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COALITION FORMS TO ENSURE SAFE TRAIL EXPERIENCES IN OC'S WILDLANDS

Irvine, California – From clearing sensitive habitat with garden loppers to creating new, illegal and more adventurous trail experiences to using public trails as a place for bow/arrow target practice, Orange County's trails are changing. Recognizing this transformation, Audubon California, Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks, Laguna Canyon Foundation, Sea and Sage Audubon, and Sierra Club founded the Safe Trails Coalition to focus on public safety, positive trail experiences, and resource protection. The Coalition's inaugural activity is a solutions-oriented workshop on September 26, 2013 in Irvine. Limited space for the media is available.

"We believe it is imperative to provide appropriate trail access to the public, while at the same time balancing the resource protection needs and safety of all park visitors," comments Scott Thomas, Raptor Research Committee Chair of Sea and Sage Audubon. "That's why this workshop is so timely—it allows all the stakeholders to discuss the issues, find common ground, and work toward solutions."

The aim of the Coalition is to identify problem areas, educate the public and trail users, enforce existing rules, and restore impacted habitats. Feedback received during the breakouts will lead to a fact sheet of ideas, help determine the appropriate next steps, provide a foundation for future workshop topics, and prioritize the Coalition's ongoing Action Plan.

With over 130,000 acres of protected lands in numerous ownerships there is an extensive array of authorized trails for the public to recreate on foot, on bike or on horse. Erosion, trail abuse, and unsafe behaviors are becoming common occurrences. The Coalition believes all trail users and visitors are entitled to a safe and enjoyable wilderness experience.

Through partnerships with land managers, property owners, trail user groups, decision makers, conservation organizations, and enforcement the far-reaching problems can be addressed in a unified manner. The media is welcome to attend this workshop to learn more about the effort,

the problems, and what we can collectively do to solve them. To reserve space as a member of the media at the September 26th workshop, please contact Melanie Schlotterbeck at 714-779-7561. To view the full agenda and lineup of speakers go to: <http://www.fhbp.org/projects/safe-trails-coalition-workshop.html>.

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