

Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Areas Steering Committee

January 24, 2006

Rosemarie White chaired the meeting which was also attended by voting members Glenn Bailey, Snowdy Dodson, John Holmes, Dexter Kelly, Muriel Kotin and Melanie Winter; and by alternates, guests and non-voting members Sharon Brewer, Sharon Ford, Gene Greene, Lynda Levitan, Joyce MacKinnon, Ken Novak, Paul O'Connor of SW Herpetologists, Hal Sullivan, and Michael Tou.

After self introductions, minutes of the November 2005 meeting were approved after an addition on page 4 to the Canada Goose Project report. The second sentence should read "There have been only 200 Canada geese counted at certain locations in the SFV so far this fall."

Public Comment:

Hal Sullivan discussed a conversation about a Verizon wireless facility. He thinks the facility would be a good thing. Sharon Brewer described ongoing problems with mistreatment of birds at Lake Balboa, as well as fishing line problems

Presentation by Southwestern Herpetologists Society (SWHS): Paul O'Connor explained that the formal study has not occurred yet because of last year's heavy rains. SWHS plans to put out about 12 4' X 4' plywood boards in the Wildlife Area for a year. They will check the boards every 2 weeks, avoiding disturbance to the Canada Geese. They are particularly interested in whether they will find any rare species such as pond turtles or two-striped garter snakes. The plywood boards will be brown, labeled and placed well off the trails. Glenn suggested including the area along Haskell Creek east of the Tillman Plant.

Verizon Wireless Facility: Lynda Levitan has not heard from Verizon's representatives recently. Her understanding is that they feel they can seal the facility from damage by floods. Rosemarie has not heard from Carvel Bass regarding the Army Corps of Engineers' (ACOE) position. Glenn feels we should not spend any more time on this issue at this time. Dexter read the draft of a letter from the committee on the topic. Muriel is to format the letter; Glenn will provide the information about how to address it. Rosemarie will sign it as current chair and send a copy to Lynda, and to Brad Sherman's office.

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Sports Complex: The last public meeting was 12/8/05. Glenn reported the main topics were traffic, maintenance, native plants. R&P was planning to use some native plants, not all. A small community room and office will be included. Hours of operation, staffing, light pollution, etc. were also discussed. Ken Novak said the traffic study is still in progress. There will not be any new public meetings until after that is complete. The sod farm lease should expire June or July 2007. The nearby cornfield to the west will remain indefinitely, so far as Ken knows, because of access problems and neighborhood opposition. Melanie asked Michael Tou and Ken about whether it is still planned to have a fence along the river despite opposition. Ken has not seen a plan yet.

Melanie mentioned that there will be a public meeting on Proposition K at the Sepulveda Garden Center 6:00 next Monday 1/30. No committee members have received notice of this meeting nor of the meeting last Monday. This fact should be noted at the meeting.

Proposed Fire Road: Snowy read Steve Hartman's comment letter dated 1/10/06 to Carvel Bass of the ACOE on the Draft Environmental Assessment. California Native Plant Society (CNPS) thinks the fire road will cause more problems in the long run than it will solve unless adequate mitigation is included. Glenn and some others did not receive a copy of the EA. Melanie asked Michael Tou to encourage the ACOE to appoint a representative to attend our meetings regularly and give us timely updates whether in person or by e-mails or phone conversation with the committee chair prior to our meetings.

Glenn moved that we request of the ACOE a re-opening of the comment period (which ended 1/11/06) for the DEA be extended an additional 30 days from today. **Seconded and Passed.** Rosemarie will phone Carvel tomorrow. Glenn will write the letter referenced in the minutes of November 2005 meeting page 2.

Humane Treatment of Wildlife in City Administered Properties: Rosemarie is enraged at the inhumanity ongoing. Melanie said the city is powerless; we need to push for Fish and Game to be staffed and empowered and to protect urban wildlife. Rosemarie said the situation is intolerable and she is personally going to do something about it. Does the Department of Animal Services have any

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authority? Ken said probably only if the dog owner can be ticketed for an off-leash dog. Rangers can remove unlicensed fishermen but cannot cite them. There are few rangers. A few interpretative rangers are remaining with the safety officers moving to a different department. There will be one interpretative ranger remaining in Sepulveda Basin, in radio contact with safety officers. Glenn commented that Animal Control used to respond to leash-law complaints. The council office might be able to help. We should contact the local state legislators. We might also contact the mayor's office to support the Recreation and Parks budget request. Monday 1/31 at Van Nuys City Hall there will be a budget and finance committee of the City Council at 6 pm. Paul O'Connor thinks getting Animal Services into the Basin and giving out tickets occasionally would be effective. Muriel commented that it is also a human safety issue and one impacting whether people feel and actually are safe in the city parks. Melanie recommended the signs in NY City's Central Park as a good model.

Recreation and Parks Department: Ken Novak thanked CNPS for their donations of plant posters at the Sepulveda Garden Center. They would be grateful for similar contributions on plants from other organizations. Cal. Fish and Game are probably going to allow the needed clearing of trees in the basin waterways. Coots are being lost into the weirs at Lake Balboa because of people feeding the ducks next to the weirs; R&P is adding bars to exclude coots and other birds from the pipes. Signs to not feed the birds are going up. Sharon Ford asked about an information kiosk. Ken has followed up and hopes there will be a big sign/display on the restroom building near the lifeguard station.

Michael Tou for Congressman Brad Sherman's Office: He hopes to have Nedenia Kennedy here in February or March to discuss the Bull Creek report.

Lynda Levitan for Councilman Tony Cardenas: She will convey anything in writing that we wish to submit to the councilman. That would be most effective. We would also do well to write to the mayor's office, copying R & P and Animal Services.

Japanese Garden: Gene Greene said Sanitation will try to minimize impacts on the

cricket fields when they expand TWRP. He may have some money put aside for electronic advisory/bulletin boards at the Garden and Lake Balboa, along with some money from DWP. TWRP has is updating their denitrification process; when it is complete Fish and Game may be willing to resume stocking fish in Lake Balboa. They hope to build an educational center and have produced a 30-second DVD for cable TV. The Wetlands (water-treatment) Park project is pretty much dead.

Reports by Committee Members:

San Fernando Valley Audubon Society: Muriel said SFVAS would like to hold a Cleanup on 4/8 or 4/1. Ken will check regarding activities and let her know. Muriel asked about co-sponsors: CNPS is willing to publicize.

Southwest Herpetologists: John said another iguana has been found. It is illegal to release exotic animals.

Resource Conservation District of the Sta. Monica Mts: Glenn announced their previous education coordinator Jennifer Shelstead has returned.

River Project: Melanie asked about plans for the future recreational use of the Tapia farm east of Hjelte Field. She has a proposal that she will discuss at our February meeting. She asked that the ACOE and city provide a copy of the most updated Master Plan for Sepulveda Basin before that meeting. She encouraged the committee members to attend meetings on the LA River. They're still doing the Tujunga Watershed project.

Melanie Winter starts her rotation as committee chair after this meeting.

Submitted by

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