



2008 Annual Report

In February Huell Howser was our guest to film an episode of *California's Gold*. We could not have picked a better day – the weather was gorgeous and the views of the snow-capped San Bernardino Mountains in the background were spectacular. Huell and his team did a marvelous job of conveying both the beauty and the ecological importance of Upper Newport Bay (UNB), and the essence of the preservation, restoration and education performed by the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG), California Coastal Commission (CCC), Orange County Parks (OC Parks) and the Newport Bay Naturalists and Friends (NBNF). Thank you, Huell and your team.

A Remarkable Volunteer

NBNF is a volunteer-driven organization. In March we said au revoir, but hopefully not goodbye, to Naturalist Tom Fox as he prepared to embark on a road trip across the USA to spread his can-do attitude to grass-roots conservation and restoration. Tom, who received the OC Wild Lifetime Award in 2007, epitomizes the spirit of volunteerism. He is admired by all the many agency staff and other volunteers with whom he has interacted. His enthusiastic, positive approach inspires those around him. Tom is a graduate of the Naturalist Class of 1992. Since then Tom accumulated over 5,000 volunteer hours here at UNB. Although this contribution is in itself remarkable, what makes it even more remarkable is that Tom lived and worked in San Bernardino County. Thank you, Tom. And thank you to all of our many other dedicated volunteers. In 2008 we achieved a cumulative total of over 100,000 hours of documented volunteer time at UNB.



The New Back Bay Science Center

In May the opening ceremony was held for the Back Bay Science Center (BBSC) – a 13,000 square foot state-of-the-art facility built through a partnership of DFG, the City of Newport Beach, the Orange County Health Care Agency (HCA), and the University of California Irvine (UCI). Its mission is to provide a hands-on facility where students and the public can study and enjoy the estuarine ecology of UNB – the largest remaining natural estuary in southern California – and the marine ecology of the ocean; and to promote natural resource conservation and stewardship throughout the watershed.



The facility includes the HCA water quality lab responsible for bacterial analysis of water samples collected at the local beaches, and a teaching lab equipped for research-based science education. Here high school students will be able to work side-by-side with some of the region's top scientists. We are proud to be a major partner in the BBSC. Thank you to Miocean, State Coastal Conservancy, Pacific Life Foundation and The Irvine Company for providing the financial support that enabled construction to occur during a time of dramatic worldwide escalation in the cost of concrete, steel and other building materials.



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Nearly 40 SOCALPAPA artists submitted entries. The winner of the \$5,000 purchase award was local artist Greg LaRock. We look forward to working with the OC Parks staff to transform the Interpretive Center in 2009. Thank you SOCALPAPA, and all who bought paintings at the event.

A Busy Autumn

In September we held our 19th Annual Cleanup Day. This event showcased a great partnership between DFG, OC Parks, CCC, the City of Newport Beach, the Newport Sea Base, the Newport Aquatic Center, the Rotary Club of Newport Balboa and other local Rotary Clubs, NBNF and other organizations. Thank you to all of the event organizers, sponsors and the over 1,000 members of the public who helped us collect more than 20,000 lbs of trash and recyclables from around UNB.

In October we held a donor cultivation event at the new Back Bay Bistro in the Newport Dunes Resort to seek funding to complete the outfitting of the BBSC teaching lab and allow it to reach its full potential. Middle and high school teachers throughout Orange County and beyond eagerly await the opportunity to bring their classes to the BBSC. Nearly 200 science teachers responded to a comprehensive survey seeking input on 30 lab and/or field activities that may be offered here. Once fully equipped we will be able to show high school students from under-served areas how easy it is to become real researchers engaged in rigorous scientific inquiry in an important and inspiring context, and provide opportunities for higher level students to perform world class research. Thank you to those who attended the event and/or have made a donation.

In November we commemorated 40 years of "Friends Tours" at UNB with the official opening of Vista Point and the unveiling of a lasting tribute to Frank and Frances Robinson, who were instrumental in the creation of the UNB Ecological Reserve in 1975. The old "Friends Lookout" site at the corner of Eastbluff Drive and Back Bay Drive has been completely re-landscaped, terraced bench seating has been installed, and a Robinson memorial plaque, spotting scope and interpretive panels erected. Thank you to the many Friends who contributed in one way or another to the preservation of UNB. And thank you to all those whose financial and other support has allowed this important project to be completed.

