



## Meeting Objectives; More Work to Be Done: **Baldwin Hills Conservancy**

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To promote conservation of its natural resources, the state has created a number of conservancies to acquire and protect undeveloped land within specific geographic regions. In 2000, the Legislature created one such conservancy for the Baldwin Hills area of the Los Angeles Basin, which is scheduled to sunset on January 1, 2008. As statute requires, this report reviews the conservancy's progress and considers the merits of extending the conservancy's sunset date. We find that, generally, the conservancy has operated in a manner consistent with its statutory role, and while the conservancy has made progress, more remains to be done to meet statutory objectives. We recommend extending the conservancy's sunset date by five years, preceded by a sunset review of its performance and its relevance at this later time to the state's overall conservation goals. ■

### Acknowledgments

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## INTRODUCTION

In order to promote conservation of its natural resources, the state has created nine “conservancies” that acquire and protect undeveloped land and open space in specific regions of the state. In 2000, the Legislature enacted legislation, (Chapter 428, [SB 1625, Murray]), which designated one such conservancy for the Baldwin Hills area, located within the heavily urbanized Los Angeles Basin. In addition to defining the powers and responsibilities of the Baldwin Hills Conservancy (BHC) and demarcating its area of jurisdiction, Chapter 428 sets January 1, 2008, as the termination date for the conservancy. The statute further requires our office to review the effectiveness and progress of BHC in acquiring and developing open space and recreational resources in the Baldwin Hills area and to submit a report to the Legislature based on our review. Among other issues, the report is to evaluate the merits of extending the conservancy’s termination date. This report is intended to fulfill this statutory reporting requirement.

### Summary of Findings and Recommendations

In an earlier report (*California’s Land Conservation Efforts: The Role of State Conservancies*, January 5, 2001), we concluded that conservancies are just one element of the state’s overall approach to land conservation. Other agencies—for example, the Wildlife Conservation Board and the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR)—are also directly involved in land acquisition and protection. The primary advantage of state conservancies is their ability to focus state resources on a specific geographical area of exceptional statewide value.

In that report, we recommended that state conservancies be periodically reviewed to determine if their missions continue to be appropriate, of statewide interest, and a priority in terms of meeting the state’s overall land conservation goals. Such a review should be guided by a statewide land acquisition blueprint which would enable the Legislature to determine if the conservancies were furthering the state’s overall land acquisition goals. To date, such a blueprint does not exist and, therefore, it is impossible to determine the extent to which state conservancies, including BHC, are advancing the state’s overall land conservation goals.

However, we are able to assess the extent to which BHC has met the specific goals laid out by the Legislature in Chapter 428.

**Findings.** Statute directs BHC to acquire, develop, and manage public lands and open space for recreation, education, and wildlife habitat restoration and protection. In addition, statute directs BHC to accomplish these goals in a manner consistent with the needs and desires of surrounding communities. We generally find that BHC has been operating consistently with its statutorily defined role in the Baldwin Hills area, and while the conservancy has made progress, more remains to be done to meet statutory objectives. Specifically, we conclude that BHC has:

- **Facilitated Public Agency Acquisition of Open-Space Land.** While BHC has acquired no land and does not actively manage public lands or open space, consistent with its mandate it has facilitated and/or funded acquisitions made by other public agencies that have substan-

tially increased public open space in the Baldwin Hills area. Since 2001, BHC has facilitated or funded public agency acquisition of a total of 155 acres, resulting in a 33 percent increase of open-space land in the Baldwin Hills area. We conclude, based on our review, that BHC facilitated this increase in publicly owned/accessible land because of its local area expertise and consistent local presence.

- ***Enabled Recreational, Educational, and Wildlife Habitat Projects.*** The BHC has coordinated the planning of and/or funded numerous recreational and educational projects that have made the area's open spaces publicly accessible while protecting and fostering wildlife habitat.
- ***Fostered Communication With and Responded to Surrounding Communities.*** The BHC has regularly publicized relevant issues in local print, broadcast media, and direct mail; presented at community meetings; organized public forums; and met directly with area representatives and local elected officials. These efforts have influenced acquisitions, planning, and development within the Baldwin Hills area and helped to ensure that the work of BHC and other public agencies operating in the area has been in keeping with local needs and desires.
- ***More Work to Be Done.*** Despite a substantial increase in publicly owned/accessible open space in the Baldwin Hills area, there remain approximately 655

acres of privately owned open space that are potentially acquirable in furtherance of Chapter 428's public land acquisition goals. In addition, although the conservancy has facilitated significant development projects on public lands acquired early in, or prior to, the conservancy's existence, most newly acquired public properties in the area have yet to be *developed* for public access, recreation, education, habitat preservation, or other public purposes. Facilitating the development of these properties for specified public benefit purposes is one of BHC's fundamental responsibilities in Chapter 428.

