

Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Areas Steering Committee
Minutes -- May 26, 2009

Rosemarie White chaired the meeting. After a quorum was established, self introductions were made. The other voting members attending were Glenn Bailey, Sharon Ford, Steven Hartman, Muriel Kotin and Robert Munsey. Non-voting members, alternates and guests attending were Patrick Aubuchon, Kerri Barton, Sharon Brewer, Tim Johnson, Kenny Ortega and Mark Osokow.

The minutes of the April 2009 meeting were approved without change.

A Committee Walkthrough before this meeting by committee members took place to look at potential mitigation areas with Caltrans biologist Paul Caron. Participants were Glenn Bailey, Sharon Brewer, Snowy Dodson, Steve Hartman, Sharon Ford, Tim Johnson, Muriel Kotin, Kris Ohlenkamp, Mark Osokow, Alan Pollack (SFVAS Audubon at Home Chair) and Rosemarie White.

Announcements:

- Muriel will not be able to take minutes of the June meeting and may miss the meeting because of travel plans. Sharon Ford will take the June minutes.
- Tim said the bike lane along Victory Blvd will temporarily close for about 3 months while Victory is widened to add a left turn lane.
- Mark O mentioned that SFVAS (SFV Audubon Society) is trying to organize a program for college students. As part of this, there may be a college-student tour and cleanup on 10/23.
- SFVAS will probably sponsor a Family Flashlight Walk with the Park Rangers on 8/23. Rosemarie requested emails to the committee when these are definite.
- The Bull Creek Restoration Project was dedicated this morning. Speakers included Congressman Brad Sherman, City Council Member Tony Cardenas and R&P General Manager Jon Kirk Mukri.

Public Comments: Kenny Ortega attended the Bull Creek dedication this morning. He was well impressed, but is concerned about rust finish of the bridges. He noticed graffiti there already.

Walkthrough with Caltrans Biologist Paul Caron: The walkthrough and discussions were described by Muriel, Mark and Sharon Ford as follows.

1. After meeting at the amphitheater at 4 PM, the group walked north along the edge of the weedy field that runs along the east side of Haskell Creek

from Wildlife Way to a roadway that accesses the banks of the creek. They discussed the possibilities for replacing some of the exotic riparian trees with native ones and turning the weedy field into a linear park for strolling, wildlife viewing and picnicking. Paul seemed to think this area might benefit from a major re-do, although he was concerned by hearing mention of a homeless presence along that stretch of the creek.

2. The group then headed east between the archery range and its restroom building, looking at the possibility of turning the turf grass area into an educational native plant woodland with a path along prominently labeled trees and shrubs. Paul was concerned about Caltrans doing a project there as there could be conflict about displacing an unauthorized cricket field now maintained on the grass.

3. Finally the group toured the north end of the native habitat area of the Wildlife Reserve, on both sides of Haskell Creek. Paul was enthusiastic about the area and thought the area west of the creek (the newer side) might benefit from additional mitigation plantings of oaks to make a woodland or savannah.

Participants felt that the walkthrough was a very good first step in planning some desirable mitigation projects and communicating the value of the Wildlife Reserve. Glenn said that on reflection perhaps we should have walked all the way to the north; perhaps a linear park could be developed all the way to the Wildlife Reserve from the Victory bike path. He also suggested Steve H get the jurisdiction map from Gene Greene. Rosemarie suggested she should invite Adel Hagekhalil who now heads the Bureau of Sanitation to discuss the possibility of a riparian linear park along the east side of Haskell Creek if they have an interest in that area. Would it be feasible to recontour and replant the whole creek (both sides)?

Update on Dog Policy: Muriel read an email from OPS Chief Lead Officer Evelyn Solano:

Just a friendly note to inform you that I will not be able to attend tonight's meeting. I want to update you with information relating to the Sepulveda Basin and our continued patrols in the area. Our night watch officers continue to enforce the limit hour/overnight parking on Woodley Ave as well as, the off leash and fishing violations. Several citations have been issued and two narcotic related arrests have been made out of the wildlife area.

Please feel free to share this information with the members and feel free to contact me should need any further information. Once again, thanks for the support and I hope this information is helpful.

Evelyn Solano; Senior Lead Officer-West Valley; Office Of Public Safety
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Rosemarie will phone Chief Park Ranger Albert Torres about dogs on leash. **A motion was passed that this committee support enactment of a city ordinance that prohibits dogs in the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve.**

Bull Creek Restoration Project: Glenn heard this morning about the graffiti. He questioned: Who is going to enforce keeping people out of the plantings? He noticed algae blooms in the creek; is this a problem? Trash is starting to accumulate. There's no orange fencing to keep people out of Bull Creek on the west side. Tim said maintenance will be putting up fencing and replacing fencing as best they can. There is little ability to keep people out. Glenn requested that maintenance staff radio in behavior problems and graffiti they observe. Tim said they would. Mark will contact Steve Moe on the water quality issues of Bull Creek in the restoration area and let the committee know.

The consensus was that we should keep the Bull Creek Restoration Project on our committee's agendas, but to take care not to step on the toes of other organizations like Friends of Lake Balboa.

Dodger Dreamfield: Tim has heard nothing. Glenn spoke to a deputy from Cardenas's office who has also heard nothing.

Native Trees and Shrubs north of Wildlife Reserve Parking: Steve H will discuss a possible native plant garden with a handicapped-accessible pathway with the board of the Payne Foundation. Possibly this will be a project to be funded by the Wildlife Consortium. Glenn suggested that the areas of turf that look brown might be desirable areas for the plantings. (This would be in the area described in paragraph 2 about the walkthrough.)

Japanese Garden 25th Anniversary Participation Saturday June 13. Rosemarie will talk to Gene Greene to learn what presence and audience are expected and will email everyone. Kenny Ortega offered to help with the event.

Department of Recreation and Parks: Tim said they're working on preparing to use reclaimed water in the park areas of Sepulveda Basin within the next couple of months. DWP is putting in piping and will be training Rec & Parks staff to use reclaimed water for irrigation. First Balboa Sports Center will be piped, then Woodley Park.

On the west side of Woodley Ave. along the access road to park headquarters and Woodley Lakes Golf, the army wants Rec & Parks to remove the native plantings from within 15 feet of their chain link fence for security reasons. Steve H suggested trimming up the plantings instead of removal.

Congressman Sherman's Office: Rosemarie spoke to Michael Tou earlier today. He will return to attending these meetings now that his schedule again permits.

California Native Plant Society: Steve H. has been working with Bill Neill and will ask Bill to handle some weed problems Steve noticed. Steve is updating our SepulvedaBasinWildlife.org website about weekly. He is becoming less available because of his work and may need to hire someone to do some of the updating.

Canada Goose Project: Rosemarie noted a tremendous decrease in the numbers of migratory Canada Geese in the past few years and will try to learn why it has happened. There are about 300 resident C. Geese in the Basin. Bob Munsey recommended the discussion in National Wildlife's recent magazine issue.

San Fernando Valley Audubon: Muriel described a present operation by SFVAS volunteers to protect black-crowned night heron fledglings that have been walking on a recreational path along the edge of Encino Golf Course, west of Burbank Blvd. Bridge. The volunteers have been moving the fledglings off the pathway and explaining to people what is going on.

Sierra Club: Sharon F reported on an upcoming Valley Group dinner.

Submitted by

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