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NEWPORT BEACH

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Sunset Ridge Park Project Moves Forward

NEWPORT BEACH, Ca. -- On April 14, the California Coastal Commission (CCC) approved an agreement with the City of Newport Beach (City) that requires the City and Newport Banning Ranch to restore two small areas of damaged vegetation on or near the site of the City's Sunset Ridge Park project. The agreement also enables the park's pending coastal development application to move forward to the Commission.

The damage occurred before the City acquired the 13-acre property. Sometime between 2004 and 2006, when the parcel was owned by the State of California and the prior owners of the adjacent Banning Ranch property, a contractor cleared vegetation without a permit to make room for a temporary construction yard.

The City later purchased the property from Caltrans in 2006 to help fulfill the community's long-standing need for an active park in West Newport. Park planning efforts began in 2008 and the Environmental Impact Report was completed in 2009.

Throughout the environmental and planning stages, no state, county or environmental agency involved notified the City of any concerns or issues with the park. The Banning Ranch Conservancy recently raised the issue of the cleared vegetation presumably to stall or block construction of the park access road and possibly the active ball fields on the park. CCC staff then issued a violation and worked out the agreement with the two property owners. The Coastal Commissioners were complimentary of the City's efforts in working closely with the CCC staff to resolve an issue the City inherited from the previous landowner.

“We’re grateful that the City and the CCC were able to quickly work out a resolution and we can get our park back on track,” said City Manager Dave Kiff.

When completed, the Sunset Ridge Park will provide baseball and soccer fields, restrooms and picnic facilities, flower gardens and coastal views. The project will also include the creation of several acres of prime habitat for the threatened California Gnatcatcher. The habitat will be located on part of the southerly portion of the Banning Ranch property that is being provided to the City to permit public access to the park.

The future Sunset Ridge Park is located near the intersection of West Pacific Coast Highway and Superior Avenue.