

**CITY OF RANCHO PALOS VERDES
PRESERVE MANAGEMENT/PUMP PUBLIC FORUM MEETING
FEBRUARY 19, 2014**

The forum began at 6:03 p.m. in the City Hall Community Room, 30940 Hawthorne Boulevard.

ATTENDANCE

City Staff: Carolynn Petru – Acting City Manager
Joel Rojas – Community Development Department Director
Ara Mihranian – Community Development Deputy Director
Chris Ortiz – Public Works Maintenance Superintendent
Katie Lozano – Recreation and Parks Department Administrative Analyst

PVPLC Staff: Danielle Lefer – Conservation Director

MRCA Representative: Jewel Johnson – Supervising Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) Ranger

Director Rojas welcomed attendees and explained that City and Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy (PVPLC) staff will discuss projects/topics relevant to their Preserve management responsibilities. Staff introduced themselves and they and Director Rojas explained their Preserve management roles; PVPLC is responsible for habitat restoration and portions of Preserve maintenance, Community Development handles NCCP and trails designation topics, Public Works is responsible for portions of Preserve maintenance and construction projects that may impact the Preserve, Recreation and Parks is responsible for Preserve rules enforcement through the MRCA rangers and interpretive programming, and the City Manager's Office works with the departments and Council on their policy decisions.

Status Update on PVPLC Trail Projects (Presented by Danielle Lefer)

Ongoing Trail Project Update: Smuggler's Trail connection to Palos Verdes Drive South (Abalone Cove Reserve) – Director Lefer reported that the project is complete, and habitat restoration has begun.

2012 HCF Grant approved for miscellaneous trail work (Preserve-wide) – This grant has been approved and the City has received the contract from the agency. Grant funds will be used for Preserve improvement projects, including trail delineations and spur trail closures.

Status Update on Unauthorized Trail Closures (Preserve-wide) – Director Lefer reported that the PVPLC is prioritizing maintaining existing closures largely at Portuguese Bend (at Ishibashi Trail), Abalone Cove, and Forrestal Reserves.

Rapid Response Team – Director Lefer shared that the PVPLC has put together the Rapid Response Team. This team will focus on closing spur trails using brush to cover trails and raking over spur trails so they are less defined. More volunteers are needed; please contact Danielle Lefer. The PVPLC is also hiring a trails employee part-time to assist with spur trail closures and to train the team.

Decal Replacement of Trail Signs (Preserve-wide) – Director Lefer shared that the current focus is on restoration. Decal replacement will continue at Forrestal, Portuguese Bend, Abalone Cove, Filiorum, Vicente Bluffs, and Vista Del Norte Reserves. Both carbonite posts and decals will be placed at San Ramon Reserve.

Implementation of the Volunteer Trail Watch Program (Preserve-wide) – Director Lefer reported that the program is going well. They have 17 active volunteers and 11 additional volunteers will begin training on February 22nd. PVPLC has created public informational cards on the importance of keeping dogs on leash.

Installation of Preserve Welcome Signs (Preserve-wide) – Director Lefer reported that this will be a large scale design process that will take some time. Public input will be solicited. These welcome signs will be placed at the major Preserve entry points and include the names of the individual reserves.

Nature Walks – Director Lefer shared that the PVPLC leads monthly nature hikes through the open space that they preserve, and public hike fliers are available at the front table and on the PVPLC website.

Public Comments/Questions:

Barbara Ailor shared that the Rapid Response Team had a great walk February 14th, during which they discussed strategies for covering spur trails and making them less attractive. She also reported a pipe at the intersection of Ishibashi Trail and Burma Road that may need attention.

Eva Cicoria confirmed that PUMP Public Forum Meeting minutes can be found on the City's webpage. She also shared that decals and signage are missing at Alta Vicente Reserve. She asked that trail widening on Landslide Scarp and Abalone Cove trails be addressed.

Director Lefer responded that the issue of trail widening is a complex one, compounded by the current drought conditions. PVPLC has contacted other agencies on the issue, and encourages educating the public on how to pass each other correctly and the importance of staying within the trail bed.

Ms. Cicoria expressed concern that the PVPLC's trail crew is led by an individual with a bias towards widening trails in the Preserve to make them multi-use. She also heard that a trail management plan is being developed and asked if the public will be invited to participate in it.

Mike Jost shared that he works on PVPLC's trail crew, and their intent is to clean up trails, not widen them. He also noticed damage on Landslide Scarp Trail that looks consistent with a quadrunner driving through the trail.

Director Lefer shared that the management plan will be completed in-house by the PVPLC, and that it is still in the conceptual stage. The plan will define a process to address trail issues. PVPLC will take public input received into consideration when developing the plan.

Barry Holchin commented that multi-use trails are becoming much wider than single-use trails.

