

**Big Tujunga Wash Mitigation Area Project
Community Advisory Committee
2012 Fall Meeting Minutes
September 27, 2012**

I. Welcome/Introduction

Meeting attendance sign-in sheet attached.

II. Review of Meeting Agenda

Grace Yu reviewed the meeting agenda.

III. Discussion of Action Items from the April 26, 2012 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. Grace Yu (LACDPW) will send the Mitigation Area website link to Carlos George and Terri Ortiz. *This action item is now complete.***
- 2. Grace Yu will send Mary Benson (City of Los Angeles District 7; City) a list of possible dates for a tour of the Mitigation Area for County and City Officials, and Mary Benson will forward it on to Councilmember Krekorian's office. Mary Benson will also coordinate between District 2 and District 7.** Mary Benson left Council District 2 and is now with Council District 7. Grace Yu and Mary will contact the following people for the tour: Council District 7 staff members, Sunland Tujunga staff members, and Gerald Rubicon (new City planning representative). Mary will let Chris Stone (LACDPW) know who will be attending. Grace will give Mary some times that would work best for a site visit, preferably during a morning. Mary will contact Chris Arlington (SHOPA) to let her know if Foothill Mounted Patrol should be present.
- 3. Grace Yu will work with Flood Maintenance Division to determine a method for blocking the steep upper shortcut trail at the end of the Cottonwood Avenue area where the metal debris is sticking out of the side of the slope.** Boulders were placed at the top of the slope at the end of Cottonwood Avenue in the summer to prevent future use of the shortcut. There have been no complaints from the equestrian community regarding this trail closure. *This action item is now complete.*
- 4. Mari Quillman (ECORP) will resend LACDPW the article about trimming trees in the fall as opposed to other seasons. Grace Yu will review the article and then send it to Chris Arlington for the SHPOA newsletter and an email blast to SHPOA members. In addition, Grace will also provide the article to Terry Kaiser (ETI) so he can send it to ETI members.** The

article was placed on page 3 of the Fall 2012 newsletter. *This action item is now complete.*

5. **Mari Quillman will provide Chris Arlington and Terry Kaiser with electronic copies of the English/Spanish Information Brochure.** *This action item is now complete.*
6. **Cindy Rowlan (LACDPW) will notify Vector Control to schedule a treatment for mosquitoes at the Mitigation Area.** Cindy Rowlan has been in contact with Vector Control. Applications have been done in the summer every three to four weeks. Mosquitoes do not appear to be a problem in the Mitigation Area right now; however, mosquitoes could become a problem due to dropping water levels, reduction of water flows in the creek, and an increase in stagnant water (due to rock dams and lack of rain during this time of year). If you see mosquitoes, let LACDPW know so that Cindy can schedule Vector Control. *This will be ongoing, and therefore, this action item is now complete.*
7. **Mari Quillman will send Grace Yu the text for a follow-up email blast that alerts site users about staying on the trails and reporting problems like downed trees on the trails. Grace or Cindy Rowlan will review it and then send it out to the recipients on the email list.** An email blast was sent on September 27, 2012. *This action item is now complete.*
8. **Grace Yu will assess the need for open and closed trails signs once the new trails map is completed. If the signs are deemed necessary, then ECORP will provide Grace Yu with the information on where the Bureau of Land Management has their trails signs fabricated.** LACDPW will regroup internally and determine a new plan for signage throughout the entire Mitigation Area. It may be necessary to close some trails and re-route them around problem areas; however, there is no need to update the official trails map at this point. *This action item has been temporarily tabled.*
9. **Mary Benson will provide Grace Yu with a community service certificate from Heal the Bay to use as potential template for a community service certificate that can be utilized for student volunteers at the Trail Cleanup Day. Grace will follow up internally with LACDPW.** There may be difficulty with issuing certificates because of current County protocol regarding volunteers. Chris Stone and Grace Yu will look into the current requirements for volunteers. In the meantime, Mary Benson will arrange for student volunteers to get their hours verified through another organization or group for work done in the Mitigation Area. *This action item is now complete.*
10. **Grace Yu or Cindy Rowlan will provide the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) Dispatch with maps of the Mitigation Area to aid deputies when responding to calls in the Mitigation Area.** LACDPW provided copies of Mitigation Area maps to LASD. It was announced during the meeting that City of Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) would like copies of Mitigation Area maps again because all the copies they had have gone missing. Additionally, a new officer will be assigned to the Mitigation Area beginning

October 7, 2012. Mary Benson will provide information to the CAC about the new officer, including the name and contact information.

