

**CITY OF RANCHO PALOS VERDES
PRESERVE MANAGEMENT/PUMP PUBLIC FORUM MEETING
November 20, 2013**

The forum began at 6:05 p.m. in the City Hall Community Room, 30940 Hawthorne Boulevard.

ATTENDANCE

City Staff: Carolynn Petru – Deputy City Manager
Joel Rojas – Community Development Department Director
Cory Linder – Recreation and Parks Department Director
Ara Mihranian – Community Development Deputy Director
Chris Ortiz – Public Works Maintenance Superintendent
Katie Howe – 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 to the Preserve Public Forum Meeting and explained that City and Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy (PVPLC) staff will discuss projects and topics relevant to their Preserve trail management responsibilities. He introduced City and PVPLC staff and explained their roles in Preserve management; 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 Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) rangers, 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. Next steps are planting and installation of trail markers, which will begin soon.

2012 HCF Grant approved for miscellaneous trail work (Preserve-wide) – Director Lefer reported that this matching grant has been approved. The PVPLC and City are waiting to receive contracts and the funding from the agency. The grant is in the amount of \$261,600; the City's match is \$10,800 and the PVPLC's match is \$120,000, in in-kind services, for a total of \$261,600. The grant will be used to promote Preserve connectivity and Preserve welcome signs, kiosks, and interpretive panels. Once the funding is released and a contract is in place, the PVPLC will release an RFP for the project and solicit community input.

Status Update on Unauthorized Trail Closures (Preserve-wide) – Director Lefer indicated that the PVPLC is using a combination of methods to close spur trails in the Preserve. Priority is given to spurs that have the greatest negative impact on habitat. PVPLC is now focusing on Ishibashi and Garden Trails.

Decal Replacement of Trail Signs (Preserve-wide) – Director Lefer shared that decal replacement at Abalone Cove is complete. San Ramon is scheduled next.

Implementation of the Volunteer Trail Watch Program (Preserve-wide) – Director Lefer reported that the program has begun, volunteers are providing information that is helpful to rangers, and they are educating the public on improving their land ethic. Approximately 20 volunteers are active.

Installation of Preserve Welcome Signs (Preserve-wide) – Director Lefer reported that HCF Grant funds will be used to fabricate and install these signs at key Preserve entry points. Concept designs may begin as early as this winter.

Annual Report December 3rd Council Meeting – Director Lefer explained that the PVPLC Annual Report is available on the City's website and will be presented to Council at the December 3rd meeting.

Public Comments/Questions:

Barry Holchin asked if there is an effort to capture unauthorized trail locations on a map. This would help Volunteer Trail Watch members differentiate between new and existing unauthorized trails.

Director Lefer responded that PVPLC has a map of unauthorized trails for the Portuguese Bend Reserve, but not for other reserves.

Al Edgerton, Del Cerro HOA, shared concerns about public parking on Crenshaw Blvd. to access the Portuguese Bend Reserve. Especially on weekends, it is getting dangerous. Many people walk down the middle of Crenshaw and leave car doors open. There was recently an accident, and the HOA would like the City to improve the situation with signage, education and perhaps speed limits. The HOA is not requesting parking restrictions on Crenshaw Blvd. at this time.

Joel Rojas responded that the Public Works Department would follow-up on the concern.

Eva Cicoria shared the importance of knowing which agency/department is responsible for the various Preserve management responsibilities, and she complimented the work done to close the spur trail off of Rattlesnake Trail.

Anke Raue opined that the PVPLC's Keepers Program notes spur trails, and asked if they had a map to assist Mr. Holchin.

Director Lefer responded that GIS mapping technology is required to create an unauthorized trail map, and PVPLC does not have that resource available now.

Barbara Gleghorn asked if the City and PVPLC work together to acquire grant funding for Preserve projects, and she expressed the value of giving PVPLC Keeper and MRCA Ranger reports to City Council.

Director Rojas indicated that the City and PVPLC do work together to acquire grant funding, and use the services of the City's grant consultant.

Director Lefer responded that Keeper reports are used to generate follow-up actions for PVPLC and City staff, but are not given to City Council. She will look into passing on the reports to Council.

Analyst Lozano indicated that City Council receives MRCA quarterly reports.

Barbara Gleghorn expressed that some PVPLC volunteers want to form an elite task force to quickly address Preserve issues to deter future violations.

Michael Jost reported that there was talk about line of sight issues on Rattlesnake Trail at a previous Public Forum Meeting, and that he recently worked with other trail volunteers to clear vegetation to improve the line of site.

Barbara Ailor expressed that the majority of complaints coming in are that the trails are widening and the public wants a narrow trail experience.

