



CALIFORNIA
NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

**FRIENDS OF KNOWLAND
PARK**

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SETTLEMENT TALKS SCUTTLED; ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS' LAWSUIT CONTINUES AGAINST OAKLAND ZOO PARKLAND DEVELOPMENT

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Friends of Knowland Park and the East Bay Chapter of the California Native Plant Society (EBCNPS) announced today that mediated settlement negotiations with the City of Oakland and the Oakland Zoo have ended. The groups will instead return to court to continue their lawsuit charging that the city broke the law by approving, without a full Environmental Impact Report, the zoo's plan to build a theme park atop rare native wildlife habitat.

"We really hoped that mediation would succeed," said Ruth Malone of Friends of Knowland Park. "We spent nearly two months trying for a win-win, and in the end we still had no way to permanently protect *any* portion of Knowland Park from development. We are bitterly disappointed."

Knowland Park is the only site where the public can see examples of rare native grasslands and chaparral ten minutes from the city center--and all for free. "The cruel irony is that the public has been duped about what it's getting in the 52-acre expansion. The zoo calls the development a conservation exhibit, but it's a naked land grab that destroys top quality habitat," said Laura Baker, EBCNPS Conservation Chair. "Once the theme park goes up, the public will have to pay to access areas they can now enjoy for free."

Knowland Park is a thriving ecosystem that is home to an abundance of native wildlife, including bobcats, foxes, coyotes, deer, hawks, owls, and at least one federally endangered species, the Alameda Whipsnake. "In the 21st century, it just doesn't pass the laugh test for a city to take its finest wildland park, pave it over and call it conservation," said Malone.

For years, the City of Oakland has refused requests to post Knowland Park on its Parks and Recreation website so that people could know that the park exists and discover its treasures. This makes it one of the city's best kept secrets.

"The next best kept secret is how the Oakland Zoo has quietly managed to tap millions of dollars from multiple pots of public funds," says Baker, "while making the claim that the development will largely be paid for by private donations. Let's have the whole financial picture," she added. "When libraries and critical public services are facing cuts, the public should not be asked to pay to destroy its own natural treasures for a faux-conservation theme park."#####

About Friends of Knowland Park (www.knowlandpark.com)

Friends of Knowland Park is an association of environmentalists, neighborhood groups, and concerned citizens from throughout the Bay Area, brought together by the common wish to preserve and protect the natural resources of Knowland Park for future generations.

About CNPS (www.cnps.org)

The California Native Plant Society, through its nearly 10,000 members and 33 regional chapters, has been working to represent the public's interest in protecting California's beautiful native plants and their habitats since 1965. Run by professional staff and volunteers, CNPS is a 501(c)3 organization active in promoting public education about native plants and the use of sound plant science in advocating for conservation of natural areas throughout the State of California.