

**Big Tujunga Wash Mitigation Area Project
Community Advisory Committee
2017 Spring Meeting Minutes
April 27, 2017**

I. Welcome/Introduction

Meeting attendance sign-in sheet attached.

II. Review of Meeting Agenda

Belinda Kwan (County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works [LACDPW]) reviewed the meeting agenda.

III. Discussion of Action Items from the April 28, 2016 Meeting

Action items from the last meeting were reviewed. Each action item is listed followed by the discussion about each item. New action items generated from the discussions are listed in Section VII.

- 1. ECORP and LACDPW will visit the sink hole area along the trail north of Gibson Ranch and make plans for maintenance.** LACDPW and ECORP mobilized crews in May 2016 to address the sink hole. *This action item is complete.*
- 2. LACDPW and ECORP will review the Hansen Dam Master Plan (2011) and check with the Audubon Society for comprehensive regional avian species lists to compare to the species list for the Mitigation Area.** ECORP reviewed the Hansen Dam Master Plan (2011) and eBird (www.ebird.org), an online bird sighting checklist, for the Big Tujunga Wash Mitigation Area (Mitigation Area) and Hansen Dam and compared the results to ECORP's master species list. A total of 46 bird species were documented in the Hansen Dam Master Plan, 281 bird species were documented at Hansen Dam through eBird, 117 bird species were documented at the Mitigation Area through eBird, and ECORP has documented 132 bird species at the Mitigation Area since 2007. *This action item is complete.*
- 3. ECORP will find out if USACE is conducting brown-headed cowbird trapping on the Hansen Dam property.** Brown-headed cowbird trapping is being performed at Hansen Dam, the Mitigation Area, and upstream of the Mitigation Area in 2017. *This action item is complete.*
- 4. LACDPW and ECORP will revise the wording in the HSR announcement on the first page of the Spring 2016 newsletter. They will also revise the verbiage on the back of the newsletter that describes where the Mitigation Area is located.** The verbiage was revised in the Big T newsletter on April 29, 2016 and posted to the Mitigation Area website during the first week of May 2016. *This action item is complete.*

- 5. LACDPW will look into preparing a document that lists expected impacts to the Mitigation Area resulting from the revised E2 Alignment of the HSR.** The Board of Supervisors for LACDPW has issued a formal letter to the High Speed Rail Authority opposing the proposed E2 alignment. The draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the High Speed Rail Project (HSR) is expected to be released by December 2017. LACDPW also plans to submit formal comments during the 45-day public comment period for the draft EIR. *This action item is complete.*
- 6. ECORP will work with their water quality monitoring subcontractor to develop a 1 to 10 rating system to briefly summarize the results of the annual water quality monitoring.** ECORP discussed a rating system with their water quality subcontractor, MWH (now Stantec), and MWH felt that a 1 to 10 ranking system did not represent the intricacies of the results adequately. MWH added an executive summary to the 2016 water quality monitoring report that discusses the results of the monitoring in less technical language. The 2016 water quality monitoring report will be posted on the Mitigation Area website as an appendix to the 2016 annual report. *This action item is complete.*

IV. Ongoing and New Discussion Items

1. Site and Security Issues

- The group discussed the inholding along Wheatland Avenue (connecting North and South Wheatland Avenue through the Mitigation Area). Currently, the acreage within the Wheatland inholding is not included in the mitigation credits that LACDPW receives from California Department of Fish and Wildlife because there were issues in the acquisition of the inholding a few years ago. LACDPW will check with their Real Estate Department and look into this issue again to see if they will be able to acquire the inholding.
- Several homeless encampments have been observed in the past year. ECORP biologists and residents have noticed the encampments getting larger and more elaborate, with observations of chainsaws, an all-terrain vehicle (ATV), generators, bicycles, and portable stove fires associated with the encampments. The residents asked how the homeless situation is handled on the Mitigation Area. LACDPW stated that when they receive a report of an encampment, either from Flood Maintenance crews, ECORP biologists, or residents, that they notify their field crews. The LACDPW field crew will visit the site and if they encounter the occupants of the camps, they will ask the occupants to leave and then remove the items left at the camp. However, the occupants almost always come back to the encampment at a later time. ECORP biologists have called the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department on a couple of homeless people who were observed engaging in activities or behavior that are prohibited within the Mitigation Area. County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation (Parks and Rec) have also performed clean-up activities of homeless encampments on the Tujunga Ponds property. Parks and Rec have also observed Hope Teams reaching out to the homeless on site on occasion. This has been an ongoing issue at the site and has been difficult to control, despite LACDPW's best efforts.

Several elaborate homeless camps have been observed under the Foothill Bridge and under the 210 Freeway bridge, which is within Caltrans' right-of-way. LACDPW will contact the Caltrans representative for this region to discuss how to manage the homeless encampment issue within the Caltrans right-of-way.

