

**REPORT OF THE NBNF BOARD RETREAT
SATURDAY, JANUARY 13, 2007**

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Board of Directors of the Newport Bay Naturalists and Friends (NBNF) held a retreat on January 13, 2007. This report summarizes the fundamental issues discussed and the specific outcomes of the retreat.
- 1.2 Prior to the retreat, Naturalists and Associates were asked for input on the items on the agenda for the retreat and any other items that they consider important. A total of six communications were received in response to the request sent to the nearly 200 active Naturalists and Associates. The Board addressed the comments during its deliberations. Individual responses have been made to each of the six communications received. For the benefit of the membership-at-large, each comment and how it was addressed during the retreat is summarized in Attachment 1.

2.0 Mission Statement

- 2.1 The Board reviewed the following NBNF Mission Statement adopted at the February 2003 Board Retreat:
- *Restore and preserve the native habitat of Upper Newport Bay and its surroundings.*
 - *Educate the public about the ecological value of the Bay.*
 - *Facilitate the consensus of all stakeholders in Upper Newport Bay in achieving good water quality, healthy native flora and fauna, and compatible public use of a protected ecosystem in a dense urban environment.*
- 2.2 The facilitation role was added to the Mission Statement in 2003 consistent with the comprehensive Management Coalition Cooperative Policy, the development of which was facilitated by NBNF in December 2002 and January/February 2003. Indeed the role was already being played to some extent as far back as the mid 1990's when the Naturalists helped establish and organize a policy-level group involving regional Harbors, Beaches and Parks (HBP) and Department of Fish and Game (DFG) management staff and the Assistant City Manager of Newport Beach. This group became the Upper Newport Bay (UNB) Management Coalition. With the opening of the Muth Interpretive Center (IC) and the temporary Back Bay Science Center (BBSC) in 2000 the need for increased coordination and facilitation increased substantially. In 2001 NBNF proposed to the Management Coalition that NBNF hire a full-time Executive Director and make this coordination and facilitation a key part of the person's job description. The proposal was unanimously agreed to by the Management Coalition and served as the basis for the decision made by the Board in 2002 to proceed with hiring an Executive Director.
- 2.3 The Board discussed the facilitation role at length and concluded that it is not part of the mission of NBNF, but rather a means to achieve the long-term protection of UNB. The Board therefore adopted the following revised Mission Statement:
- *To **preserve** and **restore** the ecosystems of Upper Newport Bay.*
 - *To **educate** the public about the ecological value of the Bay and its watershed and help ensure compatible public use.*

3.0 Guiding Principles

- 3.1 The Board continued the discussion of how NBNF fulfills its mission. Since NBNF has no lands or facilities, it functions only in partnership with the public agencies here at the Bay. NBNF provides human, information and financial support to achieve common goals.
- 3.2 Although NBNF works to support the land-owning agencies, its primary allegiance is to the long-term health of the Bay. The habitat and wildlife of the Bay are oblivious to jurisdictional boundaries or politics. Thus, NBNF must be able to voice concerns publicly if, because of budget shortfalls or other impediments, the governmental entities cannot or will not provide effective, holistic stewardship at UNB. This advocacy role was inherited from the Friends of Newport Bay (FONB), which was founded in 1968 by Frank and Fran Robinson and later merged with the Upper Newport Bay Naturalists (UNBN) in 2000 to form NBNF. In fighting for the preservation of UNB, Frank and Fran used the words “conscience of the Bay”. This is a very descriptive term that the Board feels conveys an essential part of who we are as an organization. FONB was here before either DFG or HBP, and was instrumental in the creation of the UNB Ecological Reserve and Nature Preserve.
- 3.3 The Board therefore adopted the following Guiding Principles under which to function:
- *We will work to fulfill our mission in cooperation with all Upper Newport Bay stakeholders.*
 - *To effectively achieve our mission we will function as “**the conscience of the Bay**” and coordinate, facilitate and advocate as necessary to ensure a holistic approach to the management of the Bay.*

