

# Environmental Report

Submitted by: Joan Licari

## **Puente Hills Landfill Progress:**

I attended a meeting of the Friends of the Puente Hills on Apr. 23, 2018. Michelle O’Conner, Facilities Planner from Los Angeles County Dept. of Parks and Recreation, described the status of planning and timelines for the planning process/implementation of plans for the creation of the new regional park on the closed Puente Hills Landfill.

From the presentation: This will be the first new regional park in Los Angeles County in more than 30 years. It is being created on the site of the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest sanitary landfill in the United States. The park is conceived to serve as an anchor to the longest trail network in the County that exists from the San Gabriel Mountains to the Coast. It will also provide access to the Schabarum trail network in the Puente Chino Hills.

When completed it will include 142 acres; 117 of top deck to be developed in three phases, plus 25 acres on non-fill areas that includes the Nike flare site. The western deck is in the oldest portion of the park and because it is the most stabilized will be the first area to be developed. The Master Plan was approved by the Board of Supervisors in Oct. 2016. The park is envisioned to be a destination park that would provide recreation for residents with a variety of interests and physical abilities from passive walking on developed paths and trails to stair climbs, bike skills area/s, equestrian facilities.

Ms. O’Conner discussed constraints that were important in the planning process. There will only be one entrance in current plans and the limitations imposed by construction on a landfill. This access is the entrance off Crossroads Parkway. Differential surface subsidence is anticipated to be as much as 125 feet over time in some areas due to decomposition and compaction of buried garbage, thus permanent structures will be limited to non-fill areas. Access to the methane recovery system must be available to the Sanitation District for many years for continued maintenance. And budget constraints are important.

The western deck will be developed first, as the oldest most settled area. Phase one plans currently include a visitor center at the base of the hill, development of infrastructure (i.e. roadways), a bike skills area, open space grasslands for picnics, daytime events, walking. Since Nike Hill is on a non-fill area, a trail to an observation/shade cover is envisioned. History of the site will be included. Approximately six miles of new trails will be integrated into planned infrastructure. The gondola from the visitor center to the top decks is not included in phase one. There will be diversification of the plant palette in the area.

Time frames for action:

- A Joint Powers Agreement by Aug. 2018

- Design of Phase One: Sept. 2018-Aug. 2019
- Bids for construction: Aug. 2019-Dec. 2019. Cost is estimated to be about \$46 million.
- Construction of Phase One: Dec. 2019-2021

### **Dog Park Planning for Hacienda Heights**

On April 19, 2018 Sandy Keat and I attended a meeting with representatives of Los Angeles County at Schabarum Park concerning the possibility of having a County Dog Park in the Hacienda Heights area. The meeting was attended by Lauren Yokomizo, Alina Bokde (Deputy Director of County Planning and Development Agency), Roy Williams (Regional Operations Manager), Iris Chi (Regional Planner-Environmental Planning and Sustainability). We discovered planning is proceeding farther than we had known.

During the discussion we found that there is currently only one dog park in Los Angeles County. This is located in La Cresenta. However, the County knows there is strong interest in such facilities and is committed to increasing the number.

Criteria they used in selection of a dog park includes the following guidelines:

- A buffer of 1500-2000 feet around residential areas
- Location in a staffed park.
- Compatibility with other uses in the park (i.e. location near a playground with possibility of undesirable interaction between dogs and children).
- Parking availability or ability to increase parking if necessary.
- Will the dog park over-amenitize an already existing park in which it will be sited?

They indicated that County criteria used in selection of a location will be sent to Sandy Keat.

The County is almost done with an assessment of Schabarum Park as a location for a dog park to serve our area and Rowland Heights. The location being considered is the area to the east of the entry kiosk. However, this may change as other sites within Schabarum are being examined.

A Facility Program Review is complete concerning guidelines, ADA access, and parking. It is now routed for review to other agencies involved. This will be followed by submittal to the Director of Parks and Recreation, the Board of Supervisors. This should be completed in about a month. The plan looks workable. There should be a cost estimate in 4-6 weeks.

Past approval of park funding (Measure A in 2016) as well as the passage of a park bill (Proposition 68) on the June 5<sup>th</sup> ballot will possibly provide funding. During the planning process, there will be community meetings.

## **Significant Ecological Areas:**

**Currently, a new Significant Ecological Areas (SEA) ordinance is being proposed by Los Angeles County. Draft 9 is now available for public review.** On May 9, 2018, Mike William, president of HHIA, and Joan Licari (Board member), met Iris Chi, Los Angeles County Regional Planner, at a public tabling event hosted by Supervisor Janice Hahn's office in Schabarum Regional Park. We discussed our concerns relative to the current review by Los Angeles County of SEA requirements. Included in this review will be consideration of existing "Conceptual SEAs" and how these will be treated in new regulations. These are important in Hacienda Heights since we have three "Conceptual" SEAs whose boundaries have been designated, but never formalized and do not have protections granted by full SEA status. **The public comment period for the SEA ordinance has been extended and will end on 5/31/18. HHIA will be providing input for this ordinance as it affects activities in our Puente-Chino Hills and the areas under management by the Native Habitat Authority.**

**HHIA is advocating formalization of the boundaries of the Conceptual SEAs, requiring new projects be reviewed under the newer proposed regulations and old projects, never started or completed, would not be grandfathered in under older less strict regulations.** Information we have received from the County currently indicates that under proposed new requirements, any project with a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) in effect would be considered under old regulations. If, however, a CUP had expired on an old but incomplete project, it would need to be reconsidered under new SEA requirements.

**The Significant Ecological Area (SEA) Program is a component of the Los Angeles County Conservation/Open Space Element of the County General Plan.** The County General Plan directs development within the County. Significant Ecological Areas in Los Angeles County were originally designated as part of the 1980 County General Plan. The General Plan of 2035 updated the SEA boundary maps, goals and policies in 2015. Expanded SEA boundaries were adopted in 2015, however there has never been a comprehensive update to the regulations since 1982.

**The SEA program designates areas within the county with important biological resources.** Proposed projects within these areas undergo special evaluation as to environmental impacts. SEAs are not preserves, but areas the County feels important to maintain a balance between limited development and resource conservation. Special review of projects in these is mandated. Proposed development projects are currently reviewed in these areas and site design is a key element in conserving fragile resources such as streams, oak woodlands and threatened or endangered species and their habitat.

The intent of the proposed SEA regulations is not to stop development, but to allow limited, controlled development that does not jeopardize the unique biotic diversity within the County. The SEA conditional use permit requires development activities be reviewed by the Significant Ecological Area Technical Advisory Committee (SEATAC).

