

Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Areas Steering Committee
Monthly Meeting
July 25, 2000

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 PM by Sandy Wohlgemuth, Chair. In attendance: Glenn Bailey, David Ecklund (arrived later), Gene Greene, Eric Lesser, James Ward, and Rosemarie White. Guests: Stuart Miller of Seasonal Adventures, Inc. and operator of the Corn Maze adjacent to Woodley Park and Wildlife Area, and Rob Lambert, Operation Manager for the Corn Maze. Later, Carvel Bass, ACOE, arrived.

Old Business: Gene reported that all 8 of the Wildlife Area signs have now been paid for (funds were not available until recently). The 2 reflectorized signs at entry road will be started next week. The 6 additional signs will be 24"x36" and may be mounted on separate posts from the Japanese Gardens signs due to space constraints.

Corn Maze: James presented Stu Miller and Rob Lambert from the Corn Maze. Stu gave a presentation on the background and operation of this and another Corn Maze of his (@ Aliso Viejo in Orange County). He emphasized the desirable traits of these projects and outlined the care put into each's operation for a quality recreational experience and to be a good neighbor to adjacent uses.

Some members of the Committee (Rosemarie, Eric, David) expressed unease with the "look of a commercial event" with so many ancillary activities aside from the maze itself in the midst of this part of the Basin and next to the Wildlife Area. Stu explained that corn mazes are only successful if there is also entertainment for children who can't master the maze (i.e., low key activities such as petting zoo, pony ride, etc.).

Stu stated that it will take them 5 days to clean up the site after the maze closes (sometime in early to mid-October). The corn (silage quality chosen for slow growth) will be cut down and disced into stubble which will be left for the wildlife.

Weeds are growing between the stalks. Stu said they only did one spraying (a fertilizer w/ Round Up) during field preparation. A quality low-pressure drip irrigation system was installed (this will be removed at the end of maze operation). Nitrogen fertilizer is injected into the system at periodic intervals.

The corn was planted on May 16. Maze opened July 1. Attendance as of July 16 has been 4700. Projections are an attendance of 9000 by end of July and 25-30,000 for the whole season. Admission is \$ 9.00 adults; \$ 7.00 children; free under 4 years. There have been no automobile traffic or parking problems to date and no need to activate the remote parking shuttle bus system set up.

James again emphasized that this is a 1-year permit, a learning experience, and that the entire event will be re-evaluated after it closes. In response to a query by Glenn, Stu said he typically needs permits in order by March 1 for a summer opening.

Rosemarie again expressed her concern with so many corn maze features and activities having an undesirable impact on the scant 200 acres of wildlife habitat that we need to protect. Eric indicated that despite some concerns re: the commercial aspect of the maze, he is supportive of the operation for this first trial year.

There was agreement that any maze impacts will need to be monitored during the course of the current operation. Any issues should be addressed to Rec & Parks. James indicated the maze operation has not seemed to so far impact Wildlife Area users. Stu stated that this is a fine use in such proximity to a wildlife area given the first class way he is managing the operation. Given the recreation use assigned to that land in the Basin plan, Glenn stated that he can see worse, less compatible things happening in that area than an corn maze, but a look at alternative sites for the maze should be undertaken. Gene stated a few unfavorable comments he has heard from visitors to the Japanese Garden re: the maze-- "inappropriate signage" and the unsightly red and white tent.

James emphasized the importance of the Committee and others monitoring and evaluating the area over the next several months (i.e., observing wildlife, interviewing people in the WL area, watching the traffic and parking, etc.). Glenn suggested that the Committee "agendize" this issue for the October meeting and invite Mr. Miller back then. (At conclusion of this agenda item, Stuart and Rob left meeting).

Carvel added some words on the process (thru Rec & Parks and ACOE) for evaluation and approval of the corn maze proposal and not often having all the information for a full analysis of potential impacts.

Excavate Sediment & Remove Vegetation, Los Angeles River: Carvel handed out a draft of a Public Notice to soon be released regarding work to begin probably in the latter part of 2001 to excavate sediment and remove flow-impeding exotic and some native vegetation in 2 reaches of the Los Angeles River north of Burbank Blvd to the railroad trestle west of Balboa Blvd. He also distributed copies of the draft Environmental Assessment prepared on the project. Stands of Arundo and Castor Bean would be among the exotics removed. Project is not yet funded. The Public Notice will be mailed to all parties listed on its page 3. The Environmental Assessment is due out in August and will have a 30-day public review period. One issue raised by the Committee is the extent of any follow-up exotics removal (for re-seeded, re-rooted plants).

Sandy read an e-mail from Melanie re: water sampling of Los Angeles River using a canoe for retrieval. Sandy also read an e-mail from Muriel re: plans for revegetation project planned 6 years ago between Burbank Blvd. and dam. Carvel indicated this project "starts and stops" based on funding and labor availability; revegetation is not ready to start yet; patience advised. (At conclusion of this agenda item, Carvel left meeting).

Recreation & Parks Report: 1. James reported that the DWP has started work on the 36" reclaimed high pressure water line (described in previous meetings/minutes). This water will be used for irrigation in locations throughout the Basin. 2. The new Hjelte facility is almost complete (restroom, food concession, and sports office). Watch for grand opening ceremony. 3. Sepulveda Garden Center expansion south of Magnolia Blvd started last week. It is a 90-day contract. 370 additional garden plots 10'x20'. \$ 25/year each plot. Will be functional this fall. 4. Construction continues on the R&P "Skatepark" in the northwest sector of the Basin. 5. A design is being developed for an enhanced entranceway for the R&P Woodley offices access road, including landscaping, signage, and a picnic area/parking lot improvements adjacent to HQ. Sandy brought up Muriel's concerns with the planned 'Worldfest' event at Woodley Park on July 30.

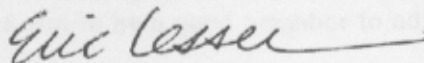
Committee Reports: Rosemarie commented on the children's series in the Los Angeles Times regarding an overabundance of Canada Geese in various western U.S. urban locations including Seattle, WA. Also, the Canada Goose Project is preparing for the 2000 fall migration with the training of counters starting next month.

Glenn reported re: direction at last RCD Board Meeting to increase extent of its educational activities.

Gene reported on educational opportunities planned for native vegetation berm in conjunction with the "toilet to tap" project.

The meeting adjourned at 9:23 PM.

Submitted by:



Eric Lesser, Member Sepulveda Basin
Wildlife Areas Steering Committee