

**Big Tujunga Wash Mitigation Area Project
Community Advisory Committee
2013 Fall Meeting Minutes
September 26, 2013**

I. Welcome/Introduction

Meeting attendance sign-in sheet attached.

II. Review of Meeting Agenda

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

III. Discussion of Action Items from the April 25, 2013 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 contact Officer Don Boon (Los Angeles Police Department [LAPD]) to coordinate LAPD patrols of the Mitigation Area.** Grace Yu spoke with Officer Wall (LAPD), who then gave her Officer Don Boon's contact information. Currently, recreation activities at the site are waning due to the change in weather and upcoming fall season, but there is concern about the next spring and summer. LACDPW would like to begin raising awareness for increased patrols now in anticipation of next spring and summer. A new patrol group, the Mounted Cavalry, is being formed as a volunteer unit out of LAPD. The Mounted Cavalry will patrol the Mitigation Area and act as eyes and ears to help the officers and is expected to start patrolling in Spring 2014. The Mounted Cavalry will have the ability to issue citations. Foothill Mounted Patrol is still conducting patrols. Grace Yu will continue to coordinate with Officer Boon about patrolling the Mitigation Area.
- 2. Grace Yu will coordinate with the rangers at Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC) and Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) about patrolling the Mitigation Area.** Grace Yu will coordinate with Debbie Pepe (Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation [LACDPR]) to get the contact information of rangers at SMMC and MRCA. Debbie Pepe reported that the on-call SMMC ranger patrols the upstream portion of Big Tujunga Wash. The on-call SMMC ranger is the best point of contact for patrolling. Grace Yu will continue to coordinate with the rangers about patrolling the Mitigation Area.
- 3. ECORP's bilingual biologists will keep in contact with the Charreada event coordinator to find out when the next event is occurring.** ECORP's bilingual biologists tried to maintain correspondence with the Charreada (Charro)

events coordinator but he stopped returning calls and emails in June 2013. Evidence of Charro activities in the Mitigation Area has decreased in recent months, which is likely attributed to increased patrols. For now, outreach efforts will be suspended; however, if there are more signs of site use related to Charro events then outreach will be resumed. *This action item has been tabled.*

4. **Grace Yu will coordinate with California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) on recreational activity restrictions and additional signage on or near the Caltrans property/right-of-way south and west of the Foothill entrance.** Caltrans has not been contacted at this time because LACDPW would like to address enforcement issues in the Mitigation Area first. *This action item has been tabled.*
5. **ECORP will contact their landscape contractor to schedule a visit to trim the poison oak on the trails around the South Wheatland entrance.** The poison oak was trimmed on May 15, 2013 by their landscape contractor and the trails remain clear. *This action item is now complete.*
6. **ECORP will contact Terry Kaiser (Equestrian Trails, Inc. [ETI]) the next time they conduct a trails maintenance event so Terry can explain how high to trim branches for equestrian access on the trails.** Vegetation above the trails continues to be too low for equestrians. ECORP will contact Terry Kaiser before the November/December 2013 trails maintenance and monitoring visit.
7. **Grace Yu will coordinate with Heal the Bay about incorporating the Mitigation Area's Trail Cleanup Day into their California Coastal Clean-up Day activities.** The objectives of Heal the Bay do not align with those of the Mitigation Area, so this was not pursued. LACDPW will continue to manage the Trail Cleanup Day independently. *This action item is now complete.*

IV. Ongoing and New Discussion Items

1. Trail Cleanup Day

The 2013 Trail Cleanup Day is scheduled for October 5, 2013. Bilingual trash signs were placed anonymously throughout the Mitigation Area and appear to be working well; there is less litter throughout the Mitigation Area. Terry Kaiser will locate large amounts of trash and will report to Grace Yu on areas that need to be concentrated on during Trail Cleanup Day. Terry Kaiser and Randy Hammock will distribute Trail Cleanup Day flyers and copies of the Fall Newsletter to other interested parties.

2. Website and Email

The Mitigation Area website has been recently redesigned and has a new domain, www.dpw.lacounty.gov/wrd/Projects/BTWMA/. The previous domain is still active and will redirect users to the new website. It is now more user-friendly but still contains the comprehensive library of reports, CAC meeting minutes, CAC agendas, and newsletters. Also, the Mitigation Area now has a new email address BTWMA@dpw.lacounty.gov for site users to report issues at the site. Both Grace Yu and Melanie Morita (LACDPW) have access to this email so that issues and questions can be more quickly addressed.

3. Councilmember Fuentes Visit to the Mitigation Area

On August 22 LACDPW, LACDPR, and ECORP Consulting, Inc. (ECORP) gave a tour of the Mitigation Area to Councilmember Felipe Fuentes of Los Angeles Council District 7. The Councilmember toured the cottonwood upland area, the Tujunga Ponds, and the upland area near the ponds. He was given an overview of the programs at the Mitigation Area and discussed concerns regarding homeless people and other site security and patrolling issues. He hopes to increase patrols in the Mitigation Area and create outreach programs for youth to get them involved at the site.

4. Security Issues

- A map of the incidents that have occurred in the Mitigation Area since the last CAC meeting was distributed. This map will be updated prior to each CAC meeting and distributed at the meeting to inform the community about homeless encampments and other site issues within the Mitigation Area.
- Terry Kaiser reported that the number of summer recreationists did not appear to change from previous years; however, he observed the same issues at the Mitigation Area as in previous years. Rock dams, swimming, and campfires were all prevalent during the summer months.