- Fires have been observed on site in the past year and appear to be mostly associated with the homeless encampments. The Los Angeles County Fire Department (LAFD) maintains reports of fires they tend to on site. LACDPW was encouraged by the residents to coordinate with LAFD to help them regulate homeless encampments on site with law enforcement.
- Residents asked about the status of the Santa Ana sucker on site. Earlier this year a large cleanout of the creek was performed by LACDPW and ECORP, where fallen branches, debris, trash, and rock dams were removed throughout Haines Canyon Creek on site to restore creek flows and improve Santa Ana sucker habitat. Numbers of Santa Ana sucker incidentally observed in the creek during exotic wildlife removal efforts have increased in the last few months.
- The group inquired about how rock dams were dismantled from the Mitigation Area. ECORP's biologists and landscape subcontractor removes rock dams from the creek when feasible. If ECORP or their landscape subcontractor is unable to remove the rock dam, then they will report the dam to LACDPW and LACDPW will send Flood Maintenance workers to the Mitigation Area to remove the dams. ECORP's aquatic biologists performed a special training for the Flood Maintenance workers a few years ago to ensure the dams were removed without creating impacts on the Santa Ana sucker or other sensitive fish in Haines Canyon Creek. Rock dam creation appeared to be less frequent and less elaborate in the spring and summer of 2016 as compared to previous years.
- The group was encouraged to contact LACDPW at the Mitigation Area email address (BTWMA@dpw.lacounty.gov) with issues they observe at the site.

2. High Speed Rail

The group discussed concerns about potential impacts to the Mitigation Area from the proposed HSR. Residents requested that LACDPW find out how far the proposed E2 alignment is from the Mitigation Area boundary. LACDPW will check their mapping data and determine the approximate distance.

Mr. Dave DePinto, a resident, has opposition letters from U.S. Senators on the HSR project and will send those letters to LACDPW for their files.

The group discussed the general process of how impacts associated with the HSR would be determined during the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and/or the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. Areas of particular concern were impacts associated with noise, ground vibrations, hydrology, geology, and underground operations. The residents were also concerned about the potential for

tunneling activities in the area associated with the HSR. LACDPW plans on submitting official comments on the draft EIR document that is expected to be released by December 2017. The residents were encouraged to resubmit their comments and concerns during the official 45-day public comment period after the draft EIR is released.

3. Mitigation Opportunities

The residents inquired about the status of mitigation credits left at the Mitigation Area and whether those credits will be used for other LACDPW projects. A portion of the available credits have been used for other LACDPW projects, but the majority of the credits are still available. Mr. Bill Eick, a resident, knows of properties in the vicinity of several LACDPW facilities that could be mitigation site opportunities. Mr. Eick will send LACDPW information on those properties.

The question was raised whether LACDPW could acquire the Tujunga Ponds property (currently owned and operated by Parks and Rec) as additional mitigation property. LACDPW will look into this.

The residents also asked if the Mitigation Area could be expanded downstream toward Hansen Dam. Mr. DePinto has discussed this with Supervisorial District 5 representatives in an effort to discourage any proposed HSR alignments from going through the Mitigation Area. LACDPW was not aware of any opportunity to expand the Mitigation Area. LACDPW will look into the option of expanding the Mitigation Area.

V. Current Status of Programs

1. Exotic Plant Eradication Program

The first effort took place between March 27 and April 13 and occurred throughout the entire Mitigation Area. This effort targeted large areas of non-native regrowth after the recent rains, including mowing the non-native grasses near the Cottonwood Avenue entrance. A pre-activity survey took place on March 24 by two ECORP biologists and an ECORP biologist was on site with the crew each day to monitor the removal effort. This effort took longer than previous efforts because of the excessive amount of exotic plant growth due to heavy rains during the winter timeframe.

2. Exotic Wildlife Removal/Monitoring

Exotic wildlife removal efforts have been ongoing since May 2016. Eight removal efforts occurred between May and December 2016 and four removal efforts have taken place since the start of 2017. Over 25,000 individuals were captured, consisting of 12 exotic aquatic species:

- Red swamp crayfish
- Mosquitofish
- Largemouth bass
- Green sunfish
- Bluegill
- Bullfrog
- Red-eared slider
- Common carp

- Goldfish
- Yellow bullhead
- Mozambique tilapia
- Common snapping turtle

3. Water Quality Monitoring

Results were normal for the 2016 water quality sampling on site. An additional executive summary was added to the report, per the request presented at the 2016 CAC meeting. The executive summary described results in an easy-to-understand manner. The next water quality monitoring will be conducted in 2017.

4. Trails Restoration/Maintenance

The trails assessment site visit was conducted on March 24, 2017. Areas of trail erosion and flooding were noted. Also noted were areas where large piles of debris and trash were washed downstream, blocking trails. Many obstructions were cleared during the first exotic plant eradication effort.

5. Public Outreach Program

The public outreach program is expected to continue in 2018, starting Memorial Day Weekend and ending Labor Day Weekend.

6. Brown-headed Cowbird Trapping

Brown-headed cowbird trapping began on April 1, 2017. Four traps were placed within and adjacent to the Mitigation Area. Trapping is expected to continue through June 2017.

VI. Schedule Next CAC Meeting

The next CAC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 26, 2018, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at Hansen Yard, 10179 Glen Oaks Boulevard, Sun Valley, California 91352.

VII. New Action Items

1. LACDPW will consult with their Real Estate Department regarding the Wheatland inholding. They will also look into possibly acquiring the inholding.
2. LACDPW will contact the Caltrans representative to discuss controlling the homeless encampments within the Caltrans right-of-way.
3. LACDPW will check their mapping data to determine how far the proposed E2 alignment of the HSR is from the Mitigation Area boundaries.
4. Mr. Dave DePinto will send HSR opposition letters from U.S. Senators to LACDPW for their files.
5. Mr. Bill Eick will send LACDPW information on properties in the vicinity of several LACDPW facilities that could be future mitigation site opportunities.

- 6.** LACDPW will look into the Tujunga Ponds property (currently owned and operated by Parks and Rec) as additional and mitigation opportunity.
- 7.** LACDPW will look into opportunities for expanding the Mitigation Area downstream.