4.0 Goals and Objectives

- 4.1 The Board briefly reviewed and ratified the goals previously established for NBNF, namely:
- Management Coalition Support
 - Interpretive Center Support
 - Back Bay Science Center Support
 - Restoration Project Support
 - NBNF Tours, Events and Outreach
 - Advocacy and Public Relations
- 4.2 The biggest need for support in the coming year is at the BBSC. Unfortunately, until the respective roles of DFG, the City and NBNF at the new facility are determined, NBNF is unable to define specific objectives with respect to the provision of human, information and financial resources at the BBSC. This affects our overall allocation of resources. NBNF is optimistic that the necessary agreements will be made soon, and a positive working relationship established with the new DFG staff. In the mean time, NBNF will focus its efforts in areas where it has direct control of its activities and areas where it is comfortable with its role in support of agency needs.

4.3 5.0 NBNF Policies

- 5.1 NBNF has policies and procedures governing various aspects of how it conducts business, including how it exercises its fiduciary responsibility to its funders ensure that monies are managed and used appropriately and in keeping with donor intentions. Based on the input from the membership the Board determined a need for the following two new policies:
- Strategic Partner Policy
 - Strategic Decision Policy

- 5.2 The Strategic Partner Policy is needed to ensure that there is a mechanism for determining how and when we should partner with corporations and other public- and private-sector entities, particularly when the partnership involves the receipt of substantial funding from the partner or prospective partner. Factors to consider include the intention of the partner, source of money (marketing or philanthropic arm of organization), amount involved (as a percentage of our operating or capital budget), purpose for which it will be used, recognition desired, and other stipulations. Any partnerships that would compromise or appear to compromise our integrity should be rejected. The Board noted that a distinction had to be made between major gifts received by NBNF where NBNF has the ability to control the terms under which a gift would be received, and those received by HBP, DFG, the City, etc. The latter should be addressed in both the Strategic Partner Policy and the Strategic Decision Policy, since we will need to find out the terms of such funding and determine to what extent we should privately or publicly advocate for rejection of a gift or change in terms under which it is pledged.
- 5.3 The Strategic Decision Policy is needed to ensure that there is a mechanism for evaluating major projects (such as the Big Canyon Project), inter- agency agreements (such as the recent City – County Cooperative Agreement), and other actions that may significantly impact the habitat or wildlife of the Bay, facilities, programs, etc. This mechanism is necessary to determine whether or not NBNF should take an official position and if so, what that position should be.
- 5.4 Both policies should be written to ensure that our Mission and Guiding Principles are followed in accepting strategic partners and advocating specific actions.
- 5.5 Both policies need to ensure appropriate membership involvement in the process.

6.0 Membership Involvement

- 6.1 The Board determined that there needs to be better communication between the NBNF Board and staff and the membership-at-large, and more involvement of the membership in the decision-making process. Specific ways suggested to accomplish this include:
- Recruitment of members to serve on permanent committees such as Advocacy and ad-hoc committees and task forces (such as the Bay Planning Committee).
 - A monthly “From the Board” column in Clapper Rail Mail to keep members informed of issues coming up for discussion, etc.
 - Monthly meetings to update Naturalists on environmental education, restoration and Management Coalition issues as well as hear qualified speakers on environmental issues.

7.0 Retreat Action Items

- 7.1 The following Action Items were assigned:
1. Seek statement from the City of Newport Beach as to the status of The Irvine Company’s pledge of \$1.6 million to the City, and the terms under which it will be given. (Jack)
 2. Establish ad hoc committee to develop Strategic Partner Policy and recruit members. (Dick/Jack)
 3. Establish ad hoc committee to develop Strategic Decision Policy and recruit members. (Dennis/Jack)

Report prepared by Roger Mallett, Facilitator.
January 28, 2007

Board members present:	Dennis Baker	Tom Mooers
	Regina Fodor	Carol Starcevic
	Jack Keating	Dick Watts

ATTACHMENT 1 MEMBERSHIP INPUT TO BOARD RETREAT

A total of six communications were received in response to the request sent to the nearly 200 active Naturalists and Associates of NBNF. One comment addressed publishing a comprehensive book on Upper Newport Bay. This was considered to be outside the scope of the retreat and will be addressed by the Executive Director. The five others communications fell within three topic areas as follows:

A. Mission Statement

The one communication on this topic requested reconsideration of the third part of our current mission statement, added at the last Board retreat, which involves "facilitating consensus of all stakeholders..."