***LAO Recommendations.*** As noted above, BHC has proven useful in facilitating the acquisition and development of land in the Baldwin Hills area. However, we also found that most of the recently purchased lands have not been developed for public access and other public purposes. While we recommend continuing the BHC at this time, we also recommend that a new five-year termination date be set at January 1, 2013, preceded by a review of the conservancy's performance. Such a sunset review would allow the Legislature to assess the extent to which BHC has made progress in addressing the work necessary to further the objectives of Chapter 428. Based on the review, the Legislature could determine whether the conservancy structure continues to be the appropriate one for addressing its land conservation goals for the Baldwin Hills area.

## BACKGROUND

***The Role of State Conservancies.*** In order to conserve California’s land resources, the state has established a number of agencies whose mission includes acquiring and protecting land as a natural resource to be held for the broad public benefit. Among these agencies are the state’s conservancies located within the Resources Agency, that are charged with acquiring and protecting undeveloped land in specified geographical areas in order to advance a mix of conservation objectives. Typically, these objectives include providing open space and recreational opportunities, as well as preserving land as wildlife habitat. While the particular statutory goals of each conservancy differ somewhat, the conservancies generally were created in response to considerations that certain vital land resources, from a natural resources perspective, were subject to development and other pressures.

In our earlier report on state conservancies, we concluded that conservancies, as a subset of the multiple state agencies involved in land conservation, present advantages and disadvantages for the state’s overall efforts to protect land resources. The primary advantage of state conservancies, relative to other state agencies involved in land acquisition, is their ability to focus state resources on a specific geographical area and to do so with a relative degree of administrative and financial flexibility. In addition, the participation of local representatives on conservancy boards can help facilitate acquisitions by engendering cooperation with local entities (some of whom may also help fund the conservancy’s land conservation efforts). On the other hand, conservancies, whose funding is targeted to geographically

defined areas, may hamper the state’s ability to direct resources to the highest statewide conservation priorities. In addition, a conservancy’s status as a state agency may create the expectation for continued state funding, even after the state’s goals for the conservancy have been met and state funding is no longer justified.

To maximize the conservancies’ potential advantages and mitigate their disadvantages, we recommended that every state conservancy be periodically reviewed to determine if its mission continues to be appropriate, of statewide interest, and a priority in terms of meeting the state’s overall land conservation goals. We recommended that such reviews should be guided by a statewide land acquisition blueprint that would enable the Legislature to determine if the conservancies were furthering the state’s overall land conservation goals. To date, no such blueprint exists to guide the evaluation of the conservancies’ work.

When we released our report in January 2001, there were seven state conservancies in existence, including the BHC. Since the release of our 2001 report, the state has statutorily created two additional conservancies, bringing the total number of state conservancies to nine. Figure 1 (see next page) provides the creation date and geographic jurisdiction of the nine conservancies.

***Description of the Baldwin Hills Area.*** Visible for miles, the Baldwin Hills rise 500 feet from the floor of the Los Angeles Basin. Bordered by the City of Los Angeles to the North and to the East, the City of Inglewood to the South, and the City of Culver City to the West, the Baldwin Hills

area covers roughly two square miles in the heart of urban Los Angeles. (Please see Figure 2 for a map of the Baldwin Hills area.)

For decades, land use in the Baldwin Hills area has been dominated by petroleum extraction. Ironically, this history of petroleum extraction, the remains of which still blight the land, has preserved open space in the Baldwin Hills area. Dirt paths connect dozens of razed brown terraces, and steel derricks continue to pump from the still-active Inglewood oil field below. Nonetheless, much of the land in the Baldwin Hills area remains free of structures, pavement, or other signs of development.

Despite ongoing petroleum extraction and a ring of urbanization, the Baldwin Hills area offers potential ecological, recreational, and open space opportunities not often found in the Los Angeles Basin. Canyons and gullies give shelter

to plant and animal life, including small numbers of native species once abundant in the region. Spillways dump runoff into adjacent Ballona Creek, an ecological and physical link between the Santa Monica Mountains, the Baldwin Hills, and Santa Monica Bay. Two principal ridges characterize the Baldwin Hills and provide notable views of the Los Angeles region. The western ridge in particular, known as the *Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook*, presents a regionally unique panoramic view of the Los Angeles Basin and the adjacent Pacific Coast.

Yet, the region surrounding the Baldwin Hills area has historically been and continues to be park poor. An inventory of recreational land use within a five-mile radius of the Baldwin Hills area, completed shortly before the conservancy's inception, identified less than 0.91 acres of parkland or recreational facilities per 1,000 residents.