- 11. Grace Yu will coordinate with Flood Maintenance Division about blading or smoothing the access road from the North Wheatland entrance in order to provide easier access into the Mitigation Area for LASD and LAPD.** Grace Yu will follow up with Flood Maintenance Division.
- 12. Grace Yu and Mari Quillman will meet with Flood Maintenance Division and Terry Kaiser at the south Wheatland entrance to look at the location where the fence needs to be replaced or repaired.** The fence has been replaced. Terry Kaiser is waiting for a check in the mail for the gate construction. *This action item is now complete.*
- 13. Chris Arlington will send Mari Quillman information about the Charro get-togethers. LACDPW will decide whether or not to send a bilingual biologist to these events as an outreach activity.** Chris Arlington did not hear of any Charro events since the last CAC meeting. There are problems on the trails where the Charro riders race the horses at the end of the day, where some riders will ride all the way from Hansen Dam Equestrian Center to the Tujunga Ponds. Contact information for the Charro promoter will be sent to Grace Yu so she can contact them about their schedule of events and activities. LA County Department of Parks and Recreation permitting office will have the information pertaining to events and activities scheduled. Grace will send information to ECORP should bilingual outreach at these events be warranted. *This will be ongoing, and therefore, this action item is now complete.*
- 14. Grace Yu will coordinate with Flood Maintenance Division about the problem trail near where the haul road goes under the I-210 freeway. Grace will also determine whether this trail issue is within the Caltrans right-of-way or if it is within a LACDPW easement. The trail is a safety issue that needs to be taken care of soon. An alternative solution was offered by Terry Kaiser. Terry will report back to Grace and/or Mari Quillman on the status of the trail problem.** The subject property is under the jurisdiction of Caltrans, LACDPW does not have jurisdiction over this area. Caltrans never deeded the property back to the City after the construction of I-210 and the City (Council District 7) is negotiating with Caltrans for an encroachment permit for this area. Caltrans is still responsible for the areas 50 feet on either side of the I-210 freeway. *This item no longer pertains to the Mitigation Area and will be removed from the agenda.*
- 15. Grace Yu or Cindy Rowlan will update the Mitigation Area website with the new water quality monitoring results from most recent monitoring study.** The most recent water quality data has been posted to the website and LACDPW is still working on adding the last 10 years' worth of water quality data to the website. *This action item is now complete.*

IV. Ongoing and New Discussion Items

1. Upcoming Events

- Hansen Dam Trail Riders will be having a cleanup day on November 4. Chris Stone recommended that they get a permit for all cleanup activities occurring in the Mitigation Area. When working in or adjacent to the Mitigation Area, volunteers should be trained on authorized and prohibited activities within the Mitigation Area.
- There is a major event occurring at the Hansen Dam Equestrian Center (HDEC) on September 30, 2012, the El Salvador Festival. Approximately 10,000 people are expected to attend. The Foothill Mounted Patrol will be there from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. to patrol the event.
- The phone number for the Hansen Dam Recreation Center events coordinator (Katie O'Kelly) was distributed so LACDPW would be able to contact her for upcoming events adjacent to the Mitigation Area.

2. Mitigation Area Permits for Organized Events

A permit protocol for the Mitigation Area is currently in the works. This protocol will describe the types of activities that need permits and types that don't. The protocol should be in draft form by the next CAC meeting. Until the permit protocol is in place, Grace Yu will work with groups on a case-by-case basis to issue permits and waivers. To allow processing time, permit applications should be submitted at a minimum one month prior to the event.

3. Site Security Issues

- Several locations along the Wentworth Avenue fence between Wheatland and Cottonwood are down due to traffic accidents.
- There is a new LAPD team in the Hansen Dam area patrolling Sundays from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. for the next six weeks. Councilmember Alarcon would like to arrange a mutual agreement between LAPD and LASD. It was suggested the area be actively patrolled by LASD or LAPD at the beginning of spring to help reduce the occurrences of prohibited activities later on in the spring and summer. Mary Benson and Chris Stone will discuss this further. Grace Yu will work with LAPD and LASD.
- It was announced that a Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC) Ranger is on patrol each day for at least three hours on the north side of Big Tujunga Wash (east of Interstate 210 to Oro Vista Ave). The SMMC is now managing 300 acres adjacent to the Mitigation Area. The head ranger is Fernando Gomez.
- The CAC was encouraged to contact LASD Dispatch or Grace Yu if homeless encampments and structures have been identified within the Mitigation Area.

4. Parking near South Wheatland Entrance

Parking on the pavement along Wentworth Avenue at the South Wheatland Entrance is not allowed because all lanes are active traffic lanes. There is no way to

obtain a permit from the City to park within the active traffic lanes; however, City and County personnel (and their subcontractors) are allowed to park vehicles off the road on the dirt trail between the curb and the fence at the South Wheatland Entrance. There is also a dirt lot across the street from the South Wheatland Entrance where City and County vehicles are allowed to park.

