

November 19, 2020

Dear Julianna Colwell, Civil Engineer
Los Angeles County Public Works
900 South Fremont Avenue
Alhambra, California 91803-1331

Subject: Big Tujunga Wash Mitigation Area Community Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Dear Julianna Colwell,

This memo summarizes the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Meeting held on Thursday, November 19, 2020, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. via WebEx.

Meeting Minutes

I. Welcome/Introduction/Housekeeping Rules

Attendees:

- Heather Driscoll (Parks and Recreation)
- Olivia Miseroy (Parks and Recreation)
- Tim Wood (Chambers Group)
- Paul Morrissey (Chambers Group)
- Jackie Mayfield (Chambers Group)
- Julianna Colwell (Public Works)
- Maria Lee (Public Works)
- Lily Sam (Public Works)

II. Review of Meeting Agenda

III. Summary of 2019 Eradication Program

1. Brown-headed cowbird trapping
 - a. Brown-headed cowbirds (BHCO) are parasitic species that lay their eggs in the nests of songbird species, and will often remove or damage the songbird's own eggs.
 - b. BHCO trapping occurs between April and July to reduce nest parasitism on songbirds during their prime nesting season.
 - c. Fifty-five BHCOs were captured and removed from the Mitigation Area in 2019.
2. Exotic Plant Eradication Program
 - a. The main purpose is to remove non-native and invasive plant species from the Mitigation Area, thus increasing resources for native plants to survive and thrive.
 - b. Maintenance crews were removing exotic plants on an almost daily basis in 2019.
 - c. At the end of April, herbicide use as a means to control weeds was banned, and the maintenance crew shifted exclusively to mechanical removal methods.
 - d. Substantial rainfall in the 2018/2019 season and alternating warm and cool weather patterns led to a lot of weed growth and weed regrowth throughout the spring and summer months.



- e. Many of the weeds removed in 2019 were bagged and disposed of at an off-site facility so that the dry material did not become a fire hazard.

3. Exotic Wildlife Removal Program

- a. Exotic wildlife removal efforts are conducted to protect special status fish species including the Santa Ana sucker, the arroyo chub, and the Santa Ana speckled dace.
- b. Regular exotic species removal efforts have helped native fish species to rebound.
- c. 14,839 exotic aquatic individuals were removed from Haines Canyon Creek and the Tujunga Ponds in 2019.
- d. Largemouth bass are voracious predators and can be detrimental to the native fish populations in Haines Canyon Creek.
- e. Illegal dams continued to be an issue, obstructing the flow of water, thus trapping and creating water quality issues for native fish.

4. Trails Maintenance, Realignment

- a. Trail maintenance is conducted to keep the trails safe and clear for equestrian users and hikers.
- b. Trails can become degraded with use. Trail crews work to remove cobble and rock that turns up in the trail over time, and to regrade and delineate the trail boundaries to make the trails more comfortable for horses.
- c. Trail maintenance included the removal of snags, downed trees, and branches; removal of irritating plants such as poison oak and trimming back overgrown vegetation; removal of rock and log dams from the creek; clearing and delineating trails for safe passage; and blocking off unauthorized trails.
- d. Trail realignment efforts occurred in 2019 to minimize the number of locations where the trails cross the creek. This was done to help protect special status fish species, riparian bird species, and riparian plant communities.

5. Snag Removal Monitoring (LA City tree crews)

- a. April 2019 as part of a larger 2017 Creek Fire cleanup project paid for by a National Dislocated Worker's Grant, San Gabriel Valley Conservation Corps, Los Angeles Conservation Corps, Northern California Construction Training, and Chambers Group collaborated with Public Works staff to facilitate the safe removal of more than 50 snag trees from the Mitigation Area.
- b. These snag trees were identified as potential safety and/or fire hazards and were removed from the site to support public safety.

6. Trail Cleanup Day

- a. The Trail Cleanup Day event was attended by approximately 18 volunteers including 3 Public Works employees, 11 Chambers Group employees, and 4 members of the public.
- b. A large amount of trash was removed from the Mitigation Area, including several shopping carts, mattress springs, lawn chairs, clothing items, tarps, tires, several large pieces of scrap metal, and approximately 40 large bags of smaller trash items.

7. Fuel Reduction Efforts

- a. The City of Los Angeles Fire Department required some brush clearance around properties that neighbor the Mitigation Area (along Gibson Ranch) and along Wentworth Avenue.



- b. All non-native species were removed in accordance with the County Code, and native species were trimmed and limbed from the ground to reduce the risk of fire in those areas.