**Figure 1**

**The State's Nine Regional Land Conservancies**



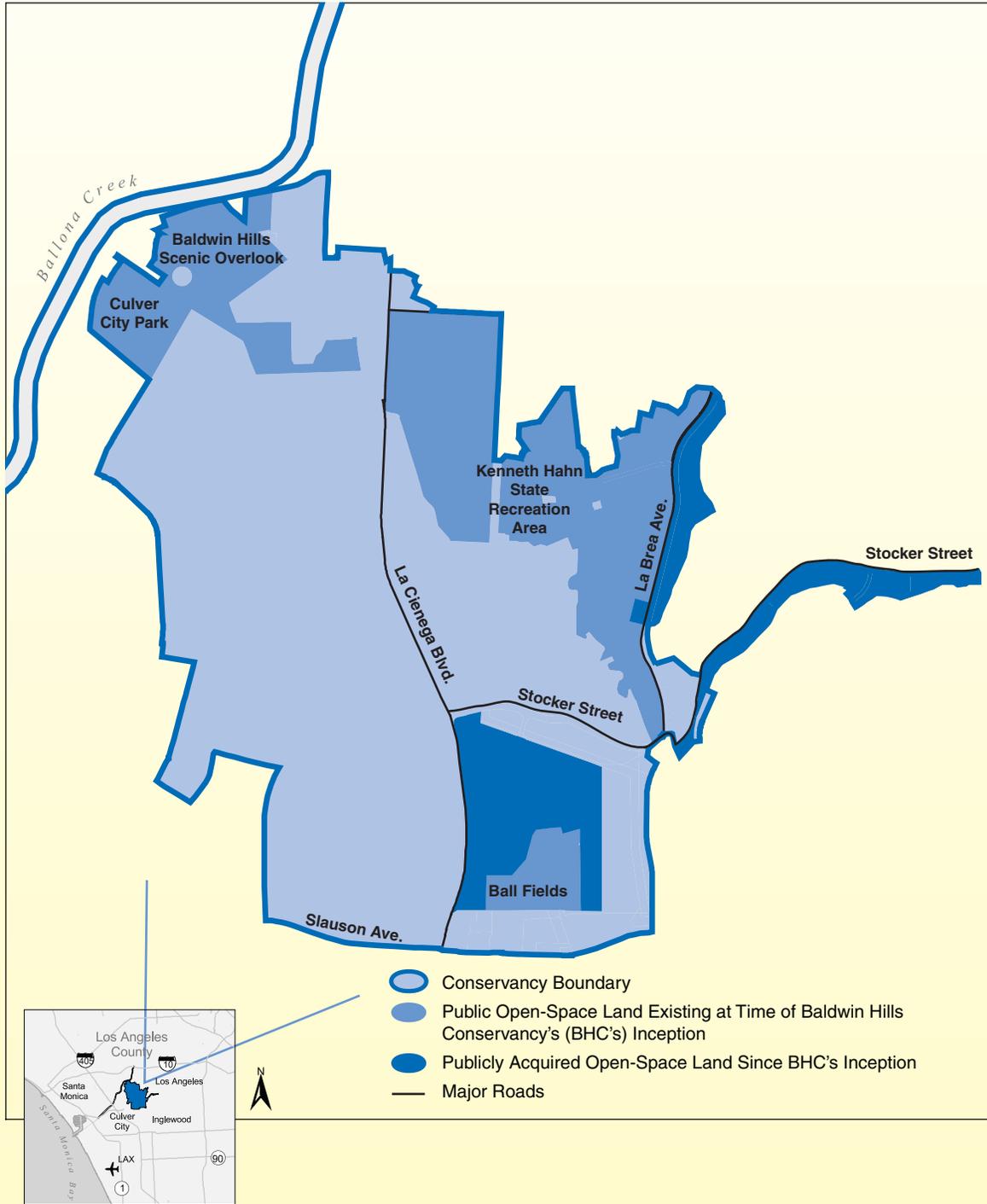
There currently exist nine state conservancies, each charged with acquiring land in specified geographical regions of the state in order to advance specified goals. The area under the jurisdictions of each of these conservancies varies from two square miles to over 25 million acres.

Conservancy	Year Created	Region
State Coastal Conservancy	1976	California coast and San Francisco Bay lands.
Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy	1980	Santa Monica and Santa Susanna Mountains and nearby lands.
California Tahoe Conservancy	1984	California side of the Lake Tahoe Basin.
San Joaquin River Conservancy	1995	The San Joaquin River Parkway on both sides of the river between Friant Dam and the Highway 99 crossing.
Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy	1996	The mountains surrounding the Coachella Valley, from Palm Springs to the Salton Sea.
San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy	1999	The Lower Los Angeles River and San Gabriel River watersheds.
Baldwin Hills Conservancy	2000	Two square mile Baldwin Hills region of the Los Angeles Basin.
San Diego River Conservancy	2002	San Diego River area.
Sierra Nevada Conservancy	2004	Sierra Nevada region of California spanning 22 counties.

