

The Post

News from the Claremont Wildlands Conservancy

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Autumn 2019

CHWP Master Plan Work Continues

The work and dedication continue as we move forward to accomplish the goals outlined in the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park Master Plan.

A strong Park Ranger program has developed and meets the challenges with great effectiveness as they coordinate busy weekends with increased visitor parking and attendance. Safety is their top priority, and with extensive training they are able to manage the Park and respond quickly when necessary. The Rangers take pride in their work in the CHWP, which is demonstrated by a clean and well maintained Park.

In June, Sycamore Canyon Trail underwent extensive brush clearing by LA County Fire. More work is planned to deal with erosion and stair reconstruction.

The Friends of the Wilderness Park Leadership Team meets monthly to focus on four main objectives:

1. The 2nd Saturday volunteer program. This involves the Friends Leadership Team, rangers and volunteers who work within the Park to assist visitors with directions and trail etiquette. Volunteers also hike the 5-mile loop and pick up trash.

2. Signage. The Friends and City staff continue to work on a formal signage proposal to reduce sign pollution within the park. A new kiosk is being designed for the main entrance on North Mills.

3. The Invasive Species Management Plan. The principal goals of this plan, now in its final stage, are to protect and preserve native

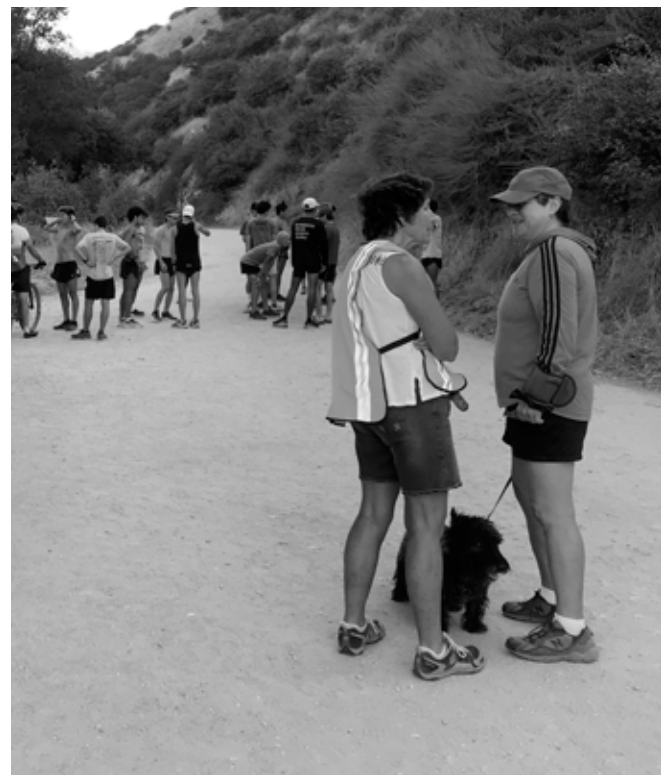
habitats, endangered species, and watershed, while identifying any threats and preventing them from becoming established in the Park. A voucher specimen permit process has been approved and will be implemented by the Friends Invasive Species Working Group and volunteers. All voucher specimens will be deposited and processed at the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden Herbarium.

4. Evaluation of unauthorized trails and trail maintenance.

The Friends are working with the rangers to determine which of the unauthorized paths

should be incorporated into the trail system, which need repair, and which should be closed. It is hoped that teams of volunteers can help with trail maintenance and repair.

The Friends of the Wilderness Park have created a collection project on iNaturalist called "Biota of the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park." iNaturalist is an online social network of people sharing biodiversity information to help each other learn about nature. iNaturalist is a collaboration



Second Saturday volunteers chat with Claremont Hills Wilderness Park hikers near the entrance to the park.

