

DRAFT
Big Tujunga Wash Mitigation Bank Project
Community Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
March 27, 2008 Meeting
Hansen Yard 6:30 to 8:30 pm

I. Welcome/Introduction

1. Welcome
 - a. Attendance list – attached to minutes
2. Review of Agenda and meeting minutes from Sept. 27th 2007.

II. Site Maintenance Issues and Discussion of Action Items from Previous Meeting

1. Site Safety – Mary Benson stated that the LAPD have been called over 100 times and they still are not getting any response. It was stated that something else should be done. The citizen patrol which was made up of local volunteers has fallen apart because they were unable to get any backup. A neighborhood watch patrol which was started three years ago has also fallen apart, because of discouragement related to the lack of support and response from law enforcement. Belinda Kwan stated that she understands their frustration, but the public should continue to call the Los Angeles Police Department to report any illegal activities within the Mitigation Bank. The numbers are still (877) ASK-LAPD or (877) 275-5273.

There has been a problem with people carving and marking trees at various locations throughout the Big T site. There was a report of three young men wielding guns or air rifles around the ponds, possibly going after water fowl. There has also been a recurring problem with ATVs on the trails. Groups of up to 8 individuals have been seen regularly riding their vehicles on the trails and within the wash. The ATVs and mountain bikes are entering the site through Hansen dam, under Wentworth to the haul road. They are going under the railings at the equestrian center and out onto the Big Tujunga wash. They are gaining access to the site by going along the new golf course bike path trail under Foothill Avenue and under the 210 freeway to enter the site. There are currently 14 to 15 blogs on the internet promoting the Hansen dam trails and haul road as open for mountain biking and ATV riding areas. Sport Chalet is also selling a map that shows the trails designated as a mountain biking area.

There was another pitbull attack which occurred recently near the mitigation bank. Chris Arlington was riding her horse on the trails and was approached by the dog, which began to attack her horse. The dog was eventually called off by its owner with no injuries to the horse or rider. Several phone calls were made to authorities with no response.

The lifeguards who are stationed at the Hansen Dam cannot help during emergency situations. There are currently no rangers assigned to the Hansen Dan station, and there won't be any ATVs for them to use on patrol until the fall of 2008. These ATV patrols

will be a much needed asset once they come on line. Currently there are no rangers patrolling the mitigation area, and the lifeguards are only responsible for the Hansen Lake swimming area. It is possible that rangers will start up patrols sometime in May of 2008, on Saturday and Sunday, and in the evenings.

Enforcement is a big question out there and it was stated that the access points must be one of the control methods. The foothill bridge is currently under construction and the gate is open most of the time, including the weekends. LADPW will talk to the City about the open gate at the bridge construction area. There is also a crane blocking the county access gate on the south side of the Big T wash on Foothill Avenue, so it is possible that the porta-potty cannot be serviced.

2. Website – The website has undergone some changes since the last meeting. Some of the attendees were unsure of how to access the Big T Wash Mitigation Bank site. Belinda Kwan informed everyone that the website now has meeting minutes of all past CAC meetings, current meeting agendas, past reports, and the newest edition of the newsletter. The website is (www.ladpw.org). Select the Government Tab, and then find the Environment box on the bottom left. Click on the link for Water Resources and there is a bulleted link to the Big T Wash Mitigation Bank. Photos of the website will be brought to the next CAC meeting to assist those still unable to navigate to it.
3. General Site Signage – Chris Stone has been working with county council to ensure that the correct codes for enforcement purposes are used on the signs, and what activities should be excluded. LAPD will be the responding agency, once the correct enforceable codes are posted. The firearms issue is the only code that they have to work out. This should be resolved soon. It was brought up during the meeting that it would be a good idea to have multiple copies of the signs created as backup for ones that are destroyed or go missing. It was also suggested that they be installed up high, limiting the amount of vandalism they could sustain. Signs will be posted at all entrances to the mitigation area. A graffiti proof coating should be placed onto the signs to prohibit vandalism and facilitate ease of cleaning. No enforcement will happen until the signs go up because they can't legally enforce anything. There have not been any issues recently with paint ball warriors on site.
4. Kiosks – DPW tried to remove the kiosk near Cottonwood in June, but there were nesting birds using the kiosks. This kiosk is still there and ECORP biologists will survey it the next time they conduct a site visit along with coordinating the visit with Terry Kaiser who has expressed interest in cutting down and removing the kiosk.
5. Cottonwood Area as a Staging Area – Terry Kaiser is still interested in using the Cottonwood area as a staging area in case of a fire or other emergency. DPW reminded the group that CDFG wants minimum use of the Mitigation Bank. Terry is investigating the use of this site in addition to other nearby locations. Terry was going to talk with the management team at the equestrian center to see if they would also be open to the idea of assisting as an evacuation site also. The equestrian center has 20 acres available for parking trailers in Gabrielino Park and there is also a large area under the power lines near Gabrielino Park and Pierce College can grant emergency access. Terry is also

