

**Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Areas Steering Committee
Meeting September 22, 2020 – Approved Minutes**

Meeting by Zoom teleconferencing was called to order at 6:38 by chair Joe Phillips. Other voting members in attendance were Glenn Bailey, Theresa Brady, Muriel Kotin, George Waddell. Non-voting members attending were Shelly Backlar; Pat Bates; Robert Buenrostro, Sr Park Maintenance Supervisor; Ruth Doxsee; and Nurit Katz, newly representing LAAS. Alternates not voting tonight and visitors were Anne Abramson (CNPS), Wendy Barsh (SFVAS), Carla Bollinger (PLAN), Cristan Caviel (ACOE biologist), Tessa Charnofsky (Sheila Kuehl), Frank Conley, Alexander deBarros (SFVAS), Kira Durban, Jonah Glickman (Nury Martinez), Margot Griswold (LAAS, a restoration ecologist), Jerry Haro (City Park Ranger), Barbara Heidemann (SFVAS), Tammy Herboldsheimer (a user of SBWR), Hector Hernandez (Battalion Chief LAFD Battalion 10), Carole Hill (RCD educator), Kelly Kazmirchuk (RCD Education Coordinator), Robert Moreno (ACOE Sr Park Ranger), Bill Neill (CNPS), Paula Orlovich (SFVAS president), Mark Osokow (SFVAS), Richard Rachman (CNPS and CSUN grad student), Pilar Uribe, Dave Weeshoff (SFVAS), Melanie Winter (The River Project),

Introductions and Agenda: The order of items on the agenda was adjusted.

Minutes of last meeting, July 28, 2020: were approved as submitted.

City Council Office CD-6 (Nury Martinez): Jonah Glickman discussed the motion introduced today to the HENPAR (Health, Education, Neighborhood, Parks, Arts and River) Committee. It asks RAP, ACOE, and county to report back about developing a master plan in 30 days. It's a framework for land uses, finding areas that are underutilized, Prop K long-term planning, clarify who is decision maker on various parcels, and Olympics planning. Councilmember Nury Martinez is very concerned about events of late, especially fires and homeless encampments. They want to maintain and preserve Sepulveda Basin. There is a continuing push to house homeless. 75 people moved from the SB into housing through Project Roomkey. The intent of the motion: Improve mobility in the basin, especially for pedestrians, including trails, and pedestrian and bike infrastructure. Reclaim the Wildlife Reserve and maximize its benefits to the community. There is no intention to turn the Wildlife Reserve into anything other than a safer WR, preserving or improving what is there. Improve its safety. There are underutilized (vacant) areas. Example, the vacant lot a utility uses for equipment. City will review the existing master plan for this new update, focusing on possible uses for the 325 underutilized acres that have no strong designated uses. SBWASC will be involved in the process.

There have been failures of law enforcement, of brush clearance. What will the city commit to? They can't bulldoze in Wildlife Reserve. How can the brushfire threat be handled without harming wildlife. The community is and wants to be involved in restoration from the fires.

Arsonists were arrested but couldn't be held under COVID guidelines. The death in the Sept 6 fire changes the legal charges. COVID is also making it more difficult to remove homeless people from the streets.

The underutilized areas they're looking at are both within city lease and without. Will be looking at Olympic 2028 plans and coordinate with the community.

The council office is supportive of the Wildlife Reserve. Past proposals that stalled should be brought to Jonah's attention. Jonah is involving the Bureau of Sanitation to remove any hazardous waste from former encampments.

The committee is concerned about the safety of trees and bridges. They want no bulldozing but want mustard and other weeds controlled by other means. Mowing is OK. It's important that any new bike paths not disturb the Wildlife Reserve. Perhaps permit mustard control starting August 16, leaving September 16 as the earliest date trees can be trimmed. Any expansion of the bike path into the Wildlife Reserve will be done in a way to not disturb the wildlife function. Jonah is working with LAFD on dry brush in the basin. The Median of Burbank is about to be spruced up.

Richard Rachman will write a proposal for weed management for a colleague in restoration ecology, using mechanical means. Nurit Katz expects there will be strong interest by UCLA students in restoration efforts.

LA Fire Dept.: Battalion Chief Hector Hernandez reported that 86 acres burned. It will grow back in time, but he is concerned about the flashy fuels. In addition to mustard and other weeds, that includes flammable and toxic stuff from homeless that is highly flammable. Biohazards.

The fact that small patches of turf grass in Woodley Park burned was discussed. Some large trees were cut down in the Reserve as they were about to fall down. Prescribed burns are not within their policy.

Tessa Charnofsky of Supervisor Sheila Kuehl's Office: She posted information on available grants.

