

THE PIPELINE

News from the Ventura County Public Works Agency

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From the
Director's
Desk

Jeff Pratt,
Public Works
Agency Director



Dear Friends,

Springtime is a great time to get out and do some hiking throughout Ventura County. According to Alex Mathews with the Surveyor's Office, hikers might still stumble upon survey markers from California's historic Rancho era. In this issue you can read up on the old Ranchos and how they contributed to today's survey boundaries. While many boundaries stay the same, the in-betweens are improving and evolving. For example, VCPWA's Transportation Department is working to enhance road safety in Somis by realigning the Donlon Road and Highway 118 intersection.

We're also proud to recognize our hard-working VCPWA teams for their work and improvements to our County. Last month, Zoe Carlson represented the Watershed Protection District at USCB's Environmental Planning Coalition and VCPWA was honored by the American Society of Civil Engineers and APWA Ventura County Chapter for the Ventura County Government Center Parking Lot Green Streets Retrofit Project and the J Street Drain Improvement Phase 1.

Finally, the theme has been announced for this year's National Public Works Week. Next time you find yourself questioning why you do what you do, remember, "Community Begins Here."

All the Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeff Pratt". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Jeff Pratt
Director



Realigning **SAFETY**

With our continued mission to deliver efficient, responsive, and cost-effective public works services that protect and enhance the safety, health, and quality of life in Ventura County, VCPWA's Transportation Department is moving forward to construct a critical realignment of the Donlon Road and Highway 118 intersection to line up with Somis Road (Highway 34). The purpose of the project is to improve safety at the intersection by eliminating the offset between Donlon Road and Somis Road.

The project will move Donlon Road 200 feet to the west, to align with the existing traffic signal on Highway 118 at Somis Road. The signal will then become a standard four-way intersection, with Donlon Road extending to the north; the old intersection of Donlon Road and Highway 118 will be closed. The new Donlon Road will traverse an existing nursery and cross over

Coyote Canyon Creek, where it will join the original Donlon Road. "These developments will increase intersection capacity and enhance safety," explains Director of Transportation David Fleisch.

The project will add much longer left-turn lanes in both directions on Highway 118, as well as eight-foot shoulders to the highway. Where Donlon Road will cross the creek, a new concrete arch culvert (bridge) will be constructed.

Construction is estimated to begin in June and will take approximately eight months. Shoulder widening along Highway 118 will occur at night to minimize disruption to traffic. "We hope these safety improvements will bring relief to the thousands of motorists who frequently drive this roadway," says Fleisch. "The public has been requesting these road enhancements for quite some time."



HISTORIC RANCHO BOUNDARIES

Everyone knows about the historic Spanish influence in California... and part of this history includes rancho land grants from Spain. But maybe you didn't know that you can still find evidence here in Ventura County from California's rancho days... if you know where to look, and if you like to hike! According to Alex Mathews, LSIT, Surveyor III with the Ventura County Surveyor's Office at VCPWA Engineering Services Department, there are some survey markers from the rancho era still in place. In fact, some city boundaries are drawn along those original survey lines, as well as other boundaries all over the state of California.

What's a Rancho?

In the 1790s, California was a Spanish colony. The Spanish Governors began granting land to Spaniards – often retiring soldiers – living in the region. Consisting of thousands of acres, these land grants, known as *ranchos*, were used primarily as ranch land for livestock. Two of these original Spanish land grants in Ventura County include Rancho Simi (1795) and Rancho El Conejo (1802). Later, when California fell under Mexican rule, additional Mexican land grants were issued to individuals. These land grants are also referred to as ranchos.



"It's interesting to note that even though maps were plotted and officially filed for each rancho, many of them, often for economic reasons, were not surveyed at the time of their creation. If our modern-day GPS survey technology had been available when the land grants were originally issued, it would have been a much more reasonable proposition to survey and monument these often vast areas of land," says Mathews. These grants were honored by the U.S. when it took possession in 1846, and a massive surveying process was launched to confirm boundaries.

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In the 1860s, a drought caused many of the California ranchos to experience financial difficulties, and most were divided up and sold. Many of these became modern-day suburbs. A very small number of ranchos are still owned by descendants of the original owners, retain their original size, or remain undeveloped.



