

**SAN DIEGUITO RIVER PARK
CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Minutes of August 1, 2014**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Tom Golich
Phil Pryde
Diane Coombs
Linda Oster
Ed Spaeth
Jack Shelver
Margaret Schlesinger
Dorothy McLin
Ben Hillebrecht
Carol Carr
Alice Brown
Mid Hoppenrath
Dave Kreitzer
Pat Whitt
Bill Michalsky
Arthur Schmitz
Jacqueline Winterer

REPRESENTING

CAC, Chair
Audubon Society
Citizens Coordinate for Century 3
Del Dios Town Council
Equestrian - Ramona Trails Association
Julian Community Planning Group
League of Women Voters
Lomas Serenas Property Owners
San Diego City Agricultural Advisory Board
San Diego County Bicycle Coalition
San Dieguito Lagoon Committee
San Dieguito Planning Group
San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy
Torrey Pines Community Planning Group
Sierra Club
Eastern Property Owner
Coastal Property Owner

VISITORS/STAFF PRESENT

Dick Bobertz	San Dieguito River Park JPA
Susan Carter	San Dieguito River Park JPA
Brenda Miller	San Dieguito River Park JPA
Jess Norton	San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy

Roll Call and Introductions

Chair Golich convened the meeting at 10.37 a.m. at the San Rafael Parish, 17352 Bernardo Center Drive, Rancho Bernardo.

Deputy Director Susan Carter took the roll call. At 10:45 a.m. a quorum was met with 16 in attendance.

Chair Golich introduced Jess Norton, Conservation Manager with the San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy.

Approval of Minutes-June 6, 2014 Diane Coombs made the motion to approve the minutes and Bill Michalsky seconded. All in favor.

Chair's Report – Chair Golich explained that Deputy Director Carter has announced her retirement at the end of November. Executive Director Bobertz has been a volunteer for the last five years and has stayed on with the understanding that when Deputy Director Carter retired, the Executive Director and Deputy Director positions would be combined into one position and Executive Director Bobertz would leave at the same time. When this was announced at the last JPA meeting, a Search Committee was established. Chair

Golich is on the committee representing the CAC. The other members are Boardmembers Mosier, Roberts and Kersey. Search Committee Chair Mosier suggested at the last JPA meeting that due to the outstanding issues with the City of San Diego, an Interim Director should be hired for an approximate six-month time period, with the permanent director to be hired after that time, once the issues with the City of San Diego have been resolved. The committee is in the process of doing the search and interviewing candidates right now. There is a field of five or six candidates. Chair Golich asked if any of the members were having problems downloading the agenda and minutes from the SDRP website. Chair Golich said that there will not be a September CAC meeting. Following the discussion at the last CAC meeting regarding what items the CAC members would like to vote on or discuss it was decided that most items will be on the CAC agenda before they go to the JPA Board.

Executive Director's Report – Executive Director Bobertz stated the Birdwing has been nominated for an Orchid award. He suggested that the CAC members should feel free to visit the Orchid and Onions website and enter any comments they may have. He explained that there has been an issue with the Boardwalk at the San Dieguito Lagoon. We have a disagreement with the Coastal Commission. The Coastal Commission staff thinks they can order the Boardwalk to be removed, without additional action by the Coastal Commission. We think they are wrong. The Coastal Commission staff sent the JPA a letter explaining that the JPA should submit an application to change the condition that permitted the Boardwalk as a temporary, interim use. This amendment request has been made. The topic will not be on the August Coastal Commission agenda for the meeting held in San Diego. It will probably be at the next meeting in Newport Beach.

Public Comment – No public comment.

CONSENT

1. Revision to Memorandum of Understanding between JPA and San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy (page 3)

Jacqueline Winterer made the motion to approve the consent item. Bill Michalsky seconded the motion. All in favor.

DISCUSSION/ACTION

2. Committee Reports (oral)
 - a. Project Review Committee – No report given
 - b. Trails Committee – No report given
3. Citizen Science Presentation – Jess Norton, Conservation Manager, SDRVC (page 15)

Jess Norton provided a power point presentation titled “San Dieguito Citizen Science Monitoring Program”. Jess stated that the launch event will be tomorrow, Saturday, August 2, 8:00 a.m. at the River Park office. She talked on the following topics:

- a. What Citizen Science is:

Citizen Science is public participation in scientific research. It may be conducted by people with no formal science background. It has been going on for many years and has really grown in popularity in the last decade. Some examples of Citizen Science are the Audubon Christmas Bird count, BioBlitz at Lake Hodges, Project Budburst – which tracks the bloom times for plants. The program offers a new positive volunteer activity in the River Park, connects people to nature, creates a greater understanding of scientific process, fosters stewardship of natural areas and increases awareness of the River Park. More people can survey large areas, increases knowledge of local wildlife and ecology and provides opportunities to learn new skills and responsibilities for science students. The River Park has limited staff and many acres so it will important to have more people involved. Carol Carr asked if the water monitoring that has been going on for several years is Citizen Science. Jess said it is. Ed Spaeth asked how projects get started. Jess referred anyone that is interested in participating in a project to visit the website for the list of current projects.

