

Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Areas Steering Committee
Meeting August 24, 2021 -- Approved Minutes

The meeting, held by Zoom, was called to order by chair Nurit Katz at 6:34. A quorum was established. Voting members: Glenn Bailey, Terrie Brady, Nurit Katz, Muriel Kotin, George Waddell, Melanie Winter. Non-voting members: Pat Bates and Ruth Doxsee. RAP was not represented. Non-voting alternates and Guests: Tessa Charnofsky, Kira Durbin, Jonah Glickman, Linda Gravani, Barbara Heidemann, Jan Kidwell, Antoine Kunsch, Annel Monsalvo, Bill Neil, Mark Osokow, Richard Rachman, Clark Stevens. A quorum was established.

Recording of the minutes is available at https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_CLciJOA-U_y5PHlp2wOBBiiUXqNVUDx/view?usp=sharing.

Minutes of July 2021 Meeting: approved as submitted.

Plan for Damaged Trees in SBWR: To clarify partial information from RAP at our last meeting, what is about to begin regarding the fire-damaged trees is a risk assessment by an outside arborist. Forestry will continue to coordinate with us regarding any tree removal in the reserve.

Pathways: Discussion of formalizing and improving the informal pathway around the east and north sides of the lake included moving the east side trail farther from the water's edge than it is now to increase the amount of riparian habitat. The consensus seems to be that new paths need to be accessible to emergency and park maintenance vehicles. As the path along the north side of the lake is narrow and widening it to accommodate emergency vehicles would be destructive to habitat, it was suggested that, instead of widening that section, the informal service road from the T-gate at the northeast corner of the natural area be formalized as an alternate emergency and maintenance access road that connects to the path on the east side of the lake. Viewing areas, probably like the existing ones on the west side of the lake, should be planned. We will need city and ACOE buy in to formalize and improve these pathways. And funding – without wasting money on unnecessary monuments. The RCD's study will include consideration of pathways. We should treat the fire's devastation as an opportunity to do some of the plantings missing from the 1998-99 expansion and improvement of the SBWR.

Proposed Controlled Burns in Fields Northeast of Burbank and Woodley (Next to Apollo Model Airplane Field): Committee members discussed this prior to arrival of LAFD representative. LAFD is interested in controlled burns in field around Apollo Model Airplane Field. It would be in small pieces of around 10 acres a day on cool mornings. We might do a walkthrough with LAFD to be sure high quality habitat is not burned. LAFD brought this possibility to us around 4 years ago but ran out of funding. The interest of SBWASC in that area was explained. It is one of the "Wildlife Areas" covered in our name. Although not part of the Wildlife Reserve, it is a habitat buffer zone. What about mowing instead of burning? Jonah said that CD-6 has been in discussions with LAFD about controlled burns for about a year and shares our concerns. He will send us a copy of letter from RAP to LAFD requiring AQMD and ACOE approval.

Captain Richard Diede, wildlands fire manager LAFD, Fire Station 88: He specializes in Wildland fuel management. They would spray areas to protect for habitat with water before the controlled burns. AQMD? Training blocks of under 10 acres are allowed as “training blocks.” He knows about nesting season, but he wants to do burns in July? With nesting surveys. He said goats pass through seeds unscathed. Bill Neill said the goat grazing vendor we hoped to use advises that the goats do digest mustard seeds. Concern was expressed about a burn in July. It’s difficult to do burns in January, as vegetation is too wet. Terrie will email a link about Native American techniques for controlled burns which occur in winter to Nurit to share with Richard. He prefers earlier than 9/15 because of weather conditions, but after 9/15 and into the rainy season is possible. They have mowers available. They are not thinking of burns in the wildlife reserve, just around Apollo Field. What3Words app for emergency personnel to find you. Nurit will see if Jon Rishi can do the bird survey. Need humidities at least 25 % and max 80 degree temperature, very low wind conditions. Neighbors will need to be educated so they understand what’s going on. Comment that our mustard species, Mediterranean (*Hirschfeldia*), thrives after it’s burned, so this is not a weed management strategy, rather a fire management strategy. Walkthrough—meeting onsite will be set up.

The River Project’s Conceptual Plan for Sepulveda Basin: Melanie Winter expects this to done by end of September. It’s a feasibility study, quite limited and technical, focused on the functionality of the waterways. Not a proposed plan, rather a first step. This should be on the Sept agenda.

