Sepulveda Wildlife Reserve Planning Committee
Meeting Minutes, August 19, 1991

PLEASE NOTE:
The **next meeting** will be held on Monday, September 16, at 10 a.m.

In attendance:
Steve Hartman
Peter Ireland
Dan Kahane
Ken Kendig
Bill Principe
Jill Swift
David White
Sandy Wohlgemuth

Sandy Wohlgemuth reported as follows:

At the last meeting it was decided that a meeting between the City Department of Environmental Quality and the Corps of Engineers (COE) would be appropriate. Contacts have been made, and interest has been expressed, but scheduling problems have thus far precluded establishment of a date for the meeting.

Representative Beilensen has been very supportive of environmental issues, generally, and there was great hope among concerned groups that he would support development of wildlife habitat at Sepulveda. When contacted, he requested more information; Hartman's initial report was in response to this. Now, Beilensen has received $2.5M from Congress; $2M has been designated for Lake Balboa. A request to Beilensen for $500K hasn't been answered.

Bill Principe recommended that the $82K should be held as "fallback" funds. The agencies should be funding the various studies. Identifying target agencies should be a priority. The U.S. Congress should be a primary funding source.

Jill Swift suggested a press conference to publicize the committee's efforts.

Peter Ireland said there may be tentatively allocated federal monies, or other federal dollars already being given to the City. The COE and the City Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) may not be the appropriate lead agencies, as their efforts to date have produced minimal results. Perhaps the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) could be designated as lead federal agency, with an invitation issued through Beilensen. That would put the question back to Beilensen's office, where the money is and so he would retain control. It might even be that the Sepulveda Wildlife Reserve could become a unit of the National Wildlife Refuge (NWLR) system; there are precedents for reclaimed environments becoming NWLR units, e.g., in Hawaii. The COE's legal responsibilities could be satisfied by executing a Memorandum of Understanding with the USFWS.

Swift said COE is subject to various legal responsibilities. Specifically in regard to Sepulveda Basin, COE has three design elements, and one is a Feature Design Memorandum detailing a Wildlife Management Area. COE issued a Final Environmental Assessment (FEA) in 1987, which should constitute the basis (even if a basis for departure) for any of our discussions and plans.

Dan Kahane reported having briefed Steve Dwyer of COE on the project; he is very open and amenable. Dan will contact him again.

David White volunteered to copy the COE's FEA and send one to each committee member.

Steve Hartman said he thought the scope of our efforts should be fundamentally reconsidered. He distinguished between three separate issues:

(1) The L.A. River; this has a life of its own, independent of the Sepulveda Basin.

(2) The South Preserve within the Basin; it is a "no man's land" and no one wants to manage it because, due to siltation, it will be difficult and expensive.

(3) The North Wildlife Preserve, which is leased by the City of Los Angeles.

Instead of another paper plan, the funds could be spent enhancing management of the North Wildlife Preserve. There are immediate needs there, including the need to remove invasive Star Thistles and Horehound.

A frank exchange of views followed. While *Hartman* was concerned with doing something concrete, actual, and immediate, *Ireland* pointed out that such management activities should be the responsibility of DPR and *White* saw a possibility that available funding could be completely spent with no long-term gain. *Hartman* explained that vegetation invasion is occurring because of soil disturbance, and that establishing native vegetation would create

an essentially weed-proof environment. *White* was still concerned that, in absence of a Basin-wide management plan, soil disturbances would continue to occur; he proposed a combined approach, taking some immediate action on its own right, but also in order to enhance a broader planning/management effort.

Swift and *Principe* suggested that *Hartman* prepare a proposal, to be submitted to the Los Angeles Audubon Society, for a grant of a portion of the funds to be directed toward the immediate needs. At the same time, several participants began discussing an enhanced volunteer effort to accomplish both the limited needs and to publicize the larger issue. *Principe* suggested an organized event to raise volunteers and build community support; *Ireland* noted that a coordinated cleanup could serve as a demonstration to the City on how to do it; *White* mentioned that a successful event would serve as tangible proof of a constituency, and potentially get Beilensen's attention; there was a general discussion on ways to advertise and organize the event, and also regarding the Department of Public Works and monies available for mitigation of effects from a planned pipeline. *Swift* suggested that our larger effort be called **"Heal the Basin,"** and volunteered to contact leadership of **Heal the Bay** to see if they would object to our imitation of their name.

Principe indicated that he would investigate the legal status of the committee. *Hartman* reiterated concern that the committee is in "La-La Land" and needs to "get real and do something actual"; he was again invited to submit a firm proposal, with a budget, identifying immediate management needs and how to accomplish them. *Ken Kendig* cautioned that there may be legal problems with hiring a firm to carry out resource management activities on COE or City-leased land; a volunteer effort might be more easily accommodated.

Hartman initiated a discussion about why San Fernando Audubon (SFAS) is not represented on the committee, but Los Angeles Audubon (LAAS) is. *White* explained that LAAS is a more active organization with a county-wide constituency; *Swift* indicated that SFAS has a very narrow focus, and few highly active members. *Wohlgemuth* noted that attempted contacts with SFAS have been unsuccessful.

The meeting was adjourned and the next meeting date was set for Monday, September 16, at 10:00 a.m., in the same location.

Submitted by David White