



Mission Hills Canyon Enhancement Planning

Workshop 2 Field Visit, Notes

November 5, 2016 8:30 AM – 11:30 AM

Stakeholder Attendees

San Diego Canyonlands Staff

Eric Bowlby, Executive Director

Miranda Hyldahl, Programs Coordinator

Mission Hills Canyon Stakeholders

Steve Huemmer, Friends Group Leader

Joan Braunstein

Jennifer Curran

Nancy Davis

Henry Eimstad

Carol Emerick

Barbara Gorrow

Brett Hoem

Mike Huff

Michael Lipman

Patricia Low

Gail Nifontoff

Gerald Nifontoff

Barbara Nolan

Daniel Peterson

David Poehlman

- **Eric Gave Introductory Comments & Overview of where we are in Mission Hills CEP process**
 - This field visit is the second stakeholder workshop;
 - Canyon Enhancement Planning (CEP) Brief History and process
 - Orientation on map handouts, the socio-infrastructure map had been revised to show city-owned land (not private parcels) and Grant School property south of school, also not private
 - Showed where the current trail through the canyon crosses private property and explained that the city is working with owners for access easements through the property as part of the Community Plan Update process.
- **Stakeholders Discussed Potential ADA Trails**
 - Steep slopes in canyon could make this difficult
 - Budgetary constraints, cost and maintenance, could also be a factor

The following numbers correspond with numbers on the attached map and are notes about each of those locations.

1. Proposed Kiosk by official trailhead

- Stakeholders opposed to name “Robin’s Egg Trail” that appears on Google Maps
- Steve H has submitted a request to Google Maps to change the trail name to “Mission Hills Canyon Trail”
- Steve H pointed out and talked about restoration projects the Friends Group has been working on
 - Arundo donax removal
 - Homeless encampment and trash removal
 - Planted native plants- 40% survival rate due to difficulty of watering
- Yellow house in the area, on east side, has donated water to the Friends Group. The Mission Hills Nursery has also donated water.

2. Restore area where ice plant has overtaken habitat

• Stakeholders Discussed Invasive Species in the Canyon

- Some neighbors against palm tree removal
- Eric: some palms can be problematic because they are growing in/taking over the streambed, causing erosion and bank destabilization and they are impacting the sewer infrastructure. The City of San Diego decides on the removal of those trees
- Removal of palm trees can be very expensive and controversial
- At least control the spread of these invasive trees- palms and eucalyptus- and remove seedlings
- Ranger: canary palm trees are not as invasive as Mexican fan palms, which are very invasive, and eucalyptus trees will often fall over by themselves
- Consensus to remove invasive tree seedlings to control spread
- Eric: policy is to remove kindling and branches that drop to avoid fire hazard
- Ranger: discussed the Brush Management Zone (BMZ). The Community Parks Department manages the north end of the canyon and does not have a brush management program, but the Open Space Division, which manages the south end of the canyon, does have a BMZ management program. Open Space may be managing all BMZ's in the future.
- Chrysanthemum is another invasive species that grows and dies annually and becomes a flash-fuel, fire hazard. Potential to replace chrysanthemum with California Sunflower to keep colorful flowers.
- Ice plant: This invasive will take over entire slopes. There can be resistance to removing ice plant

• Stakeholders Discussed Sewer Infrastructure in the Canyon

- The sewer lines run beneath the canyon and are old and need to be maintained by the City of San Diego
- City access vehicles cannot get into canyon when it rains
- If there is a leak, the City will do whatever it takes to fix it, often taking access routes that cause great impacts to Canyon habitats. For years, the City sewer department was more reactive than proactive. Now access is planned. We need to remember that well planned and well defined sewer infrastructure access is important.

