

Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Areas Steering Committee
Minutes - April 25, 2006

The meeting was chaired by Melanie Winter (TRP). Other voting members attending were Glenn Bailey (RCDSMM), Steve Hartman (CNPS), John Holmes (SWHS), Dexter Kelly (LAAS), Muriel Kotin (SFVAS), and Rosemarie White (TGP). Non-voting members and guests were; Ed Aguilar (CalTrans); Ira Artz (Tetra Tech); Sharon Brewer (Encino NC); Ara Kasparian (City of LA); Sharon Ford (SFV Audubon); Derek Higa (CalTrans Design); Mia Lehrer (River Team); Lynda Levitan (CD6); Joyce MacKinnon (SFV Audubon); Parviz Majzoob (CalTrans); Michael Moertl; Ken Novak (RAP); Chris Robert (Robert Group); Kelly Schmoker (CalTrans Biology); Mine Struhl (CalTrans); Hal Sullivan (Sep Golf); Adam Fonde Thurtell (CalTrans Env Planning); Sara Townsend (Tetra Tech); Bill Wenk (Tetra Tech/Wenk).

After self introductions, the minutes of the March 2006 meeting were approved after striking the last sentence of the first paragraph on page 3.

Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan, Sepulveda Basin Portion: Ira Artz, Ara Kasparian and Bill Wenk made the presentation. Only the river corridor is included in the current process. The vision is a continuous river greenway, extending into the watershed, including tributaries and to existing parks, schools and libraries. They want to increase flood water capacities at Sepulveda Basin (SB) and Hansen Dam (HD) by lowering portions of land. In SB, they might improve water quality of tributaries before they flow into the river. They also hope to improve the water quality of storm sewers emptying into the river. In SB and downtown LA, the river might be widened to provide natural area restoration. Five sites will be selected for detailed design that could be generalized for future projects, resulting in clean water, flood safety, greening the city, and improving communities.

In SB the dam wall might be raised a few feet with berms in areas where there is no dam wall, so the channel downstream can be greened. The added vegetation from greening the channel downstream would reduce the water capacity downstream and would be washed away by current high velocities. Melanie asked how this would enhance groundwater recharge, as the soils in SB do not lend themselves to infiltration. Are the projects downstream dependent on flow attenuation in SB and HD? Reply: the only area impacted is the LAR between SB and the Tujunga Wash. (The presentation was interrupted for another one.)

New 405/101 Interchange Proposal: CalTrans presented the project to improve the connector from the southbound 405 to the northbound 101. (Committee members visited the area to be impacted with the CalTrans team at 4:00 p.m.) The scoping

process will start in May, with a public meeting in late May. All alternatives have the same connector.

Alternative #1: There would be no on-ramp access from Burbank Bl. to the north- or southbound 101. There would be no impact on the Wildlife Area (WA), but the lack of on-ramps would impact local streets. LADOT does not like that impact.

Alternative #2: The ramp from Burbank Bl. to the southbound 405 and to northbound 101 would go through the north WA in a constricted loop to reduce encroachment, causing a sharp radius curve onto the 405. This would directly impact 17 acres of the WA and extend 400 ft from the west end of the existing 405 off-ramp.

Alternative #3: This is similar to Alt. #2, but encroaches more on the WA to reduce constriction and its impacts on the nearby Burbank Bl. intersection. This would directly impact 21.5 acres of the WA and extend 450 ft from the west end of the existing 405 off-ramp.

Alternative #4: There would be no encroachment on the WA. The connector would split to access the southbound 101, merging into the slow lane. Some properties near the 101 would be impacted.

Several committee members felt the new Burbank Bl. on-ramps of Alternatives #2 and #3 should be eliminated. In addition to huge impacts on the Wildlife Area, there would be 3 close signaled intersections along Burbank: (1) at Sepulveda Bl.; (2) at northbound 405 on- and off-ramps; and (3) at the new ramps. There are already terrible traffic jams getting through the existing 2 signaled intersections.

If they wish, committee members can send in comments now to Ed Aguilar (eduardo_aguilar@dot.ca.gov).