Photo: Vicki Salazar

between National Geographic and the California Academy of Sciences. Any observation made within the CHWP boundaries will be added to the project. Anyone can participate in iNaturalist! Go to <https://www.inaturalist.org/>

If you are interested in joining the Friends of the Wilderness Park-contact Vicki at vickisalazar01@gmail.com or Meg Mathies at mmathies@scrippscollege.edu and have a look at the new web site: <https://friendsofthewildernesspark.org/>

CWC Launches Educational Outreach Initiative

The Claremont Wildlands Conservancy has long sought ways to encourage educational uses of the Wilderness Park and to bring together different agencies and the City rangers to get more children into the Park. The Education Committee of the Conservancy is excited to report that accelerated planning is underway for a 3rd-grade project with Claremont Unified School District. The project is being spear-headed by new Board member and former City staffer Ali Martinez, with assistance from Muriel Poston, our other new Board member this year, and John Norvell, Education co-chair with Ali.

With the support of Claremont Heritage, the 3rd-grade curriculum in CUSD school already introduces pupils to various aspects of the local community, and our project will add the Wilderness Park to the mix, with classroom presentations by CWC volunteers, future Park visits, and hands-on kits for use by teachers. We will partner with such local entities

as Claremont Heritage, students and faculty from Pitzer College, Pitzer's Robert Redford Conservancy for Southern CA Sustainability, and the City of Claremont's Park Ranger Program.

Grant money is currently being sought for a pilot version of the project, with an initial goal of bringing the program to Sumner Danbury Elementary school starting this coming winter. Topics will include an overview of the CHWP, what one needs to know before visiting a wilderness area, what to bring and what to leave at home for a day hike, basic first aid, and the flora and fauna found in the hillsides. We envision a workbook aligned with 3rd-grade science standards, maps of the park, a junior ranger-style patch, and craft projects. More specialized ensembles will allow teachers to choose what to highlight and take deeper from these general topics. For instance, a kit on Wilderness Park animals might include rattlesnake heads and tails, animal skins, molds of animal scat

and tracks, and photo displays of other wildlife found in the Park.

Ultimately, the project will expand to all the Claremont elementary schools, serving as many as 500 students every year and introducing every 3rd-grader to the natural wonders of the Park and the fun to be had in exploring it. More broadly, we believe the experience will instill respect for the natural environment and an appreciation for the preservation goals at the core of our mission.

Once the project is in place, we can expand it to include other area youth programs, especially those serving families for whom access to open space may be difficult owing to economics, transportation, disability, and other factors.

We think the project is a perfect manifestation of the goals of the Claremont Wildlands Conservancy and those of our local partners. We hope to report next year on its successful implementation!

CWC Pleased to Announce New Board Members

Ali Martinez joined the Board this past February. Ali is passionate about the outdoors, staying active, and encouraging families to engage in their communities. As a longtime resident of Claremont and as a recreational professional for more than twenty years, Ali knows what a special gem the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park is to Claremont and what a treasure it is to the surrounding communities. During her twenty-two years on the staff of the City of

Claremont supervising recreation, she was intimately involved in managing the Wilderness Park and implementing

the Master Plan. Now we are fortunate to have her special insights. She and her husband Eric are very involved with their three young sons, supporting them in sports, school, Scouts, and extracurricular activities. Ali is enthusiastic about educating people about healthy lifestyles, natural resources, and community engagement. She plans to focus on the education initiatives of the Conservancy.



Muriel Poston was elected to the Board in June of this year. Muriel is a Professor of Environmental Analysis at Pitzer College and has

served as Pitzer's Dean of Faculty/Vice President for Academic Affairs. She has just completed a term in the Biological Sciences Directorate at the National Science Foundation. A plant systematist with an interest in environmental studies, she has conducted fieldwork in Latin America (Mexico, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Chile). With her background in grant funding and administration, her focus this year will be on external relations, keeping the Conservancy abreast of developments

at the City of Claremont and other relevant government bodies as well as the other non-profit agencies with which we collaborate.