Deputy Director Mihranian emphasized the difference between widening a trail and creating a prism shape to make trail use more comfortable and create better lines of site in areas of steep terrain.

Eva Cicoria commented that it was determined that trails would not be widened to make them multi-use. Mountain bikes are making Rattlesnake Trail deeper/V-shaped. She is concerned with the cuts (areas to the sides of trails where vegetation is destroyed) mountain bikes are creating on trails.

Director Lefer pointed out that it is important to remember that the trail crew works closely with a trail expert, and trail work is vetted through the trail expert.

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

Installation of Additional "Trails Ends No Public Access" at Peppertree Trail (Portuguese Bend Reserve) – Maintenance Superintendent Ortiz reported that this sign has been installed.

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 year.

Deputy Director Mihranian clarified that the signs took longer than anticipated, because special attention and coordination was required on the language.

PVDS Road Realignment Project Parking Lot – Maintenance Superintendent Ortiz reported that this project is in progress.

Director Rojas added that this project will straighten a hook in the road by the future Gateway Park, which will include a 30-40 car gravel parking lot. The City geologist is involved with the projects since they are located in the landslide area.

Barry Holchin asked staff to address people leaving toilet paper and napkins in the Preserve. He recommended signage or more access to restrooms. He also suggested signs that simply say “trail” with arrows to make trail locations clear rather than using signs that read “area closed due to habitat restoration.”

Deputy Director Mihranian indicated that additional garbage cans purchased with the HCF grant funding should help the tissue situation.

Director Lefer shared that research shows that specifying areas are closed for restoration are more successful than simply stating that areas are closed.

Ranger Johnson added that rangers tell Preserve visitors to look for trail markers, and if there is not one, then the trail is unauthorized. She also encourages volunteers to give visitors positive alternatives by suggesting interesting routes.

Al Edgerton indicated that there are upwards of 500 Preserve visitors each weekend, and more restrooms would be helpful.

Deputy Director Mihranian shared that the Gateway Park parking lot and porta-potty should improve the situation.

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

Malaga Canyon Purchase Agreement – Director Rojas reported the City has signed purchase agreements to acquire two properties, comprising 58 acres in Malaga Canyon near Grandview Park. Escrow is pending. The City will likely own the properties by January. PVPLC has agreed to take on habitat management responsibilities if the City agrees to enroll the properties in the Preserve. If that is done, the PVPLC/City management agreement and PUMP document will be updated in 2014. The Conceptual Trails Plan lists the trails on the properties as pedestrian only.

Barry Holchin indicated that mountain bikers are already in those areas, and may be altering the area for access.

Use Agreement between City and Jim York for Jack's Hat Trail (Three Sisters and Filiorum Reserves) – Director Rojas reported that the City and Mr. York were not able to come to an agreement for public use of a section of Jack's Hat Trail on Mr. York's property primarily due to Mr. York's liability concerns. Mr. York has erected a fence to prevent access to his property. The City will install “trail closed” signage, and may be able to continue talks with Mr. York for a solution. Purchasing the property is not a viable option.

Barbara Ailor inquired about the widening of the road near Pony and Ford Trails.

Director Rojas noted that the City recently allowed a geologic boring on the Filiorum property related to ongoing geologic investigations that are underway related to the nearby Plumtree Property and that Staff would investigate.

Possible Use Agreements for Peppertree Trail (Portuguese Bend Reserve) – Director Rojas reported that the property owners were waiting to see the outcome of the York agreement. Since that agreement with Mr. York is not moving forward, the agreement for the use of the Peppertree property for trail use will move forward separately.

SCE Power Pole Replacement Project at Portuguese Bend Reserve – Director Rojas reported that at the City and PVPLC's request, Southern California Edison (SCE) placed avian protectors on 20 power poles in the Preserve to prevent birds from landing on power poles and subsequently starting fires. In addition, SCE is planning to use helicopters to replace three poles in the Portuguese Bend Reserve above the Gateway Park area. This would be a one-day operation, and the City will place more information on the website when it is available.

Barry Holchin asked for access to electronic City GIS maps for spur trail mapping.

Director Rojas explained that hard copy maps can be purchased, but licensing agreements prevent the City from releasing maps in electronic format.

Ranger Johnson recommended using maps from the County Assessor's Office.

Eva Cicoria expressed concern that the portion of Alta Vicente Trail through the farm area is fenced off, and that drone planes are being flown over habitat.

Barbara Ailor echoed the concern about model drones, and commented that the news showed someone was recently killed after being struck by a model drone.

Director Rojas indicated that staff will look into both issues.