LA River Revitalization continued: Glenn asked about "Area 3," the area west of Balboa Bl. Will the new sports fields preclude the water retention increase there? They're thinking about lowering areas and changing habitat types, not types of uses. They would lower (excavate) Woodley Lakes Golf Course, Tapia field, and parts of the WA, perhaps 5 to 10 feet. They would leave the south WA (so. of Burbank) alone, as it is important habitat. The north WA was considered for lowering.

Steve H would like the north WA near Haskell Creek and the Wildlife Lake to be left undisturbed. Muriel agreed and thinks the WA west of Woodley Av. could benefit from lowering and installing wetlands. The areas along the LAR could be

lowered and widened except where doing so would interfere with existing uses, including near Lake Balboa. Joyce said the Lake Balboa road should not be moved to the north, however. Rosemarie pointed out the value of the Basin as wildlife habitat. Dexter asked about infiltration along an unpaved river. Reply: they can't include such infiltration in their calculations.

Melanie pointed out that if this is a 20-year vision, the present situation will not pertain. She thinks SB a great place for a "quick win." The LAR from Hayvenhurst to the busway trestle would be an ideal stretch to show people what the river really is. They could start from Balboa Bl. to the trestle, removing gunite from the LAR and its tributaries. The River Project has been removing non-native vegetation and killing non-native trees for the Army Corps to remove from the river. Steve H suggested constructed wetlands for Woodley Creek just north of the LAR and removing non-native trees from Balboa Bl. to Burbank Bl.

Ken said Woodley Lakes Golf Course could be made more interesting by remodeling and deepening the course 1 or 2 holes at a time, and native plants added. Melanie suggested they talk to Carvel Bass about lowering some of the hills west of Bull Creek that are not in the area of the Bull Creek project.

Upcoming river revitalization workshops will be held in June. They will be listed on www.lariver.org.

Reports:

Army Corps of Engineers: Carvel has not finished the EA on the fire road in the south reserve. He expects construction will happen after September 15 to avoid the Least Bell's Vireo breeding season. He will suggest that some of the clearing be done by hand crews, some by bulldozer. There will be a major rehabilitation, including planting of native trees, at Franklin Field #7, the ball diamonds north of Oxnard. Glenn said that users of that area are parking among the oak trees there. They should park on the street.

Recreation and Parks: Ken said the Israeli Festival will be held at Woodley Park on May 7. May 20-21 will be the Garden Faire at the Garden Center. The Dog Faire will be May 13. Los Angeles County is providing \$1 million for park improvements and \$1 million for bike paths, both in SB. The park funds will pay for fixing WA fencing

and barriers, as well as removal of non-native plants and planting natives in the places made bare by the removals and for streambed restoration, especially along Hayvenhurst Creek where the rip-rap has been undermined. Melanie will talk to Ken more later about possibly using willows and other native plants instead of hardscape. Bike paths will be fixed, including where they are broken in the WA. Ken will miss our next meeting; Jesse or Steve Moe will attend. Steve H commended R & P for their quick response to new invasive plants and for the planting on the road to HQ near Woodley looking great. Melanie and Sharon Ford chimed in with thanks.

Glenn described an incident where a lifeguard said the signs to not feed animals are unenforceable. Glenn phoned General Services for a ranger who appeared in 5 minutes and started telling people to stop feeding the birds. R&P is assembling a program with flyers about not feeding wildlife. Ken will tell the lifeguards to phone General Services. R&P will try to get an enforceable city law about not feeding wildlife passed eventually.

Congressman Sherman's Office: Michael Tou thinks a compromise can eventually be reached on the CalTrans interchange that will not require construction in the WA.

Announcements: Dexter announced there will be a LA Audubon workshop on a new bond initiative at Debs Park Audubon Center May 11. [Note on 5/8: Because of the passage of the legislative resource bond on Friday, May 05, 2006, the workshop for our Resource Bond scheduled for May 11 at Debs has been re-scheduled to Saturday, June 10 from 2:30-5:30 pm so that Audubon can compare the two bonds, and strategize how best to activate support for our Bond, which includes moneys for clean water and conservation not included in the legislature bond such as funds for Baldwin Hills Conservancy, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and LA River Revitalization. Representatives from those three agencies have been invited. Dinner will be provided.]

John Holmes e-mail now works: swhs.johnholmes@hotmail.com.

Submitted by

Muriel S. Kotin, Member Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Areas Steering Committee