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PRESS RELEASE

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SAVE OPEN SPACES AND AGRICULTURAL INITIATIVE (SOAR) ENDORSED BY SIERRA CLUB

Initiative to protect Oceanside from Environmentally Damaging Urban Sprawl.

OCEANSIDE, CA – The Sierra Club today announced that it has endorsed the Save Open Spaces and Agricultural Resources (SOAR) initiative in Oceanside, CA. The decision to support the initiative was based on Sierra Club policies that urge the preservation of agricultural lands and open space and to eliminate leap-frog sprawl and improperly sited urban development. The endorsement was unanimously supported by the Sierra Club’s North County Coastal Group (the Coasters) Executive Committee and the Steering Committee for the Sierra Club San Diego Chapter.

The SOAR initiative was submitted to the City of Oceanside in September in response to resident’s concern over recent pressures to rezone and develop agricultural land and low density residential communities. The initiative would not change any existing land uses and would require a vote of the people to approve any amendment of the General Plan that would seek to convert agricultural or other open space lands to another land use.

Oceanside is one of the few cities that currently has zoning to protect land use which was designed to preserve agriculture and community character. Development of these areas would require a major amendment of the city’s existing General Plan and zoning ordinances. Oceanside’s Smart Growth planning has identified downtown and areas around the Coaster Stations as priorities for dense development.

Sally Prendergast, Chair of the North County Coastal Group said “The decision for the Coasters to support SOAR is consistent with the Sierra Club’s mission to explore, enjoy and protect our environment. While the Sierra Club recognizes the need for affordable housing and residential growth in North County, we believe that this type of infill should be focused in areas already designated as Smart Growth Sites and not where it will exacerbate climate change and cost millions in additional infrastructure to support sprawl.”

(more)

SOAR is modeled after similar initiatives that have been passed, and recently extended, by the voters in Ventura and Napa counties. According to Larry Older from the Los Padres Chapter of Sierra Club, "Through SOAR and the actions of many supporters we have protected Ventura County from becoming overdeveloped and environmentally inaccessible, unlike many Southern California counties. We still have a vibrant agricultural economy, estuaries and free flowing rivers for people to enjoy."

"The Sierra Club's support of SOAR is part of an effort to preserve our most treasured assets through careful, long term planning designed to maintain a balance between the need for growth and the need to preserve the natural habitat and environment that is so unique to North County San Diego." Said Diane Nygaard, Conservation Co-Chair for the Sierra Club North County Coastal Group.

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Sierra Club San Diego is the region's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization, encompassing San Diego and Imperial Counties. Founded in 1948, the Club seeks to preserve the special nature of the San Diego and Imperial Valley area through education, activism, and advocacy. Sierra Club San Diego has more than 15,000 members.

The North County Coastal Group (The Coasters) is the geographic division of the Sierra Club San Diego Chapter for the North Coastal area from Del Mar to Oceanside.