



The Post

News from the Claremont Wildlands Conservancy

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Summer 2014

Help Shape Master Plan for Claremont's Hillsides

Thanks to enthusiastic reviews on Yelp and other social media sites since 2011, crowds have flocked to the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park (CHWP), particularly to the loop trail at the head of Mills Avenue. By 2012 everyone was becoming frustrated by the results of the City Council's piecemeal efforts to accommodate the flood of visitors and the grievances of neighbors—noise, traffic, parking, safety, hours... The City's new parking lot that opened in the spring of 2013, for instance, solved some problems but created others.

In order to shift the focus to a broad perspective that views the CHWP as a magnificent resource for all stakeholders rather than a set of aggravating problems at specific entrances, Claremont Wildlands Conservancy in the fall of 2012 proposed that the City develop a master plan to balance needs of wildlife, neighbors and visitors and to coordinate goals of preservation, recreation, safety and education. Council members unanimously agreed. Since then, Kathleen Trepa and Bill Palloto in the City's Community and Human Services Department have coordinated efforts to hire MIG as consultants and form a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) of eleven citizens to provide ideas, perspectives and guidance to them.

This spring MIG has been gathering ideas from the park's many stakeholders. The consultants have led two TAC meetings and one public meeting attended by over 250 participants. (You may find the meeting notes on the City's web site.) They have conducted site visits, researched the environment and reviewed CHWP documents in the City's archives.



Claremont Hillside Wilderness Park visitors complete Visitor Intercept Surveys on a recent morning near the main gate at the park entrance. (See story on page 2.)

They have created a neighborhood survey and an intercept survey of visitors exiting the park that CWC's Meg Mathies is administering. And they will soon post an on-line survey for community members on the City's web site. At this point, MIG has determined that the community is most interested in having the master plan address education, parking, fire, sanitation, preservation, trails and safety.

TAC and community meetings are

open to the public, and we urge you to join us! Listen to the conversation and add your concerns and suggestions. Check the City's web site for meeting dates and details.

Please send ideas and comments to:
• chwildernessplan@gmail.com (site for the CHWP master plan)
and copy me terrymgrill@yahoo.com so that I can represent your ideas at the TAC.

Terry Grill

Rep. Chu Seeks Views on NRA Proposal

Congressional Representative Judy Chu's proposal to create a National Recreation Area (NRA) in the San Gabriel Mountains moved a step forward with the introduction in March of three draft bills, one of which would establish a new NRA and two others that would enlarge certain wilderness areas and designate several wild and scenic rivers.

Rep. Chu's congressional bills address many of the fears expressed at public meetings over the past year, clearly stating there would be no interference with local governmental authority, no use of eminent domain, more stakeholder control, no interference with concerns having to do with fire

control and water agency responsibilities. Responding to Rep. Chu's request for feedback on the draft, in April Claremont's City Council voted 3-2 to support the concept of the NRA but stopped short of endorsing the proposed new Wild and Scenic Rivers and Wilderness designations. The Claremont Wildlands Conservancy's Board voted to approve the NRA and the Wilderness designation but not the Wild and Scenic Rivers designation.

For more information, e-mail SGRec@mail.house.gov or check these web sites:

- www.nps.gov/pwro/sangabriel
- chu.house.gov

Professor's Photos and Videos Capture Park's Wildlife

On May 10th, over sixty community members of all ages enjoyed a fascinating talk sponsored by CWC and the Claremont Library on "Claremont's Wild Side: A Peek into the Secrets of the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park." Dr. Paul Faulstich, professor of Environmental Analysis at Pitzer College, has been studying the animal life of our hillsides through several hidden cameras. He captivated us all with his amazing collection of night-time photographs and videos of deer, bears, mountain lions, bobcats, and even a ring-tailed cat.



Paul Faulstich shared hillside stories and photos, including this bobcat spotted in March 2014.

Why So Many Visitors at Claremont Hills Wilderness Park?

Search for "hiking near Claremont" on Yelp.com, and you will find these top five recommendations: a) Claremont Hills Wilderness Trail with 175 reviews; b) Claremont Wilderness Trail with 11 reviews; c) Johnson's Pasture with 9 reviews; d) Thompson Creek Road Trail with 12 reviews; e) Potato Mountain with 15 reviews.

Many posts refer to the challenge of the loop and the beauty of the scenery. Some call it a fitness hike. Others remind users to bring water and credit cards for the parking fees

and to go early to avoid the hot sun.

Everytrail.com recommends Johnson's Pasture Trail as a simple out and back starting on a quiet cul-de-sac with options to link with other trails to suit your needs for mileage, endurance, adventure or time limits. It concludes, "Please keep our trails clean. Pack out your trash and animal waste."

This free publicity brings benefits to park visitors—healthier bodies, the satisfactions of exercise, the experience of solitude or of companionship, liberation from daily

pressures, and appreciation of nature. All of these benefits build visitors' support for preservation of the park. And the publicity brings opportunities for Claremont businesses. But it also brings concerns from neighbors about traffic, parking, litter, noise, and safety.

The master plan gives us the chance to brainstorm ideas and to learn from best practices in other communities so that we create a park culture that we all value.

