

ANNUAL REPORT 2012 NEWPORT BAY CONSERVANCY

Presented at the Annual Meeting November 1, 2012
by Board President, Debbie Moore

NBC 2012 Activities, Challenges, and Accomplishments

Financial and Staffing Challenges

The greatest challenge facing this Board as we took office at the end of last year was the financial health of the NBC. The board made a decision to eliminate the position of Executive Director as efforts to fund this position through grants had not materialized during 2011 and the struggling economy did not offer hopeful prospects or a positive outlook. The Executive Director was asked to stay on for three months as the Watershed Coordinator while the situation was evaluated more thoroughly. After this review the Board made the decision to request a delay of the watershed coordinator grant and began to find ways to manage the previous tasks of the Executive Director. As one might expect this presented many challenges throughout the year for the organization, our staff, our volunteers, and our partners. We appreciate the patience and continued support that many people have demonstrated through these difficult times.

The organization is now in a more stable and viable position financially which you will hear more about in the Financial Report. Our Treasurer, who is a Certified Public Accountant, has worked this year to try to clarify and standardize our financial accounts and practices and to set up clear and understandable systems that can be easily handed off to others. And the Board has continued to work hard to maintain our existing programs and to initiate new activities.

Strategic Planning

One of the Board's most important accomplishments this year was the initiation of a Strategic Planning Process that would be a realistic response to the current state of the organization and the changing times and circumstances that we are operating in. We started out with a Strategic Planning Retreat in February facilitated by a professional from OneOC. The Retreat was attended by Board members and an equal number of Naturalists and produced a report highlighting three areas that were recommended for follow-up focus - Human Resources, Finances and Fund Raising, and Business Plan and Marketing.

As committees were appointed to work on these areas, Howard Cork emerged with a Strategic Planning Model derived from his corporate experience that he encouraged the Board to follow as we proceeded to evaluate our needs and our resources in relation to our stated mission of protection, education, and restoration of the Upper Newport Bay. The primary goals of the NBC were broken down into four core areas for evaluation – Education, Research, Restoration, and Watershed. These core areas were considered alongside an examination of the human and financial resources available to meet these goals and what more would be needed to produce our desired output. A special meeting was called in June where Howard Cork presented this model to the membership and the Board and made his recommendations for how to proceed with our evaluation and ultimate determination and implementation of a Strategic Plan for the NBC, both short term and long term.

Not surprisingly, our evaluation so far has concluded that we need a vigorous and consistent program of recruitment of new volunteers, a separate Volunteer Coordinator position, as well as

efforts to procure more funding for staffing and programming. Our programs are currently being evaluated to determine where we want to place our priorities and realistically how we can pay for them and staff them with trained volunteers. As we strive to enhance our human and financial resources, strengthen our financial position, and maintain and expand our programs, we can then consider our need for appropriate and sustainable paid staff positions.

Projects – Bayview, Interpretive Center, Watershed Coordinator, Sharkmobile.

The status of the projects that NBC was working on when we took office were thoroughly reviewed and assigned to individual Board members for follow up. All of these projects are currently funded by grants that we have already received.

The Sharkmobile, a project in which we are partnered with the City and has now been renamed the Mobile Tide Pool, is almost completed. It will be managed and utilized by the City at Big Corona Beach and will be available to NBC at the Back Bay Science Center. The City has requested that we provide NBC volunteers to act as tide pool docents.

The Bayview project involves a section of undeveloped land at the upper end of the Bay which has been damaged by unfettered use by hikers and bicyclists. The project plan calls for the area to be fenced off and developed in a way that reflects and supports conservation of the natural habitat. A project manager has been selected to complete the work. He will work with surrounding residents to educate them and secure their cooperation and support. This project has recently begun and is expected to be completed in a year.

The Interpretive Center project, “Headlands to Tidelands,” is unfinished at this time but is still in the works. This includes a revision and improvement of the coastal sage, riparian, and upland habitats exhibit in the Interpretive Center.

