

## Winter 2001

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### UPDATE ON POINT VICENTE INTERPRETIVE CENTER

#### Clean-Up of Whale Watching Site to Cost \$2M

#### What Happened?

In our Fall 1999 issue of the Newsletter we reported on the groundbreaking ceremonies that were held for the expansion of the Pt. Vicente Interpretive Center-a unique site that welcomes over 62,000 visitors each year. Shortly after construction started, it was discovered that the soil was contaminated with lead that probably resulted from the operation of a rifle range during the mid-1950s. This range was part of the military installation that previously existed at the present day City Hall location.

The property known as the Interpretive Center was acquired by the County of Los Angeles from the Federal Government in 1978 and was then leased to the City as a park site in 1979. Development of the original Interpretive Center began in 1983.

Approximately 2,500 tons of material that was excavated during site preparation for the expansion was moved to a construction site in San Pedro and when it was learned that the soil was contaminated, it was moved to a hazardous waste landfill. Likewise, another 6,000 tons of material that was disposed of at Chandler's Landfill prior to knowledge of the contamination has since been removed and transported to a hazardous waste landfill. At present, about 21,000 tons of potentially contaminated soil remains at the Interpretive Center and it has been estimated that the cost to remediate the soil could be as high as \$2,000,000.

## **What Have We Done This Past Year?**

In January 2000 the City Council authorized staff to file a claim against both the County of Los Angeles and the Federal Government for the City's costs of clean up and any future costs that may be incurred. This action was necessary to preserve the City's legal rights in the event discussions with either of these parties proves to be unsuccessful.

Over the past twelve months the City has pursued several options for the clean up of the site. Alternative plans were developed and the City entered into a Voluntary Cleanup Agreement with the Department of Toxic Substance Control (DTSC) last August. DTSC has requested more information from the City and we do not anticipate any action on our permit until sometime this year. Through the efforts of Congressman Kuykendall's office, the Army Corps of Engineers has investigated the site and is considering it for eligibility under the FUDS or PRP programs. The Corps estimates that it will take another year to finalize their investigation and render a decision. Los Angeles County has been content to wait for the federal government to act and is not inclined to spend funds on remediation since they would not be reimbursed through the FUDS (or PRP) program.

## **What Is FUDS?**

In analyzing available options to the City for the clean up of the Interpretive Center it is necessary to have an understanding of the alphabet soup of acronyms for State and Federal programs and processes.

### DTSC - Department of Toxic Substance Control

This State agency is responsible for regulating hazardous waste facilities and overseeing the cleanup of hazardous waste sites in California. According to this agency, thousands of properties throughout the State - including former industrial plants, military bases, small businesses and landfills - are contaminated with some level of toxic substances. DTSC is the supervising agency for the Voluntary Cleanup Program that the City has signed as part of the plan for the clean up of the site.

### CERCLA - Comprehensive Environmental Response and Liability Act (CERCLA)

CERCLA, better known as the Superfund was founded in 1980 and gives authorities the ability to respond to uncontrolled releases of hazardous substances from inactive hazardous waste sites that threaten public health and the environment. CERCLA established regulations concerning closed and abandoned hazardous waste sites, addressed the liability of responsible parties and established a trust fund to pay for clean up when no responsible party could be identified. If the City (and the County of Los Angeles) proceed with clean-up using our own funds, CERCLA and other federal statutes may provide a basis of a lawsuit against the federal government.

### DERP and FUDS - Defense Environmental Restoration Program - Formerly Used Defense Sites

After the passage of CERCLA, the President delegated to the Department of Defense (DOD) the authority to clean up hazardous substances released from active and formerly used DOD properties. In 1984 the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers was assigned the responsibility of implementing this program. Properties eligible for clean up under this program include all sites for which real property accountability previously rested with DOD irrespective of current ownership or current responsibility within the federal government.

Eligibility of a DERP-FUDS property is determined upon completion of an Inventory Project Report (INPR). For DERP-FUDS projects, the Army Corps normally performs the clean-up work. The level of

clean up takes into consideration the expected use of the property. The Corps has completed a preliminary assessment for PVIC, but has not yet determined if there is another party in addition to the military involved in the site contamination.

