



Sierra Club San Diego Canyons Campaign Currents

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1 WINTER 2007
San Diegans Love Their Neighborhood Canyons and Creeks

CITY COUNCIL SUPPORT FOR SAN DIEGO'S CANYONS, AN INTERVIEW WITH TONI ATKINS

Toni Atkins is currently in her second term as City Council representative for San Diego's third district. Toni chairs the City Council's newly formed Committee on Budget and Finance, and is vice chair of both the Land Use and Housing and Natural Resources and Culture committees. Neighborhood revitalization is one of her top priorities and, as such, she has been an active supporter of the Canyons Campaign and the Friends Groups. The Canyons Campaign's Eric Bowlby and Catie Fyfe caught up with her recently to discuss her interests in the campaign and recent progress in the effort to create a Regional Canyonlands Park.

CC: As an active supporter of the Canyons Campaign, what do you think is so important about the San Diego Canyons?

Toni: The canyons are unique to San Diego, they are something we can brag about and be proud of; therefore we should

maintain them. The canyons are similar to Balboa Park - the pride we feel in the preservation and legacy of Balboa Park and for the canyons is very similar.

CC: What are the biggest threats our canyons face?

The impacts of adjacent and hillside development, encroachment and invasive plants. These are some of the reasons that we want to designate these areas as open space park-land and get an idea of what we have and where the boundaries are. The impacts of development can be bad if they are not designed properly, and issues like increased run-off can become a major problem in our canyons.

CC: Do your constituents contact you frequently regarding the canyons? If so, what issues are you dealing with?

Yes, we get a lot of calls, especially because the third district has such a network of canyons. We hear about a lot of concerns regarding activities occurring in the canyons, invasive species,

encroachment, and grading in the canyons. We also hear frequently from the friends groups who keep us apprised of their hard work. The efforts of the Friends groups and the Canyons Campaign have really paid off in large measure, the city and departments know that they can't just go into a canyon and do whatever they want.

CC: What steps will you take to insure the Regional Canyonlands Park becomes a reality?

First and foremost, I will provide a strong and consistent voice. Not just at city government, but in the community as well. The real issue is funding, we have lots of vision and commitment but we need the money. We need to be prepared to argue the case and work with the Canyons Campaign and constituents in my community to tell both council members and the mayor that we need their help and support for the Canyonlands Regional Park plan.

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CANYON FRIENDS GROUPS

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- Bancroft Creek Canyon
- Buena Vista Valley Creek/El Salto Falls
- Buchanan Canyon (University Heights)
- Chollas Creek
- Cottonwood Creek
- City Heights Canyons Group
- Dairy Mart Pond
- Del Rey Canyon
- Dove Canyon (Hillcrest)
- Florida Canyon (Balboa Park)
- Fox Canyon
- Hedionda Canyon
- Juniper Canyon (South Park)
- Lakehurst Canyon (North Clairemont)
- Maple Canyon
- Mission Hills Canyons (Mission Hills)
- Navajo Canyon (Del Cerro)
- Normal Heights Canyons
- North Arroyo Canyon
- Reidy Canyon Creek (Escondido)
- Rice Canyon
- Rose Canyon (University City)
- Rose Creek (Pacific Beach)
- Ruffin Canyon (Serra Mesa)
- South Bay Wildlife Refuge
- Stevenson Canyon (North Clairemont)
- Switzer Canyon (North Park)
- Tierrasanta Canyons
- University Heights Canyons
- Van Nuys Canyon
- Zena Canyon (Rolando Park)

To join a group or find out more,
<http://sandiego.sierraclub.org/canyons>

CANYON HIGHLIGHT: STEVENSON CANYON

On October 21st 2006, the Sierra Club kicked off a new initiative to restore wetlands and native habitat in Stevenson Canyon in the Clairemont neighborhood of San Diego with a guided nature tour that was attended by over 60 local residents. Since October the Canyons Campaign has worked with *Friends of Stevenson Canyon* to hold meetings and habitat restoration events. Local residents and helpful boy scouts have worked to remove invasive non-native plants like ice plant, ash, castor bean and pampas grass, and will be planting new native species in January and February. The *Friends* are also reaching out to local schools to interest youth in on-going habitat stewardship activities in their neighborhood canyon. The project is supported by the Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project. To get involved, contact the Canyons Campaign at



Dominic (above) cuts and removes pampas grass plumes

619-284-9399 or savewetlands@cox.net.