8. Water Quality Monitoring

- a. Upstream contamination sources can affect the water quality onsite, particularly within Big Tujunga Wash; however, the Tujunga Ponds originate from an underground source and thus, the water quality in the ponds and Haines Canyon Creek is generally very good.
- b. In 2019 Haines Canyon Creek and the Tujunga Ponds were within the recommended ranges for the EPA's criteria on human health for the parameters monitored.

9. Public Outreach Program

- a. On June 30 outreach efforts took place at the Foothill Trails District Neighborhood Council Equine Fair in conjunction with Los Angeles County Public Works.
- b. Outreach efforts were conducted at the Mitigation on several days during the summer.
- c. Some of the concerns raised by the non-equestrian users interviewed included: trash, vandalism, the presence of snags along trails, and the homeless population.
- d. Some of the concerns raised by equestrian users included: vegetation overgrowth and relocating rocks on the trails, trash, the realigned trails, illegal dumping, the presence of poison oak along trails, off-highway vehicle use on the trails, and the homeless population.

10. Incident Monitoring

- a. All site incidents are recorded and reported to Public Works and/or the appropriate law enforcement agency as appropriate.

IV. Current Status of Programs for 2020 and Site Photo Share.

1. Brown-headed cowbird trapping

- a. Fifty-five BHCOS were captured and removed from the Mitigation Area in 2020.

2. Special status wildlife species

- a. Three nesting pairs of the federally endangered least Bell's Vireo (LBVI) were monitored in the Mitigation Area in 2020 - the first recorded nests since the monitoring began in the early 2000s. This is likely in part to successful BHCOS trapping efforts, restoration efforts, and monitoring requirements.
- b. During LBVI nesting season, work crews were not allowed to work within nest buffer areas and some site users may have noticed a lack of trail maintenance in these areas.
- c. Other special status species observed in 2020 included Cooper's hawk, loggerhead shrike, and willow flycatchers.

3. Exotic Plant Eradication Program

- a. Only mechanical weed removal methods were used in 2020 as the pesticide ban is still in effect.
- b. All weed materials were either cut and left on the ground or were cut and bagged for removal off-site.



4. Exotic Wildlife Removal Program

- a. Approximately 700 fewer exotic aquatic individuals were removed from Haines Canyon Creek and the Tujunga Ponds than in 2019 as of November 2020; however, maintenance crews will be conducting removal efforts in December as well and will likely meet the 2019 capture totals by the end of 2020.
- b. Photo share and explanation of wildlife removal methods (seine capture) in the Tujunga Ponds.
- c. Photo share of the exclusionary fish nests and explanation of how they work to exclude exotic aquatic species from Haines Canyon Creek.
- d. Photo share of a rock dam and explanation of how they are detrimental to special status species and the health of Haines Canyon Creek.

5. Trails Maintenance Program and Cleanup Day (Cancelled)

- a. Before and after photos of trail maintenance efforts were shared and discussed.
- b. The group was asked to inform Public Works/Chambers Group of any trail maintenance issues (e.g., downed trees, overgrown poison oak etc.) so that they can be dealt with as soon as possible.
- c. One of the biggest goals of trail maintenance aside from public safety, is keeping trail users on authorized trails and not diverging into habitat to get around trail issues.
- d. The Annual Trail Cleanup day was canceled in 2020 due COVID-19 safety issues and restrictions but is planned to continue in 2021 pending the COVID-19 situation next fall.

6. Water Quality Monitoring

- a. Water quality samples have been collected but are pending lab results.

7. Public Outreach Program

- a. Four Public Outreach events were conducted in the summer and fall of 2020, and approximately 35 equestrian users and 5 hikers were interviewed.
- b. Site users had similar concerns to those mentioned in 2019 including: removing debris to reduce fire hazards, trimming back weeds along trails to increase visibility, bees, overgrown vegetation blocking trails, people leaving large items in the trails (e.g., chairs) that pose a hazard to horses, litter, illegal rock dams and homeless activity.
- c. The group was asked to let the maintenance crews or on-site biologists know about any trail issues so that they can be remedied as soon as possible.

8. Continued Incident Monitoring

- a. Chambers Group continues to monitor and report incidents in 2020. Julianna Colwell with Public Works provided an email address specific to the Mitigation Area to report any incidents or other site issues: btwma@dpw.lacounty.gov.

V. Comments, Questions, and Answers

1. The floor was opened up to the group for comments and questions.

- a. Heather Driscoll with Parks and Recreation took the opportunity introduce herself and commended Public Works and Chambers Group on a job well-done and thanked them for all of their hard work.
- b. No other comments or questions were raised.



VI. Scheduling the 2021 CAC Meeting

1. The 2021 CAC Meeting is tentatively schedule for April 2021 and may be virtual depending on the COVID-19 situation at that time. No comments or objections were raised.

If you have any questions regarding this memo, please feel free to reach out to me.

Sincerely,

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