The Watershed Coordinator grant is about to be implemented. A Board search committee solicited and received 10 applications for this complex position intended to bring various aspects and organizations involved in the watershed together for coordinated planning and action. A highly qualified applicant has been selected and is now being vetted and we expect that project to be underway soon.

Grants

The Grants committee has been active this year and has submitted applications to REI, the Pacific Life Foundation, the Orange County Community Foundation, the Mazda Foundation, and the Gimbel Foundation. All of these applications are intended to fund the Outrigger and High School Ecology programs and are in addition to grant money that we have already received for this purpose. The Grants Committee is continually seeking other opportunities for funding resources and is now working with the California Coastal Commission to apply for joint projects, focusing specifically on the Big Canyon Boardwalk and Trail and the area known as Newport Valley.

Education and Research

As part of the Strategic Planning process, a review was conducted of our existing regular education programs that are run by our Volunteer/Program Coordinator and our volunteers, many in conjunction with our partners at OCParks, DFG and CCC. These include nature walks, bird walks, school groups, the IC front desk, kayak tours, the outrigger and high school ecology

programs, the Marine Life Inventory, and restoration projects. While we have had some difficulty fulfilling all of our volunteer needs, these programs have continued and thrived this year.

In addition to these on-going programs, we have had a vital education and research effort this year led by these two very strong Board Committees made up of representatives of our local colleges and universities. They have involved college students in a study of bivalves in the upper and lower Bay and have organized courses in plants and restoration and plankton populations. They also organized a successful symposium on Urban Coyotes and are planning another one on Insects and Plants, as well as a workshop on contaminants in the water and sediment of the Bay.

Naturalist and Associates Training

Our Volunteer/Program Coordinator Patrick McCaffrey successfully graduated 10 Naturalists last December and is now conducting a class of 15 trainees. He has also conducted Associates Training classes with approximately 42 new volunteers. Many of these recruits are signing up on the Website. The Human Resources Committee of the Strategic Planning Team concluded that NBC needs to step up its efforts to draw more volunteers and that the time demands of this job require a full time paid Volunteer Coordinator in addition to the Program Coordinator. Funding is now being sought for this position.

Special Events

Earth Day was a big success this year due to Patrick's efforts to expand the number of exhibitors and to invite food trucks which drew many of their followers and high attendance at the event. Past attendance has been around 1,200. This year it was 3,000.

SoCalPAPA was also very successful, drawing many artists, visitors, and buyers. The artists made a record profit this year and donated 35% to NBC which amounted to \$10,000.00. A "Gala" reception the night before the sale was hosted by NBC and beautifully planned and implemented by Rita McCoy and Lucinda Wright. The artists were so happy that they have requested to have the event every year instead of every other year as in the past, and plans are already underway for next year.

Membership

The Membership Committee conducted its first membership renewal drive in May which brought in approximately \$9,000.00 in donations. The second drive is being planned for November. Members of the committee attended outreach events throughout the year to advertise the NBC and sign up new members. The Volunteer Appreciation Dinner in August celebrated the approximately 75 volunteers that attended. The Holiday Party this year will be catered voluntarily by a professional chef, Andrew Wigger, the husband of one of our volunteers, Jessica Wigger. The committee also initiated "Back Bay Bytes" this year to increase communication with the volunteers.

Looking forward to next year

The organization and the Board will continue to face similar challenges in 2013. It is important that NBC:

- 1) Completes the Strategic Plan started this year and implements it rapidly;
- 2) Continues to build our fund raising base through private and corporate donors as well as grants so that we can meet our staffing and programming needs;
- 3) Adapts our administrative and executive capacities to tighten up our management functions and compensate for the absence of paid staff;
- 4) Expands our communication, education, and public relations and marketing capabilities through increased use of the Website, creation of an expanded and more informational newsletter, and other methods and means.