Figure 2

### Baldwin Hills Conservancy Area

Public Open-Space Lands



By comparison, the City of Los Angeles and the City of Long Beach have 6.1 acres and 5.8 acres of parkland, respectively, per 1,000 residents. The amount of parkland available to residents of California's other major cities is greater still.

***Efforts to Preserve the Open Space Prior to Formation of the Conservancy.*** Throughout the years, a number of efforts have sought to preserve land in the Baldwin Hills area as open space and to transition that land to recreational and ecological uses. In 1983, a combination of federal, state, and county monies funded a purchase of land that would become the Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area (KHSRA)—a 309-acre state-owned park operated by the County of Los Angeles and open to the public since 1985.

In 1999, the County of Los Angeles paired with the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy to form the Baldwin Hills Regional Conservation Authority (BHRCA). A joint-powers authority, BHRCA was formed to undertake a comprehensive program of acquisition and preservation in the Baldwin Hills and to improve ecological and recreational connections between the Baldwin Hills, Ballona Creek, and other natural and recreational areas.

In 2000, the BHRCA arranged for the \$36 million purchase of the area now known as the *Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook*—a 58-acre site currently owned by DPR that had been previously slated for immediate residential development. In addition, neighboring municipalities operate several ball fields and pocket parks in the immediate vicinity.

While public agencies were acquiring lands in the Baldwin Hills, the Legislature signaled its interest in expanding open space and recreation, education, and conservation opportunities in

the area. In 1999, the Legislature enacted two related statutes concerning the Baldwin Hills. Chapter 505 (AB 1357, Wesson), required the Secretary of Resources, in conjunction with the Director of DPR, to complete a study, due to the Legislature by November 1, 2000, on the feasibility and desirability of expanding KHSRA to include all, or a substantial portion, of the Baldwin Hills area.

Also, in 1999, Chapter 752, (SB 1048, Murray), declared the Legislature's intent to plan for the expansion of the KHSRA and the development of related facilities in the Baldwin Hills. The measure also directed the Secretary of Resources to establish an advisory committee to assist in the development of a master plan for the expansion of KHSRA. The master plan, which was completed in May 2002 and incorporates the feasibility study required by Chapter 505, promotes the creation of an expanded park in the Baldwin Hills and has guided much of the subsequent public acquisition and development of open-space lands in the area. Specifically, the master plan has been a guiding document for BHC in setting priorities for its involvement in open-space land acquisition and development. We discuss the BHC's creation and its roles and responsibilities in the next section.

***Creation of the Baldwin Hills Conservancy.*** In 2000, the Legislature enacted legislation, Chapter 428, to create BHC to ensure management of lands in the Baldwin Hills area as a recreational and natural resource based on the needs and desires of the surrounding community. (See nearby boxes for details on BHC's statutory responsibilities and powers and its governance structure.) As shown in the nearby map (page 7), statute defines "the Baldwin Hills area" as

## **RESPONSIBILITIES AND POWERS OF THE BALDWIN HILLS CONSERVANCY (BHC)**

### ***Key Functions Assigned to BHC by Statute:***

- Acquire open-space lands and manage public lands.
- Provide recreational, open-space, and wildlife habitat lands and educational opportunities in keeping with the needs and desires of the surrounding community.

### ***Duties Required to Be Performed by BHC, by Statute:***

- Establish appropriate policies and priorities.
- Conduct necessary planning activities.
- Prioritize projects that expand recreation and that improve aesthetics and wildlife habitat.
- Approve conservancy-funded projects that advance BHC policies and priorities.
- Enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) that requires each to share technical assistance and information.
- Approve, by May 1, 2002, the master plan for expansion of the Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area required by Chapter 752, Statutes of 1999 (SB 1048, Murray).
- Prioritize and implement, in keeping with the master plan, (1) the acquisition of recreational and open space and a plan for managing BHC land, and (2) the planned conveyance of acquired, restored, or developed lands to DPR.
- Determine acquisition priorities.
- Restrict public access to lands unsuitable for park or open-space use by entering into temporary agreements with appropriate state or local agencies.
- Complete a report, due to the Legislature by January 1, 2004, on the potential environmental and recreational uses of Ballona Creek and adjacent properties.