5. Equestrian Safety

- Two new equestrian crossings have been installed on Wentworth Avenue at the Mary Bell and South Wheatland entrances to the Mitigation Area. A third crossing outside of the Mitigation Area is located at Christy Drive off of Foothill Avenue. All crossings have flashing lights; however, users are cautioned to not have a false sense of security when crossing the busy roads. Many times motorists do not stop for the flashing lights or simply cannot see the lights because of overgrown vegetation or the way the setting sun hits. Currently, the crossing at the South Wheatland entrance is the only one that is consistently operational. Terry Kaiser asked LACDPW to trim the vegetation near the crossing signs and lights on the Mitigation Area side of Wentworth Avenue to help motorists see the crossings better. Grace Yu will coordinate with Flood Maintenance to get the foliage trimmed.
- Terry Kaiser installed concrete mounting steps on either side of the Mary Bell entrance to make it easier for riders going to and from the Mitigation Area.

6. Streambed Alteration Agreement Renewal

The streambed alteration agreement with CDFW is set to expire on March 31, 2014. LACDPW and ECORP will work together over the next few months to see that it is renewed.

7. Distribution List Survey

A survey was distributed to the current mailing list to update shareholder contact information, determine if the shareholders are still interested in receiving site news and alerts, and determine how they would like to receive the information (email or regular mail). Individuals interested in being added to the mailing list can fill out a

from on the website at www.dpw.lacounty.gov/wrd/Projects/BTWMA.

8. Mountain Biking in the Mitigation Area

Mountain bikers have recently and consistently been observed entering the site at the North Wheatland entrance. The CAC was advised to contact Grace Yu or ECORP if they see mountain bikers in the Mitigation Area.

9. Mozambique Tilapia in the Ponds

In December 2012, one adult Mozambique tilapia was captured in a gill net in the East Pond during an exotic aquatic species removal effort. This was the first time this species had been found at the site. In May 2013, four adult Mozambique tilapia were again captured in a gill net in the East Pond during a removal effort. In early September 2013 one juvenile Mozambique tilapia was captured in the West Pond. There are likely more juvenile tilapia in the ponds; however, visibility during the September 2013 removal effort was poor so there were no additional sightings. The presence of the juvenile fish is a possible indication that Mozambique tilapia are breeding and successfully moving through the waterways at the Mitigation Area. It is likely this species will spread to the creek. Tilapia are direct predators of native fish, are very successful reproductively, and can adapt to many different habitat types (fresh and salt water). They outcompete native fish populations for food and nesting or shelter spaces. ECORP will continue to monitor the tilapia situation in the ponds and notify LACDPW if additional action is necessary.

Based on recent observations of Mozambique tilapia in the East and West Ponds there was discussion about installing fish screens at the outlet of the West Pond where it connects with Haines Canyon Creek to prevent the tilapia from migrating into the creek and having direct contact with the native fish species. LACDPW asked ECORP to research the amount of maintenance these screens would require.

V. Current Status of Programs

1. Exotic Plant Eradication Program

Three efforts have been conducted in 2013; April 10 through 19, 2013; June 24 through 26, 2013; and September 4 through 9, 2013. The final effort is scheduled for November or December. ECORP will also be conducting site maintenance during the final effort (trail cleanup, etc.).

2. Water Lettuce Control/Monitoring

Water lettuce was observed in the ponds in late June 2013. Two herbicide application efforts were conducted in early July 2013 and early August 2013. Follow up visits in late August 2013 did not detect any water lettuce in the ponds or the Connector Channel. ECORP is continuing to monitor the ponds for presence of water lettuce.

3. Exotic Wildlife Removal/Monitoring

Two of the four removal efforts have been conducted to date, with the most recent effort occurring September 16 through 19, 2013. The last two efforts will occur

between October and December 2013.

4. Brown-headed cowbird Trapping

The trapping for 2013 began on April 1 and ended on June 30. Four traps were placed in the same locations as previous years throughout the Mitigation Area. A total of 54 adult male, 42 adult female, and 1 juvenile brown-headed cowbirds were captured in 2013 for a total of 97 birds. This is a decrease from the 137 that were captured in 2012. The main goal of brown-headed cowbird trapping is to remove the adults from the site before they have a chance to reproduce. A single female cowbird can lay up to 100 eggs in a single season, which can be detrimental to the native songbirds at the Mitigation Area. A substantial decrease from the 2012 captures means trapping has been very successful.

5. Trails Restoration/Maintenance

Four restoration/maintenance efforts have been conducted in 2013 with one more scheduled for the November/December timeframe. Blocked trails have been cleared, poison oak was cleared from trails, and trash and debris has been removed.

6. Public Outreach Program

The public outreach program was completed on Labor Day weekend. ECORP's bilingual biologists conducted ten visits since Memorial Day weekend and spoke with over 100 equestrian and non-equestrian site users. The same issues of rock dam construction, swimming, picnicking, fishing, and campfire building were frequently observed.

VI. Schedule Next CAC Meeting

The next CAC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 24, 2014, 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 will contact Wesly Hernandez (Assistant to Councilmember Fuentes) to advertise Trail Cleanup Day.
2. Terry Kaiser will contact Grace Yu about areas that should be focused on during the upcoming Trail Cleanup Day.
3. ECORP will update the incident map prior to the next CAC meeting.
4. Grace Yu will contact the Flood Maintenance Division about clearing vegetation between the Mary Bell entrance and Gibson Ranch on Mitigation Area side of Wentworth Avenue.
5. ECORP will research the maintenance required for fish screens in case LACDPW decides to pursue the installation of screens at the outlet of the West Pond to prevent tilapia from entering Haines Canyon Creek.