

The Post

News from the Claremont Wildlands Conservancy

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Master Plan Launched for Wilderness Park

The Claremont Hills Wilderness Park has been wildly successful—too successful. Last year it hosted more than 300,000 visitors. As a result, members of the City Council and commissions have focused on responding to immediate problems—noise, traffic, inadequate parking, pedestrian safety, and enforcement of hours at the main entrance on Mills. They have created new park hours and a new parking policy that has resulted in an expanded lot and a fee system to help pay for it. However, they have not had the opportunity to examine the park as a whole and study the interconnection of the issues involved. Now, by unanimous vote, the City Council is doing it!

Claremont Wildlands Conservancy has played a critical role over the past two years in persuading Council members to develop a master plan for the park instead of tackling problems piecemeal. And this spring our subcommittee on the master plan, chaired by board members Dean McHenry and Terry Grill, developed a working draft of a scope of study with a lengthy contact list of stakeholders for Bill Pallotto in the City's Community and Human Services Department, who is leading the project.

The main goal of a master plan is to preserve the park's natural characteristics while providing visitors opportunities for recreation and enjoyment of the park's scenic beauty, diverse vegetation, wildlife, and cultural resources. Four key values are: preservation, recreation, education and safety. CWC wants to ensure that the master plan is developed in keeping with an appropriate balance of these values and that all stakeholders'



How wild is the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park? Hiker Karen Gastineau carefully took this photo of a bear strolling up the dirt road on a Saturday morning in early May.

voices are heard.

Bill Pallotto and his staff have created a strong request for proposal (RFP), which the Community and Human Services Commission approved June 5. It includes the following tasks to be orchestrated by a consulting firm:

- Review existing documentation
- Develop a public participation plan
- Analyze existing conditions in the park and at all access points
- Recommend carrying capacity for the park's trails
- Establish an environmental baseline and develop a resource management plan
- Assess parcels for possible acquisition to expand the park, improve access points and provide for additional parking options.
- Evaluate park usage and amenities and make recommendations
- Assess current parking locations
- Prepare a GIS-based site map
- Outline options to engage volunteers
- Identify sustainable funding opportunities for land acquisitions, site improvements and trail expansion as well as a phasing plan for capital

improvements.

- Prepare a final Master Plan.

Here is a tentative calendar for the next steps:

June 25 (or July 9) - Bill Pallotto and his staff present the scope of work to the City Council.

Late August - They receive bids from consultants in response to the RFP.

September 4 - The Community and Human Services Commission reviews the bids.

September 24 - City Council approves the consultant and determines the cost. The study begins after this approval.

Spring 2014 - The study culminates in the park master plan.

The critical period for public input is next October through December, when consultants will set up focus groups and solicit views of community members and park visitors. We strongly urge all of our supporters to participate. The City's General Plan declares: "The Claremont Hills Wilderness Park is the heart and soul of Claremont's natural open space." We need to assure that it stays that way long into the future.

Sycamore Canyon Re-Opens After Ten-Year Closure

By *Georgeann Andrus*

Sycamore Canyon reopened in grand fashion on Saturday, March 2, 2013 after being closed since the devastating Grand Prix Fire of 2003.

The restoration of the 144 acres of special parkland, part of the city since 1972, was made possible through thousands of dollars of grant money and the efforts of many local and county organizations and dedicated individuals. Debris was removed by the Los Angeles Fire Department and many hard-working young members of the Los Angeles Conservation Corps removed about thirty non-native Eucalyptus trees.

Mark van Wodtke, of the Claremont Environmental Design Group, directed the planting of many Sycamore and Oak tree seedlings and said with enthusiasm for the project, "We have been able to demonstrate, here in this canyon, how we are able to regenerate nature and the natural environment."

In his opening remarks, Mayor Larry Schroeder said, "This ceremony is a tribute to the city's commitment to preserving our open spaces, one of the distinct features of our city."

The crowds awaiting the opening of the canyon found it lush and beautifully restored, and the three-quarters of a mile trail connecting the canyon with the Claremont Wilderness Park well designed and something of a challenge! It offers yet another access into the hillsides for hiking the many trails and connecting loops in the wilderness area.

