

San Fernando Valley Audubon Society

Incorporated as California Audubon Society 1913

For nature education and conservation of wildlife

March 7, 2002

Adel Hagekhalil, Division Manager
City of Los Angeles
Bureau of Sanitation, Wastewater Engineering Services Division
433 So. Spring Street, Suite 500
Los Angeles, CA 90013

Via Fax: 213/473-8222.

Dear Mr. Hagekhalil:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the **Sepulveda Wetlands Park Draft Concept Design Report of January 2002.**

This project should be a great asset to the community. If well designed and maintained, it will improve the quality of water in the Los Angeles River and provide habitat for wildlife and opportunities for wildlife viewing. It will also provide an attractive place for people to walk, for both exercise and enjoying open space. I hope you will consider the following comments in the planning.

Name: The name, "Sepulveda Wetlands Park," does not reflect the main purpose of the project. Also, it is correctly the "Sepulveda Basin." "Sepulveda Basin Water-quality Wetlands" would be more accurate.

Geographic Considerations: Graphic Plate 4 does not show the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Area correctly, as it does not reflect amendments to the master plan for the Sepulveda Basin, in particular expansion of the Wildlife Area west of U.S. 101.

Model Airplane Field, although it has been developed with paths and plantings only to Woodley Avenue to date.

The Wildlife Area's correct area is 225 acres, not 108 as stated in the report. The watercourse flowing through the Wildlife Area is Haskell Creek, not Haskell Channel. The report does not reflect that effluent from the Tillman Water Reclamation Plant is added to Haskell Creek near the north end of the Wildlife Lake, besides the creek's receiving the outflow from the lake.

Disturbance and Mitigation: Building a pump station and line to the wetland in the south portion of the Wildlife Area will disturb that part of the Wildlife Area. The pump station and line should be designed to minimize disturbance to the Wildlife Area, with appropriate restoration and mitigation measures in the Wildlife Area or adjacent to it.

Plants: Native California plants should be used throughout the project. Especially, invasive exotics like water hyacinths should be avoided.

Maintenance and Security: Adequate budget for maintenance and security will be necessary for this project to be the community asset it should be. Budget should allow adequately for periodic removal of invasive exotics, especially arundo donax and castorbean. Further, maintenance and other personnel will need to spend time reducing inappropriate behavior by the public, such as hunting, fishing, hunting-dog exercises, dumping, and graffiti.

Restraint in Structures: Both good taste and cost require that the size, number, and style of structures should be kept small, simple and natural. The wetlands should have a natural feel, not that of a playground. Views of large, showy birds foraging will be the focus of interest. Further, in this area subject to flooding, very sturdy, simple structures are needed.

Wildlife viewing areas should be built, not blinds. (The viewing areas in the Wildlife Area function very well, except for the overly-tall informational signs limiting the views.) Shade is always welcome in our hot climate, but covering an area may create insect problems and attract homeless. Informational signs should be placed low so they do not block the view.

Whether the expense and maintenance associated with boardwalks is appropriate should be considered carefully. Placement of decomposed granite walkways along the tops of the berms separating cells may provide adequate vantage points. To the extent that requirements for disabled access permits, entrance to walkways (and boardwalks if built) by unauthorized wheeled vehicles should be blocked by

San Fernando Valley Audubon Society

Sepulveda Wetlands Park Draft Concept Design Report -- Comments Page 3

Bike Paths: Bike paths should be separated from walkways. A bike path around the perimeter of the wetlands would be desirable. Barriers that permit bicycles but not motorcycles should be installed.

Educational Displays: The project should include educational signs about water treatment, wetlands, and birds. Signs should be placed at the project to tell visitors about the Wildlife Area and signs at the Wildlife Area to tell visitors about the project. These signs connecting the two areas should include directions.

Educational Programs: San Fernando Valley Audubon is very interested in using this facility for nature-education programs. (We bring about 3,000 school children to the Wildlife Area annually and lead monthly public birdwalks there.) Los Angeles Unified School District should be contacted to ascertain if its participation in an education program at the project is realistic. Especially if not, the Bureau of Sanitation should take a major role in the education programs.

Educational Center(s): Again, restraint is called for in building structures in this often-flooded location. Displays and other materials kept here will need to be extremely sturdy.

Sediment Pond: If the sediment pond that removes trash from runoff waters will be highly mechanical or industrial in nature, the education center should be placed sufficiently far away from the pond. Also, a walkway should lead to the sediment pond but not be the main access to enjoying the rest of the project.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to comment. Please do not hesitate to contact me if that would be helpful.

Sincerely,

Muriel S. Kotin, Past President, Youth Activities Chair, Representative on the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Areas Steering Committee for San Fernando Valley Audubon
15615 Castlewoods Drive
Sherman Oaks, CA 91403
Tel. 818/783-4293 Fax 818/783-4295