

CITY OF RANCHO PALOS VERDES
PRESERVE MANAGEMENT/PUMP PUBLIC FORUM MEETING
MAY 28, 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
Cory Linder – Recreation and Parks Department Director
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 their roles in management of the Palos Verdes Nature Preserve.

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

Ongoing Trail Projects Update- Director Lefer shared that the PVPLC has been conducting assessments on how to effectively close spur trails in the Preserve.

Rim Trail – Trail closures includes routing people away from geologically sensitive areas. The original route that hugs the cliff will remain, and the spur trails off of it will be closed. PVPLC is working on effective signage and trail delineation.

Landslide Scarp Trail: PVPLC is working on the issue of keeping mountain bikes off of this trail. PVPLC installed a sign. It was removed once, but is now back in place.

Rattlesnake Trail: Line of site issues were assessed. It has been determined that there are no line of site issues that need to be addressed now.

Sacred Cove Trail: The Eastern section of the trail will be closed for safety reasons. Hikers will be redirected to nearby Cliffside Trail.

Director Rojas clarified that a portion of the trail is sloughing off, and a City engineer determined it to be unsustainable.

Grant Updates on Trail Improvement Projects

2009 HCF Grant for Portuguese Bend Reserve – PVPLC is still working on projects under this grant. Some of these include spur trail closures in Portuguese Bend Reserve.

2012 HCF Grant for miscellaneous trail work (Preserve-wide) – The contract has been signed recently, and it will be implemented soon.

Grant from Los Angeles County – This contract will be signed soon. The grant will focus on improving the trail system through installation of way-finding features, kiosks, trail signage, and native plants to enhance trailside habitat.

Status Update on Unauthorized Trail Closures (Preserve-wide) -Director Lefer shared that PVPLC's efforts are now focused in the Portuguese Bend Reserve at the Peppertree and Ishibashi areas, Abalone Cove Reserve, and the connector spur trail between Filiorum and Three Sisters Reserves. PVPLC understands that the connector trail between the two Reserves is a difficult situation in need of a solution.

Decal Replacement on Trail Signs (Preserve-wide) -Director Lefer indicated that replacement is nearly finished.

Volunteer Trail Watch Program Update (Preserve-wide) -Director Lefer reported that the program is going well, there are 34 active volunteers, and a new recruitment and training will take place in the fall.

Rapid Response Team -Director Lefer shared that this volunteer group is focused on closing spur trails.

Installation of Nature Preserve Welcome Signs (Preserve-side) -Director Lefer shared that Nature Preserve welcome signs listing reserve names will be installed at major entry points to the Preserve. The timeline is uncertain.

Nature Walks -Director Lefer shared that PVPLC docents will lead nature walks July-August; more information on PVPLC interpretive/volunteer activities is available at PVPLC.org.

Volunteer Trail Crew Projects

Director Lefer reported that the PVPLC's Volunteer Trail Crew (VTC) has recently completed work on Mariposa Trail, Flying Mane Trail, and Cliffside Trail.

She also reported on a project proposed by the VTC to realign Toyon trail with the benefits of protecting vegetation, solving the existing erosion problem, and improving the alignment for trail use. No native habitat would be removed and the project would use Groasis Waterboxx technology. She presented the project, and requested public feedback.

Public Comments/Questions

Eva Cicoria expressed concern that the new design would create a slope conducive to mountain bike speeding. She also commented that the erosion damage on the existing alignment has been caused by mountain bikers.

Peter Shaw commented that the new alignment would create a relatively flat trail and increase visibility. He shared that the VTC does not feel Toyon Trail is sustainable in its current state.

Vic LoCicero commented that the existing alignment is a scar that will continue to get worse unless traffic is taken off of it and an alternate solution is found.

Mike Jost shared that the proposed reroute would recover 6X the habitat and improve the line of sight.

Director Lefer expressed appreciation for the public input. PVPLC will schedule a trip to the site to receive more input, and will reach out to equestrians for input. Barry Holchin recommended using cameras to catch individuals that misuse trails in ways that result in trail widening.