- b. The goals and objectives of the San Dieguito Citizen Science Monitoring Program: The goal is to create a sustainable, cost-effective, scientifically-valid, multiple species monitoring protocol specifically for the San Dieguito River Park that can be carried out by volunteer citizen scientists. The program will gather critical data for use in management planning, research incubation and to track the ecosystem, climate change and invasive species dynamics within the Park.

The program objectives are:

To gather additional data and fill knowledge gaps on the diversity, population, movements and special ecology of species within the watershed to better inform future land acquisitions, adaptive land management, habitat and species restoration, educational initiatives and future research within the Park. To engage the community with a positive outdoor activity that engenders repeated participation, localized ecological knowledge and increased stewardship. To gather data that is consistent and shared with the San Diego Management and Monitoring Program and the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP). To create a model for use in other watersheds and large preserves.

- c. How the monitoring program ties in with Regional Plans:
The River Park crosses many jurisdictions and is regulated by many agencies. Part of what the monitoring program aims to do is fit into the regional planning process for the County. Our program will fit in the localized category of the MSCP organizational chart as we will be monitoring and managing our lands in a coordinated collaborative fashion with the region. Alignment with the MSCP requires that preserve-level monitoring be consistent with the regional MSCP monitoring program in order to be eligible for federal, state and local conservation grand funds. The benefits of a Regional tie in are that the land is managed/restored to ensure suitable habitat for regionally-sensitive species, funds are more easily leveraged and used effectively to address regional priorities and that the MSCP success can be measured. The MSCP Management Strategic Plan for Western county was released by the San Diego Management and Monitoring Program (SDMMP) in August 2013. It is divided into Management units, each with their

own management priorities. The San Dieguito River Valley runs across three Management units (5, 6 and 7).

- d. The monitoring protocol the program will be using is the USGS Rapid Assessment Protocol, which is being developed by Robert Fisher from the U.S. Geological Survey. The protocol is not complete at this time. It is known that exact methods and sampling frequency will likely be based on 50 square meter plots and include measures of:

- I. Natives vs. non-native vegetation cover (percentage estimation of each)
- II. Corvid (crow family ranges (using nut bowls)
- III. Mammalian carnivores (using hair snares and DNA analysis)
- IV. Small mammals (using baited traps that collect scat & DNA analysis)
- V. Argentine ants (using baited traps)

Camera traps will be used. The frequency of sampling and location of camera trap placement will be determined at the time the Rapid Assessments are planned. Baseline surveys will be conducted at each of the parcels as they are added to the program. These surveys will be the benchmark against which future monitoring data will be measured. Rapid Assessment is easy to learn, lessens field time, minimized species handling, eliminates observer bias and streamlines monitoring making it well-suited to citizen scientists. Baseline surveys will be conducted in partnership with more experienced groups such as Audubon, California Native Plant Society and SD Tracking Team. We will need their expertise to train staff and volunteers.

- e. The proposed timeline and where we are currently has been modified because the Rapid Assessment Protocols are not complete, however we are moving forward with components of the program, specifically Argentine ant surveys and placement of camera traps. The Argentine ant surveys will begin tomorrow morning, August 2nd at 8:00 a.m. We are hoping the Rapid Assessment protocol will be available by this spring 2015. The baseline surveys will be determined by the timeframe of the Rapid Assessment protocol. The River Park office property on Sycamore Creek is an ideal starting point because it encompasses several habitat types including Coastal Sage Scrub, oak woodlands, riparian and non-native species. It is also part of the Sycamore Creek corridor, has topographical variety and is near disturbance (roads, trails and residential development). Jess described the Argentine ant survey process noting that this species likes protein and is a simple process. The data collected will be stored by the Conservancy and will also be input into the regional database maintained by the SDMMMP. Jess showed images of bobcat, wild turkey, mountain lion, deer and coyote that were taken from the camera traps.

- f. The new Citizen Science iPhone/iPad app. (wildSD.org)
The Conservancy partnered with the Institute for Conservation Research to develop the Citizen Science app at wildSD.org. It is only available for use on iPhones and can be downloaded from the Safari browser. It allows citizen scientists to record data in the field using their smartphones, eliminating the need for pens and paper. The app also has interpretive materials and instructional videos on how to do the fieldwork. It is being developed for use on Android devices.

Jess mentioned the partners in the program: Cuyamaca College, Garmin, Palomar Audubon Society, Patagonia, SDMMP, SDG&E, San Diego Foundation, Sierra Club-North County Chapter and USGS. Jess concluded her presentation by stating that the program has a lot of interest and a lot of potential.

