

Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Areas Steering Committee
Minutes April 23, 2002

Steve Hartman chaired the meeting. Also attending were Jim Aidukas of JTA & Associates, Glenn Bailey, Jack Baylis, Sharon Brewer, Mary D. Cope, Gene Greene, Muriel Kotin, Joyce MacKinnon, Bill Neill, Kris Ohlenkamp, consultant Ralph Osterling, Linda Waade, James Ward, Rosemarie White, Melanie Winter, and Sandy Wohlgemuth. After self introductions, minutes of the March 2002 meeting were approved without change.

Public Comment: Mary Cope, a visitor who walks at Lake Balboa, asked about the purpose of this committee. She is concerned about birds being snared by fishing lines there and the impacts of July 4th events. James Ward indicated that Lake Balboa will be a venue for a fireworks display this year, and suggested that she write to the Dept of Rec & Parks. Committee members suggested contacting city council members and the Rec & Parks Commission. The visitor also complained about a lack of receptacle for charcoal. James said they are on order.

Sharon Brewer, another visitor, was featured in a recent article in the LA Times about problems at Lake Balboa. She has pictures of birds killed and maimed by fishing lines left at the lake and has many illegal fishing devices that she has found there. Steve H recommended she write letters to the editor and contact SFV Audubon. There is not enough law-enforcement personnel in city parks generally. A political process would be the route to resolving the problem.

Ongoing Weed Eradication Efforts (Bill Neill of Riparian Repairs): There is an arundo map (see <http://smsirwma.org>). Bill is removing arundo from the Wildlife Area (WA) on an ongoing basis. We are down to a few small clumps. Arundo is a fire hazard and overtakes riparian habitat. Castor bean is pretty much eradicated from the WA, and the large amounts near Haskell Creek north of the WA have been removed by Rec & Park discing. Eucalyptus is more slowly invasive. Bill would like to remove eucalyptus from WA, river and creeks, especially small ones. Muriel commented that's fine, but that the eucalyptus near the LA River at the golf course where great blue herons nest should not be disturbed. Bill agreed. He also said that small palm trees in river should come out. (Rec & Parks harvests the young palms sprouts from park areas.) There is a lot of Shamel ash, an urban riparian problem, in the Sepulveda Basin. Bill has removed it from the WA north of Burbank Blvd. and some south of Burbank, east of Haskell Creek. There is still a lot in the south reserve. Passionflower vine is the So Cal version of kudzu. It overwhelms the landscape. It is not in the WA yet, but it is in Encino Creek. Bill is using a different herbicide than the ACOE on arundo. Bill, the California Native Plant Society, and Melanie are working on a 3-year plan to rid Sep Basin of arundo and other exotics and are applying for grants for this.

Recreation & Parks Department (James Ward): Last weekend was chaos in Sep Basin, with the Whole Earth Festival all weekend and the Israeli Independence Day Festival Sunday. They're still breaking down the equipment. Glenn commented that cars were driving on bike paths, and that organizations should be held responsible for damage and misbehavior, that their security people need to supervise parking, traffic, etc. Glenn felt there was no one supervising and he does not want to see long-term damage from these events. James said R & P does have a revokable security deposit. The

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organizations must clean up and pay for security and parking expenses. But there were more people here than could be handled. R & P is assessing how much damage and how much to hold onto from the deposit. DOT did not staff up. Joyce commented that her neighborhood north of Victory Blvd. was badly impacted. Attendance at the Israeli Festival was about 10,000 Sunday and Whole Earth's 3-4,000 over the weekend despite media estimates of 40,000 at the Israeli Festival.

Members of CPRS (Cal Parks and Recreation Society) recently toured the Basin and were well impressed. The Woodley Golf club house is now partly in use and will be completed soon. The Garden Center's proposed new building is back on track. Ellen Oppenheim is leaving 5/18 as General Manager of R & P.

Japanese Garden (Gene Greene): They had to close last weekend because of the special events. Steve H gave the Japanese Gardens docents a tour of his garden recently. Berm tours will begin next month. Next Sunday will be a public event "Spring in the Japanese Garden" from 10:00 to 3:00.

LA Audubon Society (Sandy Wohlgemuth): Sandy handed in petitions in favor of Sep Bas wetlands. Consortium funds are now all in money market funds: \$40,341.

San Fernando Valley Audubon (Muriel Kotin): SFVAS's education programs are mostly complete for the school year. Friday, a tour/cleanup is scheduled, and she will also tour older girl scouts who will lead Brownies event and planting on Saturday.

Canada Goose Project (Rosemarie White): There is a possible nesting pair of Canada Geese on the Wildlife Lake island.

Resource Conservation District of the Sta. Monica Mountains (Glenn Bailey): Margo Murman is leaving as executive officer at the end of June. They're looking for a replacement.

The River Project (Melanie Winter): Melanie is working with the RCD-SMM on a project along the LA River near Bull Creek, now that the arundo is gone. She wants to remove concrete armoring along the north bank and restore riparian vegetation and create a more natural bank stabilization. They will investigate bio-engineering technologies and work with Birmingham High. The Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) is supportive. Melanie is uncertain whether the project will include the south bank. James said that Prop A2 designated \$1M funds for wildlife enhancement along Bull Cr with ACOE. Rec & Parks would like to put in a bike trail/trail along the north bank of LAR Bike funds also, using that \$1M. Rec & Parks will be re-applying for the bike trail funds. Melanie suggested the south bank might be better. TheRiverProject.org is their new website.

California Native Plant Society (Steve Hartman): CNPS had a great day weeding on Hummingbird Hill as part of the Cleanup on April 13, which successful and well-attended event Muriel neglected to report on.

