

Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Areas Steering Committee Meeting 5/27/2025

Meeting notes prepared by Zoom AI with assistance from Pat Bates

Attendance:

Members in person:

Patricia Bates (Chair) SFV Audubon

Glenn Bailey Alt. for RCD of Santa Monica mountains and Encino NC

Melanie Winter The River Project

Joe Phillips LA Sierra Club

Theresa Brady SFV Sierra Club

Gregory Stewart CNPS

Nurit Katz LA Audubon

Members on Zoom: Erin Viera Orr FOLAR

Presenters:

Battalion Chief Robert Barna, LAFD

EIT Churchwell, LAFD

Rosalba Gonzalez LA Metro

Zoom: See attached following chat file

Quick recap

The committee meeting covered updates on the G Line improvements project and discussed a recent vegetation fire in the Sepulveda Basin, with emphasis on fire risk mitigation and brush clearance plans. Updates were provided on various ongoing projects including Army Corps of Engineers activities, Olympic planning, and environmental assessments. The conversation ended with discussions about committee membership, upcoming community meetings and surveys, grant opportunities, and scheduling changes for the next meeting.

Summary

Committee Meeting and Agenda Updates

The committee meeting begins with determination of in-person quorum, introductions and approval of previous minutes. Patricia Bates, the rotating chair, calls the meeting to order and representatives from various organizations introduce themselves. The minutes from the last meeting are approved with a note to correct misspelled names. The agenda is adjusted to accommodate government guests, with a brief Metro presentation scheduled before public comments on non-agenda items.

G Line Improvements Project Update

Rosalba Gonzales from Metro provides an update on the G Line (formerly Orange Line) improvements project. The project includes building grade separations, traffic signal

prioritization, resurfacing at main intersections, and bike path improvements from Chatsworth to Encino. Construction is ongoing, with the Van Nuys Bridge and new area station being the main focus. The project is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2027. Rosalba also discusses upcoming pilot gate testing and temporary closures, including the entrance to Lake Balboa Park from Hayvenhurst and Victory. [Presentation slides are available at this link.](#)

Sepulveda Basin Fire Response

Correction to agenda to note LAFD Battalion Chief Barna's correct rank. Chief Robert Barna reports on a recent vegetation fire in the Sepulveda Basin near the sports complex, which escalated to a brush fire and threatened an armory. The fire department responded with significant resources, including fire attack helicopters, and managed to contain the fire to 4 acres in about 3 hours. Chief Barna highlights the challenges posed by homeless encampments in the area, including safety risks for firefighters and the need for defensive tactics. He also explains the concept of ladder fuels and how they contribute to fire spread in areas with encampments.

Brush Clearance Plan for Fire Safety

Chief Barna discusses the fire risk in the area, particularly on Santa Ana wind days, and outlines a brush clearance plan to mitigate fire spread. He emphasizes the need to target invasive species while preserving native vegetation. Chief Barna also mentions the hazards firefighters face from man-made traps in homeless encampments. He seeks support for the clearance plan and collaboration with stakeholders to implement it safely and effectively. The group discusses specific concerns about palm trees, bamboo, and access points, as well as whether there is a need for a formal environmental study (EA) and proper removal techniques for invasive species. The members are generally supportive of measures to remove invasives and especially palm trees in areas where they may spread embers. Arundo flammability and clearance necessity is also discussed.

Army Corps Updates on Basin Projects

Hanna Weyland from the US Army Corps of Engineers provides updates on several topics. She is replacing John Rishi as the primary point of contact. The Corps is willing to work with the fire department on vegetation removal, but needs a proposal to proceed. Hanna clarifies that the Corps cannot remove homeless individuals and relies on partners for this. She mentions that the Sepulveda Basin master planning process is ongoing, with an internal workshop scheduled for August to discuss public comments and potential land use changes. Hannah also notes that kayaking season has started, a baseline study on arundo is planned for July and asks for input on locations, and a cycling event for AIDS awareness will take place in June. Regarding LA28 Olympic plans, Hanna states that no tree removals are currently planned and any structures in the basin should be temporary or "floatable" if permanent. Nurit suggested Patricia send an email to Recreation and Parks biologist Courtney McCammon inquiring about what the hold up is with the LAFD clearance plan, and can RAP and USACE work together to expedite.

Olympic Facilities and Environmental Impact

The meeting focused on several key topics, including the Olympic facilities in the Sepulveda Basin and their potential environmental impact. Hanna confirmed that an environmental

assessment would be conducted for the Olympic events, and she agreed to keep stakeholders informed about the process. The group discussed concerns about the defensible space regulations and their potential impact on urban forests in Los Angeles. Patricia and Nurit shared information about upcoming workshops and encouraged organizations to get involved in advocating for adjustments to the regulations. Various member organizations provided updates on their activities, including Earth Day events, habitat restoration efforts, and advocacy for endangered species. The conversation ended with a discussion about new construction projects in the area, including baseball fields and a pipeline, and concerns were raised about the lack of public input on these developments.

Wildlife Committee Membership Discussion

The American Sri Lankan Photographic Art Society expresses interest in joining the wildlife areas steering committee, nominating an advisor with expertise in ornithology and conservation. Patricia and Nurit explain that the committee requires local representation and in-person attendance at meetings, and that its focus is specifically on wildlife areas with environmental expertise. She suggests that while the society's involvement is welcome, membership may not be appropriate due to the committee's specific mission. Nurit, Glenn and others propose the idea of restarting a broader Sepulveda Basin stakeholder group to address various interests in the area, separate from this wildlife-focused committee.

Park Assessment and Grant Planning

Patricia announces that the Park Needs Assessment slides will be available on the website soon, followed by community meetings. She suggests committee members encourage their organizations to participate in these meetings and complete the new survey. The group discusses concerns about the survey methodology and results. They agree to review the slides once released and potentially respond. Patricia also mentions a \$10 billion state climate bond with upcoming grant application instructions. The committee considers applying for grants to address issues like removing flammable trees and acquiring more plants. They decide to form a subcommittee to track grant opportunities. The next meeting date is changed from July 22nd to July 29th to accommodate a member's schedule.

Meeting adjourned at 8:36, Next Meeting 7/29/2025 @6:30

Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Areas Consortium -

Greg Stewart turned in [receipts](#) from acquiring irrigation equipment, related items and plants for the restoration project adjacent to the basin.

Next steps

- Patricia to send a recap email to Chief Barna about the meeting discussion.
- Patricia to scan and attach the budget and receipts for the habitat restoration project to the meeting minutes.
- Nurit to share the one-pager on the state defensible space regulations with the committee. Information will be disseminated to the committee.
- Glenn to send the plot plan of the new ball fields to Patricia for inclusion in the minutes.

- Committee members to reach out to their respective organizations to encourage participation in the Park Needs Assessment survey and community meetings.
- Patricia to create an email blast for committee members about the Park Needs Assessment, including a link to the website and information about the new survey.
- Patricia to work on Audubon's response to the Park Needs Assessment after reviewing the slides.
- Teresa to help monitor and track potential grant opportunities from the state climate bond for the committee.
- Patricia to send out a "Save the Date" for the next meeting on July 29th.
- Committee to consider developing a wildfire resilience plan for potential grant applications.

Zoom Chat:

00:28:57 Nurit Katz: Made it to the gas station!!!
 00:29:05 erin: Reacted to "Made it to the gas s..." with 🎉
 00:43:02 Lionel Mares: Hello,

Lionel Mares, MPA

CD 6 Bicycle Advisory Committee Appointee,

Sierra Club San Fernando Valley Committee member, And long time CD 6 Resident

00:46:08 Lionel Mares: Public Comment:

I have noticed a lot of trash, and plastics along the River in the Sepulveda Basin.

What is the city, county and or Army Corp of Engineers doing to CLEAN-UP the mess?

Are government officials aware there is trash in Sepulveda Basin and or Lake Balboa?

00:55:45 Lionel Mares: If anyone wants to stay in touch, feel free to reach out at LionelMaresNCs@gmail.com

01:12:43 B H: We love our Firefighters!

01:34:18 Hanna Weyland - USACE: LACDA Program Manager Trevor Synder
trevor.r.snyder@usace.army.mil

01:41:41 Hanna Weyland - USACE: Thank you, everyone! My contact information is below. Hanna Weyland - USACE Biologist; hanna.l.veyland@usace.army.mil

02:21:37 erin: Hi Team! I need to hop off to put the kids to bed. Thank you!

02:25:02 B H: I would love to see some of this money go to the repairs of the sinking viewing areas.

Topic	ID	Host	Duration (minutes)	Start time	End time	Participants
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Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Areas Steering Committee Special	8.17E+10	Patricia Bates (batesbird@gmail.com)	151	##### ###	##### ###	13
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Name (original name)	Email	Join time	Leave time	Duration (minutes)	Guest	Recording disclaimer response	In waiting room
Patricia Bates	batesbird@gmail.com	5/27/2025 18:11	5/27/2025 20:41	150	No	OK	No
mike b		5/27/2025 18:27	5/27/2025 19:17	50	Yes	OK	No
erin		5/27/2025 18:28	5/27/2025 20:33	125	Yes	OK	No
Kathy Schreiner		5/27/2025 18:29	5/27/2025 20:40	132	Yes	OK	No
Hanna Weyland - USACE		5/27/2025 18:31	5/27/2025 19:53	83	Yes	No Response	No
168837		5/27/2025 18:32	5/27/2025 18:34	2	Yes	No Response	No

Nurit Katz	5/27/2025 18:34	5/27/2025 19:02	28	Yes	OK	No
Lakshitha Karunarithna	5/27/2025 18:36	5/27/2025 19:50	74	Yes	OK	No
B H	5/27/2025 18:37	5/27/2025 20:41	125	Yes	OK	No
America Sri Lankan Photographic Art Society Los Angeles	5/27/2025 18:39	5/27/2025 20:41	123	Yes	OK	No
Lionel Mares	5/27/2025 18:50	5/27/2025 19:08	18	Yes	OK	No
Lakshitha Karunarithna	5/27/2025 19:50	5/27/2025 20:05	16	Yes	No Respo nse	No
Lakshitha K	5/27/2025 20:06	5/27/2025 20:36	30	Yes	No Respo nse	No

Photos of project south of LA River, East of White Oak Avenue. Nobody knows anything about this!