#### PRP - Potential Responsible Party

PRP projects are those where DOD may share potential CERCLA responsibility for the hazardous condition on the eligible FUDS with another entity. PRPs may include current and former owners or operators and persons who may be accountable for having generated onsite hazardous substances or were involved in the transport, treatment or disposal of them. For PRP projects, the general policy is to "cash out" rather than perform the clean-up work.

#### **What Will the City Do Next?**

Taking legal action against the federal government (and County of Los Angeles) before the DERP-FUDS process is completed could have an adverse impact on the City's ability to receive funds under the FUDS program. On the other hand, the Army Corps has already advised us that it will take at least a year to complete the process of making its determination of whether the PVIC clean up is eligible for federal funding.

At their November 21, 2000 meeting the City Council directed staff to continue pursuing permits through the Department of Toxic Substance Control (DTSC) for the clean-up of the Point Vicente Interpretive Center. The Council also endorsed working with the Army Corps to achieve funding for site clean-up through the Formerly Used Defense Sites (FUDS) or Potential Responsible Party (PRP) programs and negotiating with the County of Los Angeles to take on a portion of the financial responsibility for clean-up. Finally, the City Council determined that they would not allow diversion of any Proposition A (County Park Bond funds) money, intended for open space acquisition, for soil contamination clean up at the Interpretive Center.



#### **DON'T LET THE CITY GET FINED**

#### **Separate Green Waste and Save the City \$10,000 a Day**

State law has mandated that the City cut in half the amount of trash collected in the City by the end of 2000 or be fined \$10,000 a day. You can help the City achieve this reduction by separating your green

waste, grass clippings, leaves, branches and any other plant cuttings, and placing them in your green recycle can. Beginning this January, green waste will be picked up on your second pickup day of the week. Tied bundles of branches and other plant material will also be picked up. Other recyclables such as paper, cans and plastic are picked up on the first collection day of the week and should be placed in the blue can.

Get your gardener involved in this effort to separate green waste.

## **DRAINAGE SYSTEM IN KLONDIKE CANYON BEING VANDALIZED**

### **City Offers a \$5000 Reward**

The City is offering a \$5,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of anyone responsible for vandalizing the drainage system in Klondike Canyon. Klondike Canyon is located on the eastern edge of the Portuguese Bend Landslide Area, just north of Palos Verdes Drive South and west of the Seaview neighborhood.

Several years ago, the Klondike Canyon Landslide Abatement District, with assistance from the City's Redevelopment Agency, installed drainage facilities in this canyon to prevent water from entering the groundwater table and accelerating the landslide. Since that time, the drainage facilities have been repeatedly vandalized and have required extensive repairs to keep them in working order.

The difficulty in accessing the damaged pipeline and the repeated vandalism after repairs are made, all indicate that these are not random acts, but deliberate and continuing attempts to disrupt the drainage system. Some believe that it is the work of adults rather than random juvenile vandalism.

If you have any information regarding the vandalism being done to this important drainage facility, please contact the Lomita Sheriff's Station at 310-539-1661.

## **DON'T GET FLOODED**

### **Sewer Backwater Valves Prevents Home Damage**

Most properties in the City are connected to public (mainline) sewers. The majority of these properties have been built so that an obstruction in the public sewer will not cause a sewage backup into the property.

Other properties, however, require the protection of a backwater valve in the owner's drain line. These properties have been built (see sketch) so that the drain of the lowest plumbing fixture (bathtub, shower, etc.) is lower than the upper manhole of the public sewer. The backwater valve is designed to automatically shut to prevent sewage from backing up into the building from an obstructed public sewer.

If your property appears to require a backwater valve, but you do not know if one has been installed you are strongly encouraged to call a licensed plumber, who can evaluate your situation and, if necessary, install a backwater valve.

Backwater valves must be checked to ensure that they are operating properly at all times. Root cleaning machines, debris in the drain line, or other problems can easily damage or interfere with the proper operation of backwater valves.