### ***Activities Authorized, But Not Required, of BHC, by Statute:***

- Adopt regulations governing use of area lands and facilities.
- Acquire property and interest in real property itself or in coordination with other public agencies.
- Award grants to public agencies and nonprofit organizations.
- Direct projects—to be undertaken by other appropriate public agencies—for site improvements, facility upgrades or construction, and area revegetation and rehabilitation.
- Fix and collect fees for services, maintenance, and operation.

## **GOVERNANCE OF THE BALDWIN HILLS CONSERVANCY (BHC)**

The BHC is governed by a 20-member board, which includes 13 voting members who serve two-year terms, and 7 nonvoting members. Board membership consists of representatives of state and local government, or their designees, and members of the public, as follows:

### ***Voting Members***

- Secretary of the Resources Agency.
- Director of Parks and Recreation.
- Director of Finance.
- Director of the Los Angeles County Department of Parks.
- The member of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors within whose district the majority of the Baldwin Hills area is located.
- Six members of the public appointed by the Governor who are residents of Los Angeles County and who represent the diversity of the community surrounding the Baldwin Hills area, including:
  - A resident of Culver City.
  - Three residents of the communities of Blair Hills, Ladera Heights, Baldwin Hills, Windsor Hills, Inglewood, View Park, or Baldwin Vista.
- A resident of Los Angeles County appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly.
- A resident of Los Angeles County appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules.

### ***Nonvoting Members***

- Secretary of the California Environmental Protection Agency.
- Executive Officer of the State Coastal Conservancy.
- Executive Officer of the State Lands Commission.
- Governor's appointee with brownfield development experience.
- Executive Director of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy.
- Director of Culver City Human Services Department.
- Director of the State Department of Conservation.

the land within KHSRA, the Baldwin Hills community, the surrounding area bordered on the South by Slausen Avenue, on the East by La Brea Avenue, the spur of land extending from Stocker Street to La Brea Avenue and Crenshaw Boulevard, and Ballona Creek and adjacent property

within fifty yards of the creek from the Santa Monica Freeway to the Marina Freeway. The area includes 1,429 acres of open-space land in the Baldwin Hills and another 637 acres that run under or alongside Ballona Creek or lie in adjacent communities.

## LAND ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT: BHC'S PROGRESS TO DATE

This section of the report details the conservancy's history of land acquisition and management, recreation and education development, and resource conservation and assesses its accomplishments based on the conservancy's statutory objectives and responsibilities.

**Funding and Expenditures.** As shown in Figure 3 (see next page), BHC has spent about \$1.4 million for support and \$15.4 million for local assistance (\$10.4 million in grants for two land acquisitions) since its inception in 2001-02 through 2005-06.

As the figure notes, all of BHC's local assistance expenditures for land acquisition and development projects have been funded from Proposition 40 bond funds. Proposition 40 allocates \$40 million for BHC to undertake acquisition, development, rehabilitation, restoration, and protection of land and water resources. From 2002-03 through 2005-06, the Legislature has appropriated about \$38 million in Proposition 40 funds to BHC, of which BHC spent approximately \$15.4 million through the end of 2005-06. Accordingly, about \$24.6 million remains available to BHC from prior appropriations and yet-to-be-appropriated Proposition 40 bond funds for expenditure in 2006-07 and future years. This rate of expenditure of an agency's

appropriations is in keeping with the expenditure patterns of the other land conservancies in their early development stages. In the early years, there is a ramp-up period during which a new conservancy establishes administrative processes, land acquisition priorities, a local presence, and develops relationships to facilitate land acquisition. We expect that the rate of expenditure of appropriations will increase in years following this ramp-up period.

Proposition 84—a \$5.4 billion resources bond measure approved by the voters in November 2006—allocates \$10 million to BHC for the protection of the Ballona Creek/Baldwin Hills watershed. The *2007-08 Governor's Budget* has proposed appropriating roughly \$3 million to the conservancy from Proposition 84 funds.

**Setting Priorities.** Chapter 428 directs BHC to set priorities for acquisition, planning, and improvement in the Baldwin Hills area to ensure uniform, coordinated expansion of recreation, education, and conservation opportunities and aesthetic enhancement. The BHC relies on the *Baldwin Hills Park Master Plan* (issued May 2002), which itself was a result of an extensive community planning effort and adopted by BHC, to set broad priorities for acquisition, planning, and development in the Baldwin Hills area. The

master plan presents the general concept of “one big park” that physically unites public open-space lands in the Baldwin Hills area, increases public access to the area, links the area to other recreational and open-space amenities such as regional bike paths, and emphasizes the coexistence of natural habitat preservation, recreation, education, and cultural opportunities.