- **Stakeholders Discussed Abandoned Water Line on Trail**
 - This line is dead and cannot be revived, should be removed
- **Hydrology Issues in Canyon**
 - Rains cause erosion (head-cutting) on the main trail
 - Ranger: It would be possible to restore the slope along the creek but it is hard when there also needs to be an access road maintained
- **Utility Pipes on Trail**
 - Stakeholders asked about policy for dead utility pipes on trail
 - Eric: Pipes that are exposed should be removed. The City will leave (abandon) the ones that are still buried.
 - Some of the buried pipes can actually help with erosion control
- **SD Canyonlands' California Coastal Conservancy (CCC) Funding**
 - SD Canyonlands has funding from the CCC to bring in a landscape architect to look at the canyon and determine what is feasible
- **Erosion Issues and the Trail**
 - Trail can be unsafe because of how rocky it is. What can be done to make it safe?
 - Rocks are being moved by the rains
 - Heavy rains reach high levels in the canyon
 - This is in part due to the impermeable surfaces surrounding the canyon that are funneling all runoff in to the canyon
 - Potential for a check dam, where the idea is to build up sediment and slow down the flow of the water
 - The “head-cutting” in the trail caused by the rains has gotten further and further up-stream in the canyon and erosion is getting worse
 - City vehicles entering the canyon to access the sewer lines are having an impact on the erosion
 - Is there a long-term solution?
 - SD Canyonlands will hire consultants to try to find a solution. They will create a conceptual design.
 - Storm drain lines come from lower Sunset into the canyon and funnel runoff halfway down the canyon slope where it is released
- Right of Way
 - Public trails are a legally consistent use within Right of Ways (ROWs)
 - It is important that we retain the ROW. If abandoned the land could revert to private ownership precluding public access.

3. Finger Canyon

- This is privately owned which would prohibit public access from this point

4. Barbara Nolan and Henry Eimstad's Home

- Offered as a potential water source for habitat restoration projects

4.5 Storm Drain Outlet from Washington Place

- Slope blew out in El Nino rain creating a huge gully, threatening the surrounding houses
- Old storm drain only went one third of the way down the slope and released water
- City replaced that with an 18-inch concrete pipe, using bull dozers and excavators for 3 months
- There was then a revegetation project which was successful because the city biologist working on it was persistent in full restoration. This is an example of how one individual can be truly impactful.

- Cement at the bottom of this storm drain outlet is intended to absorb energy from the flows of runoff when it rains
- Invasive plant acacia should be removed here
- Potential for a bench here in the open space was discussed
 - Ranger: We wouldn't put a bench in the creek bed. It would potentially become a hang-out
 - Amenities such as this are often better suited for the trailheads where they can be maintained and policed
- Pine Trees: invasive and most likely a living Christmas tree that someone planted. Now a fire hazard that should be removed.

5. Massively Eroded Creek Channel

- Could head cut higher up in the canyon
- Sewer department currently maintains manhole (#95) without driving all the way to this point
- Install possible bridge to cross the eroded creek channel near the sewer line
- Trail gets very thin and very steep- potentially dangerous
- Hawes family owns private property that the main trail passes through

6. Potential Viewpoint

- View of Point Loma and San Diego Bay

7. Jennifer Curran and Michael Lipman's Property

- They are in the process of building a canyon-rim home
- Potential water donor for habitat restoration projects
- Property adjacent is a paper street (Torrance) and unofficial social trail, off Clark Street
- This is not a huge access point with limited exposure and secluded access from cul-de-sacs
- Consensus not make it an official trail

8. Erosion

- Water main broke and blew out slope where Alameda Terrace dead ends at Clark

9. Social Trail

- Below Clark and Lynwood, large open space
- Surrounding neighbors bought this land long ago saving it from development into apartments and gave it to the City
- North half of the area is coastal sage scrub, south half is non-native grasses
- Friends group members live above the area are a potential water source for habitat restoration
- This area is prime for a habitat restoration project, possibly coastal sage scrub
- Consensus not to formalize the trail here

10. Potential Kiosk

- Ranger: could install and test out having a kiosk here, rangers do not have the capacity to constantly remove graffiti from kiosks, proposed possible solution is that the community could maintain the kiosk or that SD Canyonlands could maintain it
- A new "six pack" City regulation sign is needed here

• Ranger Proposed Habitat Restoration Event

- Wants to keep momentum of this group going, could support a small restoration project

The next Stakeholder Meeting to be determined.