Director Rojas clarified that the City does not give direction on widening trails, and that because trail maintenance on unimproved trails falls under the purview of the PVPLC, related questions should be directed to the PVPLC.

Deputy Director Mihranian added that the Preserve Public Use Master Plan indicates that trails will not be widened to accommodate more user groups. He indicated that staff and PVPLC will look into the issue of trail widening.

Barbara Ailor asked that the intersection of Toyon and Landslide Scarp Trails be addressed. For mountain bikers to stay on the designated trail, they must make a very fast right, rather than continuing straight. It can be confusing.

John Wessel shared that a lot of scraping is taking place on Toyon Trail, and something needs to be done to reduce bike speed in this area to prevent it.

Kurt Loheit introduced himself as the PVPLC trail crew leader and clarified that the damage at Toyon results from poor alignment work previously completed by a contractor. He clarified that the Volunteer Trail Crew does not widen trails, they stabilize trails using best practices developed by California State Parks, since the City does not have trail standards. The crew is aware of the problem areas discussed tonight, and there is a lot of work to be completed, and a limited trail crew. In his opinion, these areas can be improved, but with time.

Bill Lavoie introduced himself as a Sierra Club night hike leader, and indicated that while on City-permitted night hikes, he sees afterhours use (mostly mountain bikers and hikers), and he reports it to the City.

Status Update of RPV Public Works Projects (Presented by Chris Ortiz)

Burma Road Repair – Maintenance Superintendent Ortiz reported that work on Burma Road to fill in crevices and remove large rocks will take place this week.

Installation of Additional “Trails Ends” sign at Barn Owl Trail – Superintendent Ortiz reported that work will take place this week.

Installation of Additional “Trail Ends No Public Access” sign at Peppertree Trail (Portuguese Bend Reserve) – Superintendent Ortiz reported that work will take place this week.

Installation of “Closed Spur Trail” sign at Del Cerro Park (Filiorum Reserve) – Maintenance Superintendent Ortiz reported that this sign has been installed.

Installation of “walk bike” signs (Filiorum Reserve) – Maintenance Superintendent Ortiz reported that these signs should be installed by the end of the week.

Installation of Preserve Rules Signs at Intrepid Trail and Calle Entradero – Superintendent Ortiz reported that the signs would be installed this week.

Smuggler’s Cove Trail Gate Opening – Director Rojas reported that this gate at Olmstead Trail will be modified for easier mountain bike access.

Public Comments/Questions

John Wessel believes walk bike signs should be posted down Rattlesnake Trail, as he has seen a mountain biker and a hiker fall off the trail.

Deputy Director Mihranian noted that line of site issues were previously brought up at Public Forum Meetings, and staff and PVPLC will look into the matter.

Barry Holchin reported that when walking through Forrestal Reserve on Mariposa Trail, there are fence posts that have been cut off and are dangerous. He asked if the trail crew could add these to their list of repairs.

Judy Herman asked that measures be taken to delineate trails so they do not widen further.

Status Update of RPV Community Development Projects (Presented by Joel Rojas)

Vista del Norte/Crestridge Project Trail Connection – Director Rojas reported that a loop will be created in Vista del Norte Reserve as the Crestridge Project progresses. He also clarified that the Vista del Norte Trail was previously damaged as part of fuel modification, but precautions are being taken so this won't happen again.

Malaga Canyon Purchase Acquisition – The City anticipates ownership of the 58 acres within the next few weeks. The PVPLC will manage the land if City Council chooses to enroll it in the Preserve. The Public Use Master Plan would then be amended with public input.

Use Agreement Between City and Jim York for Jack's Hat Trail (Three Sisters & Filiorum Reserves) – Director Rojas reported that the City and Mr. York were unsuccessful in reaching an agreement for public use of a section of Jack's Hat Trail.

Discussion ensued between staff, PVPLC, and the public on the possibility of a connection between Three Sisters and Filiorum Reserves, and the balance between creating a new trail, and damaging existing habitat. The group expressed concern with the public creating spur trails to connect the Reserves, and the need for appropriate signage to effectively guide people.

Possible Use Agreements for Peppertree Trail (Portuguese Bend Reserve) - Staff will work with the land owners on this use agreement.

"No Coastal Access" Signs along PVDS near Archery Club – Director Rojas reported that some Portuguese Bend Reserve visitors take Burma Road down to the unimproved future Gateway Park area, where there is no trail or other directional signage. As a result, there have been increased reports of the public wandering into private communities. Since the City is responsible for signage in this area, the City is looking into funding to provide new signage to guide visitors away from private property and hazardous fissures.

Public Comments/Questions

Kurt Loheit indicated that there is a large black drainage pipe near Sacred Cove Trail in the Abalone Cove Reserve. The concrete abutments are coming loose and creating a safety issue.