Director Lefer indicated that cameras are more useful to catch very specific deliberate violations, rather than general misuse of trails.

Eva Cicoria expressed pleasure that rubble has been cleared from Rim Trail.

Peter Shaw asked if there has been progress on a trail connector across the York property.

Director Rojas indicated that there has not been progress on a connector, but staff will continue to look for solutions.

Status Update of RPV Public Works Projects (Presented by Joel Rojas)

Burma Road Repair -Director Rojas reported that the grading issue has been fixed.

Installation of Closed Spur Trail Sign at Del Cerro Park (Filiorum Reserve) -Director Rojas reported that this sign has been installed.

Installation of “walk bike” signs (Filiorum Reserve) -Director Rojas reported that these signs have been installed.

Installation of Preserve Rules Signs at Intrepid Trail and Calle Entradero -Director Rojas reported that these signs have been installed.

Flying Mane and Pirate Trails Exposed Fence Post Removal (Forrestal Reserve) -Director Rojas reported that this removal is complete.

Smuggler’s Cove Trail Gate Opening -Director Rojas reported that the parts for this project to improve bike access, have been ordered, and the project will soon be complete.

Abandoned Items at Gateway Park -Director Rojas reported that the items have been removed, and that the contact for the Road Realignment Project is Ron Dragoo in the Public Works Department.

Public Comments/Questions

Mike Jost shared that seeking mountain biker input before installing the walk bike signs at Kelvin Canyon Trail would have been helpful, because skilled mountain bikers find it safer to ride a bike down these steep trails than to walk in the loose dirt in mountain bike shoes.

Director Rojas indicated that direction to install the signs was given by City Council at a public meeting.

John Wessel shared that Kelvin Canyon Trail is getting more use and collisions are a valid concern.

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

Vista del Norte/Crestridge Project Trail Connection -Director Rojas reported that the City is working with the developer to complete the trail loop within Vista del Norte Reserve.

Acting City Manager Petru reported that the homeless activity in the Reserve has appeared on and off for years, and is likely due to the Reserve's proximity to the mall.

Changes to the Preserve

Gateway Park: Director Rojas reported that the park has been reconfigured to 17 acres, and 8 additional acres are now Preserve. The Recreation and Parks Department has taken the lead on the Gateway Park Project.

Director Linder provided an update on the Gateway Park Project: staff heard public concerns and have created a revised concept to address the concerns. The next step is to gather public input through a series of public workshops.

Archery Range Property: Director Rojas reported that this area has been removed from the Preserve, and will remain open space area. Habitat restoration was challenging due to land movement, and Successor Agency constraints.

Future Malaga Canyon Reserve: Director Rojas reported that the City purchased 58 acres to be entered into the Preserve. The City will go to Council to determine trail designations. All trails are now recommended to be restricted to pedestrian use. More opportunities for public input will be available soon.

Possible Use Agreements for Peppertree Trail (Portuguese Bend Reserve): Director Rojas indicated that City staff is working with private owners on a trail easement. More information will follow.

Public Comments/Questions:

Barry Holchin commented that the PVPLC's mission is to preserve open space; would it be possible to decommission the trails and disallow public access to Malaga Canyon? He also indicated that there is a lot of unauthorized trail building going on in this canyon.

Ranger Johnson shared that there is a party zone at the end of Mossbank Drive, and that neighbors report that there isn't much activity in Malaga Canyon.

Director Rojas indicated that the City purchases Preserve property both to preserve it and to provide public access to it. Prohibiting access is not consistent with the City and PVPLC's goals. He also shared that it is unclear at this point when Malaga Canyon will be entered into the Preserve.

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

Review of Enforcement Issues in the Preserve (Preserve-wide) -Administrative Analyst Lozano shared that there are incident and hotline logs available on the front table, and that issues

during the last quarter remained consistent, with dogs off-leash/on the beach and poaching being more prominent. Rangers continue to conduct night patrols to target night-time Preserve activity.

Unauthorized Coastal Access at Vicente Bluffs Reserve -Administrative Analyst Lozano shared that the City and PVPLC is working to address the issue of visitors climbing over the railing at Vicente Bluffs Reserve to look at the view along the coast, walking along the bluff-top, and taking unauthorized trails to access the beach. The City and PVPLC are working on solutions including enforceable signage and making the closed area less inviting.