Using the master plan as a general guiding document, BHC identifies as priorities specific acquisition, planning, and development objectives in the Baldwin Hills area. For example, BHC developed a point system to prioritize Baldwin Hills area parcels for acquisition based on the following criteria: (1) likelihood of private development, (2) remaining economic life in petroleum extraction (as determined by the State Lands Commission), and (3) access to parklands. Concerning development, BHC has identified as

a high priority those projects that fulfill the priorities identified in the master plan—access, linkage, recreation, education, and conservation—most readily and at the least cost. Application of the priorities for acquisition and development can be seen in the most significant project in the Baldwin Hills area completed to date—Stocker Street Corridor. This thin strip of four parcels, once acquired, was developed into a pedestrian and bicycle pathway, planted with native vegetation, and provides access to the border of KH-SRA from easterly neighborhoods.

**Land Acquisition.** To date, BHC has itself acquired no land, nor does it manage any land. However, since the conservancy’s inception, public open-space lands in the Baldwin Hills area have increased by 155 acres, or nearly 33 percent, at a total public purchase price of \$13.8 million. The average cost of these public

**Figure 3**  
**Baldwin Hills Conservancy Expenditure History**

*2001-02 Through 2005-06  
(In Thousands)*

Year	Support Expenditures <sup>a</sup>	Local Assistance Expenditures <sup>b</sup>	Total Expenditures	Major Projects Funded
2001-02	\$226.9	—	\$226.9	—
2002-03	266.5	\$219.8	486.3	Commissioned site assessments and studies.
2003-04	242.7	3,774.2	4,016.9	Commissioned land appraisals and studies; granted funds for planning and development projects.
2004-05	323.7	11,255.7	11,579.4	Funded \$10.4 million acquisition of 122 acres of open-space land.
2005-06	359.4	156.4	515.8	Commissioned site assessments; granted funds for survey and training program, planning, and development projects, (such as park accessways and interpretive projects).
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$1,419.2</b>	<b>\$15,406.1</b>	<b>\$16,825.3</b>	

<sup>a</sup> Various fund sources including General Fund, Environmental License Plate Fund, and Proposition 40 bond funds.

<sup>b</sup> All Proposition 40 bond funds.

acquisitions is \$89,000 per acre, with a range of \$9,000 per acre to \$397,000 per acre. Figure 4 provides a detailed listing of these acquisitions. Following the figure, we discuss BHC’s role in facilitating these acquisitions.

Although BHC has not directly acquired land, it has—as authorized by Chapter 428—either funded or otherwise facilitated all of the acquisitions of public open-space that have taken place in the Baldwin Hills area since 2001. Specifically, BHC granted \$10.4 million for two acquisitions that together included 122.1 acres of land, or 79 percent of all open-space land publicly acquired within the Baldwin Hills area. These two purchases were made in 2005 and 2006 using Proposition 40 bond funds provided by BHC to the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation and BHRCA.

In addition to the two acquisitions that BHC funded, there have been four other acquisitions made and funded by DPR using Proposition 12 bond funds, as shown in Figure 4. According to DPR, BHC’s interagency coordination role and its local presence—evidenced most notably by community organization and local official representation on BHC’s governing board—were essential to acquiring these properties in the Baldwin Hills area. For each of these four acquisitions, DPR relied upon BHC and its familiarity with and ties to local communities, community leaders, property owners, and media to select the acquisition properties; publicize pending acquisitions; arrange for public input; and coordinate among state and local agencies, political leaders, and property owners.

Land acquisition in the Baldwin Hills area is complicated by intensive urbanization, ethnic

**Figure 4**

**History of Public Acquisition of Open-Space Land in the Baldwin Hills Area**

*2001 Through October 2006  
(Dollars in Thousands)*

Purchase Date	Acres	Purchaser	Cost	State Funding Agency (Grantor)	Fund Source	Managing Agency	Intended Use
10/21/2002	1.7	DPR <sup>a</sup>	\$675	DPR	Prop. 12 Bond	DPR	} Access pathway along Stocker Street Corridor.
12/04/2002	8.9	DPR	410	DPR	Prop. 12 Bond	DPR	
06/04/2003	5.3	DPR	300	DPR	Prop. 12 Bond	DPR	
12/29/2004	17.0	DPR	2,000	DPR	Prop. 12 Bond	DPR	
11/29/2005	22.1	LA County DPR <sup>b</sup>	198	BHC <sup>c</sup>	Prop. 40 Bond	LA County DPR	Greenbelt access pathway, yet to be developed.
01/01/2006	100.0	BHRCA <sup>d</sup>	10,200	BHC	Prop. 40 Bond	BHRCA	Sports complex, yet to be developed.
<b>Total Acres Acquired</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>Total Funds Spent</b>	<b>\$13,783</b>				

<sup>a</sup> State Department of Parks and Recreation.

