

CONNECTIONS

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TE Funds Save Scenic Habitat near San Diego

Linda Nordstrand, Anza-Borrego Foundation

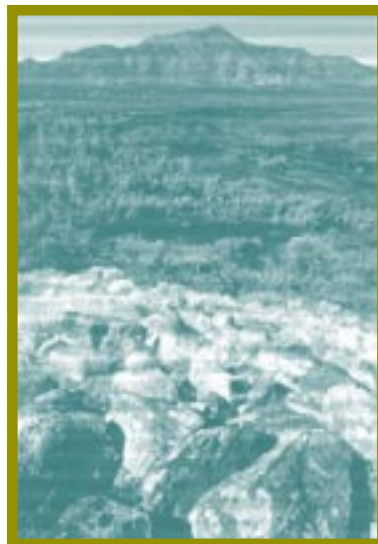
Project Description

Eligible as a scenic and historic property acquisition, the use of Transportation Enhancement (TE) funds to acquire the Sentenac Canyon and Cienega began in November 1993. The owners contacted the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park and the Anza-Borrego Foundation (ABF), a land trust that raises funds to acquire land for the park, and indicated a desire to sell their entire 9,100 acre Rancho San Felipe, about 120 miles east of San Diego. Subsequent discussions identified a portion of the property the owners were willing to sell that was contiguous to the western boundary of the state park. By the fall of 1995, funding strategies were in place to apply for TE funds for acquisition of the 884 acre Sentenac Canyon and Cienega, a rare fresh water wetland and riparian habitat.

Located at Scissors Crossing, the intersection of an historic road and a state road, the Sentenac property is the site of an historic homestead, and incorporated a section of the historic Old Overland Stage route, which dates to the 1840's. The area's scenic qualities had been compromised by — among other activities — cattle grazing and controlled burns used to increase cattle forage. Use of TE funds for this acquisition would allow the restoration and preservation of a unique, highly scenic wetland habitat (home to over 60 species of birds including the federally endangered least Bell's vireo) located in the middle of a desert environment. Acquisition would also protect both historic and prehistoric cultural resources on or near the property.

Finding the Local Match

It was estimated that the total project cost for the entire 1,720 acres would approach \$2,950,000, but that the critical Sentenac Canyon and Cienega parcel of 884 acres could be funded by the requested TE funds of \$1,000,000. When it was determined that a \$120,000 match was required, the Anza-Borrego Foundation, immediately put together a fund raising plan. In a very short period of time, there was a commitment from one benefactress of the total \$120,000. However, to ensure community involvement, she offered an initial \$75,000 while committing the remaining \$45,000 if it could not be



Desert habitat meets wetland habitat



“AS A LAND TRUST UNFAMILIAR WITH TRANSPORTATION PLANNING, THE ANZA-BORREGO FOUNDATION LEARNED AS IT MADE ITS WAY THROUGH THE PROCESS. THEY SUGGEST THAT OTHER APPLICANTS: LEARN THE RULES OF THE APPLICATION PROCESS, OBTAIN POLITICAL, COMMUNITY AND PEER SUPPORT, CULTIVATE STAFF SUPPORT OF THE ADMINISTERING AGENCIES, BE PREPARED TO ANSWER OPPOSITION, AND PREPARE QUALITY MATERIALS.”

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Sentenac Cienaga and Highway 78 looking west.

Community / User Benefit

THE 600,000 ACRE ANZA-BORREGO DESERT STATE PARK IS ONE OF THE LARGEST CONTIGUOUS STATE PARKS IN THE NATION. IT IS ALSO AN EXTREMELY POPULAR VISITOR DESTINATION WITH OVER 800,000 VISITORS IN 1995–1996. TE FUNDS USED FOR THIS ACQUISITION WILL NOW PROTECT:

- HISTORIC AND PREHISTORIC CULTURAL RESOURCES
- PEDESTRIAN AND EQUESTRIAN USE OF THE PACIFIC CREST NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL
- A MAJOR ENTRANCE TO THE PARK FROM INAPPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT
- IMPORTANT WETLAND/RIPARIAN HABITAT
- THE SCENIC VIEWSHED OF A DESIGNATED SCENIC HIGHWAY

AND ALLOW FOR:

- THE RESTORATION OF A WETLANDS HABITAT
- THE CONSTRUCTION OF PUBLIC AMENITIES
- THE STAGING OF AREAS FOR HIKING AND EQUESTRIAN USERS OF THE PACIFIC CREST TRAIL
- SCENIC VISTA POINTS ALONG THE ROADWAY
- INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE AND PANELS.

raised from other sources. The remaining \$45,000 was raised from the Heller Foundation of San Diego and the San Diego Foundation. About 200 individuals also gave smaller contributions.

Rallying Support

Fortunately, the owners hired an experienced land agent who had worked for The Trust for Public Land in San Francisco. The park, the foundation and the land agent formed a unique and highly productive relationship that produced amazing results in a short period of time. ABF contacted dozens of elected officials and environmental groups to request support for the TE application. Ultimately support played a major factor in the scoring of the TE grant application. Those supporters included Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer, Congressman Duncan Hunter, The Nature Conservancy, The Sierra Club, San Diego Audubon Society, Endangered Habitats League, California Native Plant Society, Society for California Archaeology and the USDA.