working on getting approval from the Fire department, in order to train people who will be working at the evacuation site. Prior to becoming an established evacuation site, the operation will need to be permitted or certified according to current animal regulation and control rules. The volunteers will also have to be qualified to conduct such rescue operations, and there will also have to be veterinarians present to check on animals when they arrive. Terry will provide more details at the next meeting.

6. Current situation at the equestrian center - Jimmy Perez will be running the rental venue at the equestrian center and the residences currently on-site will be taken out.
7. Neighborhood watch program - There are four local groups which are currently putting on training for a neighborhood watch program. Complaint about this effort mirror earlier comments about a lack of law enforcement backup, although the chief ranger has said that they will provide backup for this community watch program. Terry Kaiser said that their group would not pursue this unless they have an MOU with the rangers and the LAPD. They are looking for the heaviest support on the weekends.
8. Equestrian gate installation - Terry will be submitting permit application to Belinda Kwan for the installation of a manually opened and closed gate, and the permit fee will be waved. The gate would be set back 30 feet from Wentworth in case a horse gets loose in the mitigation area, which would help to prevent a collision with vehicles on Wentworth. In addition to the gate, a sign should be posted stating the safety concerns and reasons why they should close the gate. Terry will also include the removal of the kiosk on the permit application, to cover all liability issues. Prior to the removal of the kiosk he will be coordinating with ECORP biologists so they can conduct a bird nest survey prior to its removal. Terry is also going to assess the need for a gait structure at the Mary Bell entrance.

III. Current Status of Programs

1. Exotic Plant Removal – Mari provided an update on the progress of the Exotic Plant Eradication efforts. Weeding has begun in the upland portions of the site and it looks good so far, and some other larger exotics have also been targeted. These efforts will remove weed competition allowing the natives to thrive. The application for herbicide spraying is being reviewed by the Department of Fish and Game. Once that permit is approved, herbicide spraying will commence in the riparian areas. Terry has requested that poison oak be removed from along the trails. A biologist will be tasked with locating areas of Poison oak which can be targeted for removal during their next site visit. The vegetation clearing which is occurring along the perimeter of the ponds is not being conducted by ECORP or Natures Image, it is most likely related to the recent installation of fishing platforms around the ponds.
2. Exotic Wildlife Removal – Todd Chapman provided an update on their efforts. Aquatic exotic species removal efforts were conducted three times in 2007 with good success using seine nets, fyke nets, turtle traps, and spear fishing snorkel surveys. ECORP's next exotic species removal effort will take place in late April or May. We are waiting to allow young fish recruits to emerge and bullfrogs to begin their spawning. One

interesting thing to report was the occurrence of large mouth bass predating on a Santa Ana sucker. The adult sucker was partially hanging out of the mouth of the bass when it was captured.

Plywood platforms have been removed by flood maintenance from around the pond. It was also mentioned that large tree branches are also being cut off the trees and placed into the reeds to provide additional support for fishing platforms. There have also been some recent impacts on the trail just north of the two ponds where vegetation clearing has been occurring and four wheel drive vehicles have been driving.

Locations for boulder barricade installation will be considered by LADPW in order to prevent ATVs and 4x4 vehicle usage on the site. The identity of the hair algae/grass growing in the ponds was questioned and samples will be collected during the next site visit so an ECORP botanist can identify the species and determine if it is native or non-native.

