



A Publication of the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works

March 2009

Community Advisory Committee Meeting Rescheduled



Please note that the next Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting, previously scheduled for Thursday, March 26, 2009, has been changed to **Thursday, April 23, 2009**. The time (6:30 pm to 8:30 pm) and location (Hansen Yard, 10179 Glenoaks Blvd., Sun Valley, CA) remain the same. The CAC meets twice yearly (Fall and Spring) to provide an opportunity for the community to learn about the activities at the Big Tujunga Wash Mitigation Area. Please contact Valerie De La Cruz, LADPW, at (626) 458-6126 with any questions or to obtain more information on the CAC.

New Area to be Revegetated

Approximately 0.3 acres have been acquired from the Gibson Ranch, which borders the Big T Mitigation Area. Restoration efforts are being planned to revegetate this disturbed area. Restoration activities will include re-grading a portion of the area to remove some berms, weed removal, and planting oak trees and other native plants. The existing horse trail entering the Gibson property will be retained. The goal for this area will be to create a coastal sage scrub and oak tree buffer between the ranch and the riparian area. Mr. Gibson has volunteered a water source to support the plantings.

Cowbird Trapping to Begin Again

Its time again to begin the trapping program for the brown-headed cowbirds that parasitize the nests of other birds. The cowbirds lay their eggs in the nests of other birds but never provide care. The "host bird" ends up raising a cowbird chick because the cowbird chick either outcompetes the host bird's babies or it throws them out of the nest. In order to eliminate cowbird nest parasitism, four large traps will be placed around the mitigation bank. These large traps are 8' by 8' by 8' in size and they will contain food, water, shade, and male and female cowbirds. The birds enter through a slot in the top and then can't exit. A biologist will release the non-target birds every day while keeping the cowbirds in the trap. Please do not disturb these traps which will be in operation from April 1 to June 30, 2009.

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Works' implementation of the Final Master Mitigation Plan for the Big Tujunga Wash Mitigation Area (Big T) has been under way since April 2000. Big T protects one of the most rapidly-diminishing habitat types found in Southern California—willow riparian woodland. The purpose of this newsletter is to provide an update of ongoing programs and to explain the upcoming enhancement measures that will be implemented on the site in the next few months. The next Big T Wash Line will be published Fall 2009.

Ride for a Cure 2008

Ride for a Cure is a charity event that raises funds for the American Parkinson Disease Association and the Providence Saint Joseph Foundation and Patricia Disney Family Cancer Center. This is the second annual event which is sponsored by Equestrian Trails Incorporated Corral 210. The charity event was hosted at the Gibson Ranch on October 4, 2008. The Gibson Ranch is located immediately adjacent to the Big T Mitigation Bank.

The event included trail rides, poker ride, pony and wagon rides for the kids, and an exotic animal petting zoo. There also a street fair with booths from local vendors and artisans, live music, exhibitions by trick ropers, stuntmen, and various equestrian groups.



A large portion of Big T users are riders who use the equestrian trails. These riders have become stewards of the Big T and are often involved in trail maintenance activities.

LADWP participated in this event by setting up an informative booth along with ECORP Consulting, Inc. to educate participants on the Big T mitigation bank. The booth shared information on the various programs being implemented at the bank, which include; exotic plant and wildlife eradication, riparian habitat restoration, water quality analysis, and trails restoration and maintenance.

Kid's Corner

Giants Invade Big T!

No, fairy tale giants have not been spotted on the equestrian trails at Big T! The invading giants are a plant called *Arundo donax*, also known as Giant Reed. Giant Reed is an *invasive species* that was introduced to California from the Mediterranean in the 1820s. An *invasive species* is a species that is not native and is harmful to native species. Usually by using so much food and water that there isn't enough left for the native species. The Giant Reed plant can grow up to 20 feet tall. It uses large amounts of water to supply its rapid rate of growth, which can be up to 2 inches a day in the Spring. It also grows in dense stands, which can crowd out native plants. Waterside plant communities that have had native plants crowded out by Giant Reed may have less shade, resulting in warmer water. The increase in water temperature affects the types of animals that can live in the water.



As part of the restoration and revegetation efforts at Big T, LADPW is removing Giant Reed by pulling or digging out the stands. After Giant Reed is removed, native plants are planted.

Exotic Wildlife Removal Continues

The overall purpose of the exotic wildlife removal program at Big T is to restore, create, and maintain suitable habitat for native aquatic species. The exotic wildlife removal program consists of the removal of non-native fishes, bullfrogs, turtles, and red swamp crayfish from both Tujunga ponds and Haines Canyon Creek. Different methods were used by biologists to sample the population of exotics present at each location. Some of the methods included: snorkeling, spearfishing, seining, a variety of traps, and electro-fishing.