<sup>b</sup> County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation.

<sup>c</sup> Baldwin Hills Conservancy.

<sup>d</sup> Baldwin Hills Regional Conservation Authority.

and economic diversity, active and historical petroleum extraction, and overlapping political jurisdictions. In this context, BHC provides a forum in which the various and diverse interests involved in the Baldwin Hills area can identify and organize around areas of common interest and resolve conflicts. Based on our discussions with DPR, local elected officials, community members, and local government staff, we conclude that BHC facilitated the public acquisition of open-space lands in the Baldwin Hills area through its area expertise and consistent local presence.

***Planning and Development: Recreation, Education, and Habitat Conservation.*** The BHC has funded, undertaken, or facilitated numerous planning and development activities that have increased recreational, educational, and habitat open-space opportunities in the Baldwin Hills area. The most significant development to date is a mile-long, vegetated, pedestrian and bicycle trail along Stocker Street Corridor. Other completed projects of note include the Native Plant and Wildlife Garden Walk—a BHC-funded project covering three acres in KHSRA—and a study of potential environmental and recreational uses of Ballona Creek undertaken by BHC and a research team from Loyola Marymount University. Figure 5 lists completed and ongoing planning and development projects in the Baldwin Hills area for which BHC has had some role.

Despite this record of activity by BHC, there remains much work to be done in the Baldwin Hills area in furtherance of the goals of Chapter 428. In addition to the 655 acres in the Baldwin Hills area that remain potentially acquirable for public open-space purposes, the majority of the properties recently publicly acquired in the Baldwin Hills area remain either undeveloped

and, thus, unavailable for public access and use or unrestored for purposes of wildlife habitat. This lack of development and restoration is not unexpected, given how recently the properties in question were acquired by public agencies (November 2005 and January 2006).

***Community Outreach and Responsiveness to Local Needs and Desires.*** In addition to land acquisition, development, and management, Chapter 428 requires BHC to act according to the needs and desires of the surrounding community. To that end, BHC has served as the main point of communication between public agencies seeking to acquire or develop land in the Baldwin Hills area and those living nearby. Examples of BHC's more significant community outreach efforts include compilation of a database of thousands of community stakeholders, direct mail to identified stakeholders, publicizing its activities and placing editorials in local media, presentations to local homeowners associations and property owners, establishment of community-based advisory committees, public surveys, and a speakers series on the flora and fauna of the Baldwin Hills.

In keeping with statutory requirements, BHC has demonstrated responsiveness to local needs and desires. The BHC relies on the *Baldwin Hills Park Master Plan*—itself the result of intensive community input—as a guide to land acquisition and development. Creation of the master plan was a three-year process that included several series of public workshops held in various neighborhoods located within five miles of the Baldwin Hills area. Workshop attendees viewed and manipulated two dozen models illustrating possible uses of Baldwin Hills area land, participated in design groups, completed surveys, and ultimately voted on elements they

**Figure 5****History of Planning and Development Projects***2001 Through October 2006*

<b>Project</b>	<b>Date Completed</b>	<b>Description and Baldwin Hills Conservancy (BHC) Role</b>
Baldwin Hills Park Master Plan	May 2002	Legislatively required community-driven, conceptual plan for two-square-mile park encompassing open space in the Baldwin Hills. The BHC facilitated public review of the plan, which the BHC board approved in September 2002.
Weeds to Wonder	2001-2004	Living laboratory program, planned and overseen by BHC, in which over 150 high school students applied biology, math, chemistry, ecology, horticulture, ethno-botany, and local history in the Baldwin Hills area.
Jefferson Site Evaluation	March 2003	BHC-commissioned appraisal of 5.5-acre parcel.
Ballona Creek Trail and Bikeway Enhancement Study	December 2003	Legislatively required, BHC-commissioned investigation of potential recreational and environmental uses of Ballona Creek and adjacent properties.
Land Appraisal and Engineering Feasibility Study	December 2003	BHC-commissioned economic evaluation of surface and subsurface real property interests.
Baldwin Hills Habitat Steward Training	October 2004	Two-week field course, planned and overseen by BHC, on species surveying, soil testing, slope analysis, plant identification, and restoration. As of November 2004, 30 certified stewards committed to over 300 hours of volunteer service in and around the Baldwin Hills area.
Stocker Corridor Trail and Bikeway Conceptual Plan	January 2005	Community-based development of conceptual and preliminary designs of Stocker Corridor development. The BHC helped solicit and organize community input.
Preliminary Endangerment Assessment of Potentially Hazardous Sites	July 2005	BHC-commissioned investigation of oil drilling mud in soil and boring samples.
Baldwin Hills Environmental Interpretation Initiative	August 2005	BHC-funded and overseen recreational and educational survey of over 100 community members and area teachers; creation of resources guide and curriculum guide for K-12 schools. Planning for outdoor interpretive facility within Baldwin Hills area.
Stocker Corridor Recreational Development	October 2005	Development, planned and overseen by BHC, of a mile-long pedestrian and cycling trail, improving access to Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area (KHSRA). Improvement of signage at Stocker Trailhead.
Planning and Interpretation Project Management	May 2006	Plan for capital improvement grant spending, overseen and funded by BHC.
Native Plant and Wildlife Garden Walk	May 2006	BHC-funded natural habitat path and interpretive signage within a three-acre site of KHSRA.
Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook	Underway	Community-based planning process, facilitated and organized by BHC, yielding site design and preliminary construction documents for media and interpretive center, community room, administrative offices, interpretive garden, trails, and parking areas.
Land Acquisition Work Plan Implementation	Underway	BHC-commissioned update of economic evaluation of surface and subsurface interests, including recently discovered deep oil reserves.
Eastern Ridge Facilities Expansion	Underway	BHC-funded and overseen completion of construction documents and design of recreational facilities. Preparing to advertise for construction bids.