Director Rojas shared that staff and PVPLC have recently walked this trail and are looking into the situation.

Status Update of RPV Recreation and Parks Projects (Presented by Katie Lozano)

Review of Enforcement Issues in the Preserve (Preserve-wide) – Analyst Lozano shared that the City keeps two logs of Preserve concerns and issues; the Ranger Hotline log tracks all calls reported through the Ranger Hotline. These calls are generally from the public. The second log tracks concerns and issues reported to the City through the public, PVPLC staff, and Rangers. Nighttime use of the Preserve has been of particular concern this past quarter, and Rangers have increased nighttime patrols.

Ranger Jewel Johnson went through the October-December 2013 Ranger Quarterly Report and reviewed observations from January 2014-present:

Portuguese Bend Reserve

Nighttime activity at Portuguese Bend Reserve has largely been at Del Cerro Park, where couples visit in the evening. Both hikers and mountain bikers are entering the Reserve afterhours. The hikers tend to be locals walking their dogs, and the mountain bikers tend to be more organized groups. Nighttime activity at Portuguese Bend has been benign. Abalone Cove is seeing more drinking and bonfire issues.

Unauthorized trail use is an issue, mostly from hikers and mountain bikers.

Signage at the old and new Rim Trails need clarification.

The issue of private entrances to the Preserve needs to be addressed.

Visitors are still using the steep trail off of the overlook at the top of Burma. Rangers are suggesting they use Barn Owl and Burma Trails if they are looking for an uphill workout. She has asked the Volunteer Trail Watch to help visitors break their habits of using trails that have been closed by suggesting alternate routes.

Forrestal Reserve

The Preserve is seeing increased use by Meet-up groups of 20-70 people, especially in Forrestal Reserve then down to Abalone Cove Beach.

Hikers and bikers are using the unauthorized trails below the PVPUSD soccer field. This trail provides access to Forrestal Reserve at Conqueror Trail.

Ocean Trails Reserve

Ranger Slawter was first responder to a hiker that collapsed on the trail. He monitored vitals until the Fire Department arrived.

Three Sisters Reserve

Rangers looking for use patterns at this Reserve. Issues reported include dogs off-leash and bike jumps.

The debris basin stairs leading to the McBride Trail continue to get use.

There is a need to get trails in Three Sisters and Filiorum Reserves clearly posted so that as the public starts using these Reserves more, we are clearly indicating where we want visitors to go so they do not create spur trails.

Rangers continue to use the helpful information Volunteer Trail Watch members are providing. Rangers specifically request information on use patterns at Filiorum and Three Sisters Reserves as these Reserves are becoming more discovered by the public.

Filiorum Reserve

Rangers are seeing fitness groups in Filiorum Reserve.

Hikers and bikers are increasingly accessing Portuguese Bend Reserve via Rattlesnake Trail.

Rangers monitoring use of airsoft pistols.

San Ramon Reserve

This Reserve sees low usage. Usage is mostly by mountain bikers.

There are no trail markers at San Ramon Reserve, and more spur trails are popping up. We need to direct the public where they should go before they start creating their own trails.

Vicente Bluffs and Abalone Cove Reserves

Fishermen, divers, and families continue to climb over the railing and use unauthorized, unstable trails to access the beach below Vicente Bluffs Reserve.

Evidence of campfires found on the beach below Vicente Bluffs Reserves and on Abalone Cove Beach.

Nature Preserve Interpretive Programming (Preserve-wide) – Analyst Lozano reported that the Spring Junior Ranger Program begins March 8th and runs through early June. Ranger-led night hikes in the Portuguese Bend Reserve have been taking place monthly since November, and the last night hike will be March 8th. The Los Serenos de Point Vicente Docent 2014 monthly public hike schedule is also available at the front table.

Public Comments/Questions

Michael Jost expressed concern that when people see others in the Preserve afterhours, they assume that afterhours activity is allowed. He suggested signage that recommends people travel up Rim Trail, rather than down Rim Trail, because traveling down the trail is slippery.

Barbara Gleghorn expressed a need for more effective signage at Vicente Bluffs Reserve where visitors often climb over the railing to access spur trails down to the beach.

Kurt Loheit reported a spur trail off of Vanderlip Park where fishermen lower themselves down the steep unauthorized trail using a rope to access the beach.

Eva Cicoria asked for the status of the Alta Vicente Farm.

Acting City Manager Petru reported that the land use lease ends in March, and the National Park Service is not interested in keeping the farm at this location. Council has expressed a desire to keep the farm use, but has determined that the conversion process is cost prohibitive. An option to be explored is whether the farm can be moved to another location (outside of the Preserve).

Director Rojas thanked attendees for participating in the PUMP Public Forum Meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.