

Annual Environmental Report—Jan. 20, 2015

Submitted by Joan Licari

Several projects in Hacienda Heights were monitored closely by HHIA and continue to be of concern to the present. These include planning for our new regional park to be created on the fill areas of the closed Puente Hills Landfill, the request by the Quemetco lead/acid battery recycling plant to expand operations by 25% and extend operations for another 10 years, and the assessment of our local parks being done by HHIA for the County of Los Angeles. In addition, we are evaluating the plans for replacement of palms that were cut down because of fungal infections.

Puente Hills Landfill Park:

The Landfill was closed on Oct. 31, 2013. According to agreements signed in the last permit extension for the landfill, after closure, areas of fill would be developed into a park managed by the Los Angeles Dept. of County Parks and Recreation. Planning for our new park is currently in progress and the public is encouraged to take part in this process.

Four workshops have already taken place at which community residents were asked what type of park they would prefer. Three park themes were offered: (1) "Ecology"-- a passive park with hiking trails, nature walks, and picnic areas, (2) "Recreate"--a park that included more active recreation activities such as bike skills areas, stair climbs, exercise facilities, slides, zip lines as well as some passive activities, (3) "Upcycle"--a park that emphasized the history of the landfill and ongoing recycling and energy facilities. HHIA has submitted our ideas and concerns about what we felt would most benefit Hacienda Heights residents since they have borne the brunt of the many years of operation of the landfill. We strongly support a more passive park as in the Ecology theme with connection to trails already in existence.

On Dec. 18th, just before the holidays, a Notice of Preparation was issued notifying the public that the County of Los Angeles is going to prepare a Draft Environmental Report. A proposed park plan has been developed utilizing the input from the workshops. This plan is a combination of the 3 park themes with major emphasis on the ecology and recreation activities. It is available on-line and in the Hacienda Heights Library for study and comment. The comment period began Dec. 18, 2015 and will end on Feb. 1, 2016. **There will be a very important Scoping meeting on Jan. 27th at which the public will be able to view the park plan and give oral comments. Written comments can be submitted until Feb. 1, 2016 to be considered and addressed in the DEIR.**

You can view all the plans and maps at the planning website: <http://www.puentehillslandfillpark.org/>. The documents are also available in hardcopy at the Hacienda Heights Library.

We urge you to attend the Scoping meeting at Don Julian Elementary School located at 13855 Don Julian Road, La Puente, CA 91746 on Wednesday, January 27, 2016 at 6:30 p.m.

Quemetco Lead/Acid Battery Recycling Plant

HHIA is currently monitoring the request by The Quemetco Lead/Acid Battery Recycling Plant for a 25% expansion and a ten year extension of their operating permits. AQMD is currently processing Quemetco's application to expand its throughput by 25% while DTSC is processing a renewal of Quemetco's hazardous waste permit, which does NOT mention their application to expand.

The plant is located in the City of Industry on 7th but is on the boundary of Hacienda Heights and within 400 feet of our residents. It has been operating since 1959. This plant has been a concern over the years due to emissions of lead and arsenic which have in the past contaminated soil and water in areas surrounding the plant. The California Dept. of Toxic Substance Control wrote in a 2014 memorandum that “more often than not, Quemetco is not in compliance with the provisions in their General Permit.

With the closure of the Exide Plant in Vernon recently, Quemetco is now the only facility of its type west of the Rocky Mountains and receives batteries for processing from the western states as well as foreign countries. It can process up to 1.2 million pounds of materials each day.

Studies suggest that over the years, residents of Hacienda Heights in the vicinity of the plants may have been exposed to high levels of lead and arsenic contamination. Lead can be carried through the air to contaminate soils, vegetation and invade homes and be discharged into surface waters. In Southern California Quemetco currently ranks number 2 in air emissions only behind a Chevron facility in El Segundo.

Exposure to high levels of lead can cause serious neurological problems including irreversible damage to IQ. It is listed by the World Health Organization as one of the 10 chemicals of major concern. A recent study published in the scientific journal Nature suggests lead exposure can cause inheritable changes. Even small amounts of lead can cause serious health problems. Children under the age of 6 and fetuses are especially vulnerable to lead poisoning, which can severely affect mental and physical development. Children often come in contact with contamination in soil because they play outdoors.