Ranger Johnson asked the Volunteer Trail Watch to educate visitors to this area by recommending alternate locations where they can fish and legally access the beach. (Pelican Cove and Lunada Bay).

Nature Preserve Interpretive Programming (Preserve-wide) -Administrative Analyst Lozano shared that the Spring Junior Ranger Program was a success, with a registration of 50, and that the Fall Program would begin in September. Night hikes will resume in October. She also mentioned that fliers listing Los Serenos Docent led hikes are available at the front table.

Public Comments/Questions

Barbara Ailor indicated that the Volunteer Trail Watch needs more support in the form of enforcement.

Sharon Yarber indicated that better signage is needed in Vicente Bluffs Reserve to change the behavior of visitors climbing over the railing. She asked if accessing the beach is prohibited. She recommended placing trail closed signs in the middle of trails to make the message clear.

Joel confirmed that using the unauthorized trails to access the beach is prohibited.

Barry Holchin asked Ranger Johnson her opinion on how to approach the public to convey that they should not be climbing over the railing at Vicente Bluffs Reserve.

Ranger Jewel recommended first giving them the rule, then suggesting alternate locations for the activities they are looking for; fishing and coastal access.

Eva Cicoria shared that the overarching issue is that rangers are not providing adequate support to the Volunteer Trail Watch. She feels rangers are not applying rules in a way to protect the habitat.

Sue Wilkenson shared that when she would originally hike in the Preserve, it appeared to be “a free for all” with spur trails everywhere, and it seemed that people were not cognizant of rules. It is only now, as a Volunteer Trail Watch member, that she is aware of the rules, and feels strongly that they must be followed to protect the habitat.

Barry Holchin recommended using more sturdy materials for trail markers.

Ranger Johnson shared that mountain bike behavior has changed. Most of the trouble mountain bikers have moved over to Friendship Park, which is managed by L.A. County. She is in contact with L.A. County on mountain bike and motorized bike use at Friendship Park and will continue to monitor it.

Barbara Ailor asked for clarification on where equestrians can park trailers; an equestrian VTW Watch member was recently told they could not park in the dirt lot at Ladera Linda adjacent to the paddle tennis court. She shared that more equestrian parking is needed.

Director Linder confirmed that equestrians may park at that dirt lot.

Mike Jost shared that it is not possible to achieve 100% compliance in the Preserve, and it is a small percentage of visitors causing problems. Overall, he feels that visitors have a positive experience in the Preserve.

Director Rojas reiterated that perfection is not achievable concerning Preserve use.

June Treherne reported that her interactions in the Preserve are mostly positive.

Barbara Ailor interjected that her neighbor's children nearly got hit by a mountain bike and will no longer visit the Preserve.

Ranger Johnson shared that there are issues in the Preserve, but they are improving. Rangers are focused on the problem areas, and read and value the VTW reports. She feels the issues raised tonight are common in open space areas, but that progress is being made.

Eva Cicoria shared that she saw mountain bikes riding Ishibashi Trail to Toyon fast, and heard a story of mountain bikers making another trail user's experience unpleasant.

Director Rojas reiterated that all comments are appreciated, as the purpose of these meetings is to both report Preserve management issues to the public, and to receive public input.

Barry Holchin recommended that the City and PVPLC develop a metric by which they could evaluate Preserve use improvements and deterioration.

Director Lefer appreciated his recommendation and shared that she is working with the Stewardship Committee on measuring levels of improvement.

Director Rojas indicated that different people have different opinions on what improvement is, and he directed questions of habitat monitoring and improvement to the PVPLC.

Director Lefer shared that Keepers are monitoring the spur trails in the Portuguese Bend Reserve.

Sharon Yarber requested that PVPLC produce the Keeper and Volunteer Trail Watch reports quarterly. She also recommended the City help recruit future VTW members through their quarterly newsletter.

Director Rojas thanked all participants and adjourned the meeting at 7:40 p.m.