Letter From CWC's President

As I complete my second year as president of the Claremont Wildlands Conservancy, I am grateful for the vision set out in 2000 by our founders Nancy Wing and Suzanne Thompson as well as the organizational foundation established by our previous president, Lissa Petersen. We have an exceptional volunteer board dedicated to achieving our purpose of expanding the amount of accessible and protected open space in the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park and surrounding area. Our board was strengthened this year by the addition of Alison Martinez and Muriel Poston. You can read more about them in this newsletter.

I am especially appreciative of Ali's deep knowledge of the CHWP and its Master Plan as well as her passion for educating others about park appreciation and stewardship. I am also grateful that Muriel is willing to contribute her knowledge of botany, her thoughtful perspectives and passion for community and external engagement. Ali, Muriel and John Norvell are launching a new program to educate children about responsibly enjoying nature in their nearby Wilderness Park.

We reported in 2017 that the size of the Wilderness Park expanded by 463 acres thanks to the generous gift of Evey Canyon by Pomona College. During the last year, the property was officially accepted by the City of Claremont and work begun to integrate it into the CHWP. There are challenges. One is security at the parking lot at the entrance to the Evey Canyon trail and the other is the safety for pedestrians parking across Baldy Road. There

is no continuity between the fire road at the CHWP and Evey Canyon since a portion of the fire road crosses private land.

Members of the Claremont Hills Conservation Corporation voted this year to dissolve. The organization was established to oversee the City of Cla-



CWC President Terry Grill chats with a Claremont Hills Wilderness Park Ranger on a recent fall afternoon.

Photo: Vicki Salazar

remont's stewardship of the land originally donated by Pomona College to establish the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park. The City's history of responsible management of the property and use of a well considered master plan for the park indicated that such oversight was no longer necessary. A portion of the remaining funds was donated to build a new kiosk at the Mills Avenue entrance to the CHWP.

The City continues to implement the CHWP Master Plan and to foster a culture of respect for wildlife in and neighbors living next to the park. Most important to the implementation are the 17 rangers who greet and assist visitors. I congratulate the Friends of the Wilderness Park, the grass roots organization working with the City, for the contributions they have made to establishing this culture. They greet visitors

and pick up litter on the second Saturday of every month, have mapped invasive species and are working to establish an overall plan for signage. Please read about mapping invasive species and the iNaturalist project in another article in this Newsletter and go to www.friendsofthewildernesspark.org to learn more.

The owner and developer of Clara Oaks, a 103-acre hillside parcel along Webb Canyon Road just north of the Webb School Campus, has recently submitted a draft Specific Plan for the development of luxury homes in the southern cluster area and the contribution of the rest of the property to the CHWP. While we welcome additional land for the CHWP, we continue to advocate for maintaining all available hillside properties adjacent to the CHWP as open space. We will, of course, continue to monitor the progress of this development.

I want to thank former board members Nick Jensen and Beverly Speak for their contributions over the last years. Both have moved to pursue other endeavors but their legacies remain.

I hope that all of you receiving our newsletter feel welcome to join our efforts by serving on one of our committees or joining us at our booth on Earth Day or Independence Day in the coming year. Please take a look at our new web site and let us know if you can find all that you hope to see. We welcome your comments and contributions of stories or photos. If you would like to contribute photos to our gallery, please email them with the photographer's name and captions to info@claremontwildlands.org. I hope to see you on the trails.

Don't forget to "like" us on Facebook.

—Terry Grill

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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.

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OUR MISSION AND PURPOSE

The mission of the Claremont Wildlands Conservancy is:

- to preserve the land, air, watershed, plant and wildlife resources of the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains and greater Claremont area;
- to educate and advocate for the protection of important biotic habitats and/or access to these natural areas for the enjoyment of current and future generations;
- to work for the creation of a wildlands corridor along the front range of the San Gabriel/San Bernardino Mountains from the urban interface to the topmost ridgeline;
- to foster collaboration among organizations and governmental entities to enhance effective achievement of mutual goals and objectives.

A fundamental purpose of CWC is to expand the amount of accessible and protected open space in the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park and surrounding areas.