A study by Cal Poly in 1991 found lead levels as high as 10,300 ppm in the environment adjacent to the plant. There is no known safe level of lead. However, the current residential California level is set at 80 ppm. Studies in the past have found Quemetco has discharged elevated levels of lead into San Jose Creek. The Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board has issued Quemetco letters in 2010 and 2015 for exceeding benchmark values for lead, zinc, pH.

Arsenic emissions from the plant are also of concern. The EPA considers exposure to arsenic a cause cancer of the lungs if inhaled as well as bladder, liver and skin cancer if ingested.

In the current permit process, Quemetco has submitted 4 sampling plans to DTSC; all have been rejected as inadequate by DTSC. As a result, the agency developed its own plan that included sampling of soils up to 1 mile. Quemetco has rejected this plan and DTSC backed down to ¼ mile within the last couple of months.

HHIA is concerned that the plan that now has been approved is inadequate to protect our residents. If contamination extends to a mile, this would include several schools plus numerous homes. We are joined in this concern with the Coalition of Clean Air in Avocado Heights who are fighting the recent plan approved by DTSC.

Palm Tree Replacement on Hacienda Blvd.

You might have noticed in the last month that some of the palm trees along the median of Hacienda Blvd. have been cut down. It was discovered that the California fan palms have been infected by Diamond Scale and pink rot. Both Mexican and California palms are in the medians along Hacienda Blvd.; Mexican fan palms are not affected. Arborists have examined the trees and recommended immediate removal of 56 trees in danger of falling. Another 100 palms may need to be removed in the next year or so.

Regulations now prohibit replanting of palms in medians so plans are being developed to determine what replacement action can be taken. Three options exist: filling in the open spaces with shrubs around the base of remaining trees, replacing cut trees with a different tree variety, or installing irrigation systems that would allow trees that are less drought tolerant to be planted. The last option is possibly not economically feasible.

The option favored by residents who attended a recent informational meeting with representatives from the Dept. of Public Works was replanting with different but drought resistant trees such as Palo Verde. This action is also favored by HHIA.

The Dept. of Public Works is planning in the next few months to plant one open area with a sample landscape to allow residents a chance to see how it is liked before a final decision is made.

The infection of our trees is probably an impact caused by the drought in which trees have become weakened since our medians do not have irrigation systems. Diamond Scale disease, a fungus, is characterized by the diamond shape of fruiting bodies that emerge from the surface of a frond. It attacks primarily the California fan palm (*Washingtonia filifera*). Trees do not typically die from the disease but are weakened allowing other infections to take hold such as pink rot. Pink rot, also a fungus, produces pinkish spore masses from which the disease derives its name. A brownish syrupy fluid also might be present. Infected plants weaken, decline and eventually can die posing a danger of falling.

Los Angeles County Park Assessment

Do you want more playing fields, a dog park, a BMX site, a pool or something else?

The Supervisors of Los Angeles County are asking the 88 cities and representative groups from unincorporated areas throughout the entire county to take a look at their communities and see what is needed in our parks—repairs, new parks, land acquisition and recreational facilities. This \$3.5 million study is considered necessary before putting a together new bond issue for

possibly the November 2016 ballot. This bond would replace the loss of funding that has been provided by Proposition A that will be ending soon.

This workshop will be an opportunity for Hacienda Heights residents to directly influence planning and development of the park system in our community. The purpose of this workshop is threefold: (1) gain an understanding of the facilities available in present parks in Hacienda Heights; (2) collaborate with attendees to determine what improvements, upgrades or new facilities are needed and (3) conduct a voting exercise to prioritize the list of potential park projects.

HHIA involvement, as a sponsor, is gathering a team of volunteers to carry out the following tasks: (1) conduct outreach to encourage residents to attend the workshop, (2) arrange all workshop logistics, (3) prepare a list of potential park projects. (4) present Community Profiles of each of our 7 parks during the workshop, (5) collaborate with workshop participants to expand the prepared list of potential park projects, (6) conduct a voting exercise with participants to prioritize the projects on the list and (7) document the list of prioritized projects. **Results of the workshop will be compiled and reported directly to the L.A. County Parks and Recreation Department as part of a comprehensive assessment report.**

A workshop to assess the park and recreation needs and opportunities in Hacienda Heights has been scheduled by HHIA for 6:30 p.m. on February 11, 2016 at the Community Center, 1234 Valencia Ave., Hacienda Heights.