ACOE Park Ranger Supervisor Robert Moreno: They hired 2 more federal park rangers and now have 6 for the region. Do they take any action about fishing they observe at the Wildlife Lake? They can enforce Title 36 rules about land uses, but the lessees are supposed to enforce rules. It's the jurisdiction of the City Park Rangers. The city is supposed to enforce the rules.

ACOE Biologist Christan Caviel: The ACOE is re-evaluating the masterplan after the fire, but she has no comments at this time. Each section is being updated to reflect current conditions.

City Park Ranger Jerry Haro: The committee complained that fishing is a huge problem currently. Nets and fishing line get left behind causing birds and potentially other animals entangled. Ranger Haro tries to get to the Basin daily. He works Sun - Wed. He makes fishermen leave. He does not have a ranger vehicle, is not armed, and doesn't speak Spanish. Often fishermen don't have I.D. His visits are usually between 2PM and 6PM. He makes service requests to maintenance to remove litter and to LAHSA. We should make our service requests through M.laparks.org.

Melanie Winter of The River Project: LA River Feasibility Study. She is doing initial work to develop a design charrette for a feasibility study of improving the LA River in the western Sepulveda Basin. She hopes we will participate in a special meeting in late October that will be a charrette. She'd like 3 hours allocated. Weekends would be possible too. Joe will send out an email asking when is good for members.

The Fire: Safety issues need to be evaluated quickly. Bridges. Trees. Don't want trees cut down that might only be pruned. Arborist?

Recreation and Parks: Robert Buenrostro is the new Senior Park Maintenance Supervisor. He has submitted job orders for evaluation of the bridges. Inspection coming. He will reach out to the Forestry Division to evaluate standing burned trees. (The committee has arborist resources.) Parts of Haskell Creek are blocked by fallen trees: Robert will look at that and check on what agency has jurisdiction.

A more recent fire than the devastating one of September 6 was south of Burbank Blvd. near the Woodley Ave T-bar gate. What will be done with the unburned dry mustard in the southeast corner of the Reserve? Because of biohazards from homeless encampments, Jonah has contacted sanitation.

Pat Bates of Encino Neighborhood Council: The NC's Homelessness Committee made a motion to implement a Pallet community in a parking lot north of the Tillman Plant to accommodate the homeless population from the basin to get them out of the brush.

Law Enforcement: Jonah said West Valley LAPD has dedicated patrol car for SB. It would be good to get them walking around.

SFVAS: Dave Weeshoff described the outstanding online education program that Kelly Kazmirchuk of RCD has put together. Muriel mentioned the need for new fencing. Robert will talk to Therman Calloway to see what material could be used to repair the Reserve fencing.

Water Lettuce: This invasive aquatic plant was first noticed in Wildlife Lake before the fire. It's a huge problem, now carpeting the edges of the lake and growing rapidly. RAP is fishing some out from edges. Their boat is broken. The alternatives to raking it out are to use herbicides or drain and poison the lake. RAP would welcome volunteers to remove some.

CNPS Regarding Weeds and Trash: George Waddell reported that volunteer weeders have removed lots of trash post fire, including cooking grills. Perhaps the remaining mustard could be removed by hand, but it's a big job and the coronavirus makes large group volunteer events unwise. An anonymous donor has contributed to 3 years of integrated pest management of the east and west prairies. Can volunteers bring in weed whackers? That would not be useful, as leaves stumps behind that grow back. You don't want to disturb soil.

Friends of the LA River: Shelly Backlar reported that FoLAR has been organizing self-guided watershed cleanups using the Literatti app (an iNaturalist of trash) for September. Today they

did a film shoot with CNPS about removing the mustard and restoring habitat. Tom Ryan has been doing bird surveys in the Wildlife Reserve for FoLAR. The report should be available in Nov. They're working for a Prop 1 grant, which perhaps can help with the maintenance in the Reserve. She's up to the task of getting funding for whatever is needed.

Resource Conservation District of the SMM: The rebar from the broken Woodcrete fencing should be removed as it's dangerous.

Jonah: LA Works is very interested in collaborating with us for a volunteer cleanup. A day to do our own cleanups because of COVID. Reach out to Jonah to arrange a day for people to do their own cleanups.

Next meetings: October 27 and November 24. October 27 will be a special meeting for Post Fire discussions and update on Nury's motion about the masterplan update. Robert B will distribute any report from RAP. (Email him about fencing.). Charrette day will be determined after emails.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:07 PM.

Submitted by

Muriel S. Kotin, San Fernando Valley Audubon Representative to the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Areas Steering Committee