Proposal by Canada Goose Project: Rosemarie has concluded that the Wetlands Park is a necessary and positive project. At her request, consultants Jim Aidukas and Ralph Osterling looked at the Wildlife Area (WA) and helped her formulate suggestions. She does now support the project and thinks it is time to look at enhancing the Wildlife Area (WA). She distributed a list of proposed changes. (See attached sheet.) She will provide a revision in the near future.

The Canada Geese do visit the WA, but not consistently. Rosemarie wants the Bureau of Sanitation to bring reclaimed water into the WA. She asked for the opinions of the other committee members. Muriel would like to see upper riparian habitat established above the west bank of Haskell Creek and considers the other suggestions inappropriate. Kris said that diversity and naturalness have always been basic goals for Sepulveda Basin. He would hesitate to significantly expand the managed goose habitat, as it would impinge on the habitat of other species. Rosemarie and her consultants agree that "area 3" (the portion of the Wildlife Area that is west of Woodley Ave.) should be left alone at this time. Melanie would like to see Tillman water used for riparian habitat above the west bank and agrees with Kris's desire for natural habitat and management for diversity. In addition to the riparian habitat, Melanie would also like to see re-establishment of some native grassland within "area 2" (the area between Haskell Creek and Woodley Ave). Glenn observed that the original plan for the area south of Burbank Blvd. included a marshland, and he would like to see enhancement of the riparian habitat. Also, perhaps any plantings that were eliminated from the Proposition A project because of financial limitations might be added back through this project. (Melanie would like to see all irrigation in the Sepulveda Basin be Tillman water; James says that is in the pipeline.)

Regarding the recent expansion and renovation of the Wildlife Area, Steve H noted the lack of tree planting along the north end of Haskell Creek from the fence to the northern bridge. He pointed out that in the Wildlife Reserve west of Haskell Creek, the committee agreed to delete plantings of elderberry and other shrubs (along with an extensive irrigation system), as mulefat-coyote bush scrub was already establishing itself in that area. He agreed that the west bank of Haskell Creek needs to be planted with native riparian trees. Overhead irrigation is not appropriate in the WA; drip should be used. He suggested that plantings should be done *in El nino* years, possibly even without any irrigation. Steve would like to see native grassland between the goose forage area and the dam (I-405). Melanie objected that floods might make *el nino* year plantings risky here. Steve H responded that floods in Sepulveda Basin do not rush through in a manner likely to rip out recent plantings.

Melanie suggested that, since we all support it now, we pick a name for the proposed project for constructed water treatment wetlands that we are all comfortable with. It should be accurate and constructive. She also suggested that the educational component at the proposed wetlands focus on water issues and that it refer people to the WA for its wildlife education center, rather than duplicating what is available at the WA.

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Linda Waade would like a written response from the committee — the relevant part of these minutes should go out to everyone quickly for their comments — then work with Steve H to get these out to Sanitation. Jack Baylis feels that our comments need to be in quickly. They need input on native plants for the wetlands project and they will be coming to this committee repeatedly for our input. They are still taking comments on the Conceptual Design Report.

Sandy complained that he dislikes the name "Wetlands Park." Also, he is uncomfortable with the addition of the soccer field. Jack said that the soccer field is part of an agreement with Rec & Parks.

Glenn suggested that we revisit our support of the constructed wetlands at our May meeting. Perhaps all organizations may support now. Steve H will ask Eric to attend or send a proxy. Glenn also asked for an informal reading on how much budget is likely to be available for mitigation in the WA at our May meeting.

Submitted by

Muriel S. Kotin, Member Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Areas Steering Committee

Draft Proposed Environmental Enhancement Plan for City of Los Angeles Sanitation Wetlands Park Project

The Wetlands Park Project can be enhanced by upgrading the condition of the wildlife areas 1, 2, and 3 shown on the attached map. The type of enhancement that is proposed by the environmental preservation committee is briefly described below.

Area 1 (Wildlife area west of the 405 Freeway, north of Burbank Boulevard and east of Wildlife Lake)

This area is approximately 70 acres in size and currently has four acres of grasses that were planted for Canadian Goose habitat. The area is not maintained and is surrounded by dry, tall, non-native grasses. The geese do not use the area because they need an open and clear area that allows them to spot predators. Additionally, the geese need to forage on tender, green grass.

It is proposed that water be provided to this 70-acre area and overhead sprinklers be installed on 20 of those acres, expanding the improved goose habitat. Mowing the 20 acres will be required once a month to maintain the optimum height for grazing. The geese will thus be encouraged to use this area instead of the nearby golf course.

Area 2 (West of Wildlife Lake, north of Burbank Boulevard, east of Woodley Avenue)

This area is also approximately 70 acres and contains tall, non-native grasses. The area is surrounded by a dirt walking trail, which connects to the Wildlife Lake area. This area can be enhanced for recreational use by the planting of Coast Live and Valley oaks, Black Walnut, and Sycamore trees. With the installation of drip irrigation, the area would provide woodland habitat within five years. The trail system could be extended through the area, providing interpretive trails and passive recreational use.

Area 3 (West of Woodley Avenue, north of Burbank Boulevard, and east of the model airplane field)

This area is approximately 60 acres and contains tall, non-native grasses. It is proposed that water and an overhead irrigation system be installed and native plant species be planted to provide songbird habitat. Buckwheat, toyon, Catalina Cherry, sage, blackberry, as well as native grasses, should be utilized to create an area for native birds to nest, forage and seek cover.

The three enhanced areas' close proximity to Los Angeles Unified schools would allow children access to an urban wildlife area and would provide an educational benefit to school children, as well.