



The Post

News from the Claremont Wildlands Conservancy

Volume 13, Issue 1

Summer 2016

Master Plan Adopted, New Opportunities for Community Involvement

The big news this Spring was the City Council's adoption of the Master Plan for the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park, by a unanimous vote on May 10th. The comprehensive plan is the result of three years of extraordinary work by many parts of the Claremont community—city staff, involved citizens, concerned neighbors, and especially the board members and friends of the Claremont Wildlands Conservancy.

The plan offers a vision for the Park that foresees its future expansion in Claremont and its connection with neighboring open spaces to form a wilderness corridor along the San Gabriel Mountains. It sets three intertwined goals—preserving the park as an environmental resource, managing it as a passive recreational opportunity, and minimizing negative impacts on adjacent neighborhoods—and strategies for implementing them.

The Master Plan is meant to be

The plan provides those who love the park with the opportunity to participate in managing it through the creation of a group called "Friends of the CHWP."

a "living document," which can be amended and strengthened as we learn more about this treasured resource. If you have not had a chance to review it, you can find it on the City's website. It is well worth a look!



Clouds roll over a familiar spot in the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park on a sunny winter morning.

Photo: Karen Gustineau

Imagining a bright future for the park and crafting tools to create that future was important work. Making that future real is the next challenge. One important ingredient of the plan is a significant increase in ranger hours, including 38 additional hours for a new, full-time Senior Ranger in charge of park operations. The most exciting and innovative feature of the plan is the opportunity it provides for those who love the park and use it regularly to participate in managing it, through the creation of a group called "Friends of the CHWP."

This group will play an active role in shaping park rules, fostering a culture of respect for others and the park's flora and fauna, and in

developing education programming for visitors of all ages. Friends groups will also decide what research and study projects should be undertaken, where new trails might be built, and what areas should be left with minimal impact. This management approach seeks to harness the ideas and energies of Claremont residents and people in our neighboring communities who have become regular visitors.

With an adopted Master Plan, our next challenge is to bring it to life. We urge you to jump in and help build the kind of park that all of us, including future generations of visitors, can cherish, learn from, contribute to, and preserve.

—Tom Ilgen

From Conflict to Collaboration: Creating the Master Plan

On May 10th, Claremont City Council voted unanimously to adopt the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park Master Plan, the culmination of a three-year process that engaged hundreds of community members. The document marks a significant change: For the first time in the park's history, the City will actively manage it.

The impetus for a Master Plan grew out of the huge increase in the park's popularity during the last decade, as the five-mile "loop" attracted more and more park visitors. A combination of increased emphasis on healthy exercise and extensive publicity through word-of-mouth and social media seems to have spurred increased park visitation. In response, the City enlarged the northern parking lot and began charging for its use.

However, increased visitor numbers and parking fees produced an unintended negative impact on adjacent neighborhoods as people parked on city streets, sometimes blocking driveways, littering, causing safety concerns by walking in the streets, and bringing noise and congestion to what had been peaceful neighborhoods. Neighbors brought their grievances

to the City Council, which responded by establishing a series of residents-only parking zones. Emotions ran high as other citizens objected to parking restrictions on public streets and the resulting limitation of park access. Questions also arose as to whether the number of park visitors was having negative environmental impacts on the park and its wildlife. Park visitors and park neighbors seemed at loggerheads.

CWC successfully advocated for the creation of a new, comprehensive master plan to address not only the concerns of neighbors and park visitors but also to provide management guidance for the entire park, including environmental preservation, and park staffing, funding, and expansion. CWC was instrumental in urging City Council to develop the City's plan through an inclusive, community-based process that would include the concerns of all stakeholders. Once City Council voted to create a master plan, the City hired a consulting firm, MIG, to gather baseline information and to work with City staff in ensuring stakeholder collaboration.

For the next two years, CWC members participated in formal and informal meetings, facilitated small

group dialogues (e.g. between neighbors and park visitors, and between hikers and bikers), conducted surveys of park visitors, and encouraged community participation in City forums and meetings. The CWC Board considered various options and worked with other community groups to encourage development of a plan that would balance the goals of environmental preservation, recreational access, and minimization of neighborhood impacts. Throughout the process, City staff was receptive and responsive to community input.

The May 10 City Council meeting was clearly different in tone from earlier, contentious meetings. The process of community collaboration was evident, as people from diverse stakeholder groups rose to express their satisfaction with the outcome and to encourage adoption.

The final Master Plan is the result of true listening, open consideration of options, and genuine dialog among MIG, City staff, CWC, park visitors, neighbors, and many Claremont residents. Thank you and congratulations to all who participated!

—Meg Mathies and Terry Grill

Farewell to CWC's Eldest Board Member; Welcome to its Newest

As CWC's longest-serving Board member, Georgeann Andrus (joined 2002) heartily welcomes Antonio Sanchez (2016) as the board's newest member.

Georgeann's interest in the hillsides began before the development of Claraboya, when entry to Johnson's Pasture was easy. With her family, she collected tree frogs and tadpoles from the water behind the PVPA earthen dam. Potato Mountain was a family destination from Evey Canyon.

When Georgeann was hiking in Claremont's foothills, Antonio was not yet born into his El Paso family.

He served in the Marines, and moved to Oxnard in 2002 to live with his grandmother after his parents' early death. There he was fascinated with the cultivation of mushrooms and his grandmother's lush garden, and he began to engage environmental justice issues. He was curious about the effect of the environment on plants' development—how plants grown from the same seeds grew differently, depending upon their location in the environment. While hiking and working on the Channel Islands he became aware and intrigued with native plants, a special interest that continues today.