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

Review of Enforcement Issues in the Preserve (Preserve-wide)- Analyst Lozano shared that Preserve enforcement falls under the purview of the Recreation and Parks Department, which works with the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority Rangers (MRCA) for enforcement. She explained that the City keeps logs of Preserve issues reported to the City, and that the logs are available at these quarterly meetings. The more common issues reported this past August through November have been dogs off-leash, poaching, questions on fishing restrictions, mountain bike misuse, and bonfires on the beach.

Ranger Johnson reviewed highlights of the MRCA quarterly report from July through September 2013. This report was made available to attendees.

Ocean Trails Reserve

Rangers have been monitoring mountain bike use, and rarely see bikes on these trails. They are also monitoring paragliding activity.

Three Sisters Reserve

Bike jumps were removed from this location, rangers submitted a report of spur trails in the Reserve, and rangers recommend listing the McBride Trail on the Three Sisters and Filiorum Reserve trail maps.

Filiorum Reserve

This Reserve has not been “discovered” as has Portuguese Bend, and Rangers continue to explore it to establish use patterns. Rangers are asking Volunteer Trail Watch members to explore this area and inform rangers of use patterns.

Portuguese Bend Reserve

Rangers and PVPLC conducted a field tour of the Landslide Scarp/ Toyon/ Peppertree junction to improve wayfinding signage. Mountain bike activity has dropped in this area.

Rangers are seeing increased equestrian use, mostly from directly adjacent neighbors and occasionally from Rolling Hills residents.

Continued use of unauthorized trails is occurring at the spur trail off of Peppertree. PVPLC and rangers continue to block this trail with vegetation. The spur trail from Burma to Sandbox Trail is continuing to get use, and closure is recommended. No new spur trails have been found off of Rim and Fire Station Trails. Hikers are using both the old and new Rim Trail routes due to confusion.

A party spot with evidence of lewd behavior was discovered off of Ishibashi Farm Trail, and rangers found a vehicle illegally accessing the Preserve.

San Ramon Reserve

Rangers continue to monitor Reserve for rebuilt bike jumps, rangers warned a juvenile for clearing brush, trail markers are needed at this Reserve, multiple spur trails exist, and a potential party spot with lewd activity was removed.

Abalone Cove Reserve

Rangers are working with the City and L.A. County Lifeguards on cliff diving.

Vicente Bluffs Reserve

Fishermen and divers are using unauthorized trails to access the beach. Labor Day weekend, 40-50 people were on the beach. They are likely climbing over the railing at Calle Entradero and using unauthorized trails to access the beach.

She shared that during the period of July through September, rangers monitored activity on the coast, and conducted night patrols with the Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Nature Preserve Interpretive Programming (Preserve-wide): Fliers on interpretive programming were made available at the meeting.

Eva Cicoria expressed concern that mountain bikers are damaging habitat and that no mountain bike citations were issued for a three month period of time.

Barbara Ailor shared a picture taken by Volunteer Trail Watch member showing mountain bikers traveling fast. She shared that the Toyon Trail intersection is confusing to mountain bikers. She is concerned that excellent habitat on Landslide Scarp and Garden Trails is being damaged.

Ranger Johnson expressed that rangers are watching for all user group misuse of trails, and since the recent uptick in mountain bike enforcement based on past use trends, their behavior seems to be changing. Volunteer Trail Watch members and the public can help Rangers identify activity trends.

Barry Holchin suggested that higher fines might be appropriate for particular offenses that are harder to catch. He also asked if it would be appropriate for violations that cause more habitat damage to have higher fines.

Director Lefer commented that dogs off-leash are actually quite destructive to habitat, as they leave feces and cause stress and harm to protected species.

Michael Jost added that a dog off-leash ran in front of his bike, causing an accident.

Analyst Lozano offered that the City's base fine for most infractions in the Preserve is \$50, but the fine increases after subsequent offenses. In addition, the Torrance Courthouse, which processes citations, adds additional fees over 100% of the City's base fee. Ranger Johnson added that the fees are entirely at the discretion of the court.

Barbara Ailor offered rangers Volunteer Trail Watch assistance and shared the challenge of educating mountain bikers because they ride by and do not listen.

Eva Cicoria asked about the terminology rangers use to identify user groups in reports; if a paraglider is walking, is he referred to as a hiker, or a paraglider?

Ranger Johnson clarified that people with paragliding equipment are referred to as paragliders; people who have horses, but are dismounted, are equestrians; and people walking their mountain bikes are referred to as mountain bikers.

Director Rojas thanked everyone for their input, and concluded that the meeting was another helpful exchange of information.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.