A Plumbing Permit is required for the installation of a backwater valve so you should contact the Building & Safety Division at City Hall, 30940 Hawthorne Boulevard, Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90275. They can also be contacted at (310) 541-7702.

## **PLAN YOUR GREAT ESCAPE**

### **Get Out Of The House Safely**

Plan your great escape-not a vacation or retirement-but your safe escape from your house in the event of a fire.

Most fatal fires occur between midnight and six o'clock in the morning-the time when you are least prepared. The Burn Institute reports that in the U.S. fire kills about 4,000 people each year and injures and maims thousands of others.

Draw a floor plan of your home, mark all doors and windows and locate two ways out from every room. If you must use a second story window as an escape route, consider purchasing a fire escape ladder and store it upstairs. These fire ladders come in 15 foot or 25 foot lengths and are available at local home improvement centers for between \$35 and \$50. Not a bad price when you consider the benefits.

Choose a safe meeting place outside your home and never go back inside the house once you are safely out.

Practice makes perfect so start planning your great escape today.

### **Time to Renew Business Licenses**

All business activity done in the City requires the owner to obtain a City business license. This includes any occupation activity being undertaken within a residential area (i.e. a home office for any type of income-producing activity). Additionally, any service providers such as contractors, gardeners, or handymen, whether based in the City or not, are also required to be licensed.

This past December, the Finance Department mailed the 2001 business license renewal application to all currently licensed businesses within the City. This application should be completed and returned with the license fee to City Hall by February 1, 2001. Subsequent to processing these renewal applications, a 2001 Business Tax Certificate will be mailed to all businesses that have paid their license fee. Penalties will be assessed on any license renewal applications received on or after February 2<sup>nd</sup>.

If you are currently operating a business without a proper City license, or have any questions regarding the renewal process, please contact the Business License Coordinator at (310) 377-0360.

## **PARK YOUR CAR IN ITS RIGHTFUL PLACE-CLEAN OUT THE GARAGE**

### **Free Pick-Up of Bulky Items by City's Trash Haulers**

Wish you could get your car in the garage but can't because that old TV, desk, and your grandmother's sofa are taking up space. Well, here's your chance to get rid of all those items and it will cost you nothing.

If appliances are in working condition, and/or the furniture is in good condition, donate them. They will get picked up and you will get a receipt so you can claim a deduction on your income tax. Organizations such as Goodwill (telephone 562-435-7741), the Salvation Army (telephone 800-958-7825), and the Cancer Society (telephone 800-443-4224), will pick up these items and put them to good use, or use the proceeds for a good cause.

If the unwanted appliances are not in working condition, and/or the furniture is unusable, call your trash hauler and ask for a free bulky item pickup. Waste Management and Ivy Rubbish offer customers three free bulky item pickups a year. Waste Management can be reached at 310-830-7100; Ivy's phone number is 310-530-2899. Call and make arrangements for a pick-up.

## **SPRUCE UP THE ENTRANCE TO YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD**

### **Apply For A Recycling Grant**

During the past eleven years the City has awarded \$400,000 in grants to homeowner associations and neighborhood groups to beautify neighborhoods. Beautification projects such as neighborhood entrance signs, lighting, irrigation, and landscaping have been approved for numerous locations throughout the City. On Hawthorne Boulevard alone between Hesse Park and the coastline there are four neighborhood entries that have been given a facelift using funding from this program. The money comes from the sale of curbside recycling materials collected in the City by the franchised waste haulers.

Applications will be mailed to all homeowner associations during the month of January and should be completed and returned to City Hall by March 31<sup>st</sup>.

If your homeowner association president has not received an application, contact the Public Works Department at 310-544-5252.





## **CITY STARTS ON \$5M CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT**

### **Portuguese Bend Community to Get Sewer System**

Construction on the long anticipated Portuguese Bend community sewer system finally got underway this past October. The project will replace the individual septic tank system with a sewer system and will serve about 80 homes. The system will not only improve groundwater quality but it will also reduce the amount of groundwater that enters the slide plane of the Abalone Cove Landslide.