3. Riparian and Upland Restoration Areas – A few of the remaining cuttings have started to bud with the recent rainstorms. We will continue to maintain the riparian areas and we will also commence the planting of cuttings again when the timing is correct. Adequate signage will also be installed to inform the public.
4. Water Quality – MWH will continue to conduct water quality sampling and analysis.
5. Trail Usage and Maintenance – ECORP biologists have walked all of the trails in the Bank and have assembled a list of maintenance items. Poison oak encroaching on the trails is a general problem. Other problems include low branches and a fallen tree behind Gibson Ranch. Terry Kaiser offered to ride the trails and GPS problem areas. Mosquitoes have become a big issue on some of the trails. Belinda is going to check with flood maintenance division to inquire about vector control in the mitigation area and whether they are using mosquitofish. If they are spraying insecticides, it should be determined if vertebrate species could be affected. Several individuals recall the spreading or spraying of a dust in the past, which seemed to kill the mosquito larvae. Is this still a possibility?

There is a bog currently on the project site where a horse was caught in some of the roots. A trail has become eroded due to excessive flows and standing water which caused the trail to collapse and expose large roots which cross the trail 6-10” above the substrate. This problem area is 250 -300 feet down the water trail from the Cottonwood entrance, on one side of the creek crossing. It is suggested that this trail be closed with a route established which can avoid this area. Terry will meet with Todd to show him the problem area along the trail.

South of Wheatland Ave, the stream has taken a turn and has gone back into the wash. Terry and others have been removing a lot of the dead alders along the trails. There is one trail which runs along the old south chain link fence which is in need of some serious maintenance and vegetation trimming. ECORP will check this out during the next site visit.

There was a recent effort by 13 volunteers on the site, where rocks were cleared from the trails, except along the water trail. Mary Benson mentioned that the LA Trails Project has received a grant for trail planning from the National Park Service. They would like to offer assistance for trail maintenance and restoration on the site. The State also has a grant that will match 84% of funds. One area proposed for improvement was the Wheatland access trail which has been degraded and is narrowing. Some signs indicating the problem would be good. Foothill trails and Sun Valley Neighborhood council can do some matching of funds to help out, \$10,000 – \$15,000 would be an easy grant. Mary Benson also suggested that restoring some of the haul road and making it into a nice trail would be another alternative.

The next trail maintenance day, to remove trash from around the ponds, will be on May 17, 2008 at 8:00 am. Terri will bring the tools needed to conduct the trail maintenance day. Terri has also expressed interest in having some fallen trees removed from the creek to allow better flow, relieve some of the overflow potential from certain crossing areas, and this will also help to cleanup some of the accumulating debris. Todd will contact Jesse Bennett of USFWS to discuss the potential removal of trees and rock dams from the creek. Rubber gloves were suggested for the trash pickup event. Carol Roper would like to be notified when planting is going to occur on site so she could put it into the Shadow Hills Property Owners Association (SHPOA) newsletter.

6. Graffiti and Other Unauthorized Uses – There have been several incidents during site visits since ECORP’s contract began in July
7. Gibson Ranch – Chris Stone stated that the issues have been resolved and the fences will be moved soon. LADPW is at the final resolution. There will be a land swap of 1 to 1, and the final approval will be brought before the board of supervisors on April 8, 2008. End of April/early May the fences will be moved. Restoration efforts will be conducted following the move.

Gibson ranch puts on a yearly fund raiser for Parkinson’s disease research. They would like to put on a wagon hay ride. They wanted to know if they can use the Cottonwood area to take the wagon down the main road on the Cottonwood site then turn around and go back out to Wentworth Ave.

LADPW will be enlarging the Hansen spreading grounds. They will be deepening them to the same depth as the other basins. LADPW will be paying for part of the project. Contractors will begin work in August timeframe. All materials will go to the nearby Vulcan facility. The last phase of this construction will include the planting of vegetation and trees around the project boundaries.

IV. Next Trail Maintenance Day

1. The next trail maintenance day will be May 17, 2008, 0800. Chris Stone will send out an email.

V. Schedule Next CAC Meeting

1. The next CAC meeting is scheduled for September 25, 2008 from 6:30 to 8:30 pm at Hanson Yard.

VI. Comments, Questions, and Answers

1. The Foothill Trails Neighborhood Council would like to be added to the mailing list. Their address is 9747 Wheatland Ave., Sunland, CA 91040.