It was a day to celebrate not only the natural beauty of the canyon and the excitement the new trail offers to enthusiastic hikers, but all of the many people who participated in making the project so successful. Claremont thanks you all!



City Council Member Corey Calaycay (left), CWC's Dean McHenry (middle), and Director of Community and Human Services Kathleen Trepa (right) hike at the top of Sycamore Canyon Trail on re-opening day.

CWC Friends Group Supports Conservancy's Goals and Mission

Friends of the Hillside was formed in 2011 to serve as a core support group of 50-60 CWC supporters who help promote the goals and mission of the organization in a variety of ways.

For example, we draw on this group for volunteers to help staff the CWC table at the Fourth of July and Earth Day celebrations and to help with other events such as the recent re-opening of Sycamore Canyon or census-taking in the Wilderness Park. In addition, if the hillside is threatened with new development, or if parcels of land

become available, or issues of policy or access to the Wilderness Park arise, the Friends may be called on to testify at City Council meetings or write letters to the Courier.

Friends are kept informed of CWC issues by receiving notes summarizing the monthly Board meetings. In addition, several have served on CWC Board committees, e.g. the recent Master Plan committee. We envision this group acting as ambassadors in the community, helping educate Claremonters about the importance of open space, its sustainable

management, and its availability to the community.

Being a Friend of the Hillside does not involve any specific duties, formal responsibilities, payment of dues, or fixed time commitments. It simply means being available to be called on for help when the need arises. If you are interested in joining the 'Friends' support group, please contact Meg Mathies (mmathies@scrippscollege.edu) or (909) 624-5376 or Lissa Petersen (Lissa.Petersen@pitzer.edu) or (909) 621-3207.

Please Donate to Help Us Save Claremont's Hillside

Thanks to the dedication of community members and active volunteers, the Claremont Wildlands Conservancy has protected over 565 acres of our natural heritage in just over a decade. Creating a continuous wilderness corridor along the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains, and preserving open space in Claremont for future generations, remain our highest long-term priorities.

Our work is not done! Your contribution to the Claremont Wildlands Conservancy ensures our ability to act quickly when new opportunities

to preserve our hillside arise. The Conservancy facilitates the acquisition of land for the public good, and works in partnership with leading organizations and government entities to purchase private land at fair market value. The land we save provides essential habitats for the survival of local flora and wildlife, enhances our watershed, and offers respite and recreation for people of all ages to enjoy.

Please make a contribution today, to ensure the future of our foothills for years to come. Your gift to the Claremont

Wildlands Conservancy – which is run by a board of volunteers and has no paid staff – will be used entirely for public outreach and land-purchase efforts.

An envelope is enclosed for your convenience, and checks should be made payable to Claremont Wildlands Conservancy. If you would like to discuss a donation of hillside property, or have questions about any other facet of our organization, please email Lissa Petersen at lissa_petersen@pitzer.edu.

Thank you for your support!

Letter From CWC's President

In the course of a productive year, we have accomplished most of our goals with the collaboration of many valuable partners and supporters. In this newsletter, we would like to thank them and share with you our efforts and our successes.

The achievement that may make the biggest difference to the future of the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park is our success in convincing the City to develop a master plan for it instead of addressing problems in a piecemeal way. Our master-plan committee followed up with a 19-page report identifying issues and stakeholders that has assisted the City's Community and Human Services Department in designing the planning process.

We have worked closely and positively with the City Council, commissions and staff on other projects as well. With the City and Trust for Public Lands, we are attempting to acquire several hillside properties from private owners. While the process is lengthy and money is tight, we are optimistic. We have also worked with the City to extend park hours and to balance neighbors' needs with public access through parking policies. And if you attended the grand opening of Sycamore Canyon, you may have been greeted by a member of our board or our support council—Friends of the Hillside.