This project has been on the drawing boards for more than ten years and became a reality when property owners in the neighborhood offered the City easements to construct the system. This is the largest capital project ever undertaken by the City or the Redevelopment Agency. Funding comes from a settlement agreement with the County of Los Angeles.

Construction will be completed in April. Colich and Sons is the contractor and Harris and Associates is the project manager.





## **MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR MARCH 3 - WHALE OF A DAY**

### **Tour the Historic Point Vicente Lighthouse**

The 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Whale of a Day Celebration is scheduled for Saturday, March 3, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. This year's event will be held at the United States Coast Guard property at the Point Vicente Lighthouse. This outstanding event is co-hosted by the docents of Los Serenos de Point Vicente, the City of Rancho Palos Verdes and the United States Coast Guard. The event celebrates the Pacific Gray whale's annual migration from the frigid waters of the Arctic to the warm lagoons of Baja California.

The educational department from Sea World, Cabrillo Marine Aquarium, the Natural History Museum, George F. Canyon Nature Center, the Native Plant Society, South Bay Wildlife Rehab, Madrona Marsh, Cabrillo Whale Watch, the Marine Mammal Care Center, the P.V.P. Land Conservancy, and the Long Beach Aquarium of the Pacific are among those expected to participate in this day-long event.

Other highlights include children's crafts, activities and games, a marching band, tours of the Pt. Vicente Lighthouse, whale watching from the cliffs, storytelling, exhibits, and craft and food vendors. Parking will be located at Long Point (formerly Marineland). Admission, parking and shuttle service is FREE! Join us for a Whale of a Day! For additional information, contact Holly Starr at (310) 544-5264.

## **BE READY WHEN THE NEED ARISES**

### **Train to Be A Disaster Volunteer**

The Peninsula Emergency Response Team or "PERT" is a group of volunteer Peninsula residents trained to assist their families, neighbors and community in the event of a disaster. PERT is used to supplement the efforts of fire, law enforcement and other emergency response teams during disasters such as earthquakes, fires and severe weather. The members are trained in fire suppression, search and rescue, first aid and CPR, utility control, disaster medicine and hazardous materials. The City provides support to PERT by purchasing supplies and jackets for its members: the L. A. County Sheriff's Department provides the training.

If you want to join PERT, the next training starts on January 18 at Peck Park located at 560 N. Western Avenue, San Pedro. Classes are held from 7:00 P.M. until 10:00 P.M. The spring session begins in March.

To be eligible to participate in this training, you must be at least 18 years old, a resident of Rancho Palos Verdes, Rolling Hills or Rolling Hills Estates, be willing to make a long term commitment to the group and be physically capable of moderately strenuous activity. For more information, contact Sergeant Dave Rozas with the Lomita Sheriff's Station, telephone number 310-891-3227.

### **DOCENT- LED NATURE HIKES AT OCEAN TRAILS OFFERED FREE TO THE PUBLIC**

The Los Serenos de Point Vicente docents will continue to conduct guided tours of the Ocean Trails Project each month. The walks begin at the public parking lot located at the end of La Rotonda Drive off of Palos Verdes Drive South and take place on paved, gently sloping trails along the bluff edge and through the habitat corridor. Docents will be providing information about the history, geology, marine ecology and the habitat restoration at Ocean Trails. Participants should wear comfortable shoes, a hat and bring a small bottle of water. Tours last about two hours and no reservations are required.

Tours are scheduled as follows:

Sunday January 21 3:00 p.m.

Thursday February 22 9:00 a.m.

Sunday March 25 3:00 p.m.

The docents also offer hikes at Abalone Cove Shoreline Park and at the Ladera Linda Community Center. These hikes are great for scout groups, schools, families or anybody interested in learning more about the Palos Verdes Peninsula. Reservations are required for hikes at Abalone Cove and Ladera Linda and a nominal fee is charged. For more information, call the hike line at 310- 377-0360 extension 309.