Fast-forward to 2016. Georgeann has retired from teaching microbiology and general biology at Citrus College

Continued next pg.

Letter From CWC's President

A hearty thank you to all who contributed to the intense and rewarding process that led to the successful adoption of the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park Master Plan. I'd especially like to thank two of our board members who deserve extra credit, Meg Mathies and Terry Grill, for co-chairing our Master Plan committee.

One of CWC's major achievements with the Master Plan was to highlight an issue at the core of our mission, expanding the park to preserve even more of Claremont's hillsides. Due to our efforts, the Master Plan includes strong language supporting future acquisitions without restricting funding sources for them.

Today the Wilderness Park protects about 2,000 acres of Claremont's hillsides from development. Our efforts to expand the park involve long-term work that requires patience and persistence. About 1,000 acres remain in private hands, comprising about a dozen parcels along the park's western edge and its northeastern corner. No progress can be made without willing sellers and available funding, mainly from state and county sources.

Claremont's hillsides ordinance from the 1990s guarantees that landowners who lack permits to build can transfer development credits to cluster zones where housing is allowed. When developers build in cluster zones, they buy the credits from these landowners. To respect owners' legal rights, the City may have to allow further development of the hillsides. CWC's aim is to work with the City and developers to confine development to limited areas that will have minimal impact on the rest of the hillsides, maintaining as much continuous open space as possible.

An important funding source for purchasing hillside parcels is Los Angeles County. As *The Post* goes to press, the Board of Supervisors is due to decide whether to place a proposition on the November ballot that would fund future urban park development and open space acquisition. Proposition A, passed in 1996, currently provides these funds, but it expires in 2018. Please watch for news of the County's decision, and support the measure if it is on the November ballot. We'll keep you posted.

CWC has had a long-term commitment to connecting Claremont's hillside open spaces with those of neighboring communities, as part a wilderness corridor along the San Gabriel foothills. With our encouragement, the Master Plan's vision statement includes language affirming this goal.

As a step toward creating a wilderness corridor, we have been actively networking with regional conservancies and the Trust for Public Land. One exciting initiative we're contributing to involves a grant from the National Park Service to the Trust for Recreational Trails and Conservation Assistance. The Trust is compiling the stories of regional conservancies, cities, and other agencies to create a record of all of the open spaces along the San Gabriel Mountains. We're sharing our histories, goals, accomplishments, and challenges. In the process, we are networking with a number of entities that should enable us to more effectively pursue our mission.

Planning for Claremont's foothills involves coordinating with the National Forest Service, which manages the new National Monument that partly borders the Wilderness Park. We are working with Council Member Joe Lyon, who chairs the steering committee for the San Gabriel Mountains Community Collaborative, which aims to engage the public in development of the Forest Service's management plan for the Monument. In July and August, we will participate in public meetings to give feedback on the plan's initial drafts. Again, we'll keep you posted.

Please keep in touch via our Facebook page and website. Through our website you may make a donation and send us an email. We deeply appreciate your engaged interest and abiding support.

—Lissa Petersen

Farewell and Welcome (Cont.)

and, before that, from directing and teaching Biology Labs at the Claremont College's Joint Science Department. As a CWC board member, she has walked neighborhoods for the bond measure to purchase Johnson's Pasture, worked for the addition of some 800 acres to the Wilderness Park, and served during the development of the City's recently adopted Master Plan for the Park.

Antonio is Production Manager at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Gardens, and has joined the CWC Board with enthusiasm and vision. He is developing an after-school program at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Gardens to introduce at-risk youth to the natural world by working

with plants and becoming acquainted with the Gardens. Antonio has a deep appreciation for the hillsides, which he shares with family and friends when hiking with them.

During their overlapping year on the board, they've become fast friends, bonding over their shared Texas roots, and their love of Claremont's open hillsides. Farewell, Georgeann, and welcome, Antonio!

—Georgeann Andrus & Antonio Sanchez

For an extended article, based on a recent and lively conversation between Antonio and Georgeann, see www.claremontwildlands.org.

Claremont Wildlands Conservancy
1320 N. Mountain Avenue
Claremont, CA 91711

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit # 20
Claremont, CA



www.claremontwildlands.org

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.

Board of Directors:

Arlene Andrew
Georgeann Andrus
Dave Bedell
Jill Benton
Terry Grill
Tom Ilgen
Meg Mathies
Lissa Petersen
Andy Lee Roth
Antonio Sanchez
Jim Van Cleve

Editors: Andy Lee Roth
and Kirk Reynolds

For more information, or to send donations:

1320 N. Mountain Ave.
Claremont, CA 91711

Email / Website:

info@claremontwildlands.org
www.claremontwildlands.org

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

Please Donate to Help Save Hillsides

Over the last few years the Claremont Wildlands Conservancy has been a forceful advocate for the Wilderness Park. From supporting Claremont's successful efforts in obtaining Johnson's Pasture to working with the community to shape the

Master Plan, the Conservancy has been deeply involved in creating a Wilderness Park that we can be proud of. But there is more to be done. We need to be diligent in assuring that the Implementation Plan will be carried out successfully.

Furthermore, in order to expand the park and preserve

more wilderness, we are actively exploring possibilities to acquire privately held properties adjacent to the park.



You can help in these efforts by making a tax-deductible contribution to the CWC. Visit our website:

claremontwildlands.org, click on "Get Involved" and "Contribute!" where you will find instructions on how to donate. With your support, the Wilderness Park can continue to preserve the hillsides and provide a beautiful place for recreational opportunity for all.

—Dave Bedell