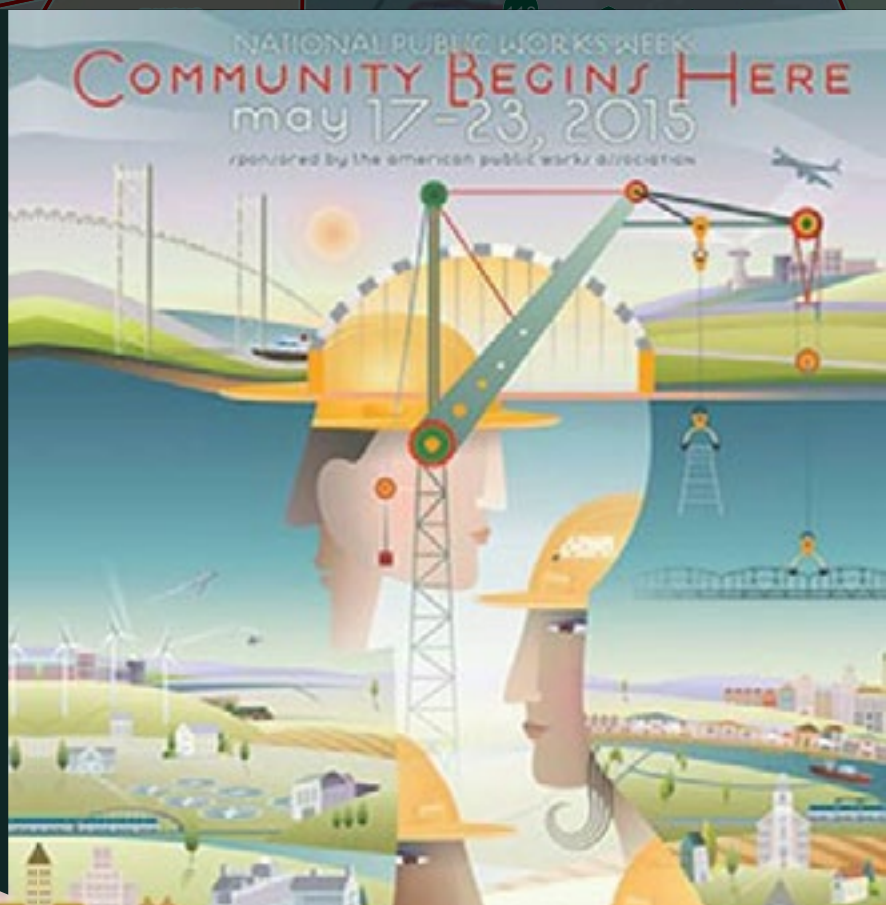
Both Spanish and Mexican land grants are the earliest recognized subdivisions of lands within the State of California and as such are the base of all subsequent land divisions within their boundaries. In fact, original rancho names can still be found on modern maps and land titles. These boundaries were partially based on geography, such as ridge lines and water courses. Land development in the 20th and 21st centuries often follows the boundaries of the old ranchos, and may even retain the original name. For example, Rancho San Diego is an unincorporated "rural-burb" east of San Diego. Rancho Bernardo is a master-plan suburb within the City of San Diego. We can see the influence of rancho lines locally, too. For example, portions of the City of Camarillo boundary follow the boundary of Rancho Calleguas, and portions of the City of Thousand Oaks boundary follow the boundary of Rancho El Conejo.

SAVE THE DATE!

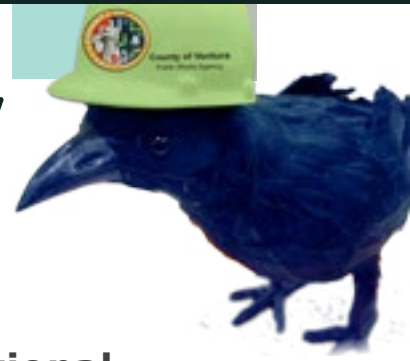
**National Public Works
Week Awareness Day**

May 19th | 8:30am - 2:00pm

There would be no community without the quality of life public works provides. There would be no community to police and protect, no public to lead or represent. Public works allows the world as we know it to be. The 2015 National Public Works Week theme, "Community Begins Here," speaks to the essential nature of Public Works services in support of everyday quality of life.



Recent VCPWA News!



VCPWA Watershed Protection District educational outreach to UCSB Environmental Planning Coalition

On Thursday, February 12, Zoe Carlson represented the Ventura County Public Works Agency Watershed Protection District for the Environmental Planning Coalition at UCSB. As UCSB's first undergraduate professional organization for future environmental planners and consultants, the Environmental Planning Coalition is an American Planning Association Planning Student Organization that enables students to learn about new urban/regional planning topics in the Santa Barbara area; to network with professionals, graduate students, and undergrads; to obtain information about graduate education in planning; and to get involved with professional associations such as the American Planning Association. Zoe was able to touch upon Ventura County's Watershed Management Planning and the current projects the department currently has in progress.



VCPWA earns top honors at American Society of Civil Engineers awards

Congratulations to the VCPWA's Watershed Protection District team, recipient of two awards at the American Society of Civil Engineers banquet on February 19th. Helmed by Stormwater Program Manager Ewelina Mutkowska and Water Quality Engineer David Kirby, the VCPWA's Watershed Protection District team was recognized for its application of engineering principles, overcoming challenges, and success of process.

The VCPWA strives to incorporate "green" technology into every project. As a result, the Santa Barbara/Ventura Branch of the American Society of Civil Engineers selected the Ventura County Government Center Parking Lot Green Streets Retrofit Project as 2014 Project of the Year. Ten other highly successful "green" projects were also nominated for this award.

VCPWA was also recognized by the APWA Ventura County chapter for the APWA 2015 Projects of the Year. This award encourages and rewards outstanding public works projects in Ventura County. VCPWA also took top honors for the County Government Center Parking Lot Green Streets Retrofit Project in the Environmental category and the J Street Drain Improvement Phase 1 in the Emergency Repair category.