

REFLECTIONS ON 2014

by Ventura County Supervisor Linda Parks, December 2014

This last year saw so much to be grateful for – the people who help make our life special, the beautiful place we call home, and the ability to make a positive difference. Below are some of the highlights of a good year.

With recent news of officer involved shootings, I am particularly thankful for the successful outcome of last week's confrontation with an unstable Thousand Oaks man who threatened officers. Armed and yelling to be killed, sheriff deputies used crisis intervention techniques and non-lethal weapons to end the stand-off. Compare this to 2001 when these techniques weren't standard and we had eight officer-involved shootings of people with mental illness in our county, and we realize the significant progress made with the help of mental health advocates and an enlightened and responsive police force led by Sheriff Geoff Dean.

Also last week deputies worked with Fish and Wildlife officers in tranquilizing and relocating a mountain lion. This is such a better outcome than the reaction of a different police department in our county that shot and killed a 35-pound mountain lion cub a few years back.



I'm also thankful for the initiation of a project to protect the future of mountain lions in our region. The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (which I'm fortunate enough to chair) put up seed money from habitat funds for a wildlife crossing over the 101 freeway at Liberty Canyon where a mountain lion and other wildlife have been hit by cars. With the leadership of Senator Fran Pavley, the National Wildlife Federation and some private funding, a wildlife bridge connecting thousands of acres of protected open space lands on either side of the freeway is beginning to move forward. The project will keep mountain lions in the Santa Monica Mountain from becoming extinct due to inbreeding. It will also address a safety issue by reducing the number of car/animal collisions on this busy highway.



I was also thrilled to participate this year as chair of the Ventura County Air Pollution Control District on a collaboration that reduced the speed of ships along our coast in order to lower emissions and reduce the incidents of whales hit by ships. We gave funds from a polluter to this program established by Santa Barbara's APCD, the Environmental Defense Center, the shipping industry, and the National Marine Sanctuary. Surprisingly one-third of Ventura County's, and one-half of Santa Barbara County's nitrogen oxides come from ships. By providing financial incentives for ships to slow their speeds we're protecting whales and cleaning our air.



Other highlights of 2014 for which I'm grateful include the Oak Park Unified School District and the Oak Park Municipal Advisory Council for stepping up to keep the Kanan Shuttle free to the hundreds of daily riders who use the service I was able to get started with grants. The popular shuttle connects students and the community to schools, stores, and parks and comes every 15 to 20 minutes during school start and stop times, and every 30 minutes in between. Guess who chose the leaping mountain lion emblem for the Shuttle? How can you not love this job?



Also this year, after many years of trying to get the County to pay for sidewalk repairs, the Board agreed to have the County pay for grinding work that can fix the majority of sidewalks in the unincorporated area. While residents will still have to pay the cost when a slab of sidewalk must be replaced, I'm grateful for this step in the right direction!

Citizens of Camarillo have much to rejoice with their success in stopping the Conejo Creek industrial and housing development that was proposed for 750 acres of prime farmland along the 101 freeway at the bottom of the Conejo Grade. The rest of the region can also cheer that we won't have the additional 41,000 extra car trips a day further congesting streets and highway. Congratulations and special thanks to Merrill Berge, founder of Camarillo Sustainable Growth, and Louise Roberts, president of Stop Conejo Creek, and the many grassroots leaders and volunteers who saved the day and the farmland!

This year also saw the rest of the Ventura County Transportation Commission join me in rejecting the concept of putting toll lanes on the 101 freeway. It was also the year our County's Animal Shelter became one of the only No-Kill shelters in the State.

It is special to be a part of efforts that make a difference, even if that difference is seeing that what we appreciate in life is protected.

Thank you for helping, and being a part of what makes life great!

Happy New Year!