Due to their ability to inhabit various habitat types while tolerating extreme environmental conditions, exotic species can out-compete natives for available space and food resources. Exotics can also pose direct impacts to native species through predation of adults and their young, or indirectly through the transmission of pathogens or parasites. The only way to effectively control the effects of non-native species on ecosystems is to remove them.

Removal activities in 2008 included two sessions, one in May and one in July. A total of 486 non-native fish and other aquatic species were removed. Compared to the 1,206 removals in 2007, fewer non-native specimens were removed in 2008. It should be noted that the activities in 2007 included three sessions.

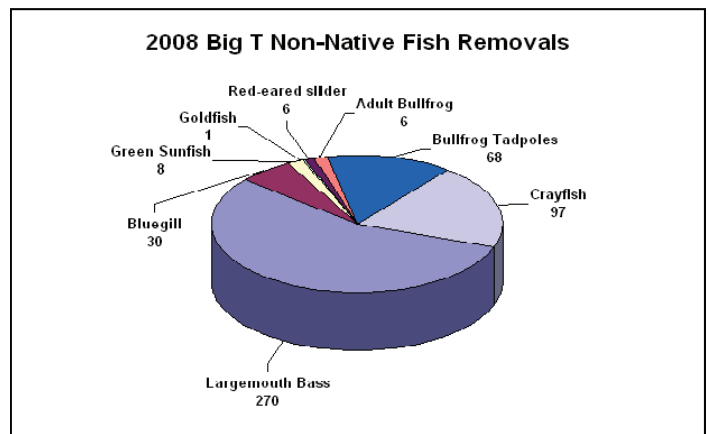
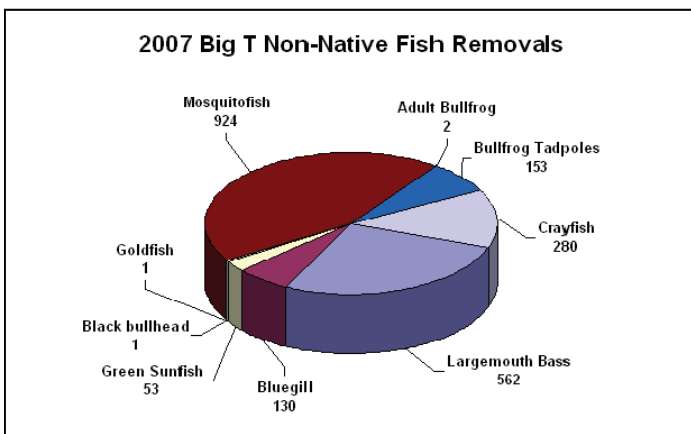


ECORP biologist, Brian Zitt, removes a goldfish, an exotic species, from the Big T ponds. These exotic species harm native aquatic species by competing for the same food or being predators of native species.

In 2008, largemouth bass was the species with the greatest number of individuals removed. Most of these individuals were removed by spear fishing, which proved to be the best method for removing fishes larger than six inches. Most exotic species are introduced into habitats such as Big T by people releasing pets they don't want anymore or people releasing fish for recreational fishing. Even though it might seem harmless it is important to remember that turtles

and fish, along with any other pets, should never be released into the wild because they harm the native species already living there. Once non-native species are introduced into the habitat of other animals they can cause detrimental effects on the ecosystem, so **please never release your pets into the wild.**

It is also illegal in the State of California to transport or relocate a fish or other animal without proper permits.





Water Resources Division
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Where is Big T?

Downstream of Big Tujunga Canyon, right in the heart of Sun Valley south of the 210 freeway, you'll find a native riparian (water loving plant) natural area filled with cottonwoods, willows and pools of water that support many native aquatic species. Check out the Big T website for more information at:

<http://www.ladpw.org/wrd/facilities/>



Emergencies? Incidents? Questions?

• CALL 911 TO REPORT ANY EMERGENCY SUCH AS FIRE OR ACCIDENT

- Please **DO NOT** use 911 to report minor incidents or regulation infractions. Contact the Los Angeles Police Department's (LAPD's) non-emergency number at (877) ASK LAPD or (877) 275-5273.
- In the case of an emergency situation (those where 911 is involved) please make a follow up call to the Department of Public Works as soon as possible at the numbers listed below.*
- Do not attempt to enforce regulations. Contact LAPD to handle the situation/incident.

* For emergency follow up or to report minor incidents, obtain information, or get questions answered during weekday work hours (8:00 a.m. to 5:50 p.m., Monday through Thursday**), please contact:

Ms. Belinda Kwan or Ms. Valerie De La Cruz

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** After work hours or on weekends, please contact the Department of Public Works at (626) 458-HELP.