wanted included in the design of a regional park. In addition, BHC incorporates the concerns of the community in its development projects. For example, during community outreach meetings, residents living alongside and nearby the Stocker Street Corridor expressed concern to BHC about fire danger and noise. Reflecting these concerns, the corridor was developed to include a pedestrian and bicycle pathway and vegetation, but no barbeque areas or parking.

***Furthering the Goals of the Master Plan.*** In general, BHC activity to date has furthered the goals of the master plan. In particular, the public acquisition of property along Stocker Street and La Brea Avenue, and the development of a trail

along the former, serves to unite public open-space lands in the Baldwin Hills area, improve public access to these lands, and provide recreational opportunities. Thus, this acquisition serves to link west-lying Ballona Creek, KHSRA, and east-lying neighborhoods. Projects such as the “Weeds to Wonder” living laboratory, habitat steward training, and the “Environmental Interpretation Initiative” foster use of the Baldwin Hills as an educational resource. Finally, the recent acquisition of a 100-acre parcel adjacent to existing county ball fields holds the promise of further expansion of recreational opportunities in the Baldwin Hills area.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The BHC is generally fulfilling its statutory duties. While the conservancy has acquired no land and does not manage any public land, it has advanced the statutory goals of increasing public open space and educational, recreational, and habitat preservation and restoration opportunities in the Baldwin Hills area. Specifically, the BHC has funded the majority of land publicly acquired in the area since 2001. And, through its local expertise, presence, and relationships, BHC enabled DPR’s acquisitions in the area. In addition, BHC has planned, coordinated, overseen, and/or funded numerous development projects in the Baldwin Hills area that increase the public’s access to and enjoyment of open space. Similarly, BHC has created or coordinated numerous opportunities in the area for education and natural resource preservation. We find that BHC has performed these activities while communicating with and striving to respond to the

needs of those living in surrounding communities, as statute directs.

However, the Legislature’s objectives for BHC, as stated in 2000, have not been fully met. Despite a substantial increase in public open space since the BHC’s inception, 655 acres of open-space land in the Baldwin Hills area remain susceptible to development that may not be in keeping with the public purposes for these lands—open space, education, recreation, and wildlife and habitat conservation—envisioned by Chapter 428. In addition, despite the completion of significant projects that increase opportunities for recreation, education, and ecological preservation in the area, recently acquired public lands in the Baldwin Hills area remain largely unrestored or undeveloped and unusable by the public.

While the BHC has met a number of the objectives laid out for it by the Legislature,

several objectives remain unfulfilled. In view of this, we recommend extending the sunset date for the BHC. However, we recommend extending the conservancy's sunset date by five years, to January 1, 2013, which is two years shorter than the conservancy's initial, seven-year operating period. We believe this shorter operating period is appropriate, given that the conservancy has been through the "development" period to establish itself as a conservation resource in the Baldwin Hills area. We would expect the conservancy to capitalize on existing relationships with surrounding communities, area governments,

and local property owners, so that public land acquisition and development would occur more quickly during the conservancy's second operating period than it did during the first.

We also recommend that the Legislature require a review, prior to the new sunset date, of the conservancy's effectiveness and progress towards fulfilling its statutory objectives during the period. This review would provide the Legislature with a basis on which to determine whether the conservancy structure continues to be the appropriate one for addressing land conservation goals in the Baldwin Hills area.



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