The commenter stated: "In my opinion, the NBNF board needs to attain the wisdom that they cannot effect lasting change at the various agencies involved, and instead focus on maximizing the effectiveness of the Naturalist's programs while working within the given framework. This renewed focus on programs will help put the board back on the same playing field with the membership, and as a team we can regain some of the ground we've lost in recent years."

This comment was addressed under Items 2.0, 3.0 and 4.0 of the Retreat Report. Although it is clear the Board must renew focus on programs working with the membership as team, we must also work to achieve holistic management of the Bay.

B. Irvine Company Involvement

Two communications dealt with Irvine Company involvement at the Bay.

One commenter requests that "the Board add an action item to their mission that is to ensure that the Irvine Co. does not have any part of the Upper Newport Bay Management. Their donations must be without any strings attached or we (NBNF) should refuse the money. The fact they have some "ownership" of the Science Center is of great concern to many Naturalists. Signs at the Bay should not reflect the Irvine Co. as a partner."

The other commenter states that "the Board's goals are proper and include fund-raising. One of our biggest financial supporters in the past few years has been the Irvine Company, and they seem willing to take a more active role in contributing money to the Upper Bay projects and help provide management of the resources. Any mention of the Irvine Company at membership meetings is met with scorn and derision by a vocal minority of the members. I believe the Board should express appreciation for the efforts of the Irvine Company and expand our cooperation with that organization. You should not continue the policy of hiding our appreciation from the membership, but rather the membership should be made aware of the benefits of a policy of cooperation."

The Board concluded that it needs to have a policy for evaluating offers of financial support and other support on merit and ensuring that they are consistent with our Mission Statement and Guiding Principles. See Item 5.0 of the Retreat Report.

The Board also noted that there have been conflicting reports as to whether or not The Irvine Company has indeed already given \$1.6 million to the City of Newport Beach (\$900,000 for the Construction Phase of Big Canyon, \$600,000 for the staging area for the Mountain to Sea Trail at the BBSC and \$100,000 for the Back Bay Loop Trail) and, if so, what the terms of the Gift Agreement are. The City will be asked for a written statement of the status of this pledge and any conditions attached to the pledge. The Board will then report back to the membership.

C. The Big Canyon Project

The two communications addressed several aspects of the proposed design of this project under contract to WRC by the City, including the suggested closure of Back Bay Drive to vehicular traffic from Big Canyon to Eastbluff, and the addition of an amphitheater at Big Canyon. The commenters are opposed to this.

There are two separate issues here. The first is the merit of the suggested change to Big Canyon and Back Bay Drive. The second is the protocol by which NBNF arrives at an “official” position on matters likely to be of major concern to the membership at large.

The Board feels that the addition of an amphitheater and certain other features at Big Canyon is inconsistent with our primary focus, which is the protection of native habitat and wildlife. The Board also feels that the closure of Back Bay Drive to vehicular traffic from Big Canyon to Eastbluff would not solve the problems that prompted this suggestion, and may cause other problems that would need to be addressed. The Board decided that extensive membership input is needed on the proposed design before any official NBNF position is adopted. An NBNF general meeting is needed as soon as possible to hear questions and comments and allow discussion of alternate solutions.

The Board also decided that a policy is needed to define how input will be obtained in similar situations in the future. See Item 5.3 of the Retreat Report.

(NOTE: The plans for restoring Big Canyon and adding trails and facilities will be discussed at the February 1 NBNF membership meeting. The consideration of possible partial road closure to private vehicles will also be discussed separately as it is not within the scope of the Big Canyon Restoration contract.)