

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HARD FOUGHT GATEWAY PARK DECLARED THE WINNER: Now Named "Harbaugh Seaside Trails," Park Belongs to the People *Donor and Park Name Revealed at Press Conference*

SOLANA BEACH – Like a hot potato, bouncing around from cook to cook, Gateway Park, the controversial 3-acre coastal property that had been fought over by commercial developers for decades, has finally found a permanent status, and cools off now in the hands of the people of Solana Beach.

A press conference was held today announcing the park's new name, and the \$1.15 million donor who made this possible. Harbaugh Seaside Trails soon joins San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve and will continue under the guidance of the San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy with its new name. Plans are now being made to create walking trails and benches along the acreage that will enhance this coastal overlook and preserve the impressive view corridors to the Pacific Ocean.

The donor of the \$1.15 million gift is the George and Betty Harbaugh Charitable Foundation. Heading the non-profit is long-time Solana Beach resident Joe Balla, who had watched for years as the community rallied again and again to stop commercial development of this property.

"My family grew up across the street and we've spent countless hours here running and walking to the lagoon," said Balla. "It is an amazing site and the views of the coastline and the ocean are incomparable. It is with great pride and gratitude that our Foundation has the opportunity to write a happy ending to the Gateway saga. I am so pleased that now and forever it will be the peoples park ... Harbaugh Seaside Trails."

Harbaugh Seaside Trails is a place for contemplation and enjoyment, dog walking, and a community gathering spot for stunning sunsets over the Pacific Ocean. The strategic location of this overlook creates an important buffer for protected habitat in San Elijo Lagoon and is a natural extension of the Coastal Rail Trail.

"Harbaugh Seaside Trails will be restored for native aesthetics by San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy, which also owns and manages 60 acres of acquired habitat within the reserve," said Doug Gibson, executive director and principal scientist for the nonprofit land trust. "We look forward to beginning this work in partnership with the Harbaugh Charitable Foundation and City of Solana Beach, which accepted the property as a conservation easement this past November."

A diverse committee comprised of conservancy and community leaders, and City of Solana Beach will direct the design and implementation of the plans. The City of Solana Beach has committed funds for the restoration of the property with the potential for a railroad pedestrian underpass near the park's Cardiff-by-the-Sea/Solana Beach border.

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The 3.4-acre Harbaugh Seaside Trails (formerly Gateway Park) is one of the last undeveloped coastal parcels in urban Southern California, offering panoramic views of the Pacific Ocean in the “gateway” between Solana Beach and Cardiff-by-the-Sea. For more than 20 years, commercial development proposals threatened this upland habitat and community overlook—until the conservancy purchased the property in late 2011.

Three years ago, San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy launched The Campaign for Gateway Park to raise \$3.75 million to repay the property loan made possible by conservancy lenders who formed an LLC. Today, and including this major donation, \$3.3 million has been raised through a groundswell of community support.

A portion of the funds raised is in the form of a matching challenge. Several LLC members have put up half a million dollars, and are encouraging the community to match the remaining \$420,000. Doing so allows the Conservancy to retire the acquisition debt and move forward with the restoration and enhancement of Harbaugh Seaside Trails.

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The mission of San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy, a nonprofit land trust, is to protect and restore the resources of San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve, its watershed, and related ecosystems for the benefit of current and future generations. For more information, contact Conservancy Executive Director Doug Gibson at (760) 436-3944 x 707 or by cell (760) 803-4824. His email is doug@sanelijo.org.

NOTE: Media Access for High-Resolution Images of the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony will soon be online at SanElijo.org/Press-Releases