RCD Grant for Fire Resiliency and UCLA Practicum: Their grant requires consideration of fire management and issues like those discussed earlier tonight. Meeting yesterday with UCLA and some members of SBWASC. Scope of practicum to be determined. Full committee to be involved. It is unclear whether grant can cover planning of trails. The focus is on habitat restoration and fire resilience.

New Outreach and Information System Using QR Codes: Let Nurit know if you want to work on this project.

Comments: East Field should be looked at as habitat, not be crisscrossed by trails. It shouldn’t be only grasses; other plants should be mixed in. There have been no decisions yet. RCD-UCLA team will be working towards developing the plant palette. Some preferences expressed for oak or oak+ woodland and savannah in much of the areas needing restoration. Suggestion to use goats in part of the area around Apollo Field, maybe as a pilot with LAFD. An opportunity to compare burning and goat grazing. Perhaps the areas too close to the toe of the dam for trees would be good for grassland or prairie.

Weeding in SBWR this Saturday. Wilbur-Tampa Park is an example of grassland we might visit. Annel for ACOE: we need to be careful near the toe of the dam for the security of the dam structures. She will pass these discussions on to the biologists and others at ACOE. Would Jon Rishi or his staff be available for bird surveys? Possibly he or Cristan.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:38PM.

Submitted by

Muriel S. Kotin, SFVAS's representative to SBWASC

Chat:

18:47:28 From R. Doxsee, LBNC to Everyone:

Sign in?

18:49:47 From NURIT KATZ to Everyone:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1UPE9_QfCbx-dkNamVVVyOretyVhjmwJ8GDg6IUL8lq0/edit?usp=sharing

20:01:31 From B H to Everyone:

Would the airplane field, or a part of it, be an area for a trial of the goat herd? A Goat herd still seems like a good solution to me.

20:08:54 From Mark Osokow, San Fernando Valley Audubon to Everyone:

I agree with Barbara. If the city is willing to spend fire department assets on "fuel" control, why not goats?

20:09:02 From Patricia Bates to Everyone:

Having actually been warned to evacuate on more than one occasion due to basin fires - I think people would welcome control solutions. there would need to be adequate publicity and warning for sensitive people to avoid the smoke.

20:09:44 From Mark Osokow, San Fernando Valley Audubon to Everyone:

Again, why not goats instead of fire? What's the problem?

20:10:19 From R. Doxsee, LBNC to Everyone:

We never got permission after 6 months for the goats.

20:10:50 From Mark Osokow, San Fernando Valley Audubon to Everyone:

Why?

20:16:15 From Glenn Bailey to Everyone:

No goats? My understanding is because Recreation and Parks never responded....someone please correct me if they did...

20:16:49 From Patricia Bates to Everyone:

RAP never responded

20:17:00 From Mark Osokow, San Fernando Valley Audubon to Everyone:

Why?

20:17:37 From R. Doxsee, LBNC to Everyone:

Million dollar question, Mark.

20:17:57 From Mark Osokow, San Fernando Valley Audubon to Everyone:

The question is out there.

20:18:20 From B H to Everyone:

Fire Rich was concerned about seeds in droppings. Maybe we need to get him together with our goat herd managers to clarify? I'm thinking FD might help move that approval.

20:24:54 From Bill Neill to Everyone:

Goats are ruminants, with 4 stomachs like cattle, and unlike horses; my understanding is that seeds don't survive grazing by ruminants.

20:26:19 From B H to Everyone:

Yes, Bill, that is what I am remembering hearing, too. But we need to get that clear with fire Rich.

20:26:51 From Antoine Kunsch - Santa Monica Mountains RCD to Everyone:

goat herd managers would know better but I believe they have quarantine procedures for the herd to avoid the issue of seed contamination. I vaguely remember this from a presentation a few months ago

20:30:24 From Glenn Bailey to Everyone:

Just a reminder that this item is Public Comment on items NOT on the agenda

20:32:20 From Richard Rachman (He/Him/His) to Everyone:

I showed George and Robert but some of the best San Fernando Valley grassland is at Wilbur Tampa Park, tons of native grassland species still persisting!

20:32:31 From George Waddell CNPS to Everyone:

Everyone is invited to join CNPS Fourth Saturday Weeding Day this Saturday at 7 Am

20:33:14 From Patricia Bates to Everyone:

Sorry, I have to log off, I will check the recording!!