

SEPULVEDA BASIN WILDLIFE AREAS STEERING COMMITTEE

Date: January 28, 2025 6:30 pm

Location: Balboa Sports Center, Clubhouse Room, 17015 Burbank Blvd., Encino, CA 91316

Attendees: Patricia Bates, Rosie Avetisyan, Laurie Kelson, Jon Rishi, Brent S, Bill Neill, Muriel Kotin, B H, Melanie Winter, Hanna Weyland - US, Diane Rosen, Kathy Schreiner, Glenn Bailey

Meeting Minutes:

1. Call to Order and Introductions

1. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM. A quorum was established. Attendees were present.

2. Approval of Minutes

1. Corrections: The minutes from the previous meeting were revised to include Lionel Mars from the Neighborhood Council in the attendee list.
2. Approval: Greg seconded the motion to approve the revised minutes. There were no objections, and the minutes were approved.

3. Public Comments on Non-Agenda Items

1. No members of the public raised comments on non-agenda items within the WASC's subject matter jurisdiction.

4. Reports

1. Reports from Governmental Agencies

- Brian, LA Department of Recreation and Parks:
 - Regarding trash: Ballards have been installed on Burbank and elsewhere to deter illegal dumping. Efforts to remove existing trash are ongoing. Illegal dumping primarily occurs at night and early morning.
 - At City Council, motions regarding closing parks during red flag weather were discussed. Sepulveda Basin is not technically included in this. Brian was asked to monitor for any mention of Sepulveda Basin in these discussions.
- Rosie: The Sepulveda Basin homeless count is scheduled for February 18th, weather permitting. A meeting was held today to discuss details. Pat will be covering a portion of the count and may need one or two additional volunteers.
- John Rishi, Biologist, Army Corps of Engineers:
 - Vegetation management at the South Preserve is underway. John and Hanna flagged all native plants to avoid during mowing to reduce fuel levels while preserving native species.

- In-channel work has been postponed due to rain. Mobilization is planned to start Thursday.
- The Sepulveda Basin and Hanson Dam Master Plan 45-day public scoping period is still scheduled to begin February 10th. The notice of intent was suspended due to new administration communication restrictions but is planned for re-issuance on February 4th.
 - Muriel requested John stay for the discussion of recent plantings in the upper theater lot.
 - Pat asked about the river channel contractor: BJB Services. The comment period is extended to March 27th.
 - Pat noted the next regular meeting will be March 25th.
- Glen asked about basin fires. Pat read her updates.

2. **Reports from Member Organizations**

- CA Native Plant Society: Planting is underway with 190 plants planted this year so far, and 10 more planned for this weekend.
- Friends of the Los Angeles River (FoLAR):
 - Right of Entry (ROE) for the year has been secured for confirmed Saturday events.
 - No ROE is needed for weekday habitat restorations with students participating in the Source to Sea program.
 - There has been a spike in interest for Habitat Restoration Days (HRD), with 175 attendees in January.
- Sierra Club Angeles: Meeting this Sunday, both in-person and virtual.
- Sierra Club SFV: Held their first in-person meeting as a group this past week.
- Melanie (River Project): Had nothing to report at the moment.
- Encino Neighborhood Council: Elections are held every two years; cabinet filing starts this Friday. There is heightened awareness due to a near miss with fire, which could draw additional council filings. Encino Day is in April, and they are looking for exhibitors in Encino Park.

5. **Fires in the Sepulveda Basin**

1. Approximately 50% of the Wildlife Areas (Woodley and Bull Creek) have been incinerated since June 2024. Over 220 fires have occurred in the entire Sepulveda Basin since early June 2024. The South Reserve has had multiple spot fires. USACE is beginning vegetative management of a large, mostly unburned area in the South Reserve.
2. Rosie: Update and discussion on the Sepulveda Basin Fire Working Group and the status of surveillance cameras:
 - The working group is meeting. LAFD wants to start brush clearance before nesting season. MOUs and letters of approval are being sought. After the homeless count, resource allocation will be determined. Progress is slow due to fires in Palisades.
 - Greg discussed mulch from Forestry for fire-affected areas. 10 truckloads were offered. Concerns were raised about homeless individuals lighting mulch piles. Caution was advised.
 - Park Rangers made an arrest of an individual believed to be responsible for many fires in the Sepulveda Basin.

- Rosie thanked the Rangers. Discussion on mulch use in medians. The RCD Biologist advised against using flammable mulch in the middle of roads.
- Muriel and Rosie noted an area near the wildlife reserve requiring MOU approval.
- Rangers identified areas for brush clearance. The LA River removed 6 acres of arundo.
- Rosie noted small fires scorching signs. Members were advised to call Ranger Dispatch (323-644-6661) for suspicious activity. Surveillance was approved. A meeting will discuss installation locations. The system has a long-range zoom and can aid in identifying illegal dumping. The total cost is approximately \$40,000. It is one camera covering the entire basin, monitored by Park Rangers at the Griffith Park station.
- Glen asked if the Burbank/Sepulveda location is the highest point.

6. Trees on the Lawn (and even at Lake Balboa)

1. Brian stated plantings are part of an effort to repopulate lost trees, funded by a CalFire grant and planned by the Hollywood Beautification team.
2. Muriel expressed concerns about non-native tree species planted. Dan questioned the unified plan for plantings. Greg noted the area is part of the reserve. Dan suggested a management plan. Notification before plantings was requested. Pat will invite the new Forestry representative to the committee. The old master plan calls for California native plants.
 - John Rishi confirmed the master plan calls for native plants wherever possible.
 - A conversation with Leon (Chief Forester) is needed.
 - Section 6.2.3 of the master plan recommends areas applicable to environmentally sensitive areas.
 - Greg questioned who approved the trees. A meeting with Forestry is needed to clarify consultation areas. The committee will remind Forestry that the area is within the committee's purview.
 - The committee should develop a list of approved species. A new native tree list by CFAC will be shared.
 - The possibility of an oak forest or other area-specific planting was discussed.

7. Maintenance Issues

1. Illegal dumping, removal, and the disappearance of trash barrels were discussed. More receptacles are needed. Barriers to keep cars off the grass, clear signage, and roundabout use ("Keep Right") were discussed. Bollards as a barrier were also considered.

8. Park Rangers

1. Status of \$3MM grant for the New Community Room and Ranger Station CF 23-0471: The status of the HUD grant application was discussed. Pat will ask Jimmy Kim for an update and is following up.
2. Ranger patrols and RAP funding: The insufficiency of current funding and ranger numbers was noted.

9. Discussion/comment on Sepulveda Basin website CF 24-1453

1. Rosie will check with the team. Pat encouraged member groups to write in support.

10. Discussion/comment on basin invasives removal/replacement with natives CF 24-1533

1. Appreciation was expressed for Councilmember Padilla's comment. Rosie will inform the committee if there is anything they can do to move the motion forward.

11. Thoughts on the upcoming Master Plan revision

1. The comment period is March 25th-27th. The committee will develop recommendations. Dan, Pat, and Greg are the subcommittee. An Ad Hoc Meeting is scheduled before February 25th. A tentative Special Meeting is set for February 25th.

12. Discussion/Newsworthy Items

1. Greg asked if USACE anticipates changes due to the change in administration. John stated there are no significant changes anticipated.
2. A comprehensive homeless count will be conducted on February 18, 2025.

13. Adjournment