



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 22, 2009

Irvine Ranch Conservancy Contact:
Wida Karim 714-508-4760/ Cell: 949-309-9838

Nature, We've Got Your Number

City of Irvine, in Partnership With Irvine Ranch Conservancy, Launches Unique Program Using Cell Phone Technology to Connect People With the Outdoors

(Irvine, CA)— In a first for Orange County outdoor recreation, the City of Irvine is launching a new tour program that lets people explore and discover the wonders of nature at their own pace – simply by using their personal cell phones.

Developed in partnership with the Irvine Ranch Conservancy, the unique self-guided tours begin Saturday, May 23 in Quail Hill, the scenic open space in the City of Irvine that is part of the Irvine Ranch Natural Landmarks.

During the new tour, visitors can use their cell phones to listen to recorded narratives by naturalists and researchers as they discuss all aspects of the preserved land that comprises Quail Hill, including its biology and history, as well as trail etiquette. At one “phonestop,” for example, listeners will learn about the ecological complexities and significance of seasonal or “vernal” pools. At another, they will observe, and hear about, non-native plant species such as artichoke thistle and mustard plant and the major threats they pose to Southern California’s fragile native habitats such as those found at Quail Hill.

In addition, informational brochures will be available at the trailhead as well as “Cell Phone Tour” signs to direct participants from one phonestop to the next. The program is simple: Visitors simply call 949-743-5943 and enter the phonestop number and the pound key to hear the recorded messages.

-more-

Since this is a cell phone tour, people can be anywhere along the trail where there is cell coverage to listen to the recordings. In addition, this allows for the option of either listening as you go or calling in and listening to the narration at the end of your trek. In other words, you can listen to the tour from any phone, anywhere at any time.

“What better way to explore nature than to take a leisurely stroll and learn about the open spaces that surround you along the way?” said Brian Hughes, a naturalist with the Irvine Ranch Conservancy who helped create the new tour program. “The Quail Hill tour is free, using your own cell service and minutes. There is no additional charge to listen to these messages. We’re very excited about this tour and hope to implement it in other areas of the Natural Landmarks as access opens up and where cell coverage is available.”

The technology that provides the foundation for this cell phone tour comes from the San Francisco-based company, Guide by Cell, which has a suite of mobile technology products used largely by museums and cultural institutions nationwide. For more information about Guide by Cell visit www.guidebycell.com

To learn more about Quail Hill and other areas of the Irvine Ranch Natural Landmarks, visit www.irvineranchwildlands.org.

Nearly 40,000 acres of open space on the historic Irvine Ranch have been designated a Natural Landmark by both the State of California and the U.S. Department of Interior since 2006, in recognition of their importance to California and the nation.

Irvine Ranch Conservancy is a 501(c)3 non-profit, non-advocacy organization created in 2005 to protect the wildlands and parks on the historic Irvine Ranch and enhance the public’s connection to them, while helping partners and landowners with all aspects of stewardship. It offers a variety of free, guided outdoor programs for all nature enthusiasts including hiking, mountain biking, horse-back riding and much more. For more information, visit www.irvineranchwildlands.org or call 714.508.4757.

###