Barbara Armstrong, Polly Feinland and Jeremy Rice pull ice plant away from a stand of buckwheat

Joe (rt.) removes ice plant on a steep hillside



CANYONS CAMPAIGN

If you would like to contribute photos or stories to the newsletter please contact:

Catie Fyfe, Program Assistant
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Sierra Club San Diego

CANYONS CAMPAIGN

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NATIVE CANYON PLANT SPOTLIGHT: CALIFORNIA BUCKWHEAT

California Buckwheat *Eriogonum fasciculatum*

Also known as wild buckwheat, flat-topped buckwheat and *hamill* by the Kumeyaay. The 70 species of buckwheat in California are annual shrubs found throughout the state from the desert to the coastal areas to the canyons. Buckwheat ranges from about 12 to 39 inches in height and has egg-shaped leaves. A beautiful umbrella arrangement of small white or pink flowers marks the subtle seasonal changes in San Diego as they dry and turn to a reddish, then chocolate color. The Kumeyaay made use of this native plant by boiling the flat tops and roots to make a medicinal tea. Buckwheat is a wonderful native canyon plant as it can be used to control erosion in critical areas and is drought resistant. Buckwheat also creates much-needed habitat for beneficial insects. Due to its long flowering period (May to October) buckwheat provides an excellent nectar source for insects such as honey bees and butterflies. Honey cultivated from bees in the area of buckwheat is said to have a wonderfully strong flavor. Next time you visit your local canyon, make sure to stop and enjoy the buckwheat as well!



photo by Gardensoft

TONI ATKINS CONT.

CC: Regarding the General Plan and the need for more park space in urban areas, what role can the canyons play in helping to satisfy that need? What about some canyons that perhaps should not have increased access because of their importance to species conservation?

Urban canyons should not count as urban park space; we need both park space and designated Canyonlands, we don't want canyons to be used as an excuse for not creating park space. We need to identify what canyons can be used for passive recreation with controlled use. The recreation needs to fit the resource; for example, a ballpark would not be a good use of an environmentally sensitive canyon. As part of the general or community plans we need to identify and define passive use within the Canyonlands. Some canyons can support recreation, others we may want to set aside and preserve. The types of passive recreation envisioned would be activities such as bird watching, hiking or walking paths, and in some areas maybe bike paths. Again, the recreation needs to match the resource; we have an environment that is unique. Some canyons in San Diego are difficult to get down into, those types of canyons may benefit from a visual access area or lookout point.

CC: What canyons do you frequent or enjoy in San Diego?

I get to visit a lot of canyons to do community work, canyons such as Rose Canyon, Switzer Canyon, and the 32nd Street Canyon in Golden Hill. I look at the canyons everywhere I go; I pay particular attention because they are something really special in our local neighborhoods. I am so fortunate to have within my district Balboa Park and canyons like you wouldn't believe!

Do you know a high school student who needs community-service hours, or how about a boy scout badge? Working in a neighborhood canyon is a fun and great way to attain those needed hours! For more information on how to qualify and to find projects in your area, contact Catie at cfyfe@sierraclubsandiego.org or 619-255-6073.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, February 3rd

Ruffin Canyon Habitat Restoration (Serra Mesa) 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM South end of Ruffin Road where it crosses Gramercy Dr. Park in the Taft Middle School lot.

Saturday, February 17th

Buchanan Canyon Habitat Restoration (University Heights) 9 AM – 12 PM Meet on Johnson Avenue between Hayes and Vermont Streets

Chimney Canyon Free Guided Nature Tour (Scripps Ranch) 10 AM – 12 PM Meet at trail entrance on Semillon Blvd, on the left past Avenida Magnifica.

Rose Creek Habitat Restoration (Pacific Beach) 10 AM - 12 PM Meet behind the Rose Creek Cottage, located at 2525 Garnet Ave in Pacific Beach.

Sunday, February 18th

Switzer Canyon Habitat Restoration (North Park) 9 AM – 12 PM Meet at the corner of 28th and Maple Streets

For more information visit <http://sandiego.sierraclub.org/canyons/>

Local boy scouts (Rt) lend a hand at Stevenson Canyon