5. Equestrian Crossing at Wheatland South Entrance

Councilmember Alarcon is planning on conducting a feasibility study for putting in an equestrian crossing at Wheatland and Mary Bell. The crossing would look like a pedestrian crosswalk with solar-powered flashing yellow lights on either end of the crossing. The "walk" button would be located at horse height.

6. Formalize CAC Meeting Membership list

LACDPW would like to formalize the CAC membership list. Grace Yu sent around a list of organizations to the CAC and asked members to assign two representatives to each organization to streamline communication methods. The purpose of this formalized list is to have a single contact list for all organizations associated with the Mitigation Area so it is easier for LACDPW to disseminate information regarding the Mitigation Area. CAC meetings will still be open to the public. Members were also asked to add other organizations to the existing list if any were overlooked.

7. Locks on Fences/Gates

Grace Yu has noticed a large number of locks on the Mitigation Area gates and fences, most of which have unidentified owners. LACDPW would like to identify the owners and remove any unnecessary locks to maintain Mitigation Area site security. The gate at Foothill Avenue on the north side of the site is not owned by LACDPW, so LACDPW will not remove any locks from that gate. Terry Kaiser will check the locks on all the LACDPW-owned Mitigation Area gates and record the locks he can identify.

8. Trail Cleanup Day

It was announced that the annual Trail Maintenance Day had an official name change. The official name of the event is now the Trail Cleanup Day (TCD). The next TCD will be held on Saturday, October 20, 2012. Volunteers will meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Cottonwood entrance to the Mitigation Area and will help pick up trash and debris along the trails until 12:00 p.m. If there is a national weather forecast for rain, the event will be cancelled and an email blast will be sent out to community members. Contact Grace Yu if you would like to be added to the email blast list.

9. Big Tujunga Dam Sediment Removal

Terry Kaiser inquired about LACDPW work upstream of the Mitigation Area near the Big Tujunga Dam and how future work will impact the Mitigation Area. Due to the completion of the Big Tujunga Dam Seismic Rehabilitation Project and the future initiation of the Big Tujunga Reservoir Sediment Removal Project, the County anticipates that the flow release regime from the dam will change in the upcoming years which could impact habitat downstream. The County is currently working with regulators on an adaptive management plan to allow for regular dam releases and hopes to

have a plan in place by 2014. Currently, no drastic changes have been made to the dam operations. The dam is currently releasing water frequently, but in low quantities.

Mary Benson inquired about whether the North Big Tujunga Wash has been surveyed in the past and ECORP replied that it has been surveyed during exotic aquatic species removal efforts and during the focused arroyo toad surveys. If large amounts of water are regularly released from the Big Tujunga Dam, habitat for arroyo toad and sensitive fish species (Santa Ana sucker, Santa Ana speckled dace, and arroyo chub) will improve. Mari Quillman stated that if willows began to grow along the North Big Tujunga Wash, habitat quality for native fish and arroyo toads will be increased in this area due to the additional vegetation cover. Terry Kaiser asked if the varying water levels would affect sensitive fish in the wash. Mari stated that the Santa Ana sucker, which has been observed in this portion of the wash, is adapted to the varying water levels and drought/flood conditions characteristic to southern California and shouldn't be affected in a substantial way as long as there is always water present in the wash.

10. Vulcan Materials Company Lot

A 4-acre lot off Wentworth Avenue and Foothill Avenue, across from the Angeles National Golf Club, belongs to Vulcan Materials Company. Vulcan is interested in giving the area to an entity so the lot could be made into a parking lot and access area to the Big Tujunga Wash for recreation. There would be room to park horse trailers. It would require developing some trail routes from this area. Vulcan would like to partner with a willing agency or organization in a grant/restoration project which would serve as mitigation for a quarry down the street. Mike Linton and Chris DiMaggio are the contacts for Vulcan. Mari Quillman will contact Mike Linton to obtain information and possibly a boundary map of these areas from Vulcan.

V. Current Status of Programs

Community Outreach

The bilingual biologists were able to reach out to 100 people over 8 weekends this summer. The rock dam issue got worse over the summer but people have been receptive to the bilingual outreach. A plan to address the rock dams may be needed for next year.

Exotic Plant Removal

A large exotic plant removal effort was conducted in July and August. The next removal will take place in the fall, around November or December. LACDPW will distribute an e-mail blast to notify the community prior to the effort.