Getting Regional and State Approval

The foundation met with a representative from the California State Parks Agency to develop a strategic approach to the board members of San Diego's regional transportation authority. Several members were contacted and gave their promise of support. However, there were some obstacles: general opposition to the use of TE funds for a scenic and historic land acquisition, objections by some to a very expensive state acquisition appearing on a regional agency list, opposition by a four-wheel group due to park closure of a popular jeep route and a potential transfer of the TE funds to retrofit the Bay Bridge in San Francisco.

In an instance of serendipity, an environmental reporter for the *San Diego Union Tribune* picked up on the Anza-Borrego story. An extensive article complete with photographs and a front-page teaser was published 11 days prior to the regional authority's final vote on its staff rec-

ommendations for TE funding. The applicant's efforts to garner support and raise public awareness of the project and its community benefits proved invaluable...the acquisition project was ranked 9th on a short list of 9 projects recommended to the California Transportation Commission.

Eighty-one projects were vying for TE funding at the California Transportation Commission level. The key players held more strategy sessions, asked for more support letters and made more contacts aware of the project and its value. The California Resources Agency made the project a top priority and this helped to move the project from the regional list to the statewide project list.

Lessons Learned

As a land trust unfamiliar with transportation planning, the Anza-Borrego Foundation learned as it made its way through the process. They suggest that other applicants:

- learn the rules of the application process
- secure owner cooperation
- bring your major players together, agree on strategy, keep everyone informed
- get your strategy down in writing, review and revise it often
- obtain as much political support as possible
- obtain community and peer support
- cultivate staff support of the administering agencies
- be prepared to answer opposition
- prepare quality materials.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

about fundraising for this project, please contact Linda Nordstrand at 760-767-0446. The project sponsor contact is Paul Webb, of the California State Parks Agency, at 619-220-5311. Marsha Mason, the TE Coordinator at CALTRANS, may be reached at 916-654-5275.

GIS Analysis of TE Data

With ISTEA and Short-TEA behind us, it is a good time to ask the question: Who is getting the benefit of the Transportation Enhancements (TE) program. How are TE funds being distributed? Each state has developed its own method of distributing TE funds, some of which have a linkage to population or spatial distribution while others do not use these criteria to distribute TE funds.

For example, Florida distributes TE funds based on population down to the state DOT district level but within districts project selection is competitive. New Jersey does not use a formula to distribute funds but rather relies on the geographic distribution of the members of the advisory committee to provide some amount of spatial or population equity. South Carolina uses the same split specified

by STP funds between urbanized and non-urbanized areas to allocate its TE funds. New York, under ISTEA, provided a portion of TE funds to the Erie Canal and then divided up the remaining funds into four areas (New York City, Long Island, Upstate, and Hudson Valley) within which project selection is competitive. Finally, Iowa allocates half of its TE funds through a state advisory committee to projects of statewide significance and the other half is disbursed to regions which allocate funds to projects in their territory.

With over six years of TE programming to draw on, it is possible to use the data collected by the National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse (NTEC) to conduct a spatial analysis using a Geographic Information System (GIS) to analyze the actual distribution of projects and

funds. There are currently 8,142 TE projects that have been catalogued. Of those, 6,945 (85%) have a county identifier for the project location. Those projects with a county identifier represent 84% of the dollar value of all TE projects. These projects are located in counties representing 88% of the population of the United States. The analysis suggests that TE funds and projects are being distributed in alignment with population, at least as far as the county level.

Thus, while each state has developed its own method for disbursing TE funds, the end result appears to be fairly uniform with regard to population distribution. Future areas of analysis could include TE funds distribution relative racial and income equity as well as distributions within urban, suburban or rural areas.

TE Funds per Capita by County — 1992 to 1998

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TE Professionals to Gather in Pittsburgh

This June, almost 100 state and federal transportation agency professionals will attend a professional seminar on transportation enhancements. The seminar will be held in Pittsburgh, PA; attendance is by invitation only. Sen. John Chafee, (R. RI) an author of the original TE legislation, has been invited as the keynote speaker. Gloria Jeff, Deputy Administrator, FHWA, will be the luncheon speaker. Policy discussions and exchange of best practices will emphasize the role TE plays in planning livable, sustainable communities and should foster national consistency while preserving state flexibility. The agenda includes a balance of structured presentations and open meeting policy discussions about TEA-21 guidance on TE provisions. The presentations will include state innovations in financing, project man-

agement and effective partnerships as well as ways to use TE funds to build more sustainable transportation systems. The desired outcome is an empowered core of agency professionals with increased commitment and capacity to realize the value and potential of the TE provisions.

NTEC Revamps Web Site

An expanded NTEC website, www.enhancements.org, is now available to provide citizens, professionals and officials with timely information necessary to make well-informed decisions about transportation enhancements. This “second generation” site is now designed for anyone who wants information on contacts, reports, legislation, policies, implementation or other issues relating to activities that can be funded as transportation enhancements. Specific features include a library of TE projects with photos,

current financial information about state programs, a directory of transportation agency professionals who work with TE funds, and links to related websites, virtual libraries and databases.

Citizens Guidebook Coming Soon

The much anticipated citizens guide to transportation enhancements is scheduled for release on June 22. This 32-page color guide will explain major elements of the TE legislative provision and highlight the parts that raise new questions and thinking. It also will give an indication of what hurdles to expect in state application and project implementation procedures, as well as an awareness of who the decision-makers are, and what they look for in a TE project. Over 20 case studies in all categories from across the nation will feature exemplary innovations in financing, public participation and project management. This guide promises to be an invaluable addition to the free resources already available to the public from the National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse.

Connections is a quarterly publication of the National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse. Submission of articles as well as letters and other comments are welcome.

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