Already, over five million dollars have been raised. But there's still much to accomplish.

The Conservancy hopes to engage the owners and negotiate a reasonable acquisition. The Newport Beach City Council could be of great assistance if they would overcome a fixation for tax revenue. Many community organizations and residents have joined the effort to [Save Banning Ranch](#). For more information, to volunteer or to donate, interested persons are urged to view the Conservancy's website at [www.banningranchconservancy.org](http://www.banningranchconservancy.org), email the writer at [steve.banningranch@hotmail.com](mailto:steve.banningranch@hotmail.com), or call the Conservancy at 310/961-7610 or 714/719-2148.

Steve Ray  
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This information is submitted by myself, John Sisker, who is on both the Newport Terrace and Banning Ranch Board of Directors. (This is for your general information only; may or may not reflect my personal opinions, and not necessarily that of any other Board and/or affiliation.)

Sincerely,  
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