Exotic Aquatic Wildlife Species Removal

Two efforts have been completed to date, one in May and one in early September. One more will be conducted in November/December when temperatures are cooler, hopefully after a rain event. A large number of exotics have already been removed this year. Species include crayfish, largemouth bass, bluegill, green sunfish, fathead

minnow, black bullhead, goldfish, carp, and American bullfrogs. The biologists found one bullfrog that had eaten a two-striped garter snake (a California Department of Fish and Game [CDFG] Species of Special Concern [SSC]) when a gut analysis was performed. No native species have been observed in the ponds, however, the biologists have been regularly seeing Santa Ana sucker (federally listed threatened), Santa Ana speckled dace (CDFG SSC), and arroyo chub (CDFG SSC) in Haines Canyon Creek. The biologists have reported that there appears to be higher densities of exotic aquatic wildlife species (primarily bullfrog, crayfish, and largemouth bass) in the creek since the water lettuce infestation last year. This is probably because the water lettuce infestation removed habitat for these species in the ponds, thus forcing these animals into Haines Canyon Creek. The biologists are using a new removal method in the ponds, in addition to their traditional methods, that is increasing the success of capturing largemouth bass and other sportfishes.

Brown-headed Cowbird Trapping

Brown-headed cowbird trapping was conducted in and adjacent to the Mitigation Area in the spring. Trapping concluded in June and a total of 137 cowbirds were captured and removed from the Mitigation Area (68 male, 68 female, one juvenile). A total of 211 cowbirds were removed from traps in same locations in 2011 (103 males, 99 females, nine juveniles). The fact that fewer cowbirds were trapped in 2012 is a good sign because it shows that trapping has been successful at removing cowbirds and that fewer native bird nests are being parasitized by cowbirds.

Sensitive Species Surveys

Arroyo toad, southwestern willow flycatcher, and least Bell's vireo surveys were conducted in the Mitigation Area in 2012. A native fishes survey may be conducted soon. A summary of each survey is found below:

- A native fishes survey is planned for October, which is outside the spawning season, when young fish are large enough to be captured, and consistent with the surveyor's permits.
- Arroyo toad surveys were completed in mid-July and no arroyo toads were observed or detected. The following species were detected: Santa Ana sucker (federally listed threatened), Santa Ana speckled dace (CDFG SSC), arroyo chub (CDFG SSC), two-striped garter snake (CDFG SSC), two species of native tree frogs, and western toad.
- Southwestern willow flycatcher/Least Bell's vireo surveys were completed by mid-July. Two adult willow flycatchers were observed in the riparian habitat in the central portion of the site. This species is state listed as endangered but the individuals observed were only migrants utilizing the site as a stopover during their spring migration. The two birds were only observed during the first survey conducted on May 21, 2012. No southwestern willow flycatchers, breeding willow flycatchers, or least bell's vireo were detected. However, approximately 50 species of native birds were observed, including the olive-sided flycatcher (CDFG SSC) and the yellow warbler (CDFG SSC). The yellow warbler usually co-occurs with least Bell's vireo. Currently, least Bell's vireos are not found in the Mitigation Area because of the density and structure of the riparian areas (no mid-story vegetation).

However, there is hope that the Least Bell's vireo will eventually move into the site from downstream areas where it is known to occur.

Water Quality Analysis

A water quality analysis will be conducted in November by MWH Global, Inc., the same company that has conducted the analysis in the past.

Trails Restoration/Maintenance

LACDPW and ECORP have been responding to trails issues that have been reported, and the trails appear clean and generally unobstructed. CAC members were encouraged to contact LACDPW or ECORP if they observe any issues with the trails system.

VI. Schedule Next CAC Meeting

The next CAC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 25, 2013, 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. Grace Yu and Mary Benson will contact the following people for a City/County tour of the Mitigation Area: Council District 7 staff members, Sunland Tujunga staff members, and Gerald Rubicon. Mary will let Chris Stone know who will be attending the tour of the Mitigation Area. Grace will give Mary some times that would work best for a site visit, preferably during a morning. Mary will contact Chris Arlington to let her know if Foothill Mounted Patrol should be there during the site visit.
2. Mary Benson will provide the name and contact information of the new officer assigned to patrol the Mitigation Area to the CAC.
3. Grace Yu will follow up with Flood Maintenance Division about blading or smoothing the access road from the North Wheatland entrance in order to provide easier access into the Mitigation Area for the LASD and LAPD.
4. ECORP will draft a Mitigation Area permit protocol.
5. Mary Benson and Chris Stone will advocate scheduling more LAPD and/or LASD patrols of the Mitigation Area. Grace Yu will work with LAPD and LASD.
6. Grace Yu will formalize the CAC Meeting Membership list.
7. Terry Kaiser will check the locks on all the LACDPW-owned Mitigation Area gates and record the locks he can identify to help LACDPW.
8. Mari Quillman will contact Mike Linton at Vulcan Materials Company for information and possibly to obtain a boundary map of the Vulcan Materials Company properties along Foothill Boulevard.