

Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Areas Steering Committee

Minutes October 25, 2005

Rosemarie White chaired the meeting which was also attended by voting members Glenn Bailey, Steve Hartman, John Holmes, Muriel Kotin, and Melanie Winter. Alternates, non-voting members and Guests were Patrick Aubuchon, Ron L. Berkowitz, Sharon Ford, Linda Levitan, Joyce MacKinnon, Gregory K. Martayan, Jon Mukri, Hal Sullivan, and Michael Tou. After self-introductions, the minutes of the September 2005 meetings were corrected by inserting "Regarding Lake Balboa" in item 8 between the colon and "there are still problems."

Jon Mukri, General Manager of the Department of Recreation and Parks spoke of his interest in this committee's input. He introduced Ron Berkowitz, the new Superintendent for the Operations West Region. Rosemarie spoke of the importance of wildlife and the need to provide management. Jon said a balance between recreation and wildlife can be achieved. He said the mayor, Tony Cardenas, and many other politicians are major backers of green space. The public needs to show its support. Lynda Levitan said the wildlife area could be a wonderful asset to everyone if more manpower could be invested in it. Advocacy groups need to advocate for adequate staffing if they are to get it. Glenn spoke of the importance of managing many other areas of Sepulveda Basin, the LA River, and other parks in the City better for wildlife. This includes Lake Balboa. Melanie emphasized the need to look at overlaps of various city programs. Jon said it's better if one department has line-item control of a project, that the city departments do cooperate. Flora and fauna are difficult to quantify. Melanie said R & P should be the department to coordinate the multi-aspect projects. Melanie mentioned the proposed Sports Complex, its design and use, especially in relation to the LA River. Why are Proposition O funds not to be coordinated with that project? Why are they proposing a fence between this project and the river instead of integrating the project and the river. Ron said he met recently with the design team and would discuss that with Melanie one-on-one.

Michael Tou asked about the budget process: it's preliminary stage now. R&P are aware of Prop O and SB13. Brad Sherman's office wants to partner with the city on projects.



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Rosemarie mentioned this afternoon's visit to the South Reserve. Steve Hartman explained the history of that area and briefly the homeless and other inappropriate uses - and fires there. Lynda expanded on the fire department's concerns about safety there. Steve explained about concern for the endangered Least Bell's Vireo, the need for adequate mitigation. One area might be North Haskell Creek - expanding the WA there. The fire road will encourage more weeds in the So. Reserve; perhaps the City might agree to fund weed control in the Basin. He is especially concerned about Shamel Ash taking over and providing dense shelter that encourages homeless to camp there. Ron Berkowitz thinks the need for the fire road can be eliminated by proper maintenance in the So. Reserve. Jon asked why isn't the east side of north Haskell Creek being used for anything? Why not plant trees? Steve agreed, suggesting a meadow too. Ron suggested getting this into the budgeting process and maybe partnering with Public Works. Jon would do it now even if it's not required for mitigation. Steve said that controlling weeds now would save the city money in the long run. Glenn Bailey said that additional staffing for flora and fauna would provide sufficient presence to discourage homeless encampments. Jon said that the city could raise many of their own plants at Griffith Park greenhouse. Rosemarie brought up education, something to get school groups out here regularly and repeatedly to learn about a variety of things. Muriel spoke of the need to have enough rangers to encourage civility, respect for people and critters, and proper disposal of trash. She said the habitat of the WA is marvelous. There should be more education than Audubon alone can provide here. Melanie suggested encouraging stewardship, recognition of the River in the Basin. Ron told that in other parks, adding "please" to signs to throw trash in the receptacles really improved things. Jon is amazed at how much better the basin is today than 50 years ago.

Muriel asked about limiting the huge special events; Jon said he doesn't know how to avoid having them in the Basin and other parks. He is suggesting that care be taken to distribute these events among various parks fairly and in a planned way. Glenn hopes that fee waivers are not given inappropriately. Ron said he will require cleanup deposits and adequate security. Glenn

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suggested that the 2 Basin neighborhood councils be invited to the planning sessions for the huge events. Ron plans to stand by the rules for how long in advance an event's permit must be filed for before the event. Only the R & P board waives fees; staff does not.

Hal Sullivan asked about the security department. Jon said that with consolidation, the urban parks with high crime rates may be covered OK, but the large urban don't have enough rangers to do the job adequately. He hopes to have one ranger for each large park. Lynda commented that she refuses to allow closures of Woodley Ave. She wants LAPD, DOT and Fire departments out for the huge events.

Verizon Facility: Glenn described the visit to the proposed site this afternoon at 2:00 with representatives from Verizon's engineering consultants. He suggested this be on next month's agenda. Steve suggested the lease specify the need for removal of the equipment when it is no longer used.

Brush Clearance Proposal Near Flight Field: Ken Novak said this is well within the present brush-free area. It will not be in the Wildlife Area.

Reports:

Lynda Levitan reported that Council District 6 will hold an Open House at their new offices 11/1/05. Her e-mail is now lynda.levitan@lacity.org.

Gene Greene reported on special events at the Japanese Garden - he wants materials from our organizations to display at future events. Number of visitors is up.

Muriel said first SFV Audubon field trip program of the school year is tomorrow.

Steve reported on Cal. Native Plant Society's successful native plant sale and reported on how lovely the new center is.

For the Canada Goose Project, Rosemarie said 140 geese, possibly migratory ones, were counted at Encino Reservoir Saturday. She will be surveying Chatsworth Reservoir fire damage.

John Holmes will have a short presentation next month on the herpetology study to date.

Glenn discussed possible sites for the Resource Conservation District's new location.

For The River Project, Melanie Winter is doing tours for science classes from regional colleges. The project to clean up LA River between the Balboa Blvd. bridge and the busway should be completed soon but will not be complete before the opening of the busway. Student gardeners are returning to work on the various greenways to the east of the basin. She encourages us to attend meetings on the river revitalization and to pay attention to the master planning process.

The next meeting will be November 29, a 5th Tuesday and serve as our November and December meeting. The fire road proposed for the south reserve will be discussed at that meeting.

Submitted by

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

