

Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Areas Steering Committee (SBWASC)
Minutes February 22, 2005

Steve Hartman chaired the meeting which was attended by voting members Glenn Bailey, John Holmes, Dexter Kelly, Muriel Kotin, Melba and Willis Simms, Rosemarie White and Melanie Winter, as well as guests and non-voting members Patrick Aubuchon, Carvel Bass, Sharon Brewer, Gene Greene, Lynda Levitan, Joyce MacKinnon, Jesse Medina, Bill Neill, Harold Sullivan, and James Ward. Self-introductions were made. Minutes of January 2005 meeting were approved without change.

Proposed Firebreaks: Carvel Bass reported for the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) that LA City Fire Department feels they need access to the lower part of the Wildlife Area (WA) in case of emergency. They want a 12-16 foot fire road or crossroad through the habitat south of Burbank Blvd. They plan to look at the area by helicopter.

Melanie asked whether the ACOE has asked for mitigation. Carvel said it hasn't been explored seriously yet. Does the ACOE have authority to ask for it? The proposal is in the scoping stage. Glenn asked about the process. There are several tracks: Fish & Wildlife Service track if there are endangered species. Least Bell's Vireo is the species of concern in the WA. The location of the road(s) has not been decided on. The Fire Dept. wants one end near the Burbank tunnel and another near the road up to the top of the dam. Tonight is our chance to give input into the scoping. Rosemarie commented that if homeless people are creating a dangerous situation, a road would not address the entire problem. This problem is rampant in all the parks; she feels we need to work on it in the basin.

Melanie asked whether we want to suppress all fires. Perhaps non-suppression is an alternative. She would like to discuss what would be appropriate mitigation. Perhaps education on native-plant ecology through either California Native Plant Society (CNPS) or Recreation and Parks (R&P) maintenance staff. Glenn suggested that controlled burns might be a more natural way to go. Taxpayers have paid millions of dollars to create the wildlife area; we would expect them to put back in kind the investment in pathways and plants that are destroyed. He would still like to participate in a walkthrough. Lynda said the fire dept. came to her with no ulterior motives apparent. At that time they then just wanted to lay down (flatten) some brush. Unfortunately the homeless living in the so WA refuse to leave even when alternatives are offered. She is concerned about people wandering in there and getting hurt. Carvel said controlled burns would be very iffy in an urban area. Glenn commented that a controlled burn would be done when humidity is high and the fire burns slowly with fire personnel keeping it under control. Carvel will send

an e-mail to the committee when he will be working the area (3/7 or 3/14). Muriel raised the question of whether more harm is done by uncontrolled fire in a riparian zone or by clearing a fire road. Melanie suggested a fire alarm (siren) in case a fire is spotted.

The fire captain will attend next month's meeting. Steve H will be away. Glenn will coordinate and chair the meeting. Steve H asked Carvel to send a summary of where we're at by e-mail.

Proposed Transfer of Park Rangers: The ranger transfer to general services dept has been postponed to the end of the fiscal year. Less than a third of the ranger staff will be kept as unarmed general interpretative rangers in the largest parks. The interdepartmental agreement hasn't been signed yet.

Bull Creek Restoration: Carvel will find out who is now handling it for the ACOE.

The Proposed New Sports Complex: Rosemarie attended a recent Volunteer Neighborhood Oversight Committee (VNOC) meeting which was very lightly attended. She raised the issues of reclaimed water; native landscaping; buffer zone (transition) between LA River (LAR) and the project; and the homeless. Project design is to begin in July. The plan now allows for 440 cars plus buses. Glenn commented that the public process has not been working properly here; neither this committee nor Council District 12 were notified of the meeting. Glenn feels the closeness to the LAR is a wildlife issue. He feels a transition zone between the river and the park is something we should push for. James W said the project is on about 70 acres, and will cost \$9 M. Melanie commented that she has been working along that stretch of the LAR with support from members of this committee, including to remove some of the concrete. This is a phenomenal opportunity to work with the LAR. She would also see the bike path experience developed there, as well as sustainability, water use, all synthetic soccer fields and one or two fewer soccer fields. She too would like more public process here. Muriel agreed and suggested native plants throughout the project, as well as in the riparian transition zone. Rosemarie is concerned about keeping the lighting appropriate to a wildlife area.

James said that they've been discussing this project for about 12 years. The drawing shown to us is 8 years old, largely irrelevant. They want to scope the project with a consultant by July. A wish list is being written into the scoping process. The actual layout will not be drawn until next fiscal year, when there is an

architect working on it. R&P has specified all native plants and permeable parking surfaces. The committee will be notified of the next VNOC committee meeting. The Bureau of Engineering is heading the project and has been told we want to be in the process. The number of fields is not yet set, nor the number of parking spaces. Carvel said that he hadn't known about this, ACOE's work on this project hasn't begun yet. James said that if we want to present a vision before there is an architect, we should contact Cathie Santo Domingo at R&P.

Proposed SBWASC Standing Rules: Glenn's proposal did not include our mission statement — Muriel is to e-mail that out. Suggestions were made. Glenn will send around an e-mail to organize a new proposal to go out with the next minutes.

WA Cleanup: Muriel wants to sponsor a cleanup along Haskell Creek on Saturday April 9. SFV Audubon and The River Project will sponsor it. Muriel should get information about it to the Encino Community Council. May 14 will be the rain date.

A combined November-December meeting on the 5th Tuesday, 11/29 was agreed on.

ACOE: - Carvel gave most of his report earlier in the meeting. Additionally, he hopes we will meet Louie Munoz, the dam tender.

Japanese Garden: Gene G reported that the native plant levee is lovely this time of year. CNPS did a presentation on native plants featuring the Japanese Garden at a recent CLCA show.

Recreation and Parks: James W said the Sepulveda Basin has been closed since Friday. The WA was inundated by 10 ft of water. Kevin Regan is Acting Assistant General Manager and James is Acting Superintendent. Jesse Medina is Acting Principal Grounds Maintenance Supervisor Operations West. Jesse will do 90% of the work relative to this committee, taking most of it from James. Christina Iwata will be the secretary doing most functions relating to this committee.

Council District 12: Lynda Levitan will continue to be open to this committee. They've made some progress with the illegal parking on Burbank Blvd. A new committee "HOPE" is working on the homeless problem.

Southwestern Herpetologists Society: John indicated their study is somewhat on hold because of the rain.

Sierra Club: Melba and Willis Simms are the new Sierra Club representatives. They are seeking donations of funds to help with the public purchase of the Gillette/Soka property.

Canada Goose Project: Rosemarie said that the migratory geese have left.

LA Audubon: Dexter attended the recent science fair where he was questioned about the Sepulveda Basin Environmental Education Program.

CNPS Proposal for post-flood invasive weed control in 2005: Steve Hartman & Bill Neill reported on progress in removing castor bean, yellow star thistle, milk thistle, and fennel. Bill had rid the areas along waterways of most castor bean before the flood. The flooding has probably washed out most of that seed bank and he wants to get rid of what remains. The rains will add all sorts of exotics to the seed bank. He would like the city staff to mow the milk thistle between the LAR and model airplane fields. He has sprayed the thistle that is too close to mulefat and other shrubs for mowing and will keep spraying the outlier thistle. Milk thistle is a problem where we have had fires. James said a "hammer-knife" could do the mowing a month after it stops raining. Yellow star thistle needs spraying. Bill should contact Ken Novak to discuss how R&P can help with this. It will be a multi-year effort.

At adjournment it was declared too late for a Consortium meeting to discuss how to invest Consortium funds. Glenn distributed information about the California Wildlife Center.

Submitted by

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