Terry Grill

CWC Volunteer Administers Park Survey

Meg Mathies, coordinator of the survey project, reports on Visitor Intercept Surveys - Highlights:

- 5 locations (Main gate, Pomello at Thompson Creek Trail, Johnson's Pasture, Evey Canyon, and (when possible) Via Padova at Palmer Canyon.
- 16 two-hour survey sessions between May 1 and mid-July; including weekends and weekdays, and different times of day.
- 61 volunteers have surveyed, including members of the CWC Board, Friends of the Hillside, students from five of the Claremont Colleges, members of the Senior Bike Group, residents of Pilgrim Place, members of the TAC, a member of City Staff, and various friends of friends.
- 2 types of information gathered:

(a) a count of visitors exiting the park within a 2-hour period and (b) written questionnaires in which individuals report on their experience in the park and make suggestions for improvements.

• 2260 individuals have been counted so far, ranging from a low of 2 exiting at Johnson's Pasture on a weekday afternoon to a high of 475 at the main gate on a Sunday morning.

But numbers are only a part of the story. Most visitors are happy to complete the surveys and eager to express their appreciation of the park. They include:

- 2 maintenance workers at Pomona College who run after work every day
- a retired photographer who plans to climb Whitney this summer and is walking the loop 2-3 times per day each week

• a young expectant mother who was pushing an empty stroller, weighted with water bottles, to test it out before the baby arrives

• 11 members of the LA County Fire Department who run the loop regularly to keep in shape

• a single mom with 5 boys who brings them here to "burn off all that energy"

• a middle-aged Hispanic man who beamed when he said that he has lost 25 pounds and now has his diabetes under control

• a young mother who successfully completed the Boston Marathon and "could never have done it if I hadn't had the Claremont loop to train on!"

Remaining surveys are scheduled for June 22, 23, and July 1, 5, 6, 18. If any of these dates fit your schedule and you can volunteer to help, please email: mmathies@scrippscollege.edu.

Letter From CWC's President

It's been a busy year. The City's Hillside Master Plan has fired up the hearts, minds, bodies, (dare I say souls?)—and consumed hundreds and hundreds of hours—in the lives of our board members and volunteers from Friends of the Hillside. And we're making a difference!

CWC's approach to the master-planning project has been two pronged. First, we have worked closely with City staff and MIG (the consulting firm hired by the City) to promote participation so that everyone has a voice. Here is the position we have adopted for achieving this goal:

The Claremont Wildlands Conservancy believes that an effective master plan will emerge only if there is full stakeholder participation, conducted in an atmosphere of respect for varying opinions and with the goal of finding creative solutions. CWC will encourage participation through e-mail, surveys, letters, social media, and attendance at TAC and other meetings. Such participation is indispensable for the development of the best possible plan and one with broad public support from the entire Claremont community and all those who use the Wilderness Park.

In addition to e-mails that keep our Friends of the Hillside and our mailing list of 1500 supporters informed of master-plan activities, we have attended City Council meetings and organized informal gatherings to share different perspectives and collect ideas for the plan. Board member Terry Grill serves as our representative on the City's eleven-member Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) with Dean McHenry as alternate. The TAC provides guidance to the consultants. And board member Meg Mathies, single-handedly, has shouldered the task of organizing

volunteers to conduct MIG's surveys of park visitors for 16 two-hour sessions scheduled from May through mid July. With ten or more volunteers per session, she is still working on filling over 160



Photo: Beverly Speck

slots. She and we could definitely use your help!

The second prong of CWC's engagement is to propose our views to MIG and the City on main goals and specific means for achieving them that we would like to see included in the master plan. Having spent many months listening to various voices and

discussing and collecting ideas, we are in the process of defining a position statement. We have identified five key goals that we hope will shape the framework for the plan: preservation, access (including recreation), safety, park culture (including education) and sustainable funding. The next step, which we intend to complete by July, is to develop specific suggestions to reach each of these goals.

The master plan will shape the direction for the future of our hillside for the next fifteen to twenty years. All of us who love them need to speak up and get involved. Here's how:

- Visit the City's web site for updates on the master plan. www.ci.claremont.ca.us
- Volunteer to help conduct surveys of park visitors. See Meg Mathies' article for the schedule and her contact information.

We hope to see or hear from you soon—perhaps at the Mills trailhead handing out surveys, or at the next TAC meeting, or by e-mail if you have any questions or would like to share your views or contribute to our efforts. Please use the "Contact Us" form on our web site www.claremontwildlands.org, or email info@claremontwildlands.org

Friends of the Hillside Support CWC's Goals

The Friends of the Hillside is a core support group of approximately 75 household members who assist CWC in promoting the organization's goals and mission. Friends volunteer at our booths on Earth Day and the Fourth of July. Many of them have been especially helpful surveying park visitors for the Hillside Master Plan. (See the "CWC Surveys" story.) And several have served on Board subcommittees, especially the ad hoc master-plan committee.

CWC board members keep

Friends informed of current issues affecting the Wilderness Park through monthly summaries of Board meetings and notices of relevant City Council and Commission meetings.

If you become a friend, you will have no regular meetings to attend, no dues to pay, and no fixed time commitments. You are there for support when we need special assistance on an issue crucial to our goals and mission. If you are interested in becoming a Friend of the Hillside, please contact board member Dave Bedell: dwbledell44@gmail.com

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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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**[CWC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit,
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Please Donate to Help Save Hillsides

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.

Our work is not done! There are a number of near-by parcels of land in private hands that are either now on the market or may become so in the future. Your contribution to the Claremont Wildlands Conservancy ensures our ability to act quickly when new opportunities to preserve our hillsides arise. The conservancy facilitates the acquisition of land for the public good and works in partnership with the Trust for Public Lands 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.

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." Thank you for your support!