In the process of building networks with neighboring conservancies, we have joined San Gabriel Mountains Forever to support the recent National Parks Service proposal to create a National Recreation Area. It would extend from the eastern

edge of Pasadena to just past the LA County border along the urban interface of the San Gabriel foothills, with a finger stretching south along the San



Photo: Beverly Speck

Gabriel and Rio Hondo rivers to Puente Hills. (See www.nps.gov/pwro/sangabriel) Claremont Wilderness Park would be in it. We plan to work closely with our federal legislators to draft bills that assuage concerns about the design of the project and possible infringement on local control of land and water resources.

We hope you will actively join us and share your views in hearings on the Claremont Wilderness Park master plan next fall and on the next steps in developing a National Recreation Area that we can all be proud of. And we would be glad to have you join us as one more Friend of the Hillside. Here's to keeping our foothills open and wild!

*Lissa Petersen,
CWC President*

Supporting the (Other) NRA

By Daniel Rossman, Regional Associate of the Wilderness Society, and Chair of San Gabriel Mountains Forever

Our San Gabriels are a national treasure worth protecting for future generations. This notion has long been held. In fact, the mountains were first protected as the San Gabriel Timberland Reserve in 1892 by presidential proclamation. This was only the second such designation in our nation's history, after Yellowstone. Today organizations like the Claremont Wildlands Conservancy continue to build on these efforts by preserving lands along the foothills of the what is now the Angeles National Forest.

The next step towards preserving this great landscape is the creation of the San Gabriel National Recreation Area (SG-NRA). The vision will connect the existing National Forest, foothills preserves like the Claremont Wilderness Park and corridors

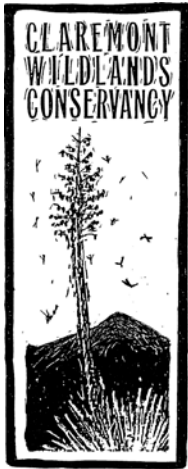
along the San Gabriel and Rio Hondo rivers.

This would improve and add visitor services for the millions of users who need healthy outdoor recreation accessible to our Southern California communities. To achieve this legislation would create a broad new partnership. The National Parks Service would coordinate efforts among existing land managers like the National Forest Service, the Army Corps of Engineers, LA County, local cities and conservancies.

Congressional leaders are now considering a proposal to establish such a National Recreation Area (NRA) for the San Gabriel Mountains, Foothills and River. You can join the effort to build support for these protections by visiting SanGabrielMountains.org to learn more about the diverse coalition working to protect our open space.

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The Claremont Wildlands Conservancy (CWC) is a non-profit, grassroots organization dedicated to keeping the foothills wild and free for all.

The Post is the newsletter of the Claremont Wildlands Conservancy.

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1320 N. Mountain Ave.
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Or visit our website at:

www.claremontwildlands.org

[CWC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, tax exempt corp. #95-4777423]

CHWP Hours Established

Last January Claremont Wildlands Conservancy board members made a significant improvement in the determination of the City's open hours for the Wilderness Park. Through analysis and persuasion, we convinced a unanimous City Council to add more than 200 open hours/year

to the initial recommendation of the Community and Human Services Commission.

Our success was a result of extensive analysis by board member Jill Benton and collaborative work with City staff, especially the new Community and Human Services director, Kathleen Trepa, and Assistant

City Manager Colin Tudor.

A key concern was safety.

Dawn has a different impact than dusk: every minute of dawn steps into increasing light, whereas every minute of dusk steps into increasing darkness. Another concern was setting monthly vs. daily times that would be easier for police and park rangers to enforce.

We are pleased with the results.

They conform to actual dawn and dusk except for the closing hours in March and October, which rob park visitors of a half hour or more of daylight use each day. We hope to adjust these and any other discrepancies when the City Council reviews the hours next January. We

would also like to see time allowed for visitors to exit the parking lot after the park itself closes.

Wilderness Park hours:

January	6:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
February	6:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.
March	6:30 a.m. – 6:30 p.m.
April	6:00 a.m. – 7:30 p.m.
May	5:30 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.
June	5:30 a.m. – 8:30 p.m.
July	5:30 a.m. – 8:30 p.m.
August	6:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.
September.....	6:30 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.
October	6:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.
November.....	6:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
December	6:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.