



CINDY YAMANAKA, ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Vibrant ice plants grow wild in Banning Ranch. The 412 acres of wetlands, bluffs and mesa is located along the Santa Ana River and Pacific Coast Highway.

It's time to compromise over

# BANNING RANCH

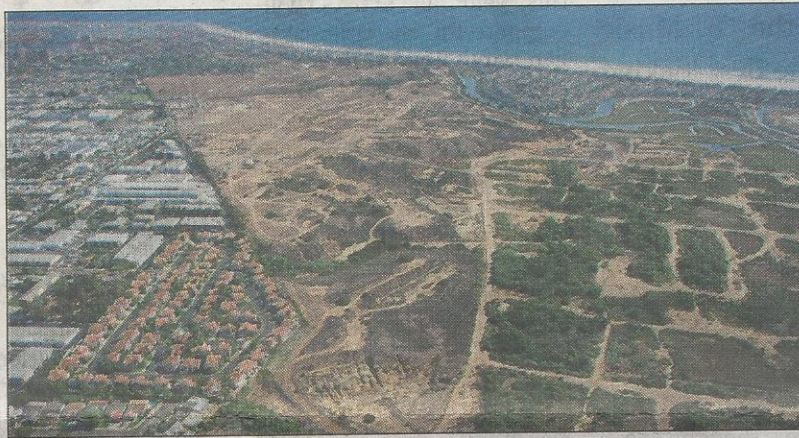
As I write this commentary, the Fiscal Cliff looms large. Whether we go over or not, the bottom line is that we shouldn't be at this point. The Fiscal Cliff, like the debt-ceiling crisis that recently occurred, is a result of dogmatic intransigence and an inability to compromise for the greater good.

So too, it seems, with the Banning Ranch issue.

Virtually the entire nine years I spent on the Newport Beach City Council, the Banning Ranch development was on the radar. The initial compromise incorporated into

the 2006 update of the Newport Beach General Plan Land Use Element, which was approved by a vote of the residents, provided for a two-pronged approach.

On the one hand, the environmental community was given a window of opportunity to cobble together the funds necessary to



COURTESY OF TOM LAMB

Under a developer's plans, the undeveloped mesa portion of Banning Ranch, at left, would have homes and shops, while the lower portion, at right, would be preserved as open space.

purchase the entire property. The city even pledged to assist in the process, which it did, by commissioning a valuation of the property and by hiring a consultant to survey the various sources of funds for parkland acquisition to determine if there was money out there that could be used to purchase the property. And the result of the valuation and the survey survey? A cost in excess of \$150 million to buy

the property, and virtually no money available to do so in the foreseeable future.

The second prong of the compromise approved by the voters was to concurrently allow the property owners to move forward with their development plans. They did so, and earlier this year the City Council certified their EIR and approved their plan for development. As part of the approval,

the property owners have agreed to convert up to 70 percent of the property to public open space in the form of restored wetlands and habitat, substantial cliff top greenbelts and dozens of acres of badly needed parkland.

One of the leaders of the Banning Ranch Conservancy once told me that he would rather the property remain in its degraded state than see one new home built there. Instead of litigating the council's approval of the Banning Ranch Development, which the Banning Ranch Conservancy has chosen to do, the BRC should back off of its dogmatic intransigence and seek a compromise with the owners of the Banning Ranch.

The residents have spoken through their approval of the General Plan Land Use Element and through the unanimous vote of their elected representatives to allow this project to move forward. The time has come to compromise for the greater good.

- Steve Rosansky is a former Newport Beach mayor and city council member representing the Second District, which includes Banning Ranch.



STEVE ROSANSKY  
GUEST  
COLUMNIST