

Friends of the Whittier Narrows Natural Area

***Campaign to save Whittier Narrows Natural Area***

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**Media advisory**

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**Experts, educators and community members available to discuss environmental, other impacts of proposed Discovery Center**

*Critics say government agencies, water districts should pursue alternatives to Whittier Narrows project rejected by LA County environmental advisory committee in 2008*

SOUTH EL MONTE, Calif. (June 8, 2009) — With the recent release of the draft environmental impact report on the proposed San Gabriel River Discovery Center and the opening of the 60-day public comment period, the following individuals—experts in environmental science, veteran educators and concerned members of the community—are available to discuss the grave environmental, financial and social costs of the project planned for the Whittier Narrows Natural Area, an important and sensitive wildlife sanctuary between the Montebello and Puente hills:

**Mary O'Brien**, doctorate in botany, author

The author of “Making Better Environmental Decisions: An Alternative to Risk Assessment” (2000), Mary O'Brien is Utah forests project manager for the Grand Canyon Trust. She has served as a staff scientist and organizer for toxics reform and conservation organizations. She is a former resident of Whittier, Calif.

Cell: (435) 259-6205

[maryobrien10@gmail.com](mailto:maryobrien10@gmail.com)

**Ed Barajas** (available for Spanish-language interviews)

Docent-naturalist at the Whittier Narrows Natural Area, Ed Barajas is an expert birder who has documented bird activity at the Natural Area for nearly a decade. He is a resident of Pico Rivera, Calif.

Cell: (562) 305-7501

(562) 695-3527

**Ray E. Williams**, professor emeritus of biology, Rio Hondo College, Whittier, Calif. Ray Williams was among the key citizens whose efforts saved Upper Newport Bay from development and led to its designation as an ecological preserve. He also chaired three city and county committees related to protecting newly acquired open space in the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor and served on the Newport Beach City Council.  
(909) 337-0142

Messages, June 1 – 9: (402) 472-8117

bakbayray@verizon.net

**Jim Odling** (available for Spanish-language interviews)

Jim Odling is chair of the Friends of the Whittier Narrows Natural Area and has been a volunteer docent at Whittier Narrows and Eaton Canyon natural areas since 2005. He holds a Bachelor of Science in biology and a Master of Science in health science.

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The proposed Discovery Center would destroy wildlife habitat, community open space and outdoor learning opportunities at the Whittier Narrows Natural Area in southeast Los Angeles County. The planned regional science museum failed the important first test of its environmental impact when the Los Angeles County Planning Department's Significant Ecological Areas Technical Advisory Committee in 2008 deemed it "incompatible" with the Whittier Narrows SEA.

#### About the Friends of the Whittier Narrows Natural Area

The Friends of the Whittier Narrows Natural Area is an all-volunteer, nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the preservation of the Whittier Narrows Natural Area and neighboring lands as open space corridors. We promote and assist with restoration and educational uses of the Natural Area that are compatible with the conservation of plant and animal habitat and migration, historical resources, water quality, and public health and safety. Web site: <http://naturalareafriends.net>