

Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Areas Steering Committee (SBWASC)

Minutes May 24, 2005

Steve Hartman chaired the meeting that was attended by voting members Glenn Bailey, John Holmes, Joyce MacKinnon, Rosemarie White, Melanie Winter, Melba Simms and Dexter Kelley. Non-voting members and guests included Jesse Medina and Debby Rolland (L.A. City), Lynda Levitan (Council District 6), Gene Green (Japanese Garden), Sharon Brewer (Encino Neighborhood Council), Don (last name not legible), Willis Simms, and Sharon Ford (S.F. Valley Audubon).

There were self introductions and public comment. Steve announced that the Army Corp of Engineers has named Gail Campos to represent the Corp at SBWASC meetings. Steve Hartman will try to contact her and invite her to attend meetings or submit a written report if she cannot attend.

The minutes of the April 27 meeting were approved as corrected (minor spelling error).

Steve Hartman made two power point presentations – the first showed images from the Wildlife Reserve of weed infestations and also showed results of weed control work performed by Riparian Repairs (Bill Neill). With the second highest total rainfall ever recorded, the Basin has experienced tremendous crops of some certain weed species; but the weeds that have been targeted for control over the last few years were not present in overwhelming numbers. English plantain is one non-native species that is beginning to form large clumps in certain areas, so that species is now being targeted for herbicide spraying. Harding grass continues to spread in the Wildlife Reserve, but will continue to receive control treatments where it is present adjacent to the wildlife lake just east of the main trail. Milk thistle patches (prompted by the 2003 fire) have been sprayed on the east side of the lake and on the north slope of Burbank Blvd (east of the tunnel). Patches of fennel in the south reserve have been sprayed, as have yellow star thistle and perennial pepperweed. Evergreen (Shamel) ash continues to be a main target in the north reserve, but it is out of control in other riparian areas in the Basin.

Woodley Entrance Native Landscape Planting

Mr. Hartman reviewed the native landscape plantings that were initiated and planted by the City along the Woodley Golf Course entrance (on Woodley) and surrounding the parking lot adjacent to the Valley Region headquarters. While the selection of trees and native grasses was appropriate and looks very good in some areas, the City contacted Steve with concerns that the plantings by the entrance signs didn't look "lush" and "comparable to other entrance-way landscaping." Steve met with Ken Novak and other City representatives in late spring to review the project. The most important element of a successful native landscaping project is to weed regularly during the first three years of a project; there were many weeds at the time and Steve recommended that the City be sure to keep up on the weeding. One plant was coming up all over, and the landscape staff didn't know what it was (and to pull it or not); Steve identified the plant as an annual "weedy" native, *Epilobium ciliatus*, that could be treated as a weed. However, since meeting with the City, apparently little or no weeding has taken place in the landscaping area as of May 24, and the area looked in poor condition due to weeds up to 5 foot tall (along with lots of trash).

To make matters worse, it appears that the selection of plants made little sense based on the climate of the Basin, nor did the landscape designers take into consideration the success of (and lessons learned from) past native landscape installations in the Basin. Certain coastal species were selected that will never grow in the valley, the most obvious example is giant coreopsis (limited to the coast). Plants that require lots of moisture (*Mimulus guttatus*) were planted right next to desert plants (*Calliandra eriophylla*); also Fremontodendron (no summer water) was plant next to the sycamore (needs water all year). Marsh marigold (*Baccharis douglasii*), a somewhat weedy looking perennial that is found in "moist places near streams", but previously not known in the Sepulveda Basin, was selected even though it is known to be invasive (per Jepson Manual). While this plant is known from the L.A. River and the Griffith Park area, it would be more suitable for planting in the wildlife area than as a "landscape" plant. Other plants not suitable for public landscaping (or the area) include fuchsia-flowering gooseberry (loses leaves and turns brown after flowering in early spring, leaving only brown thorny stalks), cardinal monkeyflower (this is a

riparian plant and will only last one season in hot, dry areas even when watered); the grape (*Vitis girdiana*) is a woody vine, but it was planted in an area with no other plants to climb on and would be more appropriately planted next to a fence in a landscape setting (whereas in the Wildlife Reserve, where grapes are a natural component of the riparian forest, they climb up into the trees). In other areas the California fuchsia (*Zauchneria* spp.), a plant that prefers little water, was planted next to columbine, a plant that requires much water.

Last, little signs with names were installed in the landscape, but one plant was labeled "Weedy Verbena" – not the kind of name to encourage landscape use; others that didn't have a common name, were labeled NCN.

This project was described to the SBWASC as a native landscape demonstration garden to "show off" natives and to provide an area where City gardeners could learn to maintain native gardens. There is a concern that this project was deliberately designed "to fail" so that the potential value (and reputation) of natives in the landscape would be tarnished. Further, the lack of weeding to date shows that the City isn't even doing the minimum to maintain this area. Steve urged the City to take immediate action to remedy the situation and asked the City to investigate why so many inappropriate plants were selected for the hot valley.

Continuing Business

Verizon Tower Proposal. Glenn reviewed the proposal and after much discussion agreed to draft a letter that would be sent to the appropriate agency (in consultation with Lynda Levitan). On motion by Rosemarie White and seconded by Dexter Kelly, the Steering Committee voted unanimously to "Object to the placement of the tower in or adjacent to the Wildlife Areas on the basis of visual blight and unknown negative effects to wildlife."

Meeting Rain Closure. Glenn outlined problems caused by last minute rain closures. It was agreed to look into establishing a nearby restaurant to be our meeting place in case of Basin closure due to rain or other reasons. Selection of restaurant will await logistical and culinary review.

Sod Farm Development – Melanie reported on the sod farm development. The added twist is that the Naval Armory adjacent to the north of the proposed site has been slated for closing by the military, potentially making additional acreage available. Melanie presented three versions of possible layouts including baseball diamonds in a "pin-wheel" layout. Gene pointed out that the size of the armory shown on her plans didn't match the actual size shown on the aerial views. Steve pointed out that the north bank of the L.A. River in this area is a very degraded, with trash, debris and graffiti, and that the proposed plan would bring the "park" right to the river edge; rather than the wasteland it is now, the removal of the concrete sloping walls and the creation of a streamside park could be a tremendous asset to the City

Agency Reports

Jesse reported that deodar trees were declining in the play area next to Lake Balboa and the City has brought in specialists to determine the cause.

Gene announced that the Japanese Garden will be hosting six cultural events this year and he handed out a brochure.

Lynda announced that there is a new vendor for the Woodley Golf driving range and pro-shop, and that she has encouraged the new management to attend a SBWASC meeting and perhaps participate in Basin cleanups.

Committee Reports – Brief reports were presented by some of the representatives.

Next meeting will be June 28 with a tour of the south reserve planned. Meet at the Wildlife Area entrance (near amphitheater, restrooms) at 4:30 sharp. Dinner will be at local restaurant at 6pm.