Phil Pryde mentioned the ongoing monthly bird count at the lagoon and said it could be included in the baseline data. Jess stated that as soon as the program makes its way to the west side of the Park and the protocol has been established, this information will be included. Carol Carr stated that a lot of baseline data has been collected from the Lagoon for three years and included in the mitigation reports. Diane Coombs stated that because of AB32 and SB375 all of the agencies in the County are doing climate action plans. She thinks this information will be very valuable to the County agencies. Jess stated that everyone entering their data into the County database is important and it will be accessible to all.

INFORMATION

4. Announcement re Executive Director/Deputy Director Retirement and JPA Plans for their Replacement (oral)

Chair Golich mentioned again for the benefit of late-comers that Deputy Director Carter is retiring the end of November. The game plan was that when Deputy Director Carter retired, Executive Director Bobertz would step down from his volunteer role. The Board has decided to combine both positions into one and hire an Interim Director. The candidates will have public experience working with situations as we have right now with the City of San Diego. Chair Golich stated that there are ongoing discussions with the Mayor's office. Discussions were made regarding the value of the time that River Park volunteers spend in the park and how it directly relates to being a benefit to the City of San Diego. It was noted that the Mayor asked his staff to do a cost benefit analysis of what it would cost the City to replace what the JPA has been doing, if the City were not a member of the JPA. The Board has been trying to find out if the City completed this task. The JPA staff prepared its own documentation and provided that information to the City.

4. San Dieguito Lagoon Doubletracking and Seasonal Rail Platform Projects – Impacts to Potential Reach the Beach Trail Crossing (oral)

Deputy Director Carter provided an update. She stated that staff Environmental Planner Shawna Anderson has presented the I5 Coastal widening project /double tracking project in the past. Shawna has also sent letters of comment on the projects. Shawna and Deputy Director Carter were present at a meeting with SANDAG staff regarding the design of the Seasonal Rail Platform. Deputy Director Carter held up a drawing of the area. SANDAG has completed 30% design and is moving to 60%, which is quite far along in the process and has a lot of detail. The issue that was learned at the meeting attended by Shawna and Deputy Director Carter is that there is no feasible way for the Coast to Crest trail to go on the north side of the river as the seasonal rail platform is currently designed. The key issue is the 1000' Rail Platform with ADA ramps on both sides that block the ability to cross. If the trail could get past the Rail Platform then we

could possibly use the same culvert under the railroad berm as Steven's Creek (which is planned to be realigned under the railroad). The issue is that the trail MUST be planned as part of the Rail Platform design. The action of the JPA Board on July 18th was to send letters to SANDAG and the Coastal Commission urging them to require that the trail be designed together so there is some way to get through.

Bill Michalsky stated that the plans have gotten very complicated over the last 20 years of planning. Bill said that he and Jacqueline Winterer are both on the 12 member committee. Deputy Director Carter stated that there is a Consent Order that was agreed to by the 22nd Ag District and Coastal Commission, and one of the issues described in that Consent Order is a buffer easement. The buffer easement states it is for conservation, restoration and public access. It does not say the word "trail" however we interpreted it to mean trail use. The design they have now is to move the seasonal rail platform to the east to avoid wetland impacts, however, the new design encroaches into the buffer easement. Bill Michalsky stated that perhaps the Seasonal Rail Platform idea should be abandoned and instead use buses to transport people from the Solana Beach train station. Deputy Director Carter said that the good news is that SANDAG is planning on putting an undercrossing on the south side. The south side trail is for pedestrians only, not horses or bikes. The north side is the Coast to Crest trail and is for pedestrians, bicycles and horses. The JPA Board has asked the Coastal Commission to send written direction to SANDAG stating that the Coastal Commission requires public access to the beach as part of this project, hoping that a trail will be included in the planning at this time.

6. Park Project Status (oral)

a. Ranger Station/Temporary Ranger Station

Deputy Director Carter stated that Shawna presented the plans for a permanent Ranger Station building at the last CAC meeting. We received comments back from the City of San Diego after a conformance review. Then we will need a Coastal Development Permit, building designs and building permit. We are bringing a temporary work trailer to the site with electricity because we believe the Ranger Station building process may be up to one year. The temporary Ranger Station should be in place within the next few weeks.

b. Founders Tribute

There has not been a Founders Tribute meeting yet. The first meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 3rd. A report will be given at the CAC meeting in October.

c. Other

Nothing has been reported to us regarding the St. John Garabed Church project. It is probably still being processed at the City of San Diego. Shawna Anderson met with the Polo Club and the City staff regarding the Polo Fields. The Polo Club had to request an extension. Question about the Coastal Rail Trail: The Coastal Rail Trail from Solana Beach is west of the railroad tracks. In Del Mar the Coastal Rail Trail goes down Hwy 101 instead on the railroad right of way.

7. Communications - No communications to report

Adjournment

Chair Golich adjourned the